

Australian Poultry Cooperative Research Centre

Welfare Programme

A report for the Poultry CRC

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Chicken Meat Industry Welfare Audit: Improving Adoption by the National Industry

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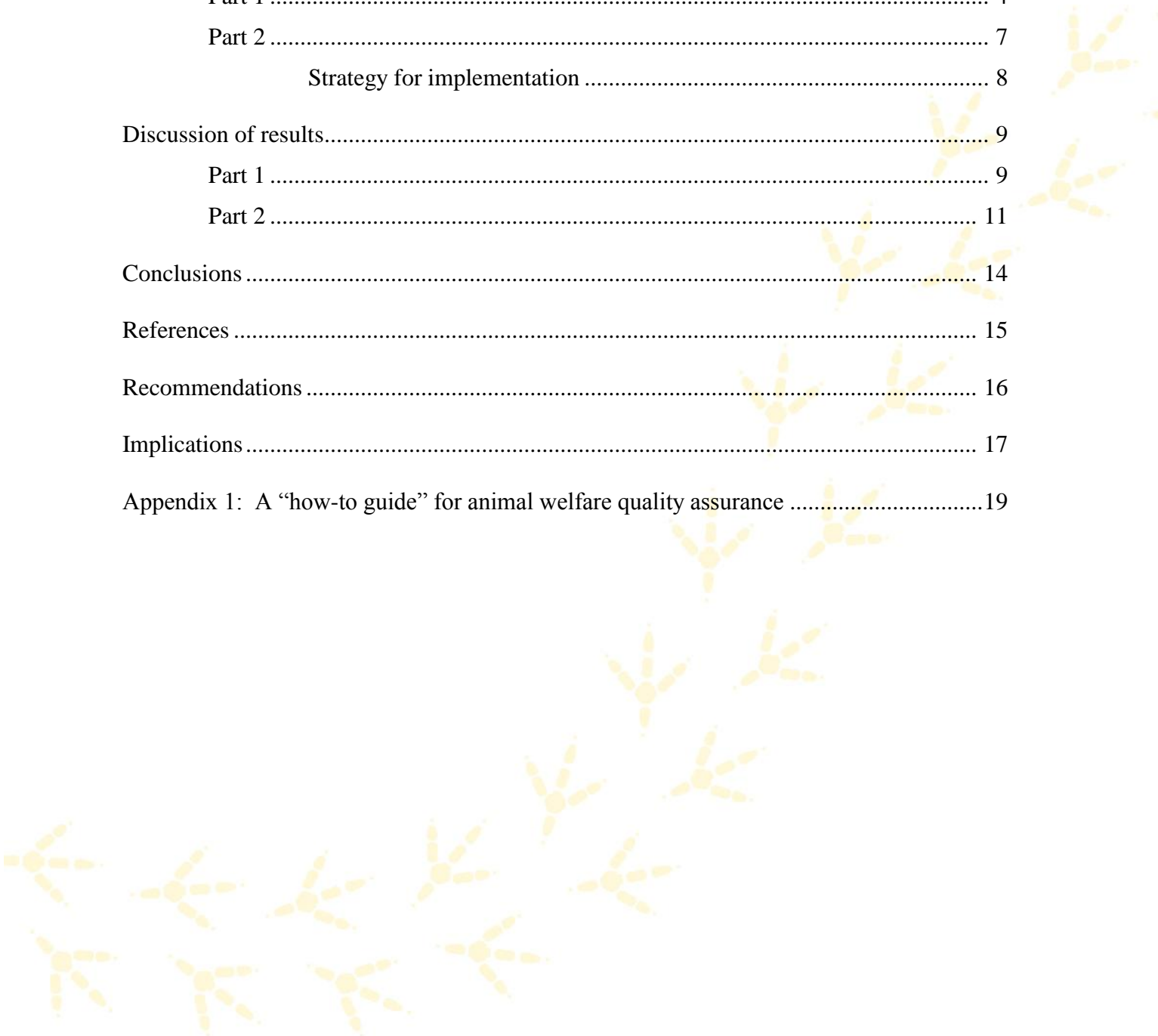
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Executive Summary

Introduction: In an earlier project, supported by RIRDC (chicken meat), welfare audit documentation was developed for all sectors of the chicken meat industry in 2001. On completion, initial implementation involved adoption by some of the industry representatives' companies on the management group, including one company nationally and the Victorian part of another company. Thus, while implementation had occurred to cover about 30+ % of birds in the industry, there was still considerable progress required for industry to achieve an 80 % adoption rate and as a whole take advantages of the benefits. The tangible benefits of incorporating the welfare audit into company QA programs on a national basis, as well as an improvement in bird welfare, are that industry will be able to demonstrate compliance with the relevant Codes of Practices, high animal welfare standards and a commitment to continual improvement in welfare standards. There are also a number of intangible benefits, such as better relationships with influential members of the welfare lobby and an ability to deflect criticism away from some controversial welfare issues.

Objectives: The main objective of this project was to increase the adoption of the 'Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry' into company QA programs nationally. By interacting with industry, in particular, commercial poultry companies, the project had the following specific objectives:

- Report on the current use and success of the 'Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry' program, developed by RIRDC/AWSC and released in 2001.
- Evaluate current levels of adoption and compliance and verify the standards of best animal welfare practice, within companies and across the industry as a whole.
- Identify companies and provide assistance and encouragement for them to integrate the welfare audit into their company QA programs.
- Achieve an 80 % adoption rate by industry within 18 months.

Results: The current level of implementation of the 'Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry' was established and interviews conducted to determine any practical difficulties, possible improvements and the overall success of the program within the company QA system. Discussions were held with nine companies on the development of the documentation and to assist those who wished to integrate the program into their current QA programs. A 'how to guide' was developed to aid the companies with identifying the relevant best animal welfare practices, based on the information contained within the 5 booklets of the 'Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry'. Based on feedback from both companies and consultants, strategies were developed for additional implementation within the industry.

Conclusions: Industry implementation of welfare into QA programs is currently reasonable with over half the birds in the Australian flock currently under QA programs incorporating the 'Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry', but relatively few companies are currently involved. While there appears to be good support from other companies for further implementation, and this will be capitalised upon in 2005, it is unlikely that maximum penetration will be achieved unless an 'industry champion' accepts the responsibility to raise the issue (and the availability of supporting and implementation documentation) on an annual basis at appropriate industry forums.

Recommendations:

- That regular interaction continues with companies to encourage implementation.
- That an 'industry champion' is identified and that continuing implementation of animal welfare is placed as an annual agenda item of industry forums to ensure all members are aware of the information and to use 'peer group pressure' to encourage ongoing implementation.
- That the documentation is revised within 5 years to ensure companies have updated best practice information on animal welfare.
- That the CRC consider publication of the 'how to guide to implementation' that is attached to this report.

Introduction

The 'Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry' project was developed over a 2-year period and released in 2001 (Barnett *et al.*, 2001), to help fulfil both industry's and the community's expectations of high levels of quality assurance associated with chicken meat production. Quality assurance programs within industry currently focus predominantly on animal health and food safety and there was a need, coinciding with a more informed and demanding customer base, to expand these programs to include animal welfare issues so that industry remains sustainable. Similarly, there will be a need in the future to include environmental audits into quality assurance programs. While it was designed so that the documentation could be used independently, it was always envisaged that its best use would be via incorporation into company quality assurance programs.

A large number of the issues that producers focus on daily, including animal health, production and food safety, also relate to animal welfare, although this information was not previously formalised within one document. Broiler companies already provide considerable information on maintaining high levels of animal welfare and producers, in their daily tasks, already largely implement this information. Five booklets that comprised the 'Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry' were produced and are independent documents for the breeding, hatchery, rearing, growing and transport/processing sectors of the chicken meat industry. This documentation, relating to various stages of production, was approved by a Management Group comprising representatives of commercial companies, farmer groups, animal welfare groups, legislative/policy groups and teaching and research organisations and represents the first comprehensive welfare audit for an animal industry. Booklets for each industry sector comprise audit questions, record sheets, information on the purpose of the questions and their impact on welfare and record sheets for unit managers to complete, in conjunction with a diary, to help demonstrate compliance with the audit process. The questions include both critical questions, defined as those where "if something goes wrong the welfare of the birds is irrevocably damaged" and good practice questions that reflect the current state of knowledge and how this can be practically applied by the industry. Compliance can be at the level of the Code of Practice or at a higher standard determined by industry. It was recommended that this higher standard was an achievable target for industry over the next five years ie. by 2006.

