

NZALA Position on Farrowing Crates and Mating Stalls

Monday 15 March 2021

0900 – 0945

Date:	Monday 15 March 2021
Time:	9:00am – 9:45am
Location:	Teams Meeting
Attendees	
Subcommittee members:	NAWAC Pig Subcommittee (Chair Included)
MPI Secretariat:	MPI Representatives
Invited Guests:	NZALA Representatives

Meeting Summary:

On Monday 15 March the NAWAC Pig Subcommittee met with representatives from the New Zealand Animal Law Association (the NZALA) to discuss their position on farrowing crates and pig welfare.

NZALA supports a recommendation for a system that maximises the sows' behavioural repertoire and maximises the fulfilment of the needs of the piglets. Alongside other code recommendations (noted in the NZALA's report [Farmed Animal Welfare Law in New Zealand](#)) the organisation supports recommendations to help minimise piglet mortality without compromising sow welfare. NZALA bullet these to include:

- Genetically selecting for more smaller more maternal sows with lower, more natural litter sizes
- Provision of a suitable creep area
- Providing better designed pens with nest building material
- Greater space and environmental enrichment and encouraging the sow to exercise.
- Hygienic and temporarily heated flooring can also decrease piglet mortality.

NZALA's recommendations are detailed in its [feedback on the code of welfare for pigs \(dated 18 January 2021\)](#) and in its report [Farmed Animal Welfare Law in New Zealand \(February 2021\)](#).

The NZALA state that if the short-term use of farrowing crates was recommended, this would be a contentious issue and susceptible to legal challenge as the Court found in its decision on NZALA and SAFE's judicial review of farrowing crates that Parliament intended to end the use of farrowing crates on the basis they were inconsistent with the Act.

The NZALA state that MPI and NAWAC must also ensure that they commit to the 5-year phase out period for farrowing crates, as an extension is only possible in the very limited circumstances prescribed in s183A(6) of the Animal Welfare Act 1999.

The code of welfare for pigs currently provides as a recommended best practice the provision of environmental enrichment such as toys, including a length of hanging chain, rock, tyre, buoy or

football. It is noted that many of these toys may not be effective, as pigs prefer material or objects that are functionally relevant e.g. objects that are ingestible, odorous, chewable, deformable, and destructible. Earth-like materials such as peat, mushroom compost and branches have been shown to be preferred over straw.

Decisions on the code of welfare for pigs should be made in the interests of the physical, health, and behavioural needs of pigs, and, on the basis of good practice and scientific knowledge, per the Animal Welfare Act 1999. On this basis, and given safety considerations, short periods of restraint for the process of mating may be acceptable, and natural mating is preferred over artificial insemination.

NZALA believe that achieving the safety of persons in charge of animals, while important, should not be NAWAC's primary focus when preparing codes of welfare. NAWAC's functions relate to animal welfare. Other regimes provide for workplace health and safety.

NZALA state that NAWAC should liaise with the Ministry for the Environment to ensure that minimum standards for animal welfare align with environmental standards, so that complying with both regimes is workable for industry and the best possible environmental and animal welfare outcomes are achieved.