

# The Farmer representatives Animal Welfare Toolkit



# A PRACTICAL TOOLKIT FOR FARMER REPRESENTATIVES HELPING TO RESOLVE ANIMAL WELFARE INCIDENTS

This toolkit is for farmer representatives who are asked to become part of an animal welfare response by an industry organisation, Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI), or by a farmer requesting support.

If you are concerned about the welfare of one or more animals, you must refer the issue to your industry organisation, veterinarian or MPI.

Quickly resolving any animal welfare issues is best for both the animals **and** the farmer.

The uniting aim of everyone involved is to develop a timely, practical and workable solution that meets animals' needs and eases their pain and suffering.

Ideally, that solution will be something that the farmer can put in place and keep using.

There is support for farmers struggling to adequately provide for their animals.

This support gives farmers options for helping themselves (this toolkit has contact details for some of that support).

**If you see anything that you suspect might be  
an exotic animal disease, contact the  
MPI Exotic Disease and Pest Emergency  
Hotline immediately on**

**0800 00 83 33**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This toolkit was developed under the Safeguarding our Animals, Safeguarding our Reputation Programme for improving animal welfare compliance in New Zealand.

Thanks are due to Federated Farmers, NZPork, Deer Industry New Zealand, the New Zealand Veterinary Association, DairyNZ, Beef+Lamb New Zealand, the Poultry Industry Association of New Zealand, Egg Producers Federation, Rural Women New Zealand, and the Ministry for Primary Industries for the time and effort they put into the development of this toolkit.

Special thanks also for the feedback and support from all those organisations and individuals who provided comment during the consultation phase.

## DISCLAIMER

This toolkit has been designed to provide practical guidance for farmers, farm industry representatives or industry group members who identify, or are asked to help resolve, an animal welfare issue on someone else's farm. It is not intended as legal advice or protection. If you are concerned about the welfare of animals, please contact your industry organisation, veterinarian or MPI.

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Ministry for Primary Industries  
Manatū Ahu Matua



Poultry Industry Association  
of New Zealand (Inc)



You see something or a member of the public shares their concern with you

Refer the situation to your industry organisation, veterinarian or MPI

Get the details of the animal welfare situation: "who" "what" "where" "when" "how" from the person who informed you of the (potential) incident

**Getting Involved**

Farmer asks for your support at the farm

Industry organisation asks you to help

MPI asks you to help

Build your support network

Mentally prepare

Collect items to take with you to the farm

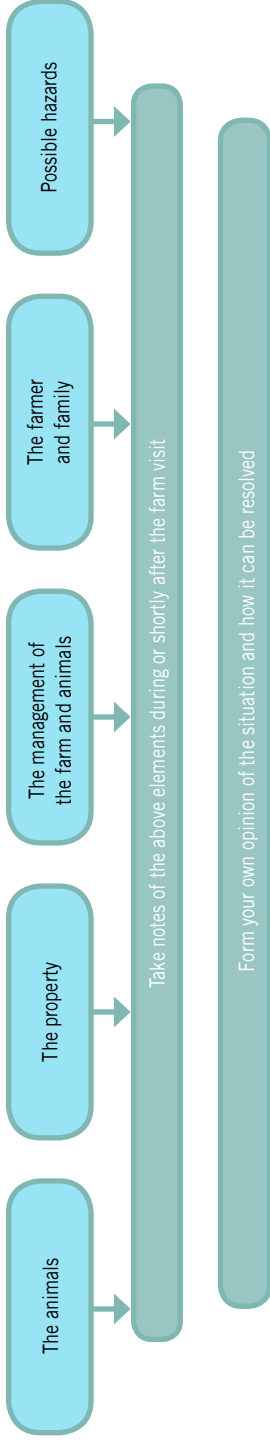
**Going to the Farm**

If asked to come by the farmer, remember you are only allowed on the property as long as the farmer wants you there

If part of an industry response, you can only be there as long as the farmer wants you there

If part of MPI investigation, wait for MPI to arrive before going onto property

Have a look around and talk to the farmer



### Things to keep in mind/tips for on the farm



### Coming up with a workable solution

You can help to build a support network around the farmer including:

- Family/friends/neighbours
- Rural professionals/advisors
- Financial manager/banker/accountant
- Lawyer/solicitor
- Rural Support Trust coordinator
- Local industry representative

**Animal Welfare Inspectors have a number of options available to them. The end outcome is always to develop a prompt and workable solution that provides for the animals' needs and eases their pain and suffering.**

# PURPOSE

This toolkit provides guidance for farmer industry representatives who are asked to help sort out an animal welfare issue on someone's farm.

This toolkit has been kept very general and is not meant to make you an expert in resolving animal welfare incidents. Sorting out an incident may well end up involving other people and may require specialised knowledge and skills. As someone local who the farmer can trust and talk to – someone who can act as a bridge between the farmer and other people with more technical knowledge – you can play a very important and positive role. Ultimately, all parties are trying to find the best solution – one that works for both the animals and the farmer.

If you see something that causes you concern, or someone else tells you of their concern, you should refer the situation to your industry organisation, veterinarian or the Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI) (formerly known as the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, MAF).

Likewise, if at any time you are unsure, or would like some advice, contact the national offices of Federated Farmers, Deer Industry New Zealand (DINZ), NZPork, Poultry Industry Association of New Zealand (PIANZ), the Egg Producers Federation (EPF), your veterinarian, or MPI (contact details are at the back of this toolkit).

Although it may seem daunting, it can be very rewarding to play a part in turning a bad situation into a good one, and inexperienced farmers or those experiencing difficulties may appreciate tips on good farming practices.

The toolkit is divided into sections based on how you might get involved (you might see something, a farmer or industry group might ask for your support, or you may be asked by MPI to get involved in an investigation). The toolkit explains your role in each circumstance and the role of others in successfully working through an animal welfare issue. The toolkit also has resources, tools, and contacts which you may find useful.