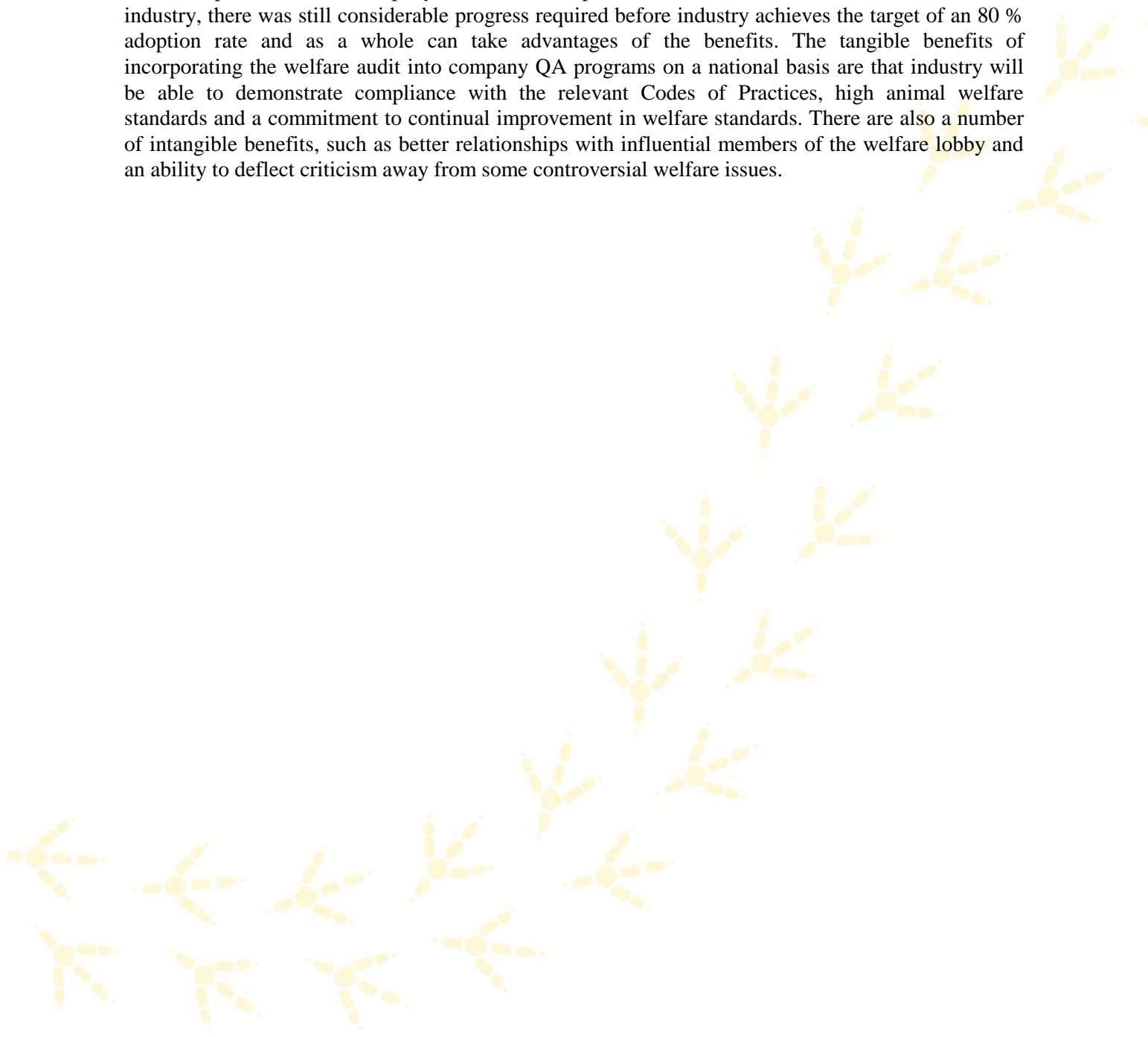
Audit documentation for animal care has the ability to provide certainty for all personnel involved so that industry, service personnel, veterinarians and any internal or external auditors are asking the same questions in terms of animal care. Implementation of audit documentation is also likely to result in improved production because of the demonstrated link between welfare and production, as was demonstrated in a small study where the welfare QA program was implemented (Barnett *et al.*, 2002; Barnett and Glatz, 2004).

The main outcome of the 2001 project was that practical audit documentation was provided for industry to use, either independently or preferably via incorporation into their existing or developing quality assurance programs, for welfare assessment that reflected industry's continuing commitment to high standards of animal welfare for all sectors of the broiler industry. There were anticipated to be some short term and long term benefits of the project. The short term benefits were those to be gained by industry's proactive position on animal welfare with welfare groups, the public, the retail sector and relevant state and federal government bodies. To this end, an official launch by the Victorian Minister of Agriculture, in October 2001, resulted in publicity in industry journals and the general media. There is also international knowledge of the documentation (NZ, USA, Canada and UK). The long term benefits would only be achieved by implementation of the audit process. These potential benefits include an ability by industry to demonstrate compliance with codes of practice and welfare targets, improvements in compliance levels with targets over time, an ability to identify and solve problems on individual farms and, where necessary, to initiate industry education on specific issues. By these actions, the industry will be able to reassure the public that appropriate welfare standards are being met within the chicken meat industry.

In order to meet the outcomes outlined above, together with realising the short and long term benefits that this project can provide, it was necessary to develop this current project 'Improving implementation of the Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry' in order to extend the information in a more targeted way to commercial companies in the poultry industry and provide the support necessary for those intending to incorporate the information into their QA systems.

This project contributes to Goal 3.1 of the Poultry CRC's Business Plan, which is "best housing and husbandry practices". It focuses attention on the critical role of stockpeople to poultry welfare. One purpose of quality assurance programs is to set standards that minimise risk at critical stages of production. While the majority of animal industry quality assurance programs incorporate management practices associated with antibiotic use and product hygiene, welfare is becoming considered as an industry-wide area of risk, thus extension of the welfare related material to industry was required.

Once the audit documentation was completed, initial implementation involved adoption by some of the industry representatives on the management group, including one company nationally and the Victorian part of another company. Thus, while implementation has occurred in about 30+ % of the industry, there was still considerable progress required before industry achieves the target of an 80 % adoption rate and as a whole can take advantages of the benefits. The tangible benefits of incorporating the welfare audit into company QA programs on a national basis are that industry will be able to demonstrate compliance with the relevant Codes of Practices, high animal welfare standards and a commitment to continual improvement in welfare standards. There are also a number of intangible benefits, such as better relationships with influential members of the welfare lobby and an ability to deflect criticism away from some controversial welfare issues.



OBJECTIVES

The main objective for this project was to increase the adoption rate of the 'Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry' into company QA programs nationally. By interacting with industry, in particular, commercial poultry companies, the project had the following objectives:

- Report on the current use and success of the 'Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry' program, developed by RIRDC/AWSC and released in 2001.
- Evaluate current levels of adoption and compliance and verify the standards of best animal welfare practice, within companies and across the industry as a whole.
- Identify companies and provide assistance and encouragement for them to integrate the welfare audit into their company QA programs.
- Achieve an 80 % adoption rate by industry within 18 months.

For the purposes of this report, the above objectives have been separated into two parts:

Part 1: Current implementation of the 'Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry'. This part focuses on the current use and success of the program and changes in practice associated with implementation.

Part 2: Improving implementation of the 'Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry'. This part focuses on identifying appropriate companies and providing assistance and encouragement for them to integrate the welfare audit into their company QA.

Intended Outcomes

- Incorporation of the 'Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry' into company QA programs by 80 % of the national industry.

Methods - Part 1:

Current Implementation of the Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry

Complete interviews with current audit participants on current implementation and success of the program

Information was sought from companies that were currently participating in the welfare audit either as stand-alone or as part of their current Quality Assurance program. The following information was sought:

- As assessment of the welfare standards resulting from participation (compliance).
- An assessment of changes resulting from the program, including management practices, training of personnel, production rates, mortalities, etc.
- Through survey or personal communication, determine changes implemented in order to meet best practice welfare standards, any improvements observed or documented, difficulties in managing the program and any outstanding issues relating to the use of the program.
- An audit of practices, including assessment of records to determine the level of compliance with the program.
- A report on the current state of implementation and success of the program.

The 'Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry' document was initially made available to all companies during 2001; they received both hard copies and a copy on a CD-rom. The methodology for this project that focuses on improving implementation commenced in sequence, with the first contact being made with those industry representatives that took part in the development of the 'Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry'. As a result, it was determined that one poultry company, Company A, had already implemented the audit. Subsequently, a meeting was held with Company A to assess the level of uptake within the company and to determine any subsequent improvements, practical difficulties and changes that were made in practice. The other companies were found not to be currently implementing the welfare audit and were all approached at a later stage, to participate in this project (see 'Methods - Part 2').

A meeting was arranged with Company A and the following survey that was developed to use with companies that had incorporated the documentation into their QA programs, to determine the impact and level of implementation of the audit within the Company, the practicalities of implementation and any changes that had been made either to the company QA documentation or daily practice.

