



Submission of **SAFE**: Animal Welfare (Regulations for Management of Pigs) Amendment Bill.

To: Primary Production Select Committee

23 October 2025



SAFE wishes to be heard in support of this submission.

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About SAFE

SAFE (Save Animals from Exploitation) is New Zealand's leading animal rights organisation. Our goal is to inspire institutional, political, and societal shifts that reduce animal suffering, improve their lives, and ultimately, end their exploitation. SAFE represents the views of tens of thousands of New Zealanders who support stronger protections for animals.

For over 15 years, SAFE has campaigned to end the intensive confinement of mother pigs. Our sustained advocacy contributed to the 2010 ban on sow stalls, which were fully phased out in 2015. Since then, SAFE has continued to lead efforts for stronger legal protections for pigs through petitions, investigations, political engagement, and strategic litigation. In 2020, the New Zealand Animal Law Association and SAFE successfully challenged the legality of farrowing crates and mating stalls in the High Court. SAFE's ongoing advocacy seeks to ensure that the *Animal Welfare Act 1999* is upheld in both letter and spirit – reflecting modern science, ethics, and the values of the New Zealand public.

1. Executive summary

The *Animal Welfare (Regulations for Management of Pigs) Amendment Bill* represents one of the most profound setbacks to Aotearoa's animal welfare law in recent history. It seeks to re-authorise confinement systems that the High Court ruled unlawful in 2020, amending the Animal Welfare Act 1999 to permit practices that are fundamentally incompatible with its purpose.

If enacted, the Bill would allow the continued confinement of mother pigs in crates and stalls so restrictive that they cannot turn around, nest, or care for their piglets. It would override clear judicial findings, disregard the independent advice of the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC), and weaken the legal foundation for animal protection in Aotearoa.

The 2020 High Court judgment affirmed that farrowing crates and mating stalls breach the Act because they prevent pigs from expressing normal patterns of behaviour. Rather than completing the scheduled phase-out of these systems by December 18, 2025, the Bill would amend the Act to make them lawful indefinitely.

This approach undermines both the welfare of animals and the integrity of the legislative process. It bypasses the mechanisms Parliament created to ensure that animal-welfare standards are based on science, expert advice, and public consultation.

Extensive evidence shows that confinement causes physical injury, stress, and frustration to intelligent, social animals. Enshrining such practices in law would contradict decades of welfare research and erode the credibility of New Zealand's animal welfare regime.

Public sentiment is equally clear. Independent polling commissioned by SAFE in 2025 found that nearly three-quarters of New Zealanders oppose farrowing crates and support stronger legal protections for pigs. Adopting this Bill would place Parliament in direct conflict with both scientific consensus and the values of the New Zealand public.

Aotearoa has long prided itself on progressive animal-welfare standards and its recognition of animals as sentient beings. Upholding that reputation requires laws that reflect compassion, fairness, and integrity – not those that exempt cruelty from scrutiny. Parliament now faces a defining choice: whether to maintain New Zealand's leadership in animal welfare, or to entrench systems of suffering that the law itself was designed to prevent.

2. Recommendations

SAFE urges the Primary Production Select Committee to reject the *Animal Welfare (Regulations for Management of Pigs) Amendment Bill* in its entirety. The Bill is inconsistent with both the purpose of the Animal Welfare Act 1999 and the principles of sound law-making.

2.1 Reject the Bill outright

The Committee should recommend **that the Bill not proceed**, on the grounds that it legalises practices already found by the High Court to be unlawful under the Animal Welfare Act 1999.

Passing this Bill would set a dangerous precedent for governments to rewrite primary legislation to shield unlawful practices from judicial scrutiny.

2.2 Reaffirm Parliament's original intent

The Committee should reaffirm the intent established when section 183A(2) was introduced in 2015 – that transitional regulations were to be a **temporary mechanism**, not a means of perpetuating non-compliant practices indefinitely.

Following the 2020 High Court ruling (*NZALA & SAFE v Attorney-General*), Parliament's intent was clear: confinement systems such as farrowing crates and mating stalls could be tolerated only for a short, transitional period while the industry transitioned to systems that met the requirements of the Act.

Reinstating these systems through primary legislation would nullify that original intent, undermine the authority of the judiciary, and erode public confidence in the integrity of animal welfare law.

The Committee should therefore recommend that the Government **re-establish a lawful transition pathway** toward compliance with section 10 of the Animal Welfare Act 1999, ensuring that any future regulations explicitly align with the Act's requirement to provide animals opportunity to display normal patterns of behaviour.

2.3 Uphold evidence-based, independent decision-making

The Committee should direct the Minister for Agriculture to defer to the advice of the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC), which has repeatedly concluded that farrowing crates and mating stalls do not meet the purpose of the Act.

Future regulatory decisions on pig welfare should be made through the established section 183A process, supported by scientific evidence and genuine public consultation, not by ad hoc amendment to primary legislation.

Ignoring NAWAC's advice undermines the purpose of its statutory independence. Evidence-based policy is essential to maintain scientific credibility and international confidence in New Zealand's animal-welfare standards.

2.4 Extend the consultation period

The current two-week timeframe for submissions is **insufficient for meaningful public participation** on legal changes of this significance.

The Committee should recommend that the consultation period be extended to at least **eight weeks**, enabling proper input from animal-welfare experts, veterinarians, farmers, and the wider public.

3. Legislative context and implications for law-making

The *Animal Welfare (Regulations for Management of Pigs) Amendment Bill* represents one of the most egregious regressions in New Zealand’s animal-welfare law. If enacted, it would not only reverse hard-won progress toward ending the confinement of pigs in farrowing crates and mating stalls, but erode the integrity of the Animal Welfare Act 1999 (“the Act”) itself.

3.1 The High Court decision and the intent of the Act

In 2020, the New Zealand Animal Law Association (NZALA) and SAFE successfully challenged the legality of regulations and minimum standards permitting farrowing crates and mating stalls. The High Court found that these systems prevented pigs from displaying normal patterns of behaviour such as turning, nesting, and caring for their young – in breach of the purpose of the Act. Justice Cull held that the existing regulations were **unlawful and invalid** because they circumvented Parliament’s intention and were inconsistent with the Act’s fundamental welfare obligations.¹

Following that judgment, the then-Minister for Agriculture issued new regulations under section 183A(2) of the Act, allowing the continued use of crates and stalls **only for a five-year transitional period**, with an expectation that they would be **phased out by December 18, 2025**.² This pathway was deliberately narrow: Parliament’s framework for transitional regulation under section 183A(2) indicates that any practice inconsistent with the behavioural-needs clause was intended to be temporary and to enable a genuine transition to compliant systems.³

3.2 NAWAC’s 2022 consultation and recommendations

In line with this legal direction, NAWAC initiated a comprehensive public consultation in 2022 on a new Pig Code of Welfare and replacement regulations. The process attracted nearly 4,500 submissions from individuals, animal-welfare organisations, veterinarians, and industry groups – among the highest levels of public engagement seen for a Code of Welfare review in recent years.⁴

After reviewing the evidence, NAWAC concluded that **neither the status quo nor temporary crating systems could meet the purpose of the Act**. It recommended a full transition to free-farrowing systems, supported by international scientific consensus that these provide better

1. *New Zealand Animal Law Association & SAFE v Attorney-General* [2020] NZHC 3009 (High Court of New Zealand, Cull J, 13 November 2020). <https://www.nzlii.org/nz/cases/NZHC/2020/3009.html>

2. Ministry for Primary Industries. “All animal welfare codes | Pigs.” Accessed October 21, 2025. <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/animals/animal-welfare/codes/all-animal-welfare-codes/>

3. *NZALA & SAFE v Attorney-General* [2020] NZHC 3009.

4. National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee. *Code of Welfare Final Report – Pigs*. Wellington: Ministry for Primary Industries, May 2023. <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/70671>.

welfare outcomes for both pigs and piglets.⁵ NAWAC reaffirmed this advice in February 2024 after peer review by Professor Anna Valros of the University of Helsinki, a leading expert in pig welfare science.⁶ It reiterated this position yet again in April 2025, warning that the Government’s proposal to retain farrowing crates would not meet the purpose of the Act.⁷

3.3 The Government’s departure from due process

Rather than acting on NAWAC’s evidence-based recommendation, the current Government introduced the present Bill in October 2025 just two months before the existing regulations were due to expire. The Bill repeals the phase-out and seeks to amend the primary Act itself to declare farrowing crates and mating stalls lawfully permissible indefinitely.

Introduced without proper consultation, these proposals abandon the transparent, evidence-based, participatory process that guided the trajectory of earlier pig welfare reforms.

This approach is extraordinary and without precedent in animal-welfare law. It effectively **rewrites the Act to legitimise practices that the Courts have already ruled unlawful**, bypassing the very mechanisms Parliament established to safeguard animal welfare. It also shields these systems from future judicial review, thereby removing vital checks and balances.

In effect, the Bill extends the current arrangements for another ten years, until 2035, while providing only minimal modifications – such as a nominal 13 percent increase in space for grower pigs. By doing so, it preserves the status quo for another decade and inhibits meaningful progress toward compliance with the Act’s behavioural-needs clause.

