



# ***Australian Farm Animals***

## **A Toolkit to Guide Livestock Animal Welfare Contingency Planning**

An Initiative of the National Primary Industries Animal Welfare  
RD&E Strategy, Australia

### **Final Report**

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August 2015

*Outcomes from this project include.....*

To help livestock businesses help themselves and provide them with contingency planning tools to enable them to develop a single plan to encompass all risks and hazards to their business, with the emphasis on managing an on-farm animal welfare crisis situation, by;

developing a toolkit with relevant stakeholders, containing a suite of continuity/contingency planning modules for the protection of animal welfare, including advice on livestock husbandry, risk management plans, procedures to adopt during an animal welfare crisis, key contacts lists etc., that complements existing government and industry arrangements.

To also develop a coordinated awareness program that considers how best to engage with different types of livestock managers (i.e. the inexperienced, the unwilling and the unlucky) and develop communication and engagement plans accordingly.

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## **The Issues to Be Addressed** (As outlined in the TOR)

*The CRAW research identified that some livestock businesses have less capacity than others due to a range of factors including farmer age, isolation, absentee owners, resources of local government, veterinary assistance, mental illness and the level of support available through staff, family, neighbours and community support organisations and that animal welfare issues arise within three broad groups of livestock businesses. The coordinated promotion strategy should consider how best to engage with different types of livestock managers (i.e. the inexperienced, the unwilling and the unlucky, as well as providing an improved and more effective planning tool for the experienced and willing) and develop communication and engagement plans accordingly.*

## **Factors To Consider:** (As outlined in the TOR)

- *Animal welfare risk management planning templates with generic and industry-specific guidelines.*
- *Strategies for promotion by the livestock industries in particular via the levy funded service providers including recognition of the different types of producers as a basis to design communications and engagement plans.*
- *Incorporation of animal welfare crisis response processes into the relevant QA programs.*
- *Where possible integrate approaches with Beyond Blue and government health services.*
- *Involvement of local emergency services (Council, SES etc.) to provide assistance in animal welfare emergencies where possible.*

## **What Is Required** (As outlined in the TOR)

*Outcomes from this project will include*

1. *A business contingency planning toolkit to assist livestock businesses to develop a single plan encompassing all risks and hazards to their business, however with the emphasis on managing an on-farm animal welfare crisis situation. This will include:*
  - a. *Business continuity/contingency planning modules with a “toolkit” of material including advice on livestock husbandry, procedures to adopt during an animal welfare crisis, key contacts lists etc.*
  - b. *Animal welfare risk management planning templates with generic and industry-specific guidelines to recognise different operational procedures, standards and risks which will influence the relevance and effectiveness of the plan.*
  - c. *On-line access to the tool-kit for producers as well as the various stakeholders*
2. *An awareness campaign, (including associated educational material) involving the various livestock industry stakeholders to ensure a coordinated approach to animal welfare is achieved.*
3. *An approach that complements existing government and industry arrangements.*

# A Phased Approach

From the brief, we understand that the key elements of the project are the development of easily accessible and understood guidelines, templates and support material, to promote and enable individual production animal businesses to identify possible risks, especially in relation to animal welfare, and develop effective operational and contingency plans to reduce, mitigate and address the likelihood of welfare issues occurring on their property and includes the following stages:

1. planning procedure development
2. Initial overview draft development, stakeholder identification, contact and discussion.
3. Template and guidelines development, for risk assessment at farm level
4. Contingency, Communication, Implementation and Final Report

The initial phase of the project included the identification of and liaison with stakeholders, and assessed their views and available resources for the project. Most of the stakeholders contacted are supportive and provided constructive feedback. There needs to be more high level and broader stakeholder engagement for full industry ownership of the *Australian Farm Animals* project, and also for industry to supply communication, dissemination and promotional support.

During the project development, the focus has been on adding value and co-ordinating existing resources, especially with respect to communications and implementation. However we have the expertise to provide more comprehensive resource development if needed, to deliver further guidance and management of the promotional, communications and implementation programs.

