



## HUMANE SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL

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David Hatfield  
Director, Adjudication  
Australian Competition & Consumer Commission  
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By email: [CTMs@accc.gov.au](mailto:CTMs@accc.gov.au)

22 July 2020

Dear Mr Hatfield,

### CTM 1914662 – Humane Farm Animal Care – Submission on Version 2 of the CTM Rules

Following receipt of your letter dated 26 June 2020 (Your Ref: CTM-R-70007), thank you for inviting us to provide comments on the revised set of rules from **Humane Farm Animal Care (HFAC)** in relation to Certification Trade Mark No. 1914662 (**HFAC CTM**). We are responding on behalf of both Humane Society International (**HSI**) and Humane Choice, our accreditation program for free range meat and egg producers.

HFAC was established in the USA and has operated there for some time. As we mentioned in our previous letter, during that time HSI has worked with them extensively in many regions, most recently in South East Asia, helping to progress animal welfare and certify several cage-free farms. HFAC commonly present at HSI events overseas, and the working relationship we have with them is valued and appreciated.

We would like to put forward the following comments and recommendations:

- Whilst we support and recommend that HFAC are trademarked in Australia, we note that there are still some areas that would require necessary amendments in order for them to be functionally appropriate for use within the Australian market and supportive of basic animal welfare measures. For example, in the *HFAC Standards for Sheep* it states in Part 7 S.3 under 'Slaughter procedures' that, "*Producers must use processors who follow American Meat Institute (AMI) guidelines for processing livestock.*" This would not be appropriate for the Australian context.
- We note that the HFAC Scientific Committee is predominantly made up of members from the U.S. and other countries, with just one Australian-based member. Given the unique environment presented in Australia it may be beneficial to recruit further support on the Committee offering local knowledge.
- HSI Australia continues to support the provision of independent third-party auditing. Third-party certifiers supply credibility, information, food safety, and quality assurance to customers. In general, a third-party auditor is more experienced, more highly trained, and has pledged to uphold a particular code of ethical conduct in the performance of the audit. They work for a quality register that also has policies, rules, and regulations to which the auditor must abide. They can also provide a

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competitive edge over rivals, as certification through a third-party organisation creates a premium on these products. Producers are now increasingly claiming that their produce is of a higher quality than those a consumer could purchase elsewhere. Third-party certification has the benefit of transparency and gives consumers the level of trust that they would expect from an ethical producer. It is much more trustworthy than self-certification and gives consumers greater confidence. This is key for animal produce in particular where animal welfare, environmental impact, food safety and food quality play an important role in consumer purchasing decisions.

## EGG LAYING HENS:

- The *HFAC Standards for Egg Laying Hens* still includes their definition of 'free range' on page 15 which allows a "...minimum outdoor space requirement of 2 square feet (0.19 square meters) per bird to meet the *Animal Care Standards for Free Range*." HSI Australia advocates strongly for a maximum outdoor stocking density for free range layer hens of 1,500 birds per hectare, significantly less than that allowed by the above HFAC definition. This stocking density is significantly higher than even the information standard made under the Australian Consumer Law in 2016, defining free range eggs as coming from hens with 'meaningful and regular access to the outdoors and stocked at a rate up to 10,000 hens per hectare. HSI Australia does not support such high stocking densities for laying hens. It is misleading for consumers and is counter to expectations for free range. Such high stocking densities also have negative implications for the welfare of the birds.
- The error on page 12 in the "G. Perches" section of the *HFAC Standards for Egg Laying Hens* remains. There is a typo in part E 27(c) which states that perches must be provided at not less than 6" (15 m) per hen, but this should state, "... 6" (15 cm) per hen."