A letter was sent to the companies that participated in the development of the Chicken Meat Welfare Audit project, stating that the investigators were involved in a current project designed to assess the implementation of the audit in the chicken meat industry. The letter indicated that assessments were to be made of the following:

- The welfare standards resulting from participation (ie. compliance in relation to document requirements).
- An assessment of changes resulting from the program, including management practices, training of personnel, production rates, mortalities, etc.
- Through survey or personal communication, an account of changes implemented in order to meet best practice welfare standards, any improvements observed or documented, difficulties in managing the program and any outstanding issues relating to the use of the program.

The letter also indicated that a report would be developed, based on the survey questions utilised in the face-to-face meeting. These questions included the following:

1. For which industry (ie. layers/broilers etc) has the program been implemented? *(please circle)*
Hatchery Rearing Breeders Broilers Transport Processing All

2. Is this within Victoria only or Nationally?
Victoria only (all farms)
Some farms only (Vic) (please name farms using program in Victoria).....
Nationally (please name states and where possible, no. farms).....

3. What staff training was required?
.....
.....
.....

4. Is the QA program being used as part of an existing QA program or as a stand alone document? (please tick)
 yes no Comments

5. Is this different for other farms within your company (i.e. some others use as stand alone or within existing QA OR all farms within company operate in the same manner with respect to welfare audit?
.....
.....

6. How difficult was it to incorporate the welfare audit into your QA program? *(please circle)*
Very difficult Difficult Not very difficult Easy

7. Are there any areas where compliance is difficult?
 yes no Comments

8. Are there any targets that should be changed?
 yes no Comments

9. Are you aware of any difficulties that staff have had with following the program?
.....
.....

10. In implementing the program did you provide copies of the 'rationale and background information' to staff?
 yes no

11. What was the reaction to the background material (if staff viewed)?
.....
.....

12. What was the reaction to the program from staff?
.....
.....

13. Whilst completing the program, do you feel more confident in the management of animal welfare?
 yes no Comments

14. Do you feel more informed about animal welfare whilst being involved in the program?

yes no Comments

15. Do you feel the program has helped better manage the requirements of the Code of Practice for welfare?

yes no Comments

16. Did you make any changes to practices after commencing the program?

yes no

17. If so, what did you change and why?

.....
.....

18. Indicate the level of difficulty in implementing the program. (*please circle*)

Very difficult Difficult Not very difficult Easy

19. Does the program add to the time spent on QA and how much more time is generally required?

.....
.....

20. How would you suggest the program be improved?

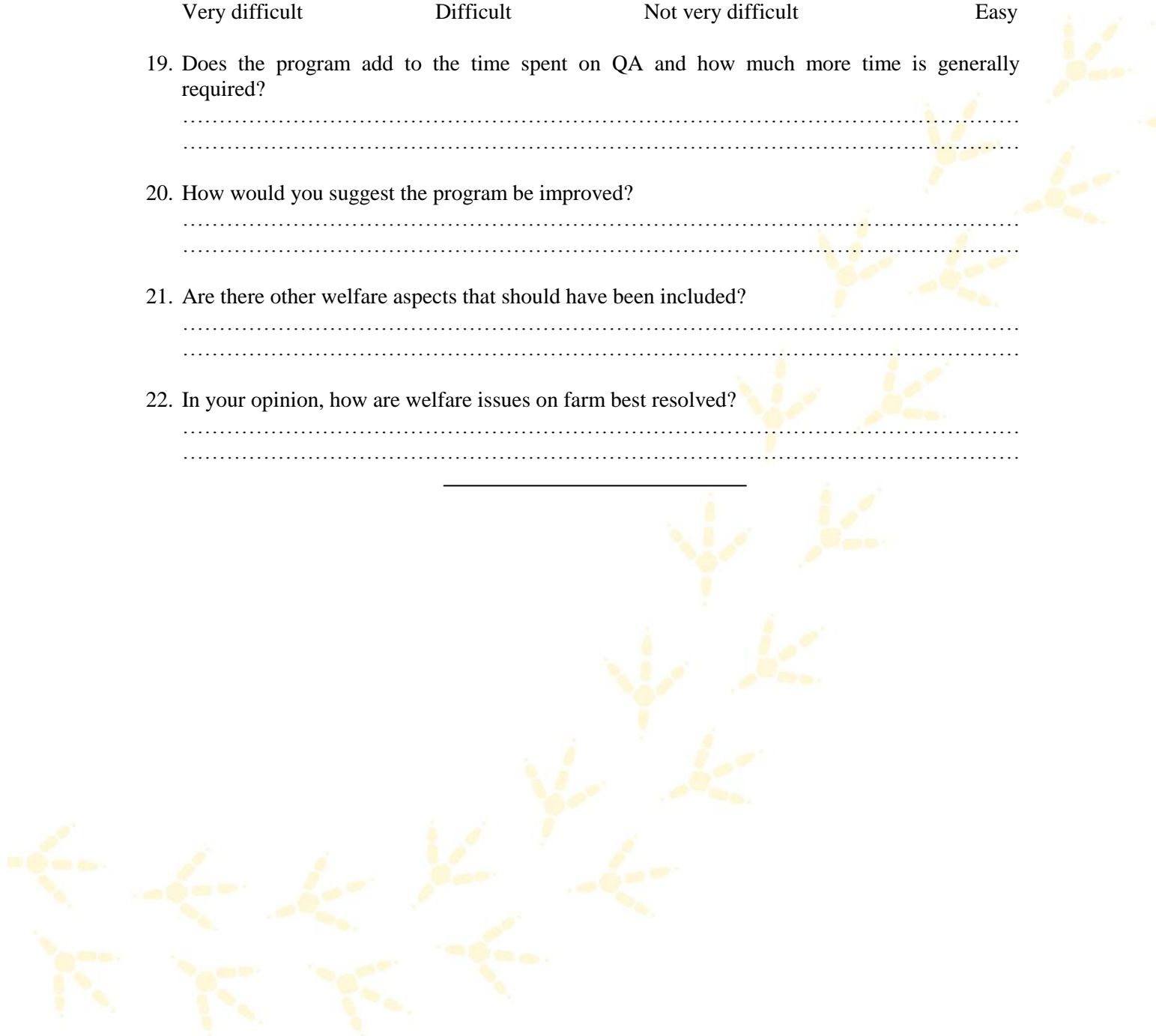
.....
.....

21. Are there other welfare aspects that should have been included?

.....
.....

22. In your opinion, how are welfare issues on farm best resolved?

.....
.....



Methods - Part 2:

Improving Implementation of the Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry by the National Industry

Meet one-on-one with company representatives to discuss implementation, time-frames and specific company requirements

Initially, the methodology involved contacting individuals or representative groups within the chicken industry and presenting/outlining the 'Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry' program and providing information compiled in the report from Part 1. It was established however, that due to changes either relating to company ownership, operation, or individual staff, that several companies were unaware that the completed documentation (Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry) was available to them. Consequently, the methodology was adapted to include introduction of the completed project, discussion on general QA and discussion on animal welfare as a 'quality attribute' in the production system.

The appropriate representative for each company was determined to be the Quality Assurance Manager or Technical Manager. This person, in the majority of cases, had responsibility for developing and managing the quality systems and documentation, and in addition, was familiar with audit processes, customer requirements and the network of producers that supplied the company. There were 9 companies contacted in total, 7 were met with face-to face, 4 of which, were met with more than once.

Each of the companies was initially contacted by phone, where the investigator outlined the project and indicated that they would like to meet face to face. Meetings were arranged, and discussion commenced with the following aims:

- 1) To brief the poultry company representative on the development of the project including the following:
 - The drivers for the concept
 - The objectives of the project
 - The methodology used to develop the documentation
 - The experts involved
 - The documentation, particularly in terms of its content and format.

- 2) To determine from company representatives information on their current Quality Assurance (QA) systems as well as the following:
 - Questions on their company (structure, stages of production, number of producers, number of birds, etc.)
 - What their current QA included (eg. food safety based, other standards/areas, etc.)
 - What stages of production the QA covered (eg. from farm to processing or only specific areas)
 - What the company objectives were in terms of future QA and value adding to their product. (This involved consultation on the current status of their QA and a determination of whether animal welfare is an aspect that should be incorporated)
 - What processes needed to be followed within the company to introduce welfare into their QA programs (eg. to determine whether the welfare documentation needed to be presented to a

wider group, within the company, or if a second meeting with other individuals was required to progress the project)

- The provision of suggestions and support in developing a collaborative approach to incorporate the documentation once this had been discussed within the company
- Whether they felt that the documentation would be a suitable reference, the likely response in their view, from producers and whether a strategy, such as a producer workshop, would be a positive course of action to engage producers in the company.

