

Before the Independent Hearing Commissioners  
Appointed by the Taranaki Regional Council

Under the Resource Management Act 1991

In the matter of a resource consent for air discharge relating to the poultry farm  
operation at 58 Airport Drive, New Plymouth (5262-3.0)

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**Summary Statement and Rebuttal Evidence of Edward John Whiting**

14 February 2022

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**anderson  
lloyd.**

## Introduction

- 1 My full name is Edward John Whiting. I prepared a statement of evidence dated 28 January 2022 in relation to operations and management of the poultry farm at 58 Airport Drive (the **Application Site**). My qualifications and experience are set out in that statement.
- 2 My supplementary evidence addresses specific evidence by other parties, as well as certain matters raised generally across evidence.
- 3 Key matters relating to the evidence for and by residents include:
  - (a) The poultry farm is located in a rural environment. It is normal for this environment to include odour and dust from typical rural activities in addition to the poultry operation, such as dairy grazing, harvesting of crops such as maize, commercial processing of firewood, and domestic animal keeping such as small scale chicken runs;
  - (b) Improvements have been undertaken at the Application Site already, however this is not the full extent of proposed upgrades and does not yet represent a scenario where the highest reduction in odour (as anticipated in the assessment undertaken by Mr Pene) should be expected;
  - (c) The generation of dust by vehicles using tracks is something Airport Farm Trustee Limited (**AFTL**) is happy to look into reducing;
  - (d) The odour diaries provided with evidence do align with activities on the site in some instances, however there are some discrepancies which I address in my statement; and
  - (e) A number of submitters made statements on the closure of the farm in 2026. This is not something that was ever anticipated or agreed to.

## Summary of evidence in chief

- 4 AFTL is a family run mixed farming operation consisting of a dairy farm and two poultry farms, one of which is the Airport Drive poultry farm. The farm has been operating for decades. The poultry sheds were constructed in 1970-71. My family has been running it for the last 8 years. As part of the continued operation of the Airport Drive poultry farm, AFTL is looking to make a number of improvements to the site and convert the operation to free range. As with AFTL's other poultry farm in Midhirst, the aim is to achieve SPCA approval for the proposed free range operation.

- 5 To ensure the running of the farm remains acceptable in the surrounding environment (which has gradually developed at an increased density) and any potential effects are at a minimum, AFTL proposes the following changes with the transition to free range:
- (a) Reduction of stocking rate to 15 birds/m<sup>2</sup>;
  - (b) Installation of new windbreaks and planting of shelterbelts as depicted in Attachment A to my evidence-in-chief;
  - (c) Installation of pop / hinge doors along one side of each shed, to be opened after 21 days of a cycle;
  - (d) Fenced range areas north of Shed 1, south of Shed 2 and east of Sheds 3 and 4;
  - (e) Installation of roof exhaust fans as depicted in Attachment B to my evidence-in-chief. These fans will provide multiple exhaust options in varying conditions, enabling minimal effects on neighbours;
  - (f) Misting devices to be installed on each exhaust fan. For existing fans, this was completed in November last year, and for new ridgeline fans, this will be completed by 1 March 2022;
  - (g) Gas-fired direct flame / vapour heaters will be replaced with hot water boilers and DACS AddAir heaters by 1 March 2022; which will provide not only dry heat, but the ability to reduce humidity and dry existing air within the shed. These are designed to keep the level of moisture in the shed lower and reduce odours. This will also result in lower ammonia levels as demonstrated by the chicken feet pad numbers achieved at Midhurst; and
  - (h) Devices to monitor carbon dioxide and ammonia concentrations inside each shed to supplement the existing monitoring of temperature and humidity (retaining a monitoring record for three months following each cycle) will be installed by 1 March 2022.
- 6 In my experience, the changes outlined above should result in a reduction in potential odour and dust effects. This is supported by the evidence of Mr Pene and Ms Ryan, the Officer's Reports and specialists for the submitters.
- 7 The conversion to free range and continued operation of the farm will maintain commercial certainty and ensure future employment for existing staff beyond the current consent expiry in 2026. The transition to free range

is also aligned with AFTL's goals to achieve a high standard of bird wellbeing and environmental outcomes.

