

# Hybrid governance and welfare standards for broiler chickens raised for human consumption

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## Abstract

This article examines the welfare standards that govern the lives of chickens raised for meat in Australia and the United Kingdom. While 'meat chickens' are subject to a wide range of welfare interventions, we focus on the development and implications of the 'private' standards which are the most significant determinants of meat chicken welfare in these jurisdictions: the RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme in Australia and the Red Tractor Chicken Assurance Scheme in the United Kingdom. While the jurisdictions appear to have a similar regime that favours private regulation, differences in the origins and governance of these systems can be identified, offering insights into the use of hybrid regulation in areas associated with the welfare of non-human animals. The similarities and differences in these countries point to the importance of individual relationships, as well as supply chain power in the adoption of private standards as a response to comparatively unstructured community concerns about welfare (Australia) and welfare and food safety (United Kingdom). While hybridity as a form of new public governance can be seen to facilitate innovative and varied responses to state devolution, the article concludes the overarching anthropocentrism of policymakers and the policy sciences explains a

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closed, incremental, and conservative form of practice in this area. Observations of the wider ‘animal turn’ in the social sciences are recommended to consider future systems of hybrid regulation that are not centred on anthropocentrism and more fully expand hybridity’s participatory promise.

#### KEYWORDS

animal turn, animal welfare, chicken, hybridity, regulation

#### Points for practitioners

- Hybrid governance can focus on the use of hybrid organisational design and/or hybrid regulatory practice; each has very different characteristics and their respective use is often a function of local conditions and situations.
- Hybrid standards-making systems need to be open to public participation in development and implementation (oversight), or risk capture and moral hazard.
- Public policy is largely predicated on strong anthropocentrism, which can be addressed through the use of critical rather than simple pluralism to expand the number of interests captured in regulatory practices.

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

During the last half century, the regulation of farmed animal welfare has significantly shifted from ostensible regulation by the state, towards hybrid practices produced through the participation of state, and non-state actors in the commercial and not-for-profit sectors. This reflects a tendency over the last 50 years for the state to become less central to governance through devolution, deregulation, privatisation, and deference to private standards making and enforcement (Schepel, 2005, p. 11). This change to regulation raises questions about how these systems operate: what are the new forms of interest mediation and intermediation that is created in these regulatory relationships, how does the state participate in these practices, what are the comparative advantages and disadvantages of these systems of control, and how effective is the resultant regulation produced.

Within this area of scholarly interest, this article specifically looks at the regulation of domesticated chickens—in particular, chickens raised for their meat (commonly referred to as ‘broilers’ in the industry). These birds represent the most numerous species of animals bred, raised, and killed for human consumption around the world, with demand increasing (Stewart et al., 2021;

ACMF, 2020b). Given their small body size, larger numbers of these sentient non-human animals (Marino, 2017; Park, 2021) move through human industrial systems per volume of meat compared with other commonly consumed domesticated animals.<sup>1</sup> Meat chickens are subject to some of the most intensive forms of animal agriculture, spending all or almost all of their lives in highly managed environments. Because of the scale of human domination of these animals, their treatment is a significant question of our ethical responsibility over systems that use animals for human ends. Based on our interest in hybrid regulation, the specific focus of this article is the 'private' welfare standards that govern the lives of most meat chickens raised in the United Kingdom and Australia. These are developed outside of, and parallel to, the formal process of government policymaking. They represent agreements between non-government standards-making and certifying bodies and producer organisations to produce meat to a higher level of welfare than legally required.

A paired-case analysis presented in this paper introduces and considers two regulatory fields that have produced seemingly similar, yet very different hybrid approaches to the regulation of the welfare of chickens raised for meat. The cases describe how the systems of regulation have emerged against the backdrop of pre-existing and ongoing state regulation. Further, the analysis considers the relationship between private standards and state policy processes. In addition, an interesting paradox is examined in the Australian case: where there is no state coercion for non-state regulation, the existence of these standards poses the question of why actors in strong market positions would allow themselves to be subject to regulation by a third party—an animal welfare organisation.

This article demonstrates that similarities between the two jurisdictions explain the surface-level isomorphic nature of the cases. However, particularities to the nations' constitutional structure, geopolitical trade position, market and advocacy community structure, and history explain important variations in the adopted private standards governance regimes and their relationship with the state. This demonstrates that, while hybrid regulation might be a generalised tendency, the specific performance of it can be significantly influenced by a variety of factors. Irrespective of the considerable differences in the hybrid systems of regulation, the extent of difference in welfare outcomes is modest in these cases. This has implications for the way that we think about the relationship between modern systems of welfare regulation with regard to non-human animals: in particular, the way that purported participation benefits of hybridisation are not realised where the primary ethical subjects of regulation—animals—have interests that are indirectly incorporated in the development and implementation of standards. The article concludes with a discussion of the importance of the study and practice of public policy to undertake an 'Animal Turn' and recognise aspects of our paradigms that are unsuited to understanding the dynamics of human–non-human policy processes where particular 'moral patients' interests are not articulated in the regulatory system.

## 2 | THE CHANGING NATURE OF GOVERNANCE AND HYBRIDISATION

The focus of this paper is on the regulation of private practices in the market. Regulation of private and quasi-private activity by the state has been a growth area in recent decades, as privatisation and outsourcing have placed once public functions monopolised by the state into a regulatory interaction space that can involve the state directly or indirectly (Eisner, 2000). As such the nature of the contemporary state is fundamentally interested in regulation over provision,

with various authors considering state power as either expansive of or reflective of neo-liberalism (Braithwaite, 2008). This is associated with a belief that the state has struggled to perform over the last half century in the face of social complexity and globalisation, and began searching for more effective meta-policy approaches to both its own organisation and policy design. Thus, concepts like 'steering rather than rowing' come to dominate the notion of an emerging 'new regulatory state' (Braithwaite, 2000) where regulation has proliferated and become diffused outward to create more responsive systems of control that are different to the standardisation associated with the Weberian model of public administration.

In a further diminution of the role of the state, aspects of the market are significantly subject to non-state regulation (Cherney & Cherney, 2018), where gaps in regulation have been filled with regulatory action from the private and community sectors through various corporate social responsibility initiatives (Schneider & Scherer, 2019). This talks to a separation of regulation from service delivery and policy development, producing a system of 'regulocracy' that rebalances power from politicians to regulators who engage stakeholders through rule-based relations in a broader system of governance where boundaries can become unclear and actors might take up a variety of different public and private roles (Levi-Faur, 2013). This coming together of actors from a variety of different social contexts has led to the possibility for increased crossovers and hybridisation. The successive waves of reform through new public management and new public governance have led to an inter-relationship between two types of hybridisation: that of organisational forms and policy process/design performances created within governance contexts.

