

6th National Primary Industries Animal Welfare RD&E Strategy Forum

25th August 2016

Attwood, Victoria

Summary / Overview

This summary is a record of comments made and is not necessarily the view of the Strategy itself.

Presentations and discussions at the forum indicate that the issues most likely to shape the animal welfare RD&E and policy environment over the next 5 years are:

- Need for nationally consistent animal welfare standards, but avoiding the risk of moving to lower standards.
- Climate change and the impact of more frequent fires, floods and droughts on animal welfare.
- Consumer concerns about the use of anti-microbials, in particularly the more intensive livestock production systems, leading to resistance problems. Animal welfare standards could be compromised if the use of anti-microbials by the livestock industries is further restricted.
- Food waste – although this may not impact animal welfare directly, it is an ethical issue that is indirectly related to welfare, i.e. less food wastage may lead to fewer animals required for human consumption.
- Role of gene editing – although this and other advanced genetic technologies have the potential to improve animal welfare, these technologies may not be acceptable to consumers

Some recurring themes raised at the forum:

- Need to capture reliable objective data on animal welfare to enable industry to demonstrate that high standards of welfare are being maintained along the entire value chain
- Role of new technology for remote monitoring and capturing real time data
- Need for greater TRANSPARENCY. Need to build TRUST.
 - Above approach aims to address the on-going disconnect between mainly urban based consumers and rural based livestock producers. Through political processes, consumers largely control “the social licence to operate”, but many consumers form views based on very poor knowledge. Education does not always change behaviour, and science will often be trumped by “gut feel”. QA / accreditation schemes sponsored by a trusted independent body (such as the RSPCA) may assist in promoting transparency and trust, but will not impact on all consumers.

Session 1 - Current and future expectations from perspective of consumers, the community and government

Charles Milne, Chief Veterinary Officer, Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources:

5 Freedoms – not the answer – too broad and not exact.

Move towards a “Good life” – holistic, looks at combined positives and negatives.

World Animal Protection ranked global AW – scored Aus “C” – the same as India. NZ and most of EU scored “A”. <http://api.worldanimalprotection.org/>

Scored poorly in part due to inconsistent legislation and no binding National Standards.

Government policy is influenced by economic, climatic and social factors.

There is a drive to more intensive farming systems. Cultural differences in attitudes to animal welfare might become apparent through foreign investment and foreign workers.

Labour shortage, farmers getting older – need to ensure those engaged in livestock production have appropriate skills.

Retailers market welfare but need to recognise that every production system brings both positive and negative impacts upon animal welfare and biosecurity. Perverse outcomes may arise when moving to systems which seem to be higher welfare.

Increasing input costs are driving technology adoption, need to ensure that animal husbandry skills are appropriate.

Advances in genetics – breeding robust animals

Welfare “incidents” reported to DEDJTR are increasing. Last year, over 1,000 welfare incidents were reported for the first time. Climate has a massive impact upon the incidence of welfare “incidents” reported and there is a long term increasing trend with reports higher in drought years.

Industry needs to understand those practices which might affect their social license to operate. Practices such as induction, spaying and mulesing need attention to seek alternatives and/or pain relief. Social license can be lost quickly as can be seen in NSW in relation to greyhound racing industry.

Future Role of Government – the States take the lead in AW, but the Commonwealth should recognise its role in driving consistency.

Governments need to work with industry, not only to maintain minimum standards but to work towards the highest standards of animal welfare.

Melina Tensen Senior Scientific Officer (Farm Animals), RSPCA:

The top 5 issues according to a 2015 RSPCA survey were:

Slaughter, Drought, Farrowing crates, Layer cages, Castration

RSPCA policies for each sector can be accessed at <https://www.rspca.org.au/facts/policies>

There needs to be an effort to not only consider negative impacts of practices upon the animal, but also consider positive affective states in an attempt to give every animal a “life worth living.”

The whole livestock production chain must be sustainable in terms of the environment, social aspects and the animal - the system must be productive and profitable to ensure sustainability.

In affluent countries, a sector of the community is making lifestyle choices and reducing meat intake.

An ethical issue is the massive amount of food which is wasted - it is estimated that over 20% of food is wasted just in the home in Australia (30-35% globally). Food is cheap and is not valued in the same way it was, say 50 years ago.