- 8 The running of the site is currently managed through the use of iAuditor, which enables climate control, regular reporting, real time data results and 24/7 monitoring ability; this combined with high quality effective shed features and sound management by experienced staff, all ensure operations at the site are at the highest standard. This is detailed further in my evidence in chief.<sup>1</sup>
- 9 The clean-up process following a run is contracted out to Osflo and Anglesey Waterblasting. The process involves the removal of litter directly onto enclosed containers on trucks, using diggers, immediate disposal off-site, and washing and sanitisation of sheds, over a period of 1-2 days. We have confirmed with Osflo that this process can be managed to ensure the most appropriate weather conditions at the time of the clean-up, to minimise potential odour.
- 10 While AFTL has not received formal complaints through the Regional Council, AFTL is open to ensuring an open line of communication going forward, and is happy to ensure long-term record-keeping of complaints and communication with the Council as requested by submitters.
- 11 AFTL is accepting of the majority of conditions proposed, and I note further:
  - (a) Air Quality Management Plan – AFTL will produce a plan of how the air quality for the farm is managed. This will likely be built into our daily digital audit process alongside existing SPCA / Tegel requirements of litter management and recording / reporting;
  - (b) Reporting on complaints – we agree with the complaint reporting process through the TRC and keeping logs of complaints and actions thereafter;
  - (c) Implementing the DACS Equipment – the DACS equipment is all on track to be installed before the 1<sup>st</sup> March 2022 as per the conditions outlined;
  - (d) Free Range area management and 70% ground cover - this is a requirement of SPCA and the free range areas are being worked on currently to meet those standards. Additionally the free range areas

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<sup>1</sup> Evidence in chief at [28](a)-(k).

will have shade cloth alongside the sheds similar to the Midhirst Farm; the birds like this as it provides shelter and cover. See **Appendix D** for the photos of the implementation at the Midhirst which we will replicate at Airport Farm;

- (e) Shelterbelts and windbreaks – these are almost complete and the 3m windbreak on the NW of the property is being installed currently, having started on 10 February 2022; and
- (f) Monitoring of dust and environment – this is built into our daily audits.

### **Matters raised in evidence on behalf of other parties**

#### *Evidence of Duncan Backshall*

- 12 Mr Backshall suggests the spreading of chicken litter is not considered typical "background odour" found in a rural environment.<sup>2</sup>
- 13 The rural environment we live in is full of continuous odours, such as winter grazing of dry cows on adjacent paddocks as an example (being an odour that can last for days, not just short periods). While the spreading of chicken litter may have been in breach of the RAQP on one occasion, this does not mean poultry odour is not capable of being an ordinary rural odour when managed correctly. I address the rural environment further on in my supplementary statement.
- 14 Mr Backshall also considers the current litter control may mean less is to be gained from the improvements proposed.<sup>3</sup>
- 15 I would say that although we have reasonably good litter, it can be improved further through the following:
  - (a) We have not yet seen the benefit of the DACS AddAir solution at Airport poultry farm as they have not been installed;
  - (b) Currently Airport pad burn and litter scores are not as good as our other farm Midhirst which uses the DACS ventilation system;
  - (c) The stocking rate at Airport currently is higher that it will be when free range at 15 birds per m<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Evidence of Duncan Backshall at [4.4].

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, at [4.16].

*Evidence of Donovan Van Kekem*

- 16 Mr Van Kekem notes that improvements have already been made to the existing operation, but that neighbours have advised him that adverse effects persist.<sup>4</sup>
- 17 While some improvements have been made, the above statement is misleading. The only equipment that has been installed during the last batch of birds between 31 December 2021 and 11 February 2022 was one roof chimney fan per shed (at low level) and the DACS controller per shed running the new ammonia, CO<sub>2</sub> and temperature sensors. The existing Agrologic controller was in place running the side vents and exhaust fans. The sheds were also operating with direct gas flamed heaters and a negative vacuum as it has done for the past eight to nine years. On Monday 1 February the tall chimneys (three on Airport Shed 3 and one each on Airport Sheds 1, 2 and 4) were installed. See photos at **Appendix C**.
- 18 The new shelterbelts and wind breaks are mostly in place, however the new windbreak on the NW side of the farm is yet to be installed, but is in progress from Thursday 10 February.
- 19 Therefore it is not to be expected that the anticipated reduction in odour would be experienced at this stage.

