

STANDING COMMITTEE ON STATE DEVELOPMENT
INQUIRY INTO ANIMAL WELFARE POLICY IN NEW SOUTH WALES

HEARING – 16 MARCH 2022

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS TO ANIMALS AUSTRALIA

1. **Currently, it is legal to farm ducks in NSW entirely without surface water – what changes to this Bill would you like to see to better protect these semi-aquatic animals?**

This is a significant issue for farmed ducks – as a minimum that should have access to water for immersion bathing as well as clean drinking sources. It is our strong view (based on the scientific evidence) that a duck without access to water for immersion bathing does not have a life “worth living” as a key behaviour is denied, and with proper management wet litter can be avoided.

Relevant to scientific information on this ‘need’, in 2017 the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources, Victoria, recognised the importance of the (still current) review of the Code of Practice for Poultry to be informed by current scientific knowledge, but the review process had failed to properly consider it. The Victorian Department therefore itself commissioned an independent review of the peer-reviewed published scientific literature. Relevant to farmed ducks and water provision, the literature review concluded:

D11. WELFARE CONSIDERATIONS: OVERVIEW

Access to a clean water source which allows full (or at least partial) immersion enables ducks to wet preen. Water is also important in hot climates to allow ducks to thermoregulate effectively. Ducks perform different behaviours in different types of water sources (e.g. showers and troughs), thus providing a range of sources is beneficial. A separate drinking source (e.g. nipple line) must be provided. It is also essential that the area surrounding water sources is adequately drained to avoid wet litter which can lead to foot health problems. A high standard of biosecurity is essential as ducks are susceptible to many infectious diseases which may be exacerbated in the presence of open water-sources.

Ref: [Farmed Bird Welfare Science Review](#) (October 2017) by Nicol, C.J., Bouwsema, J.*, Caplen, G., Davies, A.C., Hockenhull, J., Lambton, S.L., Lines, J.A.*, Mullan, S., Weeks, C.A.

2. **The Committee heard evidence that the pork industry has phased out sow stalls. Is this correct? Are sow stalls no longer used at all in NSW?**

Sow stalls are still legal and they are still being used on some pig farms. The current national Code of Practice (adopted in the States) allows pigs to be held in (gestation) stalls for up to 6 weeks of each (16 week) pregnancy. The ‘phase out’ is merely an industry policy and is **voluntary** (though assisted by some supermarket purchase policies). The industry has at various times itself indicated that the phase-out is well underway (estimating widespread take up). The Australian Pork Limited (APL) 2020/21 [Annual Report](#) also implies that sow stalls are now not used on 77% of pig farms (under the APIQ system). That most recent APL report also confirms APL now wish to translate the 2010 ‘voluntary commitment’ into a requirement under the national Standards (which would then be regulated). That review process (of the current Code of Practice) has been delayed.

Further, unfortunately sow stalls are still highly likely to be being used for a period of each sow’s

pregnancy on many intensive pig farms which claim 'sow stall free' status. The APL "Gestation Stall Free" definition as voted by APL Delegates in November 2010, states:

"Sows and gilts are kept in loose housing from at least five days after service until one (1) week before farrowing, where service refers to the last mating."

Under this definition sows will be in close confinement (either a stall or a farrowing crate) for up to 12 days of each of their pregnancies (usually 2 per year). This complicates any enforcement attempts also because it allows the sow stall infrastructure to be retained on a pig farm without a robust method to document the time each sow will spend in these stalls.

a. The use of farrowing crates and sow stalls in NSW is still legal – do you think these should be banned in the Bill, and if so, why?

Yes – sow stalls should be banned totally because they cause both mental and physical suffering, including long-term disablement and health issues. There is no doubt that housing sows in stalls results in poor welfare outcomes for the sow.

Stalls for sows in Australia only need be (legally) just large enough so the bars surround the pig, and as long as her head and tail do not touch either end at the same time, and that her body does not touch both sides of the stall at the same time. They are usually 2 metres long and 60cm wide for these large animals. Thus the confinement of sows in stalls imposes the maximum possible degree of confinement on a sow.

This severe confinement almost completely restricts the ability of a sow to express normal behaviour and is inconsistent with the "Five Freedoms". That long-term confinement also produces an increased incidence of aberrant behaviours including stereotypies (head waving, bar biting, sham chewing and chain pulling). Frustration can lead to unresolved aggression and unresponsiveness, and inactivity to weaker bones and muscles.

Confined sows are more likely to suffer foot injuries, lameness, and long-term pain from infected cuts and abrasions (from the cement flooring), weakened bones and muscles due to a lack of exercise, urinary tract infections and heart problems.

3. What is your opinion of the Ropersmate device used on calves in rodeo events? Do you think the Ropersmate device used in calf-roping should be included as a "prohibited item" in this Bill – if so, why?

Animals Australia and all other animal protection groups oppose all rodeo events as they cause stress and risk injury merely for entertainment. Calf roping (or 'Rope and Tie' as it is often referred to avoid community focus on calves) is particularly egregious because it involves young calves experiencing transport and a noisy, new environment and stressful treatment during their development. These calves are also more vulnerable to physical injury as their bodies are still developing and less robust; the chase, abrupt halting via the roping, and brutal throwing to the ground for the leg tie present a huge risk to them (stress/fear, bruising, bone breakage etc).

Any attempt to mitigate/reduce the (jerk) impact and insult on the calves in this unnecessary 'sport' will be inadequate and the event remains unethical. The Ropersmate device is not supported as it cannot address the mental anguish and [distress](#) caused by a young 'prey' animal being chased by a large horse and human and then being thrown to the ground to have its legs tied in a noisy and unfamiliar arena. It is also not clear how 'successful' the device even is at its claim to reduce the jerk impact through the pulley device. [Videos](#) of calf roping using the device are still traumatic to view and do not appear different to standard equipment. Only a ban on these outdated activities can address the welfare issues for calves – it is rodeos that must be listed in the Bill as a prohibited activity.