

Group:	RSPCA Australia	Amendment:	Governance	ID code:	1035
Control:	Public domain	Type:	Administration	Authoriser:	EO
Status:	Released	Date:	22/09/2020	Supervisor:	EO
Title:	RSPCA Standards Development and Review			Owner:	SSO-FA

RSPCA STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW

1. RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme

RSPCA Australia established the RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme (the Scheme) as part of our efforts to improve the lives of Australia's farm animals and provide guidance and a trustworthy choice to consumers wanting to purchase products from higher welfare farming systems.

2. RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme Standards

The Scheme is underpinned by the *RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme Standards* (the Standards) which set out species-specific animal welfare requirements and production practices that aim to meet the animal's behavioural and physiological needs and are designed to assist the relevant industry to continually improve and demonstrate good animal welfare outcomes. Standards are a mix of resource and animal-based requirements and provide a level of animal welfare higher than that which is currently required by Australian animal welfare legislation.

The Standards are underpinned by RSPCA Australia's Good Animal Welfare policy:

RSPCA Australia considers that the welfare of an animal includes both physical and mental states. Ensuring good animal welfare goes beyond preventing pain, suffering or distress and minimising negative experiences, to ensuring animals can express their natural behaviour in an enriching environment, feel safe, have healthy positive experiences and a good quality of life. Thus providing good animal welfare means providing animals with all the necessary elements to ensure their physical and mental health and a sense of positive individual wellbeing.

3. Standards development and review

RSPCA Australia may develop a new species-specific Standard or additional Standard requirements for other parts of the supply chain for species currently covered under the Scheme. This process will usually commence with a scoping study in order to: determine key animal welfare issues that could be addressed through Standard requirements; analyse current industry structure and practices; and determine brand, retailer and consumer interest in higher welfare product(s).

RSPCA Australia periodically reviews and updates each species-specific Standard - usually every five years.

RSPCA Australia aims to consult with a range of stakeholders, including companies that participate or have expressed an interest in participating in the Scheme, industry groups and RSPCA Australia member Societies by notifying when development or review of a Standard or additional Standard requirements has commenced and invite stakeholders to submit feedback.

RSPCA Australia may also initiate a review of a species-specific Standard in response to new animal welfare science, changes in legislation, government standards or industry practice.

4. Standards development and review - considerations

The aim of developing a new species-specific Standard, or new Standard requirements for additional parts of the supply chain for species currently covered under the Scheme, is to provide a level of animal welfare higher than that which is currently required by Australian animal welfare legislation or achieved by conventional farming practices.

The aim of reviewing an existing Standard is to ensure continuous improvement of the welfare of animals is achieved.

Group:	RSPCA Australia	Amendment:	Governance	ID code:	1035
Control:	Public domain	Type:	Administration	Authoriser:	EO
Status:	Released	Date:	22/09/2020	Supervisor:	EO
Title:	RSPCA Standards Development and Review			Owner:	SSO-FA

The starting point for considering how animal welfare can be improved within the relevant production system and subsequently reflected in the Standard, is an understanding of the animals' key behavioural needs, as evidenced by animal welfare science. Together with addressing the animal's physiological needs, through providing good health and nutrition and an appropriate housing environment, the Standard aims to give farm animals the opportunity to have positive experiences throughout their life.

The Standard takes into consideration: RSPCA Australia policy; available scientific research; current legislation applied in Australia; codes of practice; standards and guidelines for animal welfare; veterinary, technical and producer advice; and current industry good practice.

In addition to these considerations, other matters that affect the outcome of the Standard development and review process include:

- the extent to which a Standard requirement is possible or practical to implement in a commercial setting;
- the extent to which a Standard requirement has financial implications for the producer and therefore may require a phase-in period;
- trends in production system changes both in Australia and overseas;
- public concern regarding particular production systems and/or husbandry practices; and
- whether particular Standard requirements may have unintended negative animal welfare outcomes.

Standards development and review requires balancing these considerations while being guided by our Good Animal Welfare policy to ensure that each species-specific Standard includes the necessary elements to provide for the animals' physical and mental health as well as a sense of positive individual wellbeing.

5. Standards development and review - Consultation

When developing or reviewing a species-specific Standard, RSPCA Australia aims to consult widely and keep RSPCA Australia member Societies and stakeholders informed regarding progress made. RSPCA Australia will: outline the development and review process including timeframes; provide rationale for significant changes to existing standards or proposed new standards early in the process and upon completion of the Standard; and provide a summary of key issues raised during stakeholder consultation and how these have been addressed.

