



ANIMAL WELFARE
SCIENCE CENTRE

Animal Welfare Science Centre Newsletter

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 1

26TH MARCH 2010

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Welfare of lambs in intensive finishing systems

Intensive feeding of lambs is likely to increase in the future due to pressure from climate change and natural resource management. Systems include opportunity feedlots, containment feeding in emergency situations, as well as feedlotting.

Current scientific opinion is that some of the variation in lamb performance (and welfare) can be attributed to design features (eg stocking density, feeder space, etc.), shy feeders, feed adaptation, subclinical disease and breed effects.

Public attitudes of intensification of animal production are seen as posing a "high risk" to this development and the sheep meat industry as a whole (eg association of sheep meat production with typical intensive industries).

Therefore it is also important to understand public and farmer attitudes to the welfare of lambs in intensive finishing systems in developing R&D policy. Furthermore, such an understanding can be used by government and industry in developing animal welfare policy.

Understanding how individuals perceive animal welfare issues can also assist in developing strategies for managing public perception in the broader community.

In this one year **DPI - Victoria** funded project, researchers from DPI, Monash University and The University of Melbourne will identify the most contentious issues in intensive feeding systems and containment of lambs through conducting a thorough literature review of the relevant scientific literature on the welfare implications of confinement systems together with focus group informed questionnaires assessing both the public and farmers attitudes to farm animal welfare, particularly those welfare issues concerning the lamb production in intensive finishing systems.

The results of the project will be used by the AWSC and DPI to assist in the planning of a proposed subsequent major animal experiment studying the most contentious and likely contributors to poor lamb welfare.

ProHand[®] Pigs in US

Sara Crawford is a PhD candidate working with Dr. Steve Moeller and Dr. Henry Zerby at The Ohio State University. Sara's research will focus on implementation of ProHand Pigs in U.S. contract producer wean-to-finish facilities.

Today in the United States there are more pigs being raised under contract production than ever. In a study completed by the USDA, it was reported that the total number of hogs raised under contract increased from five percent in 1992 to 67 percent in 2004 (USDA). However, little information is known about contract producers with regard to their attitudes, behaviors, gender, or previous swine production experience, to name a few characteristics.

The U.S. swine industry has worked hard in recent years to develop extensive training materials to better train stockpersons in relation to daily tasks associated with raising pigs. In virtually all cases, these education materials have brought the latest science-based information in packages that provide 'how-to' as well as 'why' information.

What these programs have, to a large extent, failed to provide is a strong, direct focus on the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of the individual stockpersons which ultimately are directly reflective of how the animals are treated.

With these ideas in mind, Crawford will visit farms and study the contract producers with two primary objectives in mind,

1. to assess baseline stockperson/contract grower beliefs and attitudes toward grower-finisher pigs and assess the subsequent behaviors toward pigs as they influence pig fear responses, and
2. assess the efficacy of ProHand Pigs stockperson training in modifying existing attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of stockperson toward pigs, with the ultimate goal of developing a version directed toward contract grower-finisher production settings. Data collection will be beginning in the second quarter of 2010 on 32 Ohio farms and will continue into 2011.

For further information, please contact Sara Crawford: crawford.586@osu.edu



Sara Crawford

John and Jenny Remembered

Over a year has passed since the terrible fires in Victoria which claimed so many lives, including those of our dear colleague and friend, John Barnett and his wife Jenny.

While the Centre is still coming to terms with life and work without John and Jenny, it is pleasing to see that John's contribution to animal welfare science continues to be recognised through undergraduate awards at The University of Melbourne and The University of Sydney together with the establishment of the John Barnett memorial lecture at the Australian Society of Animal Production Conference.

Professor Paul Hemsworth will deliver the inaugural lecture, (supported by the **Australian Poultry CRC**) at the conference later this year



John and Jenny Barnett Award for Animal Welfare Honours Project

The School of Land and Environment at the University of Melbourne has established an annual award to assist an outstanding undergraduate to conduct their honours project in the field of animal welfare science.

The award carries an amount of \$1,000 to assist in the conduct of the project and applications are currently being assessed by the School.

Inaugural winner of University of Sydney John Barnett Memorial Prize

The Faculty of Veterinary Science at the University of Sydney in association with the AWSC recently awarded Cali Willet, a 3rd year student, with the inaugural John Barnett Memorial Prize.

The annual prize is awarded to the student who submits the best essay in animal welfare science by a 3rd year student in the Bachelor of Animal and Veterinary Biosciences Degree.

Greg Cronin, Lecturer in Animal Behaviour and Welfare Science at the University of Sydney said "The award is a fitting tribute to John as he nurtured so many students in the field". Greg went on to say that "Cali's essay, "Environmental, social and feeding enrichment to reduce the performance of stereotypic pacing by captive tigers", was a fine review of the subject and a clear winner from a strong field."



