

Ministry for Primary Industries
Manatū Ahu Matua



ANIMAL WELFARE

National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee

Annual Report

1 January to 31 December 2025

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

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NAWAC

National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee

Chairperson's comment

Tēnā koutou katoa

An important milestone was achieved in 2025 for NAWAC – the review of the Deer Code of Welfare was completed when Minister Andrew Hoggard issued the revised Code and it came into effect in September. The significance is not only that we now have a modern and fit-for-purpose set of minimum standards for deer farming, thanks to the collaborative efforts of key stakeholders Deer Industry New Zealand, New Zealand Deer Farmers Association, and New Zealand Veterinary Association.

NAWAC's last substantive review of any Code was completed in 2018, and so this achievement feels particularly sweet. For a variety of reasons previously described we have been struggling to achieve our stewardship ambitions. Our intention is to achieve planned reviews of each Code every 10 years. Of course resources are constrained, but we need to do better with those we have and ensure the most efficient process possible without compromising engagement or quality.

Invigorated by this achievement, NAWAC pushed on with reviews of several other Codes. The further targeted engagement of affected stakeholders for the Dairy Cattle Code was completed, and NAWAC provided our revised recommendation to the Minister in October. Public consultation on the draft Sheep and Beef Cattle Code was undertaken in the middle of the year following the Minister's approval, and we expect to make a recommendation to issue this revised Code in mid-2026. Work continued on the Rodeo Code, although the recommendation to progress to public consultation was delayed late in the year when the New Zealand Rodeo Cowboys Association advised rule changes applying to certain events in the 2025-26 season to improve welfare outcomes. We now expect public consultation on this review during mid-2026.

Complex public policy issues like animal welfare rarely achieve consensus amongst diverse stakeholders even with the best engagement. An amendment to the Animal Welfare Act 1999 that updated Regulations for care and conduct of pigs was introduced into Parliament and passed in the later part of 2025. Coverage highlighted the lack of consensus on the government's proposals. These largely adopted NZ Pork's positions on farrowing systems and space for growers, embedded these into Regulations, and amended the Act in certain ways. NAWAC's advice and recommendations to the Minister provided prior to parliament's amendment to the Act were proactively released during the process. Of course, NAWAC respects the authorities described in the Act: Ministers decide; NAWAC's role is to advise. When that advice is not taken up, we must continue to work constructively to protect and improve animal welfare. There is much to learn from this process. The Minister is yet to issue the revised Code.

During 2025 four new members were appointed to NAWAC. Dr Kathryn Bicknell is an agricultural economist based at Lincoln University where she lectures in Global Value Chains and Trade; she has previously served on NAWAC. Dr

Tim Scotland is a veterinarian and Director at Southern Rangitikei Veterinary Services, a Director at XLVets, and chair of New Zealand Veterinary Association's Policy Advisory Committee. Dr Kat Littlewood is registered with Veterinary Council of New Zealand as a veterinary specialist in animal welfare science, ethics and law, until recently lectured at Massey University's School of Veterinary Science, and is an animal welfare consultant with AkoVet. Stuart Taylor is a dairy farmer, General Manager Dairy and Grazing with Craigmere Sustainables, and Director for Waibury Holdings LP and Fortuna, companies with significant stakes in dairy farming. All the new members have rapidly come up to speed and are making important contributions to our work programme. NAWAC thanks these members and the people and businesses that support them.

