

Group:	RSPCA Australia	Amendment:	Governance	ID code:	1035
Control:	Public domain	Type:	Administration	Authoriser:	EO
Status:	Released	Date:	12/01/2023	Supervisor:	EO
Title:	RSPCA Standards Development and Review			Owner:	SSO-FA

# RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme Standards

## Development and review process

### Background

The vision of the RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme (the Scheme) is a future of higher welfare farming. It focuses on improving the quality of life of farmed animals and providing guidance and a trustworthy choice to consumers wanting to purchase products from higher welfare farming systems that are routinely assessed through a robust certification process. The Scheme is underpinned by the *RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme Standards* (the Standards) which set out animal welfare focussed requirements that aim to meet the animal's behavioural and physiological needs and are designed to assist the relevant industry to continually improve and demonstrate better animal welfare outcomes.

Each Standard review aims to ensure continuous improvement of the welfare of animals. The Standards, during each development and review process, consider the following:

- RSPCA policy and position papers
- Animal welfare science research and technology in Australia and overseas
- Relevant regulations in Australia, including legislation, codes of practice and standards and guidelines for animal welfare
- Technical, veterinary and producer advice and experience
- Current industry practice compared to best practice
- Commercial practicality and feasibility of a requirement
- Financial implications of a requirement and whether a phase-in period is appropriate
- Public concerns and expectations around animal welfare
- Unintended negative animal welfare outcomes which could occur because of a requirement.

### Types of Standard development and review processes

- Development of a new Standard
- Development of new standards (requirements) to expand the scope of an existing Standard (e.g. breeder bird or hatchery standards for meat chickens)
- Formal Standard review that occurs approximately every five years to update the Standard to progressively improve animal welfare based on new science, improved industry practice, and/or changes in legislation where appropriate.
- Ad hoc Standard review that occurs as required to review certain clause/s or a section in response to new science, changes in legislation or industry practice.

### Standards development and review - Roles and responsibilities

#### RSPCA Australia Science Team

The RSPCA Australia Science Team is responsible for:

- coordinating and conducting a Standard development or review process
- commissioning a literature review
- chairing and coordinating communications with the Technical Advisory Group (see below)
- producing draft/s for public consultation
- providing input into deliberations of the Management Advisory Group (see below)
- providing a final draft Standard for approval by the RSPCA Australia Board.

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### RSPCA Approved

The RSPCA Approved business unit is responsible for:

- providing relevant information and feedback when requested during a Standard development or review process
- managing general communications with relevant stakeholders during the consultation phase
- advising stakeholders and notifying them of the release of a new or revised Standard
- updating the RSPCA Approved website
- rolling out the Standard following completion of the development or review process.

### RSPCA Australia Certification Body

The RSPCA Australia Certification Body is responsible for:

- providing relevant information and feedback when requested during a Standard development or review process

### RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme Standard Technical Advisory Group (TAG)

The TAG aims to provide a forum for relevant stakeholders to share and discuss technical, practical and evidence-based advice and information relevant to the draft Standard including its application in a commercial setting and/or clarity and intent of the requirements. The TAG is an advisory body to the RSPCA Australia Science team and is not responsible for making decisions relating to the requirements of the finalised Standard. Membership of the TAG is by invitation from RSPCA Australia and involvement is expected for the length of the Standard development or review process. The sharing of information with and among TAG members is confidential unless stated otherwise.

See [RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme Standard Technical Advisory Group Terms of Reference](#) document.

### RSPCA Management Advisory Group (MAG)

The MAG reviews the consultation draft/s and finalised draft Standard and makes decisions and/or recommends where appropriate on contentious issues identified during the Standard drafting process. Decisions are made on a consensus basis with due consideration of all the factors impacting the Standard development or review process. Where consensus cannot be reached the decision may be referred to AWEC (see below).

The MAG membership includes:

- RSPCA Australia Chief Executive Officer
- RSPCA Australia Chief Science Officer
- Manager - RSPCA Approved
- RSPCA Australia Communication and Campaigns Lead

### Animal Welfare and Ethics Committee (AWEC) and RSPCA Australia Board

AWEC reviews the finalised draft Standard, aims to resolve any contentious issues, and then provides a recommendation to the RSPCA Australia Board regarding suitability for publication. The RSPCA Australia Board then reviews the AWEC recommendation and the finalised draft Standard and decides whether to endorse the Standard for publication.

