Development of game birds welfare standards and guidelines

by Kelly Wall
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The quail, partridge, guinea fowl, pheasants, pigeon, emu, ostrich and geese industries compete in niche markets alongside mainstream chicken markets and in other niche’s such as the nutraceutical emu oil. These industries have a combined retail value in excess of $50 million per year. Animal welfare is an important part of the social license, market acceptance and investment security of any animal industry. The game birds welfare standards and guidelines project contributes to market acceptance and long term investment security for these industries.

AgriFutures Australia has invested in developing the game birds welfare standards and guidelines as part of an Animal Health Australia (AHA) project to develop the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Poultry (Poultry S&G). The Poultry S&G provide guidance for all people responsible for poultry. In adhering to these guidelines Australian game bird producers can join the larger poultry industries in meeting needs of consumers for assurances of animal welfare.

AgriFutures Australia engaged Animal Health Australia to manage the development of the standards and guidelines in consultation with key stakeholders.

This report is an addition to AgriFutures Australia’s diverse range of over 2000 research publications and it forms part of our Emerging Industries R&D program, which aims to establish high potential rural industries.

Most of AgriFutures Australia’s publications are available for viewing, free downloading or purchasing online at www.agrifutures.com.au.

John Harvey
Managing Director
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About the Author

Kelly Wall is the Manager for Welfare at Animal Health Australia (AHA). AHA works in partnership with their Members and other stakeholders to keep Australia free of new and emerging diseases and to improve animal health.

AHA enhances market access and foster resilience and integrity of the Australian animal health system. This project fits into the following strategic priority:

Maintain and increase market access through effective partnerships for livestock welfare and production, and disease policy development and implementation.

Abbreviations

AHA – Animal Health Australia
Poultry S&G – Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Poultry
MCOP - Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals.
AWTG – Animal Welfare Task Group
SAG – Stakeholder Advisory Group
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Executive Summary

What the report is about

The purpose of the project was to enable the game bird species to be involved and contribute to the development of the national welfare standards and guidelines for poultry specifically for the quail, partridge, guinea fowl, pheasant, pigeon, emu, ostrich and geese species.

The report outlines the approach undertaken to produce relevant and contemporary welfare standards and guidelines for the related game bird species by:

- Maintaining a degree of parity between the poultry industries
- Harmonisation of required regulation between jurisdictions
- Communicating agreed outcomes of the project as required.

Who is the report targeted at?

The report is targeted at quail, partridge, guinea fowl, pheasants, pigeon, emu, ostrich and geese producers, owners and other key stakeholders and networks within the sector. This also includes poultry enterprises in Australia from extensive housed systems to individually owned birds. The Poultry S&G apply to all those responsible for the care and management of poultry.

Background

Under the previous Australian Animal Welfare Strategy, AgriFutures Australia contracted Animal Health Australia (AHA) to facilitate the development of nationally consistent standards and guidelines for livestock. The welfare standards and guidelines are based on the revision of the current Model Codes of Practice for the Welfare of Animals (MCOP).

The development of the Poultry S&G is an important initiative of all Australian governments and poultry industries to guide the development of new, nationally consistent policies to enhance animal welfare arrangements in all Australian states and territories.

The main collaborators were Government, the Australian Egg Corporation Limited the Australian Chicken Meat Federation Inc, the Australian Duck Meat Association Inc and the Australasian Turkey Federation. Within the main Poultry S&G project two groups will be formed: the poultry drafting group and the poultry stakeholder advisory group which includes RSPCA Australia, Science representation, Animals Australia and representation from the entire poultry production chain. The game species writing group will be very much collaborative partners with both these groups. The Animal Welfare Task Group will also be regularly communicated and consulted.

Aims/objectives

Aim of the project:

- To develop agreed Australian Animal welfare standards and guidelines in support of all poultry industries with the inclusion of the game birds species to maintain social licence and market access.

The objectives of the project were to:

- Produce relevant and contemporary welfare standards and guidelines for the quail, partridge, guinea fowl, pheasants, pigeon, emu, ostrich and geese species.
- Maintain a degree of parity between the poultry industries.
- Harmonisation of required regulation between jurisdictions.
Communicate agreed outcomes of the project as required.

**Methods used**

The project consisted of the following activities:

- Assemble an effective game species writing group for the quail, partridge, guinea fowl, pheasants, pigeon, emu, ostrich and geese industries.
- Hold two face to face game species writing group meetings in Canberra, with all other correspondence done via teleconference and or email.
- Review the draft Poultry S&G and other related documentation as it becomes available.
- Document the standard and guidelines related to the game species for consideration of incorporation into the Poultry S&G.
- Facilitate feedback to the Poultry S&G drafting group.
- Enable one representative from each game species to attend the wider Poultry SAG group meetings.
- Facilitate public consultation development including the Regulation Impact Statement.
- Publish and circulate progress to the game bird industries on the Poultry S&G via electronic form.
- Investigate and recommend subsequent extension projects for these species welfare.