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 SPCA, 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 2025 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
Prof Craig Johnson BVSc, PhD, DSc, DVA, DipECVA, RCVS Registered Specialist, Professor of Veterinary Neurophysiology	18.03.20	31.10.25 ¹
Mr Peter W Mason BComm	18.03.20	31.10.25 ¹
Mrs Sandra B Faulkner (Deputy Chair) BComm	17.03.20	31.10.25 ¹
Prof Natalie Waran BSc (Hons), PhD, NAEAC Chair	01.11.21	31.10.27
Dr Mhairi Sutherland MSc, PhD	01.11.21	31.10.27
Ms Carolyn Eyre BA, Dip Grad (Psychology), GradD (Dispute Resolution)	21.08.23	31.10.25 ¹
Dr Katherine (Kat) Littlewood BVSc(Dist), PGDipVCS(Dist), PhD FANZCVS (AWSEL)	29.01.25	31.10.27
Dr Kathryn Bicknell PhD	29.01.25	31.10.27
Dr Timothy Scotland BVSc	29.01.25	31.10.27
Mr Stuart Taylor BSc	29.01.25	31.10.27
Dr Arnja R Dale (NAWAC-Appointed Deputy Chair for 2023) BSc, GDipNFPL, GDipHE, MSc, MSc (Hons), PhD	14.03.19	29.01.25 (retired)
Ms Ruth H Palmer MA (Hons), MPP (Distinction)	01.11.18	29.01.25 (retired)

¹ Members whose appointments expired in 2025 continue to serve until they are reappointed or new members are appointed.

Fees

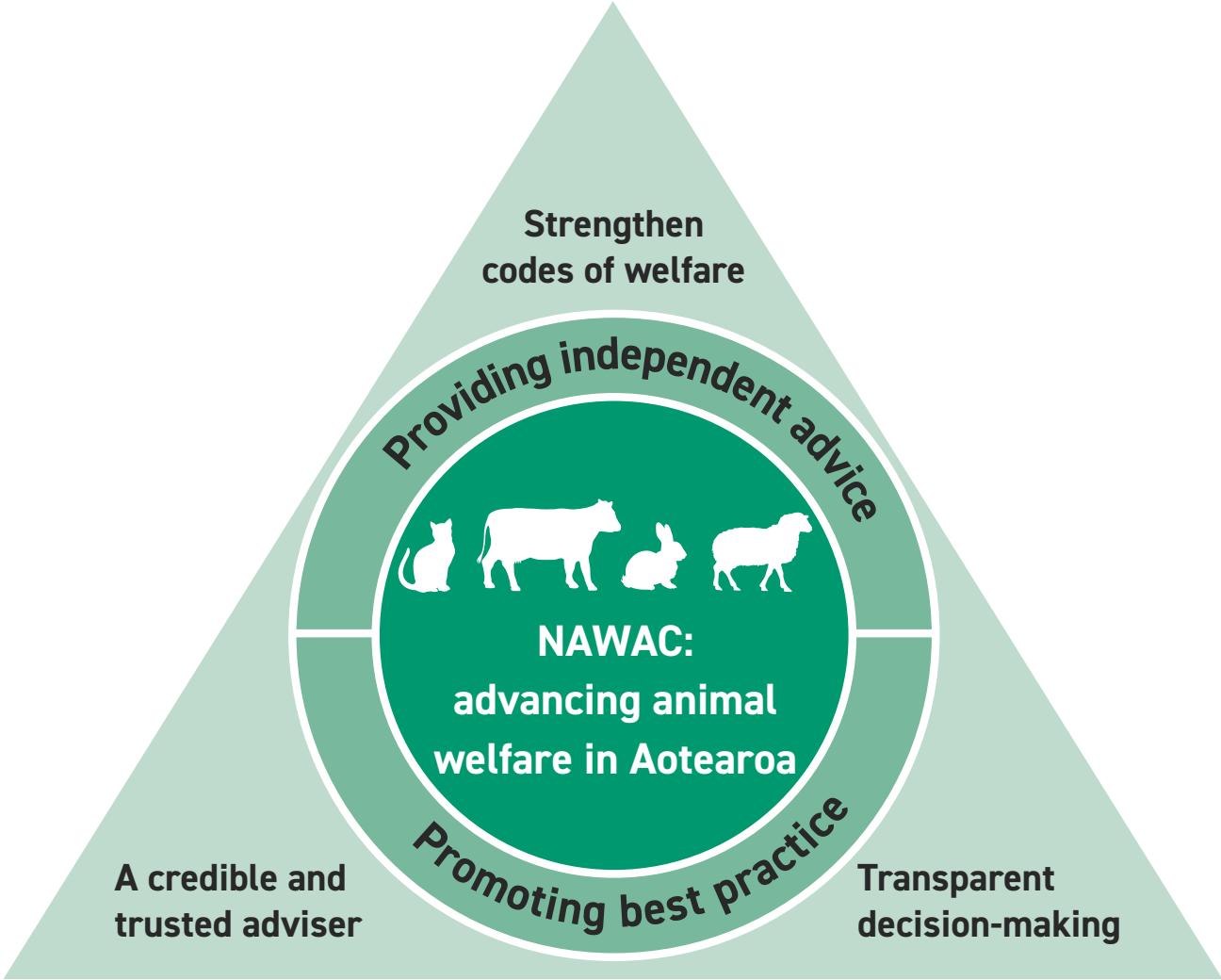
Government policy requires disclosure of board member fees paid to members of statutory boards and committees. The daily board member fee paid to committee members during 2025 was \$400 for members and \$550 for the chairperson.

