

National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee
(NAWAC)

Proceedings of
Round Table Discussion on Animal Welfare Assurance

Wellington

1 April 2008

Purpose of the Workshop

There is a growing demand by consumers and by the New Zealand public for assurance that the welfare standards for our livestock and poultry as required by the Animal Welfare Act 1999, codes of animal welfare and market place requirements are actually being met. Many of these people do not have first-hand experience of farming and rely on others to provide that assurance. We note that many farming organisations are exploring ways of providing assurances. A key issue is how welfare can be measured or assessed in an objective, cost-effective way. We consider it is timely to share this experience.

The purpose of this round table discussion is to:

- Receive an up-to-date briefing on initiatives being taken by researchers and industry organizations;
- Obtain a briefing on what is happening in the rest of the world and how that might impact on us;
- Determine if we understand what assurances consumers and the public want;
- Consider whether there is a basis for developing a national strategy to address the issue; and
- Develop a consensus on the respective roles of government, industry organisations and marketers of agricultural products in providing assurances to their publics.

NAWAC's objectives in sponsoring this discussion are to:

- Obtain an understanding of where codes of welfare fit in an overall strategy;
- Obtain endorsement of NAWAC's approach in writing code of welfare minimum standards as statements of welfare outcomes to be achieved;
- Identify the key indicators of the welfare status of farmed species and/or the research needed to develop them; and
- Examine mechanisms for determining compliance with code of welfare minimum standards and the consequences of non-compliance.

The programme is divided into three parts:

- Short presentations designed to give participants an overview of what is happening in New Zealand and elsewhere;
- Break-out workshop groups that will be asked to discuss some key questions relating to the area of welfare assurance; and
- A plenary session to consolidate the conclusions of the break-out groups and to consider the need for an over-arching strategy.

Background

In August 2007, NAWAC held an internal 'big picture' discussion on 'key indicators for assessing animal welfare', in Wellington. Dr Lindsay Matthews,¹ from AgResearch Limited, participated in this discussion and gave a presentation on the European Welfare Quality Scheme. Key points from the presentation included:

- Animal welfare indicators need to be simple, objective and assessable, and preferably directed towards reducing the need for enforcement by prosecution.
- Even with outcome-based standards, it could be difficult for producers to interpret definitions to know when to act; that information should be available.
- Other features of appropriate measures included their validity (relevance to welfare); the relevance of legal requirements; reliability; feasibility of use; predictivity and farming relevance, and historical recording.
- The European Welfare Quality research project is part of a well-funded, planned move towards the standardisation, maintenance and management of livestock welfare and labelling in Europe.
- A trend towards 'positive welfare'.

One possible objective was to develop a 'New Zealand Inc' position (alignment of government and industry) on how to move forward, depoliticising animal welfare while taking into account that New Zealand's aspirations might not match those of the European Union.

Arising from the discussion, it was proposed that a stakeholder workshop be convened in Wellington in 2008, following the format of the successful stakeholder workshop to discuss options for encouraging the use of pain relief for production animals, held in 2006. The 2008 workshop would include presentations on welfare indicators; NZ industry organisations' QA programmes; international perspectives; outcome-based minimum standards and indicators in codes of welfare; and public and consumer expectations, to provide attendees with an overview of trends in New Zealand and to establish a framework for discussions in small groups. The workshop on 1 April 2008 was the result.

A list of attendees at the workshop is attached as Appendix One.

¹ Who is a member of the European Welfare Quality Board.

Speakers' Presentations

The workshop was opened by Hon. Jim Anderton, Minister of Agriculture.

Hon Jim Anderton's opening address:

"I would like to commend the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee for being proactive in addressing animal welfare issues.

The issues around animal welfare are always topical.

They are particularly sensitive for New Zealand because so much of our economy is based on animal-derived products.

But we have interests far beyond the directly economic.

We are not only farmers. We are also consumers and, fundamentally, we are guardians of our own ethical behaviour.

Ethics and humanity are central to animal welfare.

I'm not naïve about the issues. Starting out in the workforce in the fifties and sixties, I spent enough time in the freezing works to see a few things that would make us cringe today. It made me cringe then.

It's not hard to think of examples where the issues are troubling – from sow stalling to broiler chickens and more.

Most sectors are affected. For example, in dairying, herd sizes have grown from the days when a cockie made a living milking seventy or eighty cows to an average today of over three hundred. If intensification leads to stresses in the system – like declining reproductive performance, thin cows, and lameness – then there are animal welfare issues to confront.

We need to be practical in confronting challenges. I've seen enough of our agriculture to know that practical demands can leave very little room for the sentimental.

And I suggest to you that the most practical approach for New Zealand is to have high ethical standards. Standards that are admired around the world.

That won't always mean we agree with other countries about what the most ethical position is, but nor should we be coy about the issues or overcomplicate them.

I've seen a debate, for example, about what the term 'animal welfare' actually means.

The term is very straightforward to the lay person.

To the public, 'animal welfare' means avoiding unnecessary suffering. It means avoiding cruelty. It means providing a reasonable standard of humane care for sentient species.

