



Dr Matthew Stone
Chair
National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC)
By email: m.stone@spadesolutions.nz

Dear Dr Stone

Letter of Expectations for 2026

I am writing to outline my expectations and priorities for the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC) for 2026.

I acknowledge the Committee's continued commitment to providing independent, evidence-based advice to Ministers under the Animal Welfare Act 1999. The development and review of codes of welfare remain central to maintaining high standards of animal welfare in New Zealand, while supporting practical and workable outcomes for those responsible for animals and upholding New Zealand's reputation as a country that has, and cares deeply about having, excellent animal welfare outcomes.

Production Animal Codes and the Rodeo Code

Codes of welfare for production livestock are important to New Zealand's primary sector and must reflect robust science, practical experience, and clear minimum standards that are fit for purpose.

Thank you for NAWAC's work in the last year advising me on the Code of Welfare for Pigs and the changes introduced through the Animal Welfare (Regulations for Management of Pigs) Amendment Act 2025. I also acknowledge the progress made in recommending the Code of Welfare for Dairy Cattle and consulting with the public on NAWAC's draft Code of Welfare for Sheep and Beef.

The Government's priority remains to progress and complete these codes, alongside the Code of Welfare for Rodeos. Specifically, my expectations are that this year:

- a) NAWAC will support/assist with the completion of the Code of Welfare for Pigs;
- b) NAWAC will undertake public consultation on the proposed Code of Welfare for Rodeo;
- c) NAWAC will complete its targeted review of the stocking density for poultry in the event of a Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) infection; and
- d) commence work on a Code of Welfare for Dogs.

In addition, Hon Nicola Grigg, Acting Minister of Agriculture will be in contact with you regarding progressing NAWAC's Code of Welfare for Sheep and Beef.

I ask that NAWAC ensure its advice to me on recommended codes clearly articulates or includes:

- the animal welfare rationale underpinning any proposed significant change in standards; and

- a dedicated section on practicality and economic impact and an explanation of the extent to which these matters were considered relevant to NAWAC in reaching its recommendations, and why or why not.

Companion Animal Codes

Companion animals play a significant role in New Zealand society, and it is important that their welfare standards remain up to date with good practice, current scientific knowledge and available technologies.

As work on the production animal codes progresses and resources become available, I expect NAWAC to shift its focus toward the companion animal codes. In the first instance, this should include commencing work on the Code of Welfare for Dogs and include consideration of the draft code prepared for NAWAC by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

There has been recent attention on the impacts communities experience from roaming and aggressive dogs. I acknowledge that many of the associated issues will likely fall within the remit of the Dog Control Act 1996. In this context, I would like NAWAC to consider possible changes to the Code or associated regulations that benefit dog welfare and support the outcomes of the Dog Control Act 1996.

I would appreciate NAWAC advising me on the proposed timeframes and sequencing for this work once capacity allows.

Transparency, Engagement, and Process Improvements

I support NAWAC's ongoing efforts to improve transparency and engagement with key stakeholders.

This should include:

- continued proactive engagement with industry, animal welfare organisations, veterinarians, and other affected and interested parties;
- clear communication about NAWAC's work programme and processes; and
- completion of NAWAC's review of its internal processes and guidelines, with a view to ensuring they remain efficient, robust, and fit for purpose.

In turn, I commit to releasing NAWAC's recommended codes of welfare to key stakeholders promptly after receiving them.

I appreciate the significant workload associated with NAWAC's statutory responsibilities and the expertise that members bring to this work. I look forward to receiving your advice on the above priorities and to continuing our constructive working relationship over the coming year.

Yours sincerely



Hon Andrew Hoggard
Associate Minister of Agriculture