

Undercover investigation reveals Victorian pig farms still caging mother pigs, 5 years after industry phase out came into effect

Media release by Andy Meddick MP (Animal Justice Party Victoria)

An undercover investigation by Farm Transparency Project has revealed at least six Victorian piggeries are confining mother pigs to small cages, despite an industry phase-out deadline of 2017.

The footage, taken across early 2022, shows six farms with rows of sow cages in active use.

Following release of the footage, some piggeries have admitted to the continued use of sow stalls whilst others admit to using mating cages more than 4 times longer than the industry recommends.

Hidden cameras reveal pregnant pigs languishing in these cages for up to 27 days at a time, with no room to turn around. One of the locations is owned by Sunpork, the largest pork company in Australia and a major supplier of pork to supermarkets across Victoria and the rest of the country. Sunpork claims to be [“one of the first pig producers in the country to eliminate sow stalls”](#).

The Australian Pork website states: *The Australian pork industry has taken a world-leading position by voluntarily committing to phasing out sow stalls. This means that sows will not be confined to stalls from five days after they are last mated until one week before farrowing when they are moved into farrowing accommodation.*

Animal Justice Party MP Andy Meddick will introduce a motion in parliament today, shaming the pork industry for misleading the public with their woeful attempt at self-regulation, and calling on the government to legislate a permanent ban.

Both the Farm Transparency Project and Animal Justice Party believe this investigation suggests the use of sow stalls is still widespread, flouting the industry's own commitment - and that the Victorian Government has no choice but to intervene.

Quotes attributable to Andy Meddick MP:

“The Andrews Government has just released consultation on their new Animal Welfare Act, which legislates sentence in Victoria. Yet they have refused to properly legislate on sow stalls. If they don't act immediately on this investigation, their so-called commitment to animal welfare is nothing but window-dressing.”

“Pigs are the fifth most intelligent animal in the world - even smarter than dogs. Confining them to cages they are unable to even turn around causes not just immense physical suffering, but as one of the only animals able to perceive time, extreme psychological suffering too.”

“Australian Pork committed to a mandatory sow stall ban by 2017 and they've clearly failed to do so. As long as animal welfare is voluntary, agricultural industries will continue to exploit these innocent animals.”

“This deceptive phase out has misled consumers into viewing sow stalls as a thing of the past. Victorians have been buying caged pork promoted as ‘sow stall free’ - and they have a right to be angry at the pork industry and the government.”

Quotes attributable to Chris Delforce, Executive Director at Farm Transparency Project and Lead Animal Justice Party Candidate for North Eastern Metro:

“Back in 2010, damning investigations into the use of cruel sow stalls shocked the Australian public. The pork industry responded by pledging to get rid of these cages by 2017. This new investigation reveals that the industry never took this pledge seriously, and has no intention of ending sow stalls on its own, yet is happy to tell Australians that they've already done so.”

“The largest pork company in this country, Sunpork, is telling consumers they've eliminated sow stalls, yet they're still caging sows - while proudly declaring their certification by the industry's Quality Assurance Program (APIQ). Clearly, ‘assurance’ from this industry means very little.”

“Animal welfare is being used as a hollow buzzword - they know it's something Australians care deeply about, yet it's incompatible with their goal of maximising profit and efficiency by cramming in as many pigs as they can.”

“Cruelty is a fundamental component of the pork industry's business model, and as long as farmed animals continue to be exempt from Victoria's animal cruelty laws, that's not going to change... but if we can make sow stalls illegal, that's one less

way for the industry to cause unnecessary harm and suffering to pigs.”

“We’re calling on the Andrews Government to legislate a complete ban on sow stalls, including gestation stalls, mating stalls, and any other phrase the industry wants to use to describe small cages for mother pigs.”

“This government recently passed new laws targeting whistleblowers who investigate cruelty in farms, but these findings show exactly why such investigations are crucial. Without them, consumers are just supposed to take the industry for its word.”

Footage: <https://www.farmtransparency.org/videos?id=vm28ypbpc8>

Photos: <https://www.farmtransparency.org/campaigns/sow-stalls/photos>