

AAI MARONDERA WORKSHOP REPORT



THEME

Enhancing the Well-being of Feathered Friends: Revolutionizing Poultry Industry Standards

21 September 2023



Championing Poultry Welfare Improvement through Objective Stakeholder Engagement

AAI held a day's workshop at Hope Fay Hotel and Conference Center in Marondera attended by a representative from the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development, veterinary experts, poultry farmers, and agricultural extension officers among others. The workshop aimed at educating and discussing various issues pivotal in enhancing the well-being of feathered friends in Zimbabwe.

An interactive and productive workshop brought out serious issues that need attention should we implement a recognizable improvement of poultry welfare standards as well as all farmed animals to uphold sustainable development goals (SDGs) as well as the one health approach. Goal number 2 of SDGs intends to ensure the sustainability of food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices. For sustainability to be achieved, there is a need to implement resilient agricultural practices such as shifting from battery cages to free-range systems which also contextualizes the need to have improved animal welfare standards in production systems in agriculture. Similarly, goal number 3 intends to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being at all ages. As earlier discussed, poor housing systems such as battery cages which compromise animal welfare also directly affect human health which would be a contradiction to SDG number 3.

Topics covered by the Workshop in line with the theme

- ❖ *Introduction to Animal Law and Animal Cruelty*
- ❖ *Cage-free egg production*
- ❖ *Battery Cages*
- ❖ *Chicken Statistics in Zimbabwe*
- ❖ *Overview of the Laws that impact animals in agriculture*
- ❖ *Challenges associated with Laws regulating animals in agriculture in Zimbabwe and how best they can be resolved through stakeholder collaboration*
- ❖ *Challenges faced in animal farming*

Raising Awareness on the Legal Protection of Farmed Animals in Zimbabwe

The community affected by laws protecting farmed animals must be well equipped with the requisite knowledge of such laws to avoid crimes against animals being committed due to ignorance. In her presentation on the introduction to animal law and animal cruelty, **Advocate. Y.Gurira** (*founder and Executive Director for AAI*) emphasized that we can't conceptualize animal law before appreciating the definition of an animal and the relationship between animals and humans. This discussion highlighted that the rationale behind an animal can affect the context or the extent of the protection of animals as defined in statutes protecting animals. The conclusion was that there is a lot of effort that needs to be put in place to equip the public with the laws that protect farmed animals to curb violation of such laws due to lack of knowledge or ignorance.