Organisationally, Brandsen and Karré identify new complexes that have 'evolved from one of the corners of the [state, community and market] triangle and have since moved into its centre, where the characteristics of the three domains mix. It means these organisations need to combine a profit and not-for-profit orientation; a public and private orientation; formality and informality' (Brandsen & Karré, 2011, p. 828). Johanson and Vakkuri (2017) highlight that these developments over time can produce both mixtures of inputs (ownership, funding) and mixtures of performance. The latter can be quite diverse, leading to issues of goal incongruence and competing institutional logics, as well as different methods of control over organisational behaviour.

In terms of regulatory performances, Halpern sees hybrid regulation as combining:

...governmental (public) and non-governmental (private) components. It can refer to oversight arrangements with multiple levels, joining centralized and regional or local features. It can refer to regulatory processes that engage a full range of participants, including professionals, divisions of government, public interest advocates, and representatives of groups being regulated (Halpern, 2008, p. 85).

This reflects a development of the regulatory state as both a narrowing (of state action) and an expansion in regulatory practices (from purely economic to social; Moran, 2003) in contemporary governance. Governance 'identifies the blurring of boundaries and responsibilities for tackling social and economic issues' (Stoker, 1998, p. 18). This includes both movement from 'ideal' types of social organisation (hybrid institutionalism), but also an increased number of participating actors and processes responsible for 'producing regulation' (hybrid regulatory practice). Steurer (2013) provides a useful model of contemporary regulatory practice, recognising nine general types, with four representing hybrid practice (Figure 1) involving actors working across the three core domains of state, society, and economy.

One example of hybrid regulatory practice is the role of 'private' standards-making relationships. Private standards represent voluntary and quasi-voluntary certification systems that are

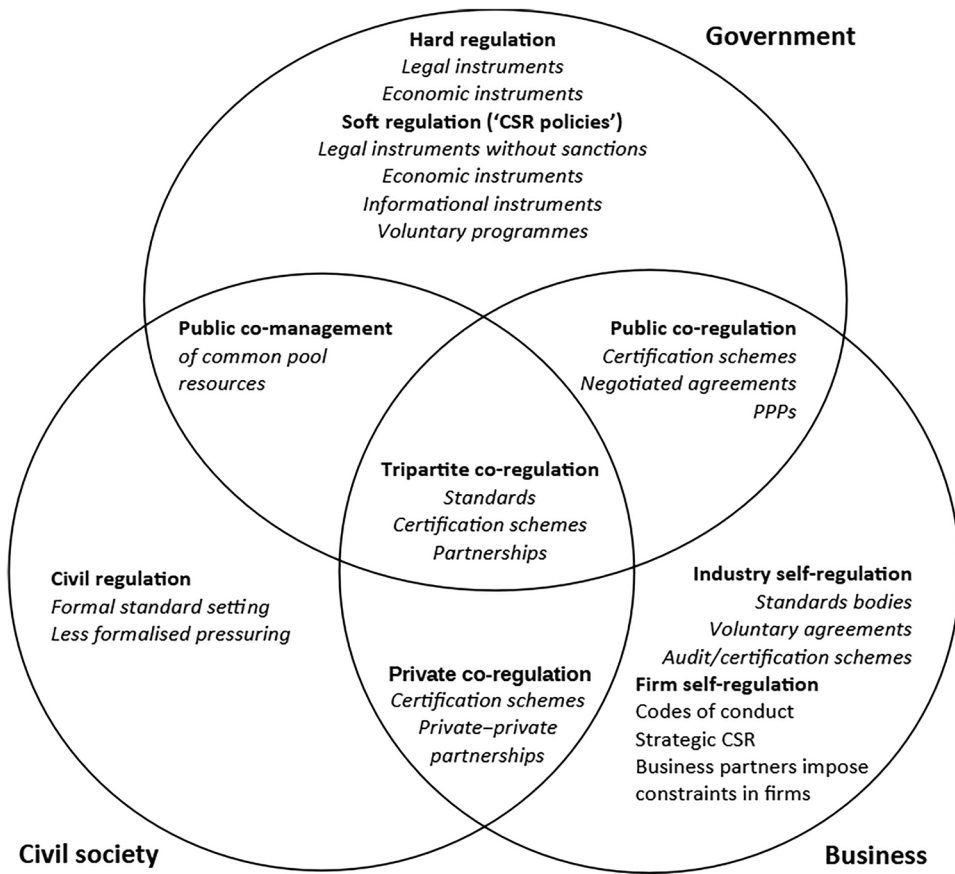


FIGURE 1 Regulatory practices and their relationship with hybridisation (simplified from Steurer, 2013).

entered into by market actors. These systems can be found throughout the modern economy and address a wide array of subjects, from standards governing the qualities of the product, to those regulating their production, to those regulating their use (Jongeneel & Herzfeld, 2012). Some of these systems are required by legislation (mandated self-regulation), some have been introduced by industry groups, some by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and others by individual firms looking to brand their own products against some performance standard higher than legislative minima and/or as an alternative to direct regulation. At their heart, these systems are based on the presumed primacy of market logics: that voluntary standards improve private markets through increasing consumer information and competition (both competing standards, but also competing retailers who stock different compliant products).<sup>2</sup> While ‘private’ activities, Héritier and Lehmkuhl (2011) remind us that these systems exist within the ‘shadow of hierarchy’, permitting the possibility of direct state (re)regulation of the practice in question and potentially shaping how private actors behave. This highlights that, even where these standards appear to be ‘purely’ private agreements undertaken within the market, they reflect relational interactions and demonstrate respective power positions and interests.

**TABLE 1** Interview overview: The United Kingdom and Australia.

Sector	Australia	United Kingdom	Total
Advocate (ADV)	6	5	11
Industry (IND)	5	4	9
Government (GOV)	2	2	4
Academic (ACA)	1	3	4
Retail (RET)	1	0	1
Total	15	14	29

### 3 | RESEARCH STRATEGY AND METHODS

The research for this article used a comparative case design (Ruffa, 2019) with an inductive orientation. Case study designs involve the collection of unstructured data and the qualitative analysis of it (Hammersley & Gomm, 2000), usually from a variety of primary and secondary sources. In this study, a detailed literature review and the collection of secondary sources related to the cases were undertaken. In addition, semi-structured elite interviews were employed to enrich our understanding of the cases, with each interview lasting between 30 and 90 min. The purpose of interviews was to develop a deeper understanding of welfare practices, explore the relationships between industry, regulators, and third sector actors, and identify issues not captured in existing secondary sources and reports. Participants were found via public records, in the first instance. We then used referral sampling to identify additional suitable participants. Interviews were sought from a diverse range of stakeholders including producers and industry bodies, politicians and public officials, major retailers, academics, and animal advocates.

