



AJP Policy Document

Ensuring adequate living conditions and environmental standards

The Animal Justice Party Aotearoa NZ (AJP) is working towards a future without animal agriculture. In the meantime, we are committed to addressing the widespread neglect of shelter, housing and environmental conditions that cause immense suffering to farmed animals. Despite existing legal protections, animals across New Zealand are routinely exposed to harsh weather, overcrowding and barren environments that deny them the ability to express natural behaviours. AJP is calling for urgent reforms to ensure farmed animals are afforded basic protections, dignity and care.

The Animal Welfare Act 1999 legislates that animals must be provided with "adequate shelter" and "the opportunity to display normal patterns of behaviour." However, these requirements are often poorly defined and inadequately enforced. Throughout New Zealand, animals frequently lack protection from harsh weather conditions, with many farms having removed natural shelter like trees that historically provided protection.

This is particularly concerning given New Zealand's varied and often extreme weather pattern. For example the Code of Welfare: Dairy Cattle (2019) states "Dairy cattle in New Zealand are exposed to extreme weather (heat, cold, rain, snow and wind)" and that this can "create welfare risks, leading to hyper- or hypothermia."¹

Intensive winter grazing represents one of New Zealand's most pressing animal welfare and environmental challenges, particularly in southern regions. This practice forces animals to graze fodder crops in small allocated areas, often resulting in them standing in deep mud for extended periods. Animals frequently lack adequate shelter, dry lying areas or protection from harsh weather conditions. Pregnant and nursing animals are especially vulnerable, facing increased risks of health issues and pregnancy

¹ Ministry for Primary Industries. (2019). *Code of welfare for dairy cattle*.
<https://www.mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/46024-Code-of-Welfare-Dairy-cattle>

complications. The practice not only compromises animal welfare but also causes significant environmental damage through soil degradation, waterway pollution and increased greenhouse gas emissions.

Indoor housing systems, particularly in intensive pig and poultry farming, frequently subject animals to poor air quality, excessive noise and overcrowding. These conditions not only cause physical health issues but also prevent animals from expressing natural behaviours such as rooting, nesting and forming normal social relationships. Colony cages for hens, despite being marketed as an improvement over battery cages, still fundamentally deny birds their basic behavioural needs. The lack of environmental enrichment in these systems leads to psychological distress and abnormal behaviours.

AJP supports comprehensive legislative reform to improve the living conditions of farmed animals in Aotearoa. We support the integration of kaitiakitanga principles in developing environmental standards for farming operations, acknowledging that true environmental protection benefits both animals and people. We advocate for clear, enforceable housing and shelter standards, the phasing out of intensive confinement systems, and a ban on technologies that exacerbate suffering. These changes are essential to upholding the intent of the Animal Welfare Act and ensuring that, for as long as animal farming continues, the welfare of animals is no longer compromised by inadequate or exploitative conditions.

Key Objectives:

1. Guarantee meaningful shelter and environmental protection for all farmed animals, with enforceable standards for shade, shelter, and temperature regulation.
2. End intensive confinement practices, including colony cages, farrowing crates, and winter grazing systems that deny animals freedom of movement and comfort.
3. Reform housing and welfare codes to prioritise natural behaviours and psychological wellbeing, ensuring enriched environments, space and social interaction.
4. Prevent the use of technologies that worsen animal suffering, by banning AI-driven systems designed to increase confinement and enforcing ethical oversight for all tech involving animals.