



## Inquiry into Factory Farming vs. Free Range Farming

### *Introduction*

NZPork is the operating name of the New Zealand Pork Industry Board, the statutory body funded by pig farmers, with the statutory purpose to work in the interests of pig farmers, to assist in achieving the best possible net ongoing returns for New Zealand pigs, pork products, and co-products. NZPork takes its statutory obligation very seriously, ensuring that it invests in appropriate research as the basis from which it can develop policies and technology transfer programmes to support New Zealand pig farmers.

NZPork has made this submission to ensure that the Youth Parliament has an information base reflecting international science and good practice for its deliberations.

### *Pig farming in New Zealand*

There is a wide variety of pig farming methods practiced in New Zealand, and even within a farm there may be a wide variety of different forms of housing and management practiced.

A good introduction to New Zealand's pig farmers and approach to farming is shown on the industry's farming website: [www.pigfarminginnz.co.nz](http://www.pigfarminginnz.co.nz)

The whole wide range of industry support activities is shown on our industry support website: [www.nzpork.co.nz](http://www.nzpork.co.nz)

Our consumer website provides information to pork consumers on how to use our product including recipes, cooking guidelines and food safety information: [www.pork.co.nz](http://www.pork.co.nz)

The farming website illustrates the range of ways in which farmers house and manage their pigs, in a commercial situation, to meeting the wide range of welfare aspects of pigs.

As noted in your Briefing Paper, the Animal Welfare Act 1999 identifies key aspects of welfare include the provision of food and water, shelter, protection from fear and aggression, treatment for injury and to ensure good health, as well as allowing opportunities to display normal patterns of behaviour. The Act requires that all these aspects (not just treatment for injury and health) are *...appropriate to the species, environment and circumstances of the animal*. Thus, the Act recognises that it is the needs of the animal that should be considered, rather than what humans might consider might be right for the animal. This is explained by MAF, within its explanation of all the aspects covered by the Animal Welfare Act: <http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/legislation/animal-welfare-act/guide/index.htm>

The 5 elements of welfare or 'needs categories' in the Animal Welfare Act are widely used internationally as the basis to guide provision of the overall welfare (which we refer to as 'net' welfare) of animals, in a wide range of countries, climates, soil types, and land availability, where commercial farming takes place.

### *Unique characteristics of pigs*

Pigs are hierarchical by nature. For example, from the time they are born, piglets within a litter have their own teat. The stronger piglets have the more functional teats and the weaker piglet the least functional. (Hence the term, *the runt of the litter*.) Limiting aggression is a very important aspect of farming: sows especially at times of hormonal imbalance (the 4 weeks following mating, and the few days after weaning) are particularly aggressive and can fight each other to the death. Unmanaged, the hierarchy formation means that dominant sow(s) hog food supply, and the submissive sow(s) may be too frightened to even attempt to eat. Providing protection from each other, and enabling each sow to have her fair share of food and water were the prime motivators for the development of stall housing for sows, where outdoor farming was not an option. Applying the concept of 'net' welfare, international good practice recognises the benefits of stalls at critical stages in the sow's life cycle (that is the 4 week period after mating, and the few days after weaning), and also for those sows who are not able to stand up for themselves within a group of sows. At all other times, sows live in groups. This is the position endorsed by the New Zealand pork industry as one way of providing for the welfare of sows within some farming situations. Furthermore, the New Zealand industry has set a target to phase down the use of stalls (as described above) by the end of 2012, which is ahead of the target date set in the current Animal Welfare (Pigs) Code of Welfare 2005. This target date means that New Zealand is aligned with the EU, and ahead of Australia.

It is also important to realize that commercial pigs have been domesticated for about 9000 years and throughout that time the genetics have been bred/evolved to suit farming systems and in response to farming systems developed. In fact pigs along with poultry have had the most focus genetically of any animals. In general these pigs have been bred indoors to flourish indoors and under intensive farming conditions: they are a far cry from what people know as a wild pig and even many of lifestyle pig genetics we see utilised in small semi-commercial pigfarms.