Table 1 provides an overview of research participants and the reference codes used in this article. All interview data are presented here anonymously. Following transcription and review by participants, the transcripts were coded using the NVivo software package for qualitative analysis to identify common and divergent themes and responses to questions, and to identify underlying beliefs and motivations. Through this, the interview material was transformed into data to support, test, and contradict material gathered from secondary sources and trigger additional literature searches and theory development in a non-linear research process. The seed interview question set examined (i) respondents' conception of the concept of 'good welfare', (ii) the salience of welfare to the chicken meat industry, (iii) key welfare issues facing chickens used for meat in industrial production systems, (iv) the effectiveness of the regulatory frameworks governing chickens used in production, (v) unresolved or outstanding significant issues, and (vi) barriers to further improvements in welfare standards (within and outside of the regulatory environment). The human research component of the study was approved by the University of Sydney's Human Research Ethics Committee (project number 2020/669).

### 4 | THE MEAT CHICKEN INDUSTRY

A large amount of chicken meat is consumed in both Australia and the United Kingdom (OECD, 2022). In both countries, this market has been growing strongly over the last three decades (ACMF, 2020c; Stewart, et al., 2021), reflecting changing consumer preferences away from red meats like beef (Gatfield, 2006) and the decreasing cost of chicken meat.



The meat chicken industry is notable for its scale and integration. The industry operates largely through vertical integration, including 'company ownership of breeding farms, multiplication farms, hatcheries, feed mills, some meat chicken growing farms and processing plants' (Poultry Hub Australia, 2022), commonly using subcontracted 'growers' or 'farmers' who raise the birds from hatchlings to slaughter. In Australia, two processors supply 70% of Australia's chicken meat (Burt, 2020). In the United Kingdom, three companies dominate 75% of the market (Caffyn, 2021).

A major source of growth has been the standardisation of meat chicken genetics. There are three key breeds of chicken used for standard intensive farming across the world. These have been associated with a 'fast growing' revolution. In 1995, the average growth rate of meat chickens was 39 g/day, rising to 59 g/day in 2014 (Thaxton et al., 2016). At present, a bird in these systems can go from hatchling to slaughter in 5–6 weeks, another factor in the reduced cost of chicken meat to the consumer.

The other major element of this supply chain system is the retail and hospitality sectors, sectors with large numbers of small actors and a small number of large actors. In grocery sales and quick service ('fast food') restaurants, a small number of firms in both nations exert considerable upstream influence on the practices of suppliers given their large market shares (Chen, 2016). In the two countries, three different supermarket chains represent over 70% of grocery sales (Hunt Export Advice, 2022; Kantar, 2021). In the food service sector, both countries have a small number of quick service companies with large numbers of outlets that engage in corporate purchasing with similar implications for supply chain shaping. As examples, McDonalds and KFC both introduced global standards governing their suppliers of chickens raised for meat (in 2018 and 2020, respectively; KFC, 2020; McDonalds, 2019), with considerable implications for their suppliers.

While similar in many ways, the two markets have important differences. Unlike the United Kingdom, Australia is considerably less exposed to international trade in chicken meat. This has an important impact on standards setting and the position of firms in these markets. The UK's market integration in Europe places constraints on the expenditure U.K. meat chicken producers are willing to spend on higher welfare for animals to be used as undifferentiated commodities (as opposed to those branded and purchased based on their higher welfare treatment). In Sweden, a higher 'floor' has seen the substitution of domestic production for imports (Lichter & Kleibrin, 2015). Conversely, the lack of international competition for Australian domestic sales produces a sector with greater commercial certainties, and fewer sources of competition, including for alternative welfare standards.

## 5 | GOVERNING THE LIVES AND DEATHS OF MEAT CHICKENS

Different parts of the farming system present animal welfare issues. For 'breeders' (layer hens), the need to restrict their food intake is commonly identified as a source of distress, as unregulated consumption would lead to premature death and reduced reproductive 'productivity' (Dixon et al., 2022). During growing, the most common welfare concerns are a function of intensification: the genetic selection permitting rapid growth and the environment in which that occurs. Rapid weight gain to reach slaughter weight is associated with lameness and leg deformities, and cardiovascular issues (Hartcher & Lum, 2019). High density can be associated with behavioural problems in birds like pecking other animals (typically addressed via debeaking, which generates additional welfare concerns), while the litter that birds spend most of their time in creates health issues where it is not of high quality at purchase, or is permitted to become saturated (Pepper & Dunlop, 2021; Thaxton et al., 2016). The construction of open poultry houses ('sheds') can also have implications

for ventilation and heat stress. These birds also encounter stress-related welfare issues during transportation and at slaughter (Pinto et al., 2016).

Requirements to reduce the frequency of these issues in flocks, as well as the burdens on individual animals, are stipulated by law. In both countries, animal welfare acts create minimum legislative requirements. The specifics of these are developed through codes of practice as delegated legislation ('public codes'). Advocates of this approach argue the use of delegation permits them to be updated through participative processes with knowledgeable stakeholders as science changes (Dudau et al., 2019; Locke, 2013).

In practice, the number of animals that live and die strictly according to the treatment specified in respective legislated codes is limited. As illustrated in Table 2, only a minority of animals in each nation are produced to the legal standards. For most birds, private standards dominate. These either meet or exceed the legislated minima. Thus, the public codes represent a welfare 'floor' which governs the lives of a minority of chickens produced for meat. Private standards can include elements excluded from public codes (such as 'required' rather than 'recommended' perching options for birds) as well as differences in the settings of common elements in public and private standards (e.g. the question of stocking density that controls the amount of space each bird is assigned).

## 6 | PUBLIC STANDARDS MAKING

### 6.1 | Producing the hard law 'floor'

The Australian government released a new model code of practice for poultry in August 2022 that replaced a 2002 public code. This becomes a reference document that individual states and territories may use in the development of their individual welfare laws, including delegating the code as the welfare standard in local laws. This work was initially undertaken through a not-for-profit corporation run jointly by Australian governments and peak industry bodies. In this, the notion of relevant stakeholders in the process of standards development is clearly demonstrated: the membership structure of this company, Animal Health Australia, places animal welfare NGOs as 'outsiders' as members are restricted to government, industry, and other organisations in the 'animal health service system'. While welfare NGOs were included in consultation for the standards review process, only formal members have 'a high level of involvement in the management of all activities and have formal input to the development of company annual and strategic plans through the Members' Forum' (Animal Health Australia, 2021). The final standards were produced by the Independent Poultry Welfare Panel established in 2020. This extended the process by some years and was related to political contestation associated with 'layer' egg chickens (AUS10\_GOV).<sup>3</sup>

In the United Kingdom, each nation has its own *Animal Welfare Act*, which similarly references national public codes that outline specific welfare requirements. U.K. laws are still heavily informed by animal welfare legislation from the European Union (Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation, 2020).<sup>4</sup> The *Animal Welfare Act 2006* offers legal protection to animals in England and Wales. Sections extend to Scotland and further similar legislation covers Scotland and Northern Ireland. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is the enforcement agency for most animal welfare legislation (Collison, 2018).

