



National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee

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Te Komiti Tohutohu Hauora Kararehe ā-Motu

MINUTES / MINETI

General Meeting / Tikanga hui

Date / Rā: 25 November 2025

Time / Tāima: 09:30 – 16:30

Venue / Whaitua o rēhia: Wellington

Committee / Komiti: Matthew Stone (Kairuruku/Chair), Katherine Littlewood, Katheryn Bicknell, Stuart Taylor, Tim Scotland, Sandra Faulkner, Mhairi Sutherland, Craig Johnson, Carolyn Eyre, Natalie Waran, Peter Mason.

Attendees / Nuinga: s9(2)(a)

[Redacted names of attendees]

Guests / Manuhiri: John Hellstrom (personal capacity), Karen Singleton (Animal Justice Party), Helen Beattie (VAWA).

Public attendees / Tūmatanui tangata I tae atu: s9(2)(a)

[Redacted names of public attendees]

Apologies / Matangaro: None.

Any Other Business (Open to the Public): No additional items of business were identified for discussion under Part One of the agenda.

Any Other Business (Public Excluded): No additional items of business were identified for discussion under Part Two of the agenda.

REGISTER OF INTERESTS

Member	Interest declared	Role
Matthew Stone	SPADE Solutions Ltd Global Preparedness Monitoring Board (GPMB) World Organisation for Animal Health MPI Policy and Trade: AANZFTA Cooperation Programme Poultry Biosecurity Compartments Evaluation AgriHealth NZ: Conference	Director and Principal Consultant Member Contractor Contractor Speaker
Craig Johnson	Massey University	Professor
Sandra Faulkner	Wairakaia Partnership (Farming: Sheep, Cattle, Annual Crops, Citrus, Farm Forestry) Campaign for Wool NZ Presbyterian Support East Coast (Arohiwi Stn) Gisborne/Wairoa Rural Co-ordination Group Federated Farmers NZ	Farmer/Partner Trustee Board Member Chair Board Member
Peter Mason	SPCA NZ Veterinarians for Animal Welfare Aotearoa	Hon Life Member Member
Natalie Waran	National Animal Ethics Advisory Committee International Society for Equitation Science Eurogroup for Animals	Chair Trustee Project Leader; Eurogroup for Animals paper on equine welfare
Mhairi Sutherland	Beef + Lamb New Zealand Ltd	Senior Advisor
Carolyn Eyre	Waikato District Council Policy & Regulatory Committee, Waikato District Council Regulatory Subcommittee Pepepe Investments Eyre Family Trust Rural Women New Zealand Eyre Family Trust	Deputy Mayor Chair Member Director Member
Tim Scotland	Southern Rangitikei Vet Services XL vets NZ Vet Association Livestock Exports NZ Dairy NZ Body Condition Scoring Evaluation Scheme	Shareholder and director Director Board Member
Stuart Taylor	SAFER farms Dairy Farmer Drystock business	 Director (unpaid role)
Kat Littlewood	Ako Vet Ltd GRNZ Welfare Committee NZVA Policy Advisory Committee WSAVA Animal Welfare Committee AWNA Organising Committee ANZCVS Animal Welfare Chapter MAF Animal Welfare Advisory Board LIFT COST Action (positive farm animal welfare)	Co-director Independent member Member Member Member Fellow Member Member
Kathryn Bicknell	Carriage driving	Participant

PART ONE: OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

O1 Welcomes and farewells

The Chair, M Stone, opened the meeting at 09:30 am and welcomed attendees, including members of the public. Attendees were advised that the open session is scheduled to run until 12:00pm.

There is no MPI written report paper for this meeting. A verbal update will be provided given the full agenda.

M Stone noted MPI has invited him to participate in the internal meeting with the Animal Welfare Steering Committee as Chair of NAWAC. Noted the absence of the former Farm to Processor Animal Welfare Forum and the resulting gap in stakeholder engagement. Members were invited to consider regulatory gaps that could be raised in this forum.

The Committee discussed member appointments. MPI is still waiting confirmation on new appointments being signed off. Members with terms coming to an end are to remain until their replacement appointments are made.

No comments were raised on the agenda.

O2 Updates to register of interests

The following update was provided:

C Eyre: Recently appointed as the Director of Anexa Vet.

O3 MPI Staffing Update

s9(2)(a) provided an update on MPI staffing noting she will begin parental leave from mid-December; a replacement has not yet confirmed. s9(2)(a) and s9(2)(a) to remain as secretariat contact points. s9(2)(a) is moving from the Animal Welfare team to the Animal Welfare Policy team; a replacement has not yet been confirmed.

The AIS restructure has disestablished the sector liaison function, with staff and team functions being split across several teams. Sector Liaison previously led implementation of Codes of Welfare (e.g., Deer and Dairy). The Animal Welfare team will now lead future implementation in collaboration with other teams.

