The Animal Welfare Science Centre

The Animal Welfare Science Centre is a joint Centre, established by The University of Melbourne, Monash University and the Department of Primary Industries, Victoria. The Centre was developed to address animal welfare issues through research, teaching, extension and public education.

The Centre focuses and coordinates research and academic resources of the collaborating organisations to provide industry, farming communities, the general community and the academic community with internationally competitive research, teaching and education in animal welfare.

The Centre's Mission

The Animal Welfare Science Centre will sustain and grow Australia's animal industries through

1) strategic animal welfare research and student training to resolve major animal welfare issues and

2) targeted industry and public education designed to improve animal welfare and productivity and to assure local and international consumers, the public and Governments that the welfare standards for Australian animals are underpinned by sound and well-accepted science.

How To Contact The Animal Welfare Science Centre

- Give us a call on +61 (0) 3 8344 8933
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- E-mail: awsc-info@unimelb.edu.au
- Visit our Website at:

www.animalwelfare.net.au

- or write to:
  Animal Welfare Science Centre
  The University of Melbourne
  Faculty of Land & Food Resources, Parkville, Victoria, Australia, 3010.

ANIMAL WELFARE SCIENCE CENTRE

THE UNIVERSITY OF **MELBOURNE**

MONASH University

State Government **Victoria** Department of Primary Industries

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a joint centre of
The University of Melbourne,
Monash University
and the
Department of Primary Industries

Research, Development and Education at the Centre

The Centre's main outcome

Improve welfare practices of domestic animals and increase the value of Australian livestock production
Four research, development and education areas underpin this outcome:

1. Welfare methodology
2. Environmental contributions to animal welfare
3. Attitudes to animals, animal welfare and consumer, farmer and community behaviour
4. Tertiary and post-graduate education and training

Outputs from the Centre's programs include:

1. Develop scientifically defensible welfare methodology.
2. Use scientifically defensible methodology to establish, amend or validate industry welfare standards and practices.
3. Develop and support industry education and training strategies and provide scientific advice to support the modification of codes of practice and the development of quality assurance programs to introduce scientifically defensible welfare standards in the animal industries.
4. Understand public and consumer attitudes to animal welfare to assist Governments and industry in (1) developing animal welfare policy and (2) assuring local and international consumers, public and other governments of the sound welfare standards for Australian domestic animals.
5. Ensure tertiary students entering the animal industries are better prepared to provide sound, science-based advice on animal welfare practices to industry, interest groups and the public.
6. Provide high quality postgraduate and postdoctoral training for the next generation of researchers and teachers in animal welfare science.

Summary of the Centre's Research, Development and Education programs

There are four main RD&E programs, in the Centre and these are summarised in the following.

Program 1. Welfare methodology

A key objective in this program is to increase knowledge of approaches to animal welfare assessment, to further understand and define animal welfare. The welfare measures validated in this research will be utilised in both future research and in the field to provide scientifically-validated and defensible standards for the various animal industries.

Program 2. Environmental contributions to animal welfare and productivity

Research on pigs and poultry indicates that the design features of housing systems may be more important than the system *per se* for animal welfare and therefore through fundamental and applied research, it is important to determine the effects of design features (such as space, group size, social and human contact, furnishings) on the welfare of farm and companion animals in order to define welfare standards for these animals. The projects in Program 2 addresses the most contentious welfare issues both across and within industries, with contributions from the research conducted in Program 1.

Program 3. Attitudes to animals, animal welfare and consumer, farmer and community behaviour

The competency of stockpeople/animal carers, in intensive industries, to manage their animals has a major impact on the welfare of a large number of animals. Fundamental and applied research projects in program 3 examine the impact of human-animal interactions in both agricultural and domestic contexts. This knowledge is utilised in the development of education, training and selection (in agriculture) programs for animal handlers/carers to enhance the welfare and productivity of these animals.

The relationships between knowledge of and attitudes towards animal welfare issues in domestic animal species, customer buying behaviour and general community behaviours is also studied. This research will lead to the development of reliable and valid measures for monitoring and assessing the impact of these community animal welfare concerns on consumer decisions and community responses.

Program 4. Tertiary and post-graduate education and training.

Teaching and training in animal welfare is delivered in the Centre via a range of subjects and courses. The subjects 'Animals in Society', 'Applied Animal Behaviour Science' and 'Animal Welfare' are offered to undergraduate students at University of Melbourne. The Centre also has an 'Animals in Society' subject being taught at Ohio State University by staff from across the Centre. In addition, Graduate Certificates, Graduate Diplomas, Masters by Research and Coursework, and PhD courses are offered at both The University of Melbourne and Monash University to support the growth of Animal Welfare Science within the next generation.

The Centre will continue to support development and delivery of animal welfare modules within existing subjects at the Ohio State University and elsewhere. Animal welfare teaching modules for specialist groups, such as practising veterinarians and stockpeople in specific livestock industries are currently being developed.