## CHICKENS

- HSI Australia recommends that in part D of the *HFAC Standards for Chickens*, the time limit for chickens to be suspended before they are stunned should be reduced from 90 seconds (as stated in P16) down to 60 seconds.
- HSI Australia strongly advocates for all animals to be unconscious during slaughter and therefore objects to the *Halal Slaughter Exception* described in P21 which allows for the chickens' necks to be cut prior to electrical stunning, whilst fully conscious. In Australia halal certifiers accept stunning prior to slaughter, and therefore there is no need for this Exception to allow inhumane slaughter practices.
- The HFAC standard needs to ensure it addresses the most important welfare issue for broiler chickens, the metabolic and skeletal problems associated with rapid growth. Most chickens around the world suffer from heart and respiratory conditions and severe lameness, which can be debilitating. The RSPCA Assured and other similar animal welfare assurance programs limit the growth rate of chickens or require slower-growing genetics that are not prone to the same problems. For the HFAC standard to be meaningful on broiler chickens' welfare in Australia, this criterion should be included in the standard.

## SHEEP

- The *HFAC Standards for Sheep* specify in *H6: Controlling parasites*, that measures must be taken to prevent or control external and internal parasitic infestations, and when infestations such as flystrike are likely, sheep must be given routine treatment such as regular dipping or other effective methods. Given that flystrike is a serious animal welfare issue impacting millions of lambs in Australia, unlike in the USA, HSI Australia strongly advocates for the use of genetic selection as a means of flystrike mitigation to breed sheep that are highly resistant to all forms of flystrike and eliminate the need for painful mutilations such as mulesing or Steining (liquid nitrogen application to the breech area), which we do not support. In our prior correspondence we recommended for the genetic solution to be incorporated into the *HFAC Standards for Sheep* and we note that it is yet to be included, so we call for this to be amended in their standards. As mulesing is a significant contentious issue in Australia, it would be a serious misstep not to address it in a standard for humane farm animal welfare care in Australia.
- The *HFAC Standards for Sheep* still allows for the tail docking of sheep with details outlined in part *H14: Physical alterations*. It states in 2(b) that, "When necessary, tail docking must be performed on lambs that are between 24 hours and 14 days old. The procedure must be performed using either

*a rubber ring or a hot docking iron (thermocautery).*” We would object to this rule and recommend for tail docking to instead be listed as a procedure that is not permitted, along with mulesing and dehorning. Further, it does not specify the use of any pain relief for instances where tail docking is permitted.

- Castration of lambs: The *HFAC Standards for Sheep* allows the castration of lambs when necessary, as described in part H14 1(a). HSI Australia advocates for the use of pain relief when castration is required and encourages this provision to be specified in the HFAC Standards.

## **PIGS**

- *HFAC Standards for Pigs*: HSI Australia supports the amendment that prohibits the use of stalls or crates, tail docking and teeth clipping in the HFAC Standards for Pigs. HSI Australia continues to support the provision that surgical castration should only be permitted in conjunction with the use of a local anaesthetic.

## **CATTLE**

- HSI Australia does not support the practices of hot and freeze branding as an approved identification method and suggests that it should only be permitted if required by a statutory authority. We recommend that this should be amended in part “D. Identification” of the *HFAC Standards for Beef Cattle*.

## **DAIRY COWS**

- Pair housing of calves should be required, not just recommended. Calves are highly social, playful animals, and while dairy production has inherent welfare problems because the calves are taken away from the cows immediately following birth, some of this trauma can be mitigated by housing young calves together. New research is demonstrating that calf herds can be kept healthy and well without isolating calves alone in hutches.
- There should be more free stalls than cows so that the animals have a choice of lying area.
- Banding for castration of calves should be prohibited, as it causes long-term pain that cannot be suitably alleviated with pain control.
- Feeding calves enough (at 20% body weight) should be required, not recommended.

In conclusion, although HSI Australia supports the HFAC trade mark in Australia in principle, we recommend that appropriate amendments are made in order for them to support improved and humane animal welfare practices, and for them to be written using appropriate language and measures in line with the Australian market and existing standards. Thank you again for inviting us to comment on the HFAC revised CTM Application.

Yours sincerely,



Georgie Dolphin  
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Humane Society International (HSI) Australia