



THE UNIVERSITY OF
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INCREASING CONSUMER CONFIDENCE IN ANIMAL PRODUCTS

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CHALLENGE

Australians consume an exorbitant amount of animal products. Since 1997, total Australian meat consumption has increased by 13% from 83.73 kg/capita to 94.61 kg/capita (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2018). More recently, consumers are judging the quality of animal products by the ethics of their production. Poor animal welfare results in unsustainable systems (Broom 2010). However, consumers lack knowledge of current practices due to their increased disconnection from agriculture (Vizzier-Thaxton *et al.* 2016).

INVESTIGATIONS

MANAGING MEAT CONSUMPTION

- The advised daily intake of red meat is 42.86-65g (Ekmekcioglu *et al.* 2018). Australian's consume just under half of the weekly recommendation daily, see Figure 1
- High red meat consumption is associated with an increased risk of type II diabetes, gastrointestinal cancer and cardiovascular disease (Ekmekcioglu *et al.*, 2018).
- A 25% decrease in global meat consumption would reduce global atmospheric greenhouse gas emissions by 12.5% (Raphaely & Marinova 2014).
- Methods to reduce consumption:
 - Flexitarianism: A semi-vegetarian diet whereby meat is included when necessary to alleviate nutritional deficiencies
 - Minilivestock: crickets as an alternative protein source

