



## Australian Chicken Meat Federation (ACMF) Inc

### Some Frequently Asked Questions

#### **Why do chickens grow so quickly?**

Meat chickens, sometimes referred to as broilers, have been selectively bred over the past 60 years for growth rate and to be highly efficient at converting feed into meat. This is why they reach their optimal market weight and quality much more quickly than the strains of chickens from which they were originally derived.

In this respect modern meat chickens are also quite different from egg chickens (or layers). Chickens used to produce table eggs for human consumption are selectively bred for their capacity to produce large numbers of high quality eggs. For this reason, the meat chickens grow much more quickly and to a larger size than egg-layers.

#### **Are chickens fed hormones in Australia?**

Australian chickens are not fed hormones. Nor are they administered hormones in any other way. Their rapid growth occurs naturally due to selective breeding and optimal nutrition. Independent tests by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, as part of the National Residue Survey, confirm that Australian chicken meat is free of added hormones.

#### **Why do many people wrongly believe that chickens are fed hormones?**

We believe that one reason might be that people note that the chickens sold these days in supermarkets, butcher shops and chicken shops are much bigger than what they may recall them to have been 20 or 30 years ago. They may wrongly conclude that this must be the result of some unnatural intervention. The actual reason for this increased growth rate and size is the ongoing extensive selective breeding programs that have been adopted by the industry over the past 60 years, which aim for not only faster growing birds but also for stronger, meatier, more efficient and more disease resistant chickens.

#### **What are the chickens fed?**

Feed is made up mostly of grains, such as wheat, sorghum, barley, oats and lupins, as well as protein sources such as soybean meal, canola and other oilseed meals, and vitamin and mineral supplements.

Hormones are not added to chicken feed or administered to commercial meat chickens or breeders in Australia. Hormone supplementation is a practice that has been banned and not practiced in Australia for over forty years. The ban is supported by the Australian Chicken Meat Federation and adhered to by chicken meat producers across Australia.

#### **Are chickens genetically modified?**

Chickens are not genetically engineered or modified. Improvements in their growth, feed conversion efficiency, tenderness and other characteristics are entirely due to traditional selective breeding techniques.