VICTORIA
State
Government

Animal Welfare Action Plan

Improving the Welfare of Animals in Victoria

Contents

Forewords

Animal welfare is a high priority for the Victorian Government.

Animals are a part of our everyday life. It is important that we work together to ensure that the welfare of all animals is protected through contemporary standards, practices and laws.

The government is continuing to improve the welfare of animals across Victoria. We will establish Animal Welfare Victoria. We will create a modern animal welfare act. We will provide additional funding to support shelters, facilities and programs.

We are acting to stamp out cruel and illegal puppy farms and have provided $5 million to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals to investigate unethical dog breeding businesses.

The government is also committed to promoting market access and maintaining consumer confidence in Victoria's livestock industries. Agriculture contributes more than $13 billion a year to the state's economy. This Action Plan aims to protect our reputation as a humane and responsible producer of food and fibre.

Animal welfare matters to all Victorians. Whether it's a beloved pet, farm animal or a wild animal, we all have a role to play in ensuring their welfare.

This Action Plan is a call for collaboration between government, animal sectors and the broader community. It sets out a plan for improving animal welfare and recognising the role animals play in our lives.

I acknowledge the work of Lizzie Blandthorn MP, the government's Ambassador for Animal Welfare, the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, Agriculture Victoria and stakeholders to develop this plan. I thank them for their hard work.

We all share a responsibility for maintaining the welfare of animals. I look forward to the Victorian Government championing this effort.

The Hon Jaala Pulford MP
Minister for Agriculture

Evidence tells us that animals feel pain. We must ensure that we not only protect animals from cruelty, but that we support their quality of life in our homes, on our farms, in our community and in their natural environment.

As the Minister's Ambassador for Animal Welfare, I believe it is important that Victoria has a proactive plan that promotes evidence-based animal welfare practices and reflects community expectations. We need to protect the welfare of all animals.

This Action Plan is designed to help us work together through a shared responsibility for how we live, work and engage with animals. It is a plan for a collaborative approach to improving animal welfare in Victoria.

Lizzie Blandthorn MP
Member for Pascoe Vale
Minister's Ambassador for Animal Welfare

Acronyms and Definitions

ACRONYMS

AWAC – Animal Welfare Advisory Committee

DEDJTR – Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources

DELWP – Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

DOJR – Department of Justice and Regulation

POCTAA – *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986*

RSPCA Victoria – Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Victoria)

OIE – World Organisation for Animal Health: The World Organisation for Animal Health (commonly known as the OIE) is the intergovernmental organisation responsible for improving animal health worldwide.

It is recognised as a reference organisation by the World Trade Organisation and in 2017 has a total of 181 Member Countries. In 2002 the OIE broadened its focus to include animal welfare standards and to take the lead internationally in this field. Australia is a member country of the OIE.

DEFINITIONS

General

Animal: for the purpose of this Action Plan, any reference to an 'animal' is an animal covered by Victorian animal welfare legislation. The current legislation is POCTAA.

Victorian legislation currently covers:

- mammals
- birds
- fish
- amphibians
- reptiles
- cephalopods (e.g. octopus, squid, cuttlefish)
- crustaceans (e.g. crabs, lobsters).

Animal sectors: are the main categories of animals in Victoria, influenced by the diverse groups of people and organisations that are closely affiliated with animals or whose actions impact on animals, in both commercial and non-commercial contexts.

This includes animal industries and their representative organisations, companion and recreational groups, animal welfare groups, wildlife and conservation groups, veterinarians and other professionals, scientists and researchers, and other relevant stakeholders.

Animal sectors include:

- agriculture
- fishing and aquaculture
- hunting and shooters
- pest control
- pets and breeding
- recreation (sport, entertainment, exhibition)
- science, research and teaching
- veterinary practice
- welfare
- wildlife.

Codes of practice: Codes of practice are practical guides that set out recommended minimum standards and practices. Codes can have a different status under law and might be voluntary, or mandatory. In relation to animal welfare, codes apply to a wide range of species and animal-related activities and may act as a defence to an offence.

Legislation: Legislation is a set of compulsory rules (law) made by a government. It is also known as 'statute'. Legislation is enforced through penalties that apply if a person breaks the rules.

Legislation can be primary (an Act of Parliament) or subordinate (including regulations that accompany an Act for details of matters created under that Act). An example of primary legislation is *Victoria's Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulations 2008* is an example of subordinate legislation.

Standards and guidelines: Generally, standards set out mandatory requirements while guidelines act as recommended practice to achieve desirable welfare outcomes. National Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines are similar to codes of practice in that they set out recommended minimum practices for the welfare of animals.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND CONTRIBUTION

This Action Plan identifies who will be involved in delivering the actions. A large number of organisations will be involved and it is not practical to name all of these in this document.

Some departments, agencies and groups will fall under more than one area. The areas of accountability do not represent an exhaustive list and might include other groups or entities where relevant.

State government: includes state government departments that administer and/or enforce animal welfare and related legislation, such as DEDJTR and DELWP, DOJR and any other departments whose responsibilities involve or impact on animals.

Local government: includes all Victorian councils, in particular Animal Management Units and the Municipal Association of Victoria.

