

Talking (at Cross Purposes) about 'Meat Chicken' Welfare in NSW

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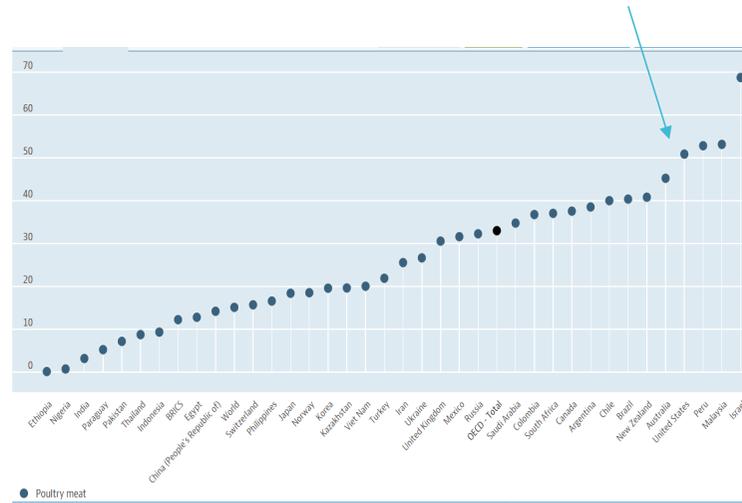
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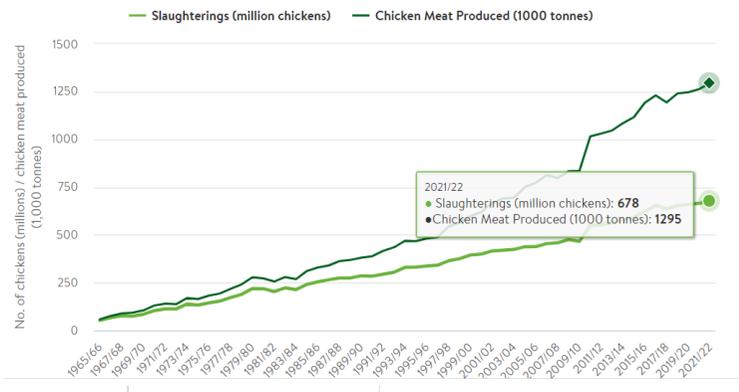
Research Background & Design

- Our Global Animal Welfare Policy Study examines blockers and enablers to animal welfare policy change
- Using the commercial production of meat chickens (broilers) as a comparative case
- The study compares and evaluates meat chickens welfare policy and policy processes
- **Australia (today's presentation).**
- United Kingdom (data collection close to completion)
- Aotearoa-New Zealand (advanced design phase, data collection beginning)
- The Netherlands (advanced design phase and some data collection)

Context



Australians are the fifth highest consumers per capita of meat chickens in the world.



In Australia, nearly 2 million chickens are slaughtered for meat every day (678 million a year).

Method

Interview code	Role
AUS ₁	Industry consultant, veterinary practitioner
AUS ₂	Government senior consultant, animal advocacy leader
AUS ₃	Animal advocacy senior management
AUS ₄	Industry association senior management
AUS ₅	Academic in animal welfare (veterinary)
AUS ₆	Politician
AUS ₇	Animal advocacy senior management
AUS ₈	Academic in animal welfare (veterinary)
AUS ₉	Veterinary practitioner, industry association senior management
AUS ₁₀	Politician
AUS ₁₁	Industry association senior management
AUS ₁₂	Retail senior management
AUS ₁₃	Professional association senior management
AUS ₁₄	Animal advocacy senior management

Early Findings:

A community of policy makers?

'If I was going to be born a farm animal, I think chickens would be the last one I want to be born as.' (AUS7, animal advocacy)

'We've bred these almost genetic mutants that grow so rapidly they outgrow their own cardiac capacity. They develop ascites and heart failure ... their head is still like a little baby chicken head, and they've got this massive body. They have trouble, they get lameness because of their size' (AUS13, professional association)

'it's well recognized by the farming sector that good animal welfare is linked to positive production outcomes ... the core business of managing livestock is to ensure good animal welfare, because that ensures a productive outcome' (AUS4, industry association)

'It's to a point now where I believe the welfare of the chickens is quite satisfactory.' (AUS9, industry association)

Early Findings:

RSPCA Australia as an important interlocker

'[Our client] was one of the first organizations to adopt RSPCA standards... they were seen as confrontationalist, they were seen as an imposition on our growing... The attitude was: We know how to grow broilers, what does the RSPCA know? We know best. So that was confronting at the time and there was pushback from growers. [But] ...The growers were actually in the sheds more and they started to be more interested in behavior of the birds while they were in the shed and started to be proactive.' (AUS9, industry association)

'It has moved forward a long way in the last fifteen years. Principally that's because of the RSPCA, and its influence over the industry, even though there continues to be some concern about where the RSPCA's final position might lie, in terms of its demands for welfare. But to this point, it's been quite accepted. Their role is now accepted.' (AUS9, industry association)

'There's some people in the industry here that are doing a fantastic job. Like the RSPCA standard and what that's done for industry is really really great. The fact that the lives of the chickens have been improved is amazing. ...hopefully other RSPCA initiatives will get as much traction.' (AUS12, retail)

Next Steps

- Write up our Australian findings.
- Complete the UK data collection and analyse the interview data, plus other desk-based research.
- Critically compare the Australian and UK cases.
- Complete the data collection for the other two cases.

- For more information about this research, or to share feedback: siobhan.osullivan@unsw.edu.au

- To keep up-to-date:
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