For the purposes of this report, poultry companies will be identified as A, B, C..... through to company I. As indicated in Part 1, meetings firstly commenced with those companies that were involved in the development of the 'Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry' and that therefore, were more familiar with the project. Contact was made with these companies (A and B) as outlined in Part 1. However, since company A had implemented the project at the national level, no further "implementation" of the documentation was necessary. Follow up was made with Company B to assess their position since taking part in the development of the 'Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry' documentation. All other companies were then contacted and for many, a number of meetings were held. In addition, meetings with industry consultants were also arranged, to add further support and expertise in the development of strategies that would result in better industry implementation. Suggestions made both by companies and industry consultants have been utilised in the development of strategies to ensure that over time, implementation of the 'Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry' documentation and integration of best animal welfare practice into industry quality assurance continues to occur within the national chicken meat industry.

Strategy for implementation

The second stage of the methodology for Part 2 of this project initially involved submission of offers (tender) to companies for consultation to assist in the implementation of animal welfare into their current QA programs. This was to be done by providing documentation and if necessary re-designing it to fit within the existing company QA format and again if required, training staff members on the welfare aspects within the program to be reviewed during internal audits. This component was not to be the focus of this project however, and was and still remains, such an unknown quantity in terms of amount of work, costs and time, etc., that it was, and will continue, to be undertaken with company funds on a cost-recovery basis.

The methodology used to assist companies to implement welfare into their existing QA program was altered following the interaction with several companies for Part 2 of this project. There were several recommendations that were made by companies that would assist in this final step, including the development of a strategy document, with the aim of providing instructions on "how-to" incorporate animal welfare into current company QA programs. This document was developed and provided to companies to aid discussion in developing animal welfare QA that is based upon the components within the 'Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry'. This document is in Appendix 1.

Discussion of Results

Results (Part 1)

In determining the extent to which the Welfare Audit documentation had been implemented, discussions with Company A, including the results of the survey indicated that material in the welfare audit had been taken up by the company at the national level. The documentation has been incorporated into the company's existing QA in all stages of production from the hatchery to processing.

Company A reported that the program was incorporated into the daily QA tasks and manuals and that minimal staff training was required to manage the welfare component in order to commence the program. It was also commented that staff did not report any difficulties (either in terms of practicality or understanding). There were no changes made to the specific content of the program in order to incorporate the material. Changes were made to the format of the program however, in order to integrate the material into the current, daily recording mechanisms employed at the company. One of these changes was a modification of the company batch cards to incorporate the program by adding welfare targets and hazards and these were also incorporated into the recording sheets for each stage of production for the company. It was expressed that, other than these modifications to recording sheets, no other changes were necessary for the program to be integrated into the existing QA program and that for the majority of farms, the practices were already being carried out, but with less awareness and no recording prior to the project.

The rationale and background information provided with the program was kept as a reference for QA managers, and general staff had access if and when they required. The material is also currently utilised for training new staff.

The company (A) reported that "there is more confidence in production processes now that the QA had incorporated welfare requirements" and "staff felt more informed about best welfare practice". Finally, there were no other welfare aspects identified by representatives that perhaps should have been incorporated into the welfare audit and overall, it was felt that the incorporation had assisted in raising awareness of animal welfare in daily processes and that this raising awareness of personnel to welfare was the best means of resolving welfare issues during production.

In addition to implementation by company A, the 'Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry' documentation was also incorporated into an initiative of the Victorian chicken meat industry – 'Chicken Care'. This initiative was originally developed as the environmental care initiative of the Victorian chicken meat industry. In line with other quality assurance programs, it is designed to continuously improve the environmental and safety performance of meat chicken growing and to ensure that the industry is open to and meets broad community expectations. It operates under the auspices of the Victorian Farmers Federation and the Victorian Chicken Meat Council. Currently over 60 % of the industry farms in Victoria are implementing the program.

The program comprises a 'best practices model'. The model was developed in 2000 to bring together industry knowledge, the requirements of four key government codes and five other industry environment improvement or community participation programs. The program was revised in 2003/04 and during this revision the Chicken Meat Industry Welfare Audit was incorporated into the program. Sections of the model cover:

- Community partnership
- Demonstrable duty of care
- Farm design
- Best practice farm operations
- Environment protection

- Occupational Health and Safety
- Animal welfare.



Results (Part 2)

Companies A to I were contacted and the following results indicate the responses and subsequent actions and achievements.

Company A

Meetings with company A, who were already implementing the welfare audit nationally, have been discussed in 'Results - Part 1'.

Company B

Company B was met with twice over a period of 3 months, following their participation in the development of the original project. Company B had intended to integrate the information into their QA program, however the company recently underwent incorporation with another commercial entity; thus company B is currently being re-structured. As a result, the entire quality assurance system and its parameters are being revised, along with the appointment of new technical personnel. Company B expressed interest in utilising the 'Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry' documentation in the revision of their QA that is currently underway. As a result of the merger, producers are not yet following a universal program. However, once the development of this program is complete, it is anticipated that recording of quality parameters will be carried out from farm through to processing. Current recording whilst the QA system is being revised includes mortalities, feed acquisition and quality, animal health, maintenance and staff records. It was suggested by Company B, that this project (Improving adoption of the Chicken Meat Welfare Audit) could include the development of a "strategy" that would aid them to commence the inclusion of animal welfare aspects into their QA beyond the completion of this project. This suggestion was also made by other companies as outlined later in this report and has since been addressed as part of this project (see Appendix 1). This "strategy" document, that was developed as part of this project, provides instructions on developing quality manuals that contain animal welfare, has been provided to company B, along with another copy of the supporting documentation ('Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry').

Company C

Meetings were held with Company C on several occasions over a period of four months. The number of visits was mainly due to changes in company personnel and the need to work through the concept of integrating animal welfare into company QA in a systematic manner. Initially, it was established that the company believed that it had no previous contact with the completed project nor did they have any copies of the documentation. As documentation had been provided to this company and their personnel were involved in commenting on the final draft of the original documentation, this belief probably reflects the lack of continuity of some key staff and processes to ensure 'corporate knowledge' is not lost. The initial contact included provision of the documentation and presentation of the project as outlined in the methodology above. The first meeting was encouraging, as Company C indicated that they were in a position to be able to incorporate animal welfare into their current QA system. They indicated that their QA had been standardised across the production system, covering from farm to processing and that this allowed integration of other quality aspects such as animal welfare, but also possibly environmental parameters and OH&S. The second meeting was initially delayed due to staff changeover, however contact was continued and the concept of introducing animal welfare into the company QA was discussed at the Board of Management level. Subsequently, meetings are continuing with this company to determine how they can be assisted to complete this work, utilising the 'Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry' documentation as a reference. They too, were interested in obtaining the "strategy" document that provided some instruction on incorporating animal welfare and further meetings have been planned for January 2005. These will be followed by farm workshops that include producers, as is also intended for Companies D and E (see below). The company also expressed interest in being involved in further animal welfare research, indicating it was an issue that was a high priority for the company.

Company D

Company D was met with twice over a period of five months. These meetings were held with the General Manager, who expressed a high level of interest in animal welfare. Currently Company D

contract most of their farms and thus do not currently have a whole-of-company integrated QA program. They currently operate QA for transport and processing and provide both recommendations and support for producers; company D felt that in the near future they would be looking to extend their QA through to farm level. They indicated that a document that outlined the steps to integrate the chicken welfare audit would greatly assist. They reported that they were in a position to implement the transport and processing sections of the documentation, however implementation at the farm level would take longer and it was suggested as an action to follow the last meeting, that the science project investigators could facilitate a workshop with their producers to assist communicating the idea and to ensure the ownership necessary to carry out the work. The documentation, including the strategy document were provided to Company D and subsequent meetings have been forecast for 2005.

Company E

Company E was also currently extending their QA program beyond the processing plant in a more formal manner. It should be made clear that all companies currently require recording to occur, thus farms record veterinary treatment, feed supply etc., however, in some cases, including Company E, this has not been formalised into an integrated whole-of-company QA system. Company E currently has a formal QA program for the processing plant and was interested in incorporating the components within the Chicken Meat Welfare Audit into this stage of production. They also indicated that they intended to follow on with hatchery documentation and then the other stages of production. Like the other companies visited, they too were interested in receiving the “strategy” documentation and holding some workshops with some of their main producers. Company E indicated that there would be producers who may be willing to take part in utilising the documentation on a “trial” basis, and who would then be able to assist tailoring the documentation for their company and in engaging other producers to get involved in utilising the documentation. It was felt that this would be the best way to move forward with implementing the farm components. Several meetings have been planned for 2005.

Company F

Company F expressed interest in presenting the information through a workshop with producers. Like the other companies however, they received the documentation and strategy document and plans have been made to continue discussions into 2005. Company F also suggested that a presentation at an industry meeting may be a good opportunity to involve a wide audience and this was discussed further with some industry consultants.

Company G

Company G was contacted by phone only, and despite interest in animal welfare quality assurance, were still working through other changes to their documentation and advised the investigator to forward all of the information and to re-visit the concept in a meeting in 2005.

