

ATTITUDINAL RESEARCH

Evidence regarding community attitudes to animal cruelty in Australia

Greyhounds are raised by the industry very much as farmed animals. They are whelped, culled and used, in this case for racing.

Attitudes to farmed animals are addressed in detail in Dr Jennifer Ford, **Advance Australian animal welfare: The urgent need to re-establish national frameworks**, World Animal Protection, February 2016, p11 - www.pc.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/206486/subdr137-agriculture-attachment.pdf

Evidence indicates that farming practices are failing to meet public expectations of welfare standards¹⁸ and are increasingly scrutinised by consumers, investors and other stakeholders, nationally and internationally. Sociological and consumer research shows that over the past 40 to 50 years public attitudes to animals have been shifting from a traditional utilitarian approach (emphasising productivity and instrumental worth of animals) to one reflecting compassion and empathy.¹⁹

This attitude shift is driving greater public concern for animal welfare, causing a growing gap between current livestock production methods and consumer expectations for animal care.²⁰

This is evident in the Australian community, where expectations have grown beyond mere expectation of avoiding cruelty in farming practices.²¹

A research study, commissioned by Voiceless²² and surveying just over 1,000 Australian adults found that 90% regarded the welfare of farm animals as important, and 60% agreed that farm animals deserve the same level of protection as companion animals.

This study also found strong support for prohibiting the use of battery cages for egg-laying hens (67%) and prohibiting the use of sow stalls for pregnant pigs (57%). Another national study revealed that 52% of Australians believe that modern farming methods relating to the production of eggs, milk, and meat, are cruel.²³

19 - J. Goodfellow, M. Tensen & L. Bradshaw. 'The Future of Animal Welfare Policy and its Implications for Australian Livestock Industries'. Farm Policy Journal, vol. 11, no. 1, 2014.

20 - Humane Research Council, Animal Tracker Australia: Baseline Survey Results June 2014, funded by Voiceless; *ibid.*

21 - Vanhonacker, W. Verbeke, E. Poucke, F. Tuytens, 'Do Citizens and Farmers Interpret the Concept of Farm Animal Welfare Differently?', vol. 116 Livestock Science, 2008.21 Australian Farm Institute, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

22 Humane Research Council, *loc. c*

Examples of the trend to setting higher standards in animal welfare driven by business responding to consumer demand

In response to consumer demand, Coles supermarkets announced that their home-brand eggs would be cage free from 2013, and that its pork products would be sow stall free by 2014. Woolworths has also announced the removal of all cage eggs from its supermarkets, by 2018.

1. the RSPCA's Approved Farming Scheme is Australia's leading independent accreditation scheme focused on animal welfare - rspcaapproved.org.au/about
2. Coles and Woolworths meeting BFAW standards* - C:\Users\Dennis\Downloads\bbfaw.com\about-us\bbfaw.com/media/1793/bbfaw_report_2019-v2.pdf

“The global landscape of farm animal welfare is changing dramatically and at a faster pace than in previous years. A big part of this is due to growing consumer interest in how their food is produced, driving demand for humanely farmed products. But behind the scenes, business investors are also playing an important role by encouraging progressive companies to view farm animal welfare as both a risk and an opportunity.

While many Australians may not have heard of the Business Benchmark on Farm Animal Welfare (BBFAW), it is on the radar for many investors and achieving a high rating, an aspiration for many well-known brands.”

* The Business Benchmark on Farm Animal Welfare (BBFAW) is the leading global measure of farm animal welfare management, policy commitment, performance and disclosure in food companies. It enables investors, companies, NGOs and other stakeholders to understand corporate practice and performance on farm animal welfare, and it drives – directly and through the efforts of others – corporate improvements in the welfare of animals reared for food.

Examples of how the Australian Government Is failing to perform regarding animal welfare

- The Commonwealth Government took no action on a major report by the Australian Productivity Commission that recommended a national and cohesive approach was needed on animal welfare - *Regulation of Australian Agriculture: Productivity Commission Inquiry Report, 15th November 2016*, - www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/agriculture/report

The report recommended that, to facilitate greater rigour in the process for developing national farm animal welfare standards, the Australian government should take responsibility for ensuring that scientific principles guided the development of standards.

