

# Inquiry into pig welfare in Victoria

## Submission

**Submission Status:**

**Content Warning:** Yes

**Attachment Provided:** Yes



# **Submission to the Inquiry into Pig Welfare in Victoria**

**Chris Delforce  
Executive Director**

12 January 2024

Farm Transparency Project

PO Box 9, South Melbourne VIC 3205  
[www.farmtransparency.org](http://www.farmtransparency.org)





## ABOUT FARM TRANSPARENCY PROJECT

Farm Transparency Project (FTP), formerly Aussie Farms, is a non-profit animal rights charity founded in 2014. FTP is dedicated to ending commercialised animal abuse and exploitation in Australian animal agriculture facilities, by increasing industry transparency and educating the public about modern farming and slaughtering practices.

FTP operates under the belief that most Australians are good, caring, decent people who are opposed to animal cruelty. Industries that use animals for commercial gain operate in almost total secrecy, and exploit this decency through marketing ploys such as "humanely slaughtered", "ethically raised", and "free range", utilising imagery depicting happy animals living out their days on rolling green hills in the sunshine, while actively seeking to limit awareness of the routine cruelty inside farms, slaughterhouses and other related facilities.

By breaking down this secrecy and making it easier for consumers to see the truth about what their purchases support, the commercialised abuse and exploitation of animals will slowly but surely come to an end. We believe that information, freely and readily accessible, is our greatest and most powerful tool.

It is to this end that we released in 2018 the feature-length documentary [Dominion](#), an exploration of what modern, legal, standard-practice animal farming and slaughtering looks like in Australia, one of the most comprehensive resources available to consumers seeking to increase their knowledge of the subject.

Similarly, in early 2019 we released a [map](#) identifying the locations of farms, slaughterhouses and other animal exploitation facilities across Australia, complementing an existing [catalogue of thousands of images and videos](#). This resource allows consumers for the first time to see the scale of industrial animal farming on both the micro and macro levels, grounding in reality the previously somewhat mythical concepts of factory farms and slaughterhouses. For many Australians, even this satellite imagery depicting a typical farm with numerous enormous sheds, or barren feedlots with tens of thousands of cattle, is a shock compared to the 'Old Macdonald' style farm presented by the industry and reinforced throughout their childhood.

Repeatedly, we have seen these resources enable consumers to have informed conversations about the ethical, environmental and health detriments of animal agriculture, and to make kinder choices that align with their own ethics.

## PERSONAL BACKGROUND

I have been investigating farms and slaughterhouses since 2011. In that time, I have visited 66 slaughterhouses and 109 pig farms across Australia. Most of these visits have been a result of trespass, without the knowledge or consent of the owners of the facilities.

I have written, directed and produced two documentary films. The first film, [Lucent](#) (2014), explored in detail the commercial farming and slaughter of pigs, while the second film, [Dominion](#) (2018), featured a 20 minute section on the same topic. Both have won a number of awards and are freely available online.

I have been vegetarian since 2002, and vegan since 2011.



## GENERAL POSITION

In my 13 years of investigating piggeries and pig slaughterhouses, many of which are located here in Victoria, I have come to the conclusion that extreme animal suffering is inherent and systemic to this industry. It is simply not possible to breed, raise, and kill pigs for food in an “ethical” or “humane” manner – there is always a degree of fear, pain and suffering.

Pigs are sentient, intelligent animals, each with their own personality yet sharing common traits of playfulness, inquisitiveness, empathy towards other pigs, and fierce maternal instincts. These instincts, in natural settings, see them gathering branches, leaves, and other materials to build nests for their young. Contrary to the stereotype, they are clean animals, who prefer to designate a ‘toilet’ area far from where they eat and sleep. In many ways, they are very similar to dogs.

They do not wish to die, and actively resist their slaughter. Their commodification cannot be morally justified, and must be brought to an end as swiftly as possible.