3.4 Implications for good law-making and constitutional integrity

The method used to achieve these ends is as troubling as the outcome. The Bill uses primary legislation to enact what are effectively regulations, circumventing the established process under sections 183A(1) and (2) of the Act. This undermines the coherence of the animal-welfare legislative framework and sets a dangerous precedent for future governments to simply legislate away judicial findings.

The Bill also presents significant challenges for implementation and enforcement. Any attempt to regulate confinement through time limits would depend on accurate record-keeping, self-

5. Ibid.

6. National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee. *Letter to the Minister for Agriculture on the Draft Code of Welfare for Pigs*, 1 February 2024. (Wellington: Ministry for Primary Industries). <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/70668-1-February-2024-NAWAC-Letter-to-Minister-on-Pigs-Code>.

7. National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee. *Advice to the Minister: Regulatory Proposal for Pigs – Farrowing Crates, Manipulable Materials, Space for Growers*. Wellington: Ministry for Primary Industries, 3 April 2025. https://www.nawac.org.nz/assets/content-blocks/downloads/3-April-2025-NAWAC_advice-to-Minister-Redacted.pdf.

reporting, and inspection capacity, yet inspectors have limited means to verify how long individual mother pigs have been confined. There is a substantial risk that such limits would be inconsistently applied or difficult to enforce.

Sound legislative practice requires that technical animal-welfare standards be determined through specialist, evidence-based processes led by independent bodies such as NAWAC, not rushed through Parliament under urgency. The truncated two-week consultation period compounds this concern, denying both the public and experts a fair opportunity to scrutinise the Bill.

By ignoring NAWAC's advice, sidelining the statutory consultation process, and amending the Act to declare unlawful practices lawful by fiat, the Government has **undermined the rule of law** and **eroded public confidence** in the integrity of New Zealand's animal-welfare regime.

3.5 Implications for animals

The consequences of this legislative manoeuvre are not abstract – they are borne by the animals themselves. If passed, this Bill will condemn tens of thousands of mother pigs to lives of confinement in systems that deny them even the most basic freedoms: to move, to nest, and to nurture their young.

Such a step is not only inconsistent with the intent of the Animal Welfare Act but also represents a profound moral failure – placing political expediency and industry convenience above the fundamental interests of sentient beings whose welfare the law exists to protect.

4. Animal welfare implications

4.1 Overview

Farrowing crates and mating stalls severely restrict a mother pig's movement and prevent the performance of normal maternal and exploratory behaviours. A large body of international evidence links these systems to physical injury (e.g., shoulder/teat lesions, lameness), physiological stress, and behavioural signs of frustration, while also compromising piglet outcomes (e.g., higher stillbirth risk, reduced growth rates, poorer maternal care). These harms are incompatible with the Animal Welfare Act's requirement to provide for animals' physical, health and behavioural needs and cannot be reconciled within a compassionate, science-based animal welfare framework.

4.2 Effects of farrowing crates on mother pigs

In a natural environment, a mother pig spends several days carefully preparing for birth – seeking seclusion, constructing a nest, and communicating with her piglets through grunts and calls.⁸ Inside a farrowing crate, nearly all of her natural behaviours are suppressed. Mother pigs cannot walk, turn around, root, or create distinct areas for lying, toileting, feeding, and nesting. She is unable to attend properly to her piglets or respond to them freely. This extreme restriction of movement causes frustration and physiological stress, reflected in elevated cortisol levels and the development of abnormal repetitive behaviours such as bar-biting, head-weaving, and sham-chewing.⁹

Prolonged immobility leads to muscle weakness, lameness, and shoulder lesions.¹⁰ Pigs on slatted floors often experience pressure sores and teat injuries due to limited space and hard flooring.¹¹ Even with limited nesting material, the physical design of farrowing crates prevents meaningful

8. Baxter, E.M., Andersen, I.L., & Edwards, S.A. (2018). "Sow welfare in the farrowing crate and alternatives." *Advances in Pig Welfare*, 27-42. <https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-0-08-101012-9.00002-2>.

9. Singh, C., Verdon, M., Cronin, G. M., & Hemsworth, P. H. (2017). "The behaviour and welfare of sows and piglets in farrowing crates or lactation pens." *Animal: An international journal of animal bioscience*, 11(7), 1210–1221. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1751731116002573>

10. Barnett, J. L., Hemsworth, P. H., Cronin, G. M., & Jongman, E. C. (2001). "A review of the welfare issues for sows and piglets in relation to housing." *Australian Journal of Agricultural Research* 52(1), 1-28. DOI:[10.1071/AR00057](https://doi.org/10.1071/AR00057)

11. EFSA Panel on Animal Health and Welfare (AHAW). (2022). "Welfare of Pigs on Farm." *EFSA Journal* 20 (8): 7421. <https://doi.org/10.2903/j.efsa.2022.7421>.

nest-building. This restriction has been shown to prolong farrowing duration, delay milk let-down, and heighten stress and frustration in mother pigs.^{12 13}

The result is not only physical harm, but deprivation of autonomy – the ability of a sentient being to respond to instinctive drives. Confinement systems strip pigs of this fundamental freedom, violating both the letter and the spirit of the Animal Welfare Act’s behavioural-needs clause.

4.3 Effects of farrowing crates on piglet welfare

The welfare of piglets is closely tied to the wellbeing of their mother. Research indicates that piglets born to crated mothers face higher stillbirth rates, delayed access to colostrum, and lower growth in the first days of life.¹⁴ The lack of space and environmental enrichment also limits normal exploration and play, which are important for healthy development and social behaviour.¹⁵

Restricted movement diminishes maternal responsiveness, leading to poorer mother–piglet interactions, higher rates of mis-mothering, and increased piglet stress.¹⁶ When mother pigs cannot turn or lie down freely, piglets struggle to access the udder evenly, contributing to uneven weight gain and weaker piglets who are less likely to survive.¹⁷ The stress experienced by the mother pig can also influence piglet behaviour and immune function through prenatal stress pathways.¹⁸

These findings show that farrowing crates harm not only the physical and psychological wellbeing of mother pigs but also the health and survival of their young – outcomes that stand in direct contradiction to the purpose of the Animal Welfare Act. NAWAC’s 2023 advice to the Minister also stated that concerns about piglet mortality were not sufficient to justify the continued use of farrowing crates.¹⁹

Free-farrowing systems that allow nesting behaviour, adequate space, and environmental enrichment have demonstrated comparable or even improved piglet survival and growth rates

12. Dumniem, N., et al. (2023). “Pen Versus Crate: A Comparative Study on the Effects of Farrowing Duration, Sow & Piglet Welfare.” *Animals* 13(2), 233. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ani13020233>

13. Plush, K., et al. (2024). “A five-domains assessment of sow welfare in a novel free farrowing design.” *Frontiers in Veterinary Science* 11. DOI: [10.3389/fvets.2024.1339947](https://doi.org/10.3389/fvets.2024.1339947)

14. Nowland, T. L., et al. (2019). “Allowing Sows to Farrow Unconfined Has Positive Implications for Sow and Piglet Welfare.” *Applied Animal Behaviour Science* 221: 104872. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.applanim.2019.104872>

15. EFSA, “Welfare of Pigs on Farm.”

16. Ibid.

17. Singh et al., “The Behaviour and Welfare of Sows and Piglets.”

18. Nowland et al., “Allowing Sows to Farrow Unconfined Has Positive Implications for Sow and Piglet Welfare.”

19. National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, *Code of Welfare Final Report – Pigs*.

compared to farrowing crates.²⁰ These systems support more natural maternal care, greater mobility, and improved overall welfare outcomes.²¹

4.4 Mating stalls

Mating stalls used during breeding mirror many of the harms of farrowing crates. Even when used for short periods, the inability to turn around or move freely causes frustration, stress, and compromised welfare.²² Scientific reviews, including the European Food Safety Authority's 2022 opinion on pig welfare, have found that confining pigs in mating stalls prevents essential social and exploratory behaviours and offers no demonstrable welfare benefit.²³

Such conditions deprive intelligent, social animals of agency and meaningful interaction. Repeated confinement and breeding in restrictive stalls – where female pigs have no ability to avoid or resist mating or insemination – reduce sentient beings to tools of production rather than recognising them as individuals capable of emotion and choice.

4.5 Temporary crating and maternity rings

Temporary crating systems and maternity rings are not viable alternatives to farrowing crates. In the closed position, temporary crates prevent pigs from nest-building, exploring, and caring for their piglets – the normal patterns of behaviour that the Animal Welfare Act requires to be provided for. When opened, if the pen is too small to allow separation of lying, toileting, and nesting areas, or safe interaction with piglets, the welfare benefit is negligible.²⁴ Some studies indicate that abrupt transitions from confinement to open pens can cause temporary disorientation or adjustment stress for both pigs and piglets, underscoring the importance of well-designed, permanently free-farrowing systems rather than temporary crating.²⁵

“Maternity rings”, developed by industry as a claimed alternative, remain inconsistent with pigs’ physical, health, and behavioural needs. While it allows turning, the structure is too small to support behavioural wellbeing, with fully slatted flooring that prevents comfortable resting,

20. Dumniem, D. N., G. Arnott, S. P. Turner, M. H. Pedersen, and P. W. Knap. (2023). “Pen Versus Crate: A Comparative Study on the Effects of Different Farrowing Systems on Piglet Mortality, Colostrum Intake and Growth.” *Animals* 13, no. 2: 233. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ani13020233>.

