

Poultry Standards and Guidelines Q&A

Poultry Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines Questions and Answers

January 2016

1. What are poultry standards and guidelines and why do we need them?

For the past 35 years, the welfare of livestock in Australia has been supported by a series of Model Codes of Practice for the Welfare of Animals. Community values and expectations have changed, and our international trading partners have placed greater emphasis on livestock welfare, so the usefulness and relevance of these Codes has been called into question, as has the process by which these Codes have been revised and developed. A review of the Model Codes of Practice (MCOP) in 2005 recommended they be converted into Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines.

One of the key objectives was to facilitate consistency of legislation across states and territories for improved and sustainable animal welfare outcomes. Government and industry have agreed that national standards and guidelines are needed and are working cooperatively to develop the standards and guidelines. These standards and guidelines will replace the Current Model Code of Practice (MCOP) *Model Codes of Practice for the Welfare of Animals: Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals: Domestic Poultry, Fourth Edition, Primary Industries Report Series 83*

At AWC 6 on 25 June 2013, members agreed to commence a full review of the code in recognition of significant advances in husbandry practices, technology, and in available science, since the current code was endorsed in 2002.

The standards will provide a basis for developing and implementing consistent legislation and enforcement across Australia, and provide guidance for all people responsible for poultry. They will aim to reflect contemporary scientific knowledge, provide competent animal husbandry advice, meet mainstream community expectations, and that can be maintained and enforced in a consistent, cost-effective manner.

The rationale is to achieve a measurable increase in best practice guidelines and industry verification systems and tools for animal welfare to support market access and to ensure that consistent and harmonised animal welfare arrangements across jurisdictions deliver consistent outcomes. The development process will allow industry to examine poultry welfare issues and determine a suitable industry position that meets community expectations.

The Australian state and territory governments are responsible for the regulation of animal welfare in Australia. Under the Federal Constitution, States and Territories have the primary jurisdiction for animal welfare within Australia.

Australian producers have always been aware of their responsibilities for livestock welfare. However, increasing awareness among consumers is placing significant pressure on our livestock industries to demonstrate and enhance animal welfare.

The animal welfare system in Australia aims to ensure all animals receive a level of care and treatment acceptable to mainstream community expectations and will include adequate housing or habitat, handling, sanitation, nutrition, water, veterinary care, and protection from extreme weather conditions and other forms of natural disasters.

2. What's the difference between a standard and a guideline?

Standards will be the legal requirements for livestock welfare and will use the word 'must'. The standards will provide the basis for developing and implementing consistent legislation and enforcement across Australia.

The main decision-making principles used for developing the standards are to ensure the standards are:

- Desirable for livestock welfare
- Feasible for industry and government to implement
- Important for the livestock-welfare regulatory framework
- Achieves the intended outcome for livestock welfare.

The guidelines are the recommended practices to achieve desirable livestock welfare outcomes. Guidelines will use the word 'should' and are designed to complement the standards. Non-compliance with one or more guidelines will not constitute an offence under law.

The development process for the standards and guidelines is transparent and inclusive. Relevant scientific literature, current practice and community expectations are utilised to support an evidence-based approach.

3. Background on the development

In September 2012 the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines Land Transport of Livestock were developed by AHA, followed by the Australian Animal Welfare Standards for Cattle and the Australian Animal Welfare Standards for Sheep in May 2014.



At Animal Welfare Committee (AWC) 5 on 7 March 2013, government members agreed to develop a plan for the conversion of the Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals: Domestic Poultry (4th Edition 2002) (the Code) into new Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Poultry.

At AWC 6 on 25 June 2013, members agreed to commence a full review of the code in recognition of significant advances in husbandry practices, technology, and in available science, since the current code was endorsed in 2002.

At AWC 8 on 10 December 2013, members agreed in principle that the scope of the review should include topics covered in the current MCOP for Domestic Poultry. Members agreed that the review should include processing and all species such as ducks, turkeys, geese, pheasants, guinea fowl, partridge, quail and pigeons. Each species is to have a small separate section, similar to the current code, dealing with individual requirements for these species.

