

**National Animal Welfare Bill 2005**

**Submission from Petra Gillan**

In Australia there is a total inequity between the way we provide protection to companion animals and animals that are used for hunting, entertainment, food and for research. The measure of a country's sophistication, in my book, is in direct proportion to the way it protects and respects its inhabitants – this includes our non-human inhabitants.

In particular practices used in the following need to be reviewed and action taken to cease the horrendous cruelty inflicted

### **Egg laying hens:**

The circumstances under which egg-laying hens are kept are abhorrent in the extreme, and the Government should address this issue, and ban battery cages (maybe with a phase-out period of three years).

Specifically there are number of aspects of this practice that add to the misery of these poor birds:

**De-beaking:** Because of the cramped conditions and the stress of the battery cage, the hens may become aggressive and attack one another. To stop this battery hens are de-beaked, this mutilation involves removing a third of the bird's beak using a red-hot blade. The hens are debeaked as chicks when they are 1-10 days old. The pain is immense and causes chicks extreme shock - some die. There are also long-term effects because the beak contains sensitive nerves which are exposed by cutting. This needs to be banned forthwith.

**Wire caging:** Caged hens suffer foot injuries from constantly standing on wire. As they cannot forage their claws grow long or become deformed, and can be caught in the wire. They also suffer broken claws and footpad dermatitis.

**Unnatural conditions:** They cannot dust-bathe or lay their eggs in a secluded nest. All these actions are natural to a hen, and not being able to fulfil them causes a great deal of stress and discomfort.

Results from published scientific studies show that confinement in battery cages prevents hens from exercising their limbs and is the main cause of hens suffering broken bones from bone weakness.

Battery cages are illegal in some countries such as Switzerland. The Australian Government should take a compassionate stance and ban battery cages also and insist on free range practices only.

*Sources: "Freerange Canberra" [www.freerangecanberra.com.au](http://www.freerangecanberra.com.au) and World Farming [http://www.ciwf.org.uk/publications/poultry\\_hens.html](http://www.ciwf.org.uk/publications/poultry_hens.html)*

### **Broiler Chicks:**

Broiler chicks are packed in their tens of thousands into sheds and, like their egg-laying "cousins," never see the light of day or feel grass under their feet. They are fed a diet of antibiotics and growth hormones, the former just to keep them alive in these appalling conditions, and the latter making them so grossly deformed that their legs cannot cope with the weight.

A limitation needs to be placed on the number of birds per enterprise, as well as limitations on the numbers of birds kept in sheds.

### **Pigs:**

Pigs are sentient beings and known to be as intelligent and sensitive as dogs, yet they are confined to concrete and metal cages barely larger than their own bodies for most of their lives. They never see daylight except when they are loaded onto trucks headed for the

slaughterhouse, by which time they are worn out from constant breeding and many are unable to walk.

There is no justification, moral or economic, for this cruel confinement in which a sow is lucky if she can move one step back or one step forward. Codes of Practice state that hooved animals become "footsore" from being confined on concrete surfaces, yet the "Model CoP for the Welfare of Animals - Pigs" provides for just that. Sows live in sow stalls until they are due to give birth, when they are moved to an even smaller structure, a farrowing crate - and there, she cannot even reach to touch her young. This denies the animals the most fundamental rights, the "Five Freedoms". Sow stalls are banned in the UK and Florida, and are being phased out in the EU.

The Australian public demands that the government do the same and end this appalling cruelty. Piglets' ears are notched, their tails cut off, their teeth clipped, and they are castrated without any anaesthetic or analgesia; this would be a criminal offence if they were cats or dogs. This double standard should not be maintained.

### **Live Export Trade:**

The live export trade is gut wrenchingly cruel and has been denounced as the gross cruelty that it is by various interest groups, and a WA exporter is facing cruelty charges over what was a voyage "representative of the industry" (Animals Australia, 2005). Animal welfare in the trade is measured solely by mortality rates, without regard to the fact that for every animal who dies, countless others suffer appallingly - blindness, lameness, salmonellosis (a form of gastro-enteritis), starvation (inanition, shy feeding), and trauma from brutal handling. The government and the industry openly state that they cannot influence animal welfare in importing countries, so no animals should be sent to countries which have absolutely no animal welfare safeguards in place. The journey is long and arduous, on third world wrecks of ships, most of which are registered under "flags of convenience", and those unlucky enough to survive the journey are the victims of horrific cruelty in the destination countries.

Review after review has failed to address these issues. The live export trade must end.

### **Animals in Saleyards:**

Animals in saleyards and feedlots are often left without food water or shelter (certainly in Tasmania at least). They are deprived of the use of their natural behaviours in conditions that are usually atrocious. Safeguards must be put into place to address the issue of "curfews" (denial of food and water in the animals' language), and shelter at these establishments. "Bobby" calves and young lambs often are too weak from being removed from their mothers to stand, and should never be loaded for transport.

In addition, animals are now routinely being transported on trucks from Western Australia to the Eastern states - simply because there is no journey time limit in the Model CoP.

Clearly this is a cruel, unnecessary and indefensible practice, and it must be banned. Animals should (if they must) be slaughtered as close as possible to the point of production.

### **Surgical mutilations:**

Mulesing and the docking of the tails of dairy cattle and horses must be banned. There is absolutely no evidence to suggest that there is any benefit to the animal or the herd with this practice; in fact it is detrimental.

The docking of the tails (not to mention cutting the ears) of dogs has been banned, why do farm animals not receive the same legislative protection?