21. Nowland et al., “Allowing Sows to Farrow Unconfined,” *Applied Animal Behaviour Science* 221 (2019): 104872.

22. Clark, E. F., Hemsworth, P. H., and Cronin, G. M. (2012). “Confinement of Pigs in Stalls during Pregnancy. Part 1: Effects on Health and Welfare.” *Applied Animal Behaviour Science* 137, no. 3: 169–180. DOI: [10.2527/jas.2011-4531](https://doi.org/10.2527/jas.2011-4531)

23. EFSA, “Welfare of Pigs on Farm.”

24. Baxter, Andersen, and Edwards, “Sow Welfare in the Farrowing Crate and Alternatives.”

25. EFSA, “Welfare of Pigs on Farm.”

nesting, and toileting. As such, both temporary crating and maternity rings remain inconsistent with the purposes of the Animal Welfare Act.

If New Zealand is to meet its legislative and moral obligations, the transition must be directly towards fully free-farrowing systems that align with both the law and modern animal welfare science. Investing in partial measures that continue to deny basic needs is neither progressive nor defensible.

5. Public sentiment

5.1 Public opinion on farrowing crates

Polling commissioned by SAFE and conducted independently by Verian in September 2025 (Appendix A) shows strong and consistent opposition among New Zealanders to the confinement of mother pigs in farrowing crates:

- 74 percent of respondents oppose the use of farrowing crates.
- 73 percent support a ban on farrowing crates.
- A majority (55 percent) believe the government is taking too long to phase them out.

This represents a clear social consensus that the confinement of pigs in cages is unacceptable. The results indicate widespread support for stronger protections and a faster transition away from systems that prevent animals from moving freely or expressing natural behaviours.

This polling builds on years of sustained public interest in the treatment of pigs. In 2018, SAFE delivered a petition with more than **112,000 signatures** calling for a ban on farrowing crates – the largest petition tabled in Parliament in five years at the time.

The 2025 research also found that this ethical concern translates into consumer behaviour:

- 60 percent of respondents said they would choose pork from cage-free systems, even if it were more expensive.

These findings demonstrate that compassion for animals is not only a moral conviction but also an economic signal. New Zealanders are prepared to support farming systems that align with their values, even at personal cost. Proceeding with legislation that entrenches confinement systems would therefore **contradict both public sentiment and market direction**.

5.2 Attitudes toward animal welfare and factory farming

The Verian polling further reveals that New Zealanders care deeply about the treatment of animals and are increasingly concerned about the realities of intensive farming.

- 98 percent agree it is important to protect animals from cruelty and neglect.
- 78 percent are concerned that farmed animals suffer due to poor living conditions or lack of proper care.
- 72 percent oppose the confinement of animals in factory farms.

When asked about the environments animals should live in, respondents strongly favoured freedom and natural behaviour over confinement:

- 88 percent believe animals should have the freedom to go outside when they want.
- 78 percent express concern about the welfare of animals on factory farms.
- 60 percent support a ban on all factory farming systems in New Zealand.

The findings point to a strong moral through-line in public opinion – New Zealanders believe animals deserve real protection from cruelty, and that compassion should be reflected in the law.

5.3 Public confidence in New Zealand's animal-welfare system

Beyond individual practices, the Verian polling highlights a **broadier crisis of confidence** in New Zealand's animal-welfare framework.

- Only 38 percent of New Zealanders trust the farming sector to prioritise animal welfare.
- A minority (43 percent) believe the Animal Welfare Act is upheld most or all of the time.
- Of those who think it isn't, 85 percent are concerned about it.
- Only 39 percent feel the government is doing a good job enforcing the Animal Welfare Act.

This lack of trust reflects a perception that the Animal Welfare Act 1999, while strong in principle, is **poorly upheld in practice**. When the public sees government policy used to legitimise cruelty that the courts have already ruled unlawful, that trust erodes further.

Re-authorising confinement systems under the *Animal Welfare (Regulations for Management of Pigs) Amendment Bill* would deepen this legitimacy gap – sending a signal that industry convenience overrides the will of the public and the needs of animals themselves.

5.4 Animal welfare and voting behaviour

Animal welfare matters at the ballot box:

- 76 percent feel the welfare of farmed animals should be a priority for the Government.
- 50 percent say they are more likely to support a political party that promises stronger animal-welfare laws.
- For 11 percent, it is one of the most important factors shaping their vote.
- For 31 percent, animal welfare is an influence that helps decide between two parties whose non-animal policies are similar.
- **46 percent said they would be more likely to vote for a party pledging to ban farrowing crates.**

These findings confirm that animal welfare is not a fringe concern – it is a mainstream political priority that cuts across party lines. Politicians who dismiss animal welfare as secondary to economic or industry interests risk alienating the very public whose trust they depend on. Voters are increasingly informed, values-driven, and unwilling to accept laws that contradict both science and conscience.

5.5 Public mandate for change

Together, these findings provide a strong democratic mandate for reform. The public's expectations of animal welfare already exceed what current regulations deliver, and consumer behaviour shows clear support for a transition toward cage-free systems.

Rather than aligning with this consensus, the *Animal Welfare (Regulations for Management of Pigs) Amendment Bill* entrenches the very systems that most New Zealanders reject.

Public opinion on animal welfare reflects enduring national values of fairness and compassion. Dismissing this mandate would mean sidestepping a straightforward test of moral leadership: safeguarding animals instead of sanctioning their suffering.

6. International context

6.1 Global movement away from confinement systems

Over the past three decades, governments and industries around the world are recognising that farrowing crates are incompatible with modern animal-welfare principles. A growing number of countries have legislated to ban or phase them out, and many others are developing transition plans toward free-farrowing systems. This reflects a clear international trajectory: reducing or eliminating long-term confinement of mother pigs and transitioning toward systems that better support the behavioural needs of mother pigs.

6.1.1 European Union (Commitment announced 2021)

The European Commission, through the *End the Cage Age* initiative, has committed to propose legislation phasing out farrowing crates across all Member States.²⁶ This proposal was reaffirmed following the European Food Safety Authority's 2022 scientific opinion, which found that farrowing crates prevent essential behaviours and cause significant welfare harms.²⁷

6.1.2 Sweden (Ban since 1994)

Sweden was the first country to ban farrowing crates. Mother pigs must be kept in loose systems that allow turning, nest-building, and interaction with piglets before and after birth.

6.1.3 Switzerland (Ban since 2008)

Switzerland prohibits all forms of farrowing crates, including temporary or hybrid systems. Mother pigs must have the freedom to move, nest, and care for their piglets naturally.

6.1.4 Norway (Ban since 2000)

Norway disallows routine use of farrowing crates. Pigs must be housed in pens that provide sufficient space for nest-building and movement, with only brief restraint allowed at farrowing if absolutely necessary for safety.

26. European Union, "ECI End the Cage Age," accessed 21 October 2025. https://food.ec.europa.eu/animals/animal-welfare/eci/eci-end-cage-age_en

27. EFSA, "Welfare of Pigs on Farm."

6.1.5 Germany (Phase-out by 2035)

Germany has legislated to phase out permanent farrowing crates by 2035. Temporary restraint will be limited to a maximum of five days after birth, and pens must provide a minimum of 6.5 m² of space with nesting material and freedom of movement.

6.1.6 Austria (Phase-out by 2033)

Austria amended its Animal Welfare Act in 2023 to phase out farrowing crates by 2033, requiring a progressive transition to free-farrowing systems with adequate space, enrichment, and nesting materials.

6.1.7 Denmark (No new builds from 2023)

The Danish Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries and the Danish Pig Producers Association have agreed that no new farrowing barns will be constructed using fixed farrowing-crate systems; future builds are required to facilitate loose-housing of mother pigs except for a brief period immediately surrounding birth.

6.1.8 Finland (No new builds from 2024)

Finland has enacted *Animal Welfare Act 693/2023*, under which from 2024 onward no new farrowing-crate housing may be installed in newly constructed pig-farming barns.

6.1.9 United Kingdom (Under review)

While farrowing crates remain legal in the UK, the Government has formally committed to reviewing their use and supporting a transition to free-farrowing. Active trials of alternative systems are underway.²⁸

6.2 Implications for New Zealand

If enacted, the *Animal Welfare (Regulations for Management of Pigs) Amendment Bill* would isolate New Zealand from the growing global movement to end the confinement of mother pigs. This approach represents a radical departure from the trajectory of our major trading partners.

While comparable jurisdictions are investing in free-farrowing innovation, pen redesign, and transitional support for farmers, this Bill would entrench outdated systems ruled unlawful under New Zealand's own legal framework.

28. Smith, L., and Sutherland, N. *Debate on an e-petition relating to the use of cages and crates for farmed animals: Commons Library Debate Pack*, 11 June 2025, No. CDP 2025/0121. London: House of Commons Library, 2025. <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2025-0121/CDP-2025-0121.pdf>.

Such a step would:

- Undermine New Zealand's reputation as a global leader in animal welfare;
- Place the country out of alignment with key export markets and trading partners; and
- Signal an ethical retreat at odds with New Zealanders' values and with international progress toward higher welfare standards.

7. Conclusion

This Bill is more than a policy change – it is a moral turning point. It asks Parliament to legalise suffering that New Zealanders have already rejected, and to write into law the very cruelty the *Animal Welfare Act 1999* was designed to prevent.


