

19 September 2013



MEDIA RELEASE: The Australian Livestock Processing Industry Animal Welfare Certification System (AAWCS)

The Australian Meat Industry Council (AMIC), the industry's peak body that represents livestock processors and independent retailers, today launched the 'Australian Livestock Processing Industry Animal Welfare Certification System' or AAWCS.

The AAWCS is an independently audited certification program used by livestock processors to demonstrate compliance with the processing industry's best practice animal welfare standards titled the '*Industry Animal Welfare Standards for Livestock Processing Establishments*' (The Standards).

In launching the AAWCS at the AMIC National Conference, Mr Tom Maguire, Chairman of AMIC's Animal Welfare Committee, said "Good animal welfare practice is a requirement of customers of the Australian meat and livestock Industry both here in Australia and around the world".

"The AAWCS has been developed to help Australian livestock processors demonstrate to their customers their superior commitment to best practice animal welfare".

"The AAWCS covers all animal welfare activities at the processing establishment - from receipt of livestock to the point of humane processing", Mr Maguire said.

At the core of the system is a commitment to comply with the '*Industry Animal Welfare Standards for Livestock Processing Establishments*'.

"These Standards integrate Australia's mandatory animal welfare requirements at livestock processing establishments together with commercial and international requirements into a single best practice animal welfare standard for livestock processors", Mr Maguire said.

"The Standards were first developed in 2005 by an Industry led committee comprising representatives from government, the scientific community, animal welfare organisations, as well as technical experts and Industry representatives; and are regularly reviewed to ensure they remain current".

"The AAWCS introduces an independently audited certification program to underpin the Standards that helps participating livestock processors demonstrate their superior commitment to best practice animal welfare", Mr Maguire said.

Participating livestock processors commit to the certification program rules, requiring them to implement the Standards in their documented Quality Management System, which is overseen by a member of management to make sure best practice animal welfare is maintained at all times.

The Quality Management System includes Standard Operating Procedures, Work Instructions, monitoring, verification and recording systems, and preventive and corrective actions.

Staff who handle and process livestock must also be competent and trained in the required animal welfare skills. Specific animal welfare training courses provided by MINTRAC, the Industry's training organisation, are available to help meet this requirement.

“To maintain certification participating livestock processors must also be subject to an annual audit by an approved auditor”, Mr Maguire said.

“Auditors under the AAWCS are approved by AUS-MEAT Limited and are required to meet specific animal welfare and auditing competency criteria. This ensures a consistent approach to animal welfare auditing and integrity in the certification process”, Mr Maguire said.

“Livestock processors that are certified under the AAWCS also have exclusive rights to use the AAWCS Trademark”.

“The Trademark can be used to promote the participant’s certification status to customers and that the establishment’s brands and products have been processed in accordance with the scope of the program - from receipt of livestock to the processing establishment to the point of humane processing”, Mr Maguire said.

“The Australian Livestock Processing Industry Animal Welfare Certification System helps livestock processors assure their customers, and the general community, that their establishment is operating to best practice animal welfare standards which are independently audited and certified”, Mr Maguire said.

Participation is voluntary and available to any Australian establishment that processes the major commercially farmed species including cattle, sheep, pigs, and goats.

The ‘Australian Livestock Processing Industry Animal Welfare Certification System’ is an initiative of the Australian Meat Industry Council, with support from the Australian Meat Processor Corporation (AMPC) and AUS-MEAT Limited.

AMPC is the red meat processing Industry’s national Research & Development Corporation, supporting Research, Development and Extension/Education initiatives directed at improving the sustainability and efficiency of the Australian meat processing industry.

AUS-MEAT is the Australian meat and livestock industry’s standards management and certification body. AUS-MEAT manages the certification program, via the Australian Meat Industry Language and Standards Committee, on behalf of the Industry.

The AAWCS is an initiative of the Australian Meat Processing Industry:



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