### *Unique characteristics of New Zealand pig farming*

New Zealand is unique among pig farming countries with its proportion of outdoor breeding: around 40% of New Zealand's sows live outdoors. This is due to suitable climate and soil type particularly in Canterbury and South Canterbury. There are other parts of New Zealand where it is not suitable to farm outdoors, particularly areas e.g. the Waikato with high rainfall. Paddocks would simply become mud-baths.

### *Intensive/ indoor and extensive farming*

New Zealand has a temperate climate and this is one of the reasons that have enabled extensive farming to establish here. But extensive farming also has welfare challenges because animals need to deal with weather extremes e.g. snow storms can occur during the lambing season; high summer temperatures. In a number of European countries for example, good animal welfare requires housing animals at least during the weather extremes, e.g. through the winter or overnight. Indoor farming obviously protects animals from weather extremes. In reality there are many tradeoffs in attempting to provide for the 'net' welfare of animals.

### *Intensive farming- where should New Zealand sit?*

The world population is increasing exponentially and many persons choose to include animal-based protein in their diets. As the world population grows, land becomes a scarce resource. The concept of 'precision farming' is becoming relevant – that is, farming which is managed

to optimise output from the input variables. Scarce inputs (e.g. land) are particularly important. Within New Zealand we see the use of herd homes for dairy and winter housing for deer becoming established. In the specific case of pigs indoor production systems (generally described as intensive) allow the following:

- Temperature to be controlled at a level that best suits the pig, and also each class of pig. For example, the optimal temperature range for lactating sows is significantly lower than for her suckling piglets (15-21°C compared to 28-32°C). Commercial farms enable the provision of higher temperatures to be provided for piglets
- Feed delivered in such a way so as to manage wastage and avoid contamination with other materials. What this means is less feed, and therefore less resources are used to produce the same amount of animal protein
- Animals grow faster so less resources are used and better product quality results
- Animals have better reproductive rates so less breeding animals are required to be farmed per kg of pork produced – again this is better use of animal resources
- Animals can be far more easily protected from disease, observed and treated for illness. Animal care is also safer for staff
- All manure can be easily collected and utilised for fertilizer production, biogas production etc
- Greenhouse gas emissions can be minimised and those released can be captured
- Less land is required to farm the animals, and this means that per ha NZ can become productive.

It can therefore be seen from these points that intensive indoor production deals proactively with many of the emerging issues facing the world and food producers.

#### Science-based animal welfare

New Zealand pig farmers are passionate about caring for their stock, and for this reason, firmly support the application of farming methods based on a sound understanding of what is best for the animal. As better methods of farming are identified, New Zealand pig farmers have shown they will embrace these methods. It is well recognised that healthy, well-cared for animals are productive animals, and everyone benefits.

The New Zealand pig industry has a programme of welfare-based research including identifying best practice sow housing, the objective of which is to identify ways of enhancing sow housing and management based on welfare assessment of sows – rather than simply responding to well-meaning but perhaps misguided views of what people might think sows would prefer.

#### The economic reality

Consumers have a choice about the food they buy to eat, and it is very clear that many consumers, especially mothers of families are economically stretched to buy good food for their families. In New Zealand about 45% of the pig meat we consume is imported. The great majority of this pig meat is from countries that have lesser standards than in New Zealand, and costs less to produce. Yet the product competes on an equal playing field.

Every dollar paid to a NZ pig farmer contributes another \$1.92 to the wider economy while every dollar spent on imported pork only contributes another 78 cents. It is obvious then that having an NZ pig farming industry that is successful is important for NZ. However, the economic reality is that we must compete with imported pork. Yet the government has tended to impose costs on NZ pigfarmers whether it be housing related, environment related through councils and the emerging ETS.

Farmers like all other businesses need to make a living. They have to make sure that there is some return over and above the sum total of their costs. If this is not so, ultimately they will have to stop farming.

