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Source: [Society and Animals](#), Volume 19, Number 4, 2011 , pp. 368-382(15)

Publisher: [BRILL](#)

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Abstract:

On the statute books, New Zealand has a strong regulatory system that protects nonhuman animals on farms. Animals are guaranteed the “Five Freedoms,” including freedom to express normal patterns of behavior. This theoretically strong protection is weakened considerably, however, through institutional structures and practices. A loophole in the law allowing practices that violate the Five Freedoms in “exceptional circumstances” is used frequently. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) is the government agency that administers animal welfare regulation. This agency is also responsible for increasing primary production, and the farming industry has undue influence with MAF. The National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC) is appointed by MAF, and this group is also dominated by industry interests, with a view of animal welfare that excludes behavioral concerns. These factors result in a weakening of welfare requirements. Various solutions to increase protection are proposed, including a requirement that all science and public concerns be taken into account when making decisions on animal welfare and that animal welfare be regulated by an independent government body.

Keywords: [factory farming](#); [Five Freedoms](#); [New Zealand](#); [policy](#)

Document Type: Research article

DOI: 10.1163/156853011X590024

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Publication date: 2011-01-01

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