## Stage 1: Stakeholder Contact

This stage involved collating the relevant material at state and federal level and developing an initial draft overview of the project. Appropriate stakeholders were identified and a representative sample contacted by phone and email, forwarded the draft project overview and feedback collated, from;

- RDCs, PICs, SFOs,
- Industry (production, service and provider bodies)
- Finance and insurance groups
- State and Federal Government departments
- SES and local council representative bodies
- Social support networks and organisations
- University and training institutions
- Animal welfare organisations
- Private consultants
- Other organisations

The draft overview was adjusted according to stakeholder feedback and reported in the Progress Report March 2016. Further stakeholder feedback has been sourced and acted on.

## **Stages 2: Template, Guideline & 3: Contingency Plan Development**

These stages have been combined, collating all the relevant material from industry Quality Assurance and regulatory/advisory programs, with feedback from stage 1, as well as identifying risk issues for each industry, to develop draft industry specific templates. These templates include links to technical information, current industry programs, standards and guidelines that assist the producer in completing the templates.

One column of the templates results in an outline of a specific *Crisis Contingency Management Plan* for that property.

Following feedback, the original generic front-end has been considered not necessary, being replaced by a one page introduction and outline of the toolkit ([Pages 1 & 2](#)). The industry specific template sections, are simple, user friendly, and take any previous stakeholder feedback into account.

## **Stage 4: Communication Plan and Final Project Report**

See below

## Stakeholder Feedback

Stakeholders from the following organisations were contacted (Appendix 1);

- Federal Government; Department of Agriculture and Water Resources
- State Government; DPIs
- Farmer Support Organisations (financial, business and health support)
- Animal Health Australia
- Australian Veterinarian Association
- Regional Development Corporations
- Industry Peak Bodies
- Industry Organisations
- Animal Welfare Organisations
- Universities (ethics, welfare, veterinary)
- Animal Ethics Committees
- Research Organisations
- Indigenous Animals Organisation (AMRRIC)
- Local Government Associations
- Private Consultants (monitoring & evaluation, pharmaceutical, industry & financial)
- Financial Institutions

In general, most respondents agreed that the National project was necessary, the process outlined was sound, and;

Feedback included, that;

- the process needs to be seen by livestock producers as simple, useful, and achieving outcomes for industry.
- to keep simplicity, a generic outline of general farm risk is probably not necessary; therefore the toolkit is designed so users can go directly to their industry pages.
- the logo was seen as an important aspect in promoting the project within industry and not necessarily to the public. The project promotion should utilize a logo, to allow livestock producers to recognize and embrace *Australian Farm Animals* as a whole of industry initiative that will instil pride in farmers, animal health, animal welfare and livestock products and market, and develop a positive Australian livestock industry image.
- the guidelines and supporting information must be quickly and easily accessible.
- reaching the unwilling is very difficult and we need to attempt to increase awareness of legal responsibilities and consequences.

## The Toolkit (See attached folder and files)

The Toolkit is designed to be simple, user friendly, useful and available on-line, with hard copies available.

### Page 1.

[Cover page](#) (Right Click)

**Page 2.** Outlines the toolkit history, objectives and process, and has hyperlinks for user to be taken directly to an industry specific *Risk and Action Template*. It also outlines that livestock producers' who are currently enrolled in an Industry Quality Assurance Programs, may not need to complete the whole document, but encourages them to embrace the *Australian Farm Animals* project and encourages them to promote it to other producers.

### Risk and Action Template.

This template is the heart of the Toolkit, and has a list of general and industry specific questions, Yes/No answer column, a list of *Actions Required* in response to the answers given, as well as a column of *Example Actions* to assist the development of their *Crisis Management Contingency Plan*.

To assist risk definition, review current property contingency planning, and development of a final *Crisis Management Contingency Plan* (list of actions required) for that property, the user reads each question, then answers yes or no for each question. If necessary (generally when the answer is no), the user then reads the *Example Actions* for that question, then completes the *Actions Required* (1-4 dot points) for that question.

Question 1. Outlines the need for all farmers to have a list of contacts ready for times of crisis. Hyperlinks links take the user to *List of Contacts Guide* and a support information hyperlink.

Question 2. Asks if the producer understands their legal responsibility in relation to Duty of Care for Animals, and possible legal consequences if they do not comply. It is considered necessary to highlight this early in the document, to ensure maximum awareness. Hyperlinks links from this question line take the user to the appropriate Australian Animal Welfare Australian Standards and/or Australian Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals, for that particular industry.