Enforcement groups: includes all agencies and statutory authorities who have officers that are authorised under POCTAA. This currently includes DEDJTR, DELWP, some councils, RSPCA Victoria, Game Management Authority and Victoria Police. For the purpose of this Action Plan, this group also includes courts and tribunals, statutory authorities and controlling bodies (such as the three racing industry codes).

Animal sectors: see general definitions above.

Collaborative group: will be a group established by government to support collaboration across the government and animal sector stakeholders and will include representatives from a range of animal sectors. Terms of reference will be developed which will support information and knowledge sharing across stakeholder groups and provide an additional source of policy advice for government on animal welfare issues.

Vision and purpose

Vision: A Victoria that fosters the caring and respectful treatment of animals.

Purpose: To ensure Victoria continues to improve animal welfare and is well respected globally for animal welfare practices.

The market has confidence in Victoria for ethical and responsible animal production

Victoria has a good reputation for how animals are treated

Practices and technology are improved over time

Victoria cares

A Victoria that fosters the caring and respectful treatment of animals

Animal welfare issues are addressed early

People avoid causing animals unnecessary harm

Compliance with animal welfare laws is improved

Compliance and enforcement that is efficient and effective

Education that improves knowledge, skills and compliance

Introduction

Animals are an important part of Victoria. They are part of Victoria's homes, farms, sport, recreational businesses and activities, natural state (including forests and waters), research and essential services. Animals also play an important role in Victoria's economy, employment and trade.

Society cares about animals and how they are treated. While people rely on animals for food, fibre, companionship, assistance and other reasons, so too do animals rely on humans to treat them well and provide for their needs appropriately. The way animals are treated reflects on Victoria's national and international reputation, including market access, consumer confidence and the ability to create and sustain jobs.

So what is animal welfare and why does it matter? Animal welfare includes the mental and physical health of an animal. Good animal welfare is achieved through humane, reasonable and respectful treatment of animals.

Science demonstrates that animals are sentient. This means they experience feelings and emotions such as pleasure, comfort, discomfort, fear and pain. Sentience is the primary reason that animal welfare is so important. All people and industries within Victoria have a responsibility to treat all animals with care and respect.

Animal welfare is a complex and evolving area. There are diverse views about animal welfare and how to achieve it. Community expectations about how animals are treated are increasing.

Victoria's animal industries, welfare organisations and other groups are already making contributions to progress animal welfare.

Farmers, zoos, sporting industries, scientific establishments and other businesses are undertaking a range of actions to improve animal welfare. For example, our livestock industries are incorporating animal welfare into quality assurance systems. The RSPCA Victoria and other welfare groups have a long history working for the wellbeing of animals.

Shelter volunteers and rescue groups are committed to providing rehabilitation and rehoming services. Examples are provided as case studies throughout this Action Plan.

Case study: ProHand

The Animal Welfare Science Centre developed 'ProHand', an educational program for the agriculture sector to improve handling of livestock. ProHand is a comprehensive training program that focusses on the attitudes and behaviours of people who handle production animals, to reinforce how the proper handling of animals is beneficial in long-term animal health and production.

ProHand provides practical training to minimise stress to the animal caused by improper handling. It aims to provide benefits holistically, by improving welfare outcomes for animals, as well as improving work productivity, job satisfaction and motivation for stock people.

Controlled studies on ProHand have demonstrated measurable improvements in animal welfare outcomes, including better attitudes and handling behaviours of people working with animals, as well as a reduction in fear responses from animals.

The value of ProHand training to stockpersons to understand the impact of their interactions with pigs on animal behaviour, welfare and productivity is recognised internationally, with arrangements being made to enable it to be used by pig producers in overseas markets in the near future.

As a community, Victoria is getting better in matters of animal welfare and there is still room to improve. Good animal welfare practices don't just benefit the animal, they also return significant social, economic and environmental benefits.

For example, Victoria's agricultural industries recognise that animal welfare underpins productivity. It reduces disease and can improve food quality, and it makes good business sense.

Australian and overseas markets are experiencing growing demand for humane and responsibly produced food. Many of the world's food production companies are setting animal welfare standards for their suppliers. Many industry quality assurance programs include animal welfare requirements to provide confidence to consumers and markets about Victoria's standard of care for production animals.

This is important to maintain and expand Victoria's domestic and global market access in an environment where there is growing demand for animal products that are produced in animal welfare credentialed systems.

The importance of animal welfare globally is demonstrated by the work of international bodies such the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and United Nations (UN).

In October 2016, the UN recommended that governments include improvements to animal welfare in their policies for livestock production systems.

A global animal welfare strategy has been released by the OIE (and adopted by 180 member countries, including Australia), demonstrating an international commitment to improving animal welfare.

The OIE strategy highlights good animal welfare laws, collaboration, education and compliance as solid areas for prioritisation. These priorities align with the areas of focus in this Action Plan and demonstrate their importance on an international scale.

Animal welfare is a shared responsibility for all people who live with, work with, or interact with, animals in Victoria. That is why the Victorian Government has developed this Action Plan, which is Victoria's first-ever strategic planning document for animal welfare.

Approach

The *Animal Welfare Action Plan – Improving the Welfare of Animals in Victoria* (Action Plan) sets the direction for animal welfare for Victoria. It covers the broad range of animal species and sectors in our state.

