

24 January 2018

Mike Ryan

Response to proposed Draft Bill

Before giving you my response I feel that giving the Committee an understanding of my background in poultry may assist in the readying of this document.

I have been in Show Poultry for over 30 years with much of that time devoted to the breeding and showing of Dark Eyed Ginger OEG bantams.

I was also a member of the VPFA and was their adviser of poultry to Councils and Shire in the state of Victoria some years back.

This role came about due to the decline of show poultry breeders and numbers of birds shown at shows across the state. Local governments had introduced a standard local law excluding the keeping of poultry over 5 hens (this was the general rule of thumb). There had been No public consultation and Councils/Shires made these decisions based on their perceived public's preference.

No forethought of the long-term ramification was considered. Many breeders of rare breeds simply "got rid" of their birds once council knocked on their door. Many members of show poultry gave up and got out of keeping fowl. Presentations were made to a range of Councils of the guidelines needed to keep poultry (I did not find one council/shire that had any knowledge of how to keep poultry). Suggestions were made that local laws could include the words "except without a permit" – they could keep a standard local law to cover a backyarder but could offer a bona fide show person a permit to keep a line of birds.

What occurred across Victoria and other states was a complete disregard for the show poultry person. They were seen as non-important and the traditions, culture values and showmanship were of no consequence in the decision making.

The decisions that you make will it take into consideration 100's of years of culture, lifestyle and a way of life. Or will you overlook the needs of us the little guy in this big picture?

Review of the Draft

I have read through the draft and at every level it would refer to a commercial practice or enterprise and could not include a show poultry person. This becomes clear in many areas – lighting, heat, cages, dubbing, toe marking etc.

Our structures are not commercial structures – we have small incubators and brooders for 20-30 birds – cages are built and designed according to the breeds sizes and needs.

There are some statements within the document that make it extremely clear that little knowledge or research had gone into it.

Dubbing:

If you dub a bird at day old will the comb grow back?

The comb hasn't begun to grow!!

Experienced hands and surgical scissors provide little discomfort to a young cockerel.

Toe Marking:

If this is done too early in the life of the chicken the mark can grow over and the lineage of the bird is lost.

Without disrespect it must be pointed out that the Draft clearly does not cover show poultry appropriately. The major portion of knowledge provided to the Draft has come from the imputer's commercial knowledge. A added section for show poultry may be useful.

The Draft has the very real prospect to damage show poultry at a level it will not recover from. I previously mentioned the damage local government did – it has taken the show breeders approximately 20 years to gain stability (of a sort) from that decision. Many breeders of show poultry are expressing great concern that their life's work will be disregarded if a Bill comes about through this Draft.

In my opinion (for its worth) the Draft needs to be serious with its inclusion of show poultry breeders or clearly exclude us from the Draft. If we are to be included then far more expertise's needs to be drawn upon to not just make it workable but take all of the factors into consideration – history, culture, lifestyle, future generations.....

Some years back the RSPCA put forward a document regarding dubbing of fowl. They threatened to act under a section of the Cruelty to Animals Act. I read the section of the Act that they stated and there was Nothing remotely to cover their demand. I believe you can only give advice, layout guidelines, pass Bills etc IF you have personal knowledge of what is put forward. We are all aware of government bodies etc that have put forward Bills/Laws that were ill-informed and the ramification were detrimental.

I urge the Committee to be most considerate of all aspects of people(s) keeping poultry in any document you put forward. Also be aware that if a document put forward is not encouraging and supporting of breeders you may be causing its demise. To continue to gain stability in the difficult circumstances that councils/shires have placed the poultry breeder/hobbyist, we will need every support you can provide. Therefore I encourage the Committee to look at your role as productive and supportive and the law as only a means to that end.

Yours Sincerely
Mike Ryan