

Ministry for Primary Industries
Manatū Ahu Matua



ANIMAL WELFARE

National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee

Annual Report

1 January to 31 December 2024

National Animal Ethics Advisory Committee
C/- Ministry for Primary Industries
P O Box 2526
Wellington 6140
New Zealand

ISBN No: 978-1-991380-83-8 (online)

August 2025

NAWAC

National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee

Chairperson's comment

Tēnā koutou katoa

Hon. Andrew Hoggard was appointed Associate Minister of Agriculture (Animal Welfare, Skills) early in 2024. The National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC) provided the Minister with our work programme for 2024–2025 and the Minister responded with a Letter of Expectations in May 2024.

We updated our work programme in response to the Minister's direction on priorities, sharpening our focus on Codes of Welfare reviews affecting the livestock sectors. The Minister directed NAWAC to elevate the consideration of economics and practicality during reviews whilst ensuring open, positive and genuine engagement with all stakeholders, particularly those affected by any changes.

Following parliamentary elections in October 2023, the National Party published Coalition Agreements in November 2023 with New Zealand First and with ACT New Zealand that contained the following policies:

- Reverse the recent ban on live animal exports while ensuring the highest standards of animal welfare.
- Reform the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC) to ensure its functions, membership and mandate are appropriate.

The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) is leading both areas and has periodically briefed NAWAC on progress throughout the year. In December 2024 an MPI Engagement Paper: Analysis of the Proposed Animal Welfare Requirements for the Export of Livestock by Sea was released. The Minister requested NAWAC's advice, and a Livestock Exports Sub-Committee was formed to lead this work under tight timeframes. That advice was delivered to the Minister early in 2025 and we expect to publish this on the NAWAC website when consultation on proposals begins, with the agreement of the Minister.

MPI requested perspectives on matters that should be addressed during the NAWAC reform process referred to in the Coalition Agreements. As Chair I responded by describing challenges NAWAC faces which constrain our ability to make progress in our work programme and need clarification within the animal welfare regulatory system. NAWAC awaits with interest for further progress on the reform process while actively working to ensure we meet the Minister's and our own expectations on good regulatory practices and independent advice in accordance with our statutory mandate.

The Minister responded to NAWAC's recommendation to issue a reviewed Code of Welfare: Dairy Cattle in May 2024 by requesting reconsideration of several aspects. Affected parties were invited to provide further comments on the aspects the Minister identified. The Dairy Cattle Subcommittee has been reconvened to continue work on this review which was initiated in 2020 and publicly consulted on during 2022.

In August 2024 NAWAC recommended the reviewed Code of Welfare: Deer to the Minister. That review was also initiated in 2020 and publicly consulted on during 2022. We await the Minister's decision or direction.

NAWAC's 2025-2026 work programme appends a status report on Codes of Welfare. As I described in my comments last year, there are currently 19 Codes of Welfare. NAWAC has plans to develop a further two (rabbits; breeder poultry). Focussing on the Minister's priority for review of codes affecting livestock sectors,

the most recently completed substantive reviews were 2016 (horse and donkeys) and 2012 (goats, layer hens, meat chickens). Our review rate in recent years falls short of our guideline of reviewing codes every ten years, which would require around two reviews to be completed every year. NAWAC's updated guidelines provide clear process and expectations for us and our stakeholders while acknowledging that it is challenging to retrofit new process to ongoing reviews. With the recommendations made in 2024, we are getting closer to achieving our target of two reviews completed each year, notwithstanding the Minister's direction to continue the work on the Code of Welfare: Dairy Cattle review. As noted in the subcommittee updates later in this report, we expect to make a recommendation to consult on the draft Code of Welfare: Sheep and Beef Cattle early in 2025. The start of planned reviews of the poultry codes and the development of the new code for breeder poultry were delayed in 2024 because of the industry's need to focus on avian influenza preparedness.

On membership, Tracy Brown resigned from NAWAC in December 2024 after her promotion to Chair of Dairy NZ. NAWAC thanks Tracy for her work with NAWAC and looks forward to continuing our engagement in her new leadership role with a key stakeholder.