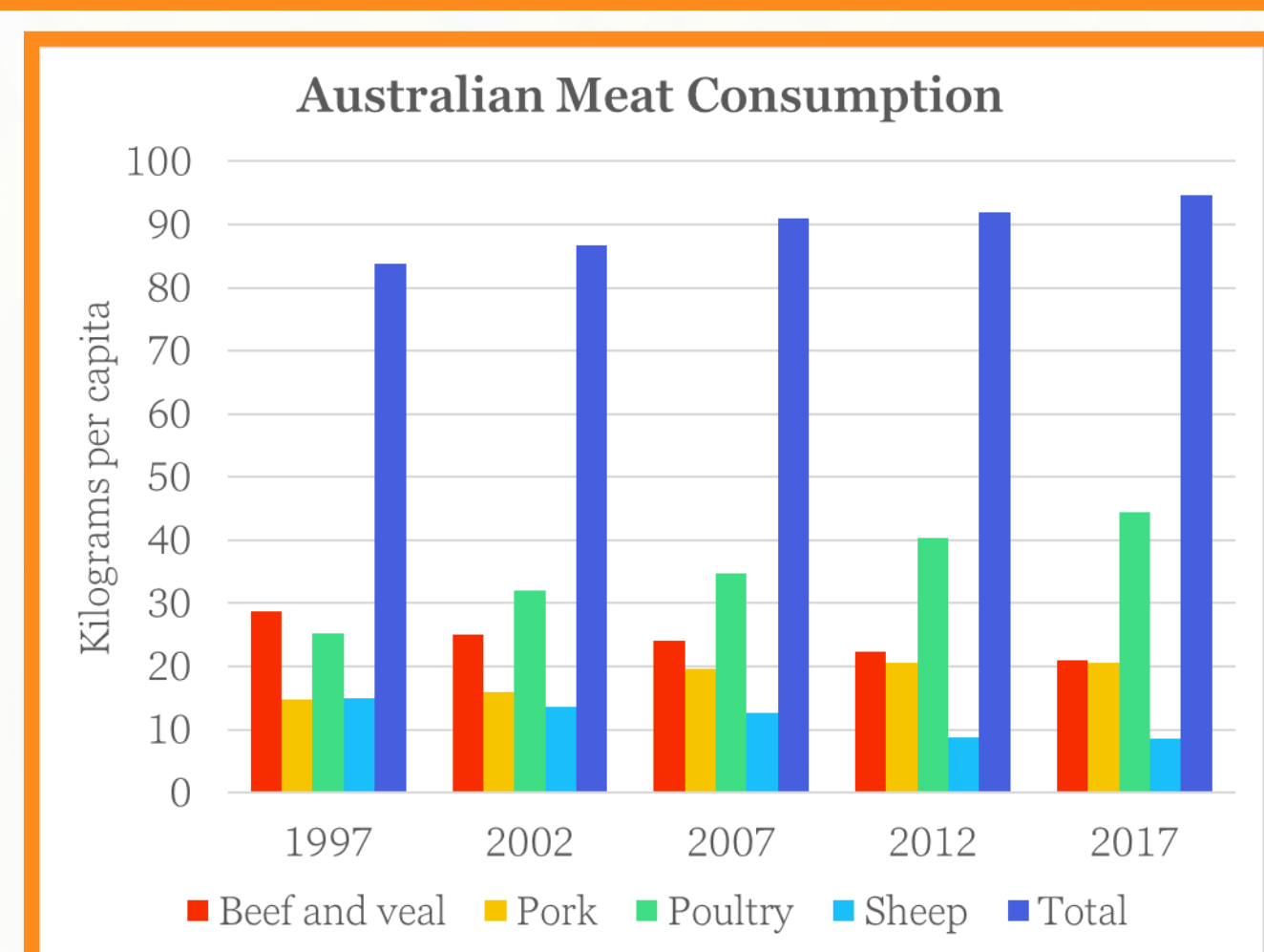
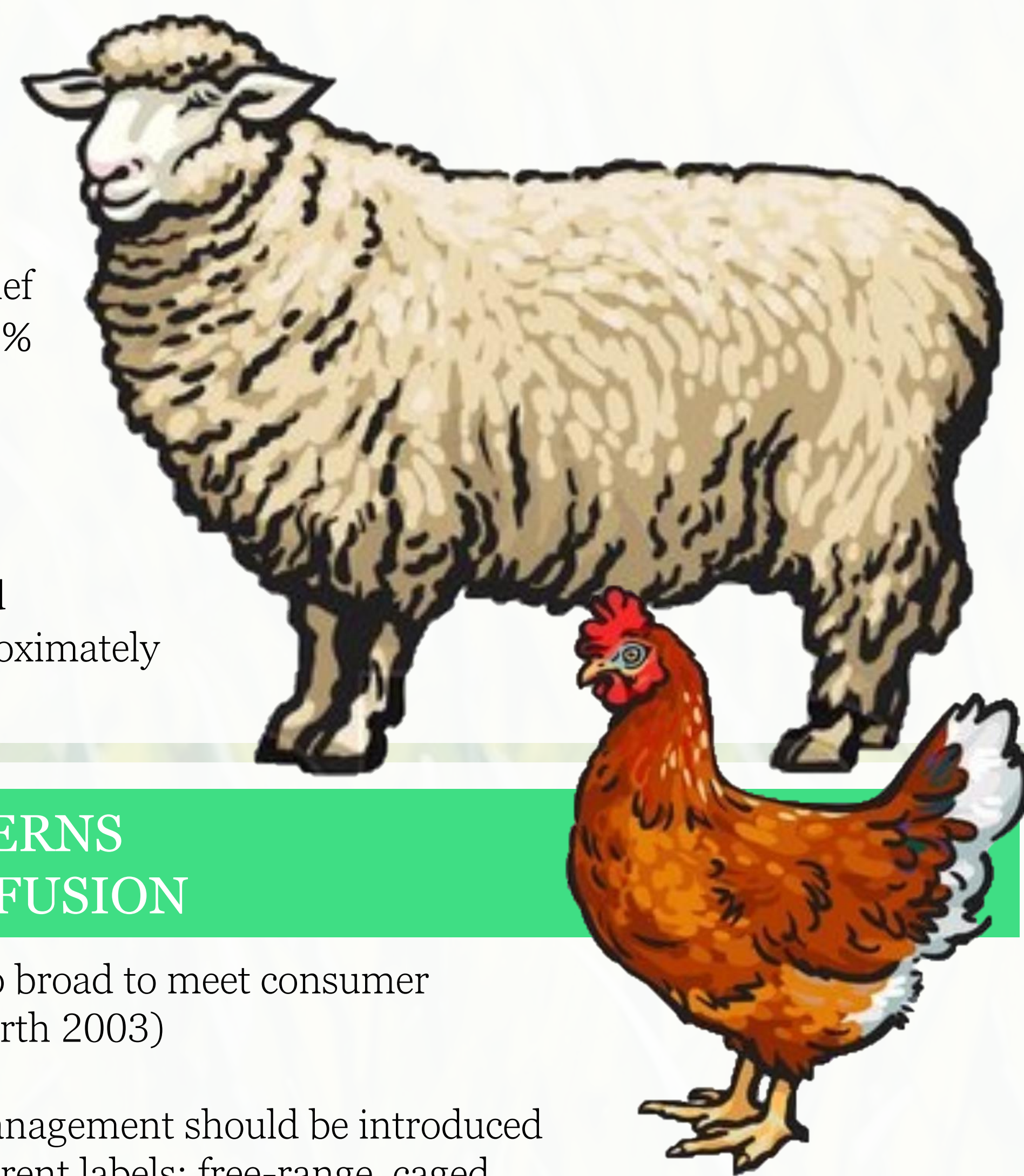


