

**Submission
No 13**

**INQUIRY INTO PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS
AMENDMENT (RESTRICTIONS ON STOCK ANIMAL
PROCEDURES) BILL 2019**

Organisation: World Animal Protection

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WORLD ANIMAL PROTECTION AUSTRALIA

SUBMISSION to

The Upper House Committee Inquiry into the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (POCTA) Amendment (Restrictions on stock animals procedures) Bill 2019

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Introduction

World Animal Protection welcomes the invitation to provide input to the Inquiry into the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment (Restrictions on stock animals procedures) Bill. This is an important issue and one that we are very happy to see the Government consider.

World Animal Protection is a global organisation with more than 50 years' experience working to protect animals around the world. We work in four areas including working to protect animals in farming.

In this submission we will outline why we support the amendments as they are currently proposed. We will address the amendments relating to both anaesthesia and mulesing. These are both areas of farming in NSW that are in need of reform in order to be in line with recognised best practice for farm animal welfare.

Schedule 1 [1]: Proposed amendment for the Mules operation to be prohibited

World Animal Protection would support the amendment to *POCTA* which would see section 23B added to the legislation in order to prohibit mulesing on or after the 1st of January 2022. The Victorian Government recently amended their legislation to require mulesing to be performed only with pain relief.¹ Currently, NSW legislation not only permits mulesing, but it allows it to be performed without any pain relief. We would encourage the committee to take this opportunity to improve our states animal welfare laws by prohibiting this cruel and unnecessary practice.

Mulesing is a procedure that causes significant pain and distress to lambs. A scientific study reported in 2011, found that “ [the] surgical mulesing procedure results in a sustained behavioural and physiological response in lambs, including a reduction in maintenance behaviours and an increase in plasma cortisol concentrations.”² Although previous research had demonstrated the short-term pain and distress experienced by lambs during the mulesing procedure, this research team documented both short-term and longer-term impacts. In the short-term, they found that lambs who had been subject to mulesing were slower to begin feeding when given food, compared to lambs in the control group who had not experienced the procedure.³ Overall, they spent less time eating and less time lying down – the lambs who had received the procedure stood for extended periods with their heads down.⁴ The altered behavioural state of the lambs was taken as an indication of pain, in line with previous

¹ Prevention of Cruelty to Animals regulations 2019 (Vic).

² L.E. Edwards et al, 'Acute effects of mulesing and alternative procedures to mulesing on lamb behaviour', *Applied Animal Behaviour Science* 133 (2011) 169, 170.

³ *Ibid*, 172.

⁴ *Ibid*.



animal behavioural studies. These behavioural shifts were also observed over the next 2-15 days following the procedure.⁵ Scientists also recorded higher cortisol levels in lambs that had been mulesed in the first 7 days after the procedure.⁶ This is another indicator of stress and lower welfare.

Although the alternatives available may be more labour intensive, World Animal Protection would still encourage the committee to support the proposed banning of the Mules operation. Lambs are sentient animals that are capable of feeling pain and fear. They deserve to be treated in a way that recognises their sentience and ensures the highest possible welfare outcomes. Furthermore, we are aware that the Australian Sheep Industry had undertaken to phase out mulesing in 2010.⁷ It's clear that the industry recognised at the time that the practice was not in keeping with societal expectations or with the current science around animal welfare. It's disappointing that a complete phase out has not been achieved in the last decade and we would therefore urge the NSW government to support the proposed amendment to bring our animal protection legislation more in line with both the science and with public sentiment.

Schedule 1 [5]: Administration of analgesic or other appropriate pain relief

World Animal Protection would not support the proposed amendment to section 24 (1)(a) of *POCTA* which would require that a range of procedures including ear-tagging, branding, teeth and tail cutting, would need to be performed with the use of analgesic or another appropriate pain relief, unless this was part of a more extensive plan to formally phase out these painful procedures. Farm animals like pigs are sentient creatures and the performance of these procedures, even with pain relief, causes significant pain and distress to the animals. Research performed by World Animal Protection found that the classes of drugs available for use after these procedures may not always be available to those who need them and further, that they “are not always effective, especially for moderate to severe pain caused by castration.”⁸ The report went on to conclude that “avoiding painful procedures is clearly preferable. There is no convincing evidence that pain can be reduced to an acceptable level on a commercial scale with the drugs available for food producing animals worldwide. Providing only post-procedural pain relief contravenes scientific advice on pain management.”⁹

⁵ P.H. Hemsworth et al, 'Effects of mulesing and alternative procedures to mulesing on the behaviour and physiology of lambs', *Applied Animal Behaviour Science* 117 (2008) 20, 23.