# YOU SEE SOMETHING YOURSELF, OR SOMEONE TELLS YOU OF THEIR CONCERNS

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A potential animal welfare issue may come to your attention in any number of informal ways: one of your friends may say something when you're socialising together; a member of the public might come to you and express their concerns about what they see on a farm; or you could be driving along and notice something of concern on a farm. So, what should you do?

In general, when faced with a potential animal welfare situation there are two things you need to sort out first:

1. Is there an animal welfare issue at all? There may not be an issue but you may still think that the farmer could do with some support.
2. Who should the situation be referred to?

## SEE IF YOU CAN FIND OUT MORE

Not all animal welfare complaints turn out to be genuine: some are made out of a sense of genuine concern but actually reflect a lack of knowledge about normal farming practices (see following box); and some complaints come from malicious intent. Consequently, it's important to take some time to get familiar with the situation. This will help you work out if there is actually an animal welfare issue, what the issue is, and who you should refer it to.

Useful things to find out that can help you make up your mind about the seriousness of the situation are:

- Who is the farmer or owner of the animals?
- Where is the farm?
- What appears to be the problem?
  - The type and number of animals involved.
  - The time of year in relation to farming practices.

- The type of problem (e.g. skinny animals, lack of feed, ill-treatment).
  - Climatic factors.
  - Availability of feed/resources.
  - Are there dying animals that need immediate assistance?
- When did it happen/how long has the alleged problem been going on?
  - Do you know of anything going on within the farmer's home or family that may have contributed to this, for example, sickness, divorce etc.
  - If the concern came from a member of the public, what is the relationship between the concerned person and the farmer? And, how did they find out about this incident?
  - If the concern is by a member of the public, do they want to stay involved? Their identity should remain confidential unless they specifically give permission for the farmer to be advised.

In all likelihood, you'll be able to find out what you need to know by making a few phone calls. It's not a good idea to go directly to the farm – for a start, you run the risk of unnecessarily antagonising the farmer. And, unless you are contacted by the farmer and invited onto their farm





(see next section), any initial visit to a farm should be with someone else (say, a veterinarian or person from MPI).

## **DEALING WITH THE PUBLIC**

**A member of the public who reports something they see is normally doing so out of real sense of concern, and this is not something they would do lightly. This should be acknowledged.**

**However, many people nowadays have less understanding than previous generations about how their food gets from the farm to their plate. This means, for instance, that people can see something genuinely distressing to them that is standard farming practice. For instance, someone driving down a country road and seeing a brown paddock with stock in it and not recognising it as break-feeding.**

**This is why it's vital to learn about the reality of the situation. It may also be wise (with the consent of the member of public) to get their contact details so you can make a follow-up call. This acknowledges the person has done the right thing by stepping forward, lets them know that something's being done, and is an opportunity to educate the person if their perception is the result of them not understanding farming practice.**

## **IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS, REFER**

If, after taking time to get some background knowledge about the situation, you come to believe there is a genuine animal welfare issue, you must refer it on to your industry organisation, veterinarian, or to MPI (via **0800 00 83 33**).

Your industry organisation, veterinarian or MPI may then ask you to help them resolve any animal welfare issue the farmer may have. Whether or not you become more actively involved is your choice to make. Be aware that involvement can be both challenging and rewarding.

## 2 THE FARMER OR INDUSTRY GROUP ASKS YOU TO HELP

A farmer may ask for your help early on (that is, you are their first point of contact), or could ask you to become involved in an investigation that has already started.

In either case, having a farmer ask you for help is the best situation to find yourself in. This means the farmer recognises there is a problem and plainly wants to do something about it.

If you are the first person the farmer has contacted about this you are clearly someone trusted by that person. Your ongoing support, even if not given in practical terms, will most certainly improve the likelihood of a successful outcome.

You may also be asked by your industry organisation to give the farmer some support.

Getting involved is entirely voluntary. If at any time you are uncomfortable, or don't think that you are the right person to be involved, contact your industry representative, or refer the situation directly to the MPI Animal Welfare Hotline (**0800 00 83 33**).

Although it may seem daunting, it can be very rewarding to play a part in turning a bad situation into a good one, and inexperienced farmers or those experiencing difficulties may appreciate tips on good farming practices.

You and the farmer need to be clear about your role. Yes, you are there to give support, but that support should not be unqualified. You need to set out clearly, right at the start, that although you are there for the farmer, you also have a duty to be neutral, objective, and honest.

The farmer needs to know that you have to call it as you see it, even if it's something the farmer may not want to hear.

But, remember, you are only there at the request and consent of the farmer. Even if you are visiting at the request of your industry organisation you can only be on the property with the permission of the farmer. If they do not give their permission, or change their mind at a later date, you must respect this decision and leave immediately.

If you are asked to help a farmer you first need to sort out in your own mind:

- 1. Is there an animal welfare issue at all?** There may not be an issue yet but you may still think that the farmer could do with some support.
- 2. Should I be involved?** Do I have the time and ability to get involved? If I am going to get involved, can I provide the right sort of support for fixing the problem? Should anyone else be involved?

If there is a problem, your role is to help gather the appropriate resources and people to ensure that any animal welfare issues are dealt with promptly and in a workable way.

If you do get involved, one thing you might decide to do is to suggest the farmer (if they haven't already), seeks the advice of an organisational representative, for example, their local **Federated Farmers, DINZ, NZPork, PIANZ, EPF** or other industry representative. You could suggest that other rural professionals, such as their **local veterinarian** and/or **MPI** could be of help. You can also refer your concern directly to these parties. Bear in mind that animal welfare issues rarely happen in isolation, so the benefits of involving others include allowing you to step back a bit from some of the practical details, while still enabling you to be a supportive and neutral sounding board for the farmer. Involving others may also result in the issue being fixed more quickly and easily.

## IF YOU ARE CONTACTED BY THE FARMER DURING AN INVESTIGATION

If an animal welfare investigation is already taking place at the farm, and the farmer has asked for your support in the investigation, your main role will be supporting the farmer in a friendly but neutral way. It's not likely you will be there to give husbandry advice (although it's likely your opinion will be sought). Every animal welfare situation is different, so you will need to use your own judgement on how best to support the farmer.