With several members approaching the end of their second terms, processes to recommend nominees to the Minister were ongoing at year end. These appointments were made in early 2025, thereby confirming the completion of terms for Ms Ruth Palmer and Dr Arnja Dale. NAWAC thanked these retiring members during our first meeting of 2025, noting their significant contributions over two terms since 2018 and 2019 respectively. Ms Palmer ably chaired our business subcommittee and participated fully in numerous other code reviews, contributing perspectives as a public policy expert. Dr Dale brought invaluable animal welfare science expertise and has been an experienced evidence-based contributor across NAWAC's work programme, while chairing the companion animal and wildlife subcommittees and serving as NAWAC Vice-Chair.

In closing, I thank all NAWAC's members for their work during the year. On behalf of NAWAC, I also thank the MPI Animal Welfare team for the excellent technical and administrative secretariat service; our partners in the New Zealand animal welfare regulatory system MPI Policy, MPI Compliance, MPI Verification Services, the RNZSPCA, the Veterinary Council of New Zealand, and the Racing Integrity Board; the organisations representing persons in charge of animals, as well as the farmers, farm workers, animal owners, veterinarians and veterinary paraprofessionals with duty-of-care responsibilities; and the stakeholder organisations representing animal welfare advocacy groups.

I trust you will find the information in this NAWAC annual report for 2024 informative and relevant in support of our collective responsibilities under the Animal Welfare Act 1999 and New Zealand Animal Welfare Strategy.

Ka nui tēnā mō tēnei wā,



Matthew Stone
Chairperson, NAWAC

Membership

Committee Members	Date of Appointment	Expiry of Appointment
Dr Matthew Stone (Chair) BVSc, MVS (Epidemiology), MInstD	04.11.22	03.11.25
Dr Arnja R Dale (NAWAC-Appointed Deputy Chair for 2023) BSc, GDipNFPL, GDipHE, MSc, MSc (Hons), PhD	14.03.19	31.10.24
Ms Ruth H Palmer MA (Hons), MPP (Distinction)	01.11.18	31.10.24 ¹
Prof Craig Johnson BVSc, PhD, DSc, DVA, DipECVA, RCVS Registered Specialist, Professor of Veterinary Neurophysiology	18.03.20	31.10.25
Mr Peter W Mason BComm	18.03.20	31.10.25
Mrs Sandra B Faulkner BComm	17.03.20	31.10.25
Prof Natalie Waran BSc (Hons), PhD, NAEAC Chair	01.11.21	31.10.24 ¹
Dr Mhairi Sutherland MSc, PhD	01.11.21	31.10.24 ¹
Ms Tracy Brown BAgrSci (Hons)	21.12.22	31.10.24 ²
Ms Carolyn Eyre BA, Dip Grad (Psychology), GradD (Dispute Resolution)	21.08.23	31.10.25

¹ Members whose appointments expired in 2024 continue to serve as needed until new members are appointed

² Tracy Brown resigned from her appointment as a member of NAWAC, effective 31.10.24.

Fees

Government policy requires disclosure of board member fees paid to members of statutory boards and committees. The daily board member fee paid to committee members during 2024 was \$400 for members and \$550 for the chairperson.

