

QUESTION ON NOTICE
No. 300
Asked on Wednesday, 8 March 2006

MR ENGLISH asked the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries (MR MULHERIN)-

QUESTION:

Will he provide details of the Department of Primary Industries' Animal Ethics Program and programs to promote animal welfare?

ANSWER:

A caring society ensures good animal welfare standards by promoting responsible animal care and use and helping to ensure that animal welfare standards meet public expectations.

The Queensland Government has a strong commitment to ensure that all animals in Queensland have appropriate standards of animal welfare that aim to achieve a reasonable balance between the welfare of animals and the interests of persons whose livelihood is dependent on them.

The Government recognises that advances in scientific knowledge increase our knowledge of animal welfare and that community attitudes and expectations about the use of animals changes over time. Animal welfare standards need to be able to change to reflect new knowledge and changing community expectations.

Through its animal welfare activities the Queensland Government is a leader in legislation and web based animal welfare information, consultation and education. This allows Queenslanders, our visitors and our trading partners to be confident that animals in Queensland are protected by sound animal welfare standards.

The Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F) is the Queensland Government's lead agency for animal welfare. Through its Animal Welfare Unit, DPI&F delivers the animal welfare program. This program has four main components delivered by specialist staff:

- **Animal ethics** is ensuring that persons who use animals for scientific purposes are accountable and responsible and that processes are open. Under the *Animal Care and Protection Act 2001* (ACP Act) which commenced in 2002, a "person" who intends to use an animal for a scientific purpose in Queensland must register with DPI&F and have that activity approved by a nominated Animal Ethics Committee. Registrations are for three years. The first person was registered in October 2002. Now in 2006 there are 240 persons (individuals, schools and corporations) registered with the DPI&F. Three years on, those first registrants are now renewing their registration.

In 2005 DPI&F implemented a new monitoring program for compliance with the *Australian code of practice for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes* (Scientific Use Code) and to date have carried out approximately 50 audits of registered persons. These audits have involved government authorities and universities.

DPI&F is pleased with the results of the audits to date and there has generally been a high level of animal care standards and compliance with the Scientific Use Code. There are a large number of registrants who have very good ethics systems operating and who demonstrate a strong commitment to animal welfare. The majority of the non-compliance issues identified so far relate to administrative issues and DPI&F has observed no deliberate attempts to misuse animals or dodge compliance responsibilities.

DPI&F appreciates the level of cooperation received from registrants who have been audited. There has been nothing but positive and valuable feedback on the monitoring program.

- Animal welfare **education** programs are continually being developed to help Queenslanders comply with the ACP Act. DPI&F believes that education, supported by strong legislation, is the key to improving animal welfare standards. The web is used as the primary means of supplying information and includes a children's section "Help An Animal Smile" which has been developed in conjunction with practising teachers and is a great example of cross-government cooperation that will result in significant community education and attitudinal changes relating to animal welfare in Queensland.

Smiley a Labradoodle has joined DPI&F as the Help an Animal Smile program ambassador in Queensland primary schools and visits schools as part of the program. The program converts the 'duty of care' provisions in the ACP Act to Help an Animal Smile messages that are ideal to communicate to the next generation of Queensland's animal carers.

The Home Page of the children's website has links to activities, games, posters, animal crosswords, primary school presentation ("5 Things to Remember to Help an Animal Smile") and Activity Books.

- Developing **standards** for the care and use of animals in Queensland. The ACP Act places a duty of care on everyone in charge of an animal to take reasonable steps to provide for the animal's welfare needs. The ACP Act also defines acceptable animal welfare standards through the adoption of codes of practice for various types of animal use. This allows the Queensland community to identify the animal welfare standards they should apply.
- Enforcing legislated standards through the investigation of animal welfare **complaints**. All investigations are undertaken with the appropriate balance of education and regulation by trained inspectors following standard operating procedures.

More information about Queensland's animal welfare legislation is available on the DPI&F website - www.dpi.qld.gov.au/animalwelfare/