

National Animal Welfare Bill 2005

rrat.sen@aph.gov.au

To: Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
Submission for the inquiry into the proposed National Animal Welfare Bill
2005

From: Pip Valentine

Animal welfare depends upon and reflects human behaviour. The community has an expectation, provided in the legislation, that all animals deserve to be treated mercifully. At the same time industry has been allowed to circumvent this by establishing codes of practice that has resulted in a situation where companion animals are protected yet farm animals-‘production animals’- as well as animals used in research and for entertainment are not. Wildlife occupies a different space whereby although all native animals are wholly protected, their welfare is utterly compromised by the granting of permits to poison, hunt, shoot and otherwise terrify and kill them.

This enquiry must consider the outcome of a similar enquiry in the English parliament which resulted in the Brambell Report of 1965 establishing five principles of basic welfare for all farm animals. These are:

- Freedom from hunger and thirst;
- Freedom from discomfort;
- Freedom from pain, injury and disease;
- Freedom from fear and distress
- Freedom to express natural behaviours

These are very basic, fundamental concepts yet are denied to the majority of animals reared for food and clothing in this country. The needs of our animals are humble, they are living creatures whose sentience has been proven beyond doubt, and is no less than that attributed to our companion dogs and cats. It is a sad indictment of contemporary Australian society to treat these animals as machines, and the vast majority of people are horrified by the reality of intensive farming- which is why the doors are kept firmly closed. The holocaust has not ended for animals. I would like to see this inquiry expand the definition of cruelty to cover all animals. What is not acceptable for a dog must also be unacceptable for a cow, sheep, pig, bird, wallaby, rat and everyone else.

My specific concerns about this legislation are:

Intensive animal production- what used to be called farming.

Live animal transport and exports

The conditions and justification for keeping animals in laboratories

The use of animals in entertainment

The issuing of permits to poison and hunt native animals.

The use of inhumane methods of slaughter for other animals.

Intensive animal production has done away with the five freedoms. Animals are not considered to be sentient creatures with needs and interests.

Animals are housed in appalling conditions- battery egg-laying hens live their short, miserable lives with no more room than an A4 piece of paper; sows are kept confined in concrete and metal cages barely wider than their bodies, cattle are penned in feedlots, exposed to elements and fed a diet far from their natural pasture. These animals cannot walk around, interact with their young, feel the sun on their face or the grass beneath their feet, they cannot form their own relationships with each other as they do when treated humanely.

Chickens rescued from broiler sheds- reared for meat as 7 weeks from egg to plate- and those rescued from egg laying batteries very quickly commence normal chook behaviour like dust bathing. Sows rescued from piggeries wallow in mud they have never before encountered. The animals kept in barbaric factory farms are no less sensitive or instinctive than their free ranging counterparts. They don't forget, they don't adapt. They suffer constantly and the range of modifications used by 'farmers' including teeth cutting, tail docking and de-beaking- all done without anaesthetic- are an inevitable sequelae of a method of husbandry which tries to modify the animal to live in the wrong environment.

The environment needs to be changed.

Several European countries are legislating against intensive animal farms because of the indefensible and totally preventable cruelty involved.

Australia needs to follow. Every single animal involved in farming has a life, a face, a memory, the ability to feel pleasure and to suffer. Industry justifies cruelty by citing the demand people have for cheap meat, eggs, leather, and wool. We are a nation of obese, sick people with high blood pressure, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer. All of these are directly attributable to a diet high in animal products and an environment polluted with poison.

Animal transport needs to be addressed in a discussion of animal welfare legislation as this too has been co-opted by industry codes of practice. The live animal export trade is inherently cruel and must be banned. Current

cruelty prosecutions of a routine journey highlight the relentless suffering these gentle animals endure for the sake of company profits.

Animals in laboratories are tormented to try and find cures for diseases caused by over-indulgence by people of animals. Meaningless experiments are done, involving a lot of suffering. A few recent examples- two groups of dogs with artificially narrowed arteries were fed two kinds of beer; rats are given enough amphetamines to create a 'model' of schizophrenia then dosed with a new antipsychotic drug. New drugs on the market are not saving lives they are merely joining an expanding market.

Animals used in entertainment are regularly treated cruelly. The terror of an animal involved in rodeos is obvious and tighter enforcement of these kinds of events- and banning animal participation- should be considered.

Native animals need more protection from hunting, poisoning, trapping and other cruelty. Methods used to kill unwanted animals in the environment- cats, pigs, dogs, rabbits- must be humane. Fencing needs to be encouraged for farmers rather than poisons and the like.

The animals domesticated by people give us everything they have, and we give them abject misery in return. As a registered nurse I am regularly confronted by an expectation of compassion. The question of animal welfare is intrinsic to the kind of world in which we want to live. Animals don't vote and they don't speak. That should not mean we can do whatever we like and it doesn't justify cruelty. We owe them a merciful life and a merciful death, at the very least.

Please consider in your enquiry how these animals live. Go to an intensive farm, go to a slaughterhouse, view footage of live animal exports and ask yourselves what kind of world you want to live in, and what you want for those you care about. To treat compassion as finite, to deny it to fellow feeling beings, means the eventual consequence can only be no compassion for anyone. The choice between kindness and cruelty should be an easy one to make. Our humanity is at stake in this inquiry into animal welfare legislation.

Thank you for your time and for giving me the opportunity to make a submission to this very important issue.

Yours sincerely,

Pip Valentine
7 Cameray St

Devonport TAS 7310
03) 6427-8460
pipvalentine@yahoo.com.au