

**ANIMAL WELFARE**

***ADVISORY COMMITTEE***

**ANNUAL REPORT**

**2000/2001**



# ANIMAL WELFARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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The Hon Kon Vatskalis MLA  
Minister for Local Government  
Parliament House  
DARWIN NT 0800

Dear Minister

I have pleasure in presenting to you, on behalf of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, established under the *Animal Welfare Act*, the first Annual Report for the year ended 30 June 2001 as required by regulation 13 of the Animal Welfare Regulations.

Yours sincerely

CHARLES WEBB  
Chairperson

August 2001



ANIMAL WELFARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT 2000-2001

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Chairperson's Overview	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	3
Legislative Charter	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	4
Functions of the Advisory Committee	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	4
Achievements 2000/2001	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	5
Advisory Committee Members	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	7
Alternate Members	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	10
Advisory Committee Meetings	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	11
Administrative Support	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	12
Codes of Practice	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	12
Education and Promotion	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	14
Conclusion	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	14

## CHAIRPERSON'S OVERVIEW

The *Animal Welfare Act* came into effect in March 2000 replacing the former *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act*. The Animal Welfare Advisory Committee was established by the Minister for Local Government pursuant to section 69 of the Act. The inaugural meeting of the Advisory Committee was held on 28 June 2000.

The legislation marked a new era in animal welfare in the Territory. The Act has a dual focus, emphasising the prevention of cruelty and neglect of animals, and secondly promoting an increase in community awareness about the welfare of animals.

The Advisory Committee has provided advice to the Minister on animal welfare issues and the development of codes of practice relevant to animal welfare and management.

A number of routine issues were considered by the Advisory Committee during its inaugural year of operation.

The Advisory Committee has completed a productive initial year. I acknowledge the effective relationships that have developed with the Minister, the Department of Local Government and particularly with the Advisory Committee's Executive Officer, Ms Alice Henderson.

I also acknowledge the many contributions by the members of the Advisory Committee, and I thank them for their support.

## **LEGISLATIVE CHARTER**

The *Animal Welfare Act* was passed by the Legislative Assembly on 20 October 1999 and came into operation on 27 March 2000.

The objectives of the Act are –

- to ensure that animals are treated humanely;
- to prevent cruelty to animals; and
- to promote community awareness about the welfare of animals.

The Animal Welfare Advisory Committee is a statutory body established by the Minister for Local Government under section 69 of the *Animal Welfare Act* and is responsible to the Minister.

The Act provides for an Advisory Committee of at least eight members appointed in writing by the Minister in accordance with regulation 6 of the Animal Welfare Regulations.

## **FUNCTIONS OF THE ANIMAL WELFARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

The Animal Welfare Advisory Committee has the following functions –

- (a) advising the Minister about animal welfare legislation and other matters relevant to animal welfare;
- (b) investigating and reporting on matters relevant to animal welfare referred to it by the Minister;
- (c) participating in the development of codes of practice and the review of adopted codes of practice;
- (d) providing advice to bodies, organisations or the general community on programs for the improvement of community awareness about animal welfare; and
- (e) any other functions prescribed by the Animal Welfare Regulations.

No further functions have been prescribed under the Animal Welfare Regulations.

## ACHIEVEMENTS 2000/2001

Three codes of practice were recommended during the year to the Minister for adoption in the Territory under the *Animal Welfare Act*. These codes are –

- National Health and Medical Research Council's *Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes*, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition 1997;
- Standing Committee on Agriculture, Animal Health Committee's *Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals "Feral Livestock Animals: Destruction or Capture, Handling and Marketing"*; and
- Standing Committee on Agriculture and Resource Management's *Australian Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals "Land Transport of Cattle"*.

The first two codes have been adopted by the Minister for Local Government. The third is presently under consideration by the Government. Details of the codes of practice are included in the Annual Report at page 12.

Other achievements included the following matters.

- A recommendation to the Minister to grant an exemption under section 81(1)(b) of the *Animal Welfare Act* to allow for tail docking of pigs under 7 days of age and under certain conditions. The Minister granted an exemption by notice in the *Gazette* on 22 November 2000. The exemption was granted based on advice from veterinary officers of the Department of Primary Industry & Fisheries and Australian Veterinary Association Ltd (Northern Territory Division) that the practice of tail docking of pigs between 3-5 days old is considered a standard pig husbandry technique often necessary for the welfare and management of pigs. The procedure's purpose is to reduce the trauma of pigs chewing the tails of other pigs. Both pig breeders in the Territory supported the exemption.

- A recommendation to the Minister to amend the Act to prohibit tail docking of dogs unless there was a therapeutic need for the operation in which case the procedure should only be performed by veterinarians. There are over 50 registered breeds of dogs that are regularly subjected to tail docking. The Australian Capital Territory Government has prohibited the tail docking of dogs in their jurisdiction under the *Animal Welfare Amendment Act 2000*, unless there is a therapeutic need for the operation. This issue is still under consideration by the Government. No other States have yet imposed bans on tail docking. There was a widely promoted campaign by RSPCA Australia during the year to have tail docking banned throughout the country.
- A recommendation to the Minister to adopt the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Resource Management's *Australian Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals – "Land Transport of Cattle"*. A decision on the code's adoption is still pending at 30 June 2001.