Cali Willet

New PhD Students at the University of Melbourne

Anoma Dilrukshi has recently commenced a PhD in dairy cattle welfare within the Faculty of Veterinary Science. Her honours degree in Agricultural Science was awarded by the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka.

Jo Coombe is also enrolled in a PhD within the Faculty of Veterinary Science. She graduated with a degree in Veterinary Science from the University of Melbourne in 2007, and worked as a vet in Timboon in a predominantly dairy based practice for 18 months.

Anoma and Jo's research is contributing to the project "optimizing dairy cow behaviour and welfare within flexible feeding systems" which is a collaborative project between **Department of Primary Industries - Victoria and University of Melbourne**.

Dairy farmers in south eastern Australia are challenged by the need to feed their dairy cows profitably in the face of increased climate variability which directly impact on the availability of water for grazed forage production.

More recently, that grazed pasture constitutes less than 50% of a cow's diet annually, with the remainder being made up of expensive, high-energy concentrates. By necessity this simple system is being replaced with flexible systems that integrate mixed rations, fed on feed pads with grazed pastures (Partial Mixed Rations-PMR), while optimizing cow behavior and welfare.

The project will address specific questions relating to cow comfort and behavior within PMR systems and the success of this project will enable dairy farmers to adopt strategies that optimize cow behavior and welfare within flexible feeding systems.



Anoma Dilrukshi



Jo Coombe

Seminar Series 2010

Over 230 people attended the first seminar in our 2010 series.

“Building Better Dogs: using what we've learned about genetic and experiential effects on dog behaviour to improve dog welfare”

The seminar was Chaired by Paul Hemsworth (Director AWSC, University of Melbourne) and Samia Toukh-sati (AWSC, Monash University) and the audience appreciated considered presentations from the four key-note speakers:

Pauleen Bennett, (AWSC, Monash Univ):	Why behaviour is as important as conformation when selecting breeding dogs.
Mike Goddard, (Univ Melb & DPI Vic):	Genetics of dog behaviour and breeding programs to improve canine welfare.
Paul McGreevy, (Univ Sydney):	Breeding for quality of life.
Kate Schoeffel, (AAPDB):	A model for an association of professional pet dog owners.

Tammie King, Kate Mornement, Vanessa Rohlf and Mia Cobb, (Post-graduate students from AWSC, Monash Univ) together with Lisa Tomkins from the University of Sydney presented short papers in relation to their current projects.

For abstracts, please visit our website at: <http://www.animalwelfare.net.au/comm/download/BBDAbstracts%20FINAL.pdf>

To view presentations, please visit: <http://www.youtube.com/user/TheAWSC#g/u>



Up-coming Seminars (further details will be mailed out before each event)

- AWSC Scientific Seminar - Pain and Slaughter**

Prof David Mellor, Animal Welfare Science and Bioethics Centre, Massey University, NZ

Wednesday April 14th

2.00pm - 4.00pm

Lecture Theatre, Attwood

In his presentation, David will consider the following: (1) how animal welfare may be understood in terms of noxious experiences (including pain) that animals may have; (2) changes during the last 50 years in attitudes towards animal pain; (3) the global educative value of an initial focus on animal pain; (4) how past ideas about humane animal slaughter have developed; (5) the impact of science on contemporary thinking about humane slaughter methodology; and, (6) specific scientific evaluations of neck-cut slaughter with and without prior stunning.

PLEASE RSVP before 1st April, jskuse@unimelb.edu.au

See [Flyer](#)

www.animalwelfare.net.au



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If you have any comments, questions or suggestions, please contact our Executive Officer, Jeremy Skuse at our Parkville Offices.

Please feel free to pass this newsletter on to those who may be interested.

If you wish to be removed from our mailing list, please send an email to:

awsc-info@unimelb.edu.au

Quoting "remove" in the subject line.

Up-coming Seminars (contd)

- **AWSC Student presentations**

Friday May 14th

10.00 - 16.00

Craven/Stevens Room, Attwood

The day will highlight current and recently completed AWSC post-graduate projects and will demonstrate the benefits of honours projects within larger studies.

- **Pig Welfare Research Day**

Friday July 9th

10.00 - 16.00

Craven/Stevens Room, Attwood

Pig welfare research from several Australian institutions will be featured in this seminar.

- **Poultry Welfare Research Day**

Friday September 10th

10.00 - 16.00

This seminar will highlight current Australian research in the layer and meat chicken industries.

- **Alternative Farrowing Workshop**

Wednesday September 15th

10.00 - 16.00

Attwood

This seminar will review current knowledge regarding alternative farrowing systems and identify gaps in knowledge for future research.

- **Farm Research Priorities**

Friday November 12th

10.00 - 16.00

Craven/Stevens Room, Attwood

This day will be a key event to assist the Centre in setting its Research priorities for 2011 and beyond.