Company H

Company H indicated that they will be incorporating the material, and plans have been made to assist them in early 2005, in terms of reviewing their newly developed HACCP plans that contain welfare and assisting them with advice on implementing their new program on farm. At this stage, plans have been made to have a company meeting that includes the major farms and to work through the changes with the producers, get their feedback and then implement on farm once any fine tuning has been carried out.

Company I

Company I was supportive of including animal welfare in their current QA system and felt that they would be in a position to do so in the near future. Contact will continue with them to assist as required.

The second stage of the methodology for Part 2 of this project initially involved submission of offers (tender) to companies for consultation to assist their implementation of animal welfare into their current QA programs. This was to be done by providing documentation and if necessary re-designing it to fit within the existing company QA format and again if required, training staff members on the welfare aspects within the program to be reviewed during internal audits. However, this component

was not able to be achieved within the timeframe of this project, due to the time taken to complete the initial and follow-up meetings with the companies. However, it is highly likely that this opportunity will be available during 2005, as companies become prepared for to implement the 'Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry' into their company QA programs. It is likely that with companies B, C, E, and F in particular, work will need to be done on an individual company basis to assist them to incorporate the documentation. However, in discussing how best to assist them in developing and incorporating the welfare QA, the following suggestions by several companies were made:

- 1) The development of a strategy document would provide instruction on "how-to" incorporate animal welfare into the current QA system.
- 2) Providing documentation for reference.
- 3) Re-designing the documentation if necessary, to fit within the existing company QA format.
- 4) Presenting and then perhaps training staff members and producers on the welfare aspects within the program through a series of workshops facilitated by individual companies.
- 5) The organisation of industry presentations (Federation and Council meetings).

Recommendation (1) has been completed as part of this project and provided to companies to assist further discussions and to provide feedback, as well as to assist them in incorporating animal welfare into company QA programs utilising the 'Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry' as a reference. The strategy document is provided in Appendix 1.

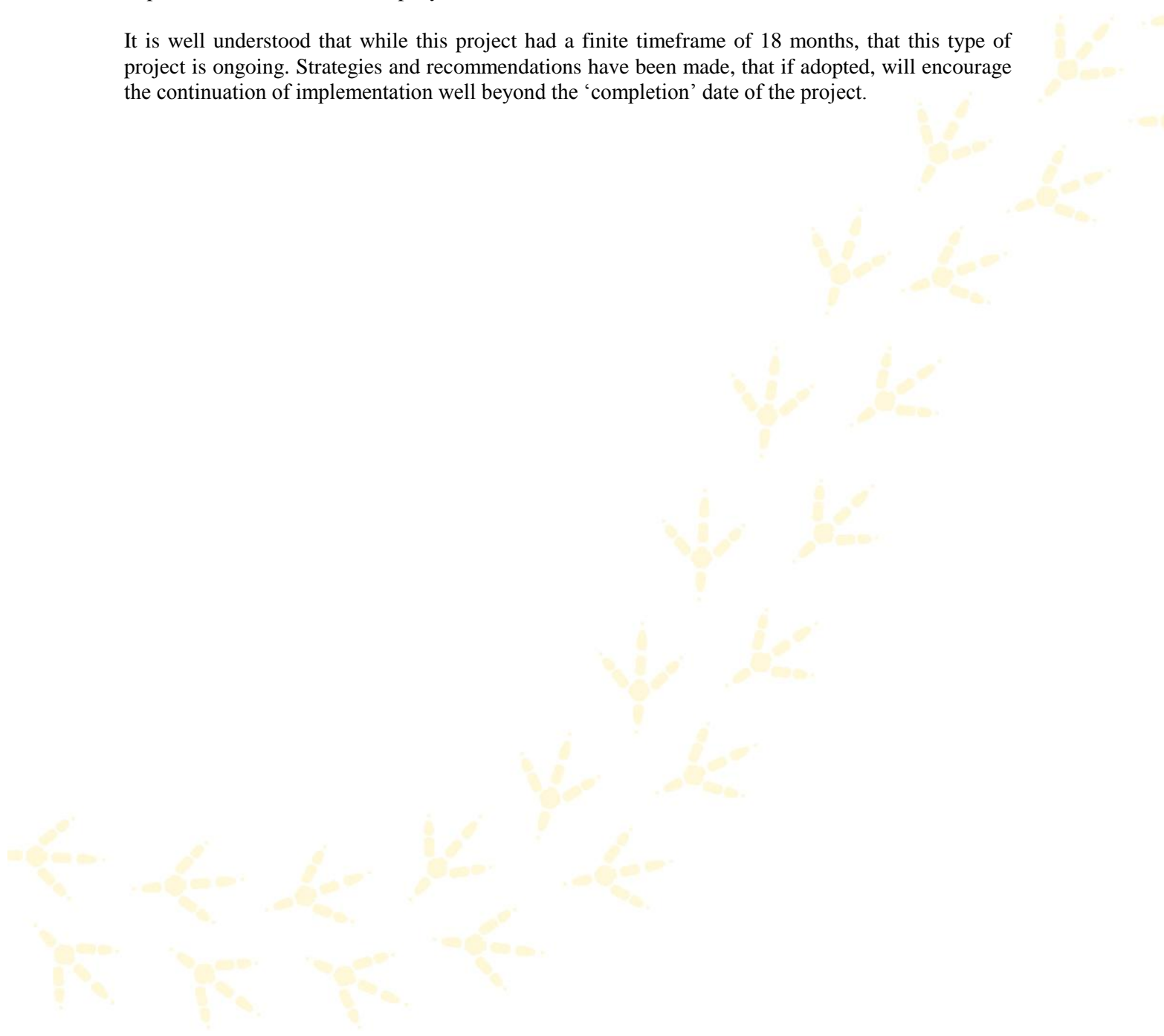
The strategy document was well received, as one of the difficulties that arose on occasion was the difference in format between the audit and a generic HACCP (QA) working manuals that are currently employed within companies. The other benefit provided by the strategy document, was that it outlined the main animal welfare considerations for companies, and aided the discussion between companies and the investigator on how to tailor animal welfare QA to manage the risks that face them as individual companies. The strategy document can remain with companies as they take up components across the stages of production in the future and perhaps also be provided to industry consultants who support companies with their QA developments.

Recommendation (2) was completed with the initial meetings and (3) was offered during discussion, although all of them felt that this would not be necessary due to the strategy document and further consultation with the investigator throughout the process. Recommendation (4) will be carried out for two of the companies, companies C and E (and possibly F), with company E taking part in a physical trial with a small group of producers. The suggestion of presenting at Industry and Association meetings (recommendation (4)), was also raised via discussions with industry consultants and will be pursued. The last recommendation is further discussed in the "recommendations" of this report, along with other strategies to increase uptake beyond the timeframe of this project.

Conclusions

Industry implementation of welfare into QA programs is currently reasonable with over half the birds in the Australian flock currently under QA programs incorporating the 'Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry', but relatively few companies are currently involved. While there appears to be good support from other companies for further implementation, and this will be capitalised upon in 2005, it is unlikely that maximum penetration will be achieved unless an appropriate 'industry champion' accepts the responsibility of raising the issue (and the availability of supporting documentation and implementation documentation) on a regular (annual) basis at appropriate industry forums. Considering the composition of the industry and the members of the various industry forums, it is appropriate that a high level industry member is the appropriate person to 'champion' the issue. The role of the 'champion' is to ensure, by tactful use of 'peer group pressure', that the issue of incorporation of animal welfare into company QA programs remains on the Industry's agenda and also to ensure that when companies are merged or restructured that corporate knowledge of the 'Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry' and progress towards its implementation within the company is not lost.

It is well understood that while this project had a finite timeframe of 18 months, that this type of project is ongoing. Strategies and recommendations have been made, that if adopted, will encourage the continuation of implementation well beyond the 'completion' date of the project.



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Barnett, J.L. and Glatz, P.C. (2004). Developing and implementing a welfare audit in the Australian chicken meat industry. In: 'Measuring and Auditing Broiler Welfare' eds. Weeks, C. and Butterworth, A. (CABI), pp. 231-240.

