



Building a Strong Local Economy

Poultry Industry Overview





Front Cover Image
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Introduction

The poultry industry has long been a part of the fabric of Wollondilly. For example, at Thirlmere the Estonian community established poultry farming in the 1930s and by 1960 it was the largest egg producing district in Australia. From Silverdale to Bargo, and Lakesland to Appin, all across Wollondilly poultry farms and processing plants have now been established, often from the legacy of early pioneers of the industry.

However, as our community grows, we also need to carefully consider concerns that arise regarding residential amenity.

There are many issues associated with poultry farming in Wollondilly and opinions vary across stakeholders. Council has received representations from both residents and the industry regarding poultry farming issues in Wollondilly.

As a result Council, at its meeting on April 2016, resolved to suspend compliance action on poultry farms. Council wants to wait until after consultation occurs to better understand the concerns before further decisions are made about current development applications (DAs).

Why is Council consulting?

The purpose of the consultation regarding poultry farming in Wollondilly includes:

- Creating an opportunity for Council to hear and understand the concerns of the poultry industry and the community
- Enabling both the industry and the community to hear each other's perspective on the issues
- Investigating ways to improve policy responses to poultry farming issues and concerns

How are we consulting?

There are two ways in which we are consulting on this important topic:

1. We are holding an **evening forum**:

You are invited to attend the forum about Poultry Farming in Wollondilly. This forum will focus on hearing and understanding the various perspectives around poultry farming in Wollondilly.

Come along and have your say!

When: 8th June 2016

Where: Bargo Sports Club

Time: 5:00pm – 8:30pm

Please Note: Light refreshments will be provided and this is an alcohol free event

RSVP: Contact Council's Community Engagement Team on 4677 1100 or community.engagement@wollondilly.nsw.gov.au to reserve your place

2. **We are seeking feedback via Council's online community engagement portal, *Engage.Wollondilly*** (www.engage.wollondilly.nsw.gov.au/). Council will be taking feedback from key stakeholders via *Engage.Wollondilly* both prior to the Poultry Farm Forum as well as after the forum. If you can't make the forum *Engage.Wollondilly* is a convenient and easy way to contribute to the conversation and put your ideas forward.

Whether you're attending the Forum or commenting via Engage.Wollondilly, please consider the following suggested questions. (They are really just "prompts" to get you thinking about some of the key issues, so feel free to make any comments you wish beyond the scope of these suggested questions).

1. What are your thoughts on the economic value and food production significance of the poultry industry in the Sydney Basin?
2. What are the most significant concerns in relation to impacts on amenity for residents?
3. What are your thoughts on the "right to farm" principle?
4. What role do you think Council has in supporting local businesses and community?
5. Describe your personal experience of living on or near an existing or extended poultry farm? What things are positive and what are negative aspects? Have you moved there recently or been there for a long time?
6. How could issues and complaints (about odour, noise and dust etc.) be better managed by Council and/or the poultry industry?
7. What actions can be taken by Council to strike an appropriate balance between the importance of the industry and the need to protect residential amenity? For example what operating hours and bird pick up times are suitable for commercial viability and for neighbourhood amenity?

What happens next?

1. Council officers will review the information provided from the consultations
2. A report will be presented to a Council meeting in July 2016
3. Decisions on current development applications (DAs) for poultry farming will be determined

Key Facts

Poultry Industry Overview	
Industry Leader	<p>Wollondilly Shire is ranked:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No.1 overall in Sydney, NSW and Australia for Turkey Meat Production • No. 2 in Sydney, No. 3 in NSW and No. 8 in Australia for Chicken Meat Production • No. 2 in Sydney and NSW and No. 3 in Australia for Duck Meat Production • No. 4 in Sydney, No. 10 in NSW and No. 19 in Australia for Egg Production