The Advisory Committee considered a number of other issues during the year concerning the welfare of animals. These included –

- the use of electronic training collars on dogs;
- health problems in camp dogs in Aboriginal communities;
- the legislative requirement to restrain dogs in vehicles;
- community awareness programs about caring for pets during cyclones;
- training for animal welfare inspectors and animal welfare officers;
- the abandonment of face branding of cattle in the Territory;
- layer hen housing and labelling of eggs in Australia;
- comparison of other jurisdictions' Animal Welfare legislation;
- Australian Capital Territory's Strategic Companion Animal Management Package;

- National Consultative Committee on Animal Welfare Position Statement No 19 – *NCCAW Protocol for Assessing Aggression in Dogs by Veterinarians on Behalf of Animal Welfare Groups and Municipalities*;
- NCCAW Position Statement No 34 – *Provision of Blood Supplies*, April 2000;
- NCCAW Position Statement No 35 – *Dog Health in Indigenous Communities*, April 2000;
- NCCAW Position Statement No 36 – *Tail Docking of Dogs*, October 2000; and
- NCCAW Position Statement No 5 – *The Welfare of Animals at Abattoirs*, October 2000.

#### **ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

The Animal Welfare Advisory Committee consists of eight members appointed by the Minister for Local Government pursuant to regulation 6 of the Animal Welfare Regulations. The members were nominated by, and represent the interests of, the organisations on the next page –

- Animal welfare organisation incorporated in the NT (RSPCA NT Inc);
- Australian Veterinary Association Ltd;
- Local Government Association of the Northern Territory;
- Agency having the responsibility for the administration of the *Animal Welfare Act* (Department of Local Government);
- Department of Primary Industry & Fisheries;
- Northern Territory Cattlemen’s Association Inc;
- Northern Territory University; and
- Parks & Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory.

Membership of the Advisory Committee as at 30 June 2001 was as follows:

*Professor Charles Webb (Chairperson)*

Professor Webb was appointed the Chairperson of the Advisory Committee on 13 June 2000. Charles is the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Higher Education and Research), Northern Territory University, and is the Chair of the University's Animal Experimentation Ethics Committee.

*Mr James McNally*

Mr McNally was appointed a member of the Advisory Committee on 8 May 2001. Jim is the Chief Executive Officer of RSPCA (Darwin Branch) Inc, which represents an animal welfare organisation incorporated in the Territory. Jim replaced the previously appointed representative member, Ms Liz Chain, who sadly passed away in January 2001.

*Dr Daniel Atkins*

Dr Atkins was appointed a member of the Advisory Committee on 13 June 2000 to represent the Australian Veterinary Association Ltd. Danny is a veterinarian and has his own veterinary clinic.

*Mr Mark Gage*

Mr Gage was appointed a member of the Advisory Committee on 2 August 2000. Mark is an Alderman with the Katherine Town Council and represents the Local Government Association of the Northern Territory. Mark replaced the interim representative member, Mr Jeffrey Hoare.

*Mr Hugh Richardson*

Mr Richardson was appointed a member of the Advisory Committee on 13 June 2000. Hugh is the Director, Legislation representing the Agency having responsibility for the administration of the Act, namely the Department of Local Government.

*Dr Kevin de Witte*

Dr de Witte was appointed a member of the Advisory Committee on 13 June 2000 and represents the Department of Primary Industry & Fisheries. Kevin is the Department's Regional Veterinary Officer at Katherine. He is the Northern Territory's representative on the National Standing Committee on Agriculture and Resource Management, Animal Welfare Committee. Kevin has a particular interest in the preparedness for emergency animal diseases and the Territory cattle industry.

*Mr Robert Lee*

Mr Lee was appointed a member of the Advisory Committee on 13 June 2000 and represents the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association Inc. Bob is the Executive Officer of the Cattlemen's Association and also acts as the Executive Officer for the Connellan Airways Trust. He is also a member of the Royal Agricultural Show Society Committee.

*Mr Philip Hauser*

Mr Hauser was appointed a member of the Advisory Committee on 20 April 2001 and represents the Parks & Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory. He has been a Ranger for over 20 years and is actively involved in wildlife and park management activities, including feral animal control and urban wildlife management programs. Phil replaces the previous representative member, Mr Barry Scott.

## ALTERNATE MEMBERS

The Animal Welfare Regulations provide for the Minister to appoint alternate members of the Advisory Committee. The alternate members and their representative body are listed below.

Dr Stephen Cutter	-	Animal welfare organisation incorporated in the Northern Territory (RSPCA NT Inc).
Dr Matthew Boyd	-	Australian Veterinary Association Ltd.
Mr Cecil Black	-	Local Government Association of the Northern Territory.
Ms Deborah Zupp (resigned)	-	Agency having the responsibility for the administration of the <i>Animal Welfare Act</i> (Department of Local Government).
Dr Brian Radunz	-	Department of Primary Industry & Fisheries.
Mr Stephen Peatling	-	Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association Inc.
Mrs Hemali Seneviratne-		Northern Territory University.
Dr Simon Stirrat	-	Parks & Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory.