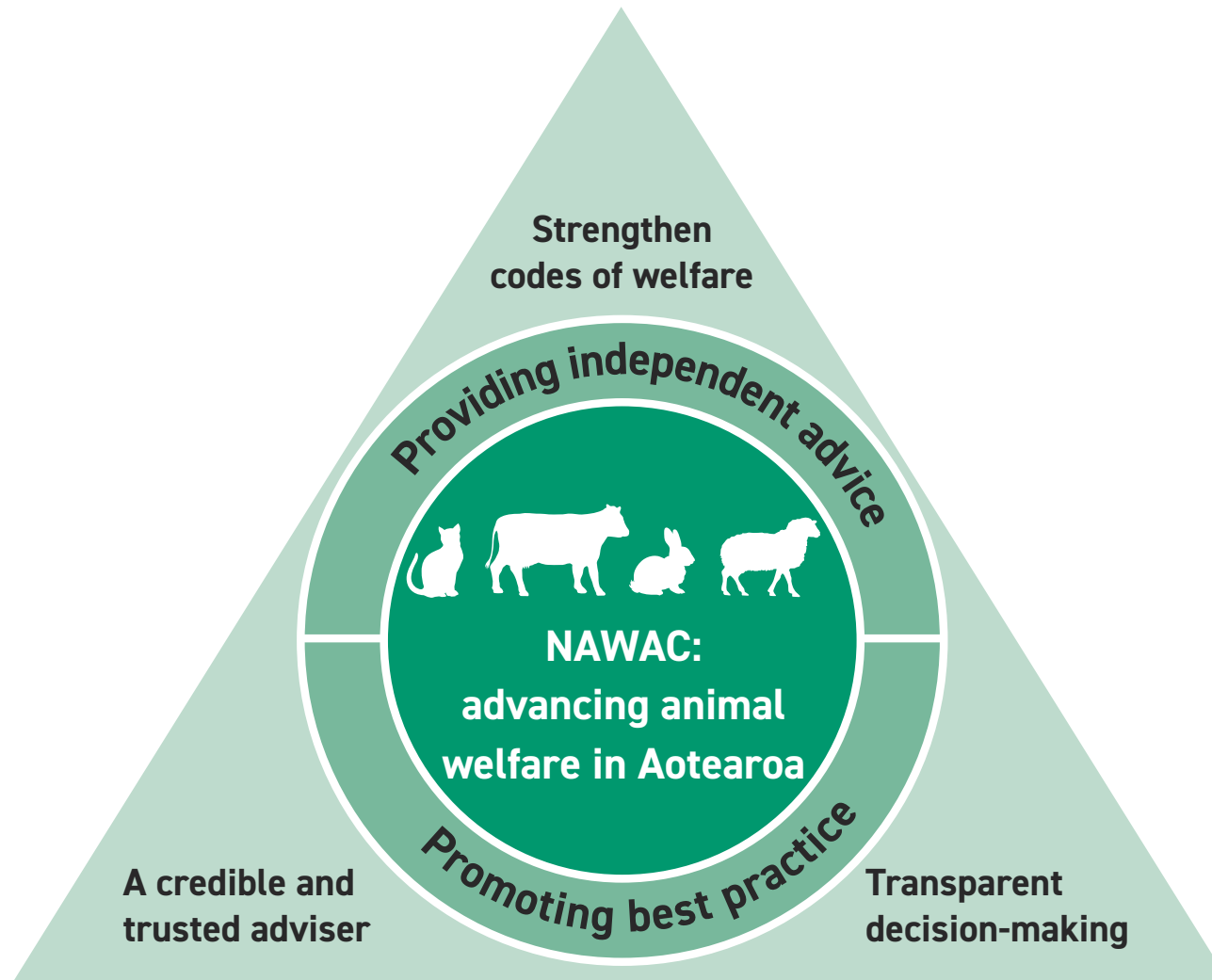
Members are paid the daily rate for attending both general and subcommittee meetings with an additional allowance for preparation time. Members are also reimbursed for travel expenses. In addition, the chairperson and, on occasion, other members may be paid additional fees for representing the committee at other organisation's meetings or for carrying out significant extra work on the committee's behalf.

Total gross fees paid	\$113,315.14
Total reimbursed travelling expenses	\$6,637.17
TOTAL FOR 2024	\$119,952.31

MEMBER	GROSS FEES PAID IN 2024
Matthew Stone	\$19,462.66
Arnja Dale ¹	\$16,000.00
Ruth Palmer	\$11,375.70
Peter Mason	\$23,697.00
Craig Johnson	\$11,060.88
Sandra Faulkner	\$9,420.00
Natalie Waran	\$9,732.00
Mhairi Sutherland	\$5,153.83
Carolyn Eyre	\$6,555.59
Tracy Brown	\$6,498.06
TOTAL	\$113,315.14

¹ Arnja Dales travelling expenses and fees for work completed in 2023 were paid in early 2024 and are thus reported in the 2024 Annual Report.

NAWAC Strategic Plan



	DRAFT NAWAC FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION 2021-2024					
FOCUS	NAWAC advances animal welfare in Aotearoa by: providing independent advice to Ministers and promoting best practice in animal welfare					
PRINCIPLES	TE TIRITI	Partnership Participation Protection	DECISION- MAKING	Informed Independent Accountable Collective responsibility	CONDUCT OF HUI	Respectful Inclusive Focused Efficient and effective Free and frank
WHAT WE WILL DO	STRENGTHENING CODES		CREDIBLE AND TRUSTED ADVISER		TRANSPARENT	
	NAWAC provides independent advice to strengthen codes of welfare		NAWAC enhances its reputation as a credible and trusted adviser		NAWAC is open about how decisions are made and takes an inclusive approach to the development of welfare standards	
	<p>Our advice promotes positive welfare and is based on evidence and best practice.</p> <p>The Codes of Welfare work programme is regularly reviewed and priorities agreed.</p> <p>Advice is provided on emergent and/or cross-cutting issues that may impact across the Codes.</p>		<p>Ministers are provided with an independent view of animal welfare concerns and priorities.</p> <p>We engage in constructive ministerial dialogue.</p> <p>We communicate effectively with our stakeholders and other interested parties.</p>		<p>We engage appropriately with relevant stakeholders and interested parties.</p> <p>An independent publicly accessible NAWAC website is implemented and maintained.</p> <p>NAWAC committee meetings are inclusive and open to the public as appropriate.</p>	

