

Questions and Answers

Queensland Codes of practice for Cattle, Sheep and for Livestock at Depots and Saleyards



What are the codes of practice?

Under the *Animal Care and Protection Act 2001* a regulation may make codes of practice about animal welfare. A code of practice may be made about the care and handling of animals, the use of animals, surgical procedures, transport, slaughter and many practices associated with animal husbandry.

A code of practice under the *Animal Care and Protection Regulation 2012* is a mandatory code. This means that a person dealing with the animal must abide by the standards required in the code of practice for that animal.

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries is commencing a code of practice for cattle, for sheep and for livestock at depots and saleyards.

These can be found at: <https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/pdf/asmade/sl-2021-0057>

Other codes of practice already exist including:

- transport of livestock
- particular requirements about poultry
- pigs.

How are codes of practice developed?

The codes of practice are based on Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines which are developed through a transparent and inclusive process. Consideration of contemporary animal welfare science, costs to industry, practicalities, community standards and international expectations are utilised to support an evidence-based approach. The Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Cattle and Sheep were agreed in 2016, while the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Saleyards and Depots were agreed in 2018.

The Australian Animal Welfare Standards form the basis for legally enforceable requirements for the welfare of cattle, sheep and livestock at saleyards and depots. They are expected to be regulated into law by each state and territory government to ensure consistent laws are in place across Australia.

Queensland has developed the codes of practice based on the agreed Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines documents.

More about the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines can be found at:

<http://www.animalwelfarestandards.net.au/>

Was the industry consulted on the changes?

An extensive consultation process was undertaken in the development of the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines. An open public consultation ran from 7 March - 5 August 2013 on the draft standards and guidelines for Cattle and the draft standards and guidelines for Sheep.

Consultation took place with government agencies, researchers, industry and animal welfare organisations in the development of the Livestock at Saleyards and Depots standards. An open public consultation was also undertaken from 11 September - 12 December 2014.

As the codes of practice are based on the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines that were developed following extensive consultation with all stakeholders and the community, no further consultation was deemed necessary on the drafting of the codes of practice in Queensland.

Why does Queensland need codes of practice if the standard of welfare is already high?

The welfare of livestock has become increasingly important to industry, the government and consumers. The Standards contained in the Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines are intended to be adopted by all jurisdictions to provide clear compulsory requirements for industry stakeholders operating across different states and territories. The compulsory requirements are vital for market access and consumer confidence as they will demonstrate to the community, industry and international trading partners that minimum standards for animal welfare have been implemented.

Clear consistent standards demonstrate to our trading partners that the risks to animal welfare resulting from husbandry procedures such as castration, tail docking and mulesing, and confinement issues are being minimised by legislation.

When do the codes of practice commence?

The codes of practice for Cattle, Sheep and Livestock at Depots and Saleyards commence on 1 July 2021. The regulation relating to the spaying of cattle by non-veterinarians will commence on 1 January 2022. This delayed commencement will allow reasonable time for non-veterinarians to gain the required training to continue to provide this service.

What is the difference between a 'Standard' and a 'Guideline' in the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines?

Standards are the animal welfare requirements that must be met under law for livestock welfare purposes. The standards are intended to be clear, essential and verifiable statements. However, not all issues are able to be well defined by scientific research or are able to be quantified.

Science cannot always provide an objective or precise assessment of an animal's welfare and, consequently, where appropriate science is not available, the standards reflect a value judgement that has to be made for some circumstances. Standards use the word 'must'.

Guidelines are the recommended practices to achieve desirable animal welfare outcomes. Guidelines use the word 'should' and complement the standards.

Noncompliance with one or more guidelines will not constitute an offence under law.

Who will be impacted by the commencement of the codes of practice?

The standards or requirements in the codes of practice will apply to all those with responsibilities for the care and management of cattle, sheep and with responsibilities for livestock at saleyards and depots.

How will the codes of practice affect me?

The Codes of Practice will provide for minimum requirements for a range of issues including housing, handling, sanitation, nutrition, water, veterinary care, and protection from extreme weather conditions.

The Codes of Practice impose obligations on persons who have responsibility for the care and handling of the animals such as owners, depots and saleyard operators, and stockpersons to meet the minimum standards.

What are the key changes that will affect me as a cattle producer?

Appropriate pain relief must be used when castrating or dehorning cattle. Pain relief is not mandatory if cattle are less than six months old or less than 12 months old and castrated or dehorned at their first yarding.

Appropriate pain relief must be used when performing the flank approach for spaying or webbing of cattle.

Reasonable actions to ensure the welfare of cattle from extremes of weather (temperature or climatic conditions that individually or in combination are likely to predispose cattle to heat or cold stress) fires, floods, disease and injury must be taken.

Dogs must be muzzled when moving calves less than 30 days old that are not with cows.

An electrical prod can only be used on cattle if they are 3 months of age or older. The cattle must be able to move away from the prod and the prod must be applied as sparingly as possible. The prod must not be applied to the face, udders, anus or genitals of the cattle.

Cattle can only be tethered if they are given reasonable opportunity to exercise off the tether at least once each day and they have sufficient space to stand up, lie down and move around for grazing.

Disbudding of calves using caustic chemicals can only be done if the calf is less than 14 days of age and the calf is not wet, is segregated from its mother for 4 hours after the treatment and the calf can be kept dry for 12 hours after the treatment.