A growing number of consumers are seeking connection to the land and there has been an expansion of farmers' markets and a 15% yearly increase in organic purchases

Need to work towards an ideal supply chain which strives to avoid negative environmental, welfare, social and health impacts. This chain would be research driven and innovative and recognise that food is valuable, waste is unacceptable. It would provide a fair price for producers and provide animals with a life worth living.

Panel:

Australia – capitalise on markets seeking a high welfare product

Standards are written at too basic a level – does not take into account leading science

Food is so cheap, if price increased – would that change the animal welfare impact?

Profit margins have decreased – retailer requirements have increased. Farms need to be more profitable – only by reducing costs as cannot increase price.

Need a long-term strategy to improve animal welfare, Commonwealth should take lead in harmonising standards.

Extension needed in some sectors to reduce and eliminate unacceptable practices.

Need to research farmer / stockperson attitudes to understand decision processes in response to drought, psychological problems, depression, connectivity, price etc.

Is cruelty increasing or is reporting / perception increasing? Farmers are more likely to report a neighbour

In SA, approximately 10% are serious cases resulting in prosecution.

New technologies such as gene editing will have concrete health and welfare outcomes but will they be able to gain public / retailer acceptance? Gene editing for poll cattle and beaks might be accepted if well explained as a technology to improve welfare, not to further exploit the animal.

Should food wastage be included as a theme of this strategy? Not a welfare issue per se, rather an ethical issue. Ethics might be included as a strategy theme?

There is a distinction between citizen action and consumer action, a person might support a particular production system, but may not follow that through with purchasing.

Free range production is increasing and the relationship between citizen and consumer behaviour is very low, but is becoming greater.

If welfare outcomes from socially accepted methods are not so good – need to determine how to improve the socially accepted methods – industry needs to work to get a better dialogue and understanding between industry and the public

Science is not good at measuring positive aspects - good at measuring negatives. Widen focus of research to include assessment of positive welfare.

The Productivity Commission will recommend a single independent AW body which begs the question – what was wrong with the old model (AAWS NAWAC). Commonwealth do have a role e.g. exported lamb may be produced in Victoria, but it is marketed as Australian.

Retailer standards add another layer to the complexity of QA assurance on farm and throughout the chain.

Session 2 – Current and future expectations from the perspective of retailers, buyers and suppliers

Rob Cumine, Responsible Sourcing & Agricultural Manager, Coles:

When purchasing, customers look for Australian, local, provenance (mainly fresh food), they trust farmers and look for markers of trust (RSPCA logo etc). There is a wide spread of product / production knowledge between customers. Even if they have the knowledge, price will often trump.

Customers (esp the younger generations) expect product / production information to be at their fingertips, they are demanding and discerning.

When there is a welfare incident, the retailer will often have to rely on an audit report which may have occurred 11 months ago.

There is a need for real time information to prove that over the period that the “incident” took place practices were in fact, OK.

Antibiotic resistance is a huge potential problem and provides ammunition to animal rights groups in their campaigns against “factory” farming. The challenge for industry will be to replace anti-microbials through management and alternatives so that animal welfare is not compromised,

Provides ammunition to animal welfare rights’ groups. How to replace? Management, alternatives?

There are conflicting interests in retail, looking for high welfare products at a low cost.

David Rutley, Lamb Supply Chain Coordinator, Thomas Foods International:

Feedback from each part of the chain is important to ensure consumer satisfaction: food safety, portion size and flavour are important factors which influence purchasing decisions. Animal welfare is not a direct requirement of the consumer or the supply chain.

But welfare is a social license to operate, part of corporate social responsibility, hence much more important than consumer satisfaction.

It is important that industry keeps abreast of changes in the community in order to ensure that it continues to meet and match the community's evolving expectations. However, industry also needs to be careful not to create an issue in the consumers' minds, where no 'real' issue exists. To counter this risk, TFI proposes that industry addresses potential animal welfare issues when the majority of society have identified a concern.

It is important to ensure that industry is supported by the weight of scientific evidence to continue to practice in a socially-responsible manner.