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<p>Agricultural Commodity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poultry meat in the Sydney peri-urban area provides 46.2% of NSW and 18.0% of Australia's total value • Poultry meat is the fifth largest agricultural commodity in NSW and is the most consumed meat product in Australia • In NSW the industry supports 6000 direct jobs and a further 39,000 jobs downstream • The industry in NSW is dominated by two large national processing companies, Baiada and Ingham, and by three processing companies based in the Sydney Basin: Cordina Chicken, Red Lea Chicken and Pepe's Ducks
<p>Growth Industry</p>	<p>The industry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is forecast to grow by between 3% and 4% a year in the medium term • Will need to meet demand by building an additional 240 sheds to supply an additional 70 million birds by 2021. This represents an estimated capital investment of approximately \$156 million • Requires access to land, infrastructure and investment confidence
<p>Industry Trends</p>	<p>The most notable of these are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant growth of free-range production and the associated opportunities and challenges • The industry has adopted higher welfare standards, such as the RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme, in response to retail and consumer demands • The main implications for processors and growers are lower stocking densities and increased costs of production • Pressure on industry to build new farming complexes and expand existing operations in order to remain financially viable • The changing rural landscape in poultry meat production areas is constraining the operational and expansion capacity of many farms
<p>Size of farms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two- or three-shed farms are increasingly no longer economically sustainable, and most new developments consist of eight or more sheds • Tremendous pressure on smaller farms to expand their operations in order to remain viable. Currently, 105 farms (35%) in NSW consist of three sheds or less • Expansion of smaller farms in the Sydney Basin. Many of these farms were originally built on relatively small acreages in rural production areas but are enclosed by urban or rural residential developments, making expansion difficult • Dwindling number of smaller family-owned and -operated farms and a trend towards large farming complexes owned by corporate growing companies

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Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compromising Wollondilly's "rural living" future. For most poultry farm owners it is not just a place of business but it is also their home • Direct economic and job loss in the supply chain. For example, breeder farms, hatcheries, grow-out farms, processing plants, rendering plants and feed mills • Indirect economic and job loss in support and service industries. For example, transport, cleaning, waste management, gas supply, construction, retail sales, marketing • Sustained future investment halted • Decreased land and economic productivity as former farms become 'rural lifestyle' properties • Increased likelihood of rural land being rezoned and subdivided for housing development. The urban development of rural land is likely to have a greater significant lifestyle impact on existing residential homes
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Poultry Industry Issues

Poultry Industry and the Peri-Urban Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectations of residents in a rural area may not match the reality of living in an agricultural zone • Poultry farming has the potential to have an adverse impact by the emission of occasional and sometimes offensive noises, odours and operations • Noise legislation and associated restrictions can significantly impact the operational capacity and viability of poultry farms, particularly in peri-urban and rural residential areas. This is primarily because poultry meat birds are harvested (picked-up) late at night or early morning when permissible noise emissions are at their lowest
Odour, dust and noise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Odour, dust and noise generated by on-farm poultry production are the most common sources of complaints from nearby residents • Most odour is caused by the build-up of litter on shed floors during the growth cycle. Dust expelled from poultry sheds can also transmit odour. These odours affect nearby residents to varying degrees dependent upon how wet the litter is; how the sheds are ventilated; the filtering of dust and air flow; weather and prevailing airflow patterns; vegetation; topography and existing vegetation • Odours produce different reactions with different people and are very difficult to quantify, the causes are hard to isolate and remedies are difficult to determine • Truck movements and the loading of birds, particularly between 9 pm and 7 am generate a significant number of noise complaints