Figure 1: Australian meat consumption trends from 1997 to 2017 (OECD 2018)

THE ETHICAL RAMIFICATIONS OF MULESING

- Mulesing is a procedure performed on lambs that removes the loose folds of skin from the breech and tail to prevent flystrike.
- Australian woolgrowers have invested over \$7 million into researching and developing an alternative to mulesing (Australian Wool Innovation Limited 2018).
- Between 2008 and 2017, declarations of use of pain relief have increased from 3% to 32% (Australian Wool Exchange 2018).
- Pain relief is expensive: the combination of pain relief and anaesthetic in trials cost approximately \$1.30/lamb (ABC 2017).



PUBLIC PERCEPTION & CONSUMER DEMAND OF EGGS

- Australian egg farming is a large-scale industry: 19 million hens across 337 commercial farms produce 15 million eggs daily for the domestic market (Egg Farmers Australia 2017).
- Consumer perception of welfare issues are based on information provided through the media and 'vocal interest groups', which present 'poor, sometimes erroneous knowledge of farm animal production and management practices' (Millar 2018).
- Consumer perceptions can have a direct effect: between 2009 and 2017 the demand for free-range eggs jumped from 5 to 40%, whilst caged eggs dropped from 70 to 49%, see Figure 2.
- 24% of consumers exclusively bought caged eggs in 2017 (Locke 2017).

