

**Submission
No 45**

**PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS AMENDMENT (VIRTUAL STOCK
FENCING) BILL 2024**

Organisation: Federated Farmers of New Zealand

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Legislative Assembly Committee on
Industry and Regional Development,
Parliament of New South Wales,
6 Macquarie Street,
Sydney



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Submission on:

The New South Wales Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment (Virtual Stock Fencing) Bill 2024

Federated Farmers of New Zealand welcomes the invitation to comment on your proposal to amend your animal welfare legislation to allow for the use of virtual stock fencing.

We are a membership organisation that represents rural and farming businesses throughout New Zealand. Our stance on animal welfare is that we advocate that any new animal welfare standards should reflect changes in scientific knowledge and mainstream public opinion while being practical, and affordable to implement.

New Zealand farmers have been early adopters of virtual fencing technology so are well placed to comment on it. While most of our knowledge has been gained on semi-intensive dairy farms, the next wave of early adopters in the extensive beef farming sector are reporting similar experiences.

In short, the technology is a tool that enables improvements in farming practise in three areas.

Animal welfare

- Animals adapt quickly and in a short period of time are responding so well to the auditory cues meaning the need for electric pulses drops off very rapidly after the training period.
- Animals in the system are calm and no longer associate people and vehicles with food allowing staff to walk among them.
- The next tier of wearable devices that allow the collection of health data using skin sensors (like smart watches) from animals have the potential to improve animal welfare with early detection of health problems.
- While we have had no reports of lasting negative effects on animals, we recommend that welfare codes include provisions to ensure no animal is subject to an excessive number of pulses and that animals that do not adapt to the system are removed to areas with conventional fencing.
- As each new generation of technology is introduced this kind of fault has been eliminated and there is no mechanism for it to be deliberately misused.

Production gains and efficiency

- The flexibility allowed by adjusting the area fed leads to better utilisation of feed with less wastage. This in turn often increases overall production from the same level of inputs like fertiliser.

- This increase in production efficiency has the potential to improve profitability and lessen the release of greenhouse gas emissions per unit of production.

Labour

- On dairy farms virtual fences improves the working life of staff by releasing them from the menial tasks of subdividing paddocks and following cows as they walk to milkings, this frees them up to do other tasks.
- It can also reduce on farm labour requirements (particularly on dairy farms) increasing farm profitability.

Environmental

- Virtual fencing provides an effective and cheap (compared to conventional fencing) way to exclude stock from sensitive areas like creeks, dams and valuable ecosystems.
- In this function it has the added advantage of being adjustable depending on the season, for example allowing animals to approach closer to waterways when conditions dry and excluding them when the area is more susceptible to damage.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to submit on your proposal, we are happy to be contacted to provide clarification on any of our points.

Kind regards,

Richard McIntyre

Federated Farmers of New Zealand National Board Member