

# Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Poultry

## Frequently Asked Questions



### **What are poultry standards and guidelines and why do we need them?**

Australia's existing voluntary model codes for the welfare of domestic poultry are now 15 years old. Those for ostriches are 14 years old and those for emus are 11 years old. These codes have not kept pace with community and trading partner expectations, and are not mandatory. It is intended that the proposed standards, if adopted, will replace the existing Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals – Domestic Poultry 4th edition (2002), plus equivalent Model Codes of Practice for welfare of poultry at slaughtering establishments, the farming of ostriches and of captive bred emus ('the existing MCOPs'). The standards will be used as the basis for developing consistent legislation and enforcement across Australia and the guidelines are to be incorporated into national industry quality assurance and verification schemes.

One of the key objectives was to facilitate consistency of legislation across states and territories for improved and sustainable animal welfare outcomes. Government and industry have agreed that national standards and guidelines are needed and are working cooperatively to develop the standards and guidelines.

Relevant scientific literature, current practice and mainstream community expectations are used to support an evidence-based approach to developing the *Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Poultry*. The combined input and expertise of governments, peak livestock industry bodies and welfare

organisations have all been integral in the drafting of the document.

The Australian state and territory governments are responsible for the regulation of animal welfare in Australia. Under the Federal Constitution, States and Territories have the primary jurisdiction for animal welfare within Australia.

The animal welfare system in Australia aims to ensure all animals receive an acceptable level of care and treatment including adequate housing or habitat, handling, sanitation, nutrition, water, veterinary care, and protection from extreme weather conditions and other forms of natural disasters.

### **What's the difference between a standard and a guideline?**

Standards will be the legal requirements for livestock welfare and will use the word 'must'. The standards will provide the basis for developing and implementing consistent legislation and enforcement across Australia.

The main decision-making principles used for developing the standards are to ensure the standards are:

- Desirable for livestock welfare
- Feasible for industry and government to implement
- Important for the livestock-welfare regulatory framework
- Achieves the intended outcome for livestock welfare.

The guidelines are the recommended practices to achieve desirable livestock welfare outcomes. Guidelines will use the word 'should' and are designed to complement the standards. Non-compliance with one or more guidelines will not constitute an offence under law.

The development process for the standards and guidelines is transparent and inclusive. Relevant scientific literature, current practice and community expectations are utilised to support an evidence-based approach.

### **Who is involved in the development?**

In September 2012 the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines Land Transport of Livestock were developed by Animal Health Australia (AHA), followed by the Australian Animal Welfare Standards for Cattle and the Australian Animal Welfare Standards for Sheep in May 2014.

At Animal Welfare Committee (AWC) 5 on 7 March 2013, government members agreed to develop a plan for the conversion of the Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals: Domestic Poultry (4th Edition 2002) (the Code) into new Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Poultry.

At AWC 6 on 25 June 2013, members agreed to commence a full review of the code in recognition of significant advances in husbandry practices, technology, and in available science, since the current code was endorsed in 2002.

At AWC 8 on 10 December 2013, members agreed in principle that the scope of the review should include topics covered in the current MCOP for Domestic Poultry. Members agreed that the review should include processing and all species such as ducks, turkeys, geese, pheasants, guinea fowl, partridge, quail and pigeons. Each species is to have a small separate section, similar to the current code, dealing with individual requirements for these species.

In December 2013 the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy (AAWS) and AWC were terminated. A new government committee – Animal Welfare

Task Group (AWTG) was formed. AWTG reconfirmed the previous AWC decisions including a budget for the project in May 2015.

Under the previous AAWS, AHA developed standards and guidelines under a member agreed business plan. Government has taken the lead to review the development process. Members also agreed to the appointment of AHA to manage the delivery of the project. NSW Department of Primary Industries was appointed to lead the project in the final endorsed work plan.

An important part of the process will be the preparation of a Regulation Impact Statement (RIS) to assess the proposed standards and evaluate the potential costs to producers and others which may result from changes to existing requirements.

### **Stakeholder Advisory Group**

The Stakeholder Advisory Group provides advice to AWTG and the Contract Manager on the preliminary draft poultry standards and guidelines and should work to quickly identify areas of agreement and disagreement. Any matters of disagreement that cannot be readily resolved should be directed to AWTG and the Contract Manager for consideration. Consistent with the scope, as determined by AWTG, the Stakeholder Advisory Group will:

- suggest alterations to the preliminary draft poultry standards and guidelines, including the adding, removing and editing of poultry standards and guidelines
- identify unanimously supported poultry standards and guidelines
- for each supported standard, provide a short explanation of why it is best served as a standard rather than a guideline
- for each supported guideline, provide a short explanation of why it is best served as a guideline rather than a standard
- identify poultry standards and guidelines that are not unanimously supported, with reasons and with recommendations on how to progress these.

## Stakeholder Advisory Group

**Reports to:** Project Manager

**Directs:** Not applicable

### Membership / Qualifications

- Independent Chair (expert facilitator)
- Australian Government representative
- State and territory government representative/s (NSW, QLD, VIC, WA, SA, TAS)
- Whole-of-chain livestock industry members (Australian Chicken Meat Federation, Ducks, Turkeys, eggs, transporters, game species reps etc)
- Industry R&D corporations (Australian Eggs, AgriFutures Australia)
- Animal welfare organisations (RSPCA Australia, Animals Australia)
- Australian Veterinary Association
- Other parties seeking nomination
- Liaise with other organisations with a national focus as required.

*Multiple representations of participating organisations will not be considered. Nominations from other parties will be considered on a case by case basis by the AWTG.*

### Roles and Responsibilities

The Stakeholder Advisory Group will:

1. Provide technical and expert advice on suggested amendments to draft standards and guidelines that will best achieve the identified objectives.
2. Identify standards and guidelines that are unanimously agreed by the Stakeholder Advisory Group and those that are not.
3. Provide advice on whether particular aspects of animal welfare are best achieved as standards or as guidelines.
4. Provide advice on how to resolve outstanding issues.
5. Provide additional advice or input as requested by the Project Manager.

In undertaking these tasks:

6. The Stakeholder Advisory Group will provide advice that is consistent with the scope identified by AWTG in the timeframes set by the Project Manager.
7. Members will communicate and consult with their constituents/organisations and bring the agreed position of their respective constituents/organisations to deliberations of the Stakeholder Advisory Group.
8. The Chair will ensure that all members have equal opportunity to present their views and that those views are given due consideration by the Stakeholder Advisory Group.
9. The Stakeholder Advisory Group will provide its advice to AWTG by consensus. Where a consensus is not reached on a given matter, it will be set aside for consideration by AWTG, with recommendations for suggested handling.
10. The Stakeholder Advisory Group should make all reasonable efforts to achieve consensus, including negotiating compromises. The Chair will ensure that these negotiations do not delay progress on the range of issues being considered by the Stakeholder Advisory Group.

### Meetings

The Stakeholder Advisory Group will meet in person on at least two occasions during the development process (Stage 2 and Stage 4). Additional meetings will generally be held by teleconference (Stage 3, Stage 5 and 6 as required).

A meeting quorum comprises the Chair and not less than 75 per cent of the remaining Stakeholder Advisory Group Membership. In the event that the Chair is unable to participate, an Acting Chair will be nominated from the government representatives.

Secretariat support for meetings will be provided by the Project Manager.