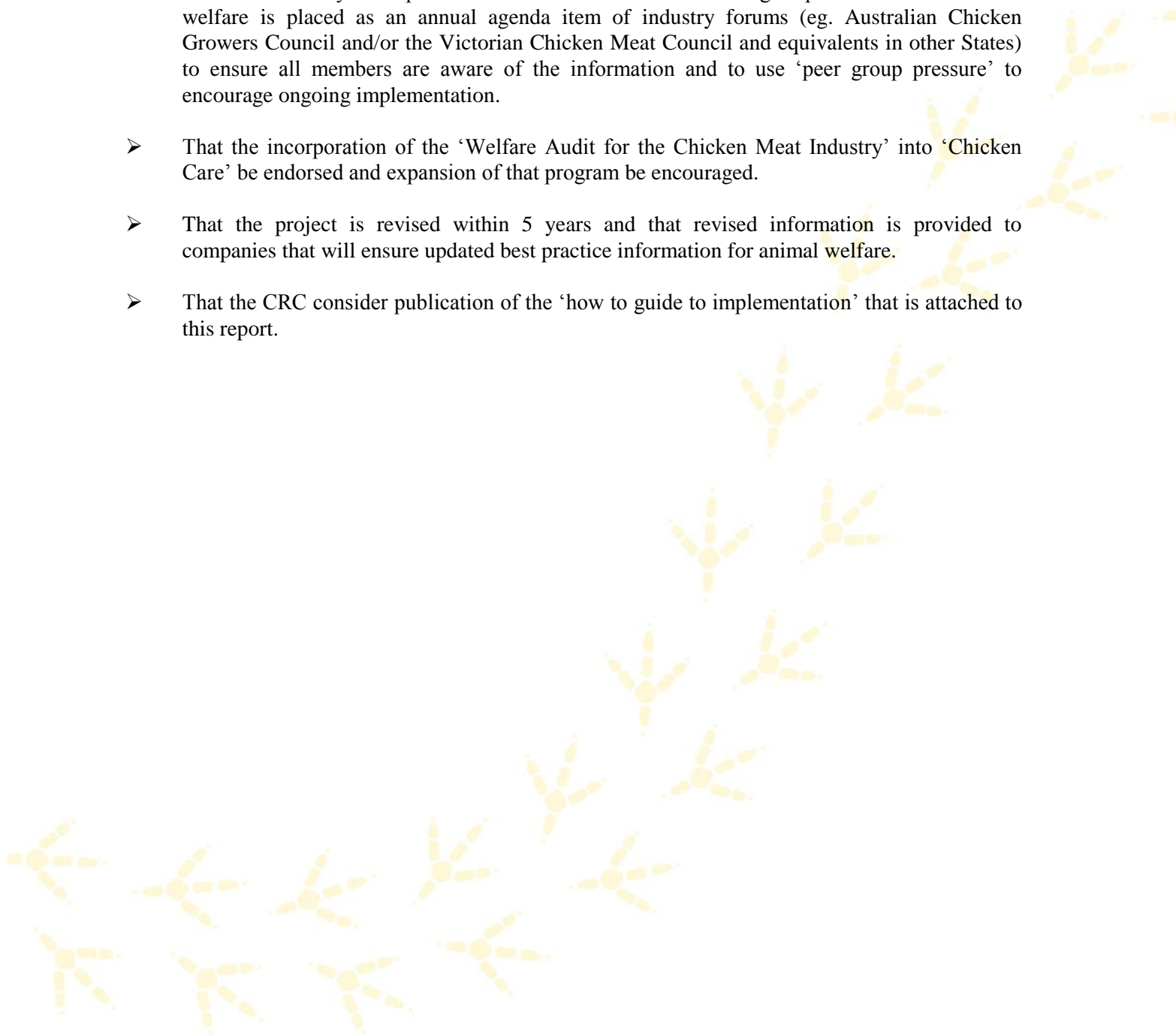
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Recommendations

- That companies are interacted with regularly following this project until their information needs are met with regards to best practice animal welfare.
- That the continuing implementation of the 'Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry' is placed as an annual agenda item of the Australian Chicken Meat Federation to use 'peer group pressure' to ensure all members are aware of the information and to encourage implementation.
- That the continuing implementation of the 'Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry' project is placed as an annual agenda item of the Australian Chicken Growers Council, the Victorian Chicken Meat Council and equivalent councils in other states.
- That an 'industry champion' is identified and that continuing implementation of animal welfare is placed as an annual agenda item of industry forums (eg. Australian Chicken Growers Council and/or the Victorian Chicken Meat Council and equivalents in other States) to ensure all members are aware of the information and to use 'peer group pressure' to encourage ongoing implementation.
- That the incorporation of the 'Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry' into 'Chicken Care' be endorsed and expansion of that program be encouraged.
- That the project is revised within 5 years and that revised information is provided to companies that will ensure updated best practice information for animal welfare.
- That the CRC consider publication of the 'how to guide to implementation' that is attached to this report.



Implications

To achieve an 80+ % adoption rate by industry requires that Industry develop a strategy so that the incorporation of the 'Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry' into company QA programs remains an ongoing item on the Industry's agenda. While this may only require raising the issue and the availability of the documentation and the 'how to guide' (see Appendix 1) on an annual basis at appropriate industry forums as described in the 'recommendations', it requires that an appropriate industry person accepts the responsibility of 'champion' to ensure this occurs.



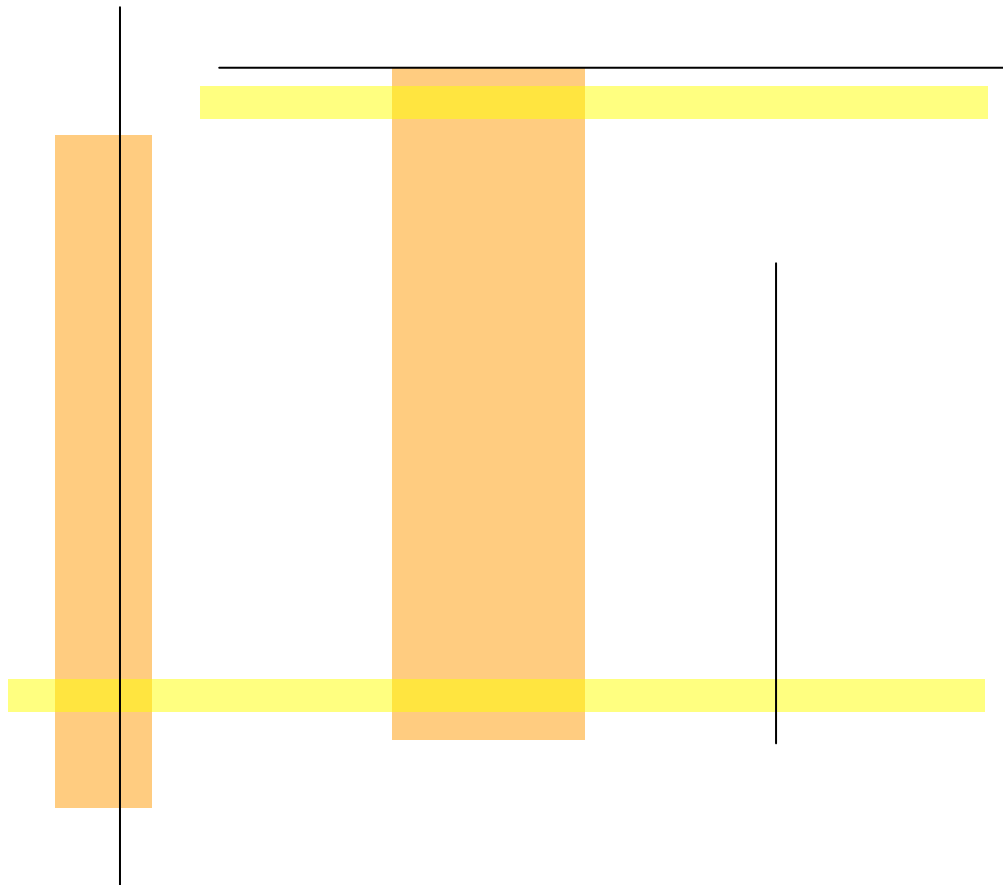
Appendix I

A “HOW-TO GUIDE” FOR ANIMAL WELFARE QUALITY ASSURANCE



**A “HOW-TO GUIDE”
FOR
ANIMAL WELFARE
QUALITY ASSURANCE**

**Based on the
“Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry”**



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This document was produced in support of the project (CRC03-20) report to the Australian Poultry CRC: Improving the Adoption of the 'Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry' by the National Industry, by Michelle K. Edge and John L. Barnett.

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A “HOW-TO GUIDE” FOR ANIMAL WELFARE QUALITY ASSURANCE

(Based on the “Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry”)

Introduction

The purpose of this summary booklet “*A how-to guide for animal welfare quality assurance*” is to assist companies in identifying the most relevant welfare aspects and practices for their company that could be incorporated into their existing Quality Assurance (QA) program. This summary booklet provides the steps to develop HACCP principles for animal welfare based on the scientific and industry recommendations contained in the 5 booklets already developed (*Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry* - see Fig. 1). While this guide is HACCP-based, alternatives are ISO 9000, and other total quality systems for specific areas (eg. environmental management) such as QS 9000, TS 16949, ISO 14000. Nevertheless, the principles in this guide can be applied to other bases of QA programs as the main elements in all quality assurance are to identify risks in the production system, the preventative and corrective actions to take and the critical limits or measureables that can be used.

Figure 1. Welfare Quality Assurance Programs for all stages of production: *Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry* (RIRDC, 2001).



