

Winter Grazing Action Group Monday 24 February 2020

MINUTES

Date:	Monday 24 February 2020
Time:	9.30am – 4.00pm (<i>tea and coffee from 9am</i>)
Location:	MPI Te Uru Rākau 1 The Terrace, Wellington Totara Boardroom (Level 1, room 6)
Attendees	
Winter Grazing Action Group	
Lindsay Burton	Independent Chair
Ash Keown	NZ Veterinary Association
Caroline Murray	Dairy Companies Association NZ
Helen Thoday	DairyNZ
Julie Geange	Federated Farmers
Milton Munro	PGG Wrightson
Miranda Hunter	Farm consultant
Pania King	Sheep & beef farmer; Taskforce member
Peter Young	Farm consultant
Tim Driscoll	Dairy farmer
Tony Pearce	Deer Industry NZ
Will Halliday	Beef + Lamb NZ
Gray Harrison (morning session only)	MPI Manager Animal Welfare & NAIT Compliance
Leonie Ward	Manager Animal Welfare Sector Liaison
Penny Timmer-Arends	Adviser, Animal Welfare Sector Liaison
Taskforce members (from 10.30am - 12.30pm)	
Arnja Dale	SPCA
Helen Beattie	NZ Veterinary Association
Angus Robson	Environment campaigner
Ministry for Primary Industries staff	
Kate Littin	MPI, Manager Animal Welfare Team
Tinta Tan	Senior Service Designer
Jordache Mackenzie	Graduate, Service Design
Guests	
Karen Adair (lunch)	MPI DDG Agriculture and Investment Services
Chris Rodwell (lunch)	MPI Director Animal Health & Welfare

Introduction and expectations

The meeting began at 9.25am and the Chair welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Winter Grazing Action Group.

Each member of the Action Group introduced themselves and conveyed their personal expectations of the group. The personal expectations had some common themes and include;

- Pan-industry agreed definitions of what good practice looks like, and what is not acceptable
- Provide some clarity, develop guidance and procedures that enable farmers to meet the requirements
- Progress towards less stressful and more successful intensive winter feeding which considers both animal welfare and environment as core requirements.
- Public perceptions can be much better informed along the journey
- Achieve animal needs balanced with environmental, people and business system needs and all that means. Use this wintering work as an opportunity to incorporate sentience within the farming system
- When we expect farmers to change – ‘farmers must be at the centre’
- Farmers and animals must be at the front of our thinking
- Recognise that there has been good work done – improvements are underway
- Acknowledge the mental health issues
- There is a lot of information available –would like to understand why it is not being used
- The focus needs to be on education – once people know the right thing – they typically want to do it
- The Action Group will work respectfully with each other, we will get stuff done!
- The Action Group is not another talk fest
- Expect our focus to be “animal welfare” there are other groups that are responsible for environmental issues
- Support farmers to close the gap between what is good practice and what’s not good practice – recognise that there are some farmers that truly believe what they are doing is fine, as its what they’ve always done.
- Need to educate accountants, bankers, seed merchants – need to include the key influencers
- Consistency – ensure that farmers receive consistent messages.
- Need to be sensitive to the pressure of the biological system that farmers operate within, with so much beyond their control
- This is a significant change management task, it will take time to achieve. Some change is already occurring, but there are gaps.
- Recognition that there is a public expectation that “something” will happen quickly to improve this welfare problem
- Maintain the focus that winter grazing involves all pastoral species; dairy and beef cattle, deer & sheep.

