

Animal Welfare Task Group (AWTG) - Annual Report 2023



New Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Poultry

Highlights:

- On 13 July 2023, all agriculture ministers endorsed the new *Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Poultry*.
- Implementation of the standards and guidelines, including timeframes, will take place at the state and territory level having regard to the specific operational environments of each jurisdiction. Jurisdictions will report on progress annually.

Project Information:

- All states and territories are considering their own implementation plans. No legislative changes have been made.



Updating the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Land Transport of Livestock to improve the welfare of horses

Lead jurisdiction: Queensland

Timeframe: planned for finalisation in 2024

Highlights:

- A review of the existing *Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for the Land Transport of Livestock* for its suitability for horse welfare has been completed. The review commenced in February 2020.
- Final proposals took in account feedback from public consultation and further targeted engagement, including advice from all states and territories.
- In September 2023, the Decision Regulation Impact Statement (DRIS) was assessed as compliant with requirements by the Office of Impact Analysis.
- The final proposals and the DRIS will be progressed for endorsement by agriculture senior officials and then agriculture ministers in early 2024.



Development of new Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Livestock at Processing Facilities and Establishments

Lead jurisdiction: Queensland

Timeframe: planned for finalisation in 2024

Highlights:

- Drafting revisions continued throughout 2023. Extensive engagement with additional expert stakeholders, including several site visits, was used to inform the practicality of the proposals.
- A preliminary set of standards and guidelines have been circulated to the Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) and AWTG members. A substantial volume of submissions were received and are being carefully considered.
- A further targeted consultation phase with a wider stakeholder group will commence once feedback from the SAG has been assessed.
- Public consultation is planned for mid 2024.

Project Information:

- At the February 2020 Agricultural Ministers' Meeting (AMM), ministers agreed that Queensland would lead the development of new *Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Livestock at Processing Facilities and Establishments*.
- The standards and guidelines will replace the previous Model Code of Practice for Livestock at Processing Establishments which was finalised in 2001.
- This work is being informed by an independent scientific literature review published in 2022 and feedback from meetings of the SAG held throughout 2022. The SAG includes industry bodies, animal welfare groups, animal welfare scientists and consumer groups.

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Examination of regulations related to virtual fencing technology

Lead jurisdiction: Commonwealth

Timeframe: currently in progress, finalisation timeline to be determined

Highlights:

- An independent scientific literature review on animal welfare considerations for virtual fencing (VF) was released publicly in November 2023 on the AWTG webpage.
- An addendum which captures new, additional, and more detailed information on virtual fencing technology since the finalisation of the literature review has also been published but does not form part of the review.
- The subgroup of the AWTG that is undertaking this work reconvened in December 2023.

Project Information:

- In August 2021, the Agriculture Senior Officials' Committee (AGSOC) referred a national examination of regulatory barriers to VF technology, with a view to harmonising legislation across jurisdictions, to the AWTG for progression.
- A subgroup was convened, consisting of representatives from the Commonwealth, NSW, WA, Qld and Vic, to explore a harmonisation mechanism that ensures national consistency of animal welfare outcomes related to VF.



Improvements to the process for developing and reviewing Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines

Lead jurisdiction: Commonwealth

Timeframe: ongoing, finalisation timeline to be determined

Highlights:

- The subgroup of the AWTG that is undertaking this work met three times during 2023 and have developed a draft standards development framework and a stakeholder engagement approach.
- Initial engagement with key stakeholders on the staged approach to improvements is planned for early 2024.

Project Information:

- At the December 2022 AMM, ministers requested that AGSOC consider options to improve the process for developing nationally consistent animal welfare arrangements, to ensure clarity, harmonisation and timeliness.
- A subgroup of AWTG was convened, consisting of representatives from NSW, WA, Qld, Vic and the Commonwealth as secretariat, to explore options to be provided to agriculture senior officials.
- Ministers discussed options progressed by agriculture senior officials and noted a staged approach for improvement. They have tasked agriculture senior officials with continuing work, focusing on practical elements. This work is being progressed by the AWTG.



Additional areas of focus for 2024:

- Ongoing involvement in the renewal of the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy, a 2023 Federal Budget measure.