As consumer awareness about the reality of this industry grows, I believe such an end is inevitable; this industry simply cannot meet any reasonable expectations of people who consider themselves opposed to animal cruelty. The question is, how much suffering will be permitted to occur in the meantime, and how much support will be provided to the farmers and slaughterhouse workers whose livelihoods are currently dependent on it?

The widespread availability of “faux meat” products made from soy, mushroom, wheat and other plants, including products designed to mimic the taste and texture of pork, bacon, ham, pepperoni and sausage, further highlights how unnecessary a slaughter-based industry really is. For consumers who refuse to eat anything other than “the real thing”, the emergence of lab-grown or “cultivated” meat (such as that produced by the Melbourne-based company Magic Valley) provides the answer, in a way that is infinitely superior for our environment and health. Victoria has the chance to be a leader in the booming plant-based sector.

### Recommendation 1

A two year phase-out of commercial pig farming must be announced. Business owners and employees within the industry should be provided financial compensation and support in transitioning to more ethical, sustainable methods of income generation.

### Recommendation 2

Public funds must no longer be provided to the pork industry. Instead, such funds must be diverted into alternatives to slaughter-based meat, including plant-based and cultivated meat, with the aim of making such alternatives the more affordable option for consumers. This should include public education campaigns aimed at dispelling myths propagated by slaughter-based industries that may otherwise discourage consumers from trying these products.

### Recommendation 3

Truth-in-labelling must be mandated, requiring that all packaging for pig meat products contains accurate information regarding the confinement and slaughter methods used, with a QR code or web URL linking to accurate footage of such practices as provided by independent, non-industry organisations such as Farm Transparency Project.



## EXISTING REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS

The *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (POCTA) 1986* firmly states that “A person who:

- wounds, mutilates, tortures, overrides, overdrives, overworks, abuses, beats, worries, torments or terrifies an animal; or
- loads, crowds or confines an animal where the loading, crowding or confinement of the animal causes, or is likely to cause, unreasonable pain or suffering to the animal; or
- does or omits to do an act with the result that unreasonable pain or suffering is caused, or is likely to be caused, to an animal; or
- drives, conveys, carries or packs an animal in a manner or position or in circumstances which subjects or subject, or is likely to subject, it to unnecessary pain or suffering; or
- works, rides, drives or uses an animal when it is unfit for the purpose with the result that unreasonable pain or suffering is caused to an animal; or
- is the owner or the person in charge of an animal which is confined or otherwise unable to provide for itself and fails to provide the animal with proper and sufficient food, drink or shelter; or
- sells, offers for sale, purchases, drives or conveys an animal that appears to be unfit (because of weakness, emaciation, injury or disease) to be sold, purchased, driven or conveyed; or
- is the owner or the person in charge of a sick or injured animal and unreasonably fails to provide veterinary or other appropriate attention or treatment for the animal...”

... commits an act of cruelty upon that animal and is guilty of an offence”.

This definition covers much of the routine farming and slaughtering of pigs. For example:

- Surgical mutilations performed on pigs without anaesthetic or pain relief, such as tail docking, teeth clipping, castration and ear notching
- Confinement in small cages or pens for days, weeks or even months at a time, with no enrichment, typically on hard flooring such as concrete or metal
- The killing of “runt” piglets by blunt force trauma (smacking them against a hard surface) or by placing them inside an esky or similar box and filling it with carbon dioxide gas
- The moving of pigs within sheds, between sheds, onto trucks, off trucks, and within the slaughterhouse, by use of painful electric prodders or blunt instruments such as poles, paddles or boards
- The use of carbon dioxide gas chambers, electrical stunners, bolt guns or rifles to immobilise pigs prior to slaughter
- The cutting open of pigs’ throats with a knife in order to bleed them out

However, section 6 of the Act exempts such cruelty from prosecution, by providing that the Act “does not apply to:

- the slaughter of animals in accordance with the *Meat Industry Act 1993* or any Commonwealth Act; or
- any act or practice with respect to the farming, transport, sale or killing of any farm animal which is carried out in accordance with a Code of Practice”



The *Victorian Standards and Guidelines for the Welfare of Pigs*, a code of practice based on the *Australian Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals – Pigs (3<sup>rd</sup> edition)*, explicitly allows acts of cruelty towards pigs in farms, such as mutilations and confinement.

