

# EFA: Animal Welfare Policy Statement



This animal welfare policy paper provides a clear articulation of Egg Farmers of Australia's position on animal welfare in relation to: farming practices, animal welfare science, community consultation and education, animal protection legislation, enforcement and compliance, and consumer choice.

## 1. Background

- 1.1 EFA was established in 2016 to provide a unified voice for state-based egg farmer groups.
- 1.2 It is a member-based organisation which advocates on behalf of farmers.
- 1.3 In its role as an advocate it engages with governments, stakeholders and consumers to promote policies and practices that drive improvement, success and sustainability in egg farming.

## 2. Farming Context

- 2.1 Australia consumes 15 million eggs every day.
- 2.2 Ninety eight percent of those eggs are farmed in family owned and operated farms.
- 2.3 Egg farmers are members of Australian cities and regions. They are employees and employers. They are part of the Australian community.
- 2.4 Like all farmers, egg farmers accept their responsibility to care for the welfare and health of their animals and to adopt best practice in support of that outcome.
- 2.5 Egg farmers recognise the community's concern for animal welfare and their interest in farming practices; they welcome the opportunity to engage with the community.

## 3. Definition

Animal welfare refers to the protection of the health and well-being of animals. It concerns how an animal is coping in its living environment in terms of housing, freedom from: hunger and thirst, fear and distress, discomfort, pain, injury or disease, and the freedom to express natural behaviours.

Egg farmers meet consumer demands by employing a range of varying production systems, all of which have limitations and challenges in addressing a range of animal welfare outcomes. We are open with the public that this involves managing aspects of behaviour. We acknowledge that hens in conventional cages do not have access to a full range of natural behaviour. Equally, we acknowledge that confinement decreases mortality rates and the spread of disease. Egg farmers view animal welfare in context and believe a more prescriptive definition which provides for the expression of natural behaviour is appropriate for domestic pets.

## 4. Principles

- 4.1 Egg farmers value the welfare of their hens. Our belief in welfare is based on our commitment to both productivity and stewardship.
  - 4.1.1 We keep our animals healthy so they can be productive.
  - 4.1.2 We value our animals as living creatures and accept our pastoral duty in managing their wellbeing.
- 4.2 We recognise that animal welfare is a core responsibility for all egg farmers and believe that the proper care of hens is a daily duty.

- 4.3 We uphold the proper standards for ensuring the welfare of our hens set out in the Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals – Domestic Poultry – 4th Edition.
- 4.4 We are committed to continuous improvement in animal welfare practices.
- 4.5 We accept that upholding the welfare of hens may involve managing some aspects of behaviour in order to achieve a greater good.
- 4.6 In caged systems and controlled settings we create an environment with some restrictions on the expression of behaviour in order to limit deaths and the spread of disease.
- 4.7 In free range systems we create an environment which can expose hens to predation and disease but which allows for a broader expression of natural behaviour.
- 4.8 We believe that proper attention to animal welfare improves productivity and contributes significantly to commercial success.
- 4.9 We acknowledge the importance of meeting the reasonable expectations of consumers and the wider community without compromising the capacity to sustain the industry and meet market demand.
- 4.10 We are committed to sustainable, efficient, productive egg farming which caters for the welfare of the hen and the needs of the market.

## 5. Science

- 5.1 We welcome peer reviewed scientific research that supports enhanced welfare outcomes that may be adopted and accepted under standards reviews.
- 5.2 We welcome the contribution that science makes in demonstrating how to improve the physical wellbeing of hens.

- 5.3 We support additional research into the emotional capacity of animals and will work with scientists to better understand the affective states of hens.
- 5.4 We acknowledge that defining animal welfare is both science-based and values-based.

## 6. Consultation and Education

- 6.1 We believe in providing the community with information about how we farm and showing our practices to the public through farm visits.
- 6.2 We welcome public consultation processes and the opportunity to engage with the community.

## 7. Legislation

- 7.1 We support legally enforceable animal welfare standards.
- 7.2 We support those standards being codified in state-based animal care and protection acts.
- 7.3 We believe these acts should establish a legally binding benchmark focused on eradicating any cruelty to animals.

## 8. Production Systems and Consumer Choice

- 8.1 We produce eggs using three production systems: free-range, barn and cages.
- 8.2 We offer consumers a choice to source eggs from a production system that they choose.
- 8.3 We are committed to enforceable animal welfare in each farming method.
- 8.4 We support third party audited on farm Quality Assurance systems that address legislated welfare compliance.