Members are paid the daily rate for attending both general and subcommittee meetings, with an allowance for preparation time. Members are also reimbursed for travelling 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	\$94,266.45
Total reimbursed travelling expenses	\$5,396.68
TOTAL FOR 2025	\$99,663.13

MEMBER	GROSS FEES PAID IN 2025
Matthew Stone	\$19,766.45
Arnja Dale	\$1,200.00
Ruth Palmer	\$800.00
Peter Mason	\$27,600.00
Craig Johnson	\$9,200.00
Sandra Faulkner	\$0.00
Natalie Waran	\$6,000.00
Mhairi Sutherland	\$13,320.00
Carolyn Eyre	\$3,000.00
Kat Littlewood	\$4,600.00
Kathryn Bicknell	\$0.00
Timothy Scotland	\$7,100.00
Stuart Taylor	\$1,800.00
TOTAL	\$94,266.45

NAWAC Strategic Plan



NAWAC STRATEGY 2021-2025			
Purpose	NAWAC advances animal welfare in Aotearoa by providing independent advice to Ministers and promoting best practice in animal welfare		
In 3 years time	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
What we will do	<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>
Principles	DECISION-MAKING	Informed Independent Collective responsibility	CONDUCT OF HUI Inclusive Prepared Focused Respectful Efficient and effective Free and frank

Meeting Summaries

NAWAC holds quarterly general meetings and other meetings as required (e.g., subcommittee meetings, strategic planning meetings and joint meetings with the National Animal Ethics Advisory Committee).

11 and 12 March 2025 General Meeting

NAWAC discussed the draft Code of Welfare for Sheep and Beef Cattle and corresponding evaluation report. Subject to amendments agreed to at the meeting, NAWAC approved the draft Code for public consultation.

Updates on other Codes under review were also provided.

3 April 2025 Special Meeting: Pig Regulations

Hon Andrew Hoggard sought NAWAC's views on regulatory proposals relating to farrowing crates, manipulable materials and space requirements for grower pigs in March 2025. The Act requires the Minister to consult with NAWAC on any regulations made under section 183A other than those proposed by NAWAC. NAWAC considered draft advice prepared by the Pigs subcommittee and agreed a final response to the Minister.

15 July 2025 General Meeting

NAWAC considered a revised draft Code of Welfare for Dairy Cattle and its post-finalisation report, after the Code was referred back to NAWAC by the Minister in 2024. Subject to amendments agreed to at the meeting, NAWAC approved the draft Code to be recommended to the Minister for issue.

A high-level plan for review of the poultry codes of welfare was discussed.

Updates on other Codes under review were also provided.

16 October 2025 Special Meeting: Pigs Code of Welfare

NAWAC considered draft advice on the Code of Welfare for Pigs after the Minister referred the Code back to NAWAC in September 2025. NAWAC accepted and agreed the draft advice subject to any further minor amendments considered necessary by the Pigs subcommittee.