The public expects that animals we care for should be healthy. An animal should be properly fed and comfortable. Treatment should be received when it is needed. Animals should be destroyed humanely.

There is nothing complicated about these standards or these ideas. It's up to industry to embrace them.

There will be some dispute over how to apply ethical standards in practice. I know that. The example of hens comes to mind. Reasonable people can disagree about best practice because we are unsure what approach reduces suffering most.

The Animal Welfare Act requires a balance of things that are easy to measure, like productivity, reproductive performance and health, with other factors like how an animal feels about its environment.

When it writes codes of welfare the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee considers all of these factors along with issues like the natural behaviour of animals.

We should search for how best to ensure we meet acceptable levels of animal welfare.

We should not approach the search from the perspective of trying to balance productivity with ethical management.

Our ambition should be to do the right thing.

The challenge should be always to do better, and we should look to be innovators and leaders.

For one thing, it is New Zealand's niche in the world.

In our markets consumers are becoming more and more demanding.

They are asking searching questions about issues like environmental responsibility. And they're asking about animal welfare and the quality standards of our production processes.

The future for New Zealand's primary exports will be in having the best answer to those questions. There is no future in trying to compete on price against emerging low cost producers. We have to compete by guaranteeing the quality of our production as a whole. It's not just a matter of an individual producer or two trying to stake out a position. Consumers will form an opinion about the New Zealand brand as a whole.

If we don't meet the expectations of our customers – and even if we can't assure our customers of our standards, then we face potentially very damaging risks to our export base.

Sound ethical standards of animal welfare are our niche and our risk management strategy. And most of all they are the right thing to do.

This is not just a consumer issue. We need to be ahead of the game on our regulatory responses.

In Europe, a welfare quality research project has been looking at the integration of animal welfare into the food quality chain for five years, with plenty of funding from the European Union.

Forty-four institutes and universities from thirteen European countries and four Latin American countries are involved.

That project is aimed at responding to public concerns and consumer demand with reliable on-farm monitoring systems and product information systems. It is developing practical strategies, specific to each species, to improve animal welfare.

Over in the UK, a variety of animal welfare assurance and certification schemes exist.

The UK's Farm Animal Welfare Council has raised the possibility of national standards of animal welfare. They could see bronze, silver and gold labelling (with bronze being the minimum acceptable standard.)

If that is introduced, it will unquestionably affect us.

We have already been asked by the chairman of the UK Farm Animal Welfare Council, Professor Christopher Wathe, during his visit here in 2006, how we know whether animal welfare standards are being observed.

These are not small issues for us, even if we think we are able to put our own practices favourably up against those of any other country in the world.

I get a huge volume of letters into my office about animal welfare issues.

New Zealand has not been a target of some high profile campaigns – like the World Society for the Protection of Animals campaign against the long-distance transportation of livestock for slaughter. But we need to keep ahead of developments.

Late last year we saw an example of how some misguided campaigns can receive widespread attention. The former Mrs McCartney – Heather Mills – lent her name to a campaign claiming no one can be an environmentalist if they eat meat and dairy.

Her claim was wrong. But it is a reminder about the need for New Zealanders to have the facts to back up our claims. High profile campaigns that could affect us do come up. Some people could be swayed by them.

We need to be vigilant. We need to make sure our house is clean. We should also recognise there is a rising tide of consumer activism. Consumers are aware of the quality of what we eat. If we get our act together we can benefit.

The bar is going to keep going up. Other countries are going to lift their game. The science available to help the process is going to get better. The demands of consumers are going to keep increasing. The demands of regulators will, too.

Just as with rising concern about climate, our strategy has to be to get ahead of the wave and ride it. We can't afford to try to fight it off.

We have to be leaders in measuring animal welfare. We have to be leaders in the techniques, as well as in the substantive results, of our measuring.

I hope this workshop will come up with some positive conclusions about how to meet these standards.

The answers will need some research and science.

The government is coming to the table on that score, with a partnership fund called New Zealand Fast Forward.

Most of you in this room will know about Fast Forward by now.

A \$700 million fund is being created to match private sector investment in research and development in the pastoral and food sectors.

I am aware of disappointment among many that the opposition would axe Fast Forward. I think it's inexplicable.

But I know Fast Forward could help to deepen our research into animal welfare. And therefore it could help improve the market position of our animal based industries.

We will need to ensure, we have the right tools to measure animal welfare.

So one very important priority for research is to find effective indicators of the welfare status of animals in production systems.

It's not always easy. Measuring how an animal 'feels' about its environment is awkward, at least.

Measurement alone is not enough.

We also need clear direction about how to respond when the evidence of our measuring shows animal welfare is being compromised.

This is about much more than blatant disregard for animal welfare that finishes up in court.

It is about how we ensure we intervene and remedy a situation when an indicator shows a deviation from acceptable expectations.

I look forward to hearing your views about consumer assurance schemes.

Do they educate consumers about the real welfare issues in particular production systems?

