

AJP Policy Document

Abolish all farming of animals

The Animal Justice Party Aotearoa NZ (AJP) advocates for the complete abolition of animal farming. All animals used in farming, regardless of the intended product or purpose, have an equal right to live free from suffering, exploitation and neglect. AJP supports a transition to a system that respects animal rights, protects the environment and promotes public health through plant-based, cellular and sustainable agriculture.

The industrial farming of animals represents the largest source of animal exploitation and cruelty globally. Every year in New Zealand, billions of animals, including fish, are bred, confined and/or killed for food production. This includes, for example: 119.5 million chickens, broiler chickens (2022),¹ 4.67 million dairy cows (2023/24)² and approximately 72.7 million farmed fish and shellfish individuals (noting this is an estimate as fish are not measured by number of individuals but by metric weight alone, the stated figure of 109, 016 metric tonnes³ is equivalent to the weight of approximately 72,677 cars).

These animals endure significant physical and psychological suffering throughout their abbreviated lives, treated as mere units of production. AJP recognises that these animals are sentient, and have interests in living lives free from suffering, with autonomy, and the freedom to express their natural behaviors. These interests are often comparable to the similar interests of humans, and establish the legal personhood of sentient animals, along with rights which must be protected in the law. These rights are fundamentally incompatible with ownership or consumptive practices.

¹ Helgi Library. (n.d.). *Meat, chicken - Producing Animals/Slaughtered in New Zealand*. Retrieved May 1, 2025, from

<https://www.helgilibrary.com/indicators/meat-chicken-producing-animals-slaughtered/new-zealand/>

² Livestock Improvement Corporation. (2024). *Stable dairy production continues - NZ Dairy Stats*.

<https://www.lic.co.nz/news/stable-dairy-production-continues-nz-dairy-stats/>

³ CEIC Data.(2021). *New Zealand: Aquaculture Production*. Retrieved May 1, 2025, from

<https://www.ceicdata.com/en/new-zealand/agricultural-production-and-consumption/nz-aquaculture-production>

All forms of farming impose severe harms and infringe on the rights of animals. The dairy industry, central to New Zealand's economy, subjects cows to annual pregnancies, separation from their calves, and intensive milking that leads to painful conditions like mastitis. Male calves, considered "surplus" to the industry, are typically killed within days of birth. Chickens raised for meat (broilers) are genetically manipulated to grow at unnatural rates, leading to painful skeletal disorders, while hens in the egg industry are confined in crowded conditions and killed when their productivity declines. Male chicks are killed by maceration within their first few days.

The fashion and textile industries also represent significant sources of animal exploitation. In New Zealand, the wool industry alone involves approximately 25.3 million sheep (2022)⁴, while possum fur and leather production contribute to animal suffering and death.

All farming operations, whether animals are raised for meat, milk, wool, leather, down, or any other product, including emerging industries such as insect and eel farming, prioritise profit over the welfare of sentient animals and infringe on their rights. While different forms of farming vary in the severity of their cruelty, all animal farming fundamentally denies animals their personhood, along with their rights to autonomy and freedom from exploitation.

AJP also recognises that animal farming imposes an unsustainable burden on natural ecosystems both in Aotearoa and globally. The environmental impact of animal agriculture is far-reaching and deeply harmful. It is a major driver of greenhouse gas emissions, particularly methane and nitrous oxide, which are far more potent than carbon dioxide in terms of warming potential. Animal farming also requires vast amounts of land for grazing and feed production, leading to deforestation and habitat destruction that endanger native species and contribute to biodiversity loss. In New Zealand, intensive dairying has been directly linked to the degradation of waterways, with nutrient runoff and effluent polluting rivers and lakes, harming aquatic life and undermining the health of entire ecosystems. Leather tanning creates toxic pollution and wool farming contributes to land degradation and water pollution. Globally, the conversion of forests to pasture and feed crops is one of the leading causes of biodiversity collapse and a significant barrier to achieving climate goals. Transitioning away from animal farming is therefore essential not only to reduce animal suffering but to restore ecological balance and safeguard the planet's capacity to support life.

