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Monitoring public attitudes

Development of a monitoring scheme to inform
livestock animal welfare policy

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Aims

- ◆ Determine attitudes towards livestock animal welfare
- ◆ Determine levels of knowledge of livestock practices in the community
- ◆ Explore levels of trust in the livestock industries
- ◆ Investigate the extent to which demographics, attitudes, trust and knowledge are related to community behaviours
- ◆ Identify opinion leaders and their characteristics in terms of demographics, attitudes, levels of trust and behaviours.



Method

- ◆ 479 participants (228 males, 251 females) interviewed by telephone.
- ◆ 142 item questionnaire
 - Demographics,
 - Questions about animal welfare,
 - Knowledge of livestock animals and livestock animal welfare,
 - Attitudes towards livestock practices,
 - Attitudes towards the livestock industries' impact on the environment and towards specific livestock industry procedures and practices
 - The extent to which respondents have engaged in behaviours to express their dissatisfaction with the Australian livestock industries,
 - Frequency with which they access or distribute livestock animal welfare information
 - The extent to which they trust various sources of livestock animal welfare information.



Results

- ◆ Distribution of attitudes to farm animal welfare
- ◆ Surprisingly strong relationship between attitudes and meat consumption (higher than had previously been reported)
- ◆ Limited knowledge of some husbandry procedures
- ◆ Poor correlation between perceived and actual knowledge
- ◆ Clear data on trusted sources of animal welfare information
- ◆ Low trust of some off-farm animal workers
- ◆ High prevalence of relevant community behaviours
- ◆ Identification of opinion leaders and their characteristics
- ◆ High perceived knowledge but low actual knowledge amongst opinion leaders



Conclusions

- ◆ Need to improve some key areas of trust
- ◆ Need to do research on off-farm practices to determine the extent of any of the areas of concern so that appropriate responses can be determined
- ◆ Need to engage some of the agencies that are regarded as the most trusted sources by the community
- ◆ Need to develop strategies to target opinion leaders to make them better informed to reduce risk posed by uninformed pressure for change in livestock practices
- ◆ Need to review practices that are of community concern and that lead to community behaviours that pose risk to the livestock industries.
- ◆ Need to use this to monitor changes over time