For instance, if the farmer won't listen to an Inspector and their suggestions, you may find you have to act as a "bridge" between the two, and try to diffuse any tensions. To be that bridge or tension-diffuser you have to be seen as a neutral and clear-headed voice by all the parties. This is why it's important you think through your opinion of the situation, and have a clear and objective view of whether a problem exists.

## SHOULD I BECOME INVOLVED?

Make sure you are the right person to help the farmer. It's easy to become emotionally involved in what is unquestionably a stressful situation – especially if you know the farmer. But, you have to be able to find the right balance between supporting the farmer and being professional and objective. Remember that everyone's objective is to make sure that the incident is properly sorted out and that appropriate support is provided.

### Keep in mind that..

- Animal welfare incidents are often the result of financial pressures, climatic conditions, breakdowns in personal or business relationships, fear or feelings of failure, and a lack of support or knowledge (or all or some of the above). Carefully listening to the farmer will allow you to understand where they are coming from and how they have ended up in this situation.

People pick up on how they are being listened to. So the more someone feels listened to and respected, the more quickly they can start thinking about what to do next.

- Your assessment of the situation and any advice you decide to give to the farmer should be independent and objective. Even if you are invited by the farmer or asked to be his or her support person, you need to retain that objectivity and honesty if you see things that aren't right.

### **Stop and ask yourself:**

- **Do I have the time to commit?**
- **Do I understand/have experience with the farming system?**
- **What relationship do I have with the farmer? Will my involvement jeopardise this or is our relationship the reason I should help?**
- **Am I comfortable taking on this role?**
- **Am I able to balance whatever emotions I feel with the need to be professional and objective?**
- **If I do become involved, what help might I need?**

### **Think about...**

- How and where you might broach tough subjects. It might be less confronting for the farmer to talk while walking around the farm, rather than across the table at the house or close to other family members.

If at any time you are uncomfortable, or don't think that you are the right person to be involved, contact your Federated Farmers, DINZ, NZPork, PIANZ, EPF or other industry representative, the Rural Support Trust, or the MPI Animal Welfare Hotline (**0800 00 83 33**). Your details will be kept confidential. Refer to the back of the toolkit for contact details.

## WHAT TO TAKE WITH YOU ON A VISIT

When you prepare for the farm visit, bear in mind that you may be on the farm for some hours, so it's sensible to let someone know where you are going and when you will be back.

Things you may find useful during your visit include:

- suitable protective clothing and footwear;
- notebook, pen and business cards/identification;
- food and drink;
- an open mind;
- this toolkit;
- camera; and
- your mobile phone.

## WHY YOU ARE THERE

The core obligations on people who own or are in charge of animals are to provide for the animal's physical health and behavioural needs and to alleviate pain or distress. It is not your job to solve all their problems for them. You can be supportive, but at the end of the day, you are there to:

- help identify whether an animal welfare problem exists;
- remind the farmer of his/her obligation to provide for his or her animals;
- help the farmer clearly communicate if there are others present (e.g. farm staff, rural professionals/contractors etc);
- discuss how to solve any problems;
- help the farmer to develop a plan of actions that result in a workable on-farm solution; and
- access resources and other support for the farmer when needed.

Remember, even if you were invited onto the farm by the farmer, you can only stay there with their permission. If they ask you to leave, you must do so.

## ENGAGE WITH THE FARMER

When you go and talk to the farmer you want to be able to establish a good personal relationship. You want to avoid misunderstandings and conflicts, and encourage the farmer's co-operation and understanding. It's important to go into this kind of situation with a positive attitude. Treat the farmer as you'd expect to be treated. Avoid "grilling" the farmer, and keep most questions for clarification purposes. The key is working together to come up with a practical and workable solution that the farmer can use.

But, even with the best intentions of all parties, animal welfare issues are usually very complex and are likely to be quite emotional for everyone involved. Things could get heated. If this happens try to defuse the situation through your language and actions. Walk away if you have to.

The best way to avoid conflict is to manage your conversations with the farmer in such a way that the opportunities for conflict are minimised. To do this there are some personal skills that are very helpful in these situations. These are not passive skills – they need to be active, they can be learnt – and they do require practice. They are E.A.R. (Empathy, Attention, Respect).



## 1. Empathy

This is about “walking in the shoes of the farmer” and trying to imagine how he or she is thinking. Language used might include, for example, “Help me understand what your plan is for...”; “I can only imagine how this must be for you ...”

## 2. Attention

There are three aspects to this:

- Listening rather than talking. Listen to learn rather than making too many judgements as you talk with the farmer. To let the farmer know you are listening and to encourage him or her to openly talk to you, use techniques like reflection (saying words/phrases back to the farmer), summarising (“So, my understanding of what you have been saying is ....”); and paraphrasing (“You seem to be saying that ...”).
- Acknowledging. Letting the farmer know that you have listened carefully, and that you understand/value his or her contribution – even if you don’t necessarily agree with them. For example: “This sounds like an interesting plan; can we have a closer look at it ...”; “I appreciate you inviting me for a visit ...”; “Thanks for your patience during what can’t have been an easy conversation for you...”.
- Questioning. Be curious but respectful. Open questions work well (“Could you tell me a little more about...”), as does taking the stance of a curious questioner (“What are your thoughts about...?” or “I’m wondering if ...?”).





### 3. Respect

It's important to be non-judgemental in both your content and tone (however strong your personal views may be). Some ways you can do this are:

- **Avoid assumptions.** For example: “Please correct me if I’m wrong”, “Let me see if I understand what you are saying”, “Could I ask you a few questions to see if my facts are straight”.
- **Accepting different views.** For example: “We seem to have a difference here ... could you help me understand your reasoning behind your view?”, “Could I explain why I have a different view?”.
- **Invite rather than demand.** For example: “Could I ask a few questions to see that I have got my facts right”, “Would you be willing to meet with me to talk about what we might do?”.