Defra's policy is made by its Ministers, who are advised by an expert panel, the Animal Welfare Committee (AWC), an expert body that sits within the state with a high proportion of technical



TABLE 2 Summary of public and private standards for chickens raised for meat.

	Est. sales	Density (indoors) <sup>a</sup>	Breed rules	Beak trimming	Environmental enrichment	Darkness minimum
<b>United Kingdom</b>						
UK government codes of practice	N/A	33–39 kg/m <sup>2</sup>	None	Not preferred	Recommended	6 h, 4 h non-stop
Red Tractor indoor	95%	38 kg/m <sup>2</sup>	None	Prohibited	Mandated	6 h, 4 h non-stop
Red Tractor free range	1.75%	27.5 kg/m <sup>2</sup>	Slow grown	Prohibited	Mandated	6 h, 4 h non-stop
RSPCA UK assured outdoor	1.75%	27.5 kg/m <sup>2</sup>	Slow grown	Prohibited	Mandated	8 h non-stop
Organic UK	0.5%	10–21 kg/m <sup>2</sup>	Slow grown	Prohibited	Mandated	8 h non-stop
RSPCA UK assured indoor	0.05% <sup>b</sup>	30 kg/m <sup>2</sup>	Slow grown	Prohibited	Mandated	6 h non-stop
Waitrose Essential UK	N/A	30 kg/m <sup>2</sup>	Slow grown	Prohibited	Mandated	Not specified
Waitrose free range UK	N/A	27.5 kg/m <sup>2</sup>	Slow grown	Prohibited	Mandated	Not specified
<b>Australia</b>						
Australian government guidelines (2022)	N/A	28–38 kg/m <sup>2</sup>	None	Not preferred	Recommended	4 h
Australian government guidelines (2002)	21%	28–40 kg/m <sup>2</sup>	None	Not preferred	Not required	
RSPCA Australia assured indoor (from January 2023)	78%	28–34 kg/m <sup>2</sup>	None	Not specified	Mandated	6 h, 4 h non-stop
FREPA accredited outdoor	0.5%	28–30 kg/m <sup>2</sup>	None	Not preferred	Mandated	6 h
Certified organic Australia	0.5%	0.25–30 kg/m <sup>2</sup>	Slower grown	Prohibited	Mandated	8 h non-stop

<sup>a</sup>At slaughter, a chicken will weigh between 2 and 3 kg.

<sup>b</sup>This standard was adopted by Marks and Spencer in 2022, which will increase its market share going forward.

Source: ACMF (2020a); Australian Government (2022); Australian Government (2001); Australian Organic (2019); Compassion in World Farming (2013); FREPA (2020); Northern Ireland Government (2012); Red Tractor (2019, 2022); RSPCA Australia (2020a); RSPCA UK (2019); Scottish Government (2019); Shahbandeh (2021, 2022); Soil Association (2022); The Poultry Site (2021b); UK Government (2018); Wales Government (2020).

experts from the academy, as well as industry and advocacy group members. The AWC also advises the Scottish and Welsh Governments on the welfare of farmed chickens (UK Government, 2021). While not a federation, the United Kingdom has different meat chicken codes for its different nations, with minor variations in content between the national codes. National codes tend to be updated in temporal proximity with minor variations between them. The public codes for England and Wales were updated in 2018 and Scotland released a new public code in 2019. Northern Ireland, on the other hand, last updated its public code in 2012 and its local version is an outlier to some degree with lower standards than the rest of the United Kingdom.

In the case of Australia and the United Kingdom, the slowness of public code revision reveals a flaw in arguments that delegated legislation enables standards setting which is significantly more responsive to changing technical understandings. However, a lack of actual legislation focusing on technical matters makes comparison impossible. What is important to note is the absolute amount of time taken to develop new standards. In both countries, 15–20 years elapsed between updates. While these long timeframes meet the concerns of industry that code updates generate expensive changes to systems and infrastructure that need to be amortised, the slow process of change negates policy justifications for the use of delegated codes, while also failing to recognise that the dynamism of technology changes within the industry and welfare science considerably outpaces regulation.

## 6.2 | Raising the floor through private standards

The majority of chickens raised for meat in the two case jurisdictions are not governed by state-legislated welfare standards, but private codes.

The dominant private standard in the United Kingdom is the Red Tractor Chicken Assurance Scheme launched by industry groups in 2000 following the bovine spongiform encephalopathy ('mad cow' disease) animal health crisis and has developed in the context of several other food safety and quality concerns (Smith et al., 2022). The nature of this crisis motivated collaboration across different industries, permitting the Red Tractor organisation to gain considerable prominence and trust among consumers, overtaking the nascent RSPCA UK's welfare standard (released in 1997) in both market share and public recognition (YouGov, 2021). Red Tractor undertakes three key activities: maintaining its various private standards, systems of certification and inspection (the latter through the establishment of a market for third party certifiers), and promotional work to increase consumer identification of the brandmark and preference for products raised under this system.

The rise of the Red Tractor is an industry response to a failure of industrial practice and government regulation. This occurred during a period when the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food was in a weak political and policymaking position<sup>5</sup> and during the rise of new public management under the Blair–Labour government (Castellani, 2018, p. 161). The government employed 'due diligence' provisions of food safety laws to coerce industry self-regulation (Richards et al., 2013). Blair remained personally associated with the scheme, launching it in 2000 and actively promoting it during his Premiership.

For the United Kingdom, welfare standards are a subset of the wider emphasis of the standards-making process on food safety concerns.<sup>6</sup> The context in which Red Tractor was developed was effectively *defensive* in the face of regulatory failures that have been highlighted by NGOs engaged in the 'caring sleuth' model of direct action that focuses on illicit entry into animal agricultural settings to identify and record examples of animal mistreatment (Shapiro, 1994). Walley et al.

(2019) have identified periodic NGO campaigns on animal welfare issues for meat chickens as able to have a significant impact on purchasing decisions, citing the 3.4 kg per person per annum drop in consumption in the United Kingdom between 2001 and 2008 because of public concerns about product safety.