**Results/key findings**

- Development of acceptable welfare management standards and guidelines for poultry that underpins the development of social license and provides a clear reference point for all poultry industries.
- The document will become part of the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines series. The document will be endorsed by Agriculture Ministers and will reside on the animalwelfarestandards.net.au website.
- The standards will be used as the basis for developing consistent legislation and enforcement across Australia and the guidelines can be incorporated into national industry quality assurance and verification schemes.
- An extensive consultation process was undertaken, with public consultation highlighting ethical and practical issues, which will lead to the development of more robust standards.

**Implications for relevant stakeholders**

The poultry standards provide the basis for developing and implementing consistent legislation and enforcement across Australia, and direction for people responsible for poultry. They reflect available scientific knowledge, current practice and community expectations.

The potential economic, environmental and/or social impacts/benefits for industry and the community from this project are: the development of acceptable welfare management standards and guidelines for poultry that underpins the development of social licence and provides a clear reference point for all poultry industries. This is turn provides clear long term investment security.

The quail, partridge, guinea fowl, pheasants, pigeon, emu, ostrich and geese industries compete in niche markets against mainstream chicken markets. Development of these welfare standards and guidelines for all species of poultry provides a basis for assuring consumers of the acceptability of products and is a necessary to contributor to market access.
Introduction

Australia’s existing voluntary model codes for the welfare of domestic poultry are now 15 years old. Those for ostriches are 14 years old and those for emus are 11 years old. These codes have not kept pace with community and trading partner expectations, and are not mandatory. It is intended that the proposed standards, if adopted, will replace the existing Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals – Domestic Poultry 4th edition (2002), plus equivalent Model Codes of Practice for welfare of poultry at slaughtering establishments (2001), the farming of ostriches (2003) and of captive bred emus (2006) (‘the existing MCOPs’).

The standards will be used as the basis for developing consistent legislation and enforcement across Australia and the guidelines are to be incorporated into national industry quality assurance and verification schemes.

In association with the planned development of the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Poultry, this project aimed to consult with the minor and emerging poultry industries (game birds) to establish appropriate contribution to the Poultry S&G.

The chicken, egg, duck and turkey peak industries support the development of the Poultry S&G with the inclusion of the smaller game species, as does the Australian Government and each jurisdiction.

The Jurisdictions, Australian Government and major poultry species: chicken, eggs, ducks and turkeys will fund a share of the principal Poultry S&G Animal Health Australia project.
Objectives

The objectives of the project were to:

- Produce relevant and contemporary welfare standards and guidelines for the quail, partridge, guinea fowl, pheasants, pigeon, emu, ostrich and geese species.
- Maintain a degree of parity between the poultry industries.
- Harmonisation of required regulation between jurisdictions.
- Communicate agreed outcomes of the project as required.
Methodology

The project consisted of following activities:

- Assemble an effective game species writing group for the quail, partridge, guinea fowl, pheasant, pigeon, emu, ostrich and geese industries.
- Hold two face to face game species writing group meetings in Canberra, with all other correspondence done via teleconference and or email.
- Review the draft Poultry S&G and other related documentation as it becomes available.
- Document the standard and guidelines related to the game species for consideration of incorporation into the Poultry S&G.
- Facilitate feedback to the Poultry S&G drafting group.
- Enable one representative from each game species to attend the wider poultry stakeholder advisory group meetings.
- Facilitate public consultation development including the Regulation Impact Statement.
- Publish and circulate progress to the game bird industries on the Poultry S&G via electronic form.
- Investigate and recommend subsequent extension projects for these species welfare.

The review of the poultry MCOP into Poultry S&G project began in 2015 with AHA successfully identifying a quail, pigeon and geese industry representative for the writing group.

AHA together with AgriFutures Australia agreed the inclusion of the emu and ostrich species as part of the AgriFutures Australia project. The turkey industry agreed to be removed as they, along with chickens, eggs and ducks, are heavily involved and funding the process at a higher level.

AHA was unable to find willing representatives for the partridge, guinea fowl and pheasant organisations/areas of the Poultry S&G. They did however have a representative from the poultry show societies and the Australian Veterinary Association and many other poultry expertise on the wider Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG).

A successful teleconference was held on 19 November 2015. The teleconference had representatives from AHA, NSW DPI, quail, geese, racing and show pigeon, emu and ostrich industries in attendance. AHA and NSW DPI briefed the group on the project and gained official commitment from these parties to be involved in the project and officially formed the game bird species writing group.