Background

The five booklets that form the ‘Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry’ were developed to fulfil both industry and community expectations of the high levels of welfare associated with chicken meat production. The five booklets were developed specifically for commercial broiler growers, hatcheries, breeder farms, pullet farms and processing plants. They have already been used by companies in Australia to underpin welfare standards in their QA programs.

Quality assurance programs within industry predominantly focus on animal health and food safety and there was a need, coinciding with a more informed and demanding customer base, to expand these programs to include animal welfare issues so that the industry remains sustainable. A large number of issues that producers focus on daily, including animal health and food safety, also relate to animal welfare, although previously, this information had not been compiled into one document. Companies already provide considerable information on maintaining high levels of animal welfare and producers, in their daily tasks, already largely implement this information.

Thus, the five booklets (Fig 1: Hatchery, Broilers, Breeder Rearers, Breeder Layers and Transport/Processing) contain the practical animal welfare information, together with additional information from the literature and scientific and industry experts in Australia. These documents are intended as a reference for the development of any welfare quality assurance documentation within existing company or industry QA programs.

Industry was heavily involved in the development of these documents and the decision remains with individual companies how best to implement the information. Nevertheless, with changing consumer and customer demands and Governments signalling their requirement for industries to have QA programs that include animal welfare, it is likely that animal welfare will become a widely recognised food quality characteristic and thus there is a need for industry to be proactive in incorporating welfare into existing QA programs.

The Documentation

The documents were prepared to fulfil several aims, most importantly, that of demonstrating high standards of welfare.

Each booklet contains:

- audit questions and example recording sheets
- background information on the purpose of the audit question and how the questions/practices relate to animal welfare.

There are two types of questions: critical questions (in **UPPER-CASE bold** and shaded) and good practice questions (lower-case bold or italics for those that are directly measured and those that may be observed/inferred, respectively).

WAS WATER AVAILABLE AT ALL NIPPLES/CUPS/BELLS?

← Critical question

Were drinkers at the correct height?

- **Level with the birds' back for bell/cup drinkers?**
- **Within reach for nipple drinkers?**

← Good Practice questions: can be measured

Was water supply potable i.e. is it fit to drink?

← Good Practice question: can be observed/inferred

There are questions that relate directly to compliance with the 'Model Code of Practice for Welfare of Animals – Poultry (3rd edition)' and the audit questions, both critical and good practice also have associated targets where required. In most cases the targets reflect good farming practice and are considered achievable by the majority of the industry, however it is recognised that in some cases on some farms, targets may not be achievable or applicable either due to rare circumstances (eg. climatic conditions) or to the differences in some production systems. Either way, good management and stockpersonship practices provide for prompt identification of problems and the prompt taking of actions to rectify the problem(s).

Since the documentation was developed, there has been a revision to the Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals – Poultry. The current version of the 'code' is the 4th edition. There have been no changes to the code that affect the targets for the chicken meat industry. However, it is strongly advised that companies are fully aware of the requirements in the current code of practice.

Example Documentation:

Audit questions:
Code of Practice related and best practice based on industry and science

Numbers in this column refer to the relevant background information and rationale in the document

Question <i>SHADED QUESTIONS REFER TO CRITICAL ACTIONS AND MUST BE COMPLIED WITH .</i> Questions in bold reflect good practice actions; those with a † must be complied with (if applicable). Questions in italics reflect difficult to verify good practice questions. † Question complies with code of practice	Answer (tick) (evidence available and viewed) Shading indicates the anticipated compliance response if the question applies			Tick if there is an item or problem that needs fixing	For further info. see Rationale question number:
	Yes	No	n/a		
DAILY PROCEDURES					
Was stocking density within target limits?					15
WAS LITTER DRY AND FRIABLE ?†					4
Were there any lame birds?*					16
<i>Were the birds moving freely during inspection?</i>					16
Were there any signs of panting?					11

← Audit questions

VARIABLE	CODE RECOMMENDATIONS	TARGETS
* LAME BIRDS	None	Less than 1% of flock per week.
* TEMPERATURES	Shed temperatures to be between 19 and 33 °C at all times.	20 to 22 ± 2 °C.
* MORTALITIES	None	Should not exceed 1 % per week.

← Targets provided, based on science and best industry practice

↑
Code recommendations provided

How to incorporate the information within the Welfare Audit into the existing farm QA program

As the majority of industry and company quality assurance programs are based upon the principles of HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point), this guide will outline how to take the recommendations contained within the 'Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry' booklets and integrate them into your existing HACCP system. If you or your company does not currently utilise HACCP, but rather, another processes-based approach, the following principles will still apply.

The following information outlines the steps needed to incorporate the available best practice for animal welfare information into the HACCP based system.

Part 1: Developing the HACCP plan

HACCP is a process-based tool used to identify hazards and to develop monitoring and control procedures to protect against important hazards at critical points in the production process.

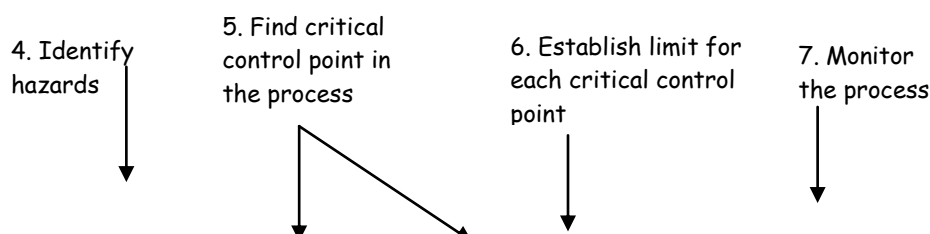
STEPS REQUIRED TO DEVELOP A HACCP PLAN:

1. Form a HACCP Team and define the scope of the HACCP Plan
2. Describe the Products
3. Construct a Flow Chart of the production process and conduct on-site verification
4. List all the potential Hazards associated with each stage of the production process, conduct a Hazard Analysis and consider any Control Measures to control Hazards
5. Determine Critical Control Points (CCPs)
6. Establish Critical Limits for each CCP
7. Establish a Monitoring System for each CCP
8. Establish Corrective Action Plans for CCP Deviations
9. Establish Record Keeping and Documentation
10. Establish Verification Procedures
11. Train staff for HACCP implementation
12. Commence monitoring the CCPs.

Most companies will have completed the steps in **brown** and therefore will only need to complete the steps in **blue** in order to add welfare into the existing QA manual and HACCP tables.

The following steps (using water availability and quality as an example) show how to construct a HACCP table based on the recommendations in the Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry booklets (*the numbers refer to the steps listed on the previous page*):

1. Form a HACCP Team and define the scope of the HACCP Plan
2. Describe the Products
3. Construct a Flow Chart of the production process and conduct on-site verification



Step	Hazard	Preventive Measure	Critical Limit	Monitoring	Immediate Action/ Longer Term Action	Records
Water – (A)	Dead or stressed bird (due to insufficient access to water)	Maintain water delivery system and check appropriate height/flow adjustment	Water available	<i>What:</i> Water availability <i>How:</i> Visually <i>Where:</i> In shed/cages <i>When:</i> Daily <i>Who:</i> ??? insert	<i>Immediate:</i> Provide water <i>Who:</i> ??? insert <i>Longer:</i> Review water delivery system <i>Who:</i> Farm Manager	Daily Critical Check List
Water – (B)	Diseased flock or contaminated eggs (due to contaminated water)	Use town or underground water or appropriately sanitised source of surface water for drinking and fogging.	No evidence of contamination and, for surface water, appropriate sanitation conditions. Target maximum recommendations are: * total dissolved solids = 500ppm, * chlorides = 200mg/L, * nitrates = 100ppm * sulphates = 500ppm. Concentrations may be higher in bore water without adverse effects.	<i>What:</i> Water <i>How:</i> Visually and for surface water sources sanitiser test <i>Where:</i> Farm <i>When:</i> Inspect daily and test weekly <i>Who:</i> Farm Manager	<i>Immediate:</i> Clean supply system and/or provide alternate supply of water <i>Who:</i> Farm Manager <i>Longer:</i> Review water source or sanitation system. This should be re-evaluated annually. <i>Who:</i> Farm Manager	Daily Critical Check List Water Quality Testing Log

* above table based on the format provided in the Industry Egg Quality and Production Assurance Program (Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation).

11. & 12. Verify that the HACCP plan is working correctly

8. Take corrective action if monitoring shows that there are deviations outside the limits of the CCP

9. & 10. Keep records on each critical control point.

Part 2: Developing the Work Instructions

The following steps are required for the development of Work Instructions (Standard Operating Procedures-SOPs) to match the HACCP tables in the quality manuals. Typically, companies have the following manuals that form their QA system:

- 1) **A Quality Manual** which details HACCP instructions and other information on the quality system (ie. quality statements, background information on standards and references, etc.)

