



AMPC

AUSTRALIAN MEAT PROCESSOR CORPORATION

THE NATIONAL ANIMAL WELFARE RD&E STRATEGY

A WELL-DEFINED RESEARCH FOCUS TO DELIVER REAL IMPROVEMENTS IN ANIMAL WELFARE

AMPC is a founder member of the National Primary Industries Animal Welfare Research, Development and Extension (RD&E) Strategy, is a component of the National Primary Industries RD&E Framework, an initiative of the Primary Industries Ministerial Council (PIMC).

The purpose of the Strategy is to develop national arrangements to deliver strong collaboration amongst existing RD&E provider groups, and effective partnerships between investors and providers.

The Strategy is directed by the Animal Welfare RD&E Committee, comprising livestock industry RDC's, major RD&E providers and Government.

The Strategy will deliver animal welfare research, development and extension programs in the primary industries sector which are

- Nationally Significant;
- High Priority;
- Cross-sectoral in application.

and which will require a high degree of collaboration in research and funding.

An Audit of farm animal welfare RD&E capability, infrastructure and investment was conducted during 2009/10. The Audit identified that there are approximately 42.5 Full Time Equivalents dedicated to farm animal welfare RD&E in Australia, representing an investment of approximately \$14.279 million per annum by governments, industry and universities.

The audit identified the need to retain and develop Australia's capacity in animal welfare research and to ensure that research funding is used in a cost-effective manner.

PRIORITIES FOR RESEARCH

Seven strategic RD&E themes have been identified.

- Animal welfare assessment;
- Pain assessment and management;
- Management, housing and husbandry;
- Transport, euthanasia and slaughter;
- Public attitudes, social science and community;
- Education, training and extension;
- Policy and market access.

STRENGTHENING LINKAGES

A key component of the Strategy involves the formation of both formal and informal collaborative arrangements amongst RD&E providers and to strengthen linkages between major research providers and research funders.

This is assisted by the provision of an annual National Forum where Australian providers and funders of animal welfare RD&E, together with representatives from State Governments and New Zealand research organisations, join in a facilitated discussion to identify RD&E priorities, to share scientific knowledge and to identify and recommend solutions to capability, resource and other issues relevant to the implementation of the Strategy.

COMMISSIONED PROJECTS

The Strategy has entered its implementation phase and has commissioned two projects which will be delivered by the end of 2012.

A. "Identify and Integrate Measures of Animal Welfare that Meet the Needs of Animals and Society"

There are three prominent concepts of animal welfare in the literature: the welfare of animals is judged on the basis of:

1. How well the animal is performing from a biological functioning perspective;
2. Affective states, such as suffering, pain and other feelings or emotions; and
3. The expression of normal or "natural" behaviours.

The so-called "five freedoms", that is freedom from hunger and thirst, from discomfort, from pain, injury and disease, to express normal behaviour, and from fear and distress include aspects of all three of the animal welfare concepts described above. While most would accept that these freedoms are necessary to avoid a lack of suffering, in terms of a consensus on animal welfare assessment, there has been little attempt to define the levels of freedom that are desirable together with the adverse consequences of not providing such freedoms.





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BENEFITS TO INDUSTRY

New generic and industry specific information on current trends in public attitudes to and knowledge of welfare issues in livestock farming will permit the industries to:

- Identify trends in public concerns that require changes to industry practices;
- Identify trends in public concerns that can be used for marketing purposes;
- Identify trends in public concerns that can be used to direct animal welfare research;
- Identify areas where the public is misinformed and therefore what education is required. This will enable industry to improve public confidence and trust in farming.

As these projects develop, we will keep you informed of their outcomes and applicability to our industry.

This project, led by Drewe Fergusson (CSIRO), with collaborative input from Paul Hemsworth (Animal Welfare Science Centre) and Teresa Collins (Murdoch University), will:

1. Review the scientific literature on welfare measures to identify those that are the best candidates to integrate into a uniform index to assess the welfare status of livestock;
2. Examine novel methods for integrating these measures into a welfare index.

The review will include recommendations of the most robust and credible welfare measures and assessment systems across or within species and identify knowledge gaps where further research and development is required.

Benefits to industry

The livestock industries will be more informed about contemporary and future welfare assessment measures and methodologies and how these can be integrated into field-based welfare indices. This in turn, will guide strategic direction within each industry regarding the development and implementation of welfare assessment and assurance systems.

B. “Develop a public attitude monitoring scheme to inform animal welfare policy development”

Traditional market research conducted in Australia is conducted to gain an understanding of consumer behaviour in relation to purchasing practices or intent.

This proposed project will give stakeholders a new insight as it will also survey community or citizen behaviour.

The point of difference is critical because animal welfare does not rate highly in influencing purchasing behaviour, in fact, humane treatment of animals ranks near the middle of issues that are considered to be important in determining food purchases.

However, attitudes to animal welfare are good predictors of the public’s behaviour in contacting politicians, retailers and other members of the community.

Such behaviour can and does have a considerable influence on how Governments either react to publicised “animal welfare events” or regulate contentious management practices in industry.

This project, led by Grahame Coleman (Animal Welfare Science Centre) with collaborative input from Dominique Blache (University of Western Australia) and Clive Phillips (University of Queensland), utilising a telephone questionnaire, will provide both generic and industry specific information on current trends in public attitudes to and knowledge of welfare issues in livestock farming.

It is envisaged that the questionnaire will be repeated every 2-3 years to provide “snap-shots” of public attitudes to ascertain developing trends in attitudes to, and knowledge of, welfare issues in the livestock chain.

- National Animal Welfare RD&E Strategy Members**
- Australian Egg Corporation Ltd
 - Australian Meat Processors Corporation
 - Australian Pork Limited
 - Australian Wool Innovation
 - Dairy Australia
 - Meat and Livestock Australia
 - Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation Chicken Meat
 - Animal Welfare Science Centre
 - CSIRO
 - Murdoch University
 - University of Queensland
 - University of Western Australia
 - Australian Animal Welfare Strategy
 - Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
 - New South Wales Department of Primary Industries
 - Queensland Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation
 - Victorian Department of Primary Industries