Lisa Archer, Quality Manager - Milk Supply, Fonterra:

Grass to Glass philosophy at Fonterra

Responsible dairying is a key program within the milk pool – including water, climate change, animal welfare and other elements.

There is a company animal welfare program to which farmers have to adhere. Farmers are encouraged to apply for funding from the “sustainable farming fund” (5c per bottle sold goes into this fund).

Real time production data is available but this should be expanded to include welfare parameters.

Need to develop strategies to communicate with the consumer and community to maintain trust; need to address induction, painful procedures, antibiotics, traceability and biosecurity.

R&D must be done in association with farmers to ensure ownership of outcomes.

Panel:

Animal welfare is linked in the customer's mind with food safety and taste.

Educate the public – but how to educate the consumer and community, as people don't like to be “educated”.

Lead-in time from research to management practices

Social license comes from transparency – continuum, AW will not have a definite end point. Industries need to engage and be transparent. Don't hide practices, when they become “public” in an “exposé” trust may be lost.

There are different types of trust: *Reflexive* trust which means you've done some research, weighed up information, and have decided that producers are aligned with, committed to, and care, about your values towards animals and *Habitual* trust where people don't really think about the industry, they trust producers to do the 'right' thing, because that's what they've always done. There is no reason to think that anything has changed.

There is a growing disconnect between community and farming (only 2% engaged in food production)

People object more to intensification – not linked to welfare. Values not driven by knowledge. Education does not change behaviour. What is the strategy?

Need to craft messages for each consumer segment.

Session 3 – RDC priorities to emerging trends in the supply chain

Pat Mitchell, Manager, Production-Stewardship, Australian Pork Ltd:

Animal welfare is not a stand-alone – other aspects also impinge – biosecurity, anti-microbial

Priorities for pork industry

1. On-farm welfare assessment – build into farm culture (not just ‘tick the box’)
2. Effective enrichment and positive welfare indicators (are stockpeople effective enrichment?)
3. Improving welfare of sow in farrowing crate
4. Pain relief
5. E-Learning packages – deals with reduction in extension
6. Lameness & Associated pain
7. Housing to engage pigs
8. Group housing
9. Alternatives to farrowing crates?

Robin Condon, Manager Animal Health and Welfare, Dairy Australia:

In the future, communication with the wider community will be important to show best care for animals and that industry aspirations are to go beyond the minimum standards.

Increased scale of production will continue – 6000 farms currently, but wide range of herd sizes. With increasing scale there are both challenges and opportunities. Bigger profits but maybe bigger risks. Price fluctuations restrict farmers’ capacity to invest in the industry.

There will be technological opportunities associated with increasing scale of production and opportunities to develop skills as larger farms can employ specialists in their labour force.

Real time monitoring of production and welfare parameters will be enhanced by a greater use of robotic milking technology.

The industry will develop novel methods of training as internet access and speeds improve. Translation of known research is a priority.

Jim Rothwell, Program Manager, Animal Health, Welfare and Biosecurity, Meat & Livestock Australia:

The red meat Strategic Plan has indicated that animal welfare will be the major risk to the industry by the year 2030.

Issues of importance are lamb mortality, live export, land transport and painful procedures.

In a focus group setting, MLA gave urban meat eaters a scenario re.transport guidelines; explained the science behind the 48hr limit, but even with the scientific explanation, the focus group still felt that transport was the most disturbing scenario, in other words, culture can trump science

Panel:

Geoff Lindon AWI – priorities include invasive husbandry, pain relief, measuring welfare / pain over the animals' lifetime.

Wayne Collier LiveCorp – need to maintain the industry's social license to operate through transparent communication of welfare improvements.

Joe McMeniman MLA Feedlots – in the future, automated measures of animal welfare and automatic detection of disease will be of great importance.

Brad Mathers AMPC – there is recognition of “Brand Australia” and animal welfare is a key aspect in supporting the brand. Open communication and transparency throughout the supply chain are important in maintaining the license to operate.

Kylie Hewson RIRDC – priorities for the chicken meat industry will be objectively measuring welfare throughout the chain and improving the welfare of free range broiler birds.

