

# **Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animal – Pigs (Revised) (Pig Code)**

## **Questions and Answers**

### **1. Why was the Pig Code reviewed?**

As part of a commitment to ensuring that the highest standards of livestock welfare are practised in Australia all codes of practice are subject to periodical review to make certain that they are up-to-date and improve standards of animal welfare. The Pig Code was last reviewed in 1998.

### **2. How was the review conducted?**

The Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals – Pigs (Revised) was developed by the Animal Welfare Working Group in consultation with State/Territory/Commonwealth Departments with responsibility for agriculture and/or animal welfare, the CSIRO, the veterinary profession, industry, researchers, retailers/processors and animal welfare groups.

The review incorporated a full and formal public consultation process on the impact of the proposed changes as discussed in the Regulation Impact Statement (RIS).

### **3. How does the government determine ‘reasonable’ animal welfare standards?**

Scientific research and experience determine whether a change to an existing standard or guideline will improve the welfare of animals or not. There is a worldwide research effort to determine reasonable and practicable methods to improve welfare. Research is funded by industry and government. Government departments, CSIRO, Universities and a number of other research groups across Australia are being funded to investigate enhanced pig management options.

### **4. How does the revised Pig Code improve the welfare of pigs?**

The revised Pig Code outlines the general principles and requirements for good animal care. It is for all persons responsible for the on-farm welfare of pigs (up to the point of transport for slaughter). The purpose of the Code is to encourage owners and people in charge of pigs to aim for a high level of welfare.

The review identified areas of welfare that could be improved. It seeks to find a balance between the challenges faced by managers who in many cases are in charge of large numbers of pigs, while at the same time providing for the basic needs of pigs.

The revised Pig Code provides details of required improvements, minimum standards, and the period of time over which changes should be introduced.

## **5. How are the standards within the Pig Code going to be enforced?**

The revised Pig Code provides farmers, inspectors and the community with a guide to what is acceptable practice for the management of pigs. Where the standards outlined in the Code are not met prosecution for causing cruelty or suffering may be initiated. It will be important that that State and Territory governments review the revised Pig Code and determine the legislative amendments necessary to ensure the standards can be enforced in their respective jurisdictions.

## **6. What are the key changes in the revised Pig Code?**

- The area of all new stalls will be increased.
- For pregnant sows there will be a maximum of 6 weeks (previously 16 weeks) confinement in stalls, after which they will be released into group housing situations with other sows i.e. they will be only be allowed to be closely confined until they are mated and their pregnancy is confirmed. This protects them from aggression from other sows that can cause such early pregnancy to be lost.
- There will be a requirement for persons managing and conducting procedures on pigs to be trained or under the supervision of a person who is trained.
- Such persons will be required to inspect their pigs regularly and more often in hot conditions.
- Sows that are placed into crates to give birth ('farrowing crates', to protect piglets from being injured) must not be left there for longer than 6 weeks.
- Farrowing crate area is to be increased in all new installations.
- The use of any stalls or crates for boars and sows will require that they be appropriate for the size of the animal and allow them to stand and lie down without obstruction or injury. Boars must be released for exercise.
- Where there is any evidence of serious behavioural problems due to individual confinement in stalls, the animals must be examined by a qualified person and treated.
- Development of recommendations for keeping and confinement of pigs at free-range, including their shelter accommodation.
- A recommendation that pig farmers join their industry quality assurance management programs to provide improved welfare, high skill levels and greater market opportunity.

## **7. What are the actual or perceived problems with stalls?**

- a) Physical disorders such as joint damage, leg weakness and urinary tract infections due to lack of exercise and confinement on hard floors.
- b) Chronic stress, aggressive and abnormal behaviour due to boredom from excessive periods of confinement.

**8. What are the actual or perceived benefits of stalls?**

- a) Better ability to individually supervise and examine animals and feed/water them
- b) Greater ability to supervise and control adult pigs efficiently
- c) Reduced stress on sows from aggression by other pigs
- d) Protection from climate extremes
- e) Protection of piglets and easier supervision of sows and piglets at farrowing

**9. What does scientific research say about the use of sow stalls?**

The main animal welfare issue for the Pig Code centred on the continuous confinement of sows in stalls during pregnancy. Recent research indicates that protection from aggression in the first 4 weeks of pregnancy is important to ensure a pregnancy continues to full term. Reasonably short term use of crate confinement can achieve protection from aggression and minimise any adverse effects.

**10. Why are pigs farmed intensively and why is the community concerned?**

Consumers benefit from the cost effective and high quality pig meats currently being supplied from intensive production systems. To achieve economies of scale large numbers of pigs are raised by fewer people with the assistance of mechanised and computerised management systems. Greater efficiencies occur in such systems and the consumer benefits. Over time this has resulted in some systems confining sows in farrowing crates, mating pens and stalls during pregnancy. Intensive farming and the perceived adverse effects on pigs causes some community concern.

**11. How is the revised Pig Code going to be implemented?**

Once the revised Pig Code has been endorsed by the Primary Industry Ministerial Council (PIMC), a high-level implementation working group will guide the Codes' implementation. The Pig Code Implementation Working Group will include representatives from all levels of Government, Animal Health Australia, each of the States and Territories, industry, local government, and environment. A nationally consistent approach to the implementation and enforcement of the revised Pig Code is crucial.

**12. When is the revised Pig Code going to be implemented?**

The revised Code provides guidelines and directly enforceable evidence-based standards that improve the welfare of pigs in all jurisdictions. The revised Code includes implementation deadlines following its publication on the following key standards:

- 3 years for skills training of staff
- 5 years for pen size allowance increases, and
- 10 years to introduce the 6 week limit for use of sow stalls