Question 3. Asks if the producer can identify and list past and possible future crises, and the risk of these crises occurring in their region and industry in the future. Hyperlinks links take the user to a document of *Possible Risks Resulting in Welfare Issues*, for that particular industry to assist their property/industry risk identification process.

Question 4. Asks if there is already a *Risk Mitigation or Crisis Management Plan* in place, and outlines that completion of the template will result in the outline of a *Crisis Management Contingency Plan* for their property. It also advises the user to look at livestock industry Quality Assurance (QA) programs, and specific industry QA program information can then be accessed directly using the hyperlinks.

The remaining questions and *Example Actions Required* column, take the producer through a process of defining past and possible future risks, reviewing current contingency planning in place for that property, and defining the actions required for that farm to be ready. The finished *Actions Required* list then becomes the basis of a specific property *Crisis Management Contingency Plan*, and may also form the basis of Standard Operating Procedures or a simple Business Plan.

The final *Actions Required* column will then be transferred to a [Crisis Management Contingency Plan](#) specifically for that property. On a Webpage, this can be achieved automatically. More activity detail can then be added under each Actions Required dot point/s, in relation to what, when, who, and how.

## Communication (Including Promotions)

The most difficult aspect of the communication process will be reaching all farmers at the local level, and this will only be achievable if the project is promoted from within the livestock industries.

The most important project allies and supporters of the *Australian Farm Animals* project need to be the current industry compliant and *Willing* livestock producers. They must be encouraged to embrace and promote the project, as a positive and necessary process for all Australian livestock producers to develop a positive Australian livestock image, even though they may not use it fully.

Feedback from stakeholders indicated that the *Australian Farm Animals* project must be seen by all livestock producers as a simple and useful project that will achieve positive outcomes for the individual livestock producer and their animals' welfare, as well as the Australian livestock production industry as a whole.

### From stakeholders feedback and our experience;

- The project communication process needs to utilize a national website, preferably a current site, and social media, as well as local hard copy access through State DPIs and State Farmer Organisations and their media channels, for awareness and access at the local level.
- The majority of livestock producers are doing the right thing, and are registered with Industry Quality Assurance programs; however they also needed to be aware of the project and use it (or parts) if necessary, and encourage other local farmers to be involved.
- The project needs to be a guide and source of information for those who are willing to change, and who may be inexperienced or unprepared. The *Unlucky* are generally willing to change and be prepared. These (*The Willing but Unprepared*) will generally fall into two groups;
  - A. Small commercial family farms with few resources and possibly lacking knowledge.
  - B. Small holders with few animals (e.g. Hobby Farmers) who also possibly lack knowledge. In our experience, most hobby farmers are willing to adopt good practice, if they are made aware of their welfare and legal responsibilities.
- Research and Development Corporations probably need to be the driver at a national level, utilizing links from their websites, newsletters and news releases and their communication channel with their Regional Development Groups, and industry peak bodies.



- State DPIs will probably need to be the main driver of the project at State level, supplying information directly to producers, as well as using State Industry Organisation and Regional Group media channels. State Government DPIs could send out newsletters through their Extension Officers and also to all registered livestock producers (PICs) as an update to the Exotic/Emergency Disease Preparedness Programs.
- State Industry Organisations could be one of the major conduit for awareness of and access to the project at the local level for small holders (The Willing group A), through their websites, newsletters, local service providers (including veterinarians, milk processors etc.), Regional Groups, Farmer Groups, NRM Groups, and social media etc.
- Local Councils could be the major conduit for awareness of and access to the *Australian Farm Animals* project at the local level for The Willing Group B (Hobby Framers), through their websites, newsletters, local service providers, Animal Control Officers etc.
- It was generally felt that the *Unwilling* group is declining in number, but past experience has indicated that this group only seem to respond to a threat of litigation and little else. The *Australian Farm Animals* project must highlight to all livestock producers', their legal responsibilities, as well as provide guidance and information on how to comply. Awareness of the *Australian Farm Animals* project and assistance necessary to complete compliance needs to be provided to this group by all means possible, including by *Willing* producers encouraging the *Unwilling*.