Jojo Jackson AECL – R&D will be required to ensure the welfare of hens in free range systems through mitigating feather pecking and cannibalism and improving stockmanship. Access to therapeutic medication is likely to be an issue over the next few years.

The panel agreed that there is a clear need to capture objective data on welfare measurement and link these measures to the community's expectation. These measures need to be robust and practical. New technologies such as remote sensing and apps are ‘fertile ground’ for developments in this area.

Attendees:

| First | Surname | Affiliation |
|--------------|-----------------|---|
| Arif | Anwar | Scolexia |
| Lisa | Archer | Fonterra |
| Jax | Baptista | Meat and Livestock Aust |
| John | Beer | Aust Livestock and Rural Transporters' Assn |
| Heather | Bray | AWSC Uni Adelaide |
| Wayne | Bryden | Uni QLD |
| Heather | Channon | Aust Pork Ltd |
| Sarah | Chaplin | DEDJTR AgVic |
| Cameron | Clark | Uni Sydney |
| Miranda | Coffey | DEDJTR Biosecurity AW |
| Grahame | Coleman | AWSC Uni Melb |
| Wayne | Collier | Livecorp |
| Teresa | Collins | Murdoch Uni |
| Robin | Condron | Dairy Australia |
| Tamsyn | Crowley | Deakin Uni |
| Rob | Cumine | Coles |
| Kathryn | Davis | Dairy Australia |
| Amanda | Doughty | Uni New England |
| Darryl | D'Souza | Sunpork Solutions |
| Marine | Empson | MLA |
| Andrew | Fisher | AWSC Uni Melb |
| Kylie | Hewson | RIRDC Chicken meat |
| Janelle | Hocking Edwards | AWSC SARDI |
| Nick | Hover | Woolworths |
| Jojo | Jackson | Aust Egg Corp Ltd |
| Ellen | Jongman | AWSC Uni Melb |
| Wayne | Jorgensen | DAF QLD |
| Ray | King | RHK Consultancy |
| Matthew | Knight | DEDJTR AgVic |
| Geoff | Kroker | |
| Melinee | Leather | Cattle Council |
| Caroline | Lee | CSIRO |
| Geoff | Lindon | Aust Wool Innovation |
| Belinda | Lucas | NSW DPI |
| Tim | Mahony | Uni QLD |
| David | Marland | DEDJTR AgVic |
| Brad | Mathers | Aust Meat Processor Corp |
| Joe | McMeniman | Meat and Livestock Aust |
| Charles | Milne | DEDJTR Biosecurity |
| Pat | Mitchell | Aust Pork Ltd |
| Rebecca | Morrison | Rivalea Aust |
| Rodney | O'Meara | Dept of Agriculture |
| Bronwyn | Orr | Dept of Agriculture |
| Amanda | Paul | NSW DPI |

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|-----------|----------|------------------------------|
| Cathy | Pawsey | DEDJTR Biosecurity AW |
| Bridget | Peachey | Aust Lot Feeders' Assn |
| Mark | Peters | PIRSA |
| Robert | Pirovic | Pirovic Family Farms |
| Peter | Pirovic | Pirovic Family Farms |
| Jane | Quinn | CSU |
| Cameron | Ralph | AWSC SARDI |
| Jean-Loup | Rault | AWSC Uni Melb |
| Mhairi | Roberts | RSPCA VIC |
| Ian | Rodger | DAFF QLD |
| Jim | Rothwell | Meat and Livestock Aust |
| David | Rutley | Thomas Foods International |
| Gary | Sansom | ACMF |
| Jeremy | Skuse | Nat AW RDE Strategy |
| Philip | Szepe | Kinross Farm |
| Brendan | Tatham | PrimeSAFE |
| Melina | Tensen | RSPCA Australia |
| Alan | Tilbrook | AWSC SARDI |
| Justin | Toohey | Advisor, Cattle Council |
| Kelly | Wall | Animal Health Aust |
| Sarah | Weaver | AWSC Uni Adelaide |
| Claire | Webber | Aquatic Animal Working Group |
| Jim | Webster | AgResearch NZ |
| Peter | White | Uni Sydney |
| Scott | Williams | Scott Williams Consulting |
| John | Williams | AWSC Uni Adelaide |
| Tim | Wilson | Scolexia |