Re-authorising crates and stalls would not modernise farming; it would normalise suffering. It would betray the trust of the public, the scientific consensus, and the sentience of the animals whose lives depend on this decision.

The choice before Parliament is not only about pigs in crates. It is about the kind of society we wish to be. SAFE urges the Committee to choose the path of progress and compassion by rejecting this Bill.



SAFE Public Perceptions Research Report

October 2025

verian 

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Research methodology

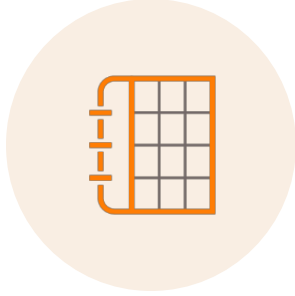
Research methodology

1.



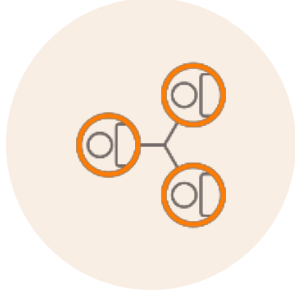
Online panel
survey

2.



Fieldwork took place
between 3 to 21 September
2025

3.



The sample was comprised
of 1,000 New Zealanders
aged 18 and over.

4.



Results are post-weighted
to be representative of the
population by region, age
by gender, and ethnicity.

Summary of findings

Attitudes and perceptions

98% of New Zealanders believe it is important to protect animals from cruelty and neglect.

63% of New Zealanders:

- Define animal cruelty as any level of physical and/or mental suffering caused directly or indirectly to animals by people.
- Believe that animals should be regarded as sentient beings with legal rights and protections or rights equivalent to those of humans.

78% are concerned farmed animals in New Zealand experience suffering due to poor living conditions and /or lack of proper care.

38% trust the farming sector to prioritise animal welfare.

New Zealand's animal welfare system

93% of New Zealanders believe the codes of welfare should be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect the latest animal welfare science and public concern.

90% feel the government has a duty to ensure the welfare codes align with the Animal Welfare Act.

43% believe the requirements of the Animal Welfare Act are currently being upheld most or all of the time.

Factory farming

88% of New Zealanders believe animals should be able to go outside when they want.

60% would support a ban on factory farming.

Pigs farmed in cages

74% of New Zealanders oppose the use of farrowing crates in New Zealand.

73% would support a ban on the use of farrowing crates.

55% feel the government is taking too long to phase our farrowing crates.

Husbandry procedures

81% of New Zealanders feel it should be mandatory for all painful husbandry procedures to be preformed with pain relief.

Zoos and aquariums

51% of New Zealanders feel that animals should not be used in entertainment shows in zoos and aquariums.

46% would support a ban on privately-owned zoos and wildlife parks in New Zealand.

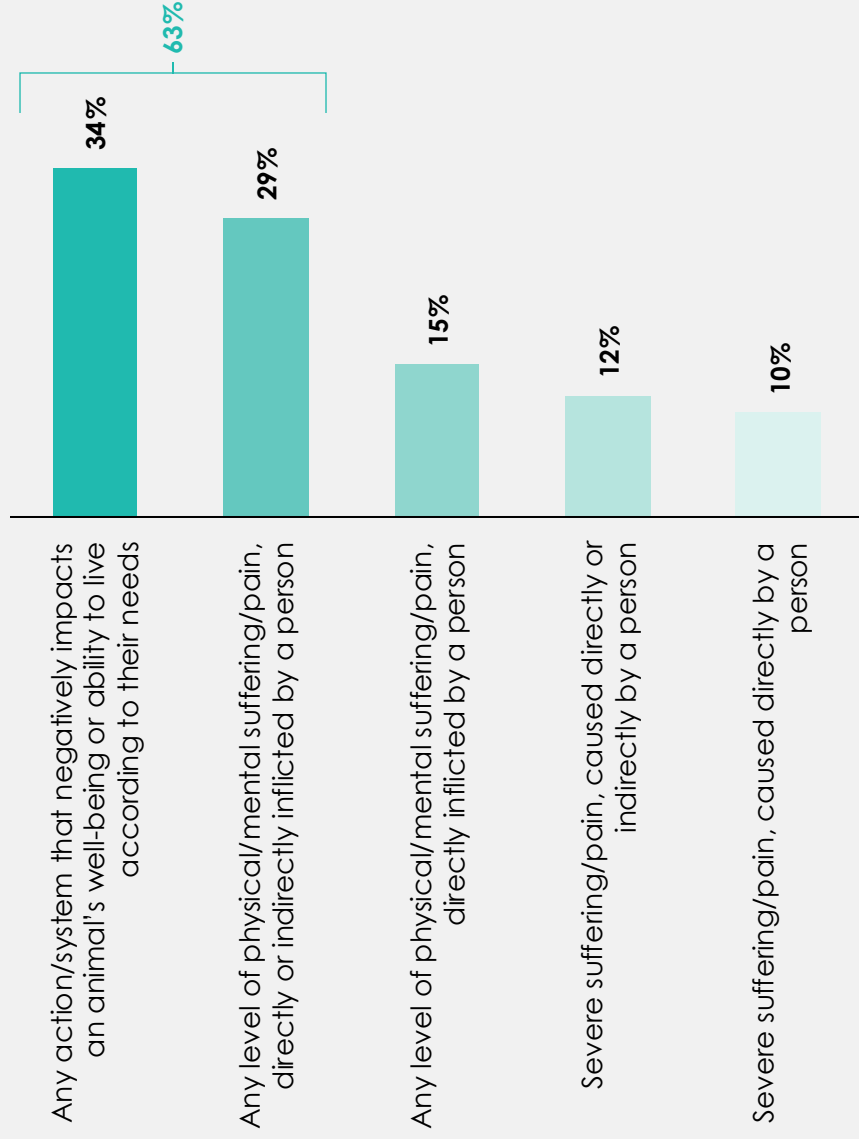
An aerial photograph of a river meandering through a dense, green forest. The river is dark and contrasts sharply with the vibrant green of the surrounding trees. The perspective is from directly above, showing the intricate patterns of the river and the forest canopy.

Attitudes and perceptions

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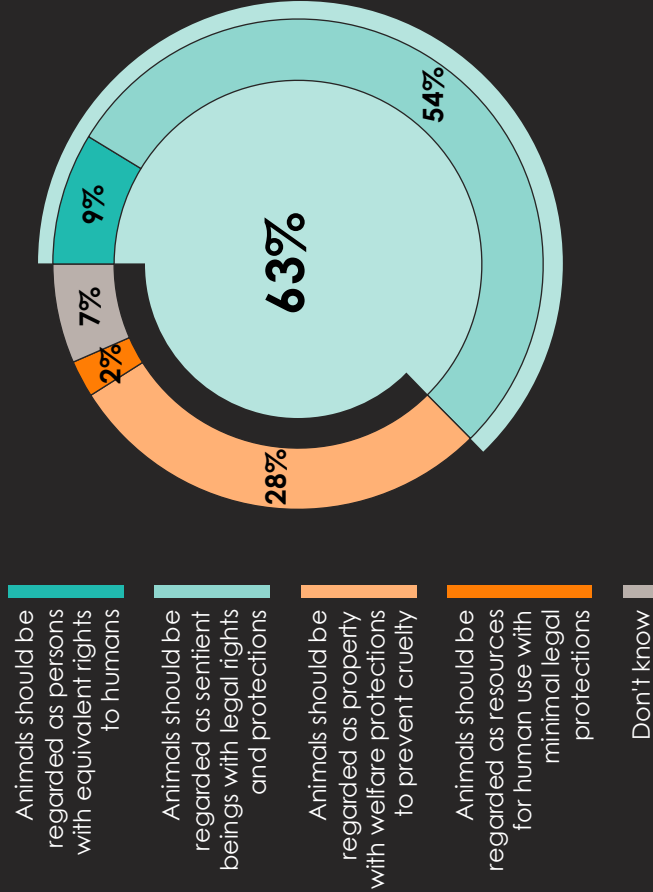
Two thirds of New Zealanders feel that the term ‘animal cruelty’ encompasses any level of physical and/or mental suffering caused directly or indirectly to animals by people.

What the term ‘animal cruelty’ means to New Zealanders



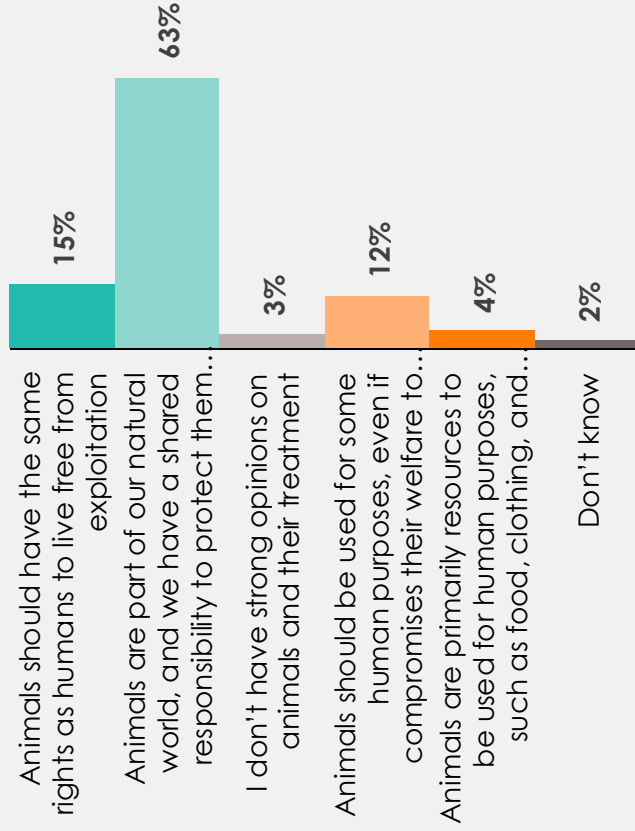
Source: DA1. Which of the following statements best describes what the term ‘animal cruelty’ means to you?
Base: All New Zealanders (n=1,000).