⁶ *Ibid*, 24.

⁷ Joanne Sneddon and Bernard Rollin, 'Mulesing and animal ethics', *Journal of Agriculture & Environmental Ethics* 23 (2010) 371, 372.

⁸ World Animal Protection, *Sharing Success: The global business case for higher welfare for pigs raised for meat* (2019) page 7.

⁹ *Ibid*.



Furthermore, piglets and other farm animals are also given high doses of antibiotics during painful procedures and weaning to pre-empt infection or disease.¹⁰ Simply administering pain relief during these procedures would not address the reliance on antibiotic use to prevent infections arising from the procedures. “Routine and continuous use of drugs in farmed animals poses potential risks for animals, people, and the environment. Many of the bacteria commonly carried by animals can also cause disease in people. When regularly exposed to low doses of antibiotics, the bacteria that survive are better able to reproduce and spread. In September 2016, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly formally recognized the inappropriate use of antimicrobials in animals as a leading cause of rising antimicrobial resistance (AMR).”¹¹ The performance of routine and unnecessary procedures including teeth and tail cutting and ear notching lead to the administration of more antibiotics in farmed animals. This can be avoided by taking steps now to completely phase out the use of these procedures.

In addition to the scientific evidence supporting a phase out to the use of painful procedures, consumer polling also reveals that consumers are overwhelmingly opposed to the use of painful procedures on farm animals. World Animal Protection commissioned global research, conducted by Voodoo Research, with more than 9,000 people in 11 countries and five continents between October 2017 and March 2018. The aim was to better understand people’s pork consumption habits, their understanding of the conditions in which pigs are raised, and their attitudes to pigs and their welfare.

Key results include the following:

- More than two thirds in each market surveyed: Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Denmark, New Zealand, Thailand, UK, and US said they found imagery of intensive pig farming ‘upsetting, wrong or shocking’.
- In some markets, up to 86% of people were worried about antibiotics in pork production.
- More than 60% in each market said they would ‘probably’ or ‘definitely’ not buy pork from a supermarket that sourced from where piglets experience teeth grinding, cutting or tail docking and castrations, sometimes without pain relief’.
- 80% to 93% of people surveyed in each market believe ‘it is important that pigs are reared with higher welfare standards.’

Australia is falling behind other comparable countries when it comes to farm animal welfare. Looking to the European Union (EU) as an example, they have introduced laws that go beyond simply requiring anaesthetic, their legislation has now prohibited the routine use of these painful procedures.¹² A European study that was conducted before they prohibited the routine use of these procedures concluded that piglets that had not had their teeth clipped

¹⁰ Ibid, 4.

¹¹ World Animal Protection, *US Pork and the Superbug Crisis: How Higher welfare farming is better for pigs and people* (2019), page 3.

¹² RSPCA, ‘What are the Animal Welfare Issues with Piglet Husbandry Procedures?’, *RSPCA Knowledgebase* (accessed 16th July 2020), <<https://kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/what-are-the-animal-welfare-issues-with-piglet-husbandry-procedures/>>



and tails docked showed less pain related behaviour than those who had the procedures.¹³ Furthermore, the piglets who were not subject to the procedures had a lower mortality rate.¹⁴ Therefore, we encourage this Committee to look to the legislative examples offered by the EU to see how Australia could eventually phase out the use of these procedures entirely.

Conclusion

In conclusion, whilst World Animal Protection is supportive of the proposed amendment to ban mulesing, we do not believe the amendment around pain relief goes far enough. We would only support this amendment if it were part of a broader plan to phase out these procedures entirely. This would help to ensure that our animal welfare laws are better in line with the science and with community sentiment. Unfortunately, our laws leave us lagging behind other similar countries, so we ask the Government to take the opportunity presented by these amendments to bring Australia more in line with others around the world. It's crucial that our animal protection laws provide the best possible welfare outcomes for all farm animals.

Yours sincerely,

Ben Pearson
Head of Campaigns, World Animal Protection Australia

¹³ Beirendonck et al, 'Improving survival, growth rate and animal welfare in piglets by avoiding teeth shortening and tail docking?', *Journal of Veterinary Behaviour: Clinical Applications and Research* 7 (2012) 88, 93.

¹⁴ Ibid.