The U.K. example illustrates an important role the state can play in 'private' standards making, both in boosting the uptake of these standards as well as in picking winners between competing NGOs. The inclusion of welfare issues served as an extension of the policymaking capacity and network strength of the Red Tractor scheme, and significantly forestalled the scope for entrepreneurialism from animal advocacy NGOs to promote their own higher standards. The RSPCA UK's private standard for chicken meat producers has, while providing higher welfare requirements than Red Tractor, had more limited take-up due to the existence of a preferred industry approach: preferred both in terms of the ability to market higher welfare outcomes at a lower cost to industry, but also through industry control over the standards-making process and as a means to avoid standards proliferation by retailers that would add complexity for producers who work across various supply chains (UK8\_IND). U.K. welfare NGOs have continued to promote their standards over the last two decades (while attacking the Red Tractor scheme as little better than state regulation and toothless in its enforcement; Viva! N.d.), with some recent successes associated with the wider acceptance of the Better Chicken Commitment (UK9\_ADV), an evolution of the European Chicken Commitment. One of the weaknesses of standards promoted by NGOs, however, is the industry fears that these organisations will 'ratchet' standards up over time, as retailers are captives to the standard (UK10\_IND, UK13\_IND) as defection from the standard would cause reputational harm and prevent supply chain access to retailers committed to that standard. This, however, presumes a strong informational effect of these standards.

The fear of ratcheting is also shared by industry organisations in Australia (AUS9\_IND) and is true to some extent: welfare NGOs see their ability to introduce incremental improvements to standards once they have high levels of adoption (AUS14\_ADV). This is particularly interesting because, unlike in the United Kingdom, the dominant private standard in Australia was developed by an animal advocacy NGO—RSPCA Australia<sup>7</sup>—operating without the strong incentives of the state seen in the U.K. case.

Since being introduced in 2010, over 3.1 billion meat chickens have been raised under evolving incremental iterations of their standard (RSPCA Australia, 2020a), with all three major supermarket chains stocking RSPCA-approved chicken meat, and McDonalds Australia adopting the standard in 2021 as a means of fulfilling its global standards commitment. The McDonalds case demonstrates the complexity of private standards adoption, having interactions with the RSPCA over higher welfare for over 10 years prior (The Poultry Site, 2021a). This is indicative of the relational nature of the private standards process and the time required to build trust (AUS14\_ADV), but also the complexity of relationships between industry and partner NGOs. RSPCA Australia has had to demonstrate it is a 'moderate' actor over time to sustain relationships (AUS9\_IND), both through its action and also via demonstrating the organisation has technical competency (which is disputed). This explains the modest (if real) differences between standards made by the industry NGO and those of RSPCA Australia as an advocacy NGO: standard setting process in these two jurisdictions is one of very careful and deliberate debates about welfare improvements that are constrained by the primacy of low costs important to retailers (AUS1\_IND, AUS4\_IND, AUS13\_ADV, UK2\_ACA, UK12\_ADV) and the risk of getting caught with standards that are too low in the context of changing consumer demand (UK8\_IND).

Overall, animal welfare organisations have increasingly promoted the adoption of private animal welfare standards as a pragmatic, incremental way to improve the lives of chickens. This has

an evidentiary base. In their benchmarking study of European nations that compared legislative standards against private standards, Sandøe et al. (2022, p. 7) identified the United Kingdom has having the largest gap between legislative minima and commonly used private standards.

### 6.3 | Comparing hybridity in the United Kingdom and Australia

Our cases permit us to consider the nature of the regimes of governance they represent. Both broiler regulation cases present good examples of hybridity and highlight the way ‘expanded’ control (in terms of higher standards) can come at a cost of a shift from regulation that is notionally ‘hard’ to regulation that is ‘soft’ in terms of the underlying legal enforcement for regulatory breaches. Additionally, the sources and nature of this hybridity are distinct in the two cases.

In Australia, a focus on organisational hybridity provides a useful lens to consider the governance of broiler welfare. Both state-sponsored and non-state regulators are hybrid by design: established in 1996, Animal Health Australia is a public–private partnership between the state and industry via a jointly owned company where standards setting has moved outside of government into a cooperative venture, and RSPCA Australia as an NGO ‘born hybrid’ is a set of organisations (federated in 1981) that include charity, commercial, and enforcement logics and decision-making heuristics (Braithwaite, 2008; Skelcher & Smith, 2015).<sup>8</sup> The overarching system reflects something that can be described as ‘mixed public and private co-regulation’ with public codes trailing the successful capture of market share by the animal advocacy sector, but still having a non-trivial share of market coverage. This is an example of Ayres and Braithwaite’s (1992) ‘responsive regulation’ observation that private contracts can be used to respond to regulatory gaps, and the position of the RSPCA in the Australian case illustrates relations with both producers and retailers, leveraging the latter in support of its standard in their purchasing decisions.

The dominant role of the Red Tractor organisation in the United Kingdom is reflective of hybrid regulatory practice, rather than operating through hybrid organisational structures. Public and private codes remain strongly within morphologically ‘pure’ organisational categories: Departmental Committees and private self-regulation. The significant failure of the state to provide food safety facilitated the de facto privatisation of food and welfare regulation where the state delegated its authority ‘upward’ to a single industry body (Medzini & Levi-Faur, 2023) that operates across the nations of the United Kingdom. While this model has been dominant for some time, the growing interest of retailers to go beyond the Red Tractor standard demonstrates the possibility for regulatory pluralism/fragmentation, making this model subject to contestation.<sup>9</sup>

The cases are illustrative of how hybrid governance analysis can be fruitfully applied to this area of regulation, unpacking key differences in seemingly similar regulatory performances. In addition, it shows these practices capture the notion of new public governance as ‘layered’ on existing structures and practices as both cases demonstrate how ‘residual elements of prior governance forms are bundled together to create bespoke responses’ (Mills et al., 2021, p. 504)—in this case, pre-existing hard regulation that serves as a performance floor. However, there are limits to seeing these cases through this established view of governance history. This field of meat chicken welfare has not been subject to the de- and re-regulation waves associated with the shift from New Public Management to New Public Governance in many other fields. This is pertinent given the regulation of welfare in this space is very old (often preceding welfare concerns focused on human animals).<sup>10</sup> The regulation of animal welfare begins comparatively early in the history of the state as a body engaged in expansive control over social behaviour. A good example here is Richard Martin’s (UK) *Act to Prevent the Cruel and Improper Treatment of Cattle*

(1822). The regulation of animal welfare was always a hybrid activity, with enforcement left to the nascent Society for the Protection of Animals (SPCA) and private citizen prosecutions (Kreilkamp, 2012). While government regulation became more direct during the 20th century, including transfers of policing functions for agriculture from private to state bodies, the willingness to defer to private governance and to except significantly inhumane practices from legal oversight on the basis of commercial pragmatism and under the rubric of 'normal animal husbandry' remains (White, 2003), in what Wadiwel sees as reflecting a system of 'immunity, property and commodity exchange' (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 223) that overlays notional 'hard' regulation and reflects a metapolicy objective underwriting law-making and devolution strategies.