In order to do that, the commission said that a stand-alone statutory organisation called the Australian Commission for Animal Welfare should be established. The paper also recommended that, by the end of 2017, state and territory government should review the way in which their farm animal welfare regulations were

monitored and enforced and make necessary changes so there was a separation between agriculture policy matters and farm animal welfare monitoring and enforcement functions, a transparent process for publicly reporting on monitoring and enforcement functions, and adequate resourcing.

The Commission said that the Australian Government should appoint an independent expert or committee to publicly inquire and report, by the end of 2017, on the efficiency and effectiveness of the livestock export regulatory scheme.

The Australian Government released its response to the report in 2019. The Australian Government 'noted' the recommendations for the creation of an Australian Commission for Animal Welfare and for state and territory governments to review and make changes by the end of 2017 to the monitoring and enforcement of farm animal welfare regulations. 'Noting' means that no action is taken.

- Australia Ranks 44th Out of 50 Countries in a New Farm Animal Cruelty Index, SYDNEY, Nov. 21, 2017 /PRNewswire-AsiaNet - www.medianet.com.au/releases/148684/

Fifty countries have been evaluated, accounting for almost 80% of the world's farm animal production. The new index complements the World Animal Protection Index (API) (<http://api.worldanimalprotection.org/>) published in 2014 (<http://api.worldanimalprotection.org/>).

While the API ranks the quality of animal welfare legislation across countries, the VACI focuses specifically on the welfare of farm animals. As a result, Australia now ranks 44th out of fifty countries compared to a 10th ranking in the API.

- The Voiceless Animal Cruelty Index (VACI), a new global interactive education resource, tracks the animal welfare performance of fifty countries -- selected among the largest producers of farm animal products in the world. It takes account of the combined impacts of production, consumption, and regulatory factors (<https://vaci.voiceless.org.au/>).
- A major study of public attitudes about farm animal welfare suggests that, while a majority of the public think Australian farmers do a good job, consumer attitudes are shifting and Australian agriculture has work to do to ensure its commitment to high animal welfare standards is understood. In fact, the study shows that many consumers are now listening to the views of animal welfare groups in the absence of national government leadership.

The report – *Australia's Shifting Mindset on Farm Animal Welfare* – was commissioned by the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources to identify public expectations of farm animal welfare and to help the department understand whether current regulations are perceived to be sufficient.

<https://spaces.hightail.com/space/FTB2E2os98/files/fi-5d845482-4948-4f86-8be4-ea8aaadf20a5/fv-dad055aa-1b5c-42f7-90b6->

Academic analysis and research

- Taylor, N.; Signal, T.D. Lock em up and Throw Away the Key? Community Opinions Regarding Current Animal Abuse Penalties. **Aust. Anim. Prot. Law J.** 2009, 3, 33–52.
- Bennett, R.M.; Blaney, R.J.P. Estimating the Benefits of Farm Animal Welfare Legislation using the Contingent Valuation Method. **Agric. Econ.** 2003, 29, 85–98.
- Siobhan O'Sullivan, Research Fellow, School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Melbourne – “Australia increasingly uncomfortable with animal cruelty”, September 20, 2011, **The Conversation** - theconversation.com/australia-increasingly-uncomfortable-with-animal-cruelty-3439
- Coleman, Grahame, 2018/04/11, “Public animal welfare discussions and outlooks in Australia”, **Animal Frontiers Journal**.
 - Although most countries use animals as companions, for production and for sport and entertainment, the scale and variety of animals in Australia is unparalleled. • Community attitudes to livestock animal welfare can impact on how Governments either react to publicized "animal welfare events" or regulate management practices in industry. • There has been a trend for community behaviours that can impact on the livestock industries to become more prevalent over time. • The livestock industries increasingly see that changing community values need to be addressed in a proactive way in order not just to maintain markets, but also to protect license to farm.
- Alexandra Whittaker, Senior Lecturer in Animal Welfare and Law, University of Adelaide and Rochelle Morton, University of Adelaide, “Penalties for animal cruelty double in SA, but is this enough to stop animal abuse?”, **The Conversation**, theconversation.com/penalties-for-animal-cruelty-double-in-sa-but-is-this-enough-to-stop-animal-abuse-108021
- Gillian Hewitson , Lecturer, Department of Political Economy, University of Sydney, “Will consumer horror undo the meat industry?”, February 14, 2012, **The Conversation**, theconversation.com/will-consumer-horror-undo-the-meat-industry-5323