

# Animal Welfare and Values



Publication: 13 June 2019  
Researchers: A.D. Fisher, P.H. Hemsworth, R.A. Ankeny, H. Millar and R. Acharya  
Categories: Animal Welfare  
Tags: feather pecking, stress, hen welfare, flock health

Australian Eggs engaged a panel of researchers, including animal welfare scientists, veterinary and social science experts to identify and describe values based elements that arise in the context of the available frameworks for animal welfare on egg farms.



Australian Eggs commissioned a report to review animal welfare policy and assessment frameworks, in order to drive informed debate on animal welfare assessment and to ensure balanced consideration of animal welfare outcomes in the egg industry.

The report examined the values-based elements underlying the consensus in animal welfare science across key areas related to laying hen welfare. It proposed how these values-based elements could be better exposed and examined, potentially opening the way for additional and new ways of researching key areas of hen welfare in future.

These elements are a necessary aspect of animal welfare science but have the potential to distort the interpretation of the science, where assumptions can be made as to how scientific knowledge is created and should be applied.

The use of a variety of indicators of health, physiology and behaviour to assess animal welfare in research studies is becoming increasingly common. However, there is at present little agreement amongst researchers on integrating these indicators, and a framework to advance this would be beneficial.

Where researchers, through necessity, focus on particular types of welfare measurements in the evaluation of animal welfare in particular contexts, there is a clear need for other studies to be undertaken on the complementary welfare measurement approaches to complete the overall assessment.

A number of social science approaches may be deployed to address the values-based trade-offs and questions that emerge from the science. These will be necessary because values are an essentially human phenomenon, and seeking to understand them in the context of animal

welfare science and its application will require the human sciences as much as the animal sciences.

The key value conflicts and questions identified provide the basis for research questions in future studies, requiring the addition of social science into the stable of methodologies employed by the egg industry research program.