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Engaging backyard poultry keepers in co-designing a national poultry health information system

INFORMATION SHEET

Researcher Introduction

My name is Carolyn Gates. I am a veterinarian, clinical educator, and researcher at Massey University School of Veterinary Science who cares about finding better ways to help our furred, feathered, and scaled companions have longer, happier, and healthier lives. One of the ways we can do this is by learning more about which diseases are most common in our animals, reasons why they get sick, and what treatments are the most effective for helping them get better. Every time you make observations about your animal's health at home or bring your animal to the veterinary clinic for a consult, we have the opportunity to learn a little bit more about the best ways to improve their health and wellbeing. My research focuses on developing easier systems to allow animal owners and veterinarians from all across New Zealand to share their unique knowledge. I am particularly interested in working with clients to design tailored preventive health care plans for their animals that address important issues like vaccination, parasite control, nutrition, housing, and environmental enrichment.

Project Background and Aims

Many households across New Zealand keep small numbers of backyard poultry for companionship, breeding, showing, and/or food for home use. However, we know very little about the total size of New Zealand's backyard poultry population, how these birds are kept, and what disease challenges they face since there is currently no legal requirement for poultry keepers with fewer than 100 birds to register their flock in a national database. Based on recent surveys we conducted last year with backyard poultry keepers and poultry veterinarians we know that backyard birds are rarely seen by veterinarians for preventive flock health care advice and many poultry keepers also report having difficulty finding veterinary clinics that are willing to treat sick birds. As a result, many backyard birds are likely getting sick from preventable diseases and many poultry keepers are likely using unreliable platforms such as the internet and social media to get poultry health care advice, which may unknowingly be causing harm to their birds. Furthermore, in the event of a natural disaster or disease outbreak, we don't have enough information about backyard poultry flocks to be able to provide keepers with the support they need to keep their birds healthy.

This project aims to engage backyard poultry keepers in the process of designing a national poultry health information system with New Zealand focused decision-support tools and educational resources

that make it easier for backyard poultry keepers to provide the best possible care for their flocks while simultaneously capturing important data that can help us understand the more effective ways to improve poultry health and wellbeing.

Participant Identification and Recruitment

You have been invited to participate in this research project because you have identified as a backyard poultry keeper in New Zealand who is over 18 years of age. For the purpose of this project, we define a backyard poultry keeper as any individual who keeps less than 100 birds for companionship, meat or eggs for personal use, hobbies, showing, breeding, pest control, and/or supplemental income.

Project Procedures

For Phase I of the project, we are running a pilot study from 10 May 2022 through 15 June 2022 to assess the level of support that backyard poultry keepers have for developing a national poultry health information system. There are five main ways for backyard poultry keepers to get involved and share their opinions:

1. **Registration Survey (5 min):** Complete a short registration form with your contact details*, location in New Zealand, how many birds you keep and why you keep them, and your level of support for developing a national poultry health information system.
** Please note that your contact details will only be visible to the project manager (Carolyn Gates) for the purpose of counting the number of unique individuals who have registered their support for the project. No one else will have access to these data.*
2. **Have Your Say Survey (10 min):** Complete a short online survey to answer questions about how you currently access poultry health information and what resources you would find most valuable to include in a national poultry health system
3. **Preventive Care Plan Survey (15 min):** Complete a short online survey to share how you currently approach the routine health care and management of your poultry flock
4. **Sick Bird Survey (15 min):** Complete a short online survey that will ask you to share some details about the last time one of your birds got sick including what symptoms you noticed, how you cared for your bird, and what was the outcome
5. **Backyard Beginners Interviews (30 min):** We are looking to interview 10 to 20 backyard poultry keepers who just started their first poultry flock within the last 6 months to understand more about how you found poultry health information and what your experiences have been like with setting up your flock including what you found helpful and what would have made the process easier

Please visit www.poultryintel.org.nz to access the links to participate in the project activities. At the end of each completed survey (Activities 1 to 4), you will be given the option of entering into a raffle prize draw through a separate survey link to win one of five \$100 Prezzy cards. You will receive one entry for

each survey completed. The prize draw will be held on June 15th 2022 upon completion of the pilot study and the winners will be notified shortly thereafter.

If you are one of the 10 to 20 individuals selected to participate in the interview, we will subsequently contact you by phone or e-mail to arrange a convenient time and place for the location of the interview. The interviews will most likely take place online via Zoom for health and safety reasons during the COVID-19 outbreak. We anticipate that the interviews will take around 30 minutes to complete depending on your responses. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed for subsequent analysis, and you will have the opportunity to review the transcripts to make any corrections or additions to ensure that we have accurately captured your responses. You will be provided with a \$50 Prezzy card as a thank you for participating in the interviews.

If enough backyard poultry keepers register to show their support during the pilot trial, we have funding available to start Phase 2 of the project to start building a permanent poultry health information system.

Data Management

Data collected from this project will be used to inform the subsequent design and implementation of a permanent voluntary national poultry health information system that would most likely be integrated into the New Zealand Companion Animal Register (NZCAR) hosted by Companion Animals New Zealand (CANZ). Your response will also be used to refine the educational materials, decision support tools, and resources provided through the project website.

Data from online surveys and transcribed interviews will be stored in a single electronic database hosted by Massey University and kept on password protected computers and servers to prevent unauthorized access. The data will only be accessible to myself and members of the research team who have signed a strict confidentiality agreement. Any findings from the project that are shared in a public forum (newsletter, media story, scientific article, presentation, or conference) will always be aggregated and presented in a manner that prevents the identification of individuals and organisations unless you have given us express written consent to make the information publicly available.

Project collaborators and funding

This project has been funded through Sustainable Food and Fibres Futures (SFFF - 19051) sponsored by the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) with additional co-funding from Poultry Industry Association of New Zealand (PIANZ) part of a larger initiative to protect New Zealand poultry populations against disease threats. The study design and resources have been developed in collaboration with individuals from MPI and PIANZ. It should be noted that these stakeholders will not have direct access to the primary data collected through the online survey forms and they will not know the identity of any individuals participating in the project. However, MPI and PIANZ have the right to receive summaries of the data that has been aggregated at a level that prevents the identification of individuals. As part of participating in the project, you must agree to receive notifications from MPI and/or PIANZ in the event of a local or national poultry emergency such as an exotic disease incursion.

Participant's Rights

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question,
- withdraw from the study at any point during the survey and/or interviews,
- withdraw your information from the study within 4 weeks of completing the registration survey and/or interviews. Please note that the responses submitted for the Have Your Say survey, Preventive Care Plan survey, and Sick Bird survey are completely anonymous so you will not be able to withdraw your information from these surveys once they have been submitted.
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation,
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher,
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

Project Contacts

If you have any further questions or concerns about participating in this research study, please do not hesitate to contact the project leader

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Human Ethics Approval

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A, Application 21/61. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Negar Partow, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A, telephone 04 801 5799 x 63363, email humanethicsoutha@massey.ac.nz