25 November 2025 General Meeting

NAWAC discussed the use of regulatory and non-regulatory tools to manage the use of electrical devices on animals specifically electro-immobilisation. NAWAC received three presentations from external stakeholders on the topic of electrical device use. The presentations covered virtual fencing technology and AI and animal welfare.

NAWAC had a debrief of the process undertaken to provide advice to the Minister on the Pigs Code of Welfare agreeing to send the Minister additional advice.

Updates on other Codes under review were also provided.

Work Plan

The work programme for 2025-26 was reviewed and approved by NAWAC at its July 2025 general meeting, with the intention to be reviewed annually.

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 2025 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 2025	Next Steps
Companion Cats	Paused April 2024 at Minister's direction.	
Dairy	Further work undertaken following ministerial direction. NAWAC approved the Code be recommended to the Minister for issue in July 2025.	Awaiting ministerial direction.
Deer	Code issued.	None.
Dogs	Paused April 2024 at Minister's direction.	
Fin-Fish Aquaculture	On hold.	
Pigs	Recommended to the Minister of Agriculture in May 2023 and then to the Associate Minister of Agriculture in February 2024. The Minister consulted with NAWAC on proposed regulations in March and the draft Code in August. Advice was provided back to the Minister in April and October respectively.	Awaiting ministerial direction on the Code.
Poultry	Step 1 - Planning and prioritisation. Step 5 - Finalise consultation drafts (after reviewing two minimum standards relating to stocking density).	Step 2 - Scoping and analysis. Step 6 - Request Minister approval to consult (on two amended minimum standards).
Rabbits	Paused April 2024 at Minister's direction.	
Rodeo	Step 4 - Targeted stakeholder engagement. Step 5 - Finalise consultation drafts.	Step 6 - Request Minister approval to consult.
Sheep and Beef	Step 7 - Public consultation. Step 8 - Review submissions.	Step 12 - Finalise recommended drafts.
Slaughter & Transport	Step 1 - Planning and prioritisation.	Step 2 - Scoping and analysis.

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	Status at December 2025	Next Step
Greyhound Racing	The Racing Industry (Closure of Greyhound Racing Industry) Amendment Bill has passed its first reading in the House and has been referred to the Primary Production Select Committee. There is no current action for NAWAC.	Continue to attend the Greyhound Racing 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, the Committee asked MPI to proactively release its advice on the Pigs Code of Welfare and associated regulations when the Animal Welfare (Regulations for Management of Pigs) Amendment Bill was referred to the Primary Production Select Committee in 2025. This included NAWAC’s draft Pigs Code of Welfare and final Code Report recommended to the Minister in May 2023 and NAWAC’s advice to the Minister dated April 2025 on regulatory proposals under consideration at the time. The amendment Bill which received royal assent on 16 December 2025 sought to support farmers transition to compliant practices beyond the current expiry date for regulations 26 and 27 of the Animal Welfare (Care and Procedures) Regulations 2018 of 18 December 2025.
- NAWAC approved draft Guideline 6, fulfilling NAWAC’s advisory function to the Minister.

Pillar III: Transparent Decision-Making

- Further 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.
- NAWAC liaised with various stakeholders, including:
 - Animal production and care industry groups
 - Animal Advocacy Groups
 - New Zealand Rodeo Cowboy Association
 - The Associate Minister of Agriculture
 - Undertaking public engagement on Codes of Welfare, NAWAC’s other activities, and on the wider role of NAWAC in the animal welfare system.
- The 2024 NAWAC Annual Report was approved and sent to the Minister in July, 2025.

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 based on the additional time commitment. A summary of each subcommittees' progress in 2025 is as follows.

Business Subcommittee

Chair: Carolyn Eyre

The business subcommittee focused on delivering the 2024 Annual Report alongside establishing the 25/26 NAWAC Workplan, which continues to remain aligned with the expectations of the Associate Minister (Animal Welfare, Skills). Monitoring of that workplan was done throughout the year with regular reporting by subcommittees on progress with code reviews. We remain committed to strengthening transparency with work being done to create a stakeholder engagement guideline however the code of conduct guideline remains on hold for 2025 whilst we await any change as a result of proposed reform of NAWAC's function, membership and mandate.

