

Burke now demands BSE risk analysis

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THE Federal Government has today announced it will demand Biosecurity Australia conduct an Import Risk Analysis for beef imports destined for Australia, following the easing of restrictions on countries which have had bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE).

The announcement by Minister for Agriculture, Tony Burke, in Canberra today is a major win for the Opposition and many grassroots farmers who feared the previously announced import assessment would not be rigorous enough to uphold Australia's clean-green disease-free status.

The Government had promised an assessment in its recently released import protocols, which included a questionnaire for completion by prospective export nations.

However, there would not have been any requirement for Australian experts to personally verify the statements, and Australians would only conduct their own inspections if there was further cause for concern.

The change to an IRA will mean Australian officials will conduct a more thorough investigative process which could last as long as two years.

The decision will thrill the Opposition which has called for the IRA process to help safeguard Australia's image both domestically and with important export customers, like Japan and Korea.

Peak cattle lobby groups had argued against the need for an IRA because of the length of time such an investigation would take and the burden that would place on international trading partners.

Source: <http://theland.farmonline.com.au/news/nationalrural/livestock/news/burke-now-demands-bse-risk-analysis/1770274.aspx>