**Matters raised in evidence by submitters**

*Dust Generated from Tracks*

- 20 A number of submitters made statements about dust from the tracks on the farm, typical of summer dry months. We do get dust also from the McDonald's driveway in those similar conditions with vehicles visiting.
- 21 Kevin McDonald noted in particular:
- As I write this evidence, a very large cloud of dust has just blown through our boundary hedge heading straight towards our house 1.15 p.m. 27 January 22. This is more common in summer time when the metal tracks are very dry, with large vehicles passing around the chicken sheds.
- 22 I have checked AFTL records, and there was a feed truck and a concrete truck present around those times. There has been some extra activity over

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<sup>4</sup> Evidence of Donovan Van Kekem at [8.12].

the last few months and will be during February and March as we carry out work on the sheds installing the new equipment.

- 23 I am very happy to implement measures to keep track dust down in times of dry periods.

*Odour diaries and neighbour concerns*

- 24 As a whole the McDonalds diary observations reflect the activities on the Application Site. There are a couple of discrepancies where there is odour observations made however the farm was clean and sanitised and no birds in. I also note we don't have 'fresh manure', only clean untreated wood shavings in the sheds, so this description is not quite in conformity.
- 25 I do note some differences in other diaries, for example the Browns have recorded at times strong odours but the chicks at the time of the odour hadn't been placed yet, or it was on the day of the placement. Others such as conflicting odours and wind directions from the Dodunskis and Hibbells are for the same duration that Jason Pene from Tonkin & Taylor was on site.
- 26 I have also met several times with the neighbours at 52 Airport Drive that have been there since June 2020 (1 ½ years) who have a young family of 3 children. We have discussed if they had any issues, just come across and see us. They have had, and continue to have, no problems with the chicken farm. See **Appendix A** of a statement confirming this. 52 Airport drive is positioned in-between our farm and the Hibbell's and Poppa Peppers properties across the road. They haven't told me of any experiences the same as the Brown's, Hibbel's, or Dodunski's odour dairies.
- 27 From mid-January to mid-February 2022, I would say have been some of the most challenging climate conditions we have seen for a long time: high temperatures, high humidity and lower wind speeds. In addition we have been operating at peak density with the age of the birds coinciding with these climate conditions. Going free range and operating at a lower stocking density will be beneficial for managing ammonia levels and odour. Twinned with the DACS ventilation system and ridgeline tall chimney exhausts, this will further empower us to manage the site even better. Having ammonia and CO2 sensors in the sheds during this last batch of birds has given us the 24/7 data needed to understand what ventilation management to do and when, even with a negative vacuum ventilation for the duration.

- 28 **Appendix B** contains ammonia levels for batch 3018-4942, the latest batch of birds during this period and we have recorded the ammonia levels, summarising into the highs and lows of each day. The maximum level was 11ppm in Airport 2 and this was a spike, not the normal. The SPCA guidelines are max of 15ppm in any day. This is again with a negative vacuum, direct gas fired heaters and in challenging conditions.
- 29 My wife and I have never found the odour or dust to be an imposition; there has not been a time when we haven't hung the washing out, sat in the garden, prevented us from having people around or impacted our own lives. We live closer to the sheds than any other property. We have two boys (16 and 13 years) and they have grown up around the farm and have regularly had friends round. Our youngest has, for the past 4 summers, maintained a tradition of sleeping in our garden (which is between our house and Airport 2 shed) in a tent for the whole duration of the summer holidays. We grow salads in our garden, have lemon and orange trees, and never had problems eating them.