The Action Plan identifies four key areas for action to improve the welfare of animals:

1. A policy and legal framework that safeguards and improves animal welfare in Victoria

2. Collaboration that improves animal welfare

3. Education that improves knowledge, skills and compliance

4. Compliance and enforcement that is efficient and effective.

Each action area sets out actions to deliver improved animal welfare and to continue the good work already being undertaken by the community, animal sectors and government.

The individual action areas are not intended to operate in isolation (for example collaboration will be important in all action areas).

While the focus of the plan and its actions are on animal welfare and the primary animal welfare legislation, there are some actions that correspond to other related legislation (such as the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*) or to other commitments that will improve animal welfare.

The Victorian Government values and continues to support key animal industries and activities, such as agriculture, sport, recreation (including hunting and fishing), research and teaching, invasive species management, pets, breeding and exhibition.

The Victorian Government understands that one size does not fit all and will work collaboratively with animal sectors to implement and deliver sustainable improvements to animal welfare appropriate to the species or activity.

The Victorian Government and some animal industries are already active participants in processes that strive for national harmonisation of animal welfare requirements. Some of these include the livestock industry, parks and zoos and invasive animal regulators. This Action Plan recognises and supports the continuation of/or involvement in these national processes.

The Action Plan is founded on a collaborative approach to animal welfare that will help to deliver better outcomes for animals in Victoria. Implementing the actions will involve a broad range of stakeholders who have responsibilities for, or interact with, animals.

The Victorian Government is a key player in delivering the Action Plan, supported by local government, animal sectors, compliance and enforcement groups and the community.

Accordingly, the Action Plan envisages that groups of stakeholders might lead or contribute to various actions.

The Action Plan is intended to bring together all those who are involved with animals to improve welfare outcomes and support the vision for animal welfare in Victoria.

All parties who are undertaking actions that improve animal welfare are encouraged to communicate their achievements and to be recognised for their contributions. The Victorian Government will provide information about the Action Plan and updates on the progress of action implementation at **https://animalwelfarevic.economicdevelopment. vic.gov.au**
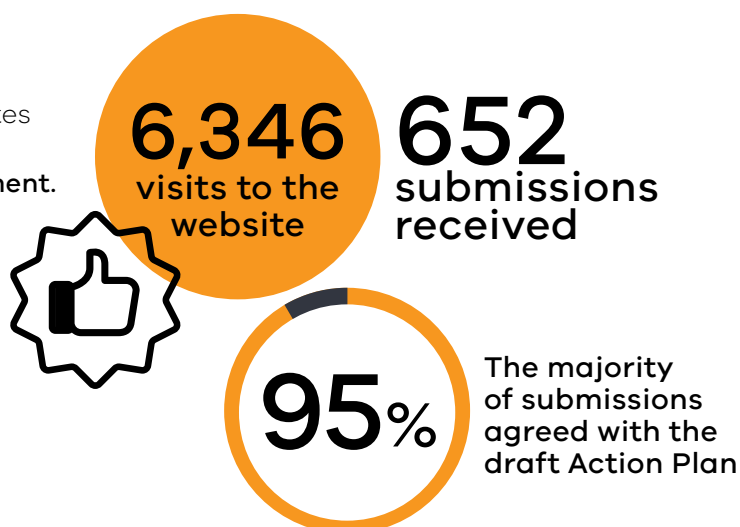
PUBLIC CONSULTATION

This Action Plan belongs to all Victorians. The Victorian Government released a *Draft Action Plan - Improving the Welfare of Animals in Victoria* – for public consultation in 2016 to provide all Victorians with an opportunity to contribute.

The Action Plan was developed with the guidance of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee. Input has also been incorporated from key groups and organisations from all animal sectors, key national stakeholder groups that trade or are involved with animals in Victoria, other government departments and enforcement groups and the broader Victorian community.

Consultation identified strong support for the four main areas which now form the basis of each action area.

These include policy and legal framework, collaboration, education and communication, and compliance and enforcement. The Action Plan and actions have been developed taking into account the vast amount of feedback from the consultation process.

6,346 visits to the website

652 submissions received

95%

The majority of submissions agreed with the draft Action Plan

VISION

Animal Welfare in Victoria

A Victoria that fosters the caring and respectful treatment of animals

ACTION AREAS

POLICY & LEGAL FRAMEWORK	COLLABORATION	EDUCATION	COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT

OUTCOMES

GOVERNANCE AND LAWS THAT SAFEGUARD AND IMPROVE ANIMAL WELFARE	COLLABORATION THAT IMPROVES ANIMAL WELFARE	COMMUNICATION AND TRAINING THAT IMPROVES KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND COMPLIANCE	COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT THAT IS EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE

ACTIONS

• Reform primary legislation (the Act) • Reform subordinate legislation (regulations) • Reform subordinate legislation (codes and standards) • Undertake policy actions • Establish Animal Welfare Victoria	• Enhance collaboration and cooperation across government and animal sectors • Identify and address priority animal welfare issues	• Provide communication and training on animal welfare to improve knowledge, attitudes and behaviours • Deliver education to improve knowledge of laws	• Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of enforcement systems and processes

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Action Area 1: Policy and legal framework

Outcome: Governance and laws that safeguard and improve animal welfare in Victoria

The welfare of animals has been protected by law in Victoria for more than 150 years when offences for animal cruelty were first introduced in the *Police Offences Statute 1864*. The first dedicated Act was the *Protection of Animals Act 1881*. Since then, Victoria has had a number of different Acts to establish laws regarding animal cruelty.