All writing group members were asked to identify and submit any relevant game bird welfare documents and materials considered to be useful within the project. AHA took this material which was prepared and reviewed for consideration and incorporation into the draft Poultry S&G document.

AHA contacted each species representative individually via teleconference prior to the SAG meeting to continue to draft/write their individual chapters in preparation for the meeting.

A face to face SAG meeting was held in March 2016, this brought the game bird species writing group and all other related stakeholders together to review the first draft Poultry S&G document.

The Poultry S&G drafting group met numerous times where feedback on progress of the game bird writing group was provided.

AHA sought feedback from the expertise of each of the game bird species on the welfare requirements of their specific chapters and relevant common poultry issues.

AHA then with the help of the game bird species writing group finalised the game bird chapters in preparation for the second SAG face to face meeting held in August 2016.
The game bird species representatives (where possible) attended the second SAG meeting and provided valuable contribution to the process and development of the poultry standards and guidelines.

The SAG members agreed to the Regulation Impact Statement (RIS) options and to the release of the revised draft standards and guidelines for poultry to be released for public consultation in November 2017.

An extensive communications campaign was undertaken during the public consultation process. To complement jurisdiction-level communications, AHA circulated the poultry standards and guidelines consultation draft, Regulation Impact Statement (RIS) and relevant communications materials to all the relevant state/territory Ministers, government departments, peak industry bodies, peak animal welfare groups, small poultry show and exhibitors, state farming organisations, state Animal Welfare Advisory Committees and others for the public consultation period. This circulation list included the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman, plus appropriate state and territory small business officials.

During the development process communications occurred with an agreed Poultry S&G communications plan. The communication tools and channels used to deliver this project included: email, media release, public consultation advertisement and website.

The animalwelfarestandards.net.au website hosted a 90 day public consultation period for the Poultry S&G. Public consultation for the draft Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Poultry concluded on 26 February 2018. During the public consultation three month period, AHA received an estimated 167,000 email submissions and an estimated 2000 hardcopy submissions, of these 217 are considered major submissions.

Next steps following public consultation include:

- Submissions have been reviewed by an independent consultant, who has delivered a report with key findings to the AWTG. The independent consultant’s report and the major submissions will be available in July 2018 on the Animal Welfare Standards – Poultry website.
- Based on these findings, and review of all public submissions related to game birds, raised in public consultation it is not predicted to change dramatically, a revised welfare standards document will be developed under the direction of the AWTG.
- The revised welfare standards will then be provided for consideration to the SAG, which is comprised of representatives from industry bodies, game bird species, welfare organisations and all government jurisdictions.
- The S&Gs document will be finalised by the AWTG and progress to Australia’s agricultural ministers.

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1 http://www.animalwelfarestandards.net.au/poultry/
The Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Poultry was a project managed by Animal Health Australia. This project aimed to provide guidance for all people responsible for poultry. The standards and guidelines are based on current scientific knowledge, recommended industry practice and community expectations. The standards and guidelines were drafted by a drafting group comprising of science, government and industry representatives, supported by a widely representative stakeholder advisory group. The poultry standard and guidelines underwent public consultation and a Regulation Impact Statement which assesses the proposed standards and evaluates the costs resulting from changes to existing regulation.

The quail, partridge, guinea fowl, pheasant, pigeon, emu, ostrich and geese industries were consulted and engaged in the process to provide specific welfare related management issues that relate to their operations.

The project was important because it aimed to create a clear reference point for all poultry industries and allowed for inclusion and consultation with all poultry species to develop welfare standards and guidelines based on current scientific knowledge, recommended industry practice and community expectations.

- Development of acceptable welfare management standards and guidelines for poultry that underpins the development of social license and provides a clear reference point for all poultry industries.
- The document will become part of the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines series. The document will be finalised by the Agriculture Ministers and will reside on the animalwelfarestandards.net.au website.
- An extensive consultation process was undertaken, with public consultation highlighting ethical and practical issues, which led to the development of more robust standards.

A communications plan was developed with all activities delivered within the allocated time frame and budget. Below is a summary of the results of key activities.
Development of acceptable welfare management standards and guidelines for poultry that underpins the development of social license and provides a clear reference point for all poultry industries.

The document will become part of the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines series. The document will be finalised by the Agriculture Ministers and will reside on the animalwelfarestandards.net.au website.

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**Website**

A dedicated webpage was developed on the Animal Welfare Standards website¹, which included information on the public consultation process, details on how to make a submission, FAQs and additional reading materials. The webpage was a reference point in all materials and correspondence. The poultry public consultation sub-page was the most visited page on the Animal Welfare Standards website over the public consultation period, receiving 15,773 page views.

