



The Hon Katrina Hodgkinson MP

Minister for Primary Industries
Minister for Small Business

09 MAY 2013

MOC13/1513

Dr Mike Bond
Chief Executive Officer
Animal Health Australia
Suite 15, 26-28 Napier Close
DEAKIN ACT 2600

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Dear Dr Bond *Mike*

I am writing regarding the consultation drafts of the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Sheep and Cattle.

The NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) supports the development of national livestock standards and guidelines and is committed to their implementation into regulation once they are finalised and endorsed by the Standing Council on Primary Industries. I understand that DPI had input to the development of the drafts through participation in the writing and reference groups.

The issue of the muzzling of working dogs has been raised as a concern and this matter requires very careful consideration, especially given the importance of working dogs to the viability of grazing enterprises through the efficient management of mobs of sheep and cattle.

It is essential that the welfare of working dogs is considered as well as the welfare of the sheep. While I do not support the use of dogs that habitually bite sheep, it is a fact that dogs may be mustering in paddocks or working in farm stockyards for extended periods of time and a muzzle may prevent them from drinking freely during their work.

Further, muzzles may restrict their movement and agility, and hence limit their ability to undertake their tasks.

Above all, graziers and specialist stock-workers are more than aware that it is in the best interests of the health, productivity and workability of their livestock that dogs do not bite; indeed, most dogs are trained not to bite and are actively discouraged from doing so.

The use of muzzles on dogs working in yards is not an issue, as I understand dogs have been required to be muzzled in sale yards for a number of years already.

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I regard the proposed mandating of muzzles on working dogs on farms to be an unnecessary over-reaction and it shows a lack of trust and faith in graziers and their workers to satisfactorily attend to the welfare of all their animals.

I have asked that Mrs Amanda Paul, Animal Welfare Veterinary Officer, be available to discuss this matter further with you. Mrs Paul may be contacted on (02) 6391 3670.

Yours sincerely



Katrina Hodgkinson MP
Minister for Primary Industries

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