The same proportion of New Zealanders (63%) also believe that animals should be regarded as sentient beings with legal rights and protections or rights equivalent to those of humans.



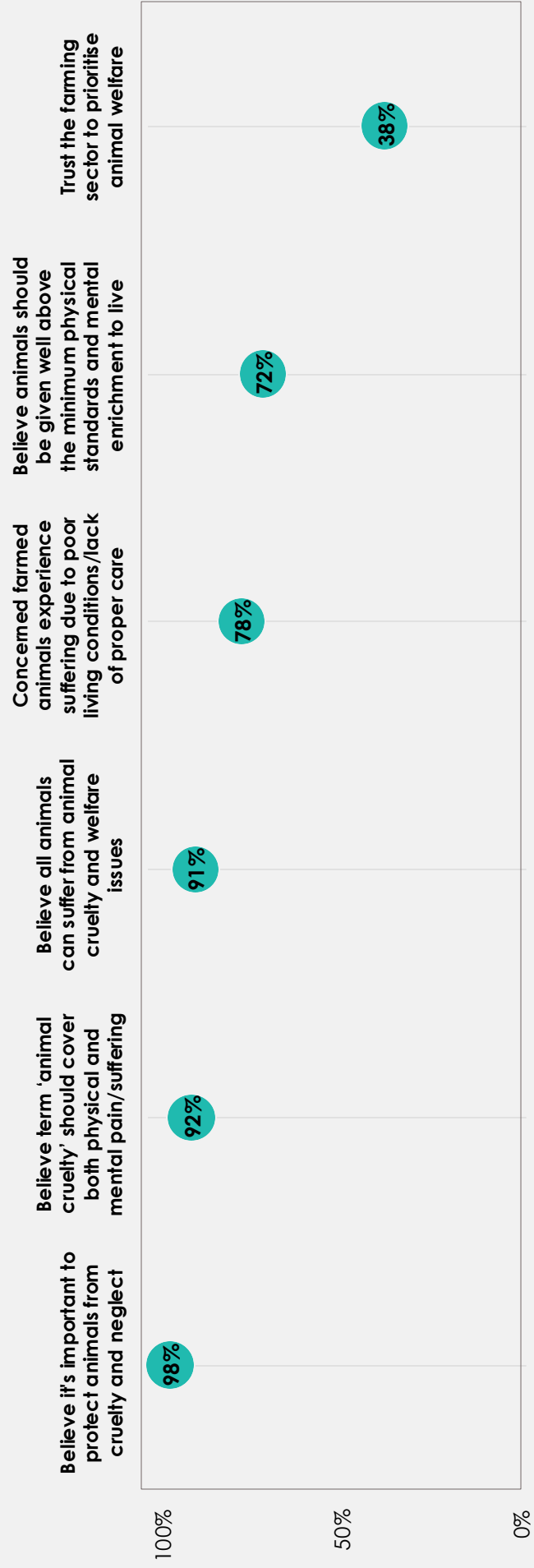
Source: GA3. How do you believe animals should be classified under the law?
Base: All New Zealanders (n=1,000).

New Zealanders feel strongly that people have a shared responsibility to protect animals from harm.



Source: GA2. Which of the following best reflects your overall view on the use of animals?
Base: All New Zealanders (n=1,000).

Almost all New Zealanders feel it's important to protect all animals from cruelty and neglect and believe the term 'animal cruelty' includes both physical and mental harm. However, only a third believe the farming sector prioritises animal welfare.

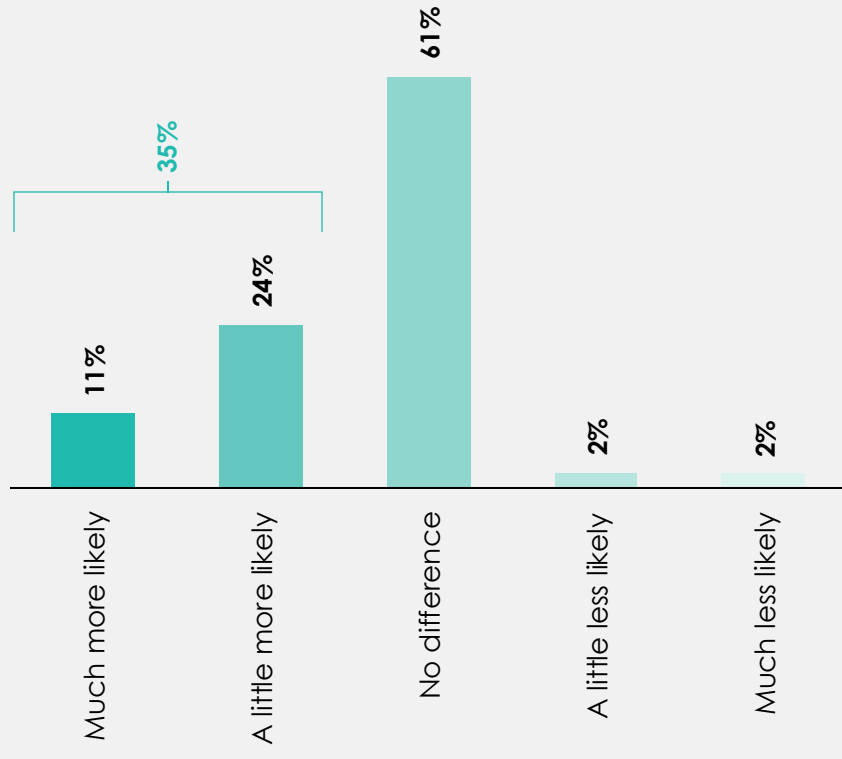


Source: GA1. How important or unimportant do you think it is to protect animals from cruelty and neglect? DA1A. And in your opinion should the term 'animal cruelty' cover... DA3. What animals do you believe can suffer from animal cruelty and welfare issues? GA4. How concerned or unconcerned are you that animals in the farming sector experience suffering due to poor living conditions or lack of proper care? DA2. Animal welfare standards are guidelines on how animals are treated. Which of the following best describes what you believe SHOULD be given to animals under animal welfare standards in New Zealand? GA5. How much do you trust or distrust the farming sector to prioritise animal welfare?
Base: All New Zealanders (n=1,000).

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A third of New Zealanders say they are more likely to stop consuming animal products as a result of the information presented to them in this research. However, for most (61%), the information will not make a difference in their consumption behaviours.

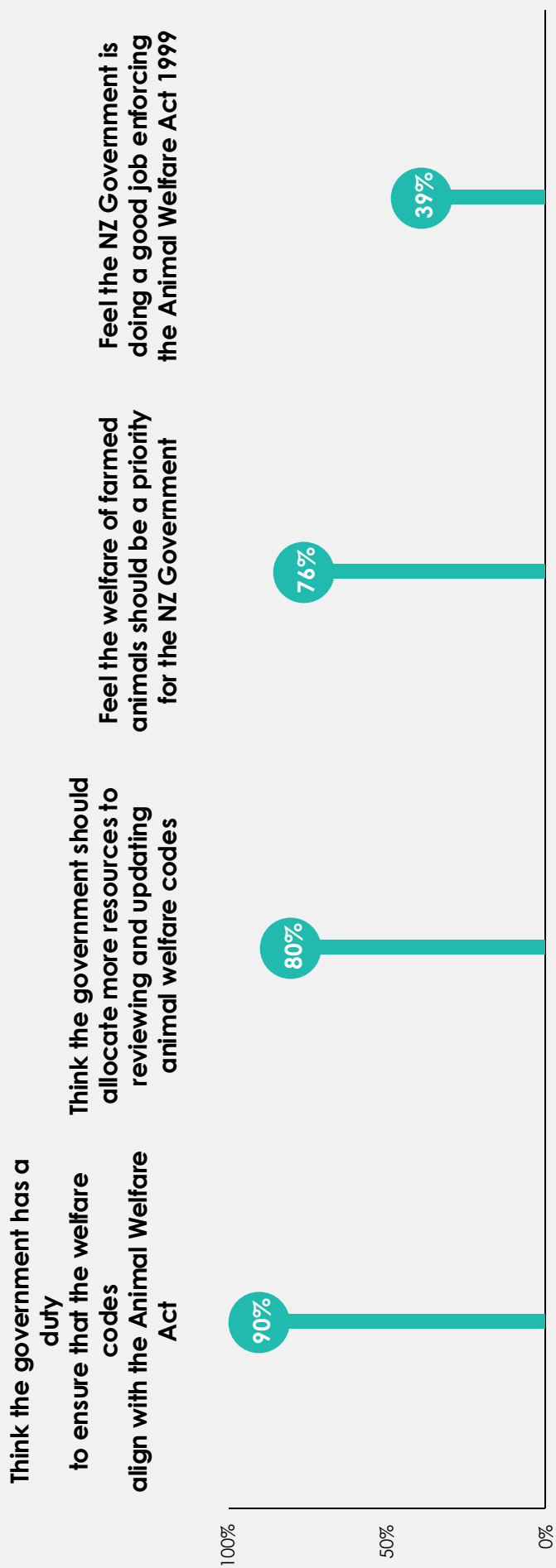
Likelihood of personally stopping consumption of animal products as a result of the information in this research...