## Communication and promotions program;

- Development of a *Australian Farm Animals* Project Steering Committee that oversees the communications, promotions, implementation, communications, and monitoring and evaluations programs.
- Finalise site templates, documents and support material on a page of Animal Health Australia's website. A web designer is currently developing a professional format and theme for the material to be placed on the webpage, including;
  - a. The front page
  - b. An introductory and explanatory page, with links to;
    - i. Industry specific templates
    - ii. List of Contacts in Emergencies Guide
    - iii. Industry specific Risk and Action Template
    - iv. Industry specific Risk Examples
    - v. Property specific Crisis Contingency Management Plan
    - vi. With links to industry and compliance information
  - c. List of Useful Websites for further information

- Develop a National Good News Story to convince all livestock production industries, farmers and welfare organisations, of the value of the *Australian Farm Animals* project and the resulting positive industry animal welfare outcome and image. This will focus on how the *Australian Farm Animals* project will;
  - a. Improve preparedness to mitigate animal welfare issues in livestock industries.
  - b. Improved farmer awareness of support processes that are available.
  - c. Assist small farmers and hobby farmers improve their animal and property management procedures and improve production and welfare outcomes.
  - d. Result in improved animal welfare and animal production outcomes across Australia.
  - e. Motivate current compliant livestock producers to encourage others to adopt the *Farm Animals Australia* project.
  - f. Improve collaboration and cooperation between livestock industries and other stakeholders.
  - g. Supplying stories of success on website on a continuous basis, to also be used as news/press/social media releases.
  - h. Result in a positive animal welfare image for Australian livestock production internationally.
  
- National press release by Federal Minister, Department of Agriculture and Water Resources.
  
- National radio & television (Country Hour and Landline).
  
- National Organisations (or federal collective of state services), incorporate links and information in their websites, newsletters and press releases .
  - a. Federal Government DAWR, Health
  - b. LandCare
  - c. Research and Development Corporations
  - d. Local Government Organisation
  - e. Animal welfare organisations
  - f. Rural Financial Counselling, farmer health and welfare support services
  - g. Industry peak Bodies including ALTA etc.
  
- State DPIs will need to take a lead role in communications and promotions in the regions through their websites, media releases, social media, emergency animal disease management program communications to all PICs, producing and delivering/ mailing hard copies to producers if required and liaise with other state organisations in identifying and utilizing other media channels, eg;
  - a. DPI Animal health, biosecurity officers, stock inspectors, etc
  - b. Industry Organisations (State)
  - c. Regional Groups (from national RDCs), NRM Groups, farmer groups, young farmer networks etc.
  - d. Rural and regional service providers eg Veterinarians and other rural advisory professionals.
  - e. Product buyers (eg dairy and meat processing companies)
  - f. State Health Departments
  
- All these organisations are to have information and links from their websites to AHA page.

- Hobby farmers awareness . The focus will be from local Governments website links, newsletters, animal control officers etc

## Implementation

Funding will be required for;

1. Development of a *Australian Farm Animals* Project Oversight Committee that oversees the communications, promotions, implementation and monitoring & evaluation programs.
2. Development of Good News Stories process for initial and ongoing promotion.
3. Further stakeholder engagement and ownership to ensure total national industry ownership and communications support at peak and state level for all stakeholder organisations. It is also important to initially gain welfare organisation endorsement.
4. Finalisation of Communication and Promotion Program
5. Template fine tuning.
6. Webpage (on AHA site) development, launch and support.
7. Project launch and Communication/Promotion Plan implemented.
8. Monitoring and evaluation.

# Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

It is proposed to get feedback in year one to develop benchmarks on the levels of engagement with industry and farm QA programs and the level of welfare issues reporting from livestock industries, and compare this at year five survey, as well as gauging the level of engagement in *Farm Animals Australia* at year five.

- Survey, via;
  1. Industry organisations and RDCs, at years 1 and 5, to assess;
    - Knowledge of program
    - Uptake of program
    - Usefulness of program
    - Industry self and external image

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# Appendix 1

## Animal Welfare Tool kit: Stakeholder Contacts List

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