However, if the farmer appears uncooperative or aggressive, leave. Your safety is paramount.

If the farmer seems unable to fix the problem, you should leave and refer the situation to your industry organisation, veterinarian, or MPI.

**The end outcome is always that of coming up with a timely and workable solution that meets the animals' needs and eases their pain and suffering.**



## LEARN ABOUT THE FARM, FARMER AND SITUATION

While you are on the property you will notice a lot by just looking around the farm, letting the farmer talk freely, and listening carefully to what the farmer says.

In general you should learn about their animals, property, infrastructure, relationships, and the farm management system.

When appropriate, take notes on key facts and figures as you go. After your visit write down extra notes while things are still fresh in your mind. This will make discussing a solution with others at a later date a lot easier, and will help you assist the farmer to develop a realistic action plan for dealing with any issues.

In addition, you can refer to these notes should a prosecution eventuate.

Some useful questions that you could ask include:

- **How is your feed situation at the moment and how does it compare with last year?** This may help you determine whether the farmer recognises the farm has a feed shortage, and what (if any) plans have been put into action, for example, employing a farm consultant to do a feed budget, getting grazing, buying in supplements, and/or selling stock.

- **Have you had trouble getting good staff to help out on the farm?** This may give you some insight into the current workload of the farmer.
- **How has the farm been going financially? Do you do your own GST or use your accountant?** This may give you some idea of the farmer's financial management skills and any potentially serious financial problems.
- **Do you have a vet you normally deal with?** This may give you an indication of when a vet was last on the property and to what extent animal health products are used, for instance, drenches, vaccines, annual consultation for drugs, past animal welfare problems etc.
- **Does your partner work with you on the farm? Who is responsible for what jobs?** This may help you to determine who else is involved in the running of the farm and care of the animals, for example, managers, casual labour, family etc.
- **How has your season gone?** Figures on animal weights, number of pregnant/dry stock, milk production, lambing/calving percentage, mortality rate etc. may give you an indication of whether there is a problem and what it might be. Unrealistic figures may also indicate that the farmer is out of touch with or in denial about the situation.

Appendix One provides a more detailed guide of the types of things you may notice and record and some examples of questions you may want to ask.

## BUILD A SUPPORT NETWORK

If the farmer acknowledges a problem exists, and is willing to do something about it, building a support network around the farmer is a very effective way of dealing with the incident.

Some suggestions for people to include in your network are:

- **Industry representatives**
  - Finding and putting in place solutions is easier when there is more than one set of eyes and ears present. Another person can bring a different perspective to the situation, and be a sounding board for you. A suitable colleague will be someone you respect and know to be trustworthy, discreet, easy to work with, and a good listener. They should also have the approval of the farmer as confidentiality is essential.



- **Local veterinarians.**
- **Contractors** in the area who can:
  - Muster/shear/dock/milk animals, or fence, clear paddocks/ sheds etc;
  - Deliver feed to the farm at short notice;
  - Graze/house livestock for short periods of time.

(**Note:** If payment is required for such services it needs to be negotiated and agreed beforehand with the farmer and supplier (and if appropriate, the Federated Farmers, DINZ, or NZPork representative etc, or MPI).

- **Industry contacts** who are willing to help find solutions or who can redirect you to someone who may be more useful.
- **Rural professionals**, for instance, farm consultant/ adviser, stock agent, financial manager/banker/ accountant, lawyer/solicitor.
- **Family and friends** who can lend a listening ear – but they must be discreet about any information they receive.
- **Rural support trust co-ordinator.**

Refer to the back of the toolkit for contact details.

When putting the farmer in contact with any of these people you are in essence giving the farmer options and tools (as opposed to advice) for dealing with the problem themselves. This “self-help” approach is more likely to generate a long-term, workable solution. It’s also more likely that the issue won’t repeat itself.

Give the farmer some time to work with his or her support network. Go back and visit to make sure that a workable solution is in place – this visit should be within days, not weeks or months. The farmer will hopefully see your visit as a sign of support and see you as part of his or her network.

If you go back to the farm and you think things are slipping again or that the farmer isn’t following through on the action plan, then you are strongly advised to contact a MPI Inspector (via **0800 00 83 33**) and/or industry group representative. If a farmer is unwilling to co-operate, walk away and contact MPI.



# MPI ASKS YOU TO GET INVOLVED IN AN INVESTIGATION

## 3

### JOINT APPROACH

An investigation backed up by industry expertise is more likely to lead either to a workable solution the farmer can use, or to a realisation that, in fact, there is no problem.

You are an important part of this joint approach. Your skills and knowledge as a farmer (for example, in dealing with livestock), and your experience in dealing with fellow farmers, will be really valuable when it comes to working out a timely and workable way of fixing the problem.

Coming up with a workable solution to the animal welfare incident is what everyone involved in the incident is aiming for. Sometimes, however, particularly if the farmer refuses to co-operate, enforcement action may be necessary.

You may have referred your own or others' concern about a farmer to MPI who may then ask you to join the official investigation. In the interest of overall balance and fairness, you are encouraged to have your own opinion of the situation on the farm and share it with the Inspector.

The Inspector may ask for your help in developing an action plan which the farmer can use to fix the problem.

You may be asked to give:

- an evaluation of the overall management of the farm and the animals considering the local conditions;
- your view of potentially workable solutions to the problem;
- contacts of local rural professionals/ financial managers/neighbours/ family who could be of help.

You do not have to become involved in an investigation. If at any time you are uncomfortable or do not think you are the right person to be involved, tell the Inspector.

As a witness to an incident, you may be required to give a statement to the Inspector, whether you are officially part of the investigation or not.

### **Taking responsibility and avoiding isolation**

It's up to the farmer to take ownership of any action plan designed to fix the problem. While you may advise and discuss the options with them, the farmer needs to be the one who makes the specific decisions about what actions are practical and workable for them. It's their farm and their animals.