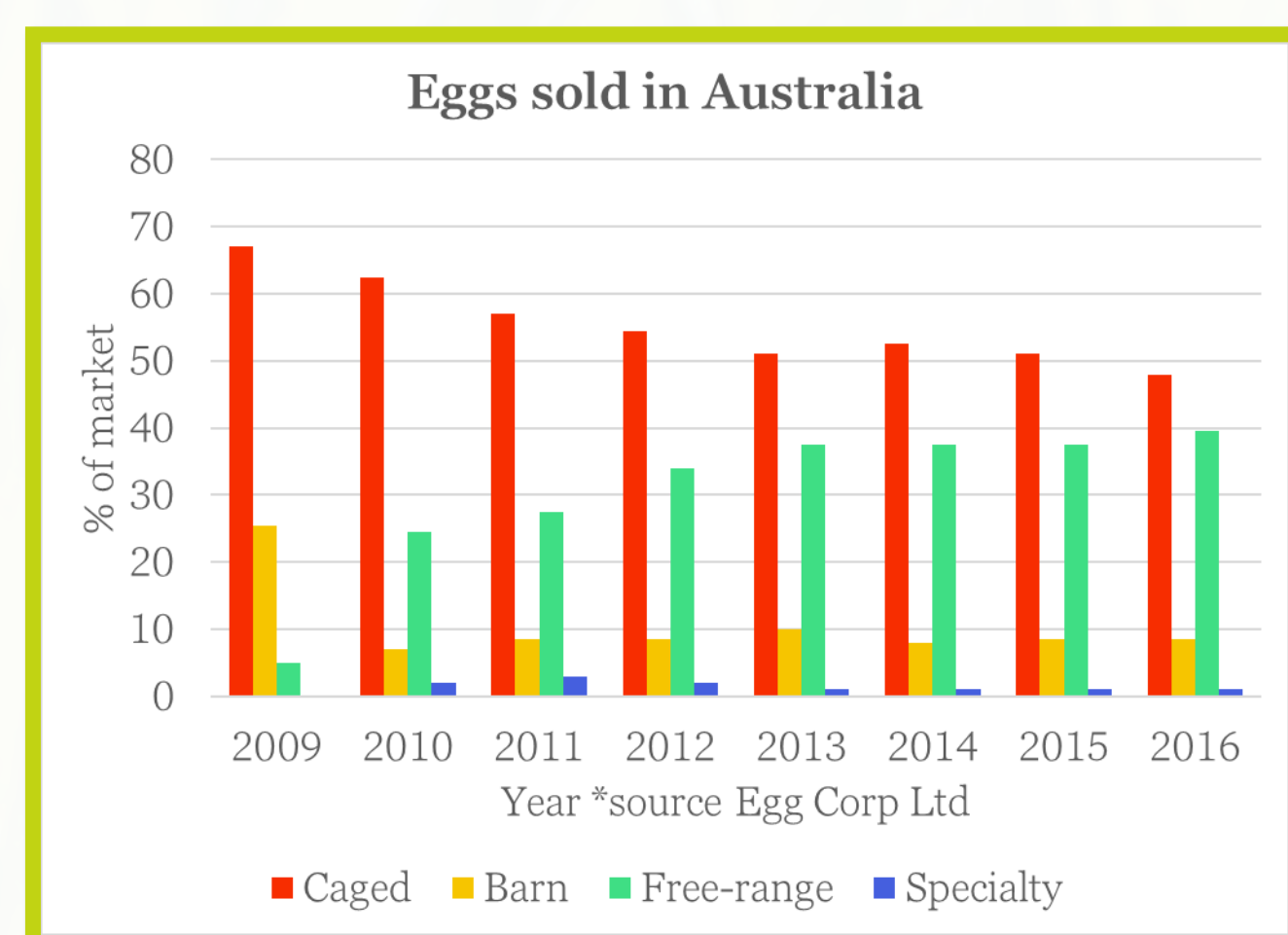


Figure 2: Trends of egg sales from 2009 to 2016 (Locke 2017)

HEN WELFARE CONCERNS AND LABELLING CONFUSION

- Current egg guidelines are too broad to meet consumer concerns (Barnett & Hemsworth 2003)
- Specific labelling based on management should be introduced due to the broad nature of current labels: free-range, caged, aviary, barn
- The option of furnished cages should be added to offer a compromise between caged systems and welfare (Lay *et al.* 2011)
- Further detail should be available on farm websites around stocking density and management practices to provide more detail to consumers

RESPONSE

Direct education and transparent systems can close the gap between Australian consumers and agricultural practices. Education will enable consumers to engage in ethical consumerism and accurately purchase and consume ethically produced products. This way, consumers can 'vote with their dollar' (Bray, Buddle & Ankeny 2017, p. 2346) and demonstrate their preferences. Maintaining a secure income for farmers, fewer animals will be raised with an increased level of care and sold for an equivalent price (Hicks, Knowles & Farouk 2018). Consumers will reduce their meat consumption by purchasing a lesser quantity of meat to preserve their grocery budget (Bray, Buddle & Ankeny 2017).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Marketing campaigns be used to alter consumer behaviour. Bogueva, Marinova and Raphaely (2017) note the success of science-backed social campaigns (e.g. "Slip, Slop, Slap" and anti-smoking campaigns) in manipulating the choices and behaviours of the public.

Negative information has a significant impact on consumer decision-making due to the perception that negative information is of a higher value than positive (Verbeke 2009). This can be used to overcome the significant social root and cultural identification of meat consumption in Australia. Consumers can be motivated to reduce red meat consumption out of fear of its impacts on their health and the environment and satisfy their welfare concerns by increasing consumption of ethically produced animal products.