

ANIMAL WELFARE TASK GROUP

ABC 730 – STATEMENT REGARDING DEVELOPMENT OF POULTRY GUIDELINES

DECEMBER 2017

The national Animal Welfare Task Group – consisting of representatives from all States, Territories and Commonwealth Governments – is overseeing the development of the ‘Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Poultry’.

On behalf of the Task Group, Animal Health Australia as the Project Manager, is currently seeking views about how well the draft Standards ensure the welfare of poultry and any regulatory impacts for poultry producers, government and the wider community.

The process to develop these standards and guidelines – as well as a firm commitment to consult as widely as possible to get the views of all stakeholders – was endorsed by the Animal Welfare Task Group at its meeting in March 2016.

The draft standards and guidelines were again considered at a Task Group meeting in October 2017 and all members endorsed their public release for full and open public consultation.

The release of the draft standards and guidelines is the culmination of two and half years of work looking at the latest science on animal welfare, extensive technical reviews on a range of husbandry issues and comprehensive engagement with industry groups, animal welfare groups, researchers and State, Territory and Commonwealth Governments.

Claims of undue influence from industry are simply untrue. The 125 standards and guidelines went out for consultation on 27 November and will be subject to scrutiny from all stakeholders and the public.

As Project Manager, Animal Health Australia has consulted widely and equitably with all stakeholder groups in the preparation of the draft Standards. The draft Standards do not necessarily represent the views of all parties that contributed to their development and this is clearly recognised in the document.

Industry was not represented on the group that was tasked with drafting the guidelines. This group included representatives from Animal Health Australia and the NSW Department of Primary Industries, as contract managers for this process.

The poultry industry representatives were however, alongside animal welfare groups, consulted widely and asked for advice on key poultry welfare issues to be addressed in the standards, technical issues and industry best practice.

This is an appropriate approach in assisting the drafting group understand operational issues that needed addressing to improve animal welfare outcomes.

A significant number of technical documents, from both industry and animal welfare groups, were considered as part of the development of the draft standards and guidelines.

Animal welfare groups were also engaged early in the process to ensure a balanced understanding of key welfare issues, including the latest science and community sentiment.

A Stakeholder Advisory Group was constituted to contribute technical and expert advice into the process as the draft standards and guidelines were further refined.

The Stakeholder Advisory Group comprises representatives of the poultry industries, State, Territory and Commonwealth governments, RSPCA Australia, Animals Australia, the Australian Veterinary Association and an animal welfare scientist.

All of this work has led us to the current point in the process – releasing a draft set of Standards and Guidelines for genuine consultation with the community - and encouraging everyone to have their say.

We are committed to listening to all views and receiving input from everyone.

The public consultation period has been extended from 60 to 90 days to allow plenty of time for reflection and response. We are not shying away from the difficult issues - including the release of Victoria's independent Farmed Bird Welfare Science Review.

At the end of the consultation period, all submissions to the draft Standards will be reviewed by an independent consultant before amendments are considered and eventually finalised by the Animal Welfare Task Group.

This will only happen once further advice is sought from animal welfare groups and experts, industry, and government through the Stakeholder Advisory Group.

The final package will be considered by agriculture Ministers next year.

It will then be up to individual States and Territories to implement these recommended national Standards by the end of 2018.

The alternative to all of this work is doing nothing - and we aren't prepared to do this.

All jurisdictions have made a commitment to regulate improved standards through this process, setting minimum standards for the care of animals in our production systems.

The development of the draft poultry standards and guidelines follows successful collaboration between government, industry and animal welfare groups, through the development of various animal welfare standards and guidelines in 2016, including for cattle and sheep industries.

Will Zacharin
Chair, Animal Welfare Task Group