AND

- 2) **A Working Manual** (standard operating procedures, work instructions, written emergency instruction, example recording sheets, etc).

These documents are developed in a similar manner for each stage of the production system. The working manual can be utilised as a training tool for new staff, as it provides a 'checklist' of the daily, weekly, monthly and yearly tasks required to manage the farm or plant.

TO DEVELOP WORK INSTRUCTIONS (SOP'S):

- 1) Make sure you have the preventative actions and verification procedures for the above HACCP tables to view whilst developing work instructions. (these may assist in thinking of the daily tasks required to fulfil the HACCP).
- 2) Develop the actions that staff are to take on a daily basis (ie. list of tasks) that together will meet the HACCP standard set above.
- 3) Make these available to staff, along with the mechanisms to record (shed recording sheets, farm diary etc).

The following Work Instruction (Standard Operating Procedure) is based on recommendations from the Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry booklets and uses water availability, access and quality as an example:

Work Instruction no.

Company:

TITLE: Water availability, access and quality	Date Created:
<p>INSTRUCTION: <i>These standard operating procedures are for staff to refer to for procedures and are to be carried out in order to meet the requirements of HACCP. It is good practice to record, where possible, to verify that these actions are carried out. For example, a shed checklist that is ticked and signed will demonstrate that these tasks have been completed, as will notes on maintenance in the farm diary, or receipts etc. To revise these sheets in accordance with the farm daily management practice, refer to the Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry to check which items are best to include.</i></p>	
<p>Prior to bird arrival Water pressure gauge and filter checked. Tanks and drinker lines flushed. Drinkers checked to be at correct height and operational. Header tanks and drinker lines sanitised. Any filters checked/changed. Surface water, if used, was sanitised.</p>	
<p>Daily checks Water flow and availability at all nipples, cups and bells checked. Birds all have access to water (ie. can physically access the water). Drinking equipment is operational. Water pressure gauge and height checked. Drinker height checked and raised as necessary. Water quality monitored (ie. birds are observed to be drinking). Water microbiology tested if a problem is identified.</p>	
<p>Yearly checks Water quality (microbiology, pH and salts) tested (particularly if new or alternative source). Contingency plan to obtain water in event of shortage/mechanical breakdown is reviewed.</p>	
APPROVED:	

* above table based on the format provided in the Industry Egg Quality and Production Assurance Program (Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation).

Identifying “Best Animal Welfare Practice”

The above example of a HACCP table is for water availability, access and quality, however, all other potential hazards in everyday management that have implications for animal welfare will need to be similarly developed into the HACCP format. All of the information needed for this is in the ‘Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry’ documents. Although the potential hazards may vary from farm to farm, depending on housing system, equipment and daily management practice, a generic list that accounts for a number of hazardous areas with impact on animal welfare is likely to include the issues and tasks listed below. The shaded text represents critical areas that must be included in a welfare QA program and the remainder represents good farming practice that it is highly recommended is also included in a QA program.

- **Feed and water:** equipment maintenance and function, correct height, access by birds, availability, quality, residual feed removal, fresh food daily, water flow, water and equipment (tanks, drinker lines) sanitisation, contingency plans.
- **Shed set – up prior to bird arrival:** cleanliness in and around sheds, access by chicks to feed and water, drinker and feeder lines checked, removal of residual feed, alarm systems and controllers checked, good litter quality and depth.
- **Shed facilities:** all facilities operational (housing, ventilation, blinds, alarms, etc), temperature, ventilation rate and humidity appropriate lighting level and uniformity, power, annual electrical safety audit.
- **Bird arrival and placement:** appropriate handling of chicks, dead on arrivals recorded, bird appearance, behaviour and sound, advice sought if required.
- **Routine management of birds and daily inspections:** regular checks of birds, health, bird appearance, behaviour and sound, unthrifty birds identified, treated and if not responding, euthanased, removal and disposal of dead birds, regular weighing of birds, stocking densities within targets, veterinary assistance available if required, mortalities within targets, litter quality (dry and friable and not wet around drinkers), wet litter replaced, temperature, dust and ammonia (gases).
- **Pick up:** birds identified as fit for transport, stocking density at first pick-up, raising/returning feeders and drinkers before/after, track maintenance, time in crates, care by pick-up crew, light level, number of birds carried, contingency for emergency pick-up.
- **Biosecurity:** procedures in place and followed, for visitors, pest control, wild birds, vehicles/deliveries, transporting birds.
- **Staff training and induction:** staff absences covered, employee induction procedure, written procedures, written biosecurity plans, written contingency plans, written documents available for staff, training available and encouraged, response to alarms.

Some specific issues for other sectors of industry may include:

HATCHERY: control systems meet target specifications, testing back-up systems, sanitising all equipment/facilities, microbial monitoring, alarms checked and response times, hatcher temperature and humidity, egg residue diagnosis, time in cool room, temperature/humidity in cool room/setters, tilters, egg quality, egg trays labelled, chick management and euthanasia, appearance and sound of chicks at hatching, beak-trimming, de-clawing, de-spurring, vaccinations, sexing, space allowance in delivery boxes, chick inspections, maintenance of temperature/humidity for chicks, transport time, track maintenance, truck maintenance/hygiene, truck environmental control, staff on call at all times.

BREEDER REARERS: vaccinations and parasite control, single sex rearing and feeding, body weight measured weekly, growth rate and variation, flock graded, perches.

BREEDER LAYERS: flock health monitoring, body weight measured weekly, eggs cooled to 20-21 °C within 4 hours of lay, growth rate and egg production, nest boxes and their hygiene, egg cleanliness, hygiene and storage, aggression, male:female ratio.

PICK-UP, TRANSPORT AND PROCESSING: clean and disinfected equipment, clean clothing, bird health assessment, avoidance of extreme temperatures, monitoring of truck in hot weather, size of containers and stocking density, consignment documentation and records, time in containers prior to truck departure and overall, emergency contact details for driver, secure load, cooling facilities in holding area at processing plant, handling birds, immediate euthanasia of sick birds, following standard operating procedures for equipment maintenance and operation, shackling procedure and time, instantaneous stunning, effective back-up procedure, commencement of and effective bleed out, monitoring birds are dead, feedback to drivers and farms on bird quality (damage and downgrades).

Producers may find that they already comply with parts of the information contained within the ‘Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry’, or that only minor changes to their current farm practices or expansion of their existing program to cover the full range of animal welfare issues will be needed. As each company and its individual farm(s) are different, each section of the new welfare component needs to be customised to fit the individual requirements of each of the farm(s).

Some processes and operations may not apply to your company or its farm(s) and therefore can be deleted from your QA Program. However, you need to make sure that your QA Program still achieves the critical aims of the ‘Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry’, in terms of accountability and the ability to minimise risks animal welfare.

Once these sections have been customised they can be inserted into your farm’s current QA manual and standard operating procedures. A second folder or file should be used to store the records once they have been completed (this is the current practice in place for the majority of farms/companies). Some of the records already kept may include examples of:

- Employee training summaries or employee files
- Daily Farm Check List
- Egg Production & Mortality Record
- Visitors, Equipment and Vehicle Log
- Chemical Inventory List
- Vaccination certificates
- Laboratory test records.

Getting the quality assurance program up and running within your company farms will safeguard flock health and welfare. Therefore, implementation of the quality assurance program is likely to improve the profitability of your business in the long term and prevent incidents that could potentially lead to legal action.

SUMMARY

This document provides an example of how to integrate the information contained within the 5 booklets 'Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry' into workable HACCP tables, with work instructions that can be easily inserted into the existing company manual. The example recording sheets also contained within the 5 booklets can also be adapted to the same format as currently used within the company QA system.

The background information contained within the 5 booklets can remain a shelf guide for staff training or reference on specific issues as required. This information can also assist further in the development of work instructions or standard operating procedures as part of the whole of farm QA system.

Also included with this strategy are:

- Copies of the Welfare Quality Assurance Booklets (5) on CD-ROM.
- Copies of the relevant Codes of Practice for animal welfare.

Also available by request:

- A CD-ROM containing the baseline documentation to allow you to customise your own program.

Finally, the basic steps for incorporating animal welfare recommendations into your company or farm QA program are:

- 1. CUSTOMISE THE HACCP PLAN FOR YOUR FARM TO DETERMINE WHAT ARE YOUR CRITICAL CONTROL POINTS**
- 2. DEVELOP A WORK INSTRUCTION FOR EACH CRITICAL CONTROL POINT**
- 3. DEVELOP RECORDS THAT SHOW THE RESULTS OF MONITORING EACH CRITICAL CONTROL POINT**

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- [1] Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry. (2001). (Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, Department of Primary Industries Victoria, and the Animal Welfare Science Centre).
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- [3] Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals - Domestic Poultry, 4th edition. (2002). *By the Primary Industries Standing Committee* (CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood, Victoria).
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