

Chapter 15

Why It Is Difficult To Make Meaningful Progress in Animal Welfare Law Reform

*Sue Kedgley**

I have been asked, in this chapter, to discuss why so little progress has been made in the area of animal law reform, and why it is so difficult to make meaningful changes for animal welfare within the political process.

I write this as someone who spent 12 years as a member of New Zealand's Parliament and tried to improve New Zealand's animal welfare law.¹ One of my objectives, coming into Parliament in 1999, was to put animal welfare onto the parliamentary agenda, improve conditions for animals in New Zealand, and get rid of some of the more extreme forms of industrial cruelty, such as the keeping of animals in cages, by changing our animal welfare law.

Despite years of campaigning, however, and strong public support for better welfare laws, few positive changes were made to animal welfare law during those 12 years. And few changes were made, either, to improve conditions for farm animals in New Zealand.

Recently, the New Zealand government announced its intention to make some significant changes to the *Animal Welfare Act 1999*(NZ) (AWA), and it released the first ever animal welfare strategy² as a way of achieving that end. While some of the proposed changes may improve conditions for animals in certain situations, other changes are likely to weaken the Act even further. They will dilute existing protections for animals in the Act, increase protections for producers and users of animals, and make it even more difficult to get rid of some of the more extreme examples of animal cruelty in New Zealand, such as the practice of keeping hens in cages.

So in this chapter I will attempt to shed light on why there has been little progress in the area of animal welfare reform, highlighting the reluctance of

* I would like to thank Danielle Duffield for her research assistance.

1 Elected to Parliament in 1999, I was a sitting member until 2011 <www.greens.org.nz/people/suekedgley>.

2 Ministry of Primary Industries (2012) *Animal Welfare Matters: Proposals for a New Zealand Animal Welfare Strategy and Amendments to the Animal Welfare Act 1999*, MPI Discussion Paper No 2012/07 <www.mpi.govt.nz/news-resources/publications?title=Animal%20Welfare%20Matters>.

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