Meeting Summaries

NAWAC holds general meetings quarterly, and other meetings (e.g., subcommittee meetings, joint NAWAC/NAEAC meetings, strategic meetings) as necessary.

7 March 2024 General Meeting

The key agenda item was the discussion of the draft Code of Welfare: Dairy Cattle and associated final report. The committee approved the draft Code for recommendation for the Minister to issue. Updates on other codes under review were also provided.

24 May 2024 General Meeting

The key items on the agenda included:

- the Letter of Expectations for NAWAC,
- approval of the draft Code of Welfare: Deer (subject to minor amendments) for recommendation to the Minister,
- discussion of the process for drafting NAWAC opinion pieces and the draft 'Animal welfare and emerging agritech' document.

Updates on other codes under review were also provided.

6 August 2024 General Meeting

The key agenda item was the discussion and approval of a plan to retire the Code of Welfare: Painful Husbandry Procedures. Updates on other codes under review were also provided.

7 August 2024 Other Meeting: Joint meeting with the National Animal Ethics Advisory Committee

The key agenda item was the discussion of the Letter of Expectations provided to NAWAC this year, and how the committees should consider the inclusion of practicality and economics in how they operate. This meeting also provided an opportunity for MPI leaders to engage with both committees.

30 October 2024 General Meeting

The key items on the agenda included:

- the draft guideline for fulfilling NAWAC's advisory function to the Minister,
- responding to ministerial direction on the Code of Welfare: Dairy Cattle, and
- Consideration of integration of painful husbandry procedures during the review of the Sheep and Beef Code of Welfare.

Updates on other Codes under review were also provided.

Work Plan

The work programme for 2024-25 was reviewed and approved by NAWAC at its March 2024 general meeting, with the intention to be reviewed annually. On 2 May 2024, NAWAC received a Letter of Expectations from the Minister outlining the expectations for NAWAC for the 2024-25 financial year. NAWAC subsequently revised and approved its 2024-25 work programme at its May 2024 general meeting.

The work programme provides a comprehensive review aligned with the three pillars of the NAWAC strategic plan. The plan recognises an operating environment which requires a degree of flexibility and regular prioritisation including resourcing constraints, unexpected events, and new requests.

A summary of NAWAC's work in 2024 under each pillar is as follows.

Pillar I: Strengthening Codes Programme

Pillar I of the NAWAC work programme includes priorities arising from government direction, Ministerial direction, from external drafting, or based on NAWAC's guideline to review codes every 10 years. The schedule for future code reviews for those currently on hold will be determined as the work outlined below is completed.

The following steps are used to summarise the development process of codes of welfare described in the Animal Welfare Act 1999 and NAWAC Guidelines.

1. Planning and prioritisation
2. Scoping and analysis
3. Initial drafting
4. Targeted stakeholder engagement
5. Finalise consultation drafts
6. Request Minister approval to consult
7. Public consultation
8. Review submissions
9. Undertake further targeted consultation [Optional]
10. Undertake further public consultation [Optional]
11. Economic analysis [Optional]
12. Finalise recommended drafts
13. Recommend to the Minister

Code	Status at 31 December 2024	Next Steps
Pigs	Recommended to the Minister of Agriculture in May 2023. Re-recommendation made to incoming Minister in February 2024.	Awaiting Ministerial direction
Dairy Cattle	Recommended to The Minister in March 2024. Further work to be undertaken per Ministerial direction provided August 2024.	NAWAC subcommittee reinstated to work through advice. Expected to be finalised for the second meeting of 2025.
Sheep and Beef Cattle	Step 5 – Finalise Consultation Drafts	Step 6 – Request Minister approval to consult
Deer	Recommended to The Minister August 2024	Waiting for Ministerial decision.
Rodeos	Step 4 – Targeted stakeholder engagement Step 5 – Finalise Consultation Drafts	Step 6 – Request Minister approval to consult
Rabbits	Paused April 2024 at Minister's direction	Step 4 – Targeted stakeholder engagement ¹
Poultry	Step 1 – Planning and prioritisation	Step 2 – Scoping and analysis
Companion Cats	Paused April 2024 at Minister's direction	Step 1 – Planning and prioritisation
Dogs	Paused April 2024 at Minister's direction	Step 1 – Planning and prioritisation
Fin-Fish Aquaculture	On hold	

¹ Targeted stakeholder engagement was conducted by the RNZSPCA prior to the draft Code of Welfare: Rabbits being submitted to NAWAC for consideration. NAWAC will work to identify if any further targeted stakeholder engagement is required prior to finalising a draft Code for public consultation.