*Kevin and Glenis McDonald Statements*

- 30 I include my comments on the McDonald's statements as follows:
- (a) I have spoken with Kevin and listened to his concerns and have made the placement of the new ventilation system in the sheds in positions that are as far away as possible so that for example Airport 3 which is the closest sitting in-between their own free range chickens and their house. Airport 3 and Airport 2 has no exhaust fans within 100m;
  - (b) In response to comments on odorants, I agree that this is not preferable, and in fact is likely to make the situation worse by introducing an artificial smell to air that has no odour;
  - (c) We try to minimise the use of herbicides as much as possible and at Midhirst we are trialing a once a year spray on tracks, and none around the sheds;
  - (d) On misting system, the purpose of these is to have a tool to dampen down dust along the sides and ends of the sheds to dampen down any dust. We have very strict regulations about what chemicals are used on the farm and supply residue sheets every batch of birds declaring what has been used;
  - (e) In relation to comments on sanitation and hygiene, I note:



- (i) between each cycle of birds the sheds are cleaned thoroughly, scraped out by Osflo (used then as organic fertiliser) and vacuumed up remaining litter dust;
  - (ii) the concrete sealed floors are then washed and sanitised between ready for the next batch of birds; and
  - (iii) untreated wood shavings from Taranaki Pine are spread to a depth of 5cm on the floors of the shed ready for the 0 day old chicks to be placed;
- (f) Biosecurity for both animals and humans is getting more restrictive every year and all I can see is that it keeps on improving for the future and not going backwards;
- (g) The source of odour is based on maintaining good litter quality. Having tools to remove moisture from the environment of the shed is key to a low odour operation. Typically the first 21 days are crucial to maintaining low odours and ammonia;
- (h) In mid-2021 over a cup of tea at our house I talked to Kevin McDonald about going free range and to install the DACS system to further improve the operation and the lower stocking density. I showed him online videos of how the DACS system works and also what this will do to further improve the operation. He seemed impressed and said he was looking forward to seeing the improvements;
- (i) In November 2021, I had been talking with Kevin about his concerns written in the first round of objections to the consent and I offered to him to see the site at Midhirst free range and the DACS equipment operating. This hasn't been taken up by Kevin and Glenis;
- (j) Kevin has said several times that since we have taken over the farm the odour has improved so I have taken that as a positive; and
- (k) I spoke with Glenis one day in 2021 whilst looking for Kevin and said we would put up a screen between the farm and the house as they had unsuccessfully tried to grow some bushes their side under the big macrocarpa tree. There was no mention of issues with odour.
- 31 I believe I have been very open and accessible to Kevin and Glenis and was more surprised that they had these issues that had been running for so long in their statements.

32 In response to the following comment in particular by Glenis:

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#170 of OR: Mr Bedford visits on December 1st stating "Shed 3 had already been emptied on that day, as I arrived, vehicles and Staff to capture all remaining birds in Shed 3 just arriving, and Shed 4 was due to be emptied of birds that afternoon."

28. These dates and facts regarding Sheds 3 and 4 are extremely conflicting to me, with 5 days between November 26th and December 1st.

- 33 I note that on the 1<sup>st</sup> December, Airport 2 birds had been caught already before Gary Bedford from the TRC had arrived and Tegel were arriving to catch the birds in Airport 4 and the remaining birds left on the farm in Airport 3 after Airport 4. I think there was a typo between Airport 2 and 3.

#### *Rural Area*

- 34 In terms of dust and the surrounding environment, I note that we live in a rural area and the land surrounding the farm is in paddocks. In particular:
- (a) To the south, the land has been grazed during winter by intensive dry dairy cows and summer / autumn harvest maize the last few years. Not long after the cultivation of the maize to the south of the farm and the chicken litter being spread on it, we had a windstorm event that covered our house in soil / dust;
  - (b) Across the road from our house, the Hibbells graze their dairy R1/R2's from time to time;
  - (c) Between Airport 3 Shed and the McDonalds they have their own chickens in a large pen, maybe 10 layers, they used to be closer to Kevin's workshop but moved down to the house;
  - (d) The McDonalds have a herd of Dexter cattle that graze the paddocks surrounding the chicken farm to the north-west and north-east;
  - (e) There was until recently a wood yard / firewood operation east of the farm on the McDonalds that was operated for years and there were a lot of fires lit to dispose of unsuitable firewood; and
  - (f) We have in the past grazed 3 dairy steers around the poultry farm and more recently Gotland sheep. They have all been moved now in preparing the areas for free range.