The ongoing subordination of animal interests in this area of regulation shapes our understanding of this field of hybrid practice, given the lack of state withdrawal and 'passive oversight' has not produced the type of drivers around self-organisation seen in other areas of welfare delivery and regulation (e.g. see Nederhand et al., 2016), where 'fear-based benevolent' state power motivates the formation of new actors and relationships. Rather, drivers of the private standards in the two jurisdictions can be described in terms of Bartley's (2018) notion of positionality in supply chains as empowering some actors to 'push' and 'pull' standards adoption. In the United Kingdom, the Red Tractor is a coalition of producers, who have sold ('pushed') their standard to retailers in the United Kingdom in the context of generalised concerns about safety, government endorsement of the industry response, and specific motivations about falling demand and NGO campaigns. Quite differently in the Australian context, it has been retailers who have adopted the standard and 'pulled' their suppliers into alignment.

The highly domesticated Australian market with limited competition has reduced entrepreneurialism in the provision of a diverse set of welfare standards (as is emerging in the United Kingdom). This allowed the industry to remain dominated by a low-cost commodity model. Reflecting this, Australian chicken meat industry actors were the ones to see the private standards as unnecessary because of the capacity of industry to manage technical health issues better than outside regulators (AUS1\_IND) or because they saw many of the welfare concerns of the public represent historical practices already eliminated in modern industrial systems (AUS11\_IND, AUS4\_IND). Thus, they did not identify public concerns about welfare as a driver for industry self-regulation that motivated retailers. Retailers, on the other hand, are located closer to end consumers and see across a wider range of product lines with resulting experience in dealing with third-party certification.

The role of retailers in the Australian market explains why, in the absence of a food crisis or the need to brand products against competing low-cost/quality imports, producers accepted regulation by an animal advocacy NGO. Therefore, the Australian case becomes less paradoxical, however, when we identify how retailers are responding to trends in 'like' (the United Kingdom and the United States) markets (particularly in food service). Supermarkets draw considerable staff and expertise about future trends from the U.K. and European supermarkets (Chen, 2016; AUS12\_IND), with European higher chicken welfare standards (the Better Chicken Commitment [BCC]) forming the basis of some retailers' private standards (Waitrose, 2022; UK1\_ACA) and recent adoption of the RSPCA UK's BCC compatible standard (Marks & Spencer).

While this third-party certification arrangement presents risks, these are shared unevenly across the regulatory space. Producers face the most risk: the loss of control over their production systems and costs, and the risk that once established, the NGO will ratchet standards beyond the initial tendency towards incrementalism. This logic also requires producers to understand the pressures on the RSPCA to preserve its brand against criticism from other groups (as we have seen in the United Kingdom with attacks on the Red Tractor), and push harder for welfare

performance. While retailers too are subject to risks in becoming partners in certification, they have greater experience in managing third party certification relationships, including managing the possibility of regulatory failure (such as recent concerns about salmon certification in food systems, but also the collapse of their soft plastics recycling model). For retailers, each specific certification scheme presents risks to part of their business, but for their partners in industry and the RSPCA, they present more existential risks. Thus, the balance of power works well for retailers.

## 7 | LIMITS IN THE HYBRID REGULATION OF CHICKEN WELFARE

### 7.1 | Technical flaws in the underlying regulatory model

Both jurisdictions' use of essentially 'soft law' standards (both in terms of private standards, but also through limited enforcement of public codes; Rodriguez Ferrere, 2022) presents problems in policy design. As primarily mechanisms of market information provision, standards systems in animal welfare attempt to address problems of asymmetrical information between producers and consumers around the nature of the industrial process and its harms to chickens (Cooper, 1992). This is predicated on the notion that information equalisation allows more informed decision-making, but we argue that these are weak tools to direct consumer preferences, and regulatory pluralisation has not addressed the inherent moral hazard risks in commercial systems.

Within both cases, a broad consensus exists among academics, government actors, industry, and NGOs that the quantity and quality of public knowledge around the welfare of chickens raised for meat are very low. Commonly, participants identified basic knowledge gaps (AUS2\_ADV, AUS6\_GOV, AUS7\_ADV, AUS13\_ADV, AUS14\_ADV, UK2\_ACA, UK3\_IND, UK5\_ADV, UK11\_GOV, UK13\_IND), such as the mistaken belief that meat chickens kept in cages (AUS1\_IND, AUS5\_IND, AUS11\_IND, AUS14\_ADV, AUS15\_ADV, UK2\_ACA, UK3\_IND, UK8\_IND, UK13\_IND) or the use of hormones to stimulate growth (AUS1\_IND). Additionally, there is doubt the current system serves to meaningfully educate the wider community on the specifics of this topic (AUS13\_ADV, AUS14\_ADV, UK5\_ADV) and that some elements might be responsive to public concerns that have no basis in welfare science (UK2\_ACA). This has perverse effects, where standards certifications are seen to provide welfare benefits that are either not provided or form part of the regulatory minima.

Significantly, the dominance of the two private standards in the United Kingdom and Australia has not led to much product differentiation and premium pricing options for producers—a common motivation in firms' choice to adopt certification (Guarín & Knorringa, 2014)—but rather set a new welfare 'floor' for most birds. The policy rationale for competing standards comes from established critiques of industry self-regulation: that this empowers some actors to regulate their competitors and suppliers, effectively creating anti-trust issues (Volokh, 2014) and duplicating review processes in some places as multiple actors' audit production systems (AUS1\_IND). Thus, for policymakers concerned with competition policy and the market power of retailers, this demonstration of supply chain dominance represents a failure of self-regulation. Australia has seen several investigations into the power of supermarkets in the last decade, and the United Kingdom in the preceding decade.

This is not to exclude the role of public opinion from changes in demand for meat at an aggregate level, as well as meat produced to higher welfare standards in the case countries. Certainly, Umberger and Malek's (2021) survey and focus group research has highlighted that more



recent reductions in per capita chicken meat consumption are partially motivated by generalised welfare concerns. However, the link between this current construction of informational ('nodal') tools and market responsiveness is poor. This is because purchase decision-making in the supermarket retail sector reduces the power of specific product standards (where individual product choice often comes following an initial decision to select one retailer over another), but also a problem exacerbated by the tendency of private systems of certification to lack significant and specific public performance reporting (as these can be commercial-in-confidence arrangements), except in extremis (as noted above, outside of the certification system's own inspection system and where activists and the media report breaches). While this activism reflects, to some degree, a democratisation of regulation through public oversight and 'wiki-regulation' (Grabosky, 2013), the tendency for Australia to criminalise this form of oversight—sometimes called 'Ag-Gag laws'<sup>11</sup> (Whitfort, 2019)—illustrates active attempts to sustain a participation gap in the actor constellation of regulation.