Are consumers simply relying on the reputation of the organisation giving the assurance, such as when the SPCA provides assurance about eggs – and is that robust enough?

New Zealand has a lot of standing globally in animal welfare matters.

Barry O'Neil of Biosecurity New Zealand was made president of the World Organisation for Animal Health.

David Bayvel, as Director of Animal Welfare, chaired the Permanent Animal Welfare Working Group of the OIE, the international organisation that looks at scientific veterinary information.

This tells me we have expertise and leadership to draw on and it should give us confidence about our progress forwards.

I would like to encourage everyone at this workshop to take a broad view of the issues.

The challenge to us is to look ahead and beyond day to day demands, to the future of animal welfare surveillance and assurance.

So I have much pleasure in formally declaring the workshop open and wishing you every success as you get down to work."

The following presentations are also to be found on this CD:

Sam McIvor New Zealand Pork Industry Board	Not pigheaded about welfare
Michael Brooks Poultry Industry Association of New Zealand and Egg Producers Federation of New Zealand	The poultry industry perspective
Jessie Chan and Ariana Hemara-Wahanui Meat and Wool New Zealand	MWENZ perspective
John Tacon Deer Industry New Zealand	A deer industry perspective
Rob Gregory DairyNZ	The animal welfare programme of work
Peter Mason Royal New Zealand SPCA	SPCA accreditation schemes: an overview
Lindsay Matthews AgResearch Limited	Measurement and monitoring for welfare assurance: issues and research requirements
David Mellor Massey University	Animal Welfare: can we assess it, can we not?
Jim Webster AgResearch Limited	Label-based animal welfare initiatives from North America
Michelle Edge Symbio Alliance	Animal welfare: a quality characteristic – the role of animal welfare quality assurance in underpinning commercial and regulatory requirements
Richard Wild NZFSA Verification Agency	How do we measure the level of compliance with the Animal Welfare Act 1999 and the codes?
Cheryl O'Connor MAF Biosecurity New Zealand	Outcome-based minimum standards in codes of welfare
Lindsay Burton Fonterra	Fonterra's approach to dairy cattle welfare assurance in New Zealand

Summaries of Working Groups' Discussions

Participants were divided into four Working Groups, with the following discussion topics:

1. How do we assure consumers and the public that the welfare of our production animals is of an acceptably high standard?
2. How do we design effective assurance programmes?
3. What are the roles of industry and government in designing and operating assurance programmes?
4. How should compliance with, and enforcement of, assurance programmes be undertaken?

Summaries of each Working Group's conclusions are contained in the following section.

Working Group One

How do we assure consumers and the public that the welfare of our production animals is of an acceptably high standard?

Group One was asked to consider:

- Is animal welfare a “quality” issue? Compared to all other assurances required by your consumers, where does welfare assurance rank? Is its importance growing, getting less or staying the same?
- Does welfare assurance attract a price premium or is it a cost of doing business? Is there a cost of not providing it? Do we know what the costs are?
- Do we know what consumers want? Is that the same as what they want and are prepared to pay for?
- Is it enough to meet a minimum standard (for example code of welfare minimum standards) or do we have to do better than that?
- How does New Zealand rank in the world on welfare of production animal species? What do we have to do to maintain/improve our position?

Group One considered animal welfare to be part of a product's overall ‘acceptability’. The group considered that other than animal welfare, the assurances required by customers would be: food safety, quality, the environment and sustainability.² Although the group felt that animal welfare was growing in importance, they ranked the above assurances in the following order:

1. Food safety / disease status (or health) of an animal
2. Quality
3. Animal welfare
4. Environment and sustainability

Group One considered that whether ‘animal welfare assurance’ would attract a price premium, or was a cost of doing business, depended on the product and the market. For example, the ‘premium’ could be gaining access to a particular market, such as the European Union. The group predicted that in the future, providing animal welfare assurance would eventually become a cost of doing business, depending on the market, the product, and the buyer. The group considered that the costs were unknown until such time as the quality assurance programmes were in place. Cost efficiencies could be developed and implemented from then on.

Group One considered that consumers did want more easily “digestible” animal welfare information on products, but acknowledged that there were differences between consumer statements versus consumer behaviour. Group One referred to research which showed that in both New Zealand and the UK, 80% of people surveyed said they would pay more for an increased animal welfare standard, but in fact, only 34% were actually willing to pay for it.

Group One considered that it was enough to meet a minimum standard, when talking about a NAWAC minimum standard. NAWAC minimum standards reflect the lowest acceptable level agreed to, at a particular point in time. The exception to this, though, is when section 73 of the Animal Welfare Act 1999 applied in relation to the standard. In such a case, a proportion of buyers will pay a premium for products that exceed minimum standards,

² Another workshop participant challenged Group One's conclusions, commenting that consumer drivers had not been accurately reflected. This participant considered that the key consumer drivers, at least in relation to poultry meat, for example, would include price, convenience, versatility, and healthiness.

as the minimum standard is not an acceptable level to them. The group considered that increasingly, to remain internationally competitive, it would be necessary to do better than meet minimum standards.