O3 Confirmation of previous minutes (2 sets)

The documents **38.25** (general meeting, 15 July 2025) and **39.25** (special meeting, 16 October 2025) were circulated prior to the meeting and taken as read.

N Waran noted the minutes include a suggestion for a joint NAEAC–NAWAC discussion on fish welfare and asked if this can be an action point.

Moved (M Stone): That the draft minutes of the general meeting held on 15 July and the special meeting held on 16 October 2025 be adopted as a true and accurate records of those meetings.

The motion was put carried.

Actions:

- Schedule a 2026 joint meeting with NAEAC to discuss fish welfare.

O4 Status of actions arising from previous meetings

The document **40.25** was circulated prior to the meeting and taken as read.

The committee reviewed the status of actions agreed at previous meetings. M Stone invited the Committee to provide comment on the actions.

Action 3: s9(2)(a) provided an update on the dog tethering regulations. The regulations were approved by Cabinet on 26 August and came in to force 25 September.

An SPCA employee attending as a member of the public was asked if they could provide an update and they advised the SPCA is taking an education-first approach. The Sector Liaison disestablishment was also raised noting they were expecting them to support education. C Eyre would like to see the effect of these regulations over time. s9(2)(a) noted data is being collected.

Action 4: s9(2)(a) provided an update on Action 4 relating to Live Animal Export. The proposals did not proceed to public consultation and currently sit with the Minister.

Action 23: S Faulker advised that the Sheep & Beef subcommittee are focused on reviewing feedback received during public consultation. It was suggested that this item is split into two, as an economic analysis is not the focus.

Action 25: M Stone will ask the steering committee for an organisational chart of MPI's animal welfare regulatory system.

Action 26: N Waran advised the wildlife SC does not have a Chair and C Johnson noted that pending secretariat support, the next step would be to review stakeholder feedback from the stakeholders meeting.

Action 32: M Stone advised that the Ostrich and Emu Code of Recommendation and Minimum Standard predates the Animal Welfare Act 1999 and the information needs to be reviewed before it can be turned into a Code of Welfare. However, the industry has waned, and this can be considered as part of the 2026 work programme.

Actions:

- Secretariat to do an end of year clean out of the action list.
- Include an update on enforcement of tethering regs at future NAWAC meetings.
- Stakeholder list to be circulated to full committee (re: Action 16).

O5 NAWAC meeting dates for 2026

The document **41.25** was circulated prior to the meeting and taken as read.

Members are to email s9(2)(a) with their availability. M Stone asked the Committee whether three general meetings plus special meetings as required would be sufficient. N Waran noted the first general meeting appears late, potentially affecting the rodeo code. s9(2)(a) advised the rodeo code is unlikely to be ready earlier than March 2026 and some special meetings may be required at short notice.

Tentative dates for special meetings were agreed: early May (5–6 May suggested for Sheep & Beef and suitable for poultry) and late September (2-hour slots).

It was noted that 2026 is an election year and activity may be quiet from July.

T Scotland advised he is unavailable in July but will return by the 23rd. NAWAC agreed to meet on 22 July.

NAWAC proposed that a joint online meeting with NAEAC on fish welfare is held in September.

Actions:

- Confirm dates against calendars.
- Confirm tentative special meetings for 5–6 May and late September (2-hour slots).

O5 Issues register

The document **42.25** was circulated prior to the meeting and taken as read.

The Committee discussed the following points:

International: The WOAHA Animal Welfare Chapter has been refreshed and now recognises the Five Domains Model.

Cat Management: Discussed the clarification of feral vs owned cats, with feral cats being added to Predator Free 2050. This item is to be added to the issues register.

Actions:

- Amend 'Orana Park' to 'Wildlife Parks'.
- Add feral cats' inclusion in Predator Free 2050 to the issues register.

O6 Member updates

- K Bicknell: Temporary moveable housing for layer hens was not named in the Code causing potential issues to address.
- S Taylor: Attending a dairy farmer conference to serve on a panel on AI use.
- T Scotland: Technology – education for lifestyle blocks on animal health. Advised Committee of the amalgamation of pharmaceutical companies that may affect access to veterinary medicines in New Zealand.
- M Sutherland: Following the RamGuard study on facial eczema, now looking to develop testing without sheep requiring dosing. This will include 5-year behaviour monitoring. Informed Committee that the ClipFitter device is currently only to be used for scrotum and not tails in New Zealand as there are concerns about the application.
- C Johnson: The new Massey Research building has been completed, open day in February. Travelling to Paris (WOAHA) to develop the humane killing chapter.
- C Eyre: Noted an increase in roaming and missing dogs.
- S Faulkner: Provided commentary on the local government reform lacking policy with implications for animal welfare (e.g., emergency management). Agreed to add this to the issues register.
- N Waran: Scheduled to visit to the Hong Kong Jockey Club and returning in December for racehorse welfare discussions; human behaviour change approaches observed.
- K Littlewood: Exploring the term 'outcome-based minimum standard' to understand where it has been defined and agreed to discuss this further with G Romaine. Also working on CPD for end-of-life care, writing, and ethical reasoning work.

