

4th Animal Welfare RD&E Strategy Forum

30 October 2014

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Overview

- Hen welfare RD&E strategy
- Research and extension priorities
- Current welfare RD&E projects

Hen Welfare RD&E Strategy - Background

- Increasing societal pressure – animal welfare
- Model Code of Practice – set of guidelines for use on farm
- 4th and current edition not reviewed in 2010
- Mandatory standards, advisory guidelines
- Goal of S&G:

“to have national animal welfare standards that are consistently maintained and enforced in a cost effective manner, that reflect contemporary scientific knowledge, competent husbandry and mainstream community expectations”

Hen Welfare RD&E Strategy

- Strategy of civil engagement to inform S&G
- Consultative process – series of workshops – wide range of stakeholders
- Research priorities identified
- Collaborative Hen Welfare RD&E Plan developed
- Generation of research questions
- Finalisation of RD&E Plan
- Detail available at www.aecl.org/r-and-d/



Hen Welfare RD&E Priorities

1. Societal preferences and consumer understanding of hen welfare issues
2. Standards and Guidelines enforcement methodology
3. Furnished cages and conventional cage modification – identification of welfare benefits under Australian conditions
4. Optimal stocking density research – in all production systems
5. Range design - requirements for free range systems
6. Rearing pullets that are tailored to specific production systems
7. Osteoporosis and bone fracture reduction under various systems
8. Stockmanship for each production system
9. Feather pecking and cannibalism – alternatives to beak trim
10. Spent hen euthanasia, disposal and transport
11. Hygiene, parasites and disease – non-caged systems
12. Sex determination and cull chick disposal

Welfare RD&E Projects

- Alternative systems/space (11)
- Beak trimming and aggression-related consequences (9)
- Better welfare methodology/tools (8)
- Genetic/consumer attitudes/hen health (5)

Current Welfare RD&E Projects

- On-farm euthanasia of spent hens (CRC)
- Effects of rearing on inappropriate conflict behaviours that predispose cannibalism (University of Sydney)
- Pullet and layer flock uniformity: an epidemiological industry-based approach to improve feed efficiency (University of New England)
- Nutrient specific appetite as a driver for feather pecking in hens (University of Queensland)
- Free-range hen welfare: characterisation of 'indoor' and 'outdoor' hens and physical features in the range (University of Melbourne)



Skills and Knowledge

- AECL Cert III in Agriculture (Poultry)
- Industry specific training program
- 12 month program – 3 x 3 day workshops
- 1 x 3 day workshop = welfare related
- 2013: 25 people completed the course
- 2014: 27 people enrolled and half way through