This has the effect of legalising practices that would otherwise result in significant penalties if performed on other non-commercially-used species, such as dogs and cats, despite the same capacity between pigs, dogs and cats to experience fear, pain and suffering.

The Victorian government has stated that these exemptions will be carried over into the new *Animal Care and Protection Act*, on the basis that the pig industry and other animal agriculture industries would be unable to operate if not legally permitted to perform acts of cruelty. This is unconscionable and morally unjustifiable, and is completely out of step with the expectations of the Victorian public who, for the most part, are opposed to animal cruelty. Any industry that relies on otherwise-illegal animal cruelty to operate should not be permitted to do so. The idea that a criminal act can become legally-permissible standard practice simply because there's money to be made is ludicrous.

The slaughter of pigs, meanwhile, is regulated by the *Meat Industry Act 1993* (for slaughterhouses selling to the local/domestic market) and the *Australian Standard for the Hygienic Production and Transportation of Meat and Meat Products for Human Consumption (AS4696)* (for all slaughterhouses, domestic and export). The *Meat Industry Act* does not mention welfare or cruelty whatsoever, but simply requires that slaughterhouses must be appropriately licensed, and a condition of license is adherence to the AS4696.

In its brief 1.5 pages on 'animal welfare', the AS4696 requires that:

- Animals are slaughtered in a way that prevents unnecessary injury, pain and suffering to them and causes them the least practical disturbance
- Before sticking commences, animals are stunned in a way that ensures the animals are unconscious and insensible to pain before sticking occurs and do not regain consciousness or sensibility before dying
- Premises and equipment are used in a way and maintained in a condition that minimises risk of injury, pain and suffering to animals and causes them the least practical disturbance
- Animals are handled at meat premises in a way that minimises the risk of injury, pain and suffering and causes the least practical disturbance to them and to other animals at the premises

Arguably, all slaughterhouses are in breach of this legislation, as they are inflicting unnecessary injury, pain and suffering on animals. The use of gas chambers, in particular, is completely indefensible as "necessary" suffering, and this is the subject of an upcoming case in the Supreme Court led by Animals Australia, alleging that the Benalla slaughterhouse is in clear breach, and that the slaughterhouse regulator Primesafe has failed in its duty to enforce this law by allowing gas chamber operations to continue.

#### Recommendation 4

The exemptions for farmed animals, including pigs, must be removed from the upcoming *Animal Care and Protection Act*, as their justification is purely economic, not based in ethics, science or reason, and not in line with community expectations.



## PRE-SLAUGHTER STUNNING METHODS

### Gas chambers

Referred to by the industry as “controlled atmosphere stunning” or “controlled atmosphere killing”, gas chambers used in slaughterhouses consist of a deep pit filled with carbon dioxide gas. Pigs are forced into a metal cage known as a gondola, up to 10 at a time depending on the size of the gondola, and lowered into the pit, to be painfully suffocated by the gas.

The first Australian gas chamber was quietly installed in 1992 at the slaughterhouse in Corowa NSW, now owned by Rivalea/JBS. Over the following 20 years, they were gradually rolled out at all major pig slaughterhouses across Australia. While the industry claims that 85% of pigs are subjected to this method, we believe this to be an old statistic, and consider the real figure to be closer to 95%. An exact figure cannot be determined, due to the lack of recent data around the number of pigs killed at most slaughterhouses. The Diamond Valley Pork slaughterhouse in Laverton, Victoria, accounts for roughly 20% of the national total, sending up to 1 million pigs per year into its enormous chamber.

While taking care to not draw unwanted attention towards their use of these chambers, the industry has always claimed that pigs exposed to the gas gently fall asleep. There was no footage available from within the chamber to dispute this claim.