The committee adjourned for morning tea at 10:45am

The committee reconvened at 11:05am.

07 Presentations on Electrical Devices

M Stone introduced this agenda item, noting that NAWAC have been considering the use of electrical devices in Code reviews, specifically electro-immobilisation. Three guest speakers were introduced:

- J Hellstrom – Independent Animal Welfare Advocate for Halter.
- K Singleton – Policy President, Animal Justice Party.
- H Beattie – Vet, Veterinarians for Animal Welfare Aotearoa (VAWA).

J Hellstrom - Virtual Fencing:

J Hellstrom declared the following conflicts of interest:

- The New Zealand representative during the development of the Australian regulations for Virtual Fencing Technology (VFT).
- Currently contracted to Halter as an independent animal welfare advocate.

Key points raised in presentation:

- There has been significant uptake in the use of VFT. 3 years ago, it was being used on an estimated 30,000 cows and today, over 3 million devices are being used globally, with Halter being the most widely used VFT devices internationally.
- In New Zealand, Halter and “No Fence” account for 80% of VFT market.
- The VFT hardware (collars) continue to improve and there is now reduced skin harm.
- The VFT collars are kept on cows for life.
- The “reinforcement rate” (shocks: warning) can be up to 10% and shocks are received when animals aren’t moving. These shocks may vary in duration and strength.
- The learning process requires animals to learn multiple behaviours based on cues from the collar.
- Communication is via satellite/cloud/cellular.
- Animal welfare concerns have been raised in studies, and the UK AW Committee produced an opinion piece on the topic in 2022.
- Halter VFT now has 25 safeguards built into the system to mitigate these concerns.
- Positives of using VFT can include improved farmer-cow relationships, reduced fear due to cows not being forced beyond willingness, and precision grazing and calving management.
- Australia is currently developing new regulations to allow Ministers to approve / license individual VFT products that meet specific requirements for use in their states. Australian licensing will require suppliers to provide evidence of compliance.
- The use of VFT is expanding into North America and Europe, where there are currently no regulations regarding its use.

The Q&A session covered extensive beef use and connectivity issues.

K Singleton - AI and Animal Welfare: Regulatory gaps and opportunities:

Key points raised in presentation:

- AI presents risks and opportunities and will require safeguards to prevent entrenching or worsening existing animal welfare issues.
- Globally, AI governance focuses on humans, with Serbia noted as explicitly referencing animals.
- The development of technology is now outpacing regulation. VFT is an example of this, as it took 5 years from market release for guidance to be published.
- Four key recommendations for NZ:
 1. Update the Animal Welfare Act 1999 for AI applications and develop animal-centric AI principles,
 2. Build regulatory capacity for AI,
 3. Drive inter-agency coordination,
 4. Leverage existing legislative frameworks

It was suggested that NAWAC adopt a leadership pathway.

H Beattie - Draft Code of Ethical Conduct for VFT

H Beattie declared the following conflicts of interest:

- This VFT code of ethical conduct has been funded by industry, however VAWA have undertaken this work independently.

Key points raised in presentation:

- The issue of coverage dead-spots on hilly farms remains.
- VFT enables better pasture management.
- VFT does not replace the need for good stockmanship and human oversight remains essential.
- Further research should be undertaken on how animals that ignore boundaries can be managed. The current option is for higher voltages to be applied.
- Collars, regardless of the model / brand, are still causing injuries (typically skin lesions and swelling).
- Proposed that a self-regulatory virtual fencing manufacturers association is established for the purpose of engaging on specific matters.

NAWAC discussed how animal-welfare bias could be embedded into AI.

s9(2)(a) asked NAWAC if regulating the use of VFT is appropriate and J Hellstrom advised the Australian licensing regime would be appropriate. K Bicknell proposed that users could be licensed as well as manufacturers.

J Hellstrom noted that the responsibility is on farmers to use VFT appropriately but there is responsibility on manufactures to ensure they provide all the right information to the farmers.

N Waran raised the ethical considerations regarding data collection.

NAWAC agreed to consider how VFT could be included in a recommendation to the Minister.

The committee adjourned for lunch at 12:10pm.

The committee reconvened at 12:45pm.

In accordance with section 48 of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987, it was moved (M. Stone – committee consensus) that the public be excluded from the following parts of the proceedings:

Motion carried unanimously.