*Incorrect statements about closing the Farm in 2026*

- 35 There has been I believe some misconception of our intentions as outlined in submitter's evidence statements.
- 36 We purchased the poultry farm in August 2013 with an existing resource consent lasting to 2026. There has never been any information provided to us during the sale and purchase, from the District or Regional councils, that would suggest that the resource consent couldn't be renewed. There was a Future Urban Development overlay on the rural areas that the farm is situated on which provides an indication that of possible re-zoning in the future, but by no means is this certain. At no time has an agreement been made to close the farm in 2026. It has come to my attention through this process of renewing the consent that there were some conversations about the current consent being the last, but this is all recently new to us. We have known that the District Council could seek to re-zone Area R before 2026 which would co-inside with the consent lapsing. When the recently proposed district plan was published, there was no clear proposal that Area R would be re-zoned and if it did it could be anywhere between 2028 and 2048. As a result we decided to apply for a new consent earlier to obtain certainty for our operations.
- 37 After experiencing the keeping of free-range chickens at our other farm and anticipating the future of the chicken industry, we decided to explore changing the 'closed shed' broiler to free range at Airport Drive. The benefits in our eyes are many: lower stocking density, better animal welfare, better conditions for the birds and the teams what work on the farms, more environmentally friendly. The SPCA blue tick is a very good measure and standard level to maintain and would be good if all our farms are SPCA blue tick approved.
- 38 Converting to free-range, and having no certainty about the future or timing of re-zoning Area R, were the triggers for seeking a new consent.
- 39 For the record, I am not opposed to relocating the Airport Drive poultry farm, to make way for the development of Area Q for commercial and residential purposes when there is certainty of a date when the rezoning is operative, certainty of no major impediments to installing the necessary infrastructure, and when market/economic conditions align (so I wouldn't be losing money on my existing investment). None of this certainty currently exists.

## **Conclusion**

- 40 This consent will provide the opportunity to continue a well-managed farm achieving high wellbeing standards and environmental outcomes. You can have confidence that AFTL will continue to be forward thinking and make the use of the best technology available to us to ensure the highest standards are met and any potential effects are at a minimum. This is demonstrated by the improvements made to date and associated monitoring results.
- 41 My focus has been, and will continue to be, to ensure potential odour effects are managed in every way possible, to ensure minimal effects on neighbouring properties.

## Appendix A

Owen and Joan Salem – 52 Airport Drive

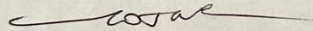
Owen and Joan Salem  
10<sup>th</sup> February 2022

We live at 52 Airport Drive, next door to the poultry farm with our three young children. Ed Whiting has approached us and asked if we have any problems living next door to the poultry farm and if we detect any offensive smells whilst we are at home.

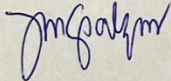
We have been renting the house there since June 2020 and during that time we have never had any problems with the poultry farm for smell and noise. The poultry farm doesn't smell and has never prevented us from hanging out washing or using the garden with the family. We have some fruits trees in the garden and we are happy to eat them. We get the occasional noise from trucks visiting the poultry farm because the entrance and driveway is down beside the house, but is not a problem compared to the constant noise from the the traffic on SH3 and on Airport Drive. The car 'burn outs' on De-havilland Drive are a problem, most nights the noise wakes us up and we get burning rubber smells when the wind is in our direction. We do get smells from cattle next door and across the road when they are there and more recently we got covered in dust from the paddocks being made ready for crops, but nothing from the poultry farm. There was late last year a bad smell from fertiliser being spread on the paddocks next to us. The dogs across the road are barking everyday and night and surprised that no one has done anything about them.

We are unable to attend the hearing due to work, but happy to be called up if anyone wants to confirm anything with us.