Source: D3. Has the information in today's survey made you more or less likely to consider stopping your consumption of animal products?
Base: All New Zealanders who consume animal products (n=986).

New Zealand's animal welfare system

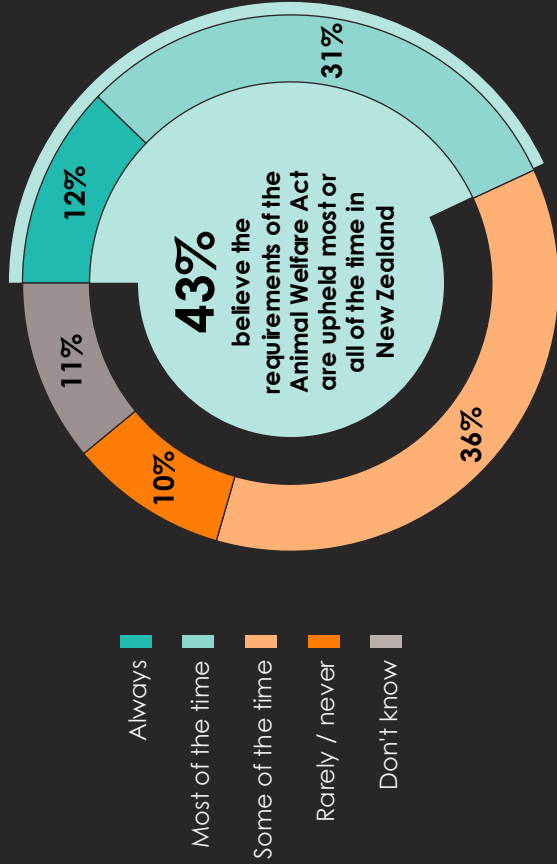
Most New Zealanders believe the government has a duty to ensure that the welfare codes align with the Animal Welfare Act and should be allocating more resources to reviewing and updating the codes. Three quarters of New Zealanders believe the welfare of farmed animals should be the priority for the Government, while just a third believe the government is doing a good job enforcing the Animal Welfare Act.



Source: AW7. Do you think the Government has a duty to ensure that the welfare codes align with the Animal Welfare Act? AW9. Do you think the government should allocate more resources to reviewing and updating animal welfare codes? GA6. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: the welfare of farmed animals should be a priority for the New Zealand Government? AW6. Do you think the NZ Government is doing a good or poor job enforcing the Animal Welfare Act 1999?
Base: All New Zealanders (n=1,000).

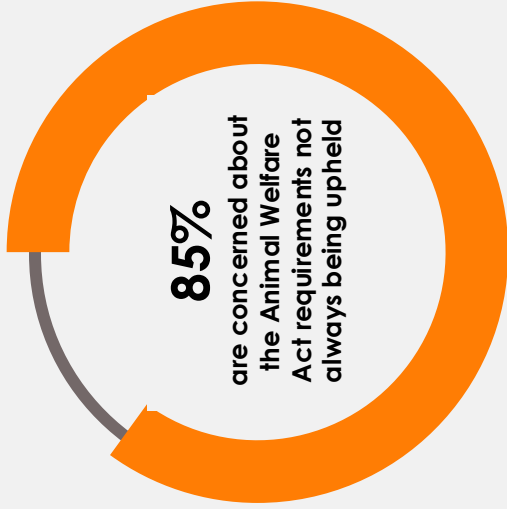
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A minority of New Zealanders (43%) believe the requirements of the Animal Welfare Act are upheld most or all of the time.



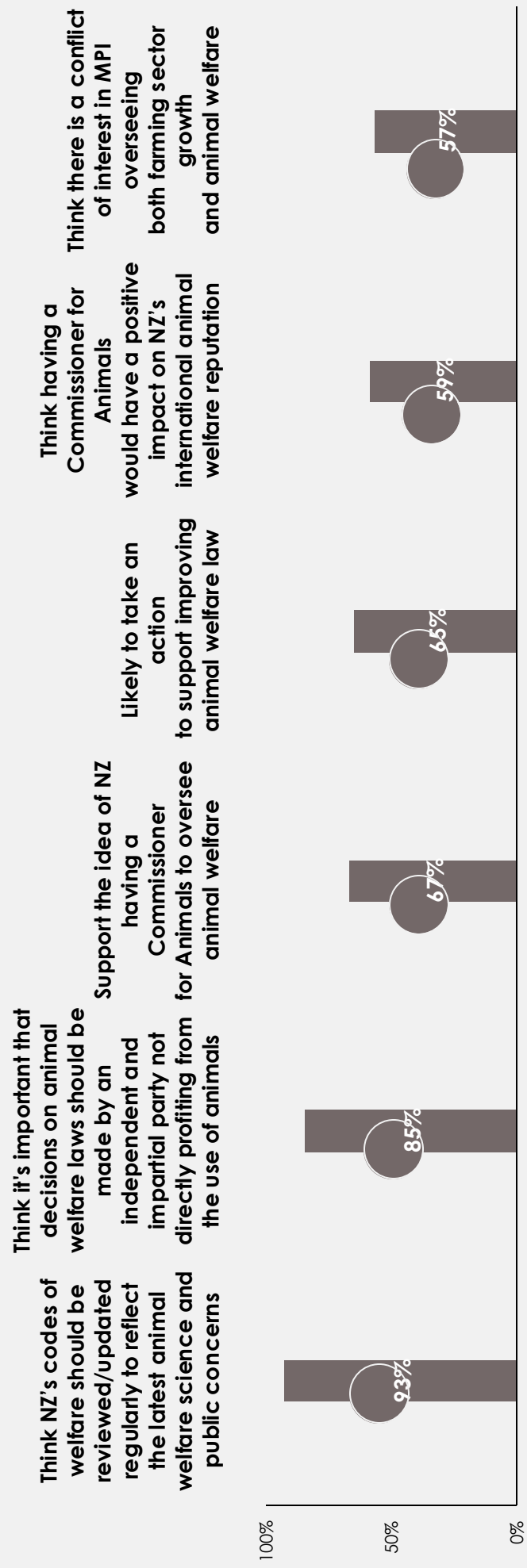
Source: AW2. Which of the following describes how often you believe the requirements of the Animal Welfare Act are upheld in New Zealand?
Base: All New Zealanders (n=1,000).

Among those who feel the requirements are not always upheld, most are concerned about it.



Source: AW5. How concerned, if at all, are you that requirements under the Animal Welfare Act are not always upheld?
Base: Those who believe the requirements of the animal Welfare Act are not always upheld (n=806).

There is broad support for improving animal welfare governance. Nine in ten New Zealanders agree that the codes of welfare should be regularly updated, and 85% believe decisions on animal welfare should be made by an independent body.



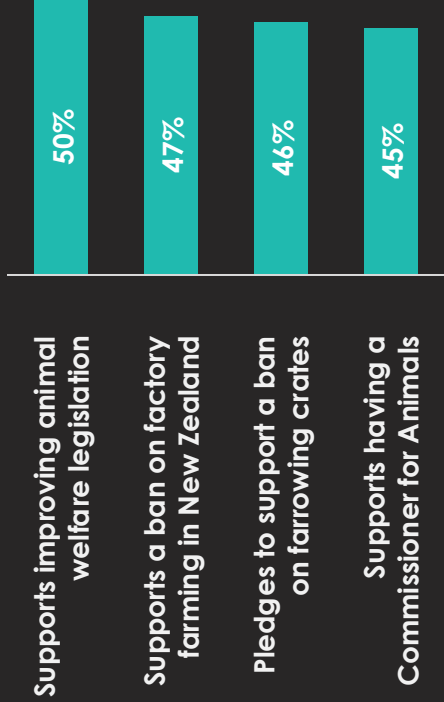
Source: AW8. Do you think New Zealand's codes of welfare should be reviewed and updated regularly to reflect the latest animal welfare science and public concerns? EC3. How important or unimportant do you think it is that decisions on animal welfare laws should be made by an independent and impartial party not directly profiting from the use of animals? EC4. Overall, do you personally support or oppose the idea of NZ having a Commissioner for Animals to oversee animal welfare? AW10. How likely would you be to take an action to support improving animal welfare law? EC6. Overall, what impact do you think a Commissioner for Animals would have on New Zealand's international reputation regarding animal welfare? EC2. Do you personally think there is a conflict of interest in MPI overseeing both farming sector growth and animal welfare?
Base: All New Zealanders (n=1,000)

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Animal welfare and political leaning

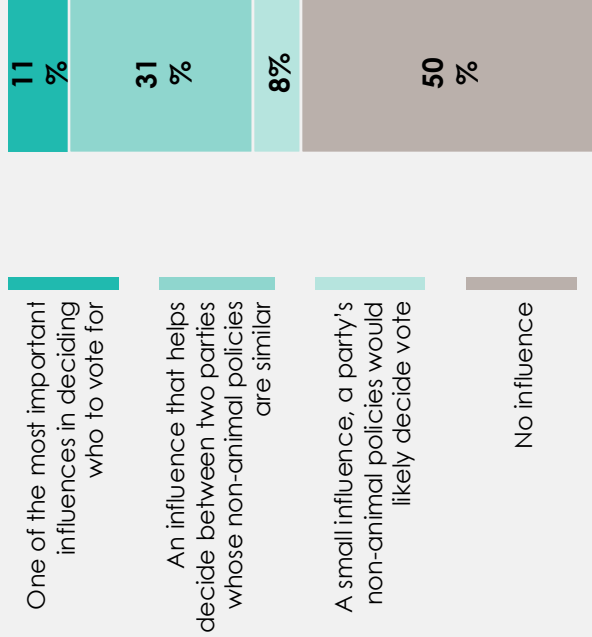
Half of New Zealanders say they are more likely to vote for a political party which supports animal welfare.