Group One considered that New Zealand was equal to the best in the world in regards to the creation and management of animal welfare standards. They felt that New Zealand standards were regarded as at least equivalent to those in the European Union. To stay in this position, though, New Zealand would need to:

- Demonstrate compliance with animal welfare standards.
- Continue being pro-active in international liaison.
- Continue being non-judgemental in its attitude to other countries' animal welfare standards.

Working Group Two

How do we design effective assurance programmes?

Group Two was asked to consider:

- What are the key features of an effective assurance programme?
- What is the case for common design principles applying to sector-specific programmes?
- What are the pros and cons of a national strategy for the design and implementation of welfare assurance programmes?
- How should welfare standards be structured and measured – inputs versus outcomes?
- What is the role of welfare indicators? Do we have enough measurable indicators? What are the deficiencies?

Group Two debated whether in fact there was a need for quality assurance schemes. Overall, the group considered that they were necessary, to meet compliance and trading drivers. Group Two identified the key features of an effective assurance programme as being:

- Non regulatory
- Fit for purpose (different markets etc)
- Buy in / acceptable for producers
- Buy in / acceptable for customers
- Simple
- Practical
- Cost effective for every party
- Able to guarantee its objectives
- Able to meet ethical considerations
- Able to add value

Group Two considered that design principles applying to sector-specific programmes had to relate to fitness for purpose, but the principles adopted throughout the programmes could be similar. For example, the Five Freedoms could be used as a basis for animal welfare measures. Group Two considered that Codex/HACCP principles needed to be applied to programmes in order to establish methodology frameworks. The frameworks also needed to have enough detail or content in them to provide an explanation as to why they should be adopted. If this detail was missing then appropriate uptake of the programme would be difficult.

Group Two considered that the design and implementation of welfare assurance programmes should be specific to each industry. This would ensure a better likelihood of achieving results as well as reducing cost. There should also be national linkage throughout the chain from production to processor.

Group Two identified the following as advantages of “within industry” design and implementation of welfare assurance programmes:

- Better pay back
- Less cost
- Forms a common baseline
- Transparency
- Supports New Zealand Inc brand image

Group Two identified the following as disadvantages of a national strategy for the design and implementation of welfare assurance programmes:

- Difficult to fit the purpose for specific industries and customers
- Could add cost without gain or benefit
- Have very diverse needs
- Could be done for the sake of doing rather than for the welfare benefit of the animal
- Would lose the chance to go back
- Might prevent meeting all customers' requirements
- Differing markets

In relation to structure, Group Two considered that an appropriate ethical framework was needed for the development of measures to meet customers' requirements. It was necessary to know customers' views, in order to understand what exactly has to be assured or achieved.

Outcome based measures won't work for all customers, so it is important to enter into a dialogue with them, advising that the focus should be on the animal. Consistent and repeatable measures are needed to enable a clear interpretation of welfare standards over time, and between different locations.

Group Two considered that the role of indicators was to provide guidance to producers on animal welfare outcomes. Indicators act to help producers receive "advance warning" of the need for management change and in so doing will help avoid potential "disasters".

Do we have enough measurable indicators? Group Two considered that we did not have enough finer gradations of animal welfare indicators. Group Two raised the following points in relation to this question:

- We might have indicators, but do we know we have them?
- We have few indicators that are validated beyond minimum.
- More physiological indicators need to be linked to behavioural indicators.
- We have little idea about the links between the inputs and the outcomes for animals.
- We have little that can be turned into a scale, and when we do, is it actually linear?

The deficiencies of indicators were identified as follows:

- There is no validated information on animal trade-offs when systems don't provide for all their needs.
- How does one account for a trade-off? Do you sacrifice one freedom for another?
- How do you integrate these and how do these relate to productivity characteristics?
- Can measures be integrated by using productivity measures and vice versa so animals can express their potential?
- There is a deficiency of mental experience measures, but are these actually necessary?
- There is a deficiency of measures which are repeatable.

Working Group Three

What are the roles of industry and government in designing and operating assurance programmes?

Group Three was asked to consider:

- Should assurance programmes be voluntary or mandatory? If mandatory, imposed and assessed by whom?
- What role, if any, does government have in auditing/verifying/giving legal teeth to industry programmes?
- How should the extent of compliance with minimum standards in codes of welfare be assessed and by whom?
- Should inspectors under the Animal Welfare Act have access to the results of assurance programmes and/or audit reports and, if so, under what conditions?

Group Three considered that assurance programmes should be voluntary rather than mandatory, in order to maximise willing industry compliance. The group considered that a mandatory assurance programme could be implemented as a back-up, if necessary. The group considered that regulatory involvement should only be a last resort.

Group Three considered that the government should have very little role in industry assurance programmes. The government is responsible for setting standards in Acts and regulations, and it is up to industry to interpret and apply those standards for their production. The government's 'legal teeth' should apply only to breaches of Acts and regulations.

