

PROGRESSING FARMING TOMORROW

Improving farm animal welfare in the UK





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The better way to farm animal welfare in the UK.

The way our food is produced is of increasing public, political and commercial concern. Farm animal welfare is now established as a key issue in the debate. The way animals are reared to produce what we eat in the UK can have a direct effect on the quality of the food on our plates.

In a concerted bid to tackle pressing farm animal welfare concerns, a number of influential business, farming and charitable organisations came together in 2005 to form the Farm Animal Welfare Forum (FAWF) and to propose a programme of reforms for better food and farming. The organisations involved include Compassion in World Farming, the Food Animal Initiative (FAI), The Co-operative Food, the World Society for the Protection of Animals, RSPCA and the Soil Association, with scientific advice from the University of Bristol's Animal Behaviour and Welfare Group.

In 2008 the Farm Animal Welfare Forum published a long term strategy for improving farm animal welfare in the UK. It identified laying hens, meat chickens, pigs and dairy cows as the top four priorities based on the number of animals in each group and the severity of their welfare problems.

The top priorities were:

- › Ensuring all egg laying hens are kept cage-free
- › Improving the welfare of chickens reared for meat
- › Ensuring all pigs are kept in humane conditions without routine tail docking
- › Improving the welfare of dairy cows.

Much has been achieved since that strategy was produced:

On laying hens

- More hens are being kept in cage-free systems and now over 120 local councils, higher education institutes and hospitals only purchase cage-free eggs¹
- Around half of shell eggs produced in the UK are now produced by birds in cage-free systems²
- More food businesses use only cage-free egg ingredient in own label products including Sainsbury's, The Co-operative Food, Marks and Spencer and Waitrose³
- The UK government upheld its obligation to phase out barren battery cages and is now fully compliant. It also stood firm against other European countries' pressure to delay bringing in the ban on barren cages and supported sanctions for countries that were non-compliant.



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welfare parameters versus production-focused parameters¹⁰

- The dairy industry has introduced uniform measurement of lameness assessments from October 2013¹¹
- Many of the major companies (eg Tesco and ASDA) that have their own supply chain require dedicated milk suppliers to prohibit the export of male dairy calves
- Leading companies, including ASDA, Waitrose and The Co-operative Food have committed to pasture-based dairy production with additional welfare requirements for their dedicated supplies¹²
- Since 2006 the Beyond Calf Exports Forum has helped reduce the number of calves killed at birth from 84,817 to 54,670 in 2012. Many food businesses in the Forum have secured a market for male dairy calves by establishing cross-functional initiatives with their dairy/beef supply chains or by creating dedicated calf-rearing operations and promoting higher welfare veal¹³.

On meat chickens

- There has been a significant uplift in welfare improvements particularly for some retailers branded 'standard plus' fresh chicken products, with these birds being reared to a lower stocking density and provided with natural light and environmental enrichment⁴
- The proportion of UK meat chickens reared to higher welfare standards and as 'standard plus' has increased from less than 4% in 2005 to nearly 19% of the market in 2011⁵. Higher welfare indoor equates to birds that are reared to the RSPCA Welfare Standards or equivalent, which include a maximum stocking density of 30kg/m², the provision of natural light, straw bales, pecking materials and perches and the use of chicken breeds that have an acceptable level of welfare⁶.

On pigs

- There have been moves towards higher welfare indoor systems for breeding pigs that do not use close confinement farrowing crates⁷
- There has been an increase in pigs produced in the UK to RSPCA welfare standards with a third now being reared to RSPCA standards under the Freedom Food scheme⁸
- The pilot EU reference centre for animal welfare has included addressing tail docking of pigs⁹.

On dairy cows

- Welfare issues for dairy cows have had a high public profile in recent years
- The genetic index of breeding goals for the UK herd is now weighted in favour of health and

To build on these successes we have now established new objectives for the next five years.

We continue to believe in collective action to improve the well-being of farm animals and to ensure that our food is assured of the highest quality and provenance. We will continue to mobilise all parts of the food chain, from consumers to producers, from retailers to manufacturers to regulators, to bring about reform and to ensure higher animal welfare in the food chain for the benefit of all involved.

We will continue to work with farmers, food companies and regulators to achieve a thriving food and farming system, which results in all farmed animals being reared to higher levels of welfare, in an economically viable and environmentally friendly way.

Having seen the success of our own collaboration and others such as the Beyond Calf Export Forum, we would also welcome a wider knowledge-sharing network involving government, NGOs, consumers, food business and farming organisations that supports higher welfare initiatives. The goal of such a network could welcome and promote the following common interests:

- The need for scientifically informed EU legislation and its enforcement across all member states
- Common understanding of technical issues amongst all stakeholders
- Farming industry involvement
- Transparency and credibility for consumers
- Competitive innovation
- Clarity and validated measurement of welfare benefits.



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FUTURE FOOD

Priorities for animal welfare.

It is important that all parts of the food chain accept responsibility for driving change. This includes recognising that good animal welfare is integral to sustainable food production and a positive way forwards is to empower producers to produce food in ways that deliver higher welfare.

The scale of the challenge of improving farm animal welfare is significant – many consumers want low-cost food, farmers must make profits to succeed and regulators rarely take action without sufficient public support.

In practice, apparently cheap food can be more expensive, once the cost of agricultural subsidies, environmental protection/clean-up costs as well as public health costs resulting from poorer quality food production are added to the equation.

Since FAWF's primary concern is animal welfare, we have re-considered the pressing animal welfare issues against criteria including severity and duration of suffering involved, the level of incidence of the problem and how achievable the required change might be.

This report outlines our second programme aimed towards better food and farming in the UK.

Our top four priority areas for action are:

1. To strengthen implementation and enforcement of legislation that effectively protects animal welfare.
2. To encourage public procurers and the food industry to source from production systems that ensure higher welfare standards.
3. To campaign for mandatory methods of production labelling across the EU underpinned by robust outcome measures, to enable consumers to make informed purchasing choices.
4. To encourage the farming industry to engage with and embed policies of continuous welfare improvement.

FAWF believes achievement of all these objectives should be reflected in adoption of systems of production which present greater welfare potential, and in which measurement of species-specific animal based outcomes of animal welfare - both physical and behavioural - is undertaken. Systems that provide greater opportunity for behavioural expression generally have higher welfare potential. Assessment of welfare in all farming systems is important to indicate the extent to which the welfare potential of a system is achieved.

LAYING HENS

We believe that all cage egg production systems should be replaced by higher welfare alternatives such as barn, free range and organic.

Many of the eggs produced in the UK are from hens living in enriched cages¹⁴. These provide little useable space and few opportunities for hens to display their natural behaviour such as nesting and foraging compared with non-cage systems¹⁵.

Hens in all systems, caged and non-caged, are often subjected to mutilations such as beak-trimming as a precaution against injurious pecking¹⁶, the risk of which can be increased by inappropriate breed, inadequate housing or poor management.

Our long term objectives are:

1. An end to egg production from caged hens in the EU
2. Continued reduction in the levels of injurious pecking and bone fractures in cage-free systems

3. An end to routine beak-trimming of laying hens in the EU without a concurrent rise in other welfare problems.

Over the next five years we will:

1. Encourage food companies to adopt higher welfare cage-free policies with target dates for the phase out of cages
2. Persuade the majority of public sector purchasers to adopt higher welfare cage-free policies
3. Work towards an end to beak trimming in laying hen flocks without an increase in injurious pecking by 2016.

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MEAT CHICKENS

We believe that improving the lives of chickens reared for meat requires the use of systems and genotypes that maintain higher levels of welfare throughout the production cycle