Sheep and Beef Code Review Subcommittee

Chair: Role is currently vacant.

This subcommittee was paused in April 2024 as per ministerial direction.

Dairy Cattle Code Review Subcommittee

Chair: Matthew Stone

In 2025, the Dairy Cattle subcommittee continued its reconsideration of aspects of the draft Code after it was referred back to NAWAC by the Minister in 2024. The subcommittee tabled an amended draft and its post-finalisation report at the July general meeting. NAWAC approved the amended draft Code to be recommended to the Minister for issue. 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 revised draft Code was again recommended to the Minister on 2 October 2025.

Deer Code Review Subcommittee

Chair: Mhairi Sutherland

The draft Code was recommended to the Minister in May 2024 and issued in August 2025.

Greyhounds Subcommittee

Chair: Peter Mason

The Greyhounds subcommittee continued its watching brief of the greyhound racing industry including maintaining observer status on the Greyhound Racing New Zealand Animal Health and Welfare Committee. In 2025, the Racing Industry (Closure of Greyhound Racing Industry) Amendment Bill passed its first reading in the House and was referred to the Primary Production Select Committee. We are currently awaiting the outcome of the select committee process to determine our focus for 2026.

Pigs Code Review Subcommittee

Chair: Craig Johnson

The Pigs subcommittee reconvened twice in the year after receiving correspondence from the Minister, to consider regulatory proposals relating to farrowing crates, manipulable materials and space requirements for grower pigs and changes to the draft Pigs Code of Welfare, made by MPI. On both occasions the Pigs subcommittee prepared draft advice for consideration by the full committee. Two special meetings were held to consider the draft advice and agree final responses. Due to a change of membership during the year, Kathryn Bicknell joined the subcommittee.

Poultry Codes Review Subcommittee

Chair: Mat Stone

The Poultry subcommittee is charged with a review of the Layer Hens and Meat Chickens Codes of Welfare, as well as further consideration of the specific needs of breeder poultry and non-chicken poultry, e.g. farmed ducks, turkeys and gamebirds. The subcommittee's high-level plan for this work was approved by NAWAC in July. The plan anticipated a ministerial request, subsequently received, to undertake this work in two phases, with prioritisation of a specific matter in the Layer Hen Code that is viewed as a potential impediment to industry preparedness for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI). In Phase 1 of this review, the subcommittee is examining whether there remains a valid justification for a different stocking density for barns with and without outdoor access. Consultation on proposals relating to this specific point is envisaged in mid-2026. Phase 2 will be a comprehensive review of the Codes with a full scope.

Rodeo Code Review Subcommittee

Chair: Peter Mason

The Rodeo subcommittee continued to systematically work through the standards proposed in the revised draft Code. A member of the subcommittee attended the first day of the National Finals at the end of the 2024/25 rodeo season (held in Waikato on the 22nd and 23rd of March) as well as the Hawke's Bay rodeo held in November at the start of the 2025/26 rodeo season. Subcommittee members and the NAWAC Chairperson met with NZRCA officials in August to discuss progress on the Code. The subcommittee also undertook consultation with specific teams within MPI that have an interest in the draft Code. The feedback from MPI will be used to inform final amendments to the Code prior to the draft being discussed by the full committee.

Sheep and Beef Code Review Subcommittee

Chair: Sandra Faulkner

The Sheep and Beef Cattle subcommittee finalised the draft code of welfare and undertook public consultation for six weeks from May to July. By the end of 2025, the subcommittee were well underway analysing the 296 submissions received on the draft Code and working to finalise a draft to go to the full committee.

Wildlife Subcommittee

Chair: Role is currently vacant.

The wildlife subcommittee did not meet in 2025 to allow NAWAC members to focus on other prioritised work streams.