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS

There is a statutory requirement under regulation 11 of the Animal Welfare Regulations for the Advisory Committee to hold at least two meetings each year. Four meetings were held during the year as listed below. All meetings were held in Darwin.

- Inaugural Meeting - 28 June 2000
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting - 8 November 2000
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting - 8 February 2001
- 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting - 21 June 2001

The members' attendance at meetings during 2000/2001 is listed in the Table below.

Organisation	Name of Member	Meetings attended
Northern Territory University	Charles Webb (Chair)	2
	Hemali Seneviratne (alternate)	2
RSPCA NT Inc	James McNally	1
	Elizabeth Chain (deceased)	1
	Naomi Oliver (alternate, resigned)	2
Australian Veterinary Association Ltd	Daniel Atkins	3
Local Government Association of the Northern Territory	Mark Gage	3
	Jeffrey Hoare (interim member)	1
Department of Local Government	Hugh Richardson	3
Department of Primary Industry & Fisheries	Kevin de Witte	3
Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association Inc	Robert Lee	3
Parks & Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory	Philip Hauser	1
	Barry Scott (resigned)	1
	Simon Stirrat (alternate)	2

## ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

The Executive Officer, Ms Alice Henderson provides executive support and research capacity to the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee. Ms Henderson is an officer employed in the Legislation Unit of the Department of Local Government.

There was ongoing consultation during the year with various animal welfare stakeholders including those in the cattle industry, road transport (livestock) organisations, relevant government Agencies, animal ethics committees, rodeo associations, camel associations, livestock exporters, canine clubs and associations, pig breeders, and sporting shooters' associations in the Northern Territory. Liaison was also maintained with the RSPCA nationally, and with animal welfare units in other jurisdictions.

## CODES OF PRACTICE

One of the functions of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee as prescribed under the *Animal Welfare Act* is to participate in the development of codes of practice and the review of adopted codes of practice. These codes are used as a guide for “best practice” standards for the handling, care, management and treatment of animals.

The Advisory Committee considered the following national model codes of practice during the year:

- *Australian code of practice for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes*, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, 1997;
- *Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals – Feral Livestock Animals: Destruction or Capture, Handling and Marketing*;

- *Australian Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals – Land Transport of Cattle*;
- *Australian Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals – Sea Transport of Livestock*;
- *Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals – Domestic Poultry*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition; and
- Draft NCCAW Position Statement – *Standards for the Care and Treatment of Rodeo Livestock*, October 2000 version.

As previously noted at page 5 of the Annual Report, the Advisory Committee recommended three codes of practice to the Minister for Local Government for adoption under section 24(1)(a) of the *Animal Welfare Act*.

- National Health and Medical Research Council's *Australian code of practice for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes*, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, 1997. The purpose of the Code is to ensure the humane care of animals used for scientific purposes, including teaching. It also aims to emphasise the responsibilities of investigators, teachers and institutions using animals; ensure the welfare of animals is always considered and justified; avoid pain or distress for animals used in projects and promote techniques which replace animal use in scientific and teaching activities. The Code also requires the establishment of Animal Ethics Committees to oversight proposals for the use of animals for scientific purposes and the conduct of those activities.
- Standing Committee on Agriculture, Animal Health Committee's *Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals – Feral Livestock Animals: Destruction or Capture, Handling and Marketing*. The aim of the Code is to provide guidelines that promote the welfare of feral livestock animals captured for domestication, harvesting, slaughter or which are destroyed in control programs. It applies to feral pigs, donkeys, horses, goats, cattle, buffalo, camels and deer.

- Standing Committee on Agriculture and Resource Management's *Australian Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals – Land Transport of Cattle*. The Code is intended as a guide for people involved in transporting cattle and to ensure considerate treatment of the cattle so that stress and injury are minimised at all stages of the transport operation. It emphasises the responsibilities of the owner of the cattle, livestock transporters, drivers and handlers.

The Minister formally approved the adoption of the first two codes as a code of practice under the Act. The third code of practice has been referred to the Minister for consideration and approval, but had not been endorsed at 30 June 2001. Before making its recommendation, the Advisory Committee sought comments on the codes from various stakeholders. The stakeholders were provided with copies of the relevant codes.

## **EDUCATION AND PROMOTION**

During the year, three Committee members attended a Conference held in Darwin in August 2000 organised by a collective group of private veterinary practitioners, university staff, indigenous environmental health workers and government public health staff on the welfare of dogs in remote communities. The overall conclusion from the Conference was that animal welfare, funding and community empowerment are the major issues with respect to dog health programs, with the funding issue being the key determinant.

There was a Pet Expo held in April 2001 at the Royal Darwin Show grounds, organised by the combined local companion animal clubs, organisations and local government councils. A stand featuring aspects of Animal Welfare legislation was set up by the Animal Welfare Unit of the Department of Local Government. The Expo was well attended by the public.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Advisory Committee believes it has made a valuable and constructive start in carrying out its responsibilities in relation to the welfare of animals in the Northern Territory.