But this is not to say the farmer then needs to face the situation alone. Ongoing support/ advice (informal and/or formal) are available to give the farmer the confidence to keep following the action plan. You may be part of that support network if you choose.

## **GETTING THE DETAILS**

Take some time to learn as much about the situation as possible. Gathering information will help you determine what the issue is, whether you are the right person to be involved, and if you do agree to get involved, to be better prepared for any potential farm visit.

The following is a guide of the types of things that you could try to find out:

- Who is the potential farmer or owner of the animals?
- Where is the farm?
- What appears to be the problem?
  - The type and number of animals involved.
  - The time of year in relation to farming practices.
  - The type of problem, for example, skinny animals, lack of feed, ill-treatment.
  - Climatic factors.
  - Availability of feed/ resources.
  - Are there dying animals that need immediate assistance?



- When did it happen/ how long has the alleged problem been going on?
- Do you know of anything going on at home that may have contributed to this (e.g. sickness, divorce etc.)?

## AM I THE RIGHT PERSON?

When you have the basic information the next step is to make sure you are the right person to assist, bearing in mind the objective is to make sure that any problem is fixed and that appropriate support networks and structures are put in place for the farmer.

### Stop and ask yourself:

- **Do I have the time to commit?**
- **Do I understand/have experience with the farming system?**
- **What relationship do I have with the farmer? Will my involvement jeopardise this or is our relationship the reason I should help?**
- **Can I maintain a balance between a desire to support the farmer and the need to be objective and totally honest?**
- **Am I comfortable taking on this role?**
- **Will I get the support I might need?**

### Keep in mind that...

- Animal welfare incidents are often the result of financial pressures, climatic conditions, breakdowns in personal or business relationships, fear or feelings of failure, and a lack of support or knowledge. Actively listening to the farmer will allow you to understand where they are coming from and how they have ended up in this situation. The more someone feels listened to and respected the more quickly they can start thinking about what to do next.

- Your assessment of the situation and any advice you give to the farmer should be independent and objective. As a trusted advisor you need to retain that objectivity and honesty if you see things that aren't right.

If at any time throughout the whole process you are uncomfortable, or do not think you are the right person to be involved, tell the Inspector.

### **What MPI Wants**

**MPI's main aim in situations like this is to put in place a workable on-farm solution, one that enables the farmer to take control of and manage the situation. The focus is on putting a solution in place as easily and quickly as possible, and where possible, working alongside industry organisations and farmers to make this happen.**

**It favours an educational approach. For instance, if a problem is identified early or is relatively minor, MPI's preferred approach – by far – is to educate the farmer, with the ultimate aim of making sure a similar problem does not happen again.**

**While it may seem daunting, it can be very rewarding to play a part in turning a bad situation into a good one, and inexperienced farmers or those experiencing difficulties may appreciate tips on good farming practices.**



## KNOW WHO YOU ARE AND KNOW WHY YOU ARE THERE

Going to a farm in these situations is not easy.

One of the keys to a successful farm visit is to be clear about your role and the roles of others. Keep in mind the basis for each party's involvement in the incident and respect his/ her role. Seek clarification of your role if you are unsure.

When you go onto the farm you must identify yourself. Approach the farmer in a friendly manner, tell them your name and where in the community you are from, and explain your reason for visiting.

As you are on the farm as part of a MPI investigation, you may only remain on the farm while the MPI Inspector is also present.

The core obligations on people who own or are in charge of animals are to provide for the animal's physical health and behavioural needs and to alleviate pain or distress. It is not your job to solve all their problems for them. You can be supportive, but at the end of the day, you are there to:

- Help the farmer to accept the reality of the situation and that an animal welfare issue may actually exist;
- Remind the farmer of his/her obligation to provide for his/her animals;
- Help the farmer clearly communicate with others present (e.g. farm staff, rural professionals/ contractors, MPI etc);
- Discuss how to solve any problems, including advice on the practicality and effect of proposed solutions;
- Help the farmer to develop a plan of actions that result in a workable on-farm solution; and
- Access resources and other support for the farmer when needed.

## WHAT TO TAKE WITH YOU ON A VISIT

When you prepare for the farm visit, bear in mind that you may be on the farm for some hours, so it's sensible to let someone know where you are going and when you expect to be back.

Things you may find useful during your visit include:

- suitable protective clothing and footwear;
- notebook, pen and business cards/identification;
- food and drink;
- an open mind;
- this toolkit;
- camera; and
- your mobile phone.

## RESOURCES

Some suggestions for people to include in your network are:

- **Industry representatives**
  - Finding and putting in place solutions is easier if there is more than one set of eyes and ears present. Another person can bring a different perspective to the situation, and can be a sounding board for you. A suitable colleague will be someone you respect and know to be trustworthy, discreet, easy to work with, and a good listener. They should also have the approval of the farmer and/or MPI Inspector (if involved).
- **Local veterinarians.**
- **Contractors** in the area who can:
  - muster/shear/dock/milk animals, or fence, clear paddocks/sheds etc;
  - deliver feed to the farm at short notice; and/or
  - graze/house livestock for short periods of time.
- **Rural professionals**, for instance, farm consultant/adviser, stock agent, financial manager/banker/accountant, lawyer/solicitor.

(**Note:** If payment is required for such services it needs to be negotiated and agreed beforehand with the farmer and supplier (and if appropriate, the Federated Farmers, DINZ, NZPork, PIANZ, EPF or other representative, or MPI).

- **Industry contacts** who are willing to help find solutions or who can redirect you to someone who may be more useful.
- **Family and friends** who can lend a listening ear – but they must be discreet about any information they receive.

## ENGAGE WITH THE FARMER

When you go and talk to the farmer you want to be able to establish a good personal relationship. You want to avoid misunderstandings and conflicts, and encourage the farmer's co-operation and understanding. It's important to go into this kind of situation with a positive attitude. Treat the farmer as you'd expect to be treated. Avoid "grilling" the farmer, and keep most questions for clarification purposes. The key is working together to come up with a practical and workable solution that the farmer can successfully use.