In 2014, I led a team of investigators into the Corowa slaughterhouse, installing hidden cameras inside the chamber and capturing the reality: that every pig who enters the gas chamber screams, thrashes and desperately fights to escape for over 30 seconds, until their last agonised breath. At the time, this was the largest pig slaughterhouse in the southern hemisphere, and the first time footage of this practice had been published anywhere in the world. A few months later, we conducted a similar investigation into South Australia’s largest pig slaughterhouse, Big River Pork, unsurprisingly revealing identical reactions to the gas.

The following year, we investigated Victoria’s three gas chamber slaughterhouses: Diamond Valley Pork, Australian Food Group, and Benalla. Again, our hidden cameras proved that there was suffering on a mass scale.

In 2023, nine years after we had published the first footage of these chambers and put the industry on notice, we decided to see if they had done anything to improve the system. We captured new footage inside the chambers at Diamond Valley Pork, Australian Food Group, Benalla, Corowa (NSW), and BMK Foods (South Australia). The only thing the industry had changed, in almost an entire decade, was to replace some of its chambers with much larger models, enabling them to kill even more pigs at an even faster rate.

Our investigation at the Benalla slaughterhouse required us to climb down into the gas chamber to retrieve the hidden cameras we’d placed on the gondolas, which had ended up at a lower rotation than when we’d installed them. Even holding your breath, the gas finds its way in; instant panic takes over, and your eyes start to burn, the CO<sub>2</sub> reacting with mucous membranes to form carbonic acid. It is perhaps the most horrible way to die that I could possibly imagine.

To increase the likelihood of mainstream media coverage and make it more difficult for the industry to ignore the issue, as part of our investigation into the Australian Food Group slaughterhouse, I hid inside a maintenance space in the top of the chamber overnight. I remained there for over 9 hours,



unknown to the workers mere metres away. From my hidden vantage point, I filmed as pigs below me were forced down into the gas. I watched as their eyes widened in terror, their snouts pushing up between the bars of the cage towards the oxygen they knew was above them, their bodies flailing and convulsing violently. I listened as their frantic screams faded into a chilling silence. In the pool of water and urine at the bottom of the chamber, I saw a severed piglet's trotter – something we'd heard about years earlier from an ex-employee of Diamond Valley Pork.

The automated machinery, lauded by the industry as a major step forward for welfare by reducing handling, has a habit of catching pigs' limbs and other body parts and tearing them off.

Our hidden cameras at Australian Food Group captured this very thing happen to the testicles of one pig, who screamed in agony and then had to suffer the gas moments later.

Our cameras here and at Diamond Valley Pork also captured the frequent occurrence of gassed pigs not being successfully tipped out of the gondola, and thus still lying there – unconscious or dead – as a new round of pigs were sent in, sniffing cautiously at them and then having to trample over the top of them as they were forced into the gondola.

With all this new damning evidence, we achieved the coverage we'd been hoping for. The pressure was mounting on the industry to acknowledge that it had a problem. And still, the CEO of Australian Pork Limited, Margo Andrae, casually lies to a federal senate hearing that pigs in these gas chambers "literally go to sleep. They literally go into a gondola a few at a time. The CO2 comes out and over a very micro amount of time, they go to sleep. It's quite a best practice science approach to what we do. It's a very low stress way to put the animals into sleep for the next step."

This industry will never improve, and will never acknowledge its sheer incompatibility with animal welfare. It has no place in a modern progressive Victoria.

Footage from our 2023 investigation into Victoria's three gas chamber slaughterhouses:

<https://www.farmtransparency.org/campaigns/gas-chambers>

#### Recommendation 5

Gas chambers must be immediately banned.

#### Recommendation 6

The Victorian government should strongly encourage the federal government to amend the AS4696 to explicitly outlaw the use of gas chambers, which are already arguably in breach of it.



