

Media Release

The Hon Ros Spence MP
Minister for Agriculture
Minister for Community Sport
Minister for Carers and Volunteers



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VIRTUAL FENCING REGULATIONS ONE STEP CLOSER FOR FARMERS

Victorian cattle farmers will soon be able to harness the benefits of virtual fencing and herding technology, with the Allan Labor Government taking the next step to allow this new technology.

Minister for Agriculture Ros Spence today announced that new regulations will be prepared for the use of virtual fencing and herding technology for cattle in Victoria.

The announcement follows engagement with industry, manufacturers, and researchers on virtual fencing to understand the animal welfare impacts of the technology that will create better and more efficient farms.

Further engagement will occur with relevant stakeholders, including animal welfare groups with the regulations to be finalised by the end of the year.

A trial of Halter® virtual fencing technology at Agriculture Victoria's Ellinbank SmartFarm in Gippsland will continue conducting research until June 30 – giving Victorian farmers the chance to experience first-hand this new technology close to home.

Since July 2024, dairy cattle at the SmartFarm have been fitted with solar powered smart collars that use electronic cues to contain animals within a virtual fence and guide them to areas of the farm via a mobile phone app. It also allows farmers to monitor their cows' location, health and reproductive status.

Virtual fencing uses collars with GPS and wireless technology to control livestock without physical fences. If the animal leaves a designated area, the collars send out three warning noise and vibration cues and additional stimulus to encourage the animal to return to the area.

The new regulations will make sure the roll out of virtual fencing across the state will improve animal welfare outcomes, farm safety, productivity and staff wellbeing.

Agriculture Victoria is also actively contributing to the development of the Australian Animal Welfare Guide for Virtual Fencing, a project led by the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

This guide aims to support a consistent regulatory approach across states and territories, while ensuring optimal animal welfare outcomes where virtual fencing is used.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture Ros Spence

"We know that Victorian farmers are looking to use virtual fencing and herding technology to improve productivity and farmer safety, which is why we're making decisions to ensure farmers have the best technology up to date."

"It is critical that we have appropriate safeguards in place to protect animal welfare, while enabling innovation on farms and these new regulations will provide a framework to achieve this."