

## Article for use by Departments of Fisheries

### Release of Animal Welfare Guidelines for Fishing Industry

Guidelines to assist the Australian commercial fishing industry to maintain its good record on animal welfare have been released under the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy.

The Australian Animal Welfare Strategy is a national strategy developed by the Commonwealth government that aims to maintain and improve the high standards of animal welfare that currently exists in Australia.

It is expected that the majority of commercial fishing operations meet these guidelines in their existing day-to-day operations

The guidelines released apply to vertebrate fish species and were developed by the Aquatic Animal Welfare Working Group established within the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy. This covers commercial and recreational fishing sectors, the aquaculture sector, ornamental fish sector and the animal welfare sector from across Australia.

The guidelines are not detailed, specific documents covering every single aspect of a fishing operation. They are a set of '*guidelines*' to assist the commercial fishing industry to '*minimise stress*' of aquatic animals within the constraint of fishing practices inherent to each capture method.

The guidelines recognize that there is a close relationship between aquatic animal welfare and existing commercial fishing industry handling techniques to maximize quality of seafood products.

The main commercial capture fishing sector methods identified were:

- Line - hand, drop, longline
- Trawl - otter, beam, stern
- Pot & Trap
- Seine - beach, purse, Danish
- Gill (mesh) net

Experienced commercial fishers in each of the capture fishing method were nominated by industry peak bodies and assisted in the initial drafting of the guidelines related to their fishery. Existing commercial fishing industry guidelines relating to seafood quality handling were considered to ensure that the animal welfare guidelines did not contradict what industry applies in practice.

The guidelines were aligned with a set of Aquatic Animal Welfare – Overarching Principles – that appear as an appendix to each set of guidelines.

These documents are not regulatory but a set of voluntary '*guidelines*' for the benefit of industry. They are '*living*' documents, able to be adapted by industry participants to fit the particular fishing methods used by each individual in a fishery.

The guidelines will be reviewed regularly by industry for improvements in knowledge on animal welfare, new fishing technology or improvements in capture methods for vertebrate aquatic species.

A list of frequently asked questions are attached for further information.

## **Frequently Asked Questions - Australian Animal Welfare Strategy**

In May 2004, the Primary Industries Ministerial Council (PIMC) approved the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy (AAWS), which was developed under the auspices of the National Consultative Committee on Animal Welfare (NCCAW).

### **Why have the AAWS?**

The AAWS provides direction for the development of future policies and the revision of existing approaches to animal welfare. It establishes a framework to clarify roles and responsibilities, enable governments and stakeholders to engage in setting standards and priorities and to set strategic goals.

The goals of The AAWS are aimed at:

1. Enhancing the national approach and commitment to ensure high standards of animal welfare based on a concise outline of current processes;
2. Achieving sustainable improvements in animal welfare based on national and international benchmarks, scientific evaluation and research, taking into account changes in community standards; and
3. Achieving effective communication, education and training across the whole community to promote improved understanding of animal welfare.

The Strategy includes animals used in research and teaching, animals used for the production of food and fibre and other products, companion and guide animals, animals used for recreation, entertainment and display, native and introduced wildlife and feral animals.

### **What is the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy?**

The AAWS will provide a strategic national framework to deliver the vision that:

*“The welfare of all animals in Australia is promoted and protected by the development and adoption of sound animal welfare standards and practices.”*

The AAWS embraces an approach to animal welfare that recognises the importance of factors such as ethics, culture, societal values, economics, the environment and innovation, as well as a scientific base.

The AAWS builds on the existing animal welfare framework in Australia. It recognises achievements such as national codes of practice, as well as the roles and responsibilities for animal welfare, such as individual animal owners, community organizations, animal industries, and governments.

Since the AAWS provides a strategic framework for animal welfare, specific issues (such as farm animal welfare standards, companion animal care) will be addressed when Action Plans are developed to implement the AAWS.

## **Who is the AAWS for?**

The Strategy is for the entire Australian community including animal owners, the veterinary profession, livestock producers, processors and transporters, animal welfare bodies, researchers, consumers and government agencies.

The Strategy covers the care, uses and direct and indirect impacts on all species of animals in Australia including those used in research and teaching, recreation and entertainment, production of food and fibre, companion animals, aquatic animals, pest species, and wildlife.

## **What Happens Next?**

In the next phase of the implementation of the AAWS, the Primary Industries Standing Committee (PISC) will co-ordinate the development of an implementation plan in consultation with key stakeholders and will provide advice on how best to address the issue of economic impacts that might arise from implementation of the Strategy.

This Plan will include Action Plans, which spell out who is responsible for putting them into effect. It will also outline key components such as resources, funding, national coordination, and monitoring and evaluation of progress.

For a full copy of AAWS go to [www.daff.gov.au/aaws](http://www.daff.gov.au/aaws)

Further information go to [www.australiananimalwelfare.com.au](http://www.australiananimalwelfare.com.au)