### Electrical stunning

In this method, a worker will use a handheld electric stunning device to pass a current through the pig's brain and, ideally, render them unconscious. These devices typically have one of two designs: a narrow rectangular box with two sharp prongs poking out one end, which are jabbed into the back of the animal's head; or large tongs with jagged edges that are clamped across both sides of the animal's head.



Unlike sheep, who only take 2-3 seconds of the electrical current to lose consciousness, pigs can require up to 15 seconds or more – during which time they are experiencing significant pain, not just from the electricity but also the sharp prongs or teeth of the stunner being forced into their heads.

I have been involved in capturing footage of the use of both kinds of electric stunners on pigs, including at the Strathalbyn slaughterhouse in South Australia in 2017 (footage: <https://www.farmtransparency.org/videos?id=94ea312e58>), and the Scottsdale Pork slaughterhouse in Tasmania in 2023 (footage: <https://www.farmtransparency.org/videos?id=e6urbjtbqv>).

At the Strathalbyn slaughterhouse, we captured repeated evidence of pigs experiencing severe pain during the stunning process, with numerous failed stunning attempts. Pigs are 'picked off' one by one in front of each other. Pigs can be seen regaining consciousness shortly after stunning, with one pig even standing up and walking around. Other pigs are seen drowning to death in the scalding tank, having regained consciousness (or never fully losing it), their throats already cut open.

At the Scottsdale Pork slaughterhouse, we captured similar evidence of pigs demonstrating a painful reaction to the stunner, demonstrating consciousness after stunning (particularly by blinking), and



seemingly being lowered into the scalding tank while still conscious. Some pigs are stunned with a backup bolt gun, but others are knowingly left conscious by workers.

Very little research has been conducted into whether electrically 'stunned' animals are truly unconscious, or merely paralysed and unable to move or exhibit their pain. From the industry's perspective, this is irrelevant, as the pig no longer poses a threat to the worker trying to cut open their throat with a knife. Conscious animals fighting for their lives are harder to kill and more dangerous in the presence of a sharp blade than paralysed animals, whether unconscious or not.

Electrical stunning is a painful and frequently ineffective method of immobilising pigs before slaughter.

### Recommendation 7

Electrical stunning must be banned as soon as practicable.

#### **Penetrative captive bolt stunning**

The type of captive bolt guns used in pig slaughterhouses tend to be small handheld devices, as opposed to the large pneumatic devices seen in some major cattle slaughterhouses.

These smaller guns must be precisely placed on the pig's forehead, and use a blank cartridge to fire a retractable rod/bolt into the pig's brain, damaging their brain and ideally rendering them immediately and irreversibly unconscious.

However, the capacity for human error is significant. Pigs do not tend to stand still for long enough for a worker to correctly line up and fire the gun. As with electrical stunning, it is unclear whether each pig is properly unconscious or simply paralysed and unable to move or exhibit their pain.

For larger pigs, including breeding sows/boars, these small guns are often very ineffective, causing noticeable pain and requiring numerous shots before the pig stops moving.

I have been involved in capturing footage of the use of captive bolt stunners on pigs, including at the Gretna slaughterhouse in Tasmania in 2016 (footage, from approximately 2:00: <https://www.farmtransparency.org/videos?id=94df1468b7>).

### Recommendation 8

Penetrative captive bolt stunning must be banned as soon as practicable.

## **Rifle**

Some smaller slaughterhouses use a rifle to ‘stun’ pigs in a similar manner to a captive bolt gun – the gun is fired at their forehead to irreversibly damage their brain. Aiming at the correct spot is understandably even more difficult from a distance.

This is often horribly ineffective on larger pigs like breeding sows/boars, as evidenced by our investigation into the Menzel’s Meats slaughterhouse in South Australia in 2023 (footage: <https://www.farmtransparency.org/videos?id=hc50novbnn>).

## Recommendation 9

Stunning by rifle must be immediately banned.