Other Projects:

Project	Key focus for 2024	Status at December 2024	Next Step
Greyhound Racing	Priority arising from Ministerial direction: receive the Racing Integrity Board report; scope and plan the response in conjunction with MPI and stakeholders.	Announcement to close industry made in December 2024. No further action for NAWAC at this time.	Continue to attend the Greyhound New Zealand Animal Health and Welfare Committee meetings as an observer.

Pillar II:

Credible and Trusted Adviser

As part of NAWAC's commitment to being a credible and trusted adviser, a NAWAC-led review of all guidelines took place in the 2023-24 workplan period. The prioritisation of guidelines for review was based on age of the guidelines, relevancy, and urgency. Five new updated NAWAC guidelines were approved and published on the NAWAC website in August 2024:

1. Guidance for the development, review, and content of codes of welfare
2. Consultation
3. Recommending regulations for the care and conduct towards animals
4. Activities that use animals for exhibition, entertainment, and encounter
5. The role of science in setting animal welfare standards

NAWAC approved and released an updated version of the external guidance document 'Assessing the welfare performance of restraining and kill traps'.

Pillar III:

Transparent Decision-Making

- Development of www.nawac.org.nz as a communication tool was continued.
- Agendas, minutes, and other advice continued to be proactively published on the NAWAC website.
- Numerous requests from industry stakeholders were received for public attendance to NAWAC meetings and these were granted where they met attendance guidelines.
- NAWAC liaised with various stakeholders, including:
 - Farm to Processor Animal Welfare Forum meeting attendees
 - Animal Welfare Network Aotearoa
 - Animal production and care industry groups
 - Animal advocacy groups
 - Undertaking public engagement on Codes of Welfare, NAWAC's other activities, and on the wider role of NAWAC in the animal welfare system.
- The 2023 NAWAC Annual Report was approved and sent to the Minister in May 2024.

Subcommittee reports

NAWAC's operational work programme is achieved via the work of subcommittees. Committee members are expected to serve on subcommittees, with the number determined based on interest, expertise, and workload. A summary of each subcommittee's progress in 2024 is as follows.

Pigs Code Review Subcommittee

Chair: Craig Johnson

Since making its recommendation to the former Minister in May 2023, and subsequently re-recommending issue to the incoming Minister in early 2024, this subcommittee has paused until there is further engagement requested.

Sheep and Beef Code Review Subcommittee

Chair: Sandra Faulkner

The sheep and beef cattle subcommittee spent 2024 finalising the draft code of welfare. By the end of 2024, the code and evaluation report were in the finalisation and editorial stage, aiming to go to public consultation in the first half of 2025.

Deer Code Review Subcommittee

Chair: Mhairi Sutherland

In early 2024, the subcommittee finished revising the draft code in response to feedback from the external peer-reviewer, MPI policy and legal, and further stakeholder engagement. The finalised deer code, code report, and summary of submissions were provided for consideration by the full NAWAC committee in the May 2024 meeting. NAWAC agreed to recommend the code for issue to the Minister at this meeting. The Code is currently with the Minister for approval.

Dairy Cattle Code Review Subcommittee

Chair: Matthew Stone

The dairy cattle subcommittee finalised its recommendations to NAWAC on the reviewed dairy cattle code of welfare, the report, and review of submissions, and presented these at NAWAC's first meeting of the year on 7 March 2024. The presentation highlighted areas for discussion and agreement with NAWAC. Final endorsement of recommendations to the Minister were confirmed.

Two NAWAC members with direct or indirect pecuniary interests in dairy farming were recused from the discussion and vote on the recommendations in accordance with the Animal Welfare Act 1999 schedule 1 requirement.

