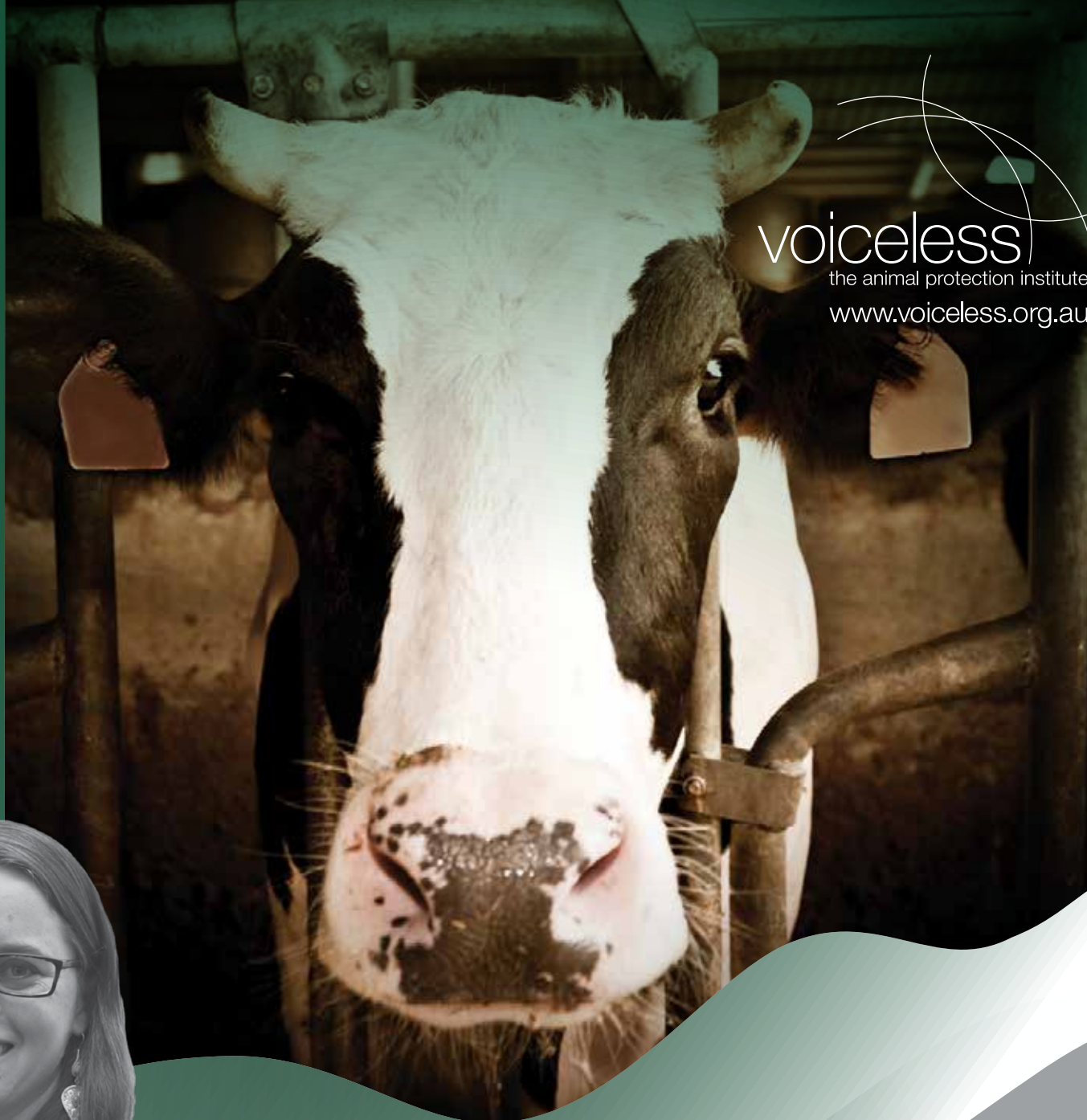



“Working together,
we can change
the lives of millions
of dairy cows
in Australia.”

Brian & Ondine Sherman
Voiceless co-founders and managing directors



voiceless
the animal protection institute
www.voiceless.org.au



In the past three decades, the Australian dairy cow has been selectively bred and reared to double her lactation from around 2,848 litres to an astonishing 5,471 litres of milk annually. This change has had a disastrous impact on her welfare.