Terms of Reference

Discussion about the draft Terms of Reference included the following points;

- Expectation that industry representatives represent the views of their organisations. It is their responsibility to bring the views of their members to the Action Group, and disseminate the outputs of the action Group to their members.
- Action Group needs to be transparent - meeting notes will be written in draft form for the Action Group to review and approve before being published on the MPI website.
- Chair will report to Minister O’Connor, and raise issues with the Chair of the Taskforce if appropriate
- Updates will be provided to the Farm to Processor Animal Welfare Forum

- We will be operating in a challenging environment, members must be able to put ideas to the group, and feel safe for doing so, we will have robust discussions but these will be respectful and we will not shoot the messenger.
- We will operate “in confidence”, that differing views and challenges will be respectfully considered.
- All conversations stay “in the room”. Nothing will be in the press or published without the express permission of the Chair.
- If any member of the Action Group needs assistance, support can be provided – please make the Chair aware.

Joint session with the Winter Grazing Taskforce

The Chair welcomed members of the Taskforce to the meeting at 10.45am.

Unfortunately the Taskforce Chair John Hellström was unable to attend. Arnja provided an overview of the approach the Taskforce undertook in his absence.

Following media coverage of animals standing in deep mud, in early August 2019, the Minister of Agriculture announced his intention to review wintering practices. An independent Taskforce was established to identify the animal welfare issues related to intensive winter grazing practices, and provide a report of their recommendations.

The Taskforce worked within a tight timeframe, and was able to provide the Minister with the report in early November.

Taskforce members walked the Winter Action Group members through the process they took to establish themselves, collate research, understand current practice, consult widely, receive presentations and input from representatives across the supply chain as input into the final report which includes eleven recommendations.

Comments from Taskforce members;

- Animals need to be at the forefront of all considerations
- Not just a farmer issue – it is a whole of supply chain issue
- Not a regional issue – it has localised pockets but is a national issue
- Aspirational timeframes for change – recommend WGAG look to identify short/medium/long deliverables.
- Taskforce worked to a very tight timeframe, engaged with a lot of people, appreciate Pania being part of both groups.
- Important for there to be a transition time for farmers to embed new changes.
- Taskforce keen to assist Winter Action Group wherever required.
- Chair of Action Group will keep Chair of Taskforce informed on progress

System mapping

Tinta & Jordache from the MPI Service Design team lead the Action Group through several activities to help build collective understanding about utilising a service design approach to improve winter grazing.

The first activity was a whiteboard session to brainstorm what the map/s could look like, who the audience is, and some principles i.e. they should be non-judgemental, show current state, and include all the people in the system who influence farmer behaviour.

The second activity was working in smaller groups to identify where in the calendar wintering decisions & actions occur, and the interactions between the farmer & the other people involved e.g. veterinarians, agronomists, and farm consultants. The group used the scenario of a dairy farmer that grazes their own cows over winter as a reference for the activity.

The group agreed that the dairy map be worked on further, and a deer, sheep & beef cattle maps be developed out-of-session by smaller working groups.

Work plan

The systems maps once complete, will inform the work programme. They can be used to identify key decision points, areas where there is a lack of resource or support for farmers, what actions are influenced by other people & how they could be used to assist with behaviour change etc.

The work plan will align with the eleven recommendations in the Taskforce report.

The Chair thanked everyone for their effort & commitment, and closed the meeting at 4pm.

Actions

	Description	Owner	Timeframe	Status
1	Reports from Farm to Processor Animal Welfare Forum to be circulated to WGAG	Penny	As soon as possible	
2	MPI to provide WGAG an update from the SFFF application for research associated with wintering,	Penny	As required	
3	Permission sought to release presentations provided to the Task Force to WGAG	Penny	As soon as possible	In progress
4	Confirm opportunity for a Winter Grazing presentation to be included in the Deer Industry Conference in Invercargill	Tony P	As soon as possible	Conference delayed due to Covid
5	Arrange for Chairs to meet with Minister O'Connor	Penny	Minister & Chair availability dependent – aim late April	
6	Terms of Reference be updated to reflect WGAG input	Penny	For next meeting - April	Complete
7	Out of session workshops held to continue developing system maps.	Penny Tinta Helen Tony Will Jordache	1 April	Dairy session held. Deer & S&B delayed by Covid response