The reviewed Dairy Cattle Code of Welfare and the Report were recommended to the Minister on 29 May 2024. The Chair of the sub-committee, being NAWAC's Chair, met with the Minister twice in subsequent months to discuss the recommendation and the Minister's response. The Minister requested NAWAC reconsider certain aspects in a written response received on 14 August and followed this up on 5 September providing more detail. As agreed with the Minister, on 5 September the draft Code and Report were sent to the representatives of parties directly affected by minimum standards to be reconsidered: Dairy NZ, Dairy Companies Association of New Zealand, Federated Farmers, Veterinary Council of New Zealand, and New Zealand Veterinary Association.

The Minister's feedback and that received by the affected parties were discussed by NAWAC at its meeting on 30 October. NAWAC agreed to reconvene the Dairy Cattle sub-committee to work through all feedback systematically and consider any changes to recommendations.

Rodeo Code Review Subcommittee

Chair: Peter Mason

The rodeo subcommittee continued to systematically work through the standards proposed in the draft revised Code of Welfare: Rodeos for recommendation to the Minister. Members of the committee observed two training sessions hosted by NZRCA in April and October. The first was for broncs and bulls which enabled an improved understanding of the use of flank straps and spurs. The second was for rough stock and enabled greater understanding of training for rope and tie events. Committee members and the NAWAC Chair met with NZRCA officials in May to discuss progress on the code. Despite delays caused by the change in government and subsequent public service restructure, the draft Code of Welfare: Rodeos is anticipated to be recommended to the Minister for public consultation in late 2025.

Companion Animal Codes Review Subcommittee

Chair: Arnja Dale

This subcommittee was paused in April 2024 per ministerial direction.

Greyhounds Subcommittee

Chair: Peter Mason

The greyhound subcommittee continued its watching brief of the greyhound industry during the year as we awaited the new government's decision on the industry's future. We maintained our observer status on the Greyhound Racing New Zealand Animal Health and Welfare Committee (GRNZ AHWC) and reviewed the Racing Integrity Board (RIB) quarterly reports on the industry. Additionally, NAWAC Chair Mat Stone met with the AHWC Chair, the GRNZ CEO, and their animal welfare manager in October for an update on progress by GRNZ towards meeting the RIB report recommendations. In December, the government announced that the industry is to close in 2026 following a 20-month wind down to enable the rehoming of racing dogs and to provide a transition period for people involved in the industry. We are currently awaiting more detail around this decision which will determine the subcommittee's focus for 2025.

Wildlife Subcommittee

Chair: Arnja Dale

The updated 'Guideline on Assessing the Welfare Performance of Restraining and Kill Traps' was published on the NAWAC website in June. This represents the culmination of a significant body of work and has been expanded to cover some of the newer and emerging categories of traps. We hope that it will continue to serve as a resource for those involved in the testing of traps. In the latter part of the year, we undertook a process of targeted engagement with major wildlife stakeholders to determine what future contributions they would like to see from NAWAC in this space. We are currently using this feedback to plan future priorities for the subcommittee.

Business Subcommittee

Chair: Ruth Palmer

The business subcommittee oversaw the annual processes of preparing the 2023 Annual Report and updating the NAWAC Work Programme 2024-25. The comprehensive overhaul and streamlining of NAWAC guidelines continued, with final editing and publication of Guideline 1: Guidance for development, review and content of Codes of Welfare, Guideline 2: Consultation, and Guideline 3: Recommending regulations for care and conduct towards animals. Drafts of Guideline 4: Activities that use animals for Exhibition, Entertainment and Encounter (the 3Es) and Guideline 5: Role of science in setting animal welfare standards were developed and consulted with the committee and MPI before also being finalised.

All these are now published on the NAWAC website, alongside the operational NAWAC guideline for assessing the performance of restraining and kill traps updated by the NAWAC wildlife sub-committee.

Two further NAWAC guidelines are in progress. Work on a new guideline for managing conflicts of interest, to complement the statutory requirements stated in Schedule 1 of the Animal Welfare Act 1999, is on pause after the development of a basic framework and will await the outcomes of the government's commitment to "Reform the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee to ensure its functions, membership and mandate are appropriate" before being finalised. A draft Guideline: fulfilling NAWAC's advisory function to the Minister was prepared, consulted and will be finalised in 2025. The Minister sought NAWAC advice on live animal exports, and the process for preparing this at short notice and out of cycle with regular NAWAC meetings was agreed with the business subcommittee before the technical work proceeded within a specially formulated live exports subcommittee.