In December 2013 the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy (AAWS) and AWC were terminated. A new government committee – Animal Welfare Task Group (AWTG) was formed. AWTG reconfirmed the previous AWC decisions including a budget for the project in May 2015.

Under the previous AAWS, AHA developed standards and guidelines under a member agreed business plan. Government has taken the lead to review the development process. Members also agreed to the appointment of AHA to manage the delivery of the project. NSW DPI was appointed to lead the project in the final endorsed work plan.

The AHA business plan incorporates the AWTG plan and provides further detail on essential elements for members and other stakeholders.

An important part of the process will be the preparation of a Regulation Impact Statement (RIS) to assess the proposed standards and evaluate the potential costs to producers and others which may result from changes to existing requirements.

4. Stakeholder Advisory Group

The Stakeholder Advisory Group SAG1 (F2F) provides advice to AWTG and the Contract Manager on the preliminary draft poultry standards and guidelines and should work to quickly identify areas of agreement and disagreement. Any matters of disagreement that cannot be readily resolved should be directed to AWTG and the Contract Manager for consideration. Consistent with the scope, as determined by AWTG, the Stakeholder Advisory Group will:

- suggest alterations to the preliminary draft poultry standards and guidelines, including the adding, removing and editing of poultry standards and guidelines
- identify unanimously supported poultry standards and guidelines

- for each supported standard, provide a short explanation of why it is best served as a standard rather than a guideline
- for each supported guideline, provide a short explanation of why it is best served as a guideline rather than a standard
- identify poultry standards and guidelines that are not unanimously supported, with reasons and with recommendations on how to progress these.

Stakeholder Advisory Group

Reports to: Project Manager

Directs: Not applicable

Membership / Qualifications

- Independent Chair (expert facilitator)
- Australian Government representative
- State and territory government representative/s (NSW, QLD, VIC, WA, SA, TAS)
- Whole-of-chain livestock industry members (ACMF, Ducks, Turkeys, eggs, transporters, game species reps etc.)
- Industry R&D corporations (AECL, RIRDC)
- Animal welfare organisations (RSPCA Australia, Animals Australia)
- Australian Veterinary Association
- Other parties seeking nomination
- Liaise with other organisations with a national focus as required.

Multiple representations of participating organisations will not be considered. Nominations from other parties will be considered on a case by case basis by the Animal Welfare Task Group (AWTG).

Roles and Responsibilities

The Stakeholder Advisory Group will:

1. Provide technical and expert advice on suggested amendments to draft standards and guidelines that will best achieve the identified objectives.
2. Identify standards and guidelines that are unanimously agreed by the Stakeholder Advisory Group and those that are not.
3. Provide advice on whether particular aspects of animal welfare are best achieved as standards or as guidelines.
4. Provide advice on how to resolve outstanding issues.
5. Provide additional advice or input as requested by the Project Manager.

In undertaking these tasks:

6. The Stakeholder Advisory Group will provide advice that is consistent with the scope identified by AWTG in the timeframes set by the Project Manager.
7. Members must communicate and consult with their constituents/organisations and bring the agreed position of their respective constituents/organisations to deliberations of the Stakeholder Advisory Group (keeping in mind the guidelines under which the SAG is required to operate).
8. The Chair will ensure that all members have equal opportunity to present their views and that those views are given due consideration by the Stakeholder Advisory Group.
9. The Stakeholder Advisory Group will provide its advice to AWTG by consensus. Where a consensus is not reached on a given matter, it will be set aside for consideration by AWTG, with recommendations for suggested handling.
10. The Stakeholder Advisory Group should make all reasonable efforts to achieve consensus, including negotiating compromises. The Chair will ensure that these negotiations do not delay progress on the range of issues being considered by the Stakeholder Advisory Group.

Meetings

The Stakeholder Advisory Group will meet in person on at least two occasions during the development process. Additional meetings will generally be held by teleconference as required.

A meeting quorum comprises the Chair and not less than 75 per cent of the remaining Stakeholder Advisory Group Membership. In the event that the Chair is unable to participate, an Acting Chair will be nominated from the government representatives.

Secretariat support for meetings will be provided by the Project Manager.