

5 November 2019

Dear Minister

Final report from the Winter Grazing Taskforce

I am writing to you on behalf of the Winter Grazing Taskforce, which you announced on 7 August 2019 to address animal welfare issues with intensive winter grazing. We are pleased to submit our attached final report to you.

Thank you for your time recently to go over the recommendations. As discussed, I am happy to answer any further questions once you have reviewed the attached.

Our report contains the process map and a stocktake of current work, which you also requested. These have supported our recommendations to you.

In the report, we make a number of recommendations. We recommend that you confirm with the Ministry for Primary Industries to urgently set up an action group to progress the recommendations. I recently spoke to the Farm to Processer Animal Welfare Forum, and understand that some members of that group were keen to form an action group. They have seen how effective this has been in addressing animal welfare issues with bobby calves.

Our key finding in this work has been that animal welfare is not at the forefront of all decisions made on farm. Farmers have been supported to act in particular ways, and everyone along the supply chain – whether they have animal welfare in their job description or not – needs to consider the animal that is being relied upon for our meat, dairy and animal product sectors to work and be profitable.

We highlight in the report that this is a national issue, although the focus has been on Southland. This is also not a farmer issue alone, as you and I discussed.

Finally, our report is based on the input from a range of speakers. We have not been able to hear from everyone who should have been consulted or heard, and we want to sincerely thank those who we have heard from. MPI is following up with all expressions of interest, with support from your office. In the report, we suggest further ways of ensuring input in the rollout of work to implement the recommendations. MPI will also follow up with your office on communicating these recommendations, when you are ready. We would urge this to be given priority, to settle fears about the content of this report and to give farmers as much time to make changes next year as possible. For example, we understand that access to winter grazing is declining in parts of the country as some graziers are pulling out to avoid anticipated regulatory challenges. This creates further pressure on farmers and can drive poor animal welfare practice.

We have made these recommendations in the expectation that they will drive and support change immediately, and to support some change that will take a longer time.

I am available by phone or can meet with you, if you have further questions. It's best to reach me at home s 9(2)(a) or if I am away from home s 9(2)(a)

Ngā mihi

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'John Hellström', with a stylized, flowing script.

John Hellström

Chair, Winter Grazing Taskforce