**Infographics**

A Facebook/Twitter cover image, website banner and newsletter tiles were developed to further promote the public consultation period; these were placed on AHA’s social media accounts and website, with the newsletter tiles used in AHA Express² and Farm Biosecurity³ newsletters. These infographics were also shared with more than 65 relevant stakeholders to assist them with sharing the message of the public consultation period.

Figure 1. Website header

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Media releases

Three media releases (one announcing the opening of public consultation, one reminding about public consultation and one announcing its closure) were sent to over 500 media outlets. Many outlets published articles about the Poultry S&G with over 118 articles published from November 2017 to February 2018. The story was also picked up by radio stations, with interviews conducted with AHA staff as well as with other organisations involved in the process.

Newsletter articles

Articles about the public consultation period were published in the November 2017, December 2017 and February 2018 editions of AHA Express (there was no January 2018 edition). Articles were also published in the Farm Biosecurity newsletters December 2017 and February 2018 editions.
Print advertisement

An advertisement announcing the opening of the public consultation period for the Poultry S&G was published in *The Land* and the *Stock and Land* on 30 November (the week public consultation began). These papers are circulated to audiences across Victoria, NSW, south eastern South Australia and Tasmania, with a combined circulation of approximately 50,000.

![Notice of Public Consultation](image)

**Figure 4. Advertisements**

Social media

The social media campaign involved sharing posts on AHA’s Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn accounts. The campaign was very successful, particularly on Facebook. Over the public consultation period, two posts were boosted each week. Boosting posts involves paying for the post to reach targeted audiences.

The success of Facebook posts is often determined by assessing the engagement rate of each post, which takes into consideration the number of likes, shares, comments and ‘click-throughs’ a post receives. The interaction with the posts resulted in an engagement rate which consistently exceeded the industry standard of one per cent indicating audiences were responsive to the content.

Engagement with posts ranged from 4.7% up to 34% (this was for the animated video). Each post on average had a reach of 5000 (a total of 13 posts appeared in 65,500 Facebook feeds).

On Twitter, engagement rates with poultry posts ranged from 0.2% to 3%. Twitter posts achieved 11,135 impressions in total (this is the amount of Twitter feeds the post appeared in) with an average reach of 557 people per post.

Some examples of posts placed on social media included:

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4 [https://www.facebook.com/AnimalHealthAustralia/](https://www.facebook.com/AnimalHealthAustralia/)
5 [https://twitter.com/AHA_au](https://twitter.com/AHA_au)
6 [https://www.linkedin.com/company/animal-health-australia](https://www.linkedin.com/company/animal-health-australia)
Animal Health Australia
Published by Danika Barnard [17] - January 25

Don't forget to have your say on the draft Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Poultry.

Public consultation is underway until 5pm Monday 26 Feb 2018.

Visit www.animalwelfarestandards.net.au/poultry for more info.

Figure 5. Social media post example one

Animal Health Australia
Published by Danika Barnard [17] - January 11

We encourage all interested parties and stakeholders to make a submission on the draft Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Poultry.

For more info visit http://ow.ly/NQbd30gSPo4

Don't forget to share your views on the draft Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Poultry before 5pm Mon 26 Feb 2018.

Figure 6. Social media post example two
Animated video

AHA has had previous success with using animated videos to share information. As a result, a short animated video was developed outlining what the poultry S&Gs were and how to make a submission. It was published on the Animal Welfare Standards website, AHA’s YouTube Channel and shared across AHA’s social media platforms. As mentioned in the ‘Social Media’ section of this report, the video had an engagement rate of 34% on Facebook and 599 views on YouTube.

Signature block

All AHA staff had the public consultation period in their individual email signature block for 11 weeks (out of the 12 weeks which constituted the public consultation period), as another means of getting the message out. AHA sends out an estimated average of 3,000 emails per week, indicating a significant amount of people may have been reached via this method of promotion.

Communications package

Most of the communications collateral developed was used by AHA and also sent out to more than 65 relevant stakeholders to assist them with spreading the message about the poultry public consultation. This included newsletter tiles, website and Facebook/Twitter banners as well as media releases and FAQs.

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7 https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCchXAK40z14mcLBVK_BjZNg
Implications

The potential economic, environmental and/or social impacts/benefits for industry and the community from this project are: development of acceptable welfare management standards and guidelines for poultry that underpins the development of social licence and provides a clear reference point for all poultry industries. This is turn provides clear long term investment security.

The quail, partridge, guinea fowl, pheasant, pigeon, emu, ostrich and geese industries compete in niche markets against mainstream chicken markets. Development of acceptable welfare standards and guidelines for all species of poultry provides a basis for assuring consumers of the acceptability of products and is a necessary to contributor to market access.

References


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