But, even with the best intentions of all parties, animal welfare issues are usually very complex and are likely to be quite emotional for everyone involved. Things could get heated. If this happens try to defuse the situation through your language and actions. Walk away if you have to.

The best way to avoid conflict is to manage your conversations with the farmer in such a way that the opportunities for conflict are minimised. To do this there are some personal skills that are very helpful in these situations. These are not passive skills – they need to be active, they can be learnt – and they do require practice. They are E.A.R. (Empathy, Attention, Respect).

## 1. Empathy

This is about “walking in the shoes of the farmer” and trying to imagine how he or she is thinking. Language used might include, for example, “Help me understand what your plan is for...”; “I can only imagine how this must be for you ...”

## 2. Attention

There are three aspects to this:

- Listening rather than talking. Listen to learn rather than making too many judgements as you talk with the farmer. To let the farmer know you are listening and to encourage to openly talk to you, use techniques like reflection (saying words/phrases back to the farmer), summarizing (“So, my understanding of what you have been saying is ....”), and paraphrasing (“You seem to be saying that ...”).
- Acknowledging. Letting the farmer know that you have listened carefully, and that you understand/ value their contribution – even if you don’t necessarily agree with them. For example: “This sounds like an interesting plan, can we have a closer look at it ...”, “I appreciate you inviting me for a visit...”, “Thanks for your patience during what can’t have been an easy conversation for you...”.
- Questioning. Be curious but respectful. Open questions work well (“Could you tell me a little more about ....”), as does taking the stance of a curious questioner (“What are your thoughts about ....?” or “I’m wondering if ...?”).

## 3. Respect

It’s important to be non-judgemental in both your content and tone (however strong your personal views may be). Some ways you can do this are:

- **Avoid assumptions.** For example: “Please correct me if I’m wrong”; “Let me see if I understand what you are saying”; “Could I ask you a few questions to see if my facts are straight”.

- **Accepting different views.** For example: “We seem to have a difference here ... could you help me understand your reasoning behind your view?”, “Could I explain why I have a different view?”.
- **Invite rather than demand.** For example: “Could I ask a few questions to see that I have got my facts right”, “Would you be willing to meet with me to talk about we might do?”.

However, if the farmer appears uncooperative or aggressive, leave. Your safety is paramount.

## LEARN ABOUT THE FARM, FARMER AND SITUATION

While you are on the property you will notice a lot by just looking around the farm, letting the farmer talk freely, and listening carefully to what the farmer says.

In general you should learn about their animals, property, infrastructure, relationships, and the farm management system.

When appropriate, take notes on key facts and figures as you go. After your visit write down extra notes while things are still fresh in your mind. This will make discussing a solution with others at a later date a lot easier, and will help you assist the farmer to develop a realistic action plan for dealing with any issues. In addition, you can refer to these notes should a prosecution eventuate.

Some questions that you could ask include:

- **How is your feed situation at the moment and how does it compare with last year?** This may help you determine whether the farmer recognises a feed shortage and what plans have been put into action, for example, employing a farm consultant to do a feed budget, getting grazing, buying in supplements, and/or selling stock.

- **Have you had trouble getting good staff to help out on the farm?** This may give you some insight into the current workload of the farmer.
- **How has the farm been going financially? Do you do your own GST or use your accountant?** This may give you some idea of the farmer's financial management capability and any potentially serious financial problems.
- **Do you have a vet you normally deal with?** This may give you an indication of when a vet was last on the property and to what extent animal health products are used, for example, drenches, vaccines, annual consultation for drugs, past animal welfare problems etc.
- **Does your partner work with you on the farm? Who is responsible for what jobs?** This may help you to determine who else is involved in the running of the farm and care of the animals, for example, managers, casual labour, family etc.
- **How has your season gone?** Figures on animal weights, number of pregnant/ dry stock, milk production, lambing/ calving percentage, mortality rate etc may give you an indication of whether there is a problem and what it might be. Unrealistic figures may also indicate that the farmer is out of touch with or in denial about the situation.

Appendix One provides a more detailed guide of the types of things you may notice and record and some examples of questions you may want to ask.





## COMING UP WITH A PRACTICAL AND WORKABLE SOLUTION

In all cases your role is to help the farmer understand his/her situation and work with them to come up with a workable action plan to deal with any animal welfare issues.

Your visit to the farm will clarify what types of help the farmer needs to fix any problems.

Building a support network around the farmer is a very effective way of helping them to resolve an incident.

Persons suitable for the support network include:

- Family/friends/neighbours;
- Farm consultant/adviser;
- Stock agent;
- Financial manager/banker/accountant;
- Lawyer/solicitor;
- Rural support trust coordinator;
- Local and/or national industry representatives; and
- Veterinarians.

Refer to the back of the toolkit for contact details.

When putting the farmer in contact with any of these people the investigation team are in essence giving the farmer options and tools (as opposed to advice) for dealing with the problem themselves. This “self-help” approach is more likely to generate a long-term, workable solution. It’s also more likely that the issue won’t repeat itself.



## WORKING WITH AN ANIMAL WELFARE INSPECTOR

An Animal Welfare Inspector will bring to the situation a particular perspective, one that is guided by the Animal Welfare Act 1999 and the codes of welfare.

If you are part of an investigation you are under the power of an Inspector. You will be briefed beforehand about the incident and given instructions/guidelines to follow while you are on the farm. You are only allowed to be on the property when an Inspector is present.

You may be privy to confidential MPI procedures and it is important to respect this confidentiality. You may be asked to serve as a non-expert (lay) witness in the event of a court case.

If you use or offer your own equipment for use during an investigation you may be reimbursed. Discuss this with the Inspector.