Group Three agreed that compliance with minimum standards needed to be assessed, ideally by industry, but if industry were unable to do this, then by third party auditors, with a 'back-stop' of independent regulatory enforcement, where required.

Group Three agreed that inspectors under the Animal Welfare Act should have an ability to access audit reports and assurance programmes in situations where there was a breach of an Act or regulation, or to assist with an investigation. This information could also be used for high-level reporting (eg industry trends), as is already the case.

Working Group Four

How should compliance with, and enforcement of, assurance programmes be undertaken?

Group Four was asked to consider:

- Should farmers/growers be required to maintain records of their compliance with minimum standards in codes of welfare or the standards in industry programmes?
- Should farmer/grower records and the minimum standards in codes of welfare or the standards in industry programmes be subject to an independent audit of compliance?
- What action follows evidence of non-compliance?
- Who polices compliance?
- Where should the costs fall?

Group Four considered that generally (depending on the nature of a quality assurance scheme), requirements for the maintenance of records should be at industry level, not farmer or grower level. Monitoring and auditing of compliance should also be conducted at an industry level.

Group Four considered that action following evidence of non-compliance with minimum standards in codes of welfare etc often came down to commercial or industry drivers (e.g. reduced profit margins). In high value industries, animal welfare issues often arise from by-product animals or cull animals. Non-compliance with codes of welfare is challenging to measure and difficult to translate into breaches of the Act.

Group Four considered that compliance was not currently being policed (although this may be covered in industry quality assurance programmes), although enforcement was carried out. For example, we usually do not know when animals are not accepted for transport, even though it is a question in some processing plants.

Group Four considered that the costs associated with non-compliance should fall on the party that failed, and that this could be used as a deterrent to others.

NAWAC's Conclusions

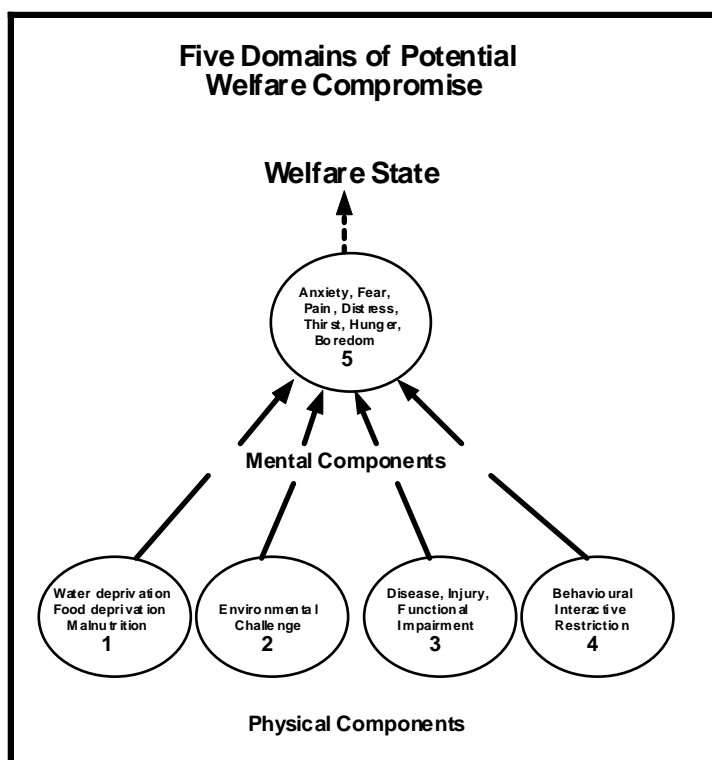
Definitions of Animal Welfare

There are numerous definitions of animal welfare but no universally accepted view. Many of the differences of view can be explained by differences of view on the weightings that are placed on the biological functioning of animals, an animal's emotional state as it copes with and adapts to its environment and the opportunity to express natural behaviours. The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) has described animal welfare as follows:

"Animal welfare is a complex multi-faceted public policy issue that includes important scientific, ethical, economic and political dimensions. Because of its growing importance in society, animal welfare must be addressed in a scientifically credible manner."

While this is a description rather than a definition, it helps explain why there is no unanimity on a definition.

In his presentation, Professor David Mellor posited that getting agreement on a definition of animal welfare was not needed to make progress. He described the five domains of animal welfare as illustrated in the following diagram. Whilst it may be difficult to measure the mental state of an animal, it is reasonable to assume that if the other four domains are appropriately managed, an acceptable welfare state can be attained. Of course, there is debate about what "acceptable" means and whether "acceptable" is good enough. At least, this assumption offers a basis from which to take practical steps to achieve good welfare outcomes while continuing research to extend our understanding of how animals are affected both positively and negatively by farming systems and practices and how we might measure their emotional reactions to those systems and practices. In its development of codes of welfare, NAWAC follows this pragmatic approach.



