



Factsheet: Kangaroo Industry Animal Welfare



The kangaroo industry takes animal welfare very seriously. Over the years it has worked closely with Australian governments to put in place tight controls and monitoring to ensure welfare outcomes are optimal. Many commentators claim that the kangaroo industry is the most animal welfare friendly way there is of producing red meat. After all an animal taken humanely directly from its natural environment without interference from human management is under much less stress than one penned for its life or trucked to slaughter.

Central to any discussion on the welfare outcomes in the kangaroo industry needs to be an understanding of what happens if kangaroo numbers are not controlled by a regulated harvest. If kangaroo populations are allowed to spiral out of control many, many will die of starvation during times of drought.

Human and dingo predation have been a part of the kangaroo's ecosystem for millennia. European settlement has largely removed these control mechanisms on kangaroo numbers. Many professional ecologists consider that the commercial harvest simply replaces Aboriginal hunting and dingo predation helping to maintain a natural balance.

Harvesting controls

All commercially processed kangaroos are taken by professional licensed Harvesters who must undergo training by government authorities in the animal welfare controls. They must be assessed by the regulators as competent in their knowledge and practices. Extensive regulations and monitoring ensure they deliver humane outcomes.

Commercial kangaroo harvesters are skilled professional harvesters who must comply with the Australian Government's Code of Practice for the Humane Shooting of Kangaroos and Wallabies for Commercial Purposes (the Code). The Code was developed after a long process of consultation involving industry, government,

animal welfare groups, the scientific community and the public. It sets an achievable standard of humane conduct and is the minimum required of persons shooting kangaroos and wallabies. The Code is based on a considerable amount of scientific research on kangaroo behaviour and ecology and is implemented through education and relevant government authority legislation as appropriate.

All animals processed for meat must be inspected to ensure they have been taken according to the Code. The Australian Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (the Department) outlines the inspection and reporting procedures in Meat Notice – Kangaroo Welfare Incidence Reporting. All suspected incidents of animals being taken outside of the Code must be reported to the relevant State authority for potential prosecution.

In addition, in each State the regulatory authorities conduct regular random unannounced audits of kangaroo Harvesters. Over 1,000 such audits/year are conducted per annum in NSW alone and an important part of these audits is compliance with the Code.

The RSPCA has stated:

"If achieved correctly, kangaroo culling is considered one of the most humane forms of animal slaughter. An animal killed instantly within its own environment is under less stress than domestic stock that have been herded, penned, transported etc." (RSPCA, 1985)

With regard to the dispatch of pouch young the RSPCA concluded:

"The dispatch of pouch young by professional shooters was generally by a sharp blow to the head or by decapitation. There is no reason to consider this as a cruel act." (RSPCA 1985)



Factsheet: Kangaroo Industry Animal Welfare

Male only

In 2013 the KIAA introduced a policy to see the industry move to a male only take. Since then the level of females taken have declined from 30% of the overall take to less than 5% (NSW 2014, Qld 2015).

Evidence of welfare outcomes

The kangaroo industry has been subject to considerable scrutiny over the years with regard to animal welfare, and has in fact encouraged a high level of accountability. The welfare outcomes delivered by the industry have been independently monitored on several occasions.

In 1999 the Kangaroo Industry Association of Australia (KIAA) successfully lobbied the Australian Minister for Environment to fund a survey carried out by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) which audited current welfare outcomes in the kangaroo harvest.

This was conducted during 2001 and the report released in July 2002. It concluded:

“These results demonstrate that there has clearly been an improvement in the humanness of the commercial killing of kangaroos compared with that recorded in the 1985 Report. In 1985 the overall proportion of head-shot kangaroos in Australia was estimated to be 86%. In 2000/2002, it was 95.9%”. (RSPCA, 2002).

The latest survey, conducted in 2012, This represents an extraordinarily high level of compliance.

More recently the kangaroo industry and Federal Government funded a study to monitor welfare outcomes for kangaroos under actual field conditions. This study conducted by the NSW Department of Primary Industries accompanied Harvesters on actual shooting trips and recorded actual welfare outcomes under normal operating conditions. It demonstrated an even higher level of compliance with 99.6% of all kangaroos targeted by professional Harvesters being killed instantaneously in accordance with regulatory requirements (McLeod and Sharp 2014). This demonstrates very high level of competence and compliance in the industry.

All kangaroos processed in export registered premises are also inspected by Federal Government Veterinarians. They are required to monitor compliance with the Welfare standards and report any non-compliance. In 2014, over 1 million kangaroos were inspected and only 25 were reported as non-head shot (Dept. Agriculture data).

www.kangarooindustry.com

