



Checking out the procedures for importing a shipment of sesame seeds are (l to r) Ismail Al-Junaibi, Mohammed Al Romaithi, El-Awad Osman, Abdul Aziz Al-Hajeri, Abdulla Husain Al-Hosani, Ed Thomas of AQIS and Lindsay Lyall of TAFE SA. Photo by LAURELLE PACEY

UAE inspectors check out our systems

Confidence in Australia's Halal Program is vital to the ongoing export of Australian red meat to the Middle East.

By Laurelle Pacey

FIVE food inspectors from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) spent two weeks in Adelaide in June looking at Australia's meat inspection and food safety procedures.

This was the ninth year of the Meat Study program organised by Regency TAFE and the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service (AQIS) and sponsored by Meat and Livestock Australia.

The MLA sees this as an important ongoing project for the Australian meat industry that builds relationships with the Abu Dhabi Food Authority.

"It helps them understand our product, our systems and allows us to solve any problems that may arise with no interruption to trade," said MLA Middle East and Africa Services Manager Blair Brice.

Everyone in the study group was a meat and meat products food inspector for products imported into the UAE. Regency TAFE program coordinator, Lindsay Lyall, said the study program helped customers understand our quality assurance and food safety procedures.

Group spokesman Mohammed Al Romaithi said between them they had a lot of experience in different aspects of the industry. "We have similar procedures but there are small differences," he said.

The Middle East is the single largest sheep meat market for

Australia worth approximately \$900million a year. The UAE itself is Australia's second biggest lamb market after the United States.

Mr Lyall said Islamic consumers place great importance on the religious requirements for food production, so all cattle, sheep and goats processed in Australia for the Middle East market are killed under the Australian Government Supervised Halal program administered by the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS).

"During their two weeks here, we showcased our red meat production and our regulatory programs that ensure the integrity of our Halal products," Mr Lyall said. "They witnessed Halal slaughter procedures and learned the principles of the Australian Government Supervised Halal Program.

"This reinforces our reputation as a reliable supplier of safe Halal meat in the United Arab Emirates and throughout the Gulf and the Muslim world."

The group found a visit to Dublin saleyards, 80 km north of Adelaide, particularly fascinating. "Normally in the Emirates, animals are sold singly or in small numbers, but at Dublin they saw 22,000 sheep and lambs yarded in one selling centre," Mr Lyall said.

"They were also intrigued with the auction process which was quite new to them, as well as the variation in the animals – from merinos bred for wool through to meat animals like the Border Leicester and Romney Marsh breeds." ■