More likely to vote for a political party if the party...



Source: GA7. If a political party supported improving animal welfare legislation, how would that impact your likelihood of voting for them? FF7. If a political party supported a ban on factory farming in New Zealand, would you be more or less likely to vote for them? PF9. If a political party pledged to support a ban on farrowing crates, would you be more or less likely to vote for them? EC5. If a political party supported having a Commissioner for Animals, would you be more or less likely to vote for them?
Base: All New Zealanders (n=1,000).

Animal welfare legislation is one of the most important factors for 11% of New Zealanders, when deciding who to vote for.

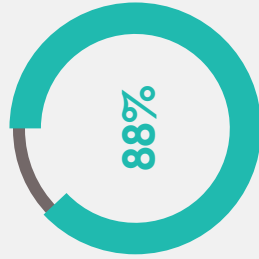


Source: GA7. If a political party supported improving animal welfare legislation, how would that impact your likelihood of voting for them? GA8. Is a political party's support of improved animal welfare legislation ...
Base: All New Zealanders (n=1000).

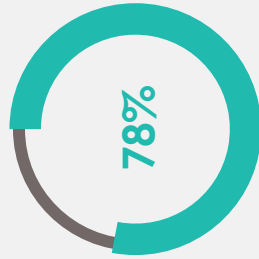
Factory farming

New Zealanders are widely concerned about the welfare of animals on factory farms in Aotearoa. Eighty-eight percent of New Zealanders think animals should be able to go outside when they want.

Believe animals should have the freedom to go outside when they want



Concerned about the welfare of animals on NZ factory farms



Oppose the confinement of animals in factory farms



Concerned about the use of factory farm systems for cows in NZ



Source: FF4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement: Animals should have the freedom to go outside when they want. FF3. Do you support or oppose the confinement of animals in factory farms? (e.g., barns or feedlots) for cows in New Zealand.

Base: All New Zealanders (n=1,000).

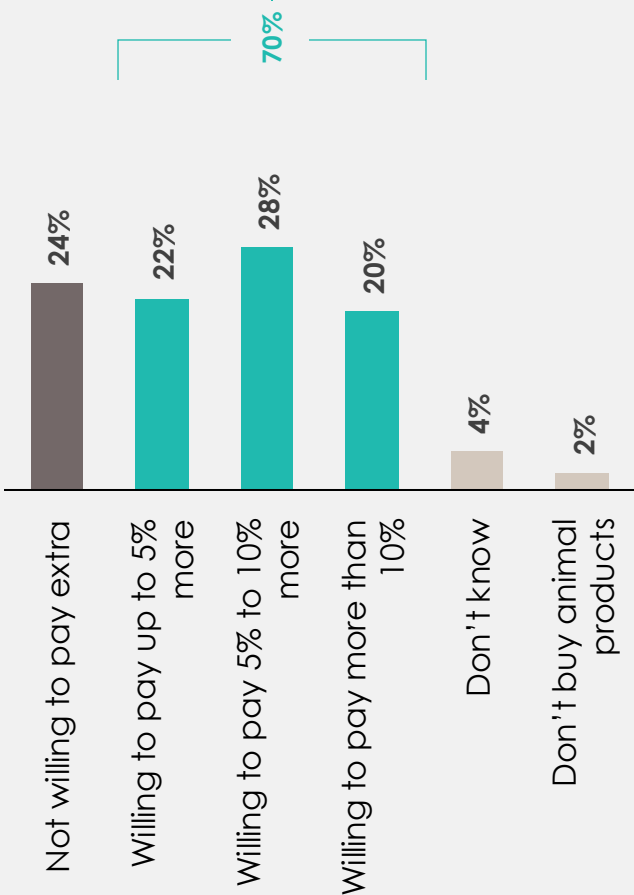
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Six in ten New Zealanders would support a ban on all factory farming systems.



Source: FF6. Would you support or oppose a ban on all factory farming systems in New Zealand?
Base: All New Zealanders (n=1,000).

Seven in ten are willing to pay more for animal products if it means the animals have higher welfare conditions.

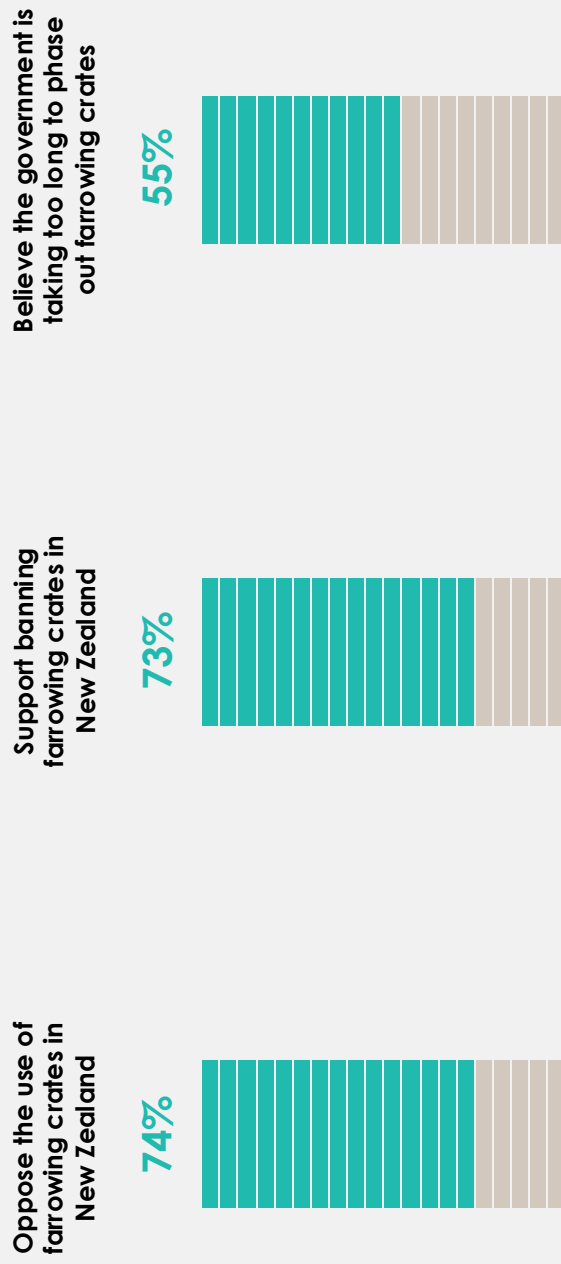


Source: FF8. Would you be willing to pay more for animal products from higher welfare conditions (i.e., free-range farms instead of factory farms)?
Base: All New Zealanders (n=1,000).



Pigs farmed in cages

Three in four New Zealanders oppose the use of farrowing crates and support banning their use in New Zealand. More than half of New Zealanders feel the government is taking too long phasing out the crates.