Sector Assurance Programmes

The presentations by the industry representatives demonstrated a consistent view that animal welfare assurances are an important component of their overall quality assurance programmes. These programmes incorporate both regulatory/ market access and customer driven components. At this time, animal welfare assurance requirements are largely driven by consumers or, by proxy, retailers. New Zealand's trade policy position is that animal welfare should not be a market access issue; and New Zealand is opposed to including animal welfare considerations in WTO agreements. Nonetheless, a partnership between government and the farming industries in maintaining an international profile of concern for animal welfare is an important demonstration that we are a civilised society and the adoption of what can be seen as world best practice in animal friendly farming is critical to the positioning of our products. In this partnership, government is seen as the standard setter and enforcer and industry as the implementer of programmes to demonstrate that standards are met. There was no support for the notion of national QA programmes mandated by government.

In the dairy, pig and poultry industries, the QA programmes are largely industry-based, whereas in the sheep, beef cattle and deer industries, programmes run by meat processing companies and wool marketers have largely replaced or supplanted industry-based programmes. The meat industry QA programmes are seen by the meat processors as points of differentiation, whereas producers would prefer a single industry-based programme that gives them greater flexibility in making their own marketing decisions. The shift from a strongly developed deer industry programme to company programmes is particularly notable.

Where codes of welfare are in place, the minimum standards underpin the QA programmes. Where they are still being developed, the content of minimum standards has been anticipated and incorporated in the QA programmes.

Overall, the picture that emerged was one of active development of QA programmes, innovative ways of advising members what the welfare standards are, the introduction of self-audit and third party audits of compliance with standards and the commissioning of research to deal with specific welfare issues and identify indicators of welfare status. At this time, the focus of the programmes tends to be largely internal and directed towards achieving understanding and uptake among farmers. Comparatively little effort is going into explaining to consumers what is being done or achieved or using the results of the programmes as a positive marketing tool.

The Royal New Zealand SPCA accreditation programmes for barn and free range eggs and free range pork present an interesting contrast. They are based on a distinctive ethical position, which is used as a point of differentiation in the market place and is branded and actively promoted. The welfare standards associated with the programmes are subject to compliance audit which is necessary to maintain accreditation. Whether the welfare of the animals in the programmes is significantly better than conventional production systems as is claimed goes to the heart of the debate over the definition of animal welfare.

International Trends

The workshop noted that concern for animal welfare now occupies a much higher profile in societal attitudes and in the decisions that consumers make about buying choices than in the past. This heightened awareness is due in part to increasingly effective lobbying by activists and campaigns promoted by celebrities. Surveys of consumer attitudes (e.g. Eurobarometer, Oklahoma State University USA survey) have demonstrated a high level of awareness of animal welfare (although not necessarily an understanding of what constitutes good or bad welfare) among those surveyed and evidence that they consider animal welfare when they make purchase choices based on their perceptions of the welfare of the animals that produce the product they are buying. What is less clear is their willingness to pay more for "animal friendly" products. No similar surveys have been undertaken in New Zealand but a UMR

survey of attitudes to the impact of dairying on the environment and animal welfare showed that approximately half of those surveyed were concerned about the impacts in both areas.

Animal welfare labelling, to assist consumers to make informed choices, and associated programmes to measure animal welfare performance are now matters for discussion in many countries. In Europe, the thinking is moving towards a mandated system supporting consumer labelling. The EU Community Action Plan on the Protection and Welfare of Animals 2006-2010 proposes to upgrade existing minimum standards for animal protection and welfare and to introduce standardised animal welfare indicators that allow the hierarchy of welfare standards applied (from minimum to higher) to be classified. On this basis, labelling will be explored in a systematic manner. The Action Plan is supported by a large research programme (discussed below). Whether and to what extent the mandated programme will supplant existing trade-based labelling and assurance programmes remains to be seen.

In the USA, welfare labelling with supporting assurance programmes remains the province of humane societies and food retailers. Welfare legislation is largely at a state level with minimal federal involvement. Consumers' views are strongly influenced by activist campaigns and retailer programmes which they believe are more credible than official assurances. Indeed, the credibility of official assurances has been eroded by some well-publicised failures.

The Australian Animal Welfare Strategy provides the umbrella for the development of national industry standards for the principal livestock sectors and the integration of the standards into industry QA programmes. Animal welfare is treated as a quality issue.

The New Zealand industries accept the growing demand for assurance from consumers that production animals in New Zealand have a good standard of welfare and that industries are proactive in their development of the means to provide such assurances. For exported products, these programmes support the New Zealand "clean green" image and allow them to give the assurances required by their customers. There is a clear preference for assurance to remain the responsibility of the industries, backed by government as the standard setter. Being able to share experience and learn from one another was seen as a benefit but there was no support for a more centrally managed approach to assurance programmes.