### The Inspector's role

The Inspector has the statutory obligation under the Animal Welfare Act 1999 to ensure that people care for their animals properly. His or her role and the perspective he or she brings to an incident is also influenced by the codes of welfare. An Inspector's core responsibilities with respect to farming are to:

- Mitigate pain and distress of animals;
- Investigate breaches of the Animal Welfare Act 1999 including referring to codes of welfare;
- Assist the farmer to come up with practical and workable solutions to any welfare problems (that is, solutions that result in the problem not happening again);
- Educate farmers and people in charge of animals about their obligations regarding the care of animals;
- Uphold and adhere to the Bill of Rights and Privacy

- Act at all times; and
- Conduct any investigation in a fair and reasonable manner.

Animal Welfare Inspectors have a range of tools available to them. What tool they use depends on the circumstances. These tools are based on an escalating approach. For instance, an educational approach, including referral to industry based programmes (such as PigCare), may be used when the situation is minor and easy to resolve. In other cases the severity, scale, and motivation of the farmer to resolve the issue may require the use of regulatory tools such as section 130 notices and enforcement orders.

After the initial investigation, Inspectors have the following options:

- To close the file because there is no animal welfare problem, or the desired result is achieved and no further action is recommended;
- To do formal or informal follow-up visits to check on progress towards putting in place an action plan;
- Write an education letter to the farmer as a way of reinforcing what the Inspector has discussed with the farmer, and as a reminder of what actions the farmer needs to undertake;
- Issue an official warning;
- Recommend the file for prosecution. The Inspector may choose to do this if:
  - there is clear evidence of serious offending against the Animal Welfare Act 1999, and/ or
  - the farmer fails to put in place the suggestions/ instructions of the Inspector.

## **Animal Welfare Inspector operating procedures:**

**When an Inspector comes onto the farm he or she will:**

- **identify his or herself as an Animal Welfare Inspector, and present his or her certificate of appointment as an Inspector, as well as a business card with contact details;**
- **outline the nature of the concern, i.e. why the Inspector is there and how the Inspector would like the visit to go;**
- **advise the farmer of his/ her rights and options;**
- **offer to help the farmer access support;**
- **be fair and reasonable throughout the investigation process;**
- **be clear about what is expected of the farmer, i.e. set clear and achievable outcomes; and**
- **advise the farmer about the outcome of the investigation following its conclusion (that is, no further action, education letter, warning etc).**

## **CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

If things get heated, try to defuse the situation through your language and actions.

For example, if emotions start to run hot during an investigation, it might be a good idea to get the farmer to move away from the immediate area until everyone can calm down.

## **AFTER YOU HAVE HELPED OUT WITH AN INCIDENT**

Do not be afraid to seek support if you are struggling with the aftermath of helping out. Animal welfare incidents are stressful events and it is important to look after your own mental health.

If you feel stressed, upset, or depressed do not bottle up your feelings. The Rural Support Trust, your local church leader, doctor, counsellor and your friends and family may be important resources if you or others need support.

## MEDIA INTEREST

In general, it is not a good idea to answer any questions from the media. Politely refer any media enquiries to the communications team at MPI or your industry organisation (you can also contact these groups for advice).

Media attention is not desirable in animal welfare incidents because it can detract from developing an on-farm solution, and it is very difficult to portray the complexity of the situation in the media. Releasing information may also result in “trial by media” which affects the individual’s right to a fair trial.

If you are formally involved an investigation, refer all media enquiries to the lead Inspector on the case.

Make sure everybody involved knows what they should or should not do if the media calls.



## IF THERE IS A COURT CASE

In many instances the welfare of animals is greatly improved simply by making the farmer realise there is an issue, and helping him/ her to change his/ her practices. Very few animal welfare incidents actually end up in court; most end with a workable solution that all parties can live with.

There are some incidents that will go all the way through to prosecution. For example, when:

- there is clear evidence of serious offending against the Animal Welfare Act 1999; and/or
- the farmer fails to put in place the suggestions/ instructions of the Inspector.

Whenever possible, the Inspector will tell you when the animal welfare incident you are helping with is likely to end up in court.

Take notes following your farm visit to record what you see, hear and/or advise. If you do act as a witness in Court, you will be allowed to refer to these notes. MPI will be able to provide more guidance on what to expect.

If you are asked to be a witness:

- be prepared, so you have the facts clear in your head (since you may be cross examined);
- use language and definitions you are familiar with, and terms you can easily define during a cross examination;
- talk about the incident in a chronological manner and try to cover the “who”, “what”, “when”, “how” and “where”;
- be prepared to defend your credibility as a witness, as the defence may try to question you on that.

# APPENDIX ONE: THINGS YOU MAY NOTICE OR ASK

While you are on the property, you will notice a lot by just looking around the farm, letting the farmer talk freely, and carefully listening to what the farmer says. Sometimes, just being a friendly and objective sounding board will enable you to find out most of what you need to know.

So, the following examples are only a guide. Do not feel like you have to ask every single question, or “interrogate” the farmer.

## THE ANIMALS

Basic details:

- Type, breed, sex, age, tag numbers (if only a small number of animals), stage of life cycle
- “How many pigs are you sending to slaughter each week?”
- “How many cows are you milking at the moment?”
- “How far along in their pregnancy are these cows?”

Accessibility and adequacy of:

- Water
- Feed
- Shelter
- Veterinary care
- “Have you been able to get a vet out to your place recently to treat the sores on these cows?”

How do the animals appear to be suffering?

- Malnourished/dehydrated
- Do not have proper access to shelter
- Sick
- Injuries
- Generally neglected



## THE PROPERTY

### Is there any evidence of dead stock on the property?

Yard, paddocks and housing available for the animals

- Approximate size of the property
- State of fences
- “How about going for a walk/drive around the farm?”

Facilities:

- To feed/water/milk the animals
- To handle the animals properly
- “Where do you dock/tail your lambs?”
- “Where do you keep your new-born calves?”
- “Where do you load out your pigs?”
- Is cleanliness an issue
- Overall order of the property
- Ownership of the land/ buildings/animals
- “Are you in a share milking agreement?”