Dairy management:

Lactating dairy cows must be inspected at least once a day to assess the welfare of the cow.

Dairy cows kept on a feed pad must have access to a well-drained area for resting.

Beef feedlots:

Cattle kept in a beef feedlot must have a minimum floor area of 9m² for each standard cattle unit (equivalent of 600kg live body weight) in the feedlot.

Cattle in a feedlot must be inspected daily to assess their welfare.

The owner or operator of a beef feedlot must complete an annual risk assessment about the risk of heat stress at the feedlot and establish, implement and maintain a risk management system to manage the ongoing risk of heat stress.

Please note the entire list of requirements can be found in the [Code of Practice about Cattle \(Schedule 2B\)](#).

What qualification will I need to spay cattle?

Lay people (non-veterinarians) who wish to spay cattle using the Willis dropped ovary technique must hold competency in the following unit of nationally recognised training: AHCLSK335 - Conduct dropped ovary technique procedures for spaying cattle. Experienced spayers may be able to meet the standards of this unit through recognition of prior learning. For more information about this training contact an industry approved Registered Training Organisation.

What are the key changes that will affect me as a sheep producer?

Tail docking, castration and cryptorchid castration (retained testicles) must not be undertaken on sheep that are more than six months old without using appropriate pain relief and haemorrhage control.

Mulesing must not be undertaken on sheep less than 24 hours old or more than 12 months old.

Appropriate pain relief must be used when mulesing sheep that are 6–12 months old.

Mulesing must not be undertaken on sheep showing signs of debilitating disease, weakness, insufficient body condition or poor growth rates (ill-thrift).

Only wool-bearing skin may be removed during mulesing.

Sheep must be shorn at least once every 2 years unless their wool is self-shedding.

Reasonable actions to ensure the welfare of sheep from extremes of weather (temperature or climatic conditions that individually or in combination are likely to predispose sheep to heat or cold stress), fires, floods, disease and injury must be taken.

A dog can only be used to assist in the control or movement of sheep if the dog is under effective control at all times. The dog must wear a muzzle if it habitually bites livestock.

Teeth trimming or grinding and pizzelle dropping must not be undertaken on sheep.

Sheep can only be tethered if they are given reasonable opportunity to exercise off the tether at least once each day and they have sufficient space to stand up, lie down and move around for grazing.

An electrical prod can only be used on sheep if they are 3 months of age or older. The sheep must be able to move away from the prod and the prod must be applied as sparingly as possible. The prod must not be applied to the face, udders, anus or genitals of the sheep.

Please note the entire list of requirements can be found in the [Code of Practice about Sheep \(Schedule 2A\)](#).

What are the key changes for livestock at saleyards and depots?

Livestock must not be loaded if they will not be fit for sale at the end of the journey. An animal is not fit for sale if it is:

- unable to walk on its own by bearing weight on all legs
- emaciated
- visibly dehydrated
- showing visible signs of severe injury or distress
- suffering from conditions that are likely to cause increased pain or distress during transport
- blind in both eyes.

(These requirements are consistent with the existing mandatory standards that ensure livestock are fit to load for transport.)

A bobby calf must not be presented for sale unless the calf is a minimum of five days old, is in good health, alert, and able to rise from a lying position. This does not apply to calves born in transit to, or at the saleyard.

Bobby calves must be held under a roofed area at all times.

Appropriate arrangements must be made at the first reasonable opportunity for the care, treatment or humane killing of any animals assessed as not fit for sale or sick, injured, distressed or diseased livestock.

An electrical prod can only be used on livestock (except pigs) if they are 3 months of age or older. The livestock must be able to move away from the prod and the prod must be applied as sparingly as possible. The prod must not be applied to the face, udders, anus or genitals of the livestock.

For pigs, an electrical prod can only be used if the pig is at least 60kg and the prod is applied as a last resort to protect the safety of a person.

A dog can only be used to assist in the control or movement of livestock if the dog is under effective control at all times and the dog is wearing a muzzle. However, dogs must not be used to assist in the control or movement of bobby calves, pigs or an animal that is unable to stand.

Reasonable actions to ensure the welfare of livestock from extremes of weather (temperature or climatic conditions that individually or in combination are likely to predispose cattle to heat or cold stress), fires, floods and injury must be taken.

Please note the entire list of requirements can be found in the [Code of Practice for livestock at Saleyards and Depots \(Schedule 3AA\)](#).

How will compliance with the codes of practice be enforced?

The initial compliance approach will focus on education and awareness about the new laws. Inspectors appointed under the *Animal Care and Protection Act 2001* will have primary responsibility for enforcing the new laws.

Biosecurity Queensland, of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, will have primary responsibility for enforcement of commercial livestock production, while RSPCA Queensland will enforce non-commercial livestock concerns in the areas that they service.

In certain circumstances the Queensland Police Service may also respond to welfare concerns regarding cattle, sheep and livestock at saleyards and depots.

Where can I obtain a copy of the codes of practice?

The Codes of Practice are written into legislation under the Animal Care and Protection Regulation 2012. A copy of the Regulation can be found at <https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/browse/inforce>

Where can I obtain a copy of the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Cattle, for Sheep and for livestock at Saleyards and Depots?

Copies of the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Cattle, for Sheep and for livestock at Saleyards and Depots can be obtained free of charge from www.animalwelfarestandards.net.au

Where can I get more information?

For more information contact Biosecurity Queensland.



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