Many Australians believe that dairy cows live idyllic lives, naturally producing enough milk to feed their young and provide for human consumption.

In reality, the average Australian dairy cow is subject to a perpetual cycle of calving, milking and forced impregnation.

She has been bred to produce double the milk she could have thirty years ago. To ensure her yield remains at its peak, she is forcibly impregnated every 13 months to produce a calf who is immediately taken away from her and, in many cases, killed within a week after birth. This takes a serious toll on her physical and emotional wellbeing.

In fact, producing a high yield of 35 litres per day has been compared to a person jogging for six hours, seven days a week. Alarmingly, Australian dairy representatives have stated that the industry standard is now 30-50 litres per cow per day, with some cows producing up to a massive 60 litres of milk per day.

As a result, milking cows become worn out well before their natural life expectancy. As soon as their milk yield falls beyond a competitive level, dairy cows do not go into retirement, rather they are sent to an early slaughter.

Professor John Webster, Emeritus Professor of Animal Husbandry at University of Bristol observes that **“the dairy cow is exposed to more abnormal physiological demands than any other farm animal.”**

Cycle of distress

Forced pregnancies

Like other mammals, a mother cow must give birth in order to produce milk. As a result, the separation of the mother cow and her calf is an inherent part of dairy production.

It is recommended by industry that dairy calves are forcibly removed from their mothers within 12 hours of birth. Cows develop a strong maternal bond with their calf in as little as five minutes after birth so this separation can be stressful for both individuals.

Over the days following their separation, a mother cow can bellow day and night in search of her calf, often returning to the place where the calf was last seen. Separation before natural weaning also has a negative impact on calf welfare, with initial signs of distress including increased heart rate and vocalisations.

Calves as waste products

Every year, these forced pregnancies result in the birth of hundreds of thousands of calves. The majority of female calves are kept as replacements for the milk producing herd, while most males and the unwanted females are considered 'wastage'.

Each year around 800,000 of these unwanted calves (known as bobby calves) are born. While some are kept for rearing, around 66,000 calves are killed on-farm straight after birth, often by blunt force trauma with a hammer or similar instrument. Alarmingly, blunt force trauma is a routine and lawful practice on Australian dairy farms with the Victorian Department of Environment and Primary Industries listing this brutal practice as one of the acceptable methods of slaughtering newborn calves.

Those newborn calves not slaughtered on-farm, around **623,000**, are separated from their mothers within just five days of life. They are given a last feed and then loaded onto trucks bound for sale yards and slaughterhouses. Despite welfare science showing that calves will naturally suckle from their mothers around five times a day, the dairy industry has committed to a voluntary standard which will allow milk to be withheld from calves for **up to 30 hours**.

These calves are then slaughtered for use in pet food, leather goods, the pharmaceutical industry or to be processed into pink veal for human consumption.

“Anyone who has witnessed the removal of a calf from their mother at a few days of age has seen the **heartbreaking spectacle of both mother and baby bawling piteously.**”

Prof Bernard Rollin
Professor of Animal Sciences
Colorado State University
Voiceless Scientific Expert
Advisory Council



The need for reform

Domestic and international demand for dairy products is booming but the price of Australian milk has declined steeply in recent years. To meet this demand, both the dairy cow and the dairy farmer are being pushed beyond their limits.

The trend towards higher milk output, larger herd sizes and the growth of indoor production systems have all increased the pressure on dairy cows. Yet little of this is visible to consumers, many of whom continue to hold idyllic views of dairy production as it was half a century ago.

The implications of high production dairying on the modern dairy cow are immense and it is a critical factor in almost all the welfare concerns which exist in today's industry.

Lameness and mastitis plague the dairy industry, resulting in pain and discomfort for a large number of dairy cows. Standard on-farm mutilation practices such as tail docking, disbudding and dehorning are often performed without pain relief and are also a major cause of severe pain and distress. *See Glossary for more details.*

It is clear that law reform is needed to better protect the dairy cow and her calf. Voiceless is working to ban the use of these mutilation practices, as well as the use of blunt force trauma as a method of slaughter. Voiceless is also fighting to ban the live export of Australian dairy cows.

It is important to note, however, that some welfare issues such as the deliberate and repeated impregnation of dairy cows and the premature slaughter of hundreds of thousands of bobby calves each year cannot simply be regulated away. These welfare issues are an inherent part of high volume commercial production and cannot be avoided by consumers who choose to consume dairy.

