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RANGELANDS AUSTRALIA

# ANIMAL WELLBEING AND HEALTH

## Postgraduate Course – ANIM7018

Available Semester 2

In External Mode  
(Subject to minimum numbers)

### OVERVIEW

The well-being and health of animals has emerged as an important issue in the rangelands. Many changes in regulations and legislation have occurred in the last 50 years to reflect the changes in society's expectations of how all animals, including commercial, native and feral species involved in rangelands production systems, should be treated by and interact with humans.

A good understanding and knowledge of the importance of the well-being and health of animals involved in rangelands management systems is an essential component in the skills-set of those entrusted with producing a sustainable future for our rangelands. The evolution of opinion on animal welfare that has occurred over centuries past and that has produced our society's current concepts of animal welfare needs to be understood, in order to grasp the on-going changes in opinion, and what is driving these changes – social, political, and market-related factors.

In this course, you will develop the skills and knowledge in managing animals to ensure good nutrition, low stress environments and handling, and best practice husbandry procedures. You will learn how to deal with key factors (such as water, feed, disease and fear) so as to enhance domestic livestock wellbeing, and thus improve productivity and product quality, and decrease susceptibility to disease. We also examine a number of issues associated with wildlife and feral animals which impact on sustainable management strategies for rangeland enterprises, such as population control and disease.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

On completion of this course you will be able to:

- Appreciate the potential importance of animal well-being and health in strategic management, in business and in natural resource management contexts
- Recognise the social, political, regulatory, economic and scientific drivers in animal ethics and welfare and be aware of the need to address these issues in rangelands strategic management
- Incorporate best practice in animal welfare into rangeland enterprise management practices and property planning
- Apply current theories and practices in the field of domestic, feral and native animal health and husbandry to increase production and profitability of rangelands enterprises
- Source, use and evaluate relevant information including 'best practice' and advances in knowledge in addressing animal health issues and decisions relating to bio-security
- Analyse the impact of incorporating improved animal wellbeing and health standards into management systems, considering social, economic, biological aspects

- Identify and define consumer and market expectations of health and welfare standards and incorporate market and regulatory requirements into production systems

## COURSE STRUCTURE

Course modules include:

- Animal ethics and welfare
- Animal health and husbandry
- Animal welfare and health in rangeland enterprises
- Disease and Biosecurity
- Wildlife and feral animal welfare

## LEARNING FACILITATOR

**Geoff Niethe** (BVetSc, MVetSt) Geoff is a veterinarian by trade who spent the first 12 years of his working life in the NT - predominantly on the Barkly Tableland and then in Darwin. He gained experience in the beef, buffalo and crocodile industries, and rose to be Principal Animal Production Officer in the NT. He ran the large animal teaching practice at Goondiwindi in southern Queensland for the University of Queensland for 13 years. He then spent a couple of years in Turkey running a feedlot for McDonalds before returning to Australia. He now works part time for the MLA as the animal production co-ordinator for northern Australia research projects. He has worked in the rangelands of NT, WA and NSW. He is currently involved in consultancies investigating alternate pastoral systems in the Goldfields/Murchison regions of WA for the Department of Agriculture, and investigating the feasibility of multi species abattoirs in northern Australia. Geoff sits on an Animal Ethics Committee for the QDPI. He also runs a small beef breeding operation in the Lockyer Valley, which keeps him in touch with reality, the vagaries of the climate, market expectations and uncertainty of the Farming Game.

## REQUIRED TEXT BOOKS

There are no textbooks required for this course. Students are supplied with a book of readings that includes essential materials required for completion of learning activities and assessment items.

## ASSESSMENT

There are no 'examinations', just three assessment items for this course.

### Assessment 1: Online discussion activities - 40%

Throughout the course you will be required to complete 5 online learning activities, including on-line discussions and an on-line tutorial. The discussions will involve responding to readings and other stimuli, and reading and responding to the postings of other students and the course coordinator. The tutorial will involve researching a relevant topic, and then participating in a group discussion.

### Assessment 2: Issue Analysis – 25%

For this assessment item, you will prepare an analysis of a single animal health or welfare issue which is of interest to you. It must be an animal health or welfare issue which is of strategic importance for at least one rangelands business/industry or natural resource management enterprise/industry.

### Assessment 3: Management Plan – 35%

For this assessment, you will either: a. Select a 'best practice' theory/standard/practice in domestic, feral or native animal health or welfare management which has not yet been implemented within an enterprise or industry, and produce a plan on how that standard or practice could be incorporated into the management of the enterprise/industry, or b. Select a current management practice which negatively impacts on domestic, feral or native animal health or welfare in a rangelands enterprise, and produce a plan on how this practice could be replaced within the enterprise management.

## BACKGROUND TO THIS COURSE

The need for this course was identified by a national survey of education and skills needs for success in the rangelands. The course was developed by Rangelands Australia, and provides the first rangeland-specific collation of information on animal wellbeing and health. The structure, content and resources used in this course were influenced by producers, industry agents, veterinary surgeons, RSPCA education officers, and government advisors &/or researchers from Animal Health Australia, WA Department of Agriculture and Food, NSW Department of Primary Industries, Queensland Primary Industries & Fisheries, the Australian Wildlife Health Network, and the University of Queensland.

A draft of the course was reviewed by research and development officers, lecturers in animal studies, animal welfare industrial representatives and veterinary surgeons.

## REVIEWERS' COMMENTS

External reviewers have provided the following general comments on a draft of this course:

- *"An excellent initiative ... I would encourage RA to get this course into the market as it will help equip rangeland managers with a raft of valuable information."* Livestock R&D officer
- *"Great course, will provide framework for good learning."* Senior government veterinary surgeon
- *"A good introduction to the issues associated with animal well-being and health in the rangelands."* NSW DPI officer