

ANIMAL WELFARE  
SCIENCE CENTRE

# Animal Welfare Science Centre Newsletter

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 3

6TH OCTOBER 2010

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## New AWSC Advisory Committee appointed

**As the Animal Welfare Science Centre its third 5-year term, the Board of Management is pleased to announce recently appointed members to its Advisory Committee.**

The Board was delighted to receive 27 applications to join the Committee from people with a depth of expertise and a wide range of interests in animal welfare. It was therefore in the difficult but gratifying position of selecting a Committee of appropriate size that provided experience and strategic relevance to the present and future Centre activities and the Board would like to thank all applicants for their commitment to the improvement of animal welfare and demonstrated interest in the Animal Welfare Science Centre.

Robert Holmes, Chair  
Veterinarian, Animal Behaviour Clinics

Onn Ben David, Deputy Chair  
Veterinarian, Caulfield South Veterinary Clinic

Lisa Dwyer  
Dairy farmer, Hawkesdale, Victoria

Michelle Edge  
Policy, Biosecurity Victoria, DPI Victoria

Geoff Fiskin  
Beef / Sheep farmer, Lal Lal, Victoria

Ian McCauley  
Scientist, Future Farming Systems Research, DPI Victoria

David Mellor  
Co-Director, Animal Welfare Science & Bioethics Centre, Massey University, NZ

Denise Noonan  
Animal Welfare Officer, University of Adelaide

Glenys Oogjes  
Executive Director, Animals Australia

Siobhan O'Sullivan,  
Social Scientist, The University of Melbourne

Clive Phillips  
Director, Centre for Animal Welfare and Ethics, University of Queensland

Kenton Shaw  
Pork producer, Rivalea Australia

Philip Szepe  
Egg producer, Kinross Farm

Steve Tate  
Director, Bureau of Animal Welfare

The Centre is very appreciative of the efforts of those retiring members of the Advisory Committee who include Noel Maughan, Alan Bowman, Peter Penson, Michelle Jones-Lennon and Nick Renyard. The Centre has played a significant role in developments in animal welfare research, teaching and training and their contribution has been important in these endeavours.

The new Committee will meet before the end of the year and the Centre looks forward to its input so that the Centre continues to deliver innovative and well-aligned Research, Development and Extension programs.

## New Pig Projects

**The AWSC has recently been successful in attracting funding from Australian Pork Limited for 3 research projects.**

The project "Usefulness of preference for resources and biological functioning to assess animal welfare" will be led by Prof. Alan Tilbrook from Monash University and will build on and extend our previous research to contribute to the validation of welfare research methodology used to establish welfare standards and help develop tools to measure welfare in the field.

Monash University's Prof. Grahame Coleman and Samia Toukhsati will conduct the project "Metrics to Benchmark Stock Handling" which will develop valid and reliable metrics to benchmark stockhandling by developing tools which measure stockperson attitudes, knowledge and beliefs that have widespread practical application in the Australian pork industry

Maxine Rice from Melbourne University will conduct a one year project "Validating the use of proximity loggers in measuring feeder visits, displacements and social interactions in pigs in competitive feeding situations". The use of proximity loggers may provide an opportunity to overcome difficulties encountered in making video observations of the behaviour of individual pigs in large group sizes.

The AWSC will also contribute significantly to an additional project which will be led by Dr Rebecca Morrison from Rivalea Australia. The project "Assessment of pain induced by tail docking in piglets, and strategies to reduce this pain" will also bring in expertise from across the Tasman with the participation of Assoc. Prof. Craig Johnson from Massey University.



## Dairy calf research at OSU

There is increasing concern in the USA about confinement housing of farm animals, which has led to certain housing systems being banned in several states. Housing veal calves in narrow crates is one housing system which is receiving attention, and the use of veal crates has been banned in Arizona, Colorado, California, Michigan and Maine.

While dairy heifer calves being raised as future replacements for the milking herd are not typically housed in crates as small as those used to house veal calves, they are often raised individually in small hutches. Farmers often cite concerns about disease transmission between calves as a reason for housing dairy calves individually. An additional concern relates to undesirable cross-sucking behavior, which can develop when calves are housed in groups. This behavior can lead to infected navels and illness in calves, and may occur when the innate sucking behavior of the calf is not satisfied due to calves being fed milk from buckets rather than via a teat.

In the future, there may be increasing attention paid towards housing systems for dairy calves, which may affect the way in which dairy farmers can house their calves. Furthermore, other limitations associated with individual housing of dairy calves, such as restricted social interaction between calves, may be of concern for the normal development of the calf. Therefore, there is a need to investigate alternative housing systems for dairy calves.

Masters student at OSU, Ms. Jessica Pempek, is currently conducting research examining the effects of individual or paired housing on the behavior and performance of dairy heifer calves. Calves are either fed from buckets or bottles. Each week, the behavior of calves is video-taped for two, 2-h periods, once around feeding time in the morning and then during the middle of the day. Feed intake, growth rates and health are also being recorded. Ms. Pempek is working with Drs. Maurice Eastridge and Naomi Botheras in the Department of Animal Sciences and Dr. Candace Cronney in the Department of Veterinary Preventive Medicine.



Jessica with two of her calves. Two, single-housed calves are in the background, while these are one of the groups of calves being housed in pairs.

## AWSC Seminar presentations now on-line

**AWSC Seminar presentations will be recorded and where appropriate posted on the web where they will be available for viewing and downloading.**

This initiative has been widely applauded as an excellent resource for people to access talks which they may not be able to attend in person, traffic through the AWSC website has increased by over 60% since the service commenced.

