

**SOUTH COAST AND TABLELANDS REGIONAL LIVESTOCK HEALTH
COMMITTEE**

**PO Box 97
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**RESPONSE ON PROPOSED AUSTRALIAN ANIMAL WELFARE STANDARDS
AND GUIDELINES: SHEEP AND CATTLE**

Response on proposed Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines: Sheep

The wording of these standards generally appears sufficiently loose to not cause too great an impact while the document stays in this format. Once reviewed in the future, the wording will need to be carefully examined.

G2.4 The qualifier “.where appropriate to the production system..” would negate the effect of the “should” in this case, but the exact wording would need to be monitored.

G3.1 A lot of producers have subconscious contingency plans for bushfire; whether they are able to implement them is dependent on a lot of factors beyond their control and particular to the event. They would plan to have the paddock eaten out around the house/shed, and plan to put as many sheep in there or in the sprayed-out paddock if..enough warning/available/not fire-fighting, etc. Whether it is envisaged that a plan is written down as evidence that preparation has occurred could only be determined in court [hopefully never come to that]. Are these plans stipulated with a view that they are documented?

S6.3 Does this become a combination Standard/guideline “A person should leave a docked tail stump of a sheep with at least two palpable joints remaining, and a person must leave a docked tail stump with at least one palpable joint remaining”? Support variation C6, but recommend two palpable joints as desirable in longer term.

G6.17 and G6.19 may be incompatible: rings tend to migrate to the narrowest point, which tends to be intra-vertebral, rather than the intervertebral space.

G8.3 It is hard to re-word this guideline using “should”. Could this be re-worded “Stress on ewes should be minimised where any management practice is carried out in the last 4-6 weeks of pregnancy, to reduce pregnancy toxaemia and other metabolic diseases”

S10.6 This should be a guideline “should” rather than a standard “must”.

Response on proposed Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines: Cattle

We are supportive of Option B ie the introduction of national mandatory guidelines for cattle husbandry. We are also supportive of many of the variations proposed in Option C. Refer to our detailed comments below on the variations:

Pain relief for spaying of cattle: Supported. As veterinarians we push for economic pain relief for all surgical operations on animals.

Banning flank spaying and webbing: Largely irrelevant to NSW, and being unfamiliar with the procedures, death rates etc. we are not able to comment from an informed position.

Banning of permanent tethering: This is supported. Owners of stock in Australia should have sufficient fenced pasture available to run their stock, or be in a position to feed them without resort to permanent tethering and shifting. Much tethering has been obviated by simple, cheap portable electric fencing systems. This type of husbandry is often associated with infrequent supervision of the tethered animals, poor provision of shelter, rope tangles and burns, and running out of feed and water. On this basis this method of restraint should not be condoned. Wording of any changes needs to be careful, however, not to catch the tethering of dairy calves to hutches where husbandry is usually of a satisfactory standard and is designed to reduce the risk of disease transmission in neonates.

Banning the use of dogs on calves less than 30 days of age: Supported. Calves of this age should be kept under conditions where mustering by people on foot is entirely satisfactory without resort to the use of dogs. We can see no justification for the use of dogs, muzzled or otherwise, on this type of stock. Calf training to the use of dogs could be conducted after the age of 30 days.

Banning caustic dehorning: Not supported. Our view is that this is a legitimate method of disbudding if conducted properly and it still should be available as an option to producers. Like many other painful interventions if done inappropriately or under the wrong conditions it may cause untoward effects. Adoption of polled genetics should see the requirement for such interventions decline in importance over coming years.

Banning of induction for early calving, except by vets for animal health requirements: This is supported. We believe induction of calving to be little used in NSW, therefore such a ban would have limited impact.

Banning electroimmobilisation: This is not supported. The proposed Standards and Guidelines are clearer and more prescriptive for a practice that is estimated to be used on nearly a quarter of a million cattle. Access to short term immobilisation when handling some animals for certain procedures eg injection of drugs for sedation/restraint/analgesia, examination of lesions etc could be made safer in some circumstances. This could benefit both the stockman or vet involved, and the hapless and fearful animal that was trying to turn itself inside out with manual restraint. Under the improved standards and guidelines, use of EI would be more “appropriate” but not in lieu of pain relief. It could also be a major benefit to WHS in certain circumstances. Does the figure of 55,839 cattle electroimmobilised in NSW per annum reflect veterinary use or a failure of the current regulation in NSW? We do not know of vets in our region that use electroimmobilisation in cattle.
Other specific comments:

Estimated number of calves 6-12mths old castrated without pain relief in NSW: It is ludicrous to think that there are not substantial numbers of calves that are castrated in this age group in NSW (or Tasmania). The number may well be higher than in Victorian estimates.

Tail docking in dairy heifers in NSW: One of us is aware of one dairy farm on the far south coast where over 100 older heifers are tail docked annually. We are not sure how this reflects the situation in the rest of the dairying areas in NSW.

Heat stress in dairy cattle: Surely all dairy farms need to manage heat stress in NSW? The 484 quoted seems rather low. The proportion of the 100 farms on the far south coast with heat stress management infrastructure is low, considering the increasing likelihood of more frequent spells of hotter weather.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bob Templeton', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Dr Bob Templeton
Executive Officer
3 May 2013