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## Europe and United Kingdom Alpaca Imports from NZ

### Current situation:

Currently a number of New Zealand, Australian and US alpacas that are resident in NZ awaiting export to Europe and UK are in limbo due to Document certification issues.

After an audit at the Heathrow Animal Reception Centre it was brought to the attention of MPI NZ that an amendment to the model veterinary certificate from June 2012 (EU RUM Certificate) had not been carried through to the OMAR and MPI Health Certificate template.

The Overseas Market Access Requirement (OMAR) is a NZ Document that is the legal agreement between NZ and EU for the EU 'RUM' Certificate. It is the document that states how the NZ authorities are going to meet the requirements of the RUM Certificate which is a Ruminant Health Certificate to enable the importation of Alpaca, Llama & Deer into EU. MPI NZ cannot certify to a clause on the RUM Certificate so the OMAR has been revoked until the issues are resolved.

The clause relates to one point in the RUM Certificate that requires NZ to certify that 'during the last 24 months (prior to date of export) no vaccination against bluetongue has been carried out and any imports of cloven-hooved animals vaccinated against the disease are not permitted into NZ. This clause is not referring to the import of these alpacas into NZ, it refers to the import of ALL livestock into NZ.

There are no restrictions against the import of cloven-hooved animals vaccinated against bluetongue into New Zealand. New Zealand does not have vectors to transmit the diseases which are therefore considered to be very low risk for imports. Implementing the restrictions would be against principals that require countries to have the least trade restrictive import measures in place that protect the country from disease outbreaks.

We are currently working with MPI to request the EU commission review the current RUM Certificate to bring it in line with their import requirements for Cattle, Sheep & Goats. The EU has recognised that vaccination is much less of a risk for the spread of the diseases, and in updates to the 'OVI' model certificates (for sheep – the natural hosts for bluetongue), the requirement that imports of vaccinated animals is prohibited has been dropped. In fact, sheep that are vaccinated can currently be exported to the EU, where vaccinated is also routinely performed.

Until the issues have been resolved there is no OMAR in place to allow the Export of Alpacas, Llama and Deer from NZ to EU & UK.

MPI NZ has engaged their Market Access Councillor for the European Union who is stationed in Brussels to initiate, and now escalate the discussions. There has been formal and face to face meetings at a very high level held between the MPI Councillor and the EU Commission.

We requested MPI to seek a dispensation from the EU Commission for this current consignment of alpacas, suggesting that a Blue Tongue Test be carried out as a one-off requirement to enable them to travel. This was not granted.

MPI were successful in negotiations with UK to enable the UK destined alpacas to travel if they had a negative result to a Blue Tongue PCR test. We also had to confirm that these alpacas would remain in the UK. This has enabled us to gain permission to export 31 alpacas from NZ to UK on 9 August using a one-off OMAR specifically for this shipment only.

### **Looking for alternatives:**

We recently contact Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (DAWR) in Australia to ask if the 2014 protocol arrangement between Australia and Switzerland could be utilised as a means to Export alpacas direct from Australia to Switzerland and then eventually on to EU countries. DAWR spoke to Swiss authorities who advised this was not an option and that Switzerland would not allow imports at this time until the RUM Certificate issues were resolved.

There is a current protocol from Australia to Canada in place but there is no aircraft route available to enable us to satisfy this protocol either. Alpacas from Australia that arrive into Canada still are required to remain there for 180 days prior to export and then use the same problematic RUM Certificate to travel to EU. Alpaca exports from Canada to EU were also recently halted for a period of time.

DAWR in Australia have approached the EU regarding discussions on Direct Market Access, which is a possibility with recent wording changes to the OIE (World Organisation for Animal Health) Standard which may enable Australia to eventually export direct from Australia to EU. DAWR have advised that these talks will not happen quickly but is very positive news for Australian breeders.

### **Action:**

We are continuing to work closely with MPI NZ, NZ Exporters and all Alpaca Association representatives throughout NZ, UK and Mainland Europe to lobby the EU to ensure the issue remains in the forefront of any EU revisions and discussions.

MPI had expected that this would be resolved swiftly but now cannot give us a timeframe on the process to obtain a mutually agreeable outcome. EU meet regularly and make regular changes to Import Conditions.

We must respect the formal nature of the discussions between the relevant Countries Governments and understand that we cannot interfere with their processes to ensure the best outcome for all involved.

We will continue to update you regularly as more information becomes available.

**International Alpaca Exports Team**