You can access presentations at <http://www.animalwelfare.net.au/comm/comm01.html>

## PIG WELFARE SEMINAR

Improving the welfare and productivity of Australia's pigs was the focus of an AWSC seminar in Melbourne on July 9, where researchers presented the latest pig welfare research to industry representatives. Pig welfare is becoming increasingly more important in the pig industry, not only for the animals benefit but also because scientists are finding that improving the welfare of farm animals can have profound impacts on their productivity and as a result, the economic return of the industry.

Paul Hemsworth, Director of the AWSC opened the seminar with a presentation on the effect of housing styles on the welfare of sows. He explained that there are few rigorous recommendations in the scientific literature on the optimal design features of sow group housing. "From a welfare perspective, group housing of sows is favourable as pigs are social animals but problems such as increased aggression tend to arise when sows are housed together," he said. Data was presented from a range of previous studies that looked at the impact of design features of housing including space, group size, provision of feeding stalls, time of mixing and individual sow characteristics on aggression levels in sows. "This knowledge is essential for us to be able to make science-based recommendations to optimise welfare of group-housed sows," he said.

Dr Greg Cronin from the University of Sydney spoke about reducing pain associated with husbandry procedures such as castrating, tail-docking, teeth clipping and ear-notching in piglets and he outlined a research program they are undertaking at the University of Sydney investigating the effectiveness of applying a topical anesthetic spray to wounds following or during the procedure.

Graeme Pope from Rural Solutions in South Australia focused on the human-animal interaction as he presented results from evaluation surveys following the implementation of ProHand – a computer based training program which aims to improve the attitudes and behaviour of industry stock people. With assistance from Grahame Coleman of the AWSC and Monash University, Graeme conducted a study to evaluate how successful ProHand training was in changing attitudes of stockpeople towards their animals. Analysis of questionnaires revealed that ProHand training was successful in improving stockperson attitudes towards pig handling which, in turn, will reduce negative handling and improve both productivity and pig welfare.

Professor Knut Boe and Associate Professor Inger Lise Andersen from the Norwegian University of Life Sciences discussed a range of techniques that can maximise piglet survival in farrowing pens, from thermal requirements of piglets to the impact of sow behaviour. Professor Boe explained that the provision of roughage during pregnancy improves piglet survival as nest building can improve maternal behaviour and provide a warm, safe area for piglets to rest.

Also focusing on piglet survival, Rebecca Morrison from Rivalea Australia outlined a research program she is working on that explores alternatives to farrowing crates. Dr Morrison explained that although farrowing crates can protect piglets from being crushed, they restrict sow's movement and therefore may be construed as a welfare problem.

Kathleen Plowman from Australian Pork Limited outlined the industry's new pig welfare assurance system called PigCare, which is part of the Australian Pork Industry Quality Assurance (APIQ). The new program has been developed to support inclusion of animal-based indicators in audits.

Dr Roger Campbell, Pork Cooperative Research Centre CEO, explained the re-bid process surrounding the proposed "new" Pork CRC which will focus on High Integrity Australian Pork. The vision for the proposed CRC, (which will include the AWSC through the University of Melbourne) is the production of Australian pork which is healthy for the consumer, produced in an environmentally sustainable manner under optimal welfare conditions including confinement-free sow accommodation.

All presentations are available for viewing at <http://www.vimeo.com/awsc>



Inger Lise Andersen, Paul Hemsworth & Knut Boe



Greg Cronin

Graeme Pope

Rebecca Morrison

Inger Lise Andersen

Roger Campbell

[www.animalwelfare.net.au](http://www.animalwelfare.net.au)



ANIMAL WELFARE  
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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](mailto:awsc-info@unimelb.edu.au)

Quoting "remove" in the subject line.

## AWSC Poultry Welfare Seminar

**Friday October 29th**

**10.00am – 3.00pm**

**(lunch will be provided)**

**Lecture Theatre, DPI Attwood**

**475 Mickleham Rd Attwood VIC 3049**

Phil Glatz, SARDI

*"Update on beak trimming research and alternatives"*

Joanna Engel, AWSC, The University of Melbourne

*"Non-invasive measures of stress in poultry"*

Greg Cronin, The University of Sydney

*"Nest boxes for laying hens and their effects on hen behaviour and stress physiology"*

Lauren Edwards, AWSC, The University of Melbourne

*"Opportunities to improve the human – animal relationship in poultry"*

Peter Groves, The University of Sydney

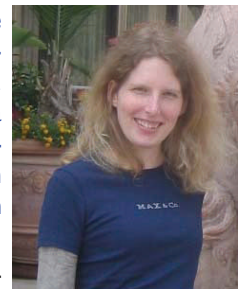
*"Lameness in meat chickens"*

If you would like to attend this seminar, please contact Jeremy Skuse at [jskuse@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:jskuse@unimelb.edu.au)



## Simple science?

Tiffani Howell recently won the Monash School of Psychology and Psychiatry's 3 Minute Thesis competition. The competition involved presenting a compelling speech using only 1 power-point slide on the thesis topic to an intelligent but non-specialist audience in just 3 minutes.



Science has always been challenged to simply communicate its ideas to a wider audience and Tiffany is to be congratulated in communicating her PhD topic in plain, understandable language.

Her research, (under the supervision of Russell Conduit, Samia Toukhsati, and Pauleen Bennett) aims to develop and validate a minimally-invasive EEG method to study cognitive processing in dogs.

Details on Tiffany's work at Monash, can be found at the following links:

[Student Abstracts](#)

[Student Presentations](#)