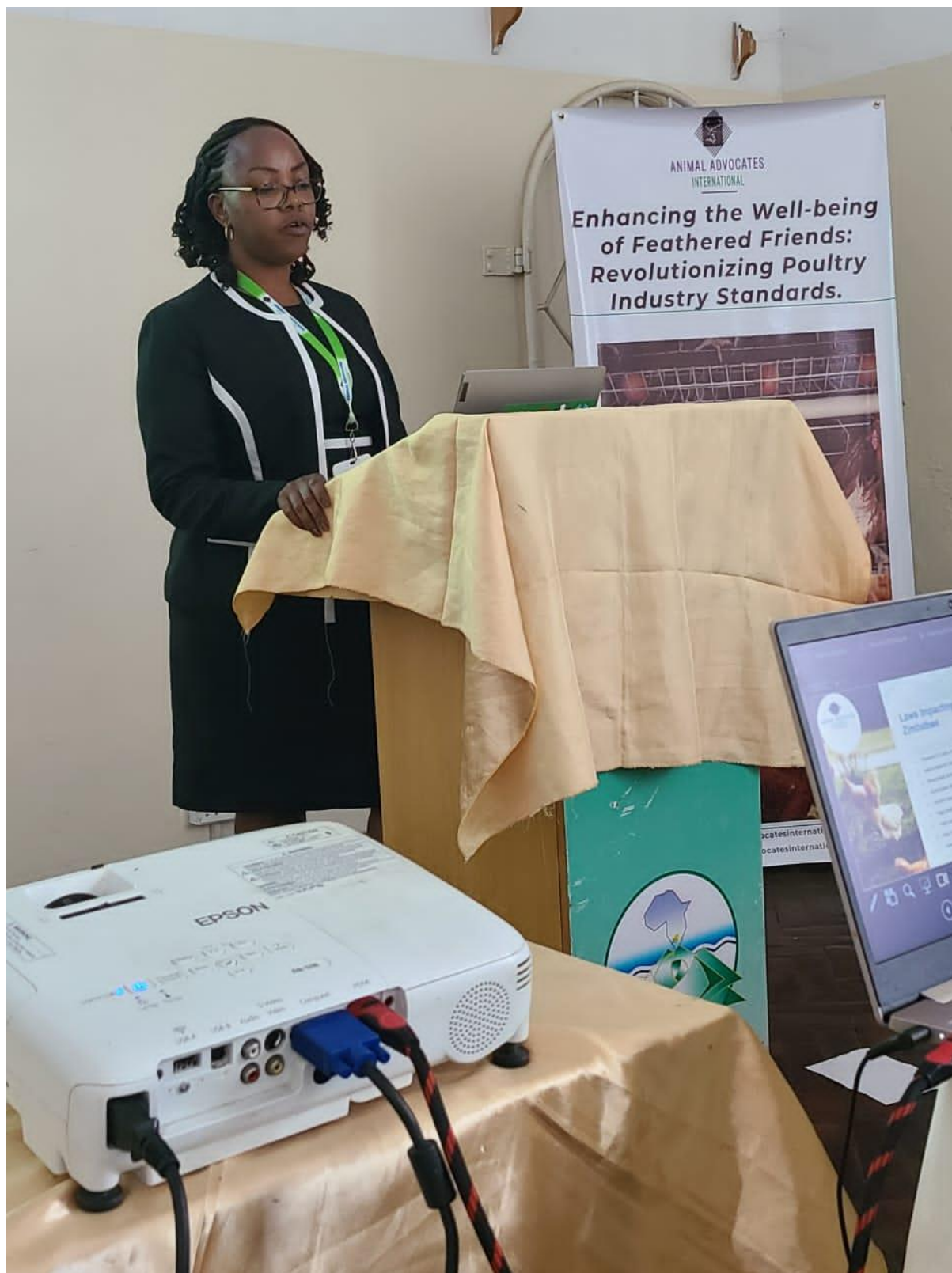


Figure 1: Adv Gurira Executive Director AAI



Figure 2: Advocate Y. Gurira presenting.

Lack of Enforcement Affecting the Effectiveness of Animal Law

Law is one thing while enforcement is another. However, the two work simultaneously in a system to execute the effectiveness of the imposed legislation. As it stands in Zimbabwe, there is poor to no enforcement of animal cruelty laws for farmed animals which renders the existing legislation ineffective. Mr. J Chiyeza (Senior Legal Officer, Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development) in his presentation emphasized that advocacy and law should also be informed by science to deter farmers from certain activities that compromise animal welfare. An example was put out that science must back up the fact that eggs produced by poultry in poor welfare conditions are less nutritious than those in good welfare conditions. The lack of resources in the authorities responsible for the enforcement of animal laws is also affecting the effectiveness of such laws. Thus, there is a need to improve the enforcement before we mention the loopholes in the laws themselves.

Efforts are in place to Improve Laws Protecting Animal Welfare

It is satisfactory to note that the government acknowledges the need to update the existing policies to improve the livelihoods of animals in agriculture in Zimbabwe. Discussions done in the workshop highlighted that some of the laws such as the

Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act are outdated and there is a need to review such statutes to create a systematic change for farmed animals and consider embracing the one health approach at large. In his address, Mr. Chiyeza highlighted that there are several statutory instruments as well as Acts in place set to improve the legislature that protects animals.



Figure 3: Mr Chiyeza, Senior Legal Officer, Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development

Why Battery Cages Should be Banned and Replaced by Cage-Free Housing Systems

Adv. Gurira's presentation categorically explained the disadvantages of the battery cage housing system to layer hens as well as why they were initially introduced. The discussion was clear that the intended purpose for the battery cage's introduction has been diverted and is now associated with a lot of layer welfare abuse. Instead, farmers and/or egg producers must consider alternative cage-free systems such as free-range systems or at least the multi-tier housing system. The discussion concluded that there is a need to strike a balance between farm profitability and animal welfare.

AAI's intended targets

AAI envisions a nation that has world-class animal welfare standards in line with international standards, sustainable development goals, and the one health approach. Animals should enjoy natural behaviors and mass production associated with poor housing systems should not be a roadblock to fundamental animal freedoms.

Thus, we continue to be pivotal in creating a systematic change for farmed animals through the law, stakeholder engagement, and direct farmer engagement. We envision resilient agricultural practices that strike a balance between animal welfare and profitability. We assist in drafting strict and efficient by-laws that effectively protect animals. Thus, in doing so, all stakeholders relevant to animal farming, law development, and law enforcement are pivotal in creating a haven for animals. As Gandhi, the Indian lawyer has said, "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress must be judged by the way its animals are treated". It's time to revolutionize poultry welfare, ditch battery cages, and embrace the new era of compassionate housing systems such as free-range systems! Go Cage-Free Zimbabwe!