Victoria's current animal welfare law is the *Protection of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986. (POCTAA)*. This Act has served Victoria for the last 30 years.

However, developments over that time are prompting a review of the policy and legal framework so that Victoria has a strong platform for the future. There is greater science-based knowledge about animal welfare, including the sentience of animals, and greater public scrutiny of the treatment of animals. Complaints about animal welfare are increasing and the community has greater expectations about how and when the law is enforced.

POCTAA has been modified many times to correspond with changes in science and community expectations. These changes have improved enforcement powers and introduced, then strengthened, the ability for inspectors to seize animals at risk. New cruelty offences were introduced to address emerging issues in animal welfare, and penalties have increased over time.

POCTAA has served an important function, however, it has become a complex piece of legislation. It is also focused on responding to cruelty after an animal has had a profoundly negative experience.

This has limited how POCTAA is enforced and the ability of enforcement agencies to intervene at an early stage before profound animal suffering has occurred or to address animal welfare concerns that do not fit within the definition of cruelty. Society now expects that the law should do more to set the responsibilities that humans have towards animals to better protect them from harm, enable earlier intervention and to better provide for their welfare.

As a result of all of these changes, a new regulatory framework is required. A new Act will be developed that will safeguard animal welfare and provide for timely avenues to address non-compliance. The new Act will build upon the effective parts of POCTAA and set out fundamental requirements for the responsible care and treatment of all animals.

In 2016
98% of Victorians surveyed said protecting the welfare of animals is important
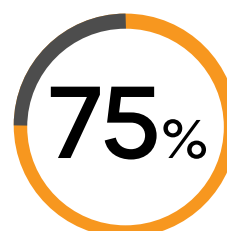
75% think the welfare of animals needs better protection

The new Act must be capable of evolving to keep pace with animal welfare science, community expectations, industry practices, and domestic and international market access opportunities.

The new policy and regulatory framework (including the principal Act, subordinate regulations and any relevant codes) will be developed in consultation with the key groups and organisations from all animal sectors and the Victorian public. It will consider regulatory impact and be promoted through education, training, compliance and enforcement.

New laws are required to cover the whole of society's responsibility towards all animals, in all environments, and for all purposes.

OUTCOMES

1. The law provides for the reasonable and considerate treatment of all animals, regardless of species, use or activity.

2. The governance, policy and legal settings allow for continuous improvement in animal welfare standards, based on contemporary science and considering community expectations.

3. The law facilitates effective behavioural change to improve animal welfare and deter offenders of crime.

4. Penalties are effective and proportionate.

Case Study: Promoting the welfare of research animals through innovative technology

Effective therapies for many human diseases have been developed through the use of animals. New technologies are being adopted to improve the standard of care and welfare for research animals, as well as improving the quality of research results.

In Melbourne, important research into possible treatments for Alzheimer's disease is being carried out using mice. To determine the benefit of new therapies, mice receiving a treatment are compared to their untreated counterparts in memory tests.

Mice are trained to use sensitive touch screens to respond to the same memory tests used for Alzheimer's patients. The touch screen training is based on positive reinforcement, using sips of strawberry milkshake to reward the mice.

The mouse touch screens replace traditional, more challenging maze tests and are less stressful for mice resulting in improved animal welfare outcomes for the mice. The technology provides more reliable results, not only improving the probability of successful translation of treatments from the laboratory to patients, but also reducing the number of animals needed for testing.

Action	What will be done to improve animal welfare	Who will be involved	Time frames
Reform primary legislation (the Act)			
Action 1.1 **Review the current Act**	*Review Victoria's current principal animal welfare legislation, the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986.* *This will include:* - *its relationship with other legislation* - *its strengths and weaknesses* - *current enforcement tools* - *consideration of international animal welfare laws*	State government (lead) Animal sectors AWAC Enforcement groups Local government	Short
Action 1.2 **Seek input from stakeholders**	Consult with a wide range of stakeholders on proposed new animal welfare legislation for Victoria throughout the reform process. *This will include:* - *discussion on current legislation* - *new areas for inclusion* - *input into policy proposals* - *broad public consultation*	State government (lead) Animal sectors AWAC Enforcement groups Local government	Medium
Action 1.3 **Involve the broader public**	Release a policy proposals paper for public consultation on animal welfare legislative reform.	State government (lead) Animals sectors AWAC Enforcement groups General public Local government	Medium
Action 1.4 **Develop a new Act**	Undertake parliamentary processes to introduce new principal animal welfare legislation for Victoria that includes recognition of sentience and obligations around animal care.	State government (lead) Animal sectors AWAC Enforcement groups Local government	Medium
Action 1.5 **Identify funding options**	Identify future options for sustainable funding of Victorian animal welfare programs and activities (such as education and compliance).	State government (lead)	Medium
Reform subordinate legislation (regulations)			
Action 1.6 **Review regulations**	Review Victoria's animal welfare regulations. *This will include:* - *a review of the existing Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulations (principal + domestic fowl)* - *identification of new areas for regulation as required to support the new Act*	State government (lead) AWAC Animal sectors Enforcement groups Local government	Medium
Action 1.7 **Seek input from stakeholders**	Consult with a wide range of stakeholders on the development and implementation of regulations.	State government (lead) Animal sectors AWAC Enforcement groups Local government	Medium
Action 1.8 **Involve the broader public**	Conduct a Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) public consultation process on proposed regulations for the new legislation.	State government (lead) Animal sectors AWAC Enforcement groups General public Local government	Medium
Action 1.9 **Develop new regulations**	Make regulations to support the new legislation.	State government (lead) Animal sectors AWAC Enforcement groups Local government	Medium