Research and Development

Dr Lindsay Matthews summarised research and development needs in the following schema:

Fundamental research to establish stakeholder acceptable/adoptable indicators and thresholds requires

- Novel measurement tools
- Development of scales, thresholds, weightings for biological functions and animal perceptions

These can be applied to develop practical indicators and farming practices

- Husbandry practices
- Evidence for welfare standards
- Best practice guidelines
- Benchmarking
- Audit capability

The following table is a summary of research currently underway:

RESEARCH SPONSOR(S)	PROJECT
MAF, EPFNZ	Comparative assessment of layer hen welfare in New Zealand
MAF SFF, Mainland, EPFNZ	Evaluation of furnished colony systems for the New Zealand egg market
NZPIB	Development of an on-farm welfare assessment tool using animal-based indicators
NZPIB	Benchmarking sow housing and management systems (includes review of overseas research)
Meat & Wool NZ, MLA	Welfare assessment tools for cattle and sheep – includes body condition score/stress relationship, effect of rate of loss of condition in cattle and sheep, qualitative behavioural assessment, behavioural correlates of physiological stress
DINZ	Methods for delevetting spikers using high tension tourniquets
DairyNZ, AgResearch	<p>Research to define welfare indicators for dairy cattle, best practice guidelines, on-farm monitoring of welfare and analysis of consumer requirements. This programme is the subject of a bid for FRST funding.</p> <p>If the bid is unsuccessful, DairyNZ will fund R&D on the extension of best practice guidelines, development of the animal husbandry skill base and the establishment of methodologies for on-farm monitoring of animal welfare.</p>

AgResearch and DairyNZ have a close association with the European Welfare Quality Project (Dr Lindsay Matthews is a member of the Scientific Board), a €17 million programme involving 44 institutes and universities in thirteen European countries and four Latin American countries. This research programme is a key element in the European Action Plan.

In addition to the established research programmes, New Zealand industry organisations are putting substantial effort into development of their quality assurance programmes incorporating what is already known. Codes of welfare are key elements in this development. A question that will need to be addressed in the development of these programmes is whether the minimum standards in codes are perceived to be baseline standards that should be exceeded. In other words, industries may be expected to strive for standards higher than a baseline level and demonstrate that they are aiming for positive welfare outcomes, not merely avoiding negative outcomes.

Outcome-based standards

As far as possible, NAWAC writes minimum standards as animal-oriented welfare outcomes to be achieved, rather than input-oriented facilities or systems standards. The objective we are pursuing for future standards can be summarised in the following “formula”:

Welfare outcome-focussed minimum standard + measurable/assessable indicator(s) = auditable welfare QA system

NAWAC sees the benefits of this approach as:

- From a regulatory point of view, standards that focus on the animal and its minimum required welfare outcomes offer greater utility and are likely to be more long-lived than prescriptive facilities-based standards that become outmoded by new developments.

- Animal owners can use their own expertise, experience, available technology and judgement to meet the standard.
- The standards can be more readily understood and accepted by those who must abide by them and by the public.
- The standards and their associated indicators can be effective tools for those who have to ensure compliance with them or enforce them.

Some input standards are unavoidable where a self-evident non-negotiable welfare outcome is being sought but in most cases, input guidelines can be included in the code of welfare in support of the outcome-based minimum standards or recommended best practices but do not need to be part of them.

Compliance and enforcement

A “back of an envelope” calculation based on animal welfare cases reported to the NZFSA Verification Agency and MAF’s Enforcement Directorate estimated that about 2.5% of 30,000 commercial farms had an animal welfare “event” in 2006. Approximately one quarter of these were referred for consideration for prosecution under the offence provisions of the Animal Welfare Act. The relatively small number of farms that have a welfare event place large demands on the time and resources of MAF’s Enforcement Directorate. At present, there are no means of knowing what proportion of the 97.5% of farms where an incident was not recorded have an animal welfare status lower than is required by codes of welfare.

NAWAC respects the desire of farming industry organisations to develop and administer quality assurance programmes that incorporate animal welfare standards and agrees that industry self-regulation is likely to be more acceptable to farmers than centrally managed or imposed programmes. NAWAC is also pleased with the workshop conclusion that NAWAC, the MAF Enforcement Directorate and Animal Welfare Act-appointed inspectors should have access to the results of audits of compliance with industry quality assurance programmes. This conclusion is in keeping with the concept of a partnership between government as the standard setter and enforcer and industry as the implementer of quality assurance programmes.

There was insufficient time at the workshop to develop the details of how NAWAC or inspectors might access the results of industry QA programmes without compromising the integrity of the programmes or appearing as “big brother”. The administrators of industry programmes will need to take the initiative of instigating regulatory action, whether through imposing penalties available to them (e.g. payments withheld) or by involving an inspector.

NAWAC needs access to the results of the QA programmes to evaluate the relevance and effectiveness of codes of welfare, the enforceability of minimum standards, the appropriateness of welfare indicators, industry or market developments which should lead to review of code provisions etc.

Conclusions

NAWAC is pleased with the level of support for this workshop and the active participation of those who attended. We see this as a good first step. We will give priority to the development of codes of welfare that include outcome-based minimum standards and associated indicators. We will monitor the evolution of industry QA programmes and will support their development to the extent we are able. We will continue to work with industry organisations to align codes of welfare with their QA objectives. We welcome feedback on any matter related to the welfare of production animals at any time.