Owen 027 777 7959



Joan 027 777 7153



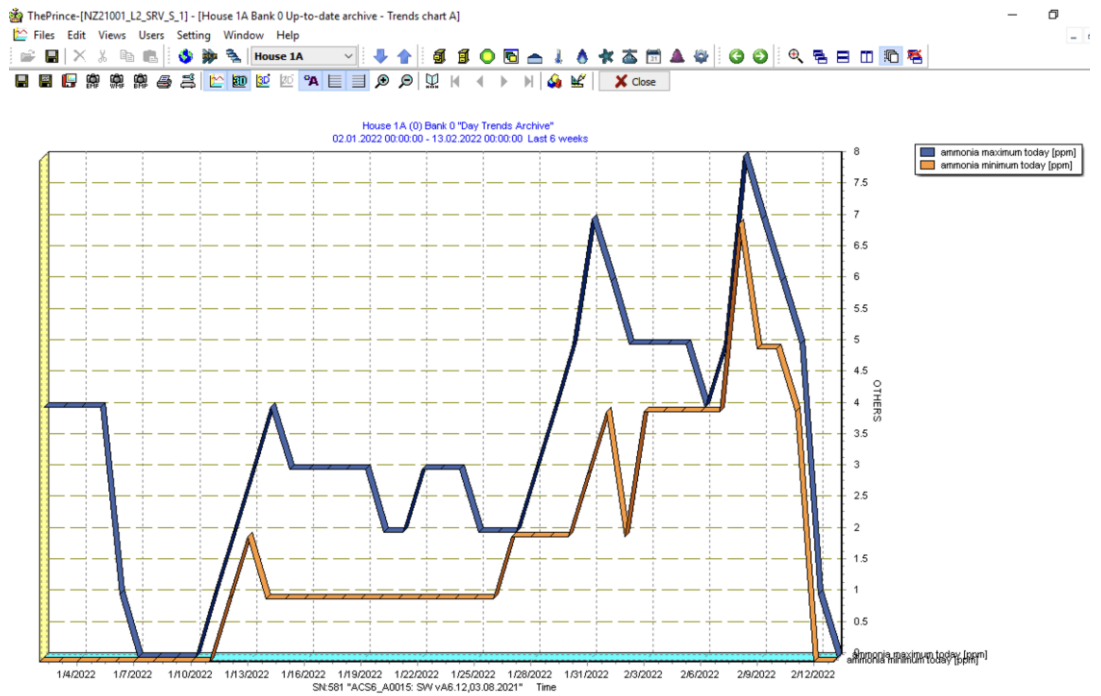
## Appendix B

Ammonia Levels period 31/12/2021 – 11/02/2022

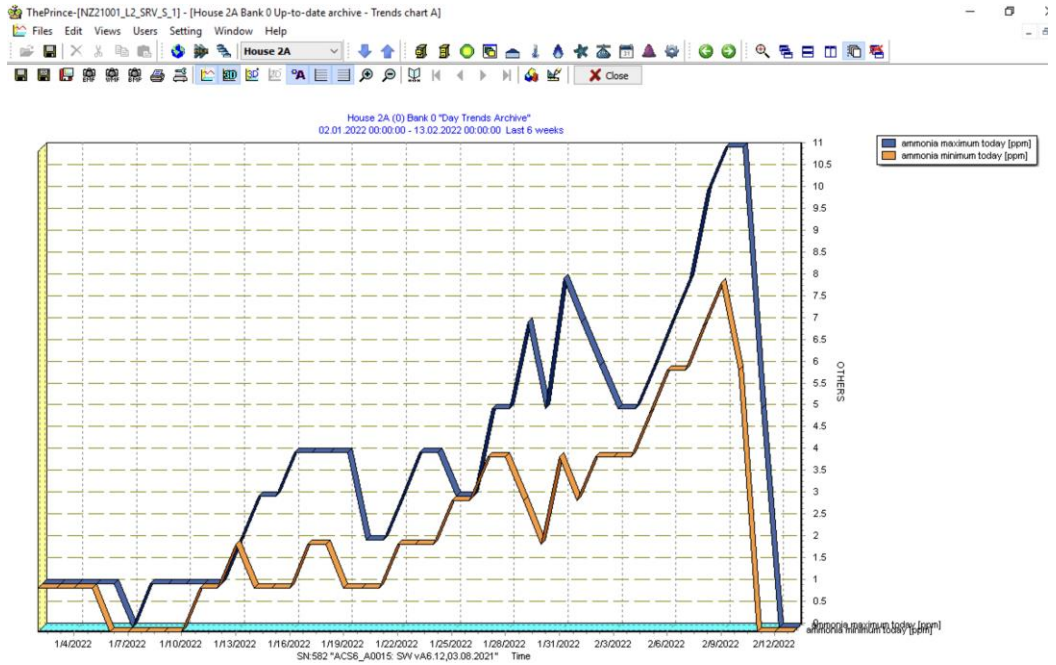
Batch 3018-4942

Ammonia levels recorded in poultry sheds showing highs and low levels in ppm of ammonia recorded. Highest recorded in any shed in any day was 11ppm