Reform subordinate legislation (codes and standards)

Action 1.10 **Pilot code review process**	Review the POCTAA codes of practice relating to hunting and use this process as a pilot to inform future code reviews. Note: This will also deliver on the government's commitment to review the hunting codes under the Sustainable Hunting Action Plan.	State government (lead) Animal sectors AWAC	Medium
Action 1.11 **Review codes consultatively**	Review existing POCTAA codes to fit within the new legislative framework, in consultation with stakeholders.	State government (lead) Animal sectors AWAC Enforcement groups Local government	Long
Action 1.12 **Participate in national standards**	Participate in national processes for developing animal welfare standards.	State government (lead) Animal sectors AWAC	Ongoing
Action 1.13 **Implement standards**	Periodically review animal welfare legislation to incorporate national standards that are supported by the Victorian Government. *For example:* - *Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Cattle* - *Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Sheep* - *Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Exhibited Animals*	State government (lead)	Ongoing
Action 1.14 **Develop code for keeping of racing greyhounds**	Develop and implement the final *Code of Practice for the Keeping of Racing Greyhounds* in collaboration with the greyhound racing industry and relevant animal sectors. **Note:** this is a recommendation of the Milne report[*] [*]Milne C, 2015: Investigation into animal welfare and cruelty in the Victorian greyhound industry	State government (lead) Animal sectors	Short

Strengthen public sector leadership and policy

Action 1.15 **Establish Animal Welfare Victoria**	Establish a dedicated public sector group called Animal Welfare Victoria to bring together all aspects of domestic animal and animal welfare research, policy, education and compliance.	State government (lead)	Short
Action 1.16 **Keep improving laws**	Implement processes that inform continuous improvement of Victoria's animal welfare laws, so they remain effective and responsive to evolving scientific knowledge and community expectations. *For example: monitor animal welfare scientific research to inform legislative changes*	State government (lead) Animal sectors AWAC Enforcement groups Local government	Ongoing
Action 1.17 **Implement puppy farm commitments**	Implement the government's puppy farm commitments, including potential changes to the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*.	State government (lead) Animal sectors Local government	Short
Action 1.18 **Review infringements**	Review the effectiveness of existing infringements and identify where improvements and/or additional infringement offences are required.	State government (lead) Enforcement groups Local government	Medium
Action 1.19 **Collaborate with foster care and rescue organisations**	Identify opportunities for collaboration between state government and foster care and rescue organisations to continuously improve animal welfare outcomes.	State government (lead) Animal sectors Local government	Medium

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Action Area 2: Collaboration

Outcome: Collaboration that improves animal welfare

Everyone has responsibilities for animals in their care and for those affected by their activities. Individuals, animal sectors and all levels of government have roles to play to contribute to better animal welfare outcomes for Victoria.

This action area encourages collaboration, cooperation and partnerships to promote continuous improvements in animal welfare. It also aims to generate innovative ideas and enable groups with varied interests to identify areas for collaboration where they can take action together and opportunities to leverage off existing processes and programs.

It recognises that while the complexity of animal welfare means that parties will not always agree, building better relationships and cooperation can lead to innovation and better outcomes.

This action area calls for a shared participation in animal welfare, with stakeholders working together to undertake the actions.

OUTCOMES

1. Victoria has a shared investment in continuous improvements to animal welfare.

2. Diverse animal sector stakeholders work together to find a common ground.

3. Commitment to animal welfare is strengthened via productive working relationships.

4. Animal sectors work together to identify and action opportunities for collaborative and innovative improvements to animal welfare.

Case study: Animals in emergencies

Following the Victorian Black Saturday bushfires in 2009, the Bushfires Royal Commission recognised the impact that human-animal bonds can have on a person's decision-making and safety during emergencies. The Commission also identified the need for a coordinated approach to managing animals and animal welfare in emergencies.

The Victorian Emergency Animal Welfare Plan (VEAWP) was developed by the Victorian Government to address planning and emergency animal welfare responses, in particular for livestock, pets, horses and wildlife. The VEAWP highlights the importance of including animals in all aspects of emergency planning, response and recovery, for the animals themselves as well as the safety of individuals and the community.

The Victorian Emergency Animal Welfare Committee was also established to help implement the VEAWP and to build strong relationships and collaboration between agencies. Exercise IRIS, a simulated animal welfare fire exercise was held in 2017 and highlighted the importance of strong relationships and open communication in any emergency response.

