



AJP Policy Document

Ensuring adequate nutrition and health standards

The Animal Justice Party Aotearoa NZ (AJP) is committed to transforming New Zealand's approach to animal nutrition and health in farming systems. While our long-term goal is to end animal agriculture, immediate reform is needed to address the widespread welfare harms caused by inadequate feeding practices, compromised health management and overreliance on pharmaceuticals in industrial farming. AJP supports stronger regulation, enforcement and a shift in priorities from production efficiency to animal well-being.

Despite the Animal Welfare Act 1999 requiring proper and sufficient food and water for animals, many farming practices in New Zealand compromise animals' nutritional needs. This creates a notable contradiction between the feed restriction practices permitted under industry-specific welfare codes and the broader principles of the Act itself, which emphasises animals' right to proper nourishment and natural behaviors.

New Zealand's dairy industry presents specific nutritional challenges, with high-producing dairy cows often struggling to meet their metabolic demands through pasture alone. This can lead to conditions like milk fever and ketosis.¹

Similarly, in intensive poultry and pig operations, animals may receive diets that maximise growth or production at the expense of their overall health and welfare. For example, the parent birds of meat (broiler) chickens are often placed on restricted feeding programs to prevent them from becoming too heavy, which would impair their reproductive capabilities.² This creates welfare concerns as these birds have been

¹ Rumenox.(n.d). *Understanding ketosis in New Zealand dairy cows*
<https://rumenox.co.nz/understanding-ketosis-in-new-zealand-dairy-cows-causes-symptoms-diagnosis-and-treatment/> Accessed May 2025

² University of Aberdeen. (Oct 2022). *Why are chickens used for breeding kept hungry?*
<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/opinion/why-are-chickens-used-for-breeding-kept-hungry/>

genetically selected for rapid growth and have strong appetites, yet are fed only about 25-50% of what they would eat if given free access to food.

The practice of winter break feeding on forage crops has drawn significant criticism due to animal welfare concerns. This practice often leaves cattle and sheep standing in deep mud for extended periods, without adequate shelter, creating both welfare and environmental issues.³

The prevalent use of antibiotics in New Zealand farming, particularly in intensive operations, masks underlying welfare issues rather than addressing their root causes. This practice contributes to the growing global threat of antimicrobial resistance while failing to address the fundamental problems of overcrowding and stress that compromise animal health.

AJP supports urgent reform to ensure that farmed animals receive proper nutrition, appropriate health care and protection from preventable suffering. We call for clear and measurable welfare standards, improved enforcement and a shift away from farming systems that prioritise productivity at the expense of animal well-being. These measures are essential to reducing current harms while progressing toward the complete replacement of animal agriculture with ethical, sustainable alternatives.

Key Objectives:

1. Establish enforceable nutrition and health standards that prioritise animal well-being over production outcomes, including requirements for adequate feed quality, body condition monitoring, and appropriate nutrition for vulnerable animals.
2. Phase out harmful and intensive practices such as winter grazing and overcrowding that compromise nutrition, increase disease risk, and cause suffering.
3. Strengthen animal health protection through preventive care, robust disease management protocols and independent oversight of animal health outcomes.
4. Tackle antibiotic overuse by regulating the routine use of antimicrobials, addressing underlying welfare issues, and contributing to the fight against antimicrobial resistance.

Ensuring adequate nutrition and health standards policy | Created May 2025

³ SAFE for animals. *Mud farming in New Zealand*
<https://safe.org.nz/our-work/animals-in-aotearoa/mud-farming/>