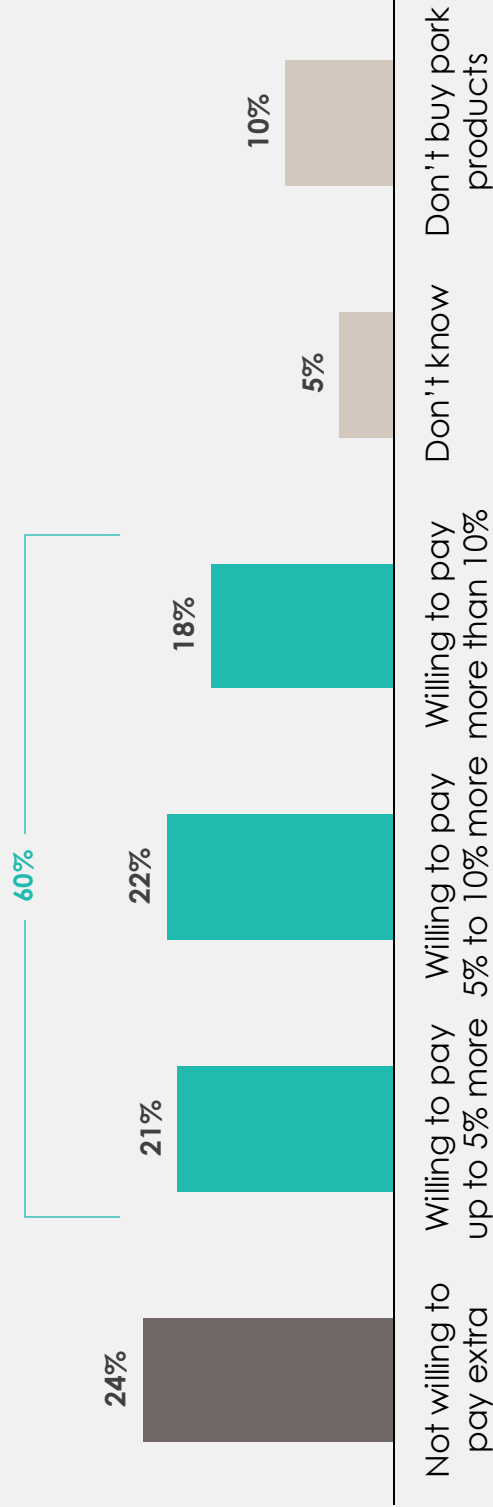


Source: PF2. Do you support or oppose the use of farrowing crates in New Zealand? PF3. Do you support or oppose the Government banning the use of farrowing crates in New Zealand? PF4. What do you think about the length of time the Government is taking before it phases out farrowing crates following the 2020 High Court Ruling?
Base: All New Zealanders (n=1,000).

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Six in ten New Zealanders say they are willing to pay more for pork products which explicitly excluded the use of farrowing crates.

Willingness to pay more for pork products if they were guaranteed to come from systems that do not use farrowing crates



Source: PF5. Would you be willing to pay more for pork products if they were guaranteed to come from systems that do not use farrowing crates?
Base: All New Zealanders (n=1,000).

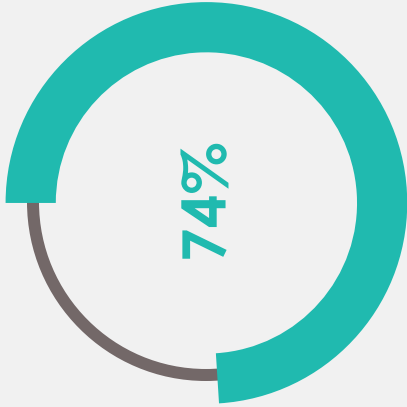
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A large school of blue tang fish swimming in dark water. The fish are densely packed, filling most of the frame. They have a deep blue color with lighter blue or white markings on their heads and bodies. The background is dark and slightly textured, suggesting an underwater environment.

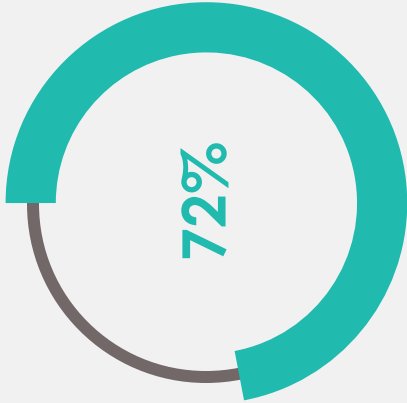
Husbandry procedures

Three quarters of New Zealanders are concerned about husbandry procedures causing pain to animals and believe it is not acceptable to perform painful husbandry procedures on animals without pain relief.

Concerned about husbandry procedures causing pain to farmed animals



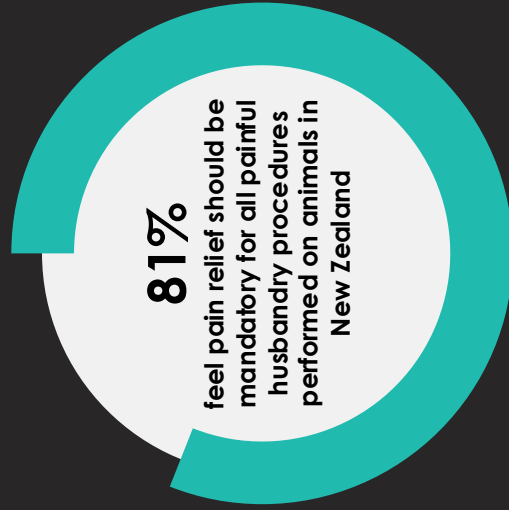
Believe it's not acceptable to perform painful husbandry procedures on animals without pain relief



Source: PH3. How concerned are you about husbandry procedures causing pain to farmed animals? PH2. How acceptable or unacceptable do you think it is to perform painful husbandry procedures on animals, such as castration and tail docking, without pain relief?
Base: All New Zealanders (n=1,000).

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Eight in ten New Zealanders believe pain relief should be mandatory for painful husbandry procedures.

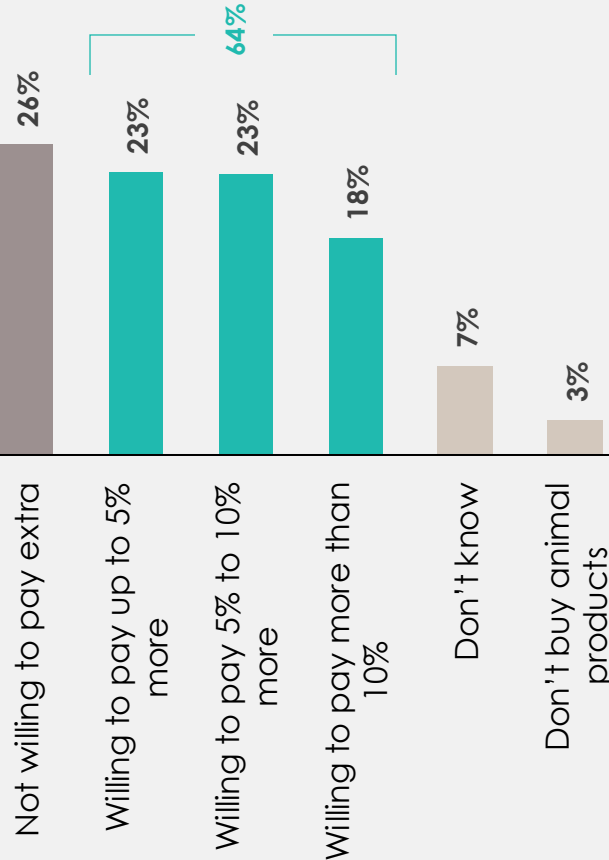


Source: PH4. To what extent do you agree or disagree that pain relief should be mandatory for all painful husbandry procedures performed on animals in New Zealand?
Base: All New Zealanders (n=1,000).

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The majority of New Zealanders (64%) are willing to take on some additional cost so that animals have pain relief for these procedures.

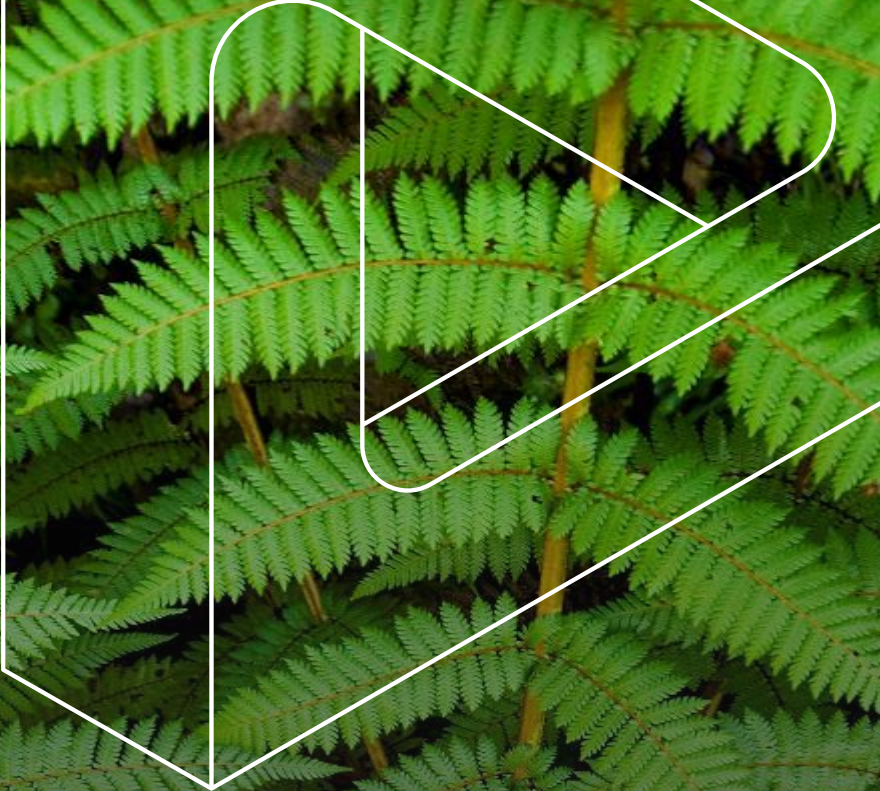
Willingness to pay more for animal products if it was mandatory that animal husbandry procedures were performed with pain relief



Source: PH5. Would you be willing to pay more for animal products if it was mandatory that animal husbandry procedures were performed with pain relief?
Base: All New Zealanders (n=1,000).

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