## PHASE-OUT OF SOW STALLS

Sow stalls are small cages, typically measuring 0.6m wide by 2.2m long, in which pregnant sows are confined during their pregnancy. The pig farming industry has long boasted about its voluntary phase-out of sow stalls, which was to be completed by 2017.



*Sows in sow stalls at Midland Bacon piggery, Victoria, 2022.*

In 2022, a full five years after this apparent completion, myself and a team of investigators uncovered the ongoing use of sow stalls in numerous Victorian piggeries, including:

- Midland Bacon
- Markanda Piggery
- Harston Piggery
- Evans Piggery
- Blackwoods Piggery



- Gowanbrae Piggery

Footage and photos from this investigation are available at:

<https://farmtransparency.org/campaigns/sow-stalls>

Our hidden cameras captured sows confined to sow stalls for at least 27 days at a time in the Midland Bacon piggery, and at least 26 days at the Markanda piggery.

Following our investigation, Gowanbrae has since removed the stalls.

Starting in its 2012 annual report, Australian Pork Limited has published data about the phase-out of sow stalls, referred to as “Gestation Stall Free (GSF) Uptake”:

- [2011-12](#): 33%
- [2012-13](#): 50%
- [2013-14](#): 63%
- [2014-15](#): 69.45%
- [2015-16](#): 69.4%
- [2016-17](#): 82.6%
- [2017-18](#): 75%
- [2018-19](#): 78%
- [2019-20](#): 78.4%
- [2020-21](#): 77%
- [2021-22](#): No data published
- [2022-23](#): No data published

By APL’s own admission, its phase-out has stalled with more than a fifth of piggeries still confining sows to sow stalls. In fact, the uptake has even gone backwards in recent years, from a peak of 82.6% in 2016-17. For the last two years, APL has just given up publishing this data altogether.

It is clear that trusting this industry to regulate itself, and to respond appropriately to the consumer outrage around the use of sow stalls, has backfired. Such extreme confinement, for the obvious purpose of maximising profit, cannot be justified.

### Recommendation 10

Sow stalls must be immediately banned and dismantled, with inspections conducted at all Victorian pig farms to ensure compliance.

## CURRENT PIG BREEDING AND HOUSING PRACTICES

Using the latest in 360 camera technology, we've created a groundbreaking interactive **virtual tour** of a major Victorian piggery, which covers many of the standard breeding and housing practices. I strongly encourage all members of the committee to try out this tour, ideally from a computer with a stable internet connection, and take their time moving to the 80+ points throughout the four sheds and viewing the accompanying explanatory videos:

<https://www.farmtransparency.org/tours>

### Artificial insemination

Workers “collect” semen from boars by masturbating them. Each boar can be masturbated up to 3 times per week, outside of which they are individually confined to small barren concrete pens or stalls/cages known as **boar stalls** (measuring only slightly larger than sow stalls, at 0.7m wide by 2.4m long).

A tube containing boar semen is then attached to the end of a catheter, referred to by the industry as a ‘pork stork’, which is inserted into the sow’s vagina.



*A worker artificially inseminating sows using a tube of boar semen attached to a ‘pork stork’.  
Screenshot from ‘The Story of Pork: Breeding’, a short video by Australian Pork Limited.*

In Victoria, bestiality is a criminal offence under the *Crimes Act 1958*, but as with cruelty, exemptions for the animal agriculture industry allow this otherwise-illegal practice to occur as part of a farm’s daily routine.

Footage: <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/08ounbd3djlabybp6lhf/Chris-pork-storks.mp4?rlkey=low2czsk9kwtagr1w48ryvmq&dl=0>

### Recommendation 11

The exemption allowing the pig farming industry to engage in bestiality must be immediately revoked.

### Recommendation 12

All forced impregnation of pigs via semen catheter must be immediately banned.

### Recommendation 13

Boar stalls – individual cages/pens for boars in which they are unable to turn around – must be immediately banned and dismantled, with inspections conducted at all Victorian pig farms to ensure compliance.