Standard development and Standard review - formal

Standard development and formal review will take 1-2 years and aims to achieve further improvement to animal welfare outcomes. The process will include:

1. Review of relevant scientific literature to identify key animal welfare issues and ways to address them
2. Review of conformance with current Standard requirements
3. Feedback from RSPCA Australia member Societies and stakeholders about current Standard requirements
4. Feedback from the external Standards Advisory Group (see below) throughout the process
5. Feedback from the internal Standards Working Group (see below) throughout the process
6. Preparation of an Issues Paper (if relevant)
7. Feedback from RSPCA Australia member Societies and stakeholders on the Issues Paper (if relevant)
8. Preparation of a Consultation Draft 1, including rationale for key changes
9. Feedback from RSPCA Australia member Societies and stakeholders on the Consultation Draft 1

Group:	RSPCA Australia	Amendment:	Governance	ID code:	1035
Control:	Public domain	Type:	Administration	Authoriser:	EO
Status:	Released	Date:	22/09/2020	Supervisor:	EO
Title:	RSPCA Standards Development and Review			Owner:	SSO-FA

10. Summary of feedback received on Consultation Draft 1 and broad RSPCA Australia response (internal RSPCA Australia document and consultation)
11. Preparation of a Consultation Draft 2 (if required), including rationale for key changes
12. Feedback from RSPCA Australia member Societies and stakeholders on the Consultation Draft 2 (if required)
13. Summary of feedback received on the Consultation Draft 2 and broad response (if required) (internal RSPCA Australia document and consultation)
14. Final feedback from RSPCA Australia Certification Body
15. Final Standard, including rationale for key changes

In parallel with the Standard development or formal review process, *RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme Information Notes* will be prepared that explain some of the key issues and/or provisions addressed through the Standard.

Standard review - interim

In addition to the formal review of a species-specific Standard, an interim review of any new or re-published Standard is conducted after one year following implementation of that Standard. The key purpose of an interim review is not to make significant changes to the Standard but rather to address Standard requirements that need clarification or amendment, particularly where there are issues with their practical implementation.

The process for an interim Standard review will take approximately 3 months and will include:

1. Review of conformance with all Standard requirements to identify those requiring review and/or amendment
2. Review of relevant scientific literature related to Standard requirements of concern to identify key animal welfare issues and ways to address them
3. Preparation of a Consultation Draft, including rationale for key changes
4. Feedback from current Producers only on the Consultation Draft
5. Summary of feedback received on the Consultation Draft and broad RSPCA Australia response (internal RSPCA Australia document and consultation)
6. Final Standard, including rationale for key changes

Standard review - ad hoc

In addition to the formal and interim reviews of a species-specific Standard, it may be necessary to review only a small number of Standard requirements within a Standard. This can occur if, for example, new information came to light about a farming practice that is not covered by the Standard, if the intent of a Standard requirement needed to be clarified urgently, or any other circumstance that cannot wait for a formal or interim review and requires an immediate change to the Standard.

Under these circumstances, the process for an ad hoc Standard review will take 1-2 months and will include:

1. Review of relevant scientific literature related to the Standard requirement(s) of concern to identify key animal welfare issues and ways to address them
2. Review of conformance with the Standard requirement(s) of concern
3. Preparation of a Consultation Draft, including rationale for key changes
4. Feedback from current Producers only on the Consultation Draft
5. Summary of feedback received on the Consultation Draft and broad RSPCA Australia response (internal RSPCA Australia document and consultation)

Group:	RSPCA Australia	Amendment:	Governance	ID code:	1035
Control:	Public domain	Type:	Administration	Authoriser:	EO
Status:	Released	Date:	22/09/2020	Supervisor:	EO
Title:	RSPCA Standards Development and Review			Owner:	SSO-FA

6. Final Standard, including rationale for key changes

Where a species-specific Standard is in place but there are no Participants, RSPCA Australia may conduct ad hoc reviews as necessary to ensure the Standard reflects current animal welfare science and best practice. In that case, at RSPCA Australia's discretion, a Consultation Draft may be provided to key industry stakeholders only. Should a species-specific Standard have no Participants for a period of five years, a decision is made whether to re-issue or withdraw the Standard. If a re-issue is required, a formal review of the Standard will take place as per the formal review process outlined above.

