

Media Statement



Tuesday 18 June 2019

Animal cruelty is never acceptable

Recent media reports and footage showing animal cruelty on a poultry farm have been strongly condemned by the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF).

“The Victorian Farmers Federation and its members are shocked and appalled by the footage showing contractors abusing animals on a poultry farm,” said Mr David Jochinke, VFF President.

“We call on the individuals in possession of this footage to hand it over to Government authorities to allow for a thorough investigation.

“The VFF understands that the farm in question, Bridgewater Poultry Farm, was required to destock as the result of a salmonella incident,” he said. “This salmonella incursion was discovered through the farm’s own biosecurity monitoring program and promptly reported to authorities.”

The strain of salmonella, *Salmonella Enteritidis* (SE), was confirmed by Government staff. Due to the potential human health impact, Bridgewater Poultry Farm stopped selling eggs in March 2019. The farm also commenced a destocking program to reduce the risk of the disease spreading to other birds and to rid the farm of the disease. A team of destocking contractors was employed to undertake the task in accordance with Victoria’s legal requirements.

“We understand Bridgewater Poultry Farms is dismayed by the behaviour captured in the footage and is cooperating with government authorities,” said Mr Jochinke. “Since the public release of the footage, egg farmers have contacted us to strongly condemn the contractor’s behaviour, noting that clearly unacceptable behaviour during destocking.

“Our farmer members from across a range of commodities have also contacted us today to express their disgust at the footage,” he said. “The footage is deeply distressing to all farmers. The individuals involved must be investigated and appropriate action taken.

“Media reporting of this story featured quotes from the VFF Egg Group President, Tony Nesci. Tony is extremely distressed by this footage,” said Mr Jochinke.

“Since the discovery of salmonella at Bridgewater Poultry Farm, Tony has endured considerable personal stress with this outbreak placing his entire farm operation at risk. This latest incident, whereby outside contractors were brought onto the property to contain disease risk, but appears to have resulted in the alleged mistreatment of birds, has compounded that stress,” he said. “Tony has advised the VFF today that he will step down from his role as the Egg Group President, to focus on the issues at hand, including the health and wellbeing of himself, his family, his business and his birds.

“Under no circumstances is animal cruelty acceptable on any farm and we hope there is a thorough investigation of this incident,” said Mr Jochinke.

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About the VFF

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) is dedicated to representing the interests of farmers and making a positive difference to their businesses and communities. We strive to create an environment for our members, our farmers, that enables profitable, safe, sustainable production to ensure an enduring social licence in a community that respects and values the sector.