



**Animal
Liberation**

Compassion without compromise



Australia's shameful rabbit farming industry

Shocking footage released by Animal Liberation reveals the abhorrent cruelty within one of Australia's domestic rabbit farms.

- Shocking new footage released by Animal Liberation reveals egregious and abhorrent cruelty inflicted on domestic rabbits in one of Australia's domestic rabbit farms.
- Distressing vision depicts domestic rabbits bred in cruel conditions, and sick and injured rabbits left alive to suffer a slow death in breach of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986.
- Renowned veterinarian describes the immense suffering and cruelty domestic rabbits endure including conditions of extreme confinement within this industrial farming sector.
- Cruelty evidence documented throughout 2021 and sent to Agriculture Victoria for urgent investigation and action.
- The Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) declared Domestic Rabbit farming a negative growth industry due to poor animal welfare and disease.
- In 2018, the RIRDC estimated there are less than 10 domestic rabbit farms in Australia today.
- Animal Liberation has heightened its demand for an Independent Office of Animal Welfare.

Shocking new footage released by Animal Liberation, the country's longest-running animal protection organisation, has exposed the stark reality of Australia's cruel and 'negative growth' rabbit farming industry.

Confronting vision captured throughout the first half of 2021 shows domestic rabbits confined to small barren cages, suffering debilitating untreated illness and injuries, and high farm mortality rates.



**Animal
Liberation**

Compassion without compromise



The damning evidence documented by an eyewitness was reported to Agriculture Victoria in early August with a call for an immediate investigation and unannounced site inspection.

Animal Liberation's Farmed Animals Campaign Manager, Roscoe Osborne said: "It's incredibly disturbing to see undetected atrocities like this occurring in our own backyard. To witness these small and gentle animals, one of Australia's most popular family companions, suffer this kind of physical and mental abuse behind closed doors is heartbreaking. The wider community will be appalled at these revelations and we are confident will respond strongly to our demand for justice for these suffering rabbits".

"We share the public's concern about these types of industrialised farming operations which cause immense harm and suffering to sentient beings, and the lack of proactive oversight and enforcement of our animal cruelty laws by those responsible. We need to shut these operators down, and establish an independent office of animal welfare because it is clear that the responsible agencies are failing to protect animals from cruelty."

"Without the introduction of urgent meaningful reforms including independent regulation and enforcement, our governments continue to send the wrong messages to the public about our duty of care to all animals.

"How can the public have any confidence in government and regulators when the only time they become aware of these atrocities is from the work by animal protection organisations, whistleblowers, and members of the public, rather than the agencies who are tasked with upholding laws intended to protect animals from cruelty and abuse?"

When asked for comment, esteemed veterinarian and recognised Australian expert in the field of rabbit medicine, Dr Gerry Skinner, expressed that "The current methods of caging, management, veterinary care and methods of the slaughter of rabbits in the meat industry have serious welfare issues and cause unnecessary suffering".



**Animal
Liberation**

Compassion without compromise



The Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation's (RIRDC) five-year RD&E report of new, developing and maturing animal industries for the years 2013–2018 found that the industry has negative growth prospects due to disease and welfare issues. The report confirms the industry turnover is down to \$3.1 million, roughly equating to 0.005% of the gross value of Australian farm production, estimated to be \$60 billion in 2016–17. RIRDC estimates that across Australia, only 10 commercial domestic rabbit farms remain in operation.

RSPCA Australia elaborates on the subject, "The way in which rabbits are farmed for meat results in a number of welfare concerns. These concerns arise from the confinement of animals in a way that prevents them from moving freely and does not satisfy their behavioural, social and physiological needs. Rabbits are curious and intelligent animals who need exercise, mental stimulation, somewhere to hide and things to chew on – natural behaviours that cannot be expressed in these conditions." The RSPCA adds that the Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals: Intensive Husbandry of Rabbits is "overdue for a review".

Dr Reem Lascelles, author of 2017 report 'The Rabbit Meat Industry' in Australia' and researcher into the current animal welfare regulatory regime applied to domestic rabbits in intensive meat farms, confirmed, "The husbandry practices set out in the Industry Model Code of Practice would amount to animal cruelty if they were applied in a context where the rabbit is a pet." Referring to the industry standards, Dr Lascelles explained, "None of the basic five freedoms of animals, as adopted by veterinarians and the World Organisation for Animal Health, are being met". Dr Lascelles further stated, "rabbits bred for meat are marketed for slaughter at the age of 11–13 weeks, a small fraction of their expected lifespan of 8–12 years."

Dr Lascelles further stated, "The use of Cervical Dislocation as an acceptable method of euthanasia under the Model Code of Practice can lead to some rabbits being bled alive and will potentially institute practices that cause rabbits unnecessary harm and suffering, and thus amount to what would be an act of cruelty.". When referring to this method of slaughter, Veterinarian Dr Gerry Skinner added, "This is not instantaneous or humane, and rabbits may be alive for up to 13 seconds after this occurs."



**Animal
Liberation**

Compassion without compromise



"This barbaric industry is long overdue for a change" Mr Osborne added, "It is hard to believe that in 2021 we are still seeing this kind of blatant and violent animal cruelty going on in Australia".

Animal Liberation has heightened its calls for an independent office of animal welfare to oversee and investigate farms such as this, to ensure standards are being met and perpetrators of animal cruelty are held to account. "We urge the Australian public to use their voices to demand a better reality for all animals in this country" Chief Executive Officer, Lynda Stoner asserted.

To learn more about this issue and take action, visit www.al.org.au/rabbits.

R Osborne

Farmed Animal Campaign Manager, Animal Liberation

roscoe@animal-lib.org.au | 02 9262 32212