The New Zealand pig industry has never had any support from government via the Adult Parliament. Could the Youth Parliament explore innovative ways in which the New Zealand pig industry could be financially enabled and supported to continuously strive to be the 'world's best' in terms of animal welfare, animal health, animal management, and food presentation, at a price that keeps our product competitive with imported pig meat? Note, in your deliberations, you need to recognise that international trading rules do not allow countries to discriminate on the basis of animal welfare.

SAFE's agenda

It is important that the Youth Parliament understands SAFE's underlying philosophy: SAFE's stated aim is '*to promote a compassionate lifestyle without reliance on animal-derived products*'. SAFE's perspective is '*all farming systems involve some level of cruelty, and this is what inspires SAFE's campaigns, especially against factory farming.*' SAFE describes its position, including on sow stalls as '*interim steps towards a society where animals are no longer exploited by people*'. SAFE's position therefore does not represent concern for animal welfare, but rather an interim step in the direction against livestock farming. This stance is not reflective of a sustainable position for New Zealand.

SAFE's underlying philosophy is also evident in its published criteria for its executive members as "*[i]deally,.. possess a compassionate attitude for all life, a personal commitment to improving the well being of all animals, and an understanding and belief in a vegetarian /vegan lifestyle*" (refer <http://www.safe.org.nz/About-Safe/> ).

Summary points

Members of the house cannot consider intensive farming within a simple idealism of behavioural welfare need assessment. Members need to take the overall or 'net' welfare' of animals, and the whole picture into account. The whole picture includes the following:

- These animals are being produced for food – not human companionship
- They have been genetically selected over time to suit the farming system that they are in
- Animal welfare needs to be based on a understanding of what is best for the animal taking note of its wide range of welfare needs, including provision of adequate feed, shelter, attention to health needs, and reasonable protection from fear, bullying and resultant injury
- Efficient use of resources is an important driver and obligation with food production – intensive systems more efficiently utilise resources
- Intensive systems allow environmental impacts to be managed and minimised and in fact provide the opportunity to have a positive impact
- New Zealand needs to be more productive and increase productivity continually, as less resources are available for production and we need to be competitive on a world stage. Intensive industries have increased productivity more greatly and more consistently than extensive industries. This could not be achieved with consistently better care of the animals farmed over time.
- Farmers need to be able to operate on a level market playing field – putting impositions on local farmers while allowing importers to do what they like is inequitable
- The ultimate way to really understand a society's true views on a subject is to let them make commercial decisions ie purchase food in a way that reflects their values and

ethics and therefore allows farmers to respond to genuine social signals not artificial ones

*Addenda: Clarification on Briefing Paper:*

- P2, 5<sup>th</sup> para: use of antibiotics: Antibiotics are used in the New Zealand pig industry to treat and prevent disease where required, on the advice of a veterinarian. This is supported by NZFSA. NZPork's specific policy 'supports such use of antibiotics in pig production under veterinary supervision, in order to maintain and enhance pig health and welfare. NZPork does not support the use of antibiotics for any purpose, other than the assurance of pig health and welfare. In particular, NZPork is against the use of antibiotics for growth promotion purposes'. (Refer <http://www.nzpork.co.nz/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=pp79prCnbr8%3d&tabid=82&mid=583>). The New Zealand poultry industry will be similar. Obviously healthy animals are more productive.
- P3, under Pork heading, 2<sup>nd</sup> para: Confinement practices (stalls and farrowing crates) are used in New Zealand in certain farming situations for sow management, not for all pigs. (Refer material above under *Unique characteristics of pigs*, and also [www.pigfarminginnz.co.nz](http://www.pigfarminginnz.co.nz))
- P5, under Cost/Benefit Analysis heading, last para: In regard to pork, only around 2 - 3% of New Zealand consumers purchase free range and free farmed pork. That is considerably lower than the figure quoted for eggs.
- P7, under Key References and Suggested Links, Pork: please particularly note [www.nzpork.co.nz](http://www.nzpork.co.nz); [www.pigfarminginnz.co.nz](http://www.pigfarminginnz.co.nz)