Collaboration has greatly improved as a result of the VEAWP. It has led to significant changes to the way animals are managed in emergencies and improved welfare outcomes. This includes greater consideration of animals during planning, better collaboration between agencies and a better understanding of the role animals play in the choices humans make in emergencies.

Action	What will be done	Who will be involved	Time frames
Enhance collaboration and cooperation across government and animal sectors			
Action 2.1 **Set up a collaborative group**	Establish a Victorian animal welfare stakeholder collaborative group (for the purpose of building stronger relationships and leading actions to improve welfare outcomes).	State government to establish a collaborative group **Note:** Collaborative group to deliver agreed actions	Short
Action 2.2 **Develop an accord**	Develop an agreement between key stakeholders and government agencies to identify roles and actions to improve animal welfare.	Collaborative group (lead) Animal sectors Enforcement agencies Local government State government	Short
Action 2.3 **Look for joint opportunities**	Identify opportunities and innovative measures to promote improved animal welfare practices.	Collaborative group (lead) Animal sectors AWAC Local government State government	Ongoing
Action 2.4 **Prepare for and respond to emergencies together**	Collaborate with animal sectors and emergency organisations to address animal welfare issues in emergencies. *For example:* - *chair the Victorian Emergency Animal Welfare Committee* - *conduct training exercises with agencies involved in responding to animal welfare emergencies* **Note:** this action will be delivered through the Victorian Animal Welfare Emergency Plan	State government (lead) Animal sectors Enforcement groups Local government	Ongoing
Action 2.5 **Collaborate between departments**	Improve collaboration between state government departments and their policy groups to achieve better animal welfare outcomes *For example:* - *DEDJTR and DELWP to work together where activities involve both environmental sustainability and animal welfare issues*	State government (lead)	Ongoing
Identify and address priority animal welfare issues			
Action 2.6 **Identify priority issues**	Explore opportunities to identify and address priority animal welfare issues.	Collaborative group (lead) AWAC State government	Medium
Action 2.7 **Identify gaps in welfare science**	Identify priority research gaps and use this information to inform investment in animal welfare research.	Collaborative group (lead) Animal sectors AWAC State government	Ongoing
Action 2.8 **Publish annual Animal welfare report**	Animal Welfare Victoria will publish an annual Animal Welfare report that outlines achievements, challenges and actions regarding better animal welfare outcomes in Victoria.	State government (co-lead) Collaborative group (co-lead) Animal sectors AWAC Enforcement groups	Long
Action 2.9 **Implement greyhound racing reforms**	Collaborate with Greyhound Racing Victoria and the Office of Racing to finalise the implementation of animal welfare reforms within the greyhound racing industry identified in the Milne report[*] [*] Milne C, 2015: Investigation into animal welfare and cruelty in the Victorian greyhound industry	State government (lead) Animal sectors	Short
Action 2.10 **Deliver grants**	Deliver animal welfare grants to non-profit community organisations.	State government (lead)	Short

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Action Area 3: Education

Outcome: Communication and training that improves knowledge, skills and compliance

Education is an important tool to shape positive attitudes and behaviours towards animals. This leads to better animal welfare practices and a greater level of compliance.

Better animal welfare outcomes occur when people have the appropriate knowledge and skills, are informed about how to interact with animals in a responsible and respectful way and understand their legal responsibilities.

Education requires a shared approach. Government, industries, representative and welfare groups, training authorities, quality assurance bodies and others all have an important role in creating a diverse range of opportunities for people who work or interact with animals to further their knowledge, training and competencies.

The collaborative actions set out in this Action Plan will help maximise the reach of education initiatives, from the dissemination of information, through to training and competency development across the range of activities, practices and processes that impact animal welfare.

Case study: Responsible Pet Ownership Program

The *Living Safely with Dogs Program* is a great example of an educational initiative delivered by the Victorian Government that provides benefits to the Victorian community and its animals.

It promotes positive and safe interactions with dogs. Programs like this could also be used for providing animal welfare education into schools.

The Victorian Government has been delivering the *Living Safely with Dogs Program* in kindergartens and childcare centres since 2004 to promote safe interactions with dogs. The Program educates children about basic dog behaviour and provides skills such as identifying when it is safe or unsafe to approach a dog.

3 KEY COMPONENTS

Kindergarten visit

Curriculum kit

Website and app

9/10 dog attacks on children 0–9, requiring hospital admission, happened in the home environment. Accordingly, they were bitten by their own dog or one known to them

2004
800 visits
16,000 children
2017
2,200 visits
60,000 children

93% retention rate of concepts taught. 3 months after the visit

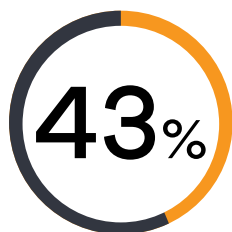**MONASH UNIVERSITY INDUSTRY RESEARCH INSTITUTE**

1999–2000 to 2013–2015 significantly decreasing trends in children 0–14 years to emergency department with dog bite injuries.