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### Standard development and formal Standard review process (1 - 2 years)

Action	Responsibility	Timeframe
Decision made to commence Standard development or review The decision to commence a new Standard development process must be agreed upon by the RSPCA Australia Board	RSPCA Approved Science	open
Project Launch Meeting Science Team, RSPCA Approved and Certification Body meet to discuss key animal welfare and compliance issues and areas to address during the Standard development or review process. Stakeholder engagement to be determined with key points of contact, including record keeping requirements.	Science RSPCA Approved Certification body	2 weeks
Commission literature review - Drafting, EOIs, selection and arranging contracts/payment	Science Accounts CEO	4 – 8 weeks
Literature review (for internal RSPCA use only) - Establishing outline, communicating with consultant/s and reviewing drafts and approving final version as complete.	Science	3 – 6 months
On Site visits - Project Lead from Science Team to determine key areas of interest for science on site visits and liaise with RSPCA Approved to identify potential on site locations (those on the Scheme and not).	Science RSPCA Approved RSPCA Administration team	
Establish TAG - Develop potential members list, send invitations, finalise list and prepare paperwork.	Science RSPCA Approved Certification Body	2 – 3 weeks
Feedback on current Standard – TAG and wider consultation including member Societies - Create stakeholder list, arrange engagement with stakeholders, reminder follow ups and review and compilation of feedback.	Science RSPCA Approved	4 – 6 weeks
Drafting of first consultation draft Standard and explanatory notes - Summarise key animal welfare issues, stakeholder feedback on current Standard and develop first draft, and finalise first draft	Science MAG	8 weeks
<b>KEY CHECKPOINT</b> - MAG Approval of first draft prior to distribution to TAG and stakeholders.	Science MAG	
TAG meeting (virtual) to discuss first draft revised Standard - Review first draft, arrange meetings, maintain records of feedback in meeting and provided post meeting.	Science RSPCA Approved – administrative support	6-10 weeks
Stakeholder consultation on draft Standard and explanatory notes (TAG and wider stakeholder consultation) - Engage stakeholders and provide time for written feedback with reminders, review and compile feedback.	Science RSPCA Approved	
Drafting of post-consultation draft Standard - Identify potentially contentious issues, draft Standard and prepare post-consultation draft for TAG review.	Science MAG RSPCA Approved	4 – 6 weeks
TAG meeting (virtual) to discuss post-consultation draft Standard	Science	

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- Discuss drafts to date and potential contentious issues, summarise and record feedback and action taken.		
Finalising Standard and supporting documentation	Science MAG	2 – 4 weeks
<b>KEY CHECKPOINT</b> A second stakeholder consultation phase may be required if significant changes are made to the post consultation draft Standard - Determine if second site visit(s) are necessary for any technical assessment or relevant advice on practical feasibility of proposed standards.	Science MAG	
Final Standard and supporting documentation (including gap analysis and gap explanation) submitted for approval process.	Science Relevant Board Committee	
Finalisation of approval process with RSPCA Australia Board	Science RSPCA Australia Board	
Prepare final Standard for publication - Formatting, design and development of associated documents.	Comms RSPCA Approved Science	1 week
Science Team to provide final Standard, explanatory notes and summary of key changes to RSPCA Approved for publication and implementation - RSPCA Approved to send to all relevant stakeholders - RSPCA Approved to publish the Standard on website	Science Comms RSPCA Approved	1 week
Communications assessment - Identify key areas in the Standard that require further comms pieces where appropriate.	Science RSPCA Approved Comms	
Relevant documents and webpages are updated where required - KB articles - Documents and webpages referencing the Standard - Standard intent document for conformance assessment	Science RSPCA Approved Certification Body Comms	open

### Ad hoc Standard review process (3 - 6 months)

Action	Responsibility	Timeframe
Decision made to commence Standard section and/or requirement/s review	RSPCA Approved Science	open
Project Launch Meeting Science Team, RSPCA Approved and Certification Body meet to discuss key animal welfare and compliance issues and areas to address during the Standard development or review process. Stakeholder engagement to be determined with key points of contact, including record keeping requirements	Science RSPCA Approved Certification Body	2 weeks
Review relevant scientific literature on requirement/s of concern, including the animal welfare issues and ways to address them	Science	2 weeks
Drafting of revised Standard requirement/s and explanatory notes (includes summary of relevant scientific literature and rationale for any change to requirement/s)	Science MAG	2 weeks

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Determine need for TAG (members previously involved in the Standard development or review process) involvement in review process</li> <li>- MAG meetings as required</li> <li>- Finalised draft provided to MAG for approval</li> </ul>		
<p>Stakeholder consultation on draft Standard and explanatory notes (TAG and wider stakeholder consultation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Engage stakeholders and provide time for written feedback with reminders, review and compile feedback.</li> </ul>	Science RSPCA Approved	4 weeks
<p>Drafting of post-consultation draft Standard</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify potentially contentious issues, draft Standard and prepare post-consultation draft for TAG review.</li> </ul>	Science MAG	4 – 6 weeks
Finalising Standard requirement/s and supporting documentation	Science MAG	2 – 4 weeks
Final Standard requirement/s and supporting documentation submitted for approval process	Science MAG Relevant Board Committee Board	
<p>Prepare final Standard for publication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Formatting, design and development of associated documents.</li> </ul>	Science Comms RSPCA Approved	1 week
<p>Science Team to provide final Standard, explanatory notes and summary of key changes to RSPCA Approved for publication and implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- RSPCA Approved to send to all relevant stakeholders</li> <li>- RSPCA Approved to publish the Standard on website</li> </ul>	Science Comms RSPCA Approved	1 week
Review and update relevant KB articles where required	Science	Open