6. Standards development and review - Roles and responsibilities

Standard development and review is led by the RSPCA Australia Science and Policy Team. Internal and external working groups are established to assist. The RSPCA Australia Certification Body provides advice in relation to:

- conformance trends of current Standard requirements
- any clarity needed on current Standard requirements
- how proposed Standard requirements will affect assessment and certification processes
- practical implications for assessment and certification processes
- interpretation of proposed Standard requirements.

The Science and Policy Team is responsible for coordinating and collating feedback from the external Standards Advisory Group while the Certification Body is responsible for coordinating feedback from all other stakeholders unless otherwise agreed. The drafting process is carried out by the Science and Policy Team who is also responsible for ensuring that a Standard, once finalised, is published on the RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme website and that the Certification Body as well as the external Standards Advisory Group are informed of its release. The Certification Body is responsible for ensuring that RSPCA Australia member Societies and all other stakeholders are notified of the release of a new Standard.

Standard Working Group (internal)

An internal Standard Working Group aims to achieve further improvement to animal welfare outcomes of each revised Standard and in doing so take into account feedback on the animal welfare implications, commercial viability and the practical implications for assessment and certification processes of proposed Standards requirements. A Standard Working Group:

- considers the findings of the literature review
- reviews and discusses feedback provided by the RSPCA Australia Certification Body and stakeholders (including RSPCA Australia member Societies) on the current Standard
- agrees on the key welfare issues to be addressed in the review of the Standard
- comments on the draft Issues Paper (if prepared) prior to finalisation
- reviews and discusses feedback provided by RSPCA member Societies and stakeholders on the Issues Paper
- comments on the Consultation Draft(s) prior to finalisation
- reviews feedback provided by RSPCA Australia member Societies and stakeholders on the Consultation Draft(s)
- agrees the final Standard requirements wording and their intent.

Membership of a Standard Working Group comprises:

- The Science and Policy Team member leading the drafting process (Chair of the Standard Working Group and representing the animal welfare science underpinning the Standard)

Reference:	RSPCA-ADM-02	Version:	4.3	Page:	4 of 5	© RSPCA Australia
------------	--------------	----------	-----	-------	--------	-------------------

Group:	RSPCA Australia	Amendment:	Governance	ID code:	1035
Control:	Public domain	Type:	Administration	Authoriser:	EO
Status:	Released	Date:	22/09/2020	Supervisor:	EO
Title:	RSPCA Standards Development and Review			Owner:	SSO-FA

- The Chair of the RSPCA Australia Scheme Committee (the Committee being responsible for setting the operating parameters and rules of the RSPCA Australia Certification Body to achieve RSPCA Australia objectives)
- A RSPCA Australia Certification Body member (representing the Certification body responsible for the assessment of, and certification to, the Standard)

Additional participation of a Standard Working Group is subject to approval by the three core members. The decisions of a Standard Working Group are made on a consensus basis by the three core members and in alignment with RSPCA Australia's Good Animal Welfare policy. Where consensus cannot be reached, the Standard Working Group seeks resolution through involvement of RSPCA Australia's Chief Science and Strategy Officer.

Standard Advisory Group (external)

To add to the robustness of the Standard development and review process, a Standard Advisory Group is appointed to provide external expert advice. A Standard Advisory Group provide comments and constructive feedback on issues relating to draft Standard requirements. This includes advice on animal welfare science, application of the Standard requirements in a commercial setting and/or clarity and intent of the wording.

A Standard Advisory Group is appointed by the Science and Policy Team member leading the Standard drafting process. A Standard Advisory Group usually consists of three members who provide their expertise as volunteers. At least one member of a Standard Advisory Group should be an animal welfare scientist with expertise in the relevant species. The other members of a Standard Advisory Group may provide, for example, expertise in standards development and review and/or auditing of welfare assurance schemes (in Australia or overseas), consumer interest, or additional animal welfare expertise.

Standard Advisory Group members must not:

- have a direct interest in the Scheme
- be a current or former Participant in the Scheme or involved in the relevant species supply chain directly or indirectly
- be a current employee or director of RSPCA Australia or an RSPCA state/territory Society.

7. Other feedback on the Standards and the Scheme

In addition to formal requests for comment as part of a Standard development and review process, RSPCA Australia accepts feedback on existing Standards and the Scheme at any time. RSPCA Australia may: address the issues identified through existing policies or processes; input the feedback at the next scheduled review of a Standard (or sooner depending on the urgency); provide additional information; and/or investigate the issues identified further.

Comments can be provided by email to approvedfarming@rspca.org.au.