This action area will facilitate a broad range of learning opportunities. Relevant tools and approaches will deliver education and communication to promote positive attitudes to animals and influence positive changes in behaviour. These initiatives will be provided across a range of audiences to bring Victorians together on animal welfare.
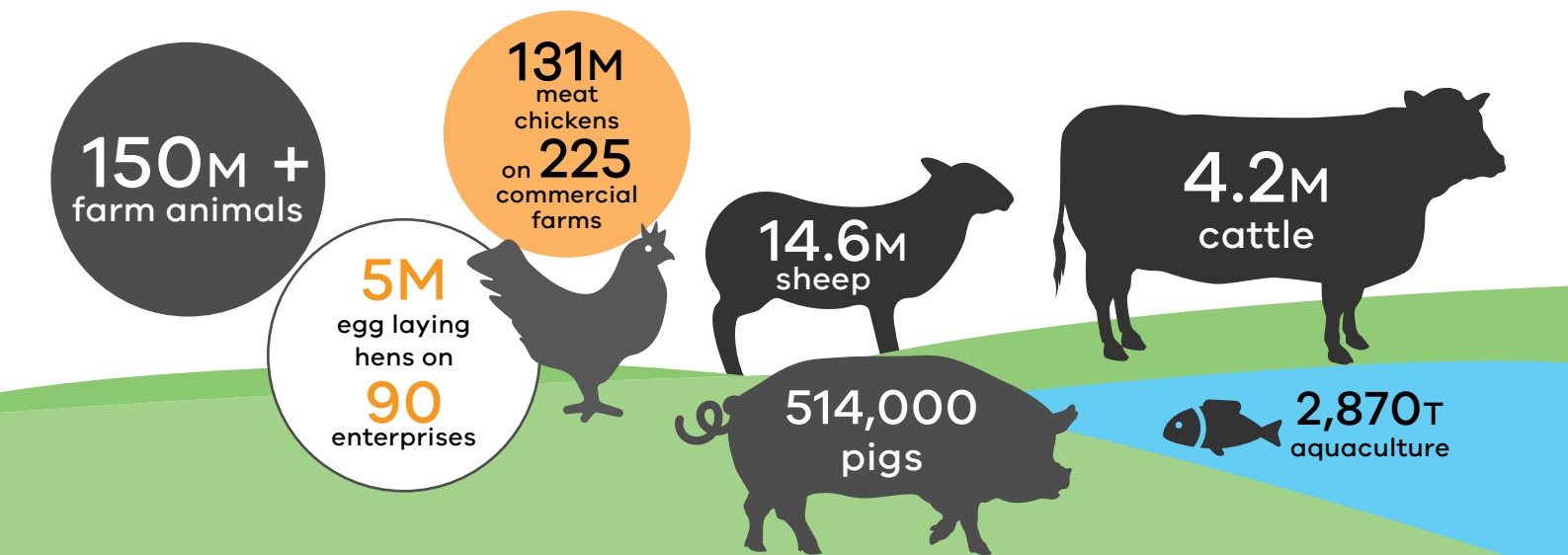
OUTCOMES

1. Information about animal welfare is readily available to the Victorian community

2. Knowledge, attitudes and behaviours towards animals are improved.

3. People have the appropriate knowledge, skills and competencies to implement sound animal welfare practices, particularly for high risk activities and procedures.

4. People know their legal responsibilities and compliance with animal welfare laws is improved.

43%

of households own at least one dog (total 1.15M)

Action	What will be done	Who will be involved	Time frames
Provide communication and training on animal welfare to improve knowledge, attitudes and behaviours			
Action 3.1 **Improve education to animal sectors**	Identify ways to increase understanding of animal welfare within animal sectors. *This will include:* - *sector-specific education materials and training opportunities* - *identifying extension opportunities to support practice change for priority industry issues*	Collaborative group (lead) Animal sectors Local government State government	Ongoing
Action 3.2 **Improve general animal welfare knowledge**	Communicate animal welfare information publicly through: - *promotion of existing animal welfare education and training opportunities* - *communication of information about sentience, respectful treatment and good practice husbandry* - *expand the government's social media engagement and web content on animal welfare*	State government (lead) Animal sectors AWAC Collaborative group Local government	Ongoing
Action 3.3 **Review and expand the *Responsible Pet Ownership Education Program***	Review and improve animal welfare components of the *Responsible Pet Ownership Education Program* to: - *audit the current program to identify animal welfare information gaps* - *build on the current program to improve animal welfare content*	State government (lead)	Medium
Action 3.4 **Investigate online school programs**	Explore opportunities and funding for an online animal welfare education program to complement the existing *Responsible Pet Ownership Education Program* to provide an appropriate model for high school students (years 7-10).	State government (lead)	Medium
Action 3.5 **Target education for priority issues**	Address priority animal welfare issues through targeted education and stakeholder engagement. *For example:* - *promote communication at point of sale about the requirements to care for animals, particularly around peak sale periods such as Christmas and Easter* - *improve training and competencies for high risk activities*	Collaborative group (co-lead) State government (co-lead) Animal sectors AWAC Local government	Ongoing
Action 3.6 **Improve scientific ethics training**	Update ethics committee training for animals in research and teaching to facilitate more informed decisions by committee members.	State government	Medium