## MANAGING THE FARM AND ITS ANIMALS

Ability to properly check the animals. “Have you been able to get out to your sheep on a regular basis, considering the wetness of the tracks/your health/your busy schedule with your off farm work?”

Ability to assess the animals’ well being and accessibility to the help of a veterinarian. “Do you have a vet who you normally deal with?”

Ability to manage feed and supplements. “Do you have a regular supplier of feed and minerals?”

Ability to manage the finances of the operation. “Do you have an accountant to help you manage the farm accounts, and finances in general?”

Ability to manage staff. “Have you had trouble getting good staff to help out on the farm?”

## THE FARMER AND HIS/HER FAMILY

What role do other family members play in the farming operation? “Does your partner work with you on the farm?”

Note that if the farmer works closely with a partner try to meet and talk to the partner as well.

What is the farmer's general state

- Of mind?
- Of health?
- “How are you getting on with [.....] in your life?”
- “You seem to be coughing quite a bit, have you been able to see a doctor about that lately?”

How much time is available for taking care of the animals and the farm?

- Does the farmer have off-farm work?
- Are there any family related issues?
- “You mentioned the work you do in town; has that been stretching you?”

## DOES THE FARMER LIVE ON THE FARM?

### Possible hazards

The following types of hazards will also be of interest to anyone else coming onto the farm, for example, an Inspector.

- Loose dogs that may or may not be friendly.
- Aggressiveness of the farmer.
- The presence of firearms on the property.
- Risk related to:
  - careless storage of chemicals;
  - easily communicable animal diseases.
- Slipperiness of access tracks and paddocks.

Be prepared to give your judgement as to how the farmer has managed any adverse events with regard to maintaining a minimum standard of care of the animals.

Adverse events can include:

- climatic conditions – droughts, flooding, snow;
- scarcity of feed available in the area;
- personal matters – financial issues, emotional, health related.

# APPENDIX TWO: FURTHER RESOURCES

## ANIMAL WELFARE ACT 1999

The Animal Welfare Act 1999 sets out the obligations of owners and persons in charge of animals and prohibits certain conduct towards animals. The core obligations under the Act are to provide for the animal's physical, health, and behavioural needs and to alleviate pain and distress.

<http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1999/0142/latest/DLM49664.html>

## CODES OF WELFARE

A good understanding of the codes of welfare will help you when you are visiting a farm. Codes of welfare set out minimum standards of care and recommended best practice. The codes help to set a benchmark for what is expected in regards to the care and treatment of animals in New Zealand. They will help you to make a better judgement of what practice is and is not acceptable under the Act, as well as gain a better understanding of the perspective that Inspectors bring to an investigation.

<http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/regs/animal-welfare/codes/alphabetically>

## SUPPORT SERVICES

Rural Support Trusts are based in rural communities throughout New Zealand. They are there to help people and families in the wider rural community who experience an adverse event – climatic, financial or personal – to more effectively meet and overcome these challenges. Services are free and confidential. Telephone **0800 787 253** to contact your local Rural Support Trust.

In some large-scale recovery or stock welfare operations, central government may appoint a short-term Recovery Coordinator. Their main role is to co-ordinate the initial stages of large-scale recovery operations by central government. The role of the co-ordinator is to give short-term support to local initiatives not to replace them.

The Family and Community Services website has a very useful database full of contact details of different support organisations for families

<http://www.familyservices.govt.nz/>

Industry groups can also provide support, advice and resources.

## **NEW ZEALAND VETERINARY ASSOCIATION, VETERINARY TOOLKIT**

Veterinarians have a special professional obligation to promote good animal welfare practices, report cases of non-compliance, and assist in resolving issues. The Veterinary Toolkit has been developed to support practice veterinarians work alongside farmers to resolve animal welfare issues.

It can be downloaded from the MPI website at:

<http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/files/regs/animal-welfare/pubs/vet-toolkit.pdf>

# CONTACT DETAILS

Having a list of key contacts who are willing and able to help you obtain more information and/or work through an incident is very valuable. Ideally, your support network will include people who will either be able to join you on the farm, give you advice and support, and/or redirect you to others for advice. Use this section to fill in the contact details relevant to you.

MPI Animal Welfare Complaints Hotline: **0800 00 83 33**

<http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/animal-welfare/animal-welfare>

Local Animal Welfare Inspector .....

MPI Communications: **0800 00 83 33**

Federated Farmers: **0800 Farming (0800 327 646)** for members or **(07) 838 2589** for non-members refer to the Federated Farmers Directory for direct numbers

<http://www.fedfarm.org.nz>

Local Provincial President .....

NZPork: **0800 NZPORK (0800 697 675)**

or email [info@pork.co.nz](mailto:info@pork.co.nz)

Local Representative .....

Deer Industry New Zealand: **(04) 473 4500** or email

[info@deernz.org](mailto:info@deernz.org)

Local Representative.....

DairyNZ: **0800 4 DAIRYNZ (0800 4 324 7969)** or email

[info@dairynz.co.nz](mailto:info@dairynz.co.nz)

Local Consulting Officer .....

Egg Producers Federation of New Zealand:

**(09) 520 4300**

Poultry Industry Association of New Zealand:

**(09) 520 4300** or email [info@pianz.org.nz](mailto:info@pianz.org.nz)

Local SPCA.....

Information about maintaining or improving the welfare of sheep and beef cattle can be obtained from

Beef + Lamb: **0800 BEEFLAMB (0800 233 352)** or email [enquires@beeflambnz.com](mailto:enquires@beeflambnz.com)

Local Extension Officer .....

Dairy Women's Network: <http://www.dwn.co.nz>

Rural Women New Zealand: **0800 256 467**

Local veterinarian .....

Agricultural contractor (local).....

Trucking firm (local) .....

Shearing (local) .....

Fencing (local) .....

Bank/ financial advisor (local) .....

Stock and station agent (local).....

Feed supplier (local) .....

Farm consultant (local) .....

Rural advisor (local) .....



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