



Ag-gag Laws

Ag-gag laws are designed to deter activists and journalists from documenting the suffering of animals on factory farms.

What is ag-gag?

The term “ag-gag” describes a variety of laws which seek to prevent individuals recording or documenting the operations of commercial agricultural facilities.

Generally, ag-gag laws target undercover investigators, whistleblowers and journalists by:

- Criminalising the undercover surveillance of commercial animal facilities
- Requiring that any footage that is obtained must be turned over to police immediately rather than given to the media
- Forcing farm employees to disclose ties to animal protection groups

The broad effect of this legislation is to deter activists and journalists from documenting the suffering of animals on factory farms in order to obscure consumers’ understanding of where their food comes from.

Hiding their suffering

Most animals farmed for food in Australia are raised intensively, yet many consumers will never step inside a factory farm. Because of this, animal advocates rely on surveillance footage to give consumers a true picture of how animals used for food are raised.

Surveillance creates transparency, promoting public awareness of some of the cruel practices which are routine in factory farms – the use of sow stalls, battery cages and mutilation techniques like debeaking. This knowledge is essential in shaping public opinion and encouraging law reform so animals can be better protected.

Lack of transparency

Surveillance footage is a key tool for improving the monitoring and enforcement of animal protection laws because it exposes incidents that would otherwise not come to the attention of authorities. It also has the potential to be used in criminal animal cruelty prosecutions.

By criminalising the collection of surveillance footage without providing improvements to existing laws, ag-gag legislation only ensures more incidents of cruelty will occur undetected and unprosecuted.

Ag-gag in Australia

As animal advocates become more effective in their use of surveillance, support for ag-gag legislation is growing in Australia. MPs from both sides of politics have voiced support for the introduction of ag-gag legislation as a means to ‘protect’ farmers from animal welfare campaigns. The NSW Minister for Primary Industries, Katrina Hodgkinson, has gone as far as to label animal activists as “akin to terrorists.”

In essence, ag-gag laws permit a culture of secrecy by punishing journalists and whistleblowers rather than the perpetrators of animal cruelty.

To learn more about ag-gag visit the Voiceless website at www.voiceless.org.au/aggag