150M + farm animals

131M meat chickens on 225 commercial farms

5M egg laying hens on 90 enterprises

14.6M sheep

4.2M cattle

514,000 pigs

2,870T aquaculture

Deliver education to improve knowledge of laws			
Action 3.7 **Provide education on current laws**	Use opportunities to engage with animal sectors to improve knowledge of legal requirements under POCTAA by: - *promoting existing government materials* - *participating in activities such as seminars, field days and extension programs*	State government (lead) Animal sectors Collaborative group Enforcement groups Local government	Short
Action 3.8 **Clarify enforcement process for the public**	Provide clear information and guidance to the public about how to report crimes, make a report, or access information about the enforcement process.	State government (lead) Enforcement groups Local government	Short
Action 3.9 **Address recurring compliance issues**	Develop targeted education to encourage behaviour change for recurring compliance issues.	State government (co-lead) Collaborative group (co-lead) Enforcement groups	Ongoing
Action 3.10 **Provide education on new laws**	Develop education and guidance on new animal welfare laws. *For example:* - *develop guidance materials on legal responsibilities* - *use innovative tools and methods* - *leverage existing communication and education channels and processes*	State government (lead) Animal sectors Collaborative group Enforcement groups	Long

4

Action Area 4: Compliance and enforcement

Outcome: Compliance and enforcement that is efficient and effective

It is the responsibility of everyone who has animals in their care or interacts with them to be aware of, and comply with, the law.

The Victorian Government and society do not tolerate mistreatment of animals. New legislation, with a robust framework to promote compliance with the law and strong powers for enforcement, is important to support improved animal welfare outcomes in Victoria.

Case study: RSPCA Victoria and activities to improve animal welfare

The RSPCA Victoria Special Investigation Unit (SIU) was formed to investigate intensive dog and cat breeding establishments, particularly investigating and responding to reports of illegal puppy farming.

In 2015-16, $5 million over four years was allocated by the Victorian Government to further strengthen the SIU. In the three years it has been in place, the SIU has significantly contributed to improving domestic animal welfare across the state, undertaking more than 100 investigations and assessing over 1,000 animals.

The SIU teams include inspectors, veterinarians and vet nurses, who can systematically assess the health and living conditions of all dogs/cats on the premises. The SIU receives reports via cruelty reports, council requests for assistance, or from the RSPCA Victoria's tip-off program. The SIU also collaborates with local councils on *Domestic Animals Act 1994* prosecutions through information and evidence sharing.

Increased scrutiny from the community about how animals are treated is resulting in increasing volume of complaints to, and heightened expectations of, law enforcement groups.

Under POCTAA, a number of groups are responsible for animal welfare enforcement. These include state government agencies, local government, Victoria Police and RSPCA Victoria. Current compliance and enforcement systems and processes will be reviewed and improved to create a more effective and efficient framework.

There is also a need to explore different ways to work collaboratively and innovatively, to identify methods that encourage voluntary compliance and to identify co-regulatory approaches that support improved animal welfare outcomes.

These improvements aim to deliver greater efficiency and effectiveness across the compliance and enforcement framework.

OUTCOMES

1 Enforcement groups, industry and the community understand their roles and legal responsibilities for animal welfare.

2 The public better understands compliance and enforcement systems and processes, with greater clarity and transparency around accountability, case management and enforcement outcomes.

3 Voluntary compliance that improves animal welfare outcomes is supported.

4 The compliance and enforcement framework is efficient and effective.

Action	What will be done	Who will be involved	Time frames
Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of enforcement systems and processes			
Action 4.1 **Review the enforcement model**	Review Victoria's animal welfare enforcement framework, including the different authorised agencies and their governance arrangements to identify areas for improvement.	State government (lead) Enforcement groups	Short
Action 4.2 **Clarify enforcement roles**	Clarify roles and responsibilities for enforcing animal welfare legislation and work with enforcement groups to ensure these are clear and understood. *For example:* - *consult with enforcement groups to clarify the roles and responsibilities under current and future legislation*	State government (lead) Enforcement groups	Medium
Action 4.3 **Improve enforcement training**	Improve the knowledge and skills of authorised officers and decision makers, including courts and tribunals where appropriate. *For example:* - *develop or promote training programs for authorised officers* - *develop educational material to assist authorised officers and decision makers*	State government (lead) Enforcement groups	Ongoing
Action 4.4 **Respond to RSPCA Inquiry**	Respond to the Parliamentary Inquiry into RSPCA Victoria.	State government (lead) Enforcement groups (RSPCA Victoria)	Short
Action 4.5 **Support voluntary compliance programs**	Identify and support opportunities for co-regulation including promotion of quality assurance programs that will improve compliance with animal welfare laws.	State government (co-lead) Animal sectors (Animal industries) (co-lead) Enforcement groups	Ongoing
Action 4.6 **Improve how enforcement is undertaken**	Identify measures to develop a consistent and state wide enforcement approach (such as consistent compliance strategies) within and across enforcement groups. *For example:* - *establish a regular forum for enforcement groups to meet and collaborate* - *identify and support increased measures for information sharing between enforcement agencies and compatible data reporting.*	State government (lead) Enforcement groups	Ongoing
Action 4.7 **Improve compliance through behavioural change**	Identify ways to improve understanding of community attitudes and knowledge related to animal welfare non-compliance, to influence positive behavioural change and improve compliance. *For example:* - *identify research opportunities to better understand the drivers of neglect and cruelty*	State government (lead) Animal sectors Local government Enforcement groups AWAC	Long