Irrespective of debates about the implementation of standards (where activists tend to argue that enforcement and implementation are poor, either by design or as a result of the scale of industrial production; UK4\_ADV, UK1\_ACA, AUS6\_ADV), while industry claims improvements in mortality demonstrate effectiveness (AUS4\_IND, UK3\_IND), the nature of industrial growing inherently produces a moral hazard problem. Risk (such as systems that lead to individual or collective suffering or death, either due to accidents or as a statistical likelihood applied across flocks; UK8\_IND, UK9\_ADV) is disproportionately borne by chickens over producers. This is exacerbated by the economic logics of the chicken meat industry, where the risk–reward distribution is not shared by producers. Slower growing animals within existing systems, for example, have clear welfare benefits (Rayner et al., 2020) across a number of measures, but these are largely immaterial in the commercial context, thus explaining their limited adoption.

## 7.2 | Hybrid governance and participation after the animal turn

The above discussion points to participation problems in these fields of hybrid regulation and control. Most obviously, key stakeholders tend to be excluded from active participation across the regulatory landscape, and the specific loci of standards creation are largely constructed as dichotomous relationships (state–economy or community–economy), rather than tripartite in nature. This is particularly true in the case of Australia when compared with the UK's AWC model that reflects wider political contestation over welfare issues in that nation.

Various authors have observed that delegated rule-making presents legitimacy and oversight problems where these processes are closed and have limited review by legislators (Brandsen & Karré, 2011; Punder, 2009). In the context of meat chickens, this presents the risk of fragile support for codes of practice, particularly given they suffer from inherent capture and opacity as currently developed (Fagotto, 2013; AUS6\_ADV, AUS10\_GOV). These types of concerns have led Buhmann to propose a 'reflexive law' approach to these kinds of issues, arguing that:

... reflexive law offers a regulatory approach for authorities to make organisations, such as companies, reorient their behaviour towards a wider societal goal. Its focus is on stimulating the internalisation of external concerns in complex environments that include multiple groups with competing and contradictory interests ... reflexive law theory recognises at a level of principle that power disparities must be balanced for the regulatory process and its outcome to be legitimate (Buhmann, 2017, p. 74).

This implies that the rebalancing of power may require active intervention by actors with an interest in correcting power differentials. Some authors have pointed to the role of the state through joint ownership and control (Toxopeus et al., 2020). Others observe that in areas where the state might be ‘complicit’ in maintaining a permissive attitude to low standards, these systems of certification are only effective where third sector stakeholders are mobilised and engaged (e.g. labour unions; Bair, 2017).

The benefit of this critique lies in assessing hybrid regulation against both democratic and performance criteria. For the former, evidence suggests that inclusivity will improve citizen support for co-regulatory outcomes (Kolcava et al., 2021), addressing Buhmann’s legitimacy concern via participation of heterogeneous actors to produce a different understanding of the type of public value that needs to be created in these arrangements.

However, outside of questions of human-centric governance, this solution has limits in determining public value where questions of cost and benefit are so starkly divided between human and non-human animals. Complexity of the utility of governance action has focused on questions of how to determine what ‘value’ means for participants. While the period under the dominant paradigm of new public management simplified policy notions of value—in practice if not in theory (see Moore, 1995)—to marketplace and like transitions, authors like Nikolakis and Moura da Veiga (2023) recognise how non-financial, ‘social’, value is a complex of experiences and perceptions between stakeholders and constituencies. Participants’ articulation of value tended to be clearer when talking about humans—in particular, the view that the sharp decline in production costs has produced a dramatic benefit to consumers (‘positive production outcomes’ AUS3\_IND, AUS4\_IND) which is replicated in political considerations around decision-making (UK4\_ADV, AUS2\_IND) and public sensitivity to product quality (e.g. objection to meat with visible white stripe; UK7\_ADV), whereas the benefits to chickens were seen as still outside of human understanding in some areas of physical assessment (AUS1\_IND, UK13\_IND) and ‘qualitative’/behavioural assessment (UK8\_IND), unrealisable (e.g. that slower growing systems might simply extend lives not worth living; AUS2\_IND), or increasingly complicated due to environmental concerns like waste and carbon production (AUS5\_IND, UK3\_IND). While advocacy organisations were most likely to note sentience considerations as a direction wherein the value of animal lives might be reconsidered (UK4\_ADV, AUS3\_ADV, UK9\_ADV, AUS10\_ADV), industry participants were unlikely to discuss sentience, or see it as a pending uncertainty (UK10\_IND) in the application of the *Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act 2022* (UK). One lawmaker observed that their colleagues’ inability to comprehend animal sentience encouraged a policy framing around positive consumer demand for higher welfare products rather than pursue arguments about the inherent value of animal experience (AUS10\_GOV).

In the consideration of this case area, therefore, we need to bring in the ‘Animal Turn’ to recognise that the inherent human–non-human relations involved in meat production bring in an additional core stakeholder, but who is excluded from these forms of consideration: chickens themselves who cannot be an object of consideration alone (Weil, 2010), but whose interests in their life (as subjects-of-a-life; Regan, 1982, p. 243) must be incorporated into the process of governance. The animal turn represents a wider academic and social movement to bring questions around animality, human–animal relations, and the role and status of animals into our research and theorisation. In doing so, the animal turn also ‘denormalises’ the way we think about animals, their place in society, and their agency. The animal turn is of particular significance in the social sciences, given that our disciplines have been predicated so strongly on an analytical separation

of humans from the non-human world through its focus on human societies and systems (Wilkie, 2015).

While welfare issues are notionally 'for animals', they are essentially 'about them' in their construction through human mechanisms of willing trade-offs of the interests of non-human animal interests for human concerns (meat quality, cost, quality, affect), but also a recognition that unlike in other areas of liberation, the subject 'cannot speak' in the way we commonly listen to other stakeholders. This failure to recognise reflects the meta-policy aspect of animal welfarism as anthropocentric and a prioritisation of human interests over non-human ones, as welfarism as experienced through product standards is more about how we human animals feel about industrial agriculture than the realities of these systems. That notion that law, regulation, and policymaking practice and theory are an example of 'strong' anthropocentrism (the pure instrumentalisation of animals; Callicott, 2002) is not a novel observation (e.g. see Almiron et al., 2022; Lederman et al., 2021; McShane, 2016; Mitchell, 2022; Reeves & Peters, 2021; Stenmark, 2002). But one that has been predominantly critiqued in terms of environmental policy with the tendency to treat animal well-being as secondary to/or and means to ecosystem health.<sup>12</sup> However, the significance of anthropocentrism in policy needs to be recognised, not just in the way we think about policy design (as critics), but also in the limits of policy science. This picks up on Kopnina's (2016) important reminder of anthropocentrism as hegemonic in its impact, and resultingly, often under-recognised by conventional policy studies.<sup>13</sup>

Recognition of anthropocentrism requires us to ask the question: does non-human animal welfare fall under 'the shadow of hierarchy' with the state willing to use the stick 'if necessary' (Steurer, 2013, p. 402)? In this regard, the answer would be a qualified 'no'. State minimum standards and enforcement in animal welfare reflect an enduring disinterestedness, even in the face of extreme provocation, where genuine welfare 'crises' (e.g. the live export scandal in Australia; Evans & Johnson, 2020) have failed to prompt substantive and sustained intervention and the development of hybrid regulatory systems that meet the standards of reflexive law-making (vs. a return towards the status quo). Thus, while political pragmatism has motivated welfare advocates to focus on frame alignment strategies with issues of greater political salience—food standards and safety (in the case of the United Kingdom), shifting public opinion on welfare issues (both jurisdictions), and issues like environmentalism (emergent)—as a justification for hybrid regulation, they have remained unable to escape the use of anthropocentric justifications in agenda setting and remain therefore constrained within anthropocentric policy paradigms.