<p>Bird Welfare</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birds experience significantly lower fear and stress responses when harvested at night. Bird pile-ups (pack-ups) are a major risk during daytime harvesting, especially for turkeys. Night time pickups also assist to avoid heat stress which has been associated with higher mortality rates • It is a legislative requirement that lairage times (term for the period between when birds arrive at the processing plants and when they are slaughtered) and conditions are managed to minimise stress on the birds. From an industry perspective, birds are optimally harvested at night or early morning to ensure lairage times are minimised as far as possible, and to comply with mandatory animal welfare requirements in terms of access to water and feed • In NSW the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (General) Regulation 2006 promote the responsible care and handling of animals. The Regulation adopts national codes of practice that provide detailed information on acceptable animal welfare practices for husbandry of livestock
<p>Processing Issues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When poultry meat birds reach target market weight they are picked up and transported to a processing plant. Pickup times and frequencies vary due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ target markets ○ species (chickens, turkeys and ducks) ○ Weather and climate conditions ○ Schedule of processing plants (abattoirs) • Processing plants usually commence slaughter between 4am to 5:30am. The plant requires birds to slaughter at commencement of operations. Late night or early morning pickups are scheduled to coincide with plant operations, to minimise lengthy lairage times in an effort to reduce impacts on carcass and meat quality
<p>Regulation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The local planning provisions allow poultry farming in the RU1 Primary Production zone as an agricultural industry that is permitted subject to development consent • Anti-development impressions for a local council area can deter long term capital investment in the local area • Land use conflict between rural and residential land uses across Sydney is causing a shift of food production into other regions • Company contracts for local industry suppliers can be influenced by uncertainty about the poultry industry from council and community • Unreasonably restrictive development approval conditions can restrict our operational capacity • Vague conditions of approval give local residents cause for concern about potential loss of amenity from odour, dust and noise • In 2002 the Land and Environment Court made a decision based on the Industrial Noise Policy relating to poultry production in Wollondilly Shire, that created a precedent for Council imposing curfews to prevent bird harvest occurring between the hours of 10pm and 7am due to the potential for noise disturbance • The vast majority of existing poultry farms and processing plants operate with little or no disturbance to nearby residents • Poultry farms that cause disturbance and ongoing issues account for less than 10% of the industry in the Wollondilly Shire

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Of the few complaints about a poultry farm that are investigated and validated by Council, most only require slightly modified management practices in order to provide good neighbour amenity
Other Issues	<p>A range of direct or indirect issues can arise from site management and the behaviour of operators and workers including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waste management - poultry farm wastes may be categorised as either liquid or solid. Liquid wastes may take the form of stormwater runoff while solid wastes include manure, litter and dead animals Water run-off must be properly managed to ensure minimal impact on local water courses Use of trucks (varying number and size) and driving practices onsite and on nearby roads The covering and securing of all loads of litter, manure and feed to prevent dust and feathers blowing from the load Lighting – onsite and from vehicle driving lights towards houses

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Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, 1979 (EPA Act)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Controls the Development Application (DA) Assessment Process Development Control Plan (DCP) to provide guidelines including : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> minimum setback distances to property boundaries management of noise, dust and odour Compliance Framework - how breaches of a development consent are managed
Land and Environment Court (LEC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning appeals can override a Council decision on a DA Court precedent to the DA conditions for poultry farms based on the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Industrial Noise Policy to assess noise impacts (e.g. bird pick up times) Environmental Protection Authority Guidelines to assess odour impacts
Protection of Environment Operations Act (POEO Act)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides the framework for how breaches of a development consent are managed and/or compliance enforced
Contract Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aside from government requirements, poultry farms and processing plants must be managed and maintained to industry standards to meet the requirements of the companies such as Baiada and Ingham

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<p>Wollondilly Council Compliance Policy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes clear guidelines around Council's regulatory activities and implementation of enforcement action • Ensure that regulatory matters are managed in a consistent and transparent manner and the principles of procedural fairness and natural justice are followed • This policy also provides guidelines on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The investigation of customer requests for action relating to regulatory matters ○ Options for dealing with unlawful activities and regulatory breaches ○ Matters for consideration including the exercise of discretion in dealing with regulatory action by Council ○ Determining whether or not enforcement action is warranted
<p>Education and Awareness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council issues advice on Planning Certificates to purchasers of rural land stating: <i>“Wollondilly Shire Council supports the rights of persons in rural areas of the Shire to undertake and pursue agricultural production activities that are consistent with land capability and use reasonable and practical measures to avoid environmental harm and minimise impact to adjoining land users. Intending purchasers are advised that agricultural production can include the following activities that may have implications for occupiers and prospective purchasers of rural land: Intensive livestock production (cattle feedlots, poultry farms, piggeries, restricted dairies)”</i>