

## Question

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Good afternoon. We heard earlier today from a panel that New South Wales animal welfare laws are, perhaps not as animal friendly as some of the other animal welfare laws across Australia or internationally. The earlier panel put forward New Zealand, for example, as being a jurisdiction that has pretty good animal welfare legislation, from their perspective. Clearly, that was introduced because they have a concept of animal sentience and people are not going without food. What is your impression of what those impacts have been on the New Zealand farmers, and why are we concerned in New South Wales to tighten the regulations here?

## Response

A key objective of Australian Pork Limited's Strategic Plan 2020 - 2025 is to ensure that our industry is a leader in animal care, representing our producers focus on and commitment to high animal welfare outcomes. The Australian pork industry invests considerably each year to research new technologies and practices to improve pig welfare and provide valuable education and training to stock people throughout Australia. This research aims to inform industry practices and the standards and regulations that underpin them.

### Animal Welfare Regulation within the Australian Pork Industry

The regulated minimum science-based animal welfare requirements for pigs are defined in the Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals: Pigs (the Model Code). This document has been slated for review and replacement by the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines: Pigs (Pig S&Gs). The Australian pig industry audits the standards and guidelines within the Model Code through the pig industry's voluntary Quality Assurance Program, APIQ<sup>®</sup>. While the Model Code enshrines the minimum welfare standards many of our producers exceed the minimum standards of care for their pigs on a daily basis. APL values its relationships with government, RSPCA and the community and a collaborative approach to the development of regulation.

It is encouraging to see that New South Wales Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI) and the New South Wales Government have recognised the importance of the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines (S&Gs). APL supports this view, however, strongly believes the S&Gs process must be reviewed and refined to ensure the multiple frameworks currently in use are aligned into a single approach that provides a fair, equitable and consistent process for setting welfare standards. Any agreed future approach must be trusted and supported by industry, government and community to facilitate the development of future species-specific S&Gs.

Key to the S&G consultation process, industry, government and relevant animal welfare groups, such as the RSPCA, are represented during the development of national S&Gs to ensure balanced welfare outcomes. The S&Gs aim to harmonise the jurisdictional animal welfare legislation implemented across Australia, crucial for our national industry which operates across multiple state and territory borders.

## Ensuring Fair and Equitable Welfare Regulation

Domestically, APL holds concerns for the fairness, transparency and consistency of the various S&G processes currently in use. Of significant concern is the implementation of the independent panel to progress the Poultry S&Gs, a material shift from the previously agreed S&G process. Multiple industry stakeholders have indicated that the independent panel resulted in a lack of direct industry expertise on the panel and reduced consultation with the poultry industries more broadly. This break down in process has not only resulted in reduced industry trust and support of the S&G process, but more broadly, has resulted in significant delays which creates uncertainty for farmers.

Internationally, in New Zealand a similar situation has arisen due to the use of the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC) to develop recommendations to support the review of the Code of Welfare: Pigs 2018 (Pig Code). It should be noted that there is no pig industry representation or experience on NAWAC, and the New Zealand pork industry were not consulted during the initial review process.

There is significant ongoing concern from the New Zealand pork industry that any changes to the minimum standards around farrowing and mating systems will be set well beyond international standards or justifiable animal welfare science. Consultation on NAWAC's proposed recommendations and amendments to the Pig Code was expected to occur in late 2021 however has experienced significant delays. Consultation is now expected to occur in mid-May 2022.

In December 2021 the New Zealand Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) commissioned an economic analysis of all the proposed NAWAC recommendations impact on pig production. While this analysis is yet to be released publicly, initial feedback has indicated the following impacts may be incurred by NZ pig farmers should the NAWAC recommendations be implemented:

- significant capital costs will be incurred to retrofit piggeries
- substantial reductions to piggery profitability

There are grave concerns from the New Zealand pork industry that proposed changes to the Pig Code will be economically unfeasible, even with adequate transition periods (10years +), which could force many farmers to leave the industry.

As noted above, the economic analysis is not currently publicly available, however APL will be pleased to ensure the Standing Committee receives a copy once available. Additionally, recent scientific commentary of the NAWAC review has suggested that there was either insufficient or conflicting evidence to support some of the conclusions made by NAWAC in their recommendations and further research is needed to support claims made by NAWAC.

APL supported the review of the current *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979* to ensure it reflects the latest science and community expectations. However, APL considers it is important that any new changes do not create unintended negative animal welfare impacts or unnecessary regulatory burden for animal-based industries. This is best achieved through a collaborative approach between government, industry and the community. Additionally, to ensure good welfare outcomes, it is also essential that the new Act is supported by compliance and enforcement functions which are adequately resourced and delivered by appropriately skilled personnel with an understanding of the industry.