



# New Zealand's Animal Welfare Regulatory System

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NEW ZEALAND

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# History of Animal Welfare in NZ

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- Animal welfare work began over 50 years ago
  - Science-based to improve nutrition and health to increase productivity
- Last 20 – 25 years much work has been done to minimise:
  - Pain and distress before slaughter
  - Pain, distress & injury during transport
  - Pain and distress during painful husbandry practice
  - Suffering from vertebrate pest control methods (possums)
- Animal Protection Act 1960
  - Focussed primarily on defining, identifying and punishing acts of cruelty, neglect & ill treatment
  - Reactive approach

# Animal Welfare Act 1999

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- The Animal Welfare Act takes a two tier approach to animal welfare. The Act itself provides a framework for **Codes of Welfare** which are species or practice specific e.g. cattle, sheep, circus animals etc.
- The Act provides for penalties to be imposed for ill-treatment but provides that compliance with a **Code of Welfare** is a defence against conviction.

# Animal Welfare Act 1999

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## Key features:

- **Obligation to care for animals**
  - Greater emphasis on prevention
  - Still applies penalties for ill-treatment
  - Needs of animals take account of the 5 freedoms
- **Flexibility**
  - Detailed minimum standards are contained in codes of welfare
  - Codes can be quickly and easily amended
- **Large range of animals protected by the legislation**
  - All animals that are capable of feeling pain

# Animal Welfare Act 1999

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- Restricts surgical procedures
  - Who can perform surgical procedures
  - Conditions for procedures
- Animal exports
  - Certification for animals exported
  - Exemptions can be granted for minimal risk situations
- Research, testing and teaching
  - Person or organisation must have an approved code of ethical conduct
  - Project approval from animal ethics committee established under code
- Enforcement
  - Minister of Agriculture appoints approved organisations
    - Royal New Zealand SPCA;
    - Animal Welfare Institute of New Zealand
    - Power to destroy, sell or re-house animals given in their care

# Animal Welfare Infrastructure

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- Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF)
  - Administers the Act
  - Provides policy advice to the Minister of Agriculture
  - Is responsible for compliance and enforcement
  - Supports education and training programmes
- Primary industry organisations
  - Develop new operating practices
  - Contribute to policy and standards
  - Carry out research and development
  - Provide training and education

# Animal Welfare Infrastructure

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- Ministerial advisory committees
  - National Animal Ethics Advisory Committee
  - National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee
    - Develop and advise on codes of welfare
    - Recommend whether codes of ethical conduct be approved
    - Recommend areas of research
- Animal Behaviour and Welfare Consultative Committee
  - Industry groups, government departments, researchers, veterinarians & public animal welfare organisations
  - Takes a science based approach to animal welfare
  - Provides a forum for exchange of information on animal behaviour & welfare
  - Disseminates research results & recommends funding of research

# Animal Welfare Infrastructure

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- Investigation
  - MAF Compliance & Enforcement Group
  - Royal New Zealand SPCA
  - Animal Welfare Institute of New Zealand

# Codes of Welfare

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- Specify minimum standards
- Give recommendations for best practice
- Require Ministerial approval
- Codes have been issued for:
  - Animals used in rodeo events
  - Broiler chickens
  - Circus animals
  - Zoo animals
  - Layer hens
  - Pigs
  - Companion cats
  - Painful husbandry procedures

# Codes of Welfare

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- Codes in various stages of development:
  - Dairy cattle (awaiting Ministerial approval)
  - Sheep (draft in preparation)
  - Beef cattle (draft in preparation)
  - Transport of animals (draft in consultation)
  - Commercial slaughter of animals (NAWAC consideration)

# Process for Developing a Code

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Any person/ organisation drafts code  
Guidelines & template ensures codes are:

- Practical
- Have stakeholder (industry, animal owners, transporters etc) buy-in

MAF/NAWAC drafts a code  
Costs met from public funds

Industry only consultation

NAWAC consideration

Public consultation

NAWAC approval  
Takes into account:

- all submissions
- good practice
- scientific knowledge
- other relevant matters

**Ministerial approval**

# Codes of Welfare

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## Benefits:

- Provide for greater detail and more specificity than the Act and includes baselines for animal management and care
- Flexibility to modify and improve standards taking into account developments in:
  - Community expectations
  - Scientific knowledge
  - Technological change
- Balances representation of community expectations
  - Community involvement in the development of codes

## Example: Painful Procedures Code 1995

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- Painful procedures definition
  - Procedures applied to farmed animals which are non therapeutic to:
    - Minimise risk of injury to animals or humans
    - Enable easy management of animals
    - Prevent carcass damage, enhance quality
    - Minimise conditions which lead to fly strike
    - Assist with identification
    - Harvest products (velvet)

# Painful Procedures Code 1995

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- Covers all painful husbandry procedures but specific information is provided for:
  - Castration
  - Tail docking
  - Disbudding & dehorning
- Procedure must be justified
  - Tests for justification are:
    - No other practical, economically viable, effective, less noxious alternative
    - Must result in overall enhancement of welfare
    - Facilitate advantageous farm management systems
    - Result in enhanced product
    - Result in increased safety to humans

# Painful Procedures Code

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- Persons undertaking procedures must be sufficiently knowledgeable, trained or supervised

# Painful Procedures Code

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## Example procedure: Castration

- Minimum standards (mandatory)
  - Procedure must minimise acute and chronic consequences to the health & welfare of the animal
  - Must be carried out at as young an age as possible
  - Must provide pain relief if the animal is > 6 months of age
  - Specific requirements regarding the use of rubber rings & high tension bands

# Painful Procedures Code

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## Castration continued:

- Best practice recommendations (guidance)
  - Pain relief should be provided
  - Farmer should seek (veterinary) advice
  - Rubber rings should be used on younger animals
  - Cleaning of castration area & equipment
  - Precautions should be taken against infection
- General information
  - Various methods of castration are considered and ranked
    - Least painful to most painful

# Direction for Castration

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- NAWAC has held industry workshops to advise the industry on the new code and to engage with them on future expectations
- As a result the industry is involved in:
  - Research
    - Alternative methods e.g. immuno-castration
    - Pain relief
    - Level of pain
  - Education
    - Appropriate procedures
    - Training
    - Ranking of procedures
    - Communication to farmers

# Concluding Remarks

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- There is a strong animal welfare ethic in NZ
- Animal welfare is managed within the pastoral farming, social and environmental contexts
- New Zealand has improved overall animal welfare standards as a result of a coordinated national infrastructure
  - Collaboration between industry & government
- Standard setting is outcome focused
  - Welfare of the animal is paramount
  - Informed by science

# Further Information

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- <http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/animal-welfare/codes/welfare>
- [http://www.oie.int/eng/Welfare\\_2004/proceedings.pdf](http://www.oie.int/eng/Welfare_2004/proceedings.pdf)
- <http://meatandwoolnz.com>
- Stafford KJ, Mellor DJ, Gregory NG. Advances in animal welfare in New Zealand. *N Z Vet J.* 2002;50(3 Suppl):17–21.
- Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry publication. Animal Welfare in New Zealand, May 2005