⁴ Stats NZ. (2023, May 22). *Fewer sheep and dairy cattle in 2022*.
<https://www.stats.govt.nz/news/fewer-sheep-and-dairy-cattle-in-2022/>

Furthermore, intensive animal farming presents a critical threat to global public health by creating ideal conditions for the emergence of zoonotic diseases. This risk arises through two major pathways. Firstly, the confinement of animals in overcrowded and often unhygienic environments facilitates the transmission and mutation of pathogens that can jump from animals to humans. These facilities can act as breeding grounds for new viral and bacterial strains, with the close contact between animals and workers increasing transmission risks. Secondly, the routine use of antibiotics in animal agriculture, often used preventatively due to unsanitary conditions and to promote rapid growth, is fuelling the global crisis of antibiotic resistance. This overuse contributes to the emergence of ‘superbugs’ - bacteria that are resistant to multiple antibiotics. The World Health Organisation has identified antimicrobial resistance as one of the top ten global public health threats facing humanity, warning that without urgent action, we could enter a ‘post-antibiotic era’ where common infections and minor injuries may once again become fatal.⁵

AJP affirms Te Tiriti o Waitangi as a foundational document and recognises the importance of working in partnership with tangata whenua in the pursuit of justice for animals and collective, intergenerational wellbeing. This includes supporting Māori-led exploration of how kaitiakitanga can guide non-exploitative relationships with animals. Māori frameworks such as kaitiakitanga, mauri, and wairua offer perspectives that challenge dominant colonial-industrial relationships with animals.

We acknowledge the importance of Māori-led conversations around the future of food systems, species protection and animal rights and that some traditional harvesting practices form part of Māori identity and whakapapa. While AJP opposes all animal use and advocates for a post-exploitative food system, we are committed to respectful, Treaty-consistent dialogue with hapū and iwi.

In order to protect the rights of animals and dismantle exploitative industries, AJP advocates for a systematic transition away from all forms of animal farming, including for food, fibre and fashion, towards plant-based, cellular and sustainable alternatives. This transition will eliminate the use of animals as commodities, dramatically reduce environmental destruction, and promote public health. It must be managed carefully to support farmers, rural communities, and affected industries through inclusive and just transition strategies.

⁵ World Health Organization. (2023). *Antimicrobial resistance*. [Fact sheet]. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/antimicrobial-resistance>

Key Objectives:

1. Establish a clear timeline for phasing out all forms of animal farming, with specific targets for each industry sector.
2. Provide economic and technical support for farmers to transition to other industries. See AJP's Plant-Based Transition policies for further objectives aligned with this transition, including focusing on investment in plant-based and cellular agriculture research and development and creation of comprehensive transition programmes to support farmers in converting to plant-based agriculture or other sustainable enterprises.
3. Prohibit the expansion, or the establishment, of animal farming operations.
4. Prohibit all forms of intensive animal farming.
5. Legislate transparency in all animal farming operations through increased monitoring and enforcement and public reporting. See Regulatory Oversight and Enforcement Policy.
6. Introduce consistent legislation that defines and acknowledges animal sentience, ensuring legal protection from harm. See Legislative Foundations Policy.
7. Expand the application of the Animal Welfare Act 1999 to all species of any order for which there is strong evidence of sentience in at least one species of that order, following Birch et al. (2021)'s framework.⁶ See Legislative Foundations Policy.
8. Require greater legislative protection of animal welfare. See Reducing Harm and Mistreatment and Legislative Foundations Policies.
9. Work with Māori leaders, ethicists and communities to explore Treaty-grounded, culturally inclusive pathways for protecting animal wellbeing.

The Animal Justice Party Aotearoa NZ (AJP) affirms that all animals used in farming, whether for food, fibre, or fashion, possess inherent personhood, dignity and rights. These policies apply equally to all farmed animals, land-based or aquatic, regardless of the product or industry they are exploited for. Our interim policies seek to reduce harm while working toward a future where no animal is treated as a commodity or object of human use.

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⁶ Birch, J., Burn, C., Schnell, A., Browning, H., & Crump, A. (2021). *Review of the Evidence of Sentience in Cephalopod Molluscs and Decapod Crustaceans*. London School of Economics and Political Science. <https://www.lse.ac.uk/business/consulting/assets/documents/Sentience-in-Cephalopod-Molluscs-and-Decapod-Crustaceans-Final-Report-November-2021.pdf>