### **Mating stalls**

Mating stalls are de facto sow stalls – small cages into which sows are moved immediately after their piglets are weaned, for the purposes of being artificially inseminated. The main physical difference is that the back of a mating stall has a small gate to allow a worker to easily inseminate the sow from behind. They are otherwise no different to sow stalls, measuring a minimum of 0.6m wide by 2.2m long and allowing continuous confinement of sows for up to **six weeks**. While the industry claims to only keep sows in these cages for up to five days at a time (which is still a very long time to be confined to a cage and unable to turn around), this is not monitored or enforced. The only thing preventing farmers from keeping sows in mating stalls for longer than five days is their scarcity – farms tend to have far fewer mating stalls than pregnant pigs.



*Sow in a mating stall in a piggery in northern Victoria, 2021.*

Some of the largest piggeries in Victoria, which have removed their sow stalls, still have and use mating stalls. This is a loophole that must be closed.

### Recommendation 14

Mating stalls must be immediately banned and dismantled, with inspections conducted at all Victorian pig farms to ensure compliance.

### **Group housing**

Group sow housing is the industry's alternative to sow stalls. Instead of confining pregnant sows to individual cages, they are packed together in concrete or metal pens and forced to live where they urinate and defecate, for up to the entire 4-month duration of their pregnancy. Without any sort of stimulation, sows become aggressive and frequently fight with each other.



*Sows confined in a 'group housing' pen in a Victorian piggery, 2023.*

Footage:

- <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/1xopjfwqw26sxuh0gc00/Larger-group-sow-pens-at-end-of-SF.mp4?rlkey=lkbb1wduy2vph7s30gi5fng2&dl=0>
- <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/c2lasgz9miz7n44bn6io6/Chris-group-sows.mp4?rlkey=vfrjp3ekaht8tbeopn7sv9w3j&dl=0>
- <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/zgslwt7hnwf8x4mt6e0ws/Chris-group-sows-filth.mp4?rlkey=q40dt4f2e6ppqcwnlq1n5ivbdj&dl=0>

### Recommendation 15

In the interim period until pig farming is phased out, stocking density for sows in group housing must be drastically reduced to a maximum of three per pen, with adequate space for sows to be able to lie down, stand up and move around freely, without engaging with other sows. Soft bedding, such as straw, must be provided and changed daily.

### Farrowing crates

Farrowing crates are small pens containing a cage slightly smaller than a sow stall (0.5m wide by 2.2m long). Sows are moved into these cages one week before they are due to give birth, and remain there for up to 6 weeks in total, nursing their piglets who can move around the pen and in and out of their mother's cage. This 6 week limit is not enforced or monitored; the only thing preventing farmers from keeping sows in farrowing crates for longer is the need to get new due-to-farrow sows into them and to reimpregnate sows as quickly as possible.



*Sow and her piglets in a farrowing crate, Wondaphil Pork Company, Tragowel VIC.*

The vast majority of intensive pig farms utilise farrowing crates.

In these cages, sows are barely able to take a single step forwards or backwards, are unable to turn around, and over time find it more and more difficult to stand or lie down due to the [wasting of their muscles](#), leading to preventable [“overlay” \(crushing\)](#) of their piglets. If sow stalls are (rightly) acknowledged as cruel, there is no justification for allowing the exact same cruelty in the form of farrowing crates.

Lying on hard floors, typically metal or concrete, for weeks at a time also leads to [pressure sores](#) forming on the sows' bodies and faces.

Our website contains [65 videos and over 5,600 photos](#) of farrowing crates, including [19 videos and 697 photos captured in Victoria](#). While it doesn't take a degree in animal behaviour to see that such cages are cruel, and that animals are suffering within them, one of the world's leading experts in pig behaviour and welfare, Professor Donald Broom, has [condemned them](#).

The New Zealand High Court has [recently ruled the use of farrowing crates unlawful](#) due to being cruel and inhumane – Victoria has an opportunity to make a similar acknowledgement and demonstrate global leadership in animal welfare, rather than inexplicably exempting them from cruelty legislation.