Closing Speech from David Bayvel

David Bayvel, Director Animal Welfare, MAF Biosecurity New Zealand, closed the meeting, offering the following comments on behalf of MAF's Director-General, Deputy Director-General (Biosecurity) and himself.

Much progress has been made over the last 20 years in relation to animal welfare, including the establishment of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee and its successor, NAWAC. This committee has provided a platform for dialogue and discussion with stakeholders in order to try and find solutions to animal welfare issues. NAWAC is very highly regarded and includes a high calibre membership and Chair. As well as developing codes of welfare, NAWAC has taken the lead in addressing strategic issues such as pain management and animal welfare assurance.

In current international positioning, New Zealand is viewed positively, with contributions to animal welfare being made from across industry, universities, CRIs and the Royal New Zealand SPCA.

However, we need to continue to address the ethical dimension of animal welfare as change takes place. We must not become complacent.

Although animal welfare was not a component of the Uruguay round (of WTO negotiations), there are parties that remain actively committed to achieving the inclusion of animal welfare in the WTO.

The recent example of an EU halt on imports of beef from Brazil demonstrates the importance of public perception and political decision-making. Another example was the PETA campaign against mulesing in Australia and the difficulties caused by the lack of a united industry viewpoint on these issues.

We (the government) want to position ourselves as a responsible manager of animal welfare change. What complementary role is each industry group setting itself in terms of animal welfare change?

Dr Bayvel thanked Peter O'Hara (Chair of NAWAC) and the NAWAC committee members for their hard work in facilitating this strategically important workshop, and all attendees for their contributions to its valuable outcomes.

Appendix One: Attendees

Speaker Attendees

Name	Organisation
Lindsay Matthews	AgResearch Limited
Jim Webster	AgResearch Limited
Rob Gregory	DairyNZ
John Tacon	Deer Industry New Zealand
Lindsay Burton	Fonterra
Hon. Jim Anderton	Minister of Agriculture
Cheryl O'Connor	MAF Animal Welfare Directorate
Richard Wild	NZFSA Verification Agency
Michael Brooks	Poultry Industry Association of New Zealand and Egg Producers Federation of New Zealand
Professor David Mellor	Massey University
Peter Mason	Royal New Zealand SPCA
Michelle Edge	Symbio Alliance
Sam McIvor	New Zealand Pork Industry Board
Jessie Chan	Meat and Wool New Zealand Limited
Ariana Hemara-Wahanui	Meat and Wool New Zealand Limited

Industry Representatives

Name	Organisation
Karin Schutz	AgResearch Limited
Adele Arnold	AgResearch Limited
Nita Harding	AsureQuality Limited
Pat Turton	AsureQuality Limited
Lindsay Fung	Deer Industry New Zealand
Kevin Cresswell	Meat Industry Association of New Zealand
Frances Clement	New Zealand Pork Industry Board
Keith Kelly	Federated Farmers of New Zealand (Inc) (New Zealand Meat and Fibre Producers)
Tom Cloke	Road Transport Forum

Veterinary Representatives

Name	Organisation
Virginia Williams	New Zealand Veterinary Association

Regulatory Environment

Name	Organisation
Daile Holz	NZFSA Approvals and ACVM Group
Nasser Ahmed	NZFSA Approvals and ACVM Group
Paulina Rodriguez	NZFSA Approvals and ACVM Group

NAWAC

Name	Organisation
Peter O'Hara	NAWAC Chair
Selwyn Dobbison	NAWAC Deputy Chair
Gwyneth Verkerk	NAWAC
Bruce Ross	NAWAC
Jenny Prattley	NAWAC
Peggy Burrows	NAWAC
Phil Cowan	NAWAC
Hilton Collier	NAWAC
Don Nicolson	NAWAC
Roger Poland	NAWAC/MAF
Joanna Tuckwell	NAWAC Secretary/MAF
Paula Lemow	NAWAC Assistant Secretary/MAF

Other

Name	Organisation
Gregor Fyfe	Freedom Farms New Zealand Limited
Mark Fisher	Kotare Bioethics
Helen Keyes	MAF Communications
Lisa Gibbison	MAF Communications
Greg Reid	MAF Enforcement Directorate
Natalie Nesbitt	MAF Biosecurity New Zealand Policy
Fleur Matthews	MAF Biosecurity New Zealand Policy
Nicki Cross	MAF Animal Welfare Directorate
Emma Fabrega-Romans	Massey University (EC Visitor)
Ian Barugh	Massey University (IFNHH)

Appendix Two: Glossary

ACVM	Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines
DINZ	Deer Industry New Zealand
EC	European Commission
EPFNZ	Egg Producers Federation of New Zealand (Inc)
HACCP	Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (risk-based approach to managing food safety)
IFNHH	Institute of Food, Nutrition and Human Health (Massey University)
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
MAF SFF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Sustainable Farming Fund
MLA	Meat & Livestock Australia
NAWAC	National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NZFSA	New Zealand Food Safety Authority
NZPIB	New Zealand Pork Industry Board
PETA	People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals
Royal New Zealand SPCA	Royal New Zealand Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA)
WTO	World Trade Organization