While the failure to achieve a paradigm change might talk to the need to bring in a fourth 'sector' to the threefold model illustrated in Figure 1, the simple addition of more stakeholders may not resolve the problem of an expanded understanding of public value in hybrid regulation. As Lindgren and Öhman (2019) argue in their evaluation of the animal turn in education, increased pluralisation does not necessarily promote practice that takes animal subjectivity seriously—even if the question of the subaltern's capacity to speak is resolved (Spivak, 1988)—as this appears likely to present 'different shades' of anthropocentrism. In their promotion of 'critical pluralism' for an Animal Turn, they argue for an approach which should 'recognise non-human agency to reveal political and ethical dimensions' of systems that impact the well-being of non-human animals. This reflects Donaldson's (2020) notion of 'enabled agency' where animal preferences can be determined through the provision of a range of choices that allow them to demonstrate their 'proclivities, preferences, and choices' (p. 720). At present, the expression of preferences in animal welfare standards (both state and private) tends to see the ability for chickens to express their preferences (natural behaviours) as a welfare standard that could be delivered *to animals*, rather than an iterative performance that might indicate to regulators animal's interests and preferences

to feedback into the system of regulation and human–animal interaction. Importantly for those who would like to rehabilitate the educational and informational value of standards, a critical pluralism would also reveal (rather than propt to resolve) areas of conflict, disagreement, and trade-offs (Lindgren & Öhman, 2019, pp. 1208–1209). This reflects an understanding that static notions of moral acceptability as captured in public and private codes attempt to depoliticise the inherently political.

## 8 | CONCLUSION

The reliance on private standards-making organisations has benefits and limitations in improving the lives of tens of millions of animals annually. In this comparative case study, both the United Kingdom and Australia can point to private standards as having high levels of public acceptance, governing the lives of most animals to a welfare standard above the legislated minima. This has been associated with slow and incremental improvements in welfare standards, but it does not fulfil the promise of private standards and certification as more entrepreneurial and dynamic than state regulation while addressing basic problems in the marketplace around producer and consumer information. Reflecting the dominant paradigm of anthropocentrism in public policy, the allocation of some animals to our sphere of concern based on their visibility to public welfare concern (generally chicken consumed domestically, as ‘whole’ animals, and by humans) has no real justification from either an ethical or welfare science perspective (O’Sullivan, 2011). A focus on these regulatory fields from the perspective of hybridity is productive in two ways. Descriptively, it permits a sensitive analysis of important differences between the Australian and U.K. cases, helping to understand and explain the development of the two systems of hybrid regulation. Analytically, it permits an evaluation of the much-heralded notion of hybridity as a solution to complex governance problems, finding that the cases present narrow and limited forms of hybridity that have generated very little regulatory change ‘post’ the administrative state. This underperformance can be associated with limited state interest in this area, itself reflected in underlying anthropocentrism in both practice and the academic study of public policy. The critical recognition of this problem permits a way forward to reclaim the value of hybridity for regulation in farmed animal welfare.

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Authors elect to not share data.

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## ENDNOTE

- <sup>1</sup>However, similarities can be made with fish raised via aquaculture (vs. wild caught fish).
- <sup>2</sup>This is particularly interesting in the case of chickens, where there has been a tendency through industrialisation to reduce the birds to undifferentiated commodities (Probyn-Rapsey, 2013).
- <sup>3</sup>This variation from traditional practices stemmed from criticisms of the original process, and allegations that the lead agency had engaged in private meetings within industry groups to shape the outcomes of the overall code development process (Ellis, 2018). Criticisms were picked up by the Western Australian Minister for Agriculture, and that jurisdiction threatened to withdraw from the process (Thomas & Branley, 2017).
- <sup>4</sup>It is likely these legacy requirements will be replaced with domestic laws in coming years as part of the post-Brexit process.
- <sup>5</sup>The Ministry would be abolished and replaced with Defra in 2001, during the foot and mouth disease outbreak of that year (Taylor, 2003).
- <sup>6</sup>This policymaking context is captured in the use of private standards that employ the term 'assurance' and the emphasis on trust this conveys about the product. This can be compared with RSPCA Australia's use of 'approved' to describe their standards making. Approved denotes and highlights the external nature of the assessment process in that country is driven by the partnership between retailers and the third sector. However, the RSPCA Australia focuses on the organisation having access to program-specific and other reporting requirements of participating producers over direct inspections (RSPCA Australia, 2020a, p. 6).
- <sup>7</sup>RSPCA Australia is the national peak body of the federated state- and territory-based RSPCA entities operating at the sub-national level.
- <sup>8</sup>As Brandsen et al. observed, this is a basic flaw in the view of hybridisation as a contemporary process, noting third sector organisations are by nature 'hybrid, fuzzy, and miscellaneous' (Brandsen et al., 2005).
- <sup>9</sup>The recent review of Red Tractor's environmental performance similarly denotes another area of contestation over this private regulatory system (see Environment Agency, 2020).
- <sup>10</sup>For example, the Queensland RSPCA had a dual focus on the welfare of non-human animals and human children at its establishment.
- <sup>11</sup>For example, the Criminal Code Amendment (Agricultural Protection) Act 2019 (Australia).
- <sup>12</sup>Importantly, and particularly in the United Kingdom, the current governance regime for meat chickens may be subject to intrusion by environmental policy concerns, with increasing public and elite interest in specific (i.e. waste outflows) and generalised (i.e. carbon pollution) environmental concerns (Costantini et al., 2021). This may be problematic for those who advocate for improved welfare standards through the adoption of 'slower growing' breeds given the per-chicken increase in food and energy consumption that these systems necessitate (AUS2\_ADV, AUS11\_IND, UK3\_IND, UK4\_ADV, UK6\_GOV, UK7\_ADV).
- <sup>13</sup>Which has lagged behind other social science disciplines in its engagement with animals (Ritvo, 2007).

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