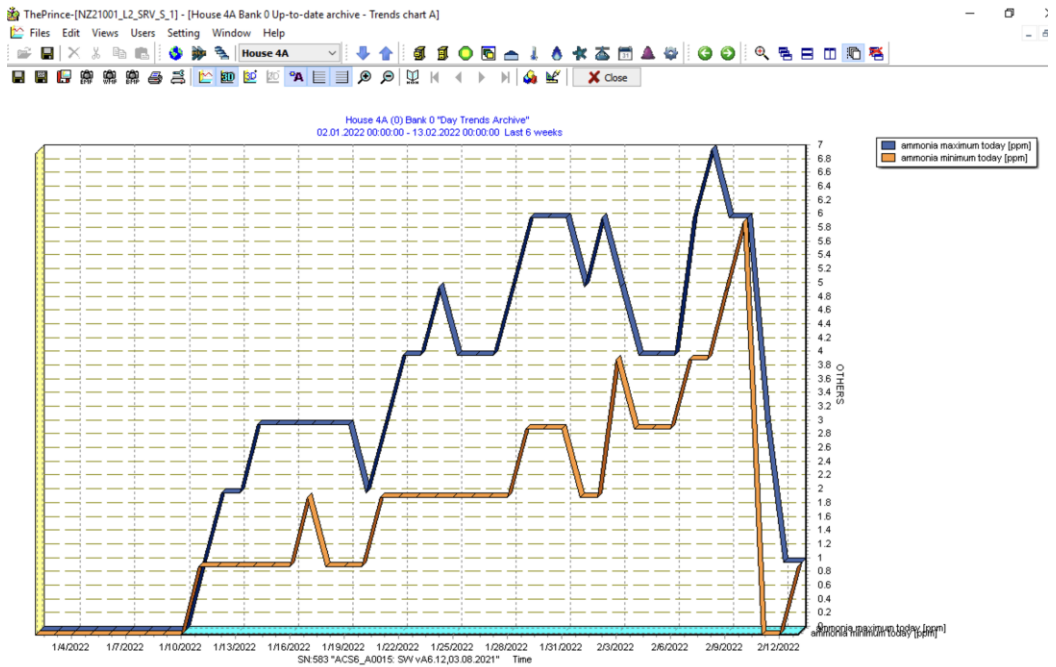
Airport 1



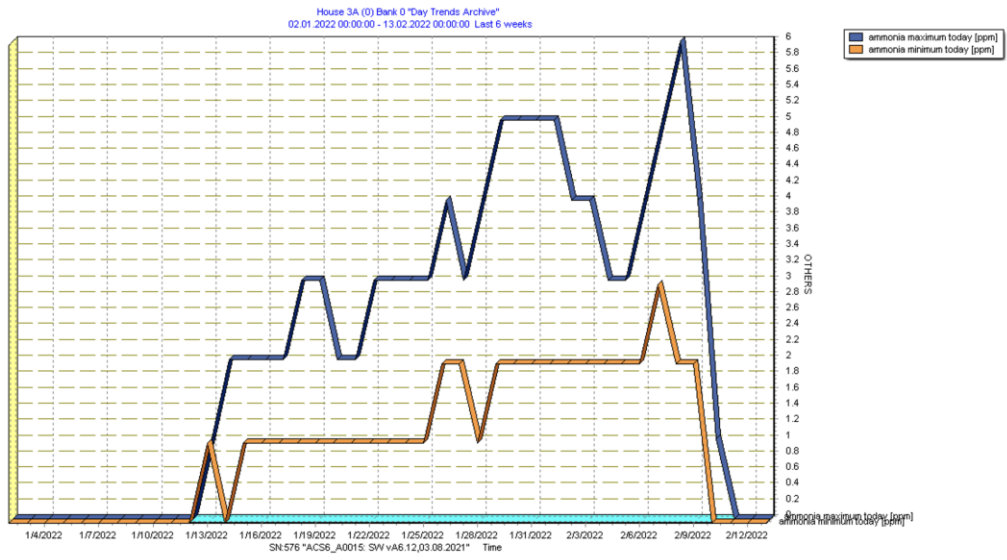
Airport 2



### Airport 3



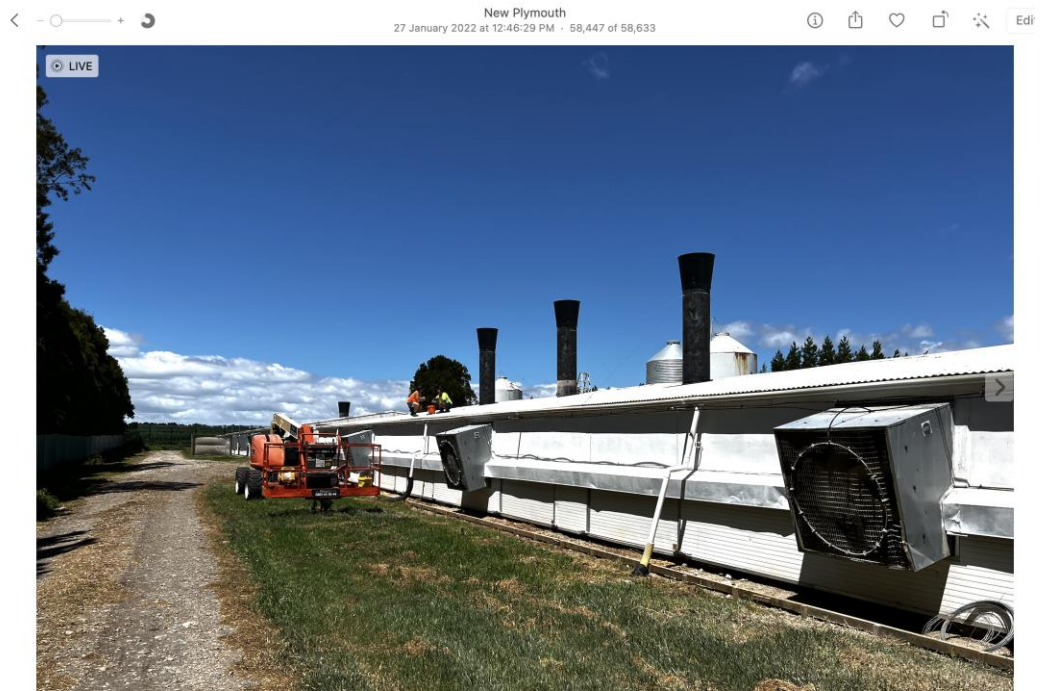
### Airport 4





## Appendix C

3x Tall Chimneys install complete on Airport 3 on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2022 – they were then wired in 1<sup>st</sup> February 2022 to operate.



1 x Tall Chimney installed on Airport 1, 2 and 4 on 27/28<sup>th</sup> January 2022 – they were then wired in 1<sup>st</sup> February 2022 to operate.



## Appendix D

Free Range Areas at Midhirst, planned at Airport