### Recommendation 16

Farrowing crates must be immediately banned and dismantled, with inspections conducted at all Victorian pig farms to ensure compliance.





### **Surgical mutilations**

Various surgical mutilations are routinely performed on young piglets without pain relief or anaesthesia, including:

- Tail docking
  - The piglets' tails are cut off with scissors, to avoid them being bitten off when the pigs have been moved into overcrowded 'grower' pens where they lack stimulation. Undoubtedly, this procedure causes severe pain.  
Footage: <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/nocro783q5ahl314j22sd/Chris-tail-docking.mp4?rlkey=sod383bktowvd3k6rxpe734my&dl=0>
- Teeth clipping
  - Piglets' teeth are cut back with sharp clippers, to minimise the pain and injury they can cause to their mother when fighting for an available teat to suckle. However, they only have to fight for teats because the industry has bred sows to produce the largest possible litter sizes, in order to maximise profit.
- Castration
  - While castration of male piglets is not as common in Australia as in some other countries, it does still occur in a number of piggeries, including in Victoria. The castration is performed with a sharp blade, and is done to prevent 'boar taint', an unpleasant taste or smell that can occur when the animal's flesh is cooked.
- Ear notching
  - Scissors or other sharp notching tools are used to cut pieces out of piglets' ears, as a means of identifying them.

### **Recommendation 17**

Unnecessary surgical procedures, such as those listed above, must be immediately banned. Any surgical procedure deemed necessary for the welfare of the pig by an independent qualified veterinarian must be performed by that vet, under anaesthesia and with post-operation pain relief administered.

### **Recommendation 18**

Litter sizes must be reduced as soon as practicable to as low a number as possible, to reduce competition for their mother's milk, and to aid in the phase-out of pig farming.

### **Killing of unwell or unwanted piglets**

'Runt' piglets, the piglets who are considerably smaller than their litter mates as a result of being repeatedly unsuccessful in fighting for a teat to suckle, and otherwise sick or unwell piglets, are typically not considered to be worth the cost and effort of raising. They are killed, usually by blunt force trauma – [lifting them up and smacking them](#) onto a concrete floor, metal bar, or other hard surface – or even more cruelly, by placing them inside a box filled with carbon dioxide gas.

### **Recommendation 19**

The killing of 'runt' piglets, and the use of blunt force trauma and gas boxes, must be immediately banned. Sick and injured pigs must be given immediate veterinary treatment. Euthanasia of sick or badly injured pigs who have no reasonable prospects of recovery must be performed by a qualified veterinarian, in a quick and pain-free manner.



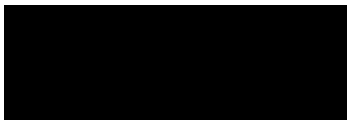
## CONCLUSION

The pig slaughter industry has lost its social license and is completely out of touch with, and unable to ever meet, the expectations of the Australian public. Cruelty and abuse are considered standard daily procedure, yet participants in this industry are immune from prosecution due to legal exemptions that have no basis in morality or science.

To this industry and its representatives, animal welfare is at best a formality, a box to tick and a few vague phrases to trot out in media releases and annual reports, completely devoid of substance or sincerity. At worst, it's a joke. At the end of the day, profit is all that matters to them. Anyone who challenges their right to that profit, and their right to self-regulate, to set and carelessly break their own rules, is attacked as an extremist. Their utter disdain for all who wish to see animals treated with care and compassion – including the majority of their customer base, who simply don't know the level of cruelty they're funding – is palpable.

To lie for decades about gas chambers, a system so barbaric and horrific, even in the face of overwhelming and comprehensive visual evidence and their own research, suggests an industry so drunk on its own power, so certain of its immunity, that the only remaining viable option is to categorically strip it of both and condemn it to its rightful place as a shameful stain on the history of our species.

Chris Delforce



Executive Director  
Farm Transparency Project