

Inquiry into pig welfare in Victoria

Submission

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Parliament of Victoria
Legislative Council Economy and
Infrastructure Committee
Parliament House
Spring Street
East Melbourne VIC 3002

5th January 2024

Subject: Inquiry into pig welfare in Victoria

To whom it may concern

Western Plains Pork has been part of the Australian Pig Industry for 26 years and currently we run a 4000 sow Outdoor Bred and Free-Range pig production enterprise from farrow to finish, birth to bacon. We are located 150km's west of Melbourne on the Western Plains of Victoria, operating in the Golden Plains Shire; we are one of the largest businesses in this municipality. We currently employ approximately 50 people full time and engage with many contractors, farmers and local businesses creating employment opportunities and community engagement.

This letter/document is Western Plains Pork response and submission into the Inquiry into pig welfare in Victoria.

Western Plains Pork is committed to its mission, 'to being the best we can be' by applying the highest principles of welfare, care and respect for the animals, our people, and the land. Being an outdoor bred, and free-range pig production system, our pigs are free to roam, interact with their peers and no sow stalls are in use and never have been.

Our vision is to be one of the world's most sustainable pork producers and assure that our quality management systems ensure meet or exceed the requirements of all our certification bodies, which are APIQ ✓[®] and Leading Harvest, through operating ethically, responsibly, sustainably.

Our commitment to welfare and safety is only matched by our dedication to excellence; to our pigs, clients, team and the environment that sustains it all – we are devoted to reaching new pinnacles of high standards to ensure the welfare and care of our pigs and to produce a premium quality product. Together with a committed and experienced team (stockpeople, Vet, nutritionists, environmental planner to name just a few) and an integrated supply chain, we prioritise the welfare of our stock, sustainability of environment, as well as the care and satisfaction of our people.

We are looking towards the future of farming, Western Plains Pork offers a symbiotic approach to pig welfare, sustainable production, to bring forth a high-quality pork product that can be enjoyed from paddock to plate. This is supported by our people's commitment and dedicated approach to the welfare of our pigs and ethical farming.





There has been discussion that much of the focus of the Inquiry will be on stunning of pigs. Western Plains Pork recognises that the use of electrical and CO2 stunning are the most common methods in use throughout the world and at this stage there are no other viable alternatives. CO2 stunning is preferable as pigs can be handled and stunned in groups and not individually, which greatly reduces anxiety and distress for the pigs.

With news of the Inquiry, came reports of additional break-ins onto Victorian Pig Farms by illegal trespassers. We at Western Plains Pork have concerns about Animal Activists trespassing and entering properties illegally. Not only would this be breaking our biosecurity protocols, but it would cause intimidation to our team and our pigs affecting the health and welfare of all. We work hard to offer a positive welfare environment for our pigs as well as a positive work environment, working on Mental Health and providing an Employment Assistant Program for anyone in need. We would love to see further protection to all farmers. The animal activists trespassing on farms, are breaking the law; it is not legal or permissible for us to walk into someone's back yard, so why do these double standards exist? Why is it permitted for activists to illegally enter a property?

The Australian Pig Industry is characterised by many different farmers that can differ greatly in the way they farm their pigs. However, we all chose this industry to work in because we are passionate about agriculture, specifically pig production and we chose this as the means by which we make our living. As an industry we all work together and support each other no matter what system is used to grow the pigs. Working together makes us all better at what we do. Outdoors and indoors.

We work closely with Australian Pork Limited (APL) in all areas. APL are extremely proactive in offering guidance, support and help. They engage with each sector of our industry equally to truly speak for Industry and ensure that all communication produced is representative of industry. They also create opportunities for producers not only to meet and keep up with industry issues (e.g. the recent APL Roadshows that focused on research extension updates as well as the Welfare Standards and Guidelines) but they also run Leadership Programs for young Industry Leaders, as well as create opportunities for business within the industry e.g. Recently Western Plains Pork was involved in the "Bring Sustainable to the Table" initiative which was organised by APL and media opportunities.

We at Western Plains Pork endorse the submission made by Australian Pork Limited to the Committee.

I am happy to be contacted if any further information is required.

Yours sincerely

Judy Croagh
CEO
Western Plains Pork