PART TWO: PUBLIC EXCLUDED AGENDA

RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC

Section 48, Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987

There being no further introductory items of business to discuss, it was moved (M Stone – committee consensus):

A. *That the public be excluded from the following parts of the proceedings of this meeting, namely, —*

C 1. Policy advice on Electrical Devices and options for regulation

C2. SC reports

- Poultry phase 1*
- Rodeo Timeline*

C3. Code of Welfare and Regulations for Pigs

- Debrief and next steps*

C4. NAWAC correspondence

- Regulator response re. Animal Welfare (Care and Procedures) regulations 2018*

The general subject of each matter to be considered while the public is excluded, the reason for passing this resolution in relation to each matter, and the specific grounds under section 48(1) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 for the passing of this resolution are as follows:

General subject of each matter to be considered	Reason for passing this resolution in relation to each matter	Ground(s) under section 48(1) for the passing of this resolution
C1 – C4	<i>That the public conduct of the whole or the relevant part of the proceedings of the meeting would be likely to result in the disclosure of information for which good reason for withholding would exist under section 48(1)(a)(ii) of the LGOIMA.</i>	<i>The withholding of information is necessary under section 9(2)(f)(iv) of the OIA, and that the public interest is not found to outweigh the need to withhold the information.</i>

B. *That s9(2)(a) [redacted] be permitted to remain at this meeting, after the public has been excluded, because of their knowledge of meeting procedure and the subject matter under discussion. This knowledge is relevant background information to assist the committee in its deliberations.*

The motion was put carried.

C 1. Policy advice on Electrical Devices and options for regulation

The documents **43.25** and **49.25** were circulated prior to the meeting and taken as read.

S9(2)(g)(i) [Redacted text block containing multiple paragraphs of obscured content]

S9(2)(g)(i)

C2. SC Reports

Rodeo: The document **48.25** was circulated prior to the meeting and taken as read. The NZRCA confirmed they were making changes to certain events to address concerns raised by the subcommittee. N. Waran will be attending an upcoming rodeo to observe these changes. The revised timeline was agreed.

Sheep & Beef: S Faulkner advised work is on-going. The SC is reviewing two sections of public consultation feedback at a time and are over half-way through. A revised version of the Code will be provided to the full committee in March. Noted appreciation for the secretariat support.

S9(2)(g)(i)

Poultry: Active in Phase 1 (stocking density differential between barns with and without outdoor access). The industry science paper was delivered to the SC last year and K Littlewood has critiqued it. Over the last few years, there has been a significant diversification of housing for poultry.

S9(2)(g)(i)

Business: The majority of the work plan is currently paused to progress guidelines on COIs.

Wildlife: No further updates to what was raised earlier in the meeting.

Greyhounds: P Mason advised that GRNZ's AHW Committee met. GRNZ/RIB dropped the judicial review and are now focusing on the select committee process. Greyhound racing will be closing on 31 July and around 1,500 dogs require rehoming. A transition agency is to be established within 2 years.

Dairy: The recommendations are with the Minister. MPI advice has been prepared and awaiting the Ministers next steps.

The committee adjourned for afternoon tea at 2:45pm

The committee reconvened at 3.00pm

C3. Code of Welfare and Regulations for Pigs: debrief and next steps

The document **47.25** was circulated prior to the meeting and taken as read.

S9(2)(g)(i) [Redacted text block containing multiple paragraphs of obscured content]

M Stone to rework first paragraph and retain the 1st sentence.

The Motion was put: M Stone to make amendments as discussed and then send to the Minister.

Motion: (put) unanimously.

S9(2)(g)(i)

s9(2)(a) left the meeting at 4:03pm.

C4. NAWAC correspondence

The documents **44.25** and **45.25** were circulated prior to the meeting and taken as read.

M Stone contacted s9(2) with several questions following the transport and calf back-rub issues reported by VS at previous NAWAC meeting. It was noted that back-rub cases in adult cattle are increasing as animals get larger and the NZ Stock Crate Design Standards are outdated and due for review.

Clarity has since been provided that 'cattle beast' does include calves and '50cm²' equals 50 × 1cm (not 50×50cm).

M Stone proposed NAWAC involvement with NZ Standards and stakeholders (including transport operators) to seek a review of stock-crate design standards. M Stone also advised that broken limbs that do not pierce the skin do not currently have to be reported under current regulations.

These issues are not covered in a current work programme and will need to be discussed regarding the work plan.

s9(2)(a) advised there have been several reviews of the Animal Welfare Act over the years, and these observations have been heard.

M Stone asked if the report of the review of the AW System undertaken in 2025 is available. MPI confirmed the review is complete, but the report is not yet available.

M Stone thanked MPI and the Committee for their work this last year, noting it has been a great deal of work and thanked s9(2)(a) and wished her the best.

The committee closed the meeting at 04.30pm.