

Errol HETHERINGTON



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15/02/2018

To Whom It Concerns,

I am writing to you in regards to the proposed Australian Animal Welfare Standards & Guidelines for poultry.

As a breeder and exhibitor of Exhibition Show Fowl of more than 50 years I am writing to you to put in a protest against certain aspects of this document.

I have bred and exhibited game fowl successfully over 50 years and in all that time have never lost a bird to death in my practices which include dubbing and toe marking.

In regards to the dubbing of game fowl I have found this practice to be helpful to a fowl as it takes away the weight of comb, wattles and lobes from the head of the fowl. Also having the lobes, wattles and comb removed benefits the birds in cold conditions by preventing frostbite and by preventing sunburn in hot conditions. This procedure does not appear to harm the fowl in anyway and once released from being dubbed the birds crow and stand proud.

I dub my birds at about 24 weeks of age. At this age the birds are grown to full size and once dubbed the combs will not regrow. Dubbing too early can cause the problem of the comb growing out and birds will need to be redubbed.

Toe marking is a practice which I have done as a means to keep breeding records for my flock. Records are kept of these markings for future references when breeding. Once young ones are toe marked they can all run together. This is done by making a small snip



or small punch to the web/s between the toe/s. this practice does not appear to be detrimental to the bird in any way.

There is no way I would do anything that is detrimental to my fowl's upbringing. If my practices were damaging in any way I would not be having the success I have in the showing arena as I currently do.

If there was any pain relief readily available I would have no hesitation in using it when performing the dubbing of my game fowl.

In the event that these practices are made illegal, I am sure the showing of game fowl will collapse and this will affect poultry clubs and agricultural societies across the country. At club shows 50% plus of the fowl's shown are game fowl. The collapse of showing game fowl would impact on a lot of businesses such as feed merchants, farmers and vets. As well as companies that make vaccines, wormers and sprays including the equipment required to administer them. Others that may suffer would be motels and service stations when competitors travel distance to show their fowl.

In closing I would like to see the practice of dubbing at four to six months of age and toe marking be allowed for the breeders of exhibiting game fowl, so these breeds can be bred and maintained into the future at the high standards at which they are today.

The welfare of my fowl is always my number one concern.

Regards,



Errol HETHERINGTON
Exhibition Fowl Breeder and Exhibitor