For a detailed review of the welfare issues in dairy production and Voiceless's recommendations, download *The Life of the Dairy Cow: A Report on the Australian Dairy Industry* from voiceless.org.au/resources



The role of consumers

One of the easiest ways to ensure consumers have the information they need to make informed and ethical food choices is through assurance schemes. Like schemes currently in use in the egg, chicken and pig meat industries, a dairy assurance scheme would enable dairy farmers to comply with and market their products in accordance with a set of established welfare standards, such as no tail docking or dehorning.

Establishing nationally recognised dairy industry assurance schemes would give consumers the opportunity to make a genuine choice to purchase higher welfare dairy products, and in turn, incentivise producers to improve on-farm practices.

Glossary:

Lameness is a structural or functional condition which usually affects a cow's limbs inhibiting her ability to walk, stand up, lie down or move around.

Mastitis is an inflammation of the mammary gland caused by the invasion of bacteria into the udder.

Tail docking involves the amputation of a cow's tail, and is often performed without pain relief.

Dehorning is the removal of the horn and surrounding tissue of older dairy calves and adult cows after the horns have attached to their skull, and is often performed without pain relief. Tools used include dehorning knives, hand and electric saws, guillotine shears or scoop dehorers.

Disbudding is the removal of the horn bud using a hot iron scoop or chemicals before it attaches to a calf's skull, and is often performed without pain relief on calves less than two months of age.

If you are concerned about the welfare of dairy cows, here is what you can do to make a change:

- Switch to dairy-free alternatives like soy, rice, oat or nut milk.
- Tell your friends about how dairy is produced and the suffering of dairy cows and their calves.
- Ask dairy producers questions about their treatment of cows and calves.
- Encourage retailers and supermarkets to offer more cruelty free products.
- Contact your local MP to let them know you want better legal protections for dairy cows.
- Share your support by donating to Voiceless and help us be a voice for dairy cows.

Voiceless is working to break the silence that surrounds the treatment of the modern dairy cow and her calf.

It is time for an informed public debate about what sort of dairy industry the people of Australia want and how we can achieve it.

“The legalised cruelty within the modern Australian dairy industry is shocking. The time for change is now.”

Assoc Prof Charlie Teo
Voiceless Council member





The Hon Michael Kirby AC CMG
Former Justice of the High Court
of Australia
Voiceless Patron



Dr John Webster
Professor Emeritus University
of Bristol
Voiceless Scientific Council



Dr Deidre Wicks
Academic and Author
Voiceless Council member

Join the movement for change

Voiceless is an independent think tank working to alleviate animal suffering caused by factory farming. We are supported by a community of respected minds who are speaking up for animal protection.

Please join us, add your voice and help us create a world in which animals are treated with respect and compassion.

PERSONAL

- Make humane choices
- Start a conversation
- Contact your MP
- Donate to Voiceless

LAW

- Grow your knowledge of animal law
- Advocate for legislative reforms
- Take on animal law matters
- Provide pro bono advice

BUSINESS

- Source ethical products
- Lead your industry
- Educate your market
- Sponsor Voiceless

GOVERNMENT

- Be informed
- Listen to community concerns
- Support industry progress
- End legalised cruelty



2 Paddington Street,
Paddington NSW 2021
Phone **02 9357 0723**
info@voiceless.org.au
www.voiceless.org.au



Find us on Facebook



Follow us on Twitter



Watch us on YouTube

This briefing was generously designed by **EyeLevel Communications** and printed by **Nova Press**.

Disclaimer: Voiceless Limited ACN 108 494 631 ("Voiceless") is a company limited by guarantee. Voiceless is not a legal practice and does not give legal advice to individuals or organisations. While Voiceless has made every effort to ensure the accuracy of information, including images, presented in this publication, Voiceless does not guarantee the accuracy or completeness of that information. Information is provided by Voiceless as general information only and any use of or reliance on it should only be undertaken on a strictly voluntary basis after an independent review by a qualified legal practitioner (or other expert). Voiceless is not responsible for, and disclaims all liability for, any loss or damage arising out of the use of or reliance on this publication. This publication is protected by copyright and no part of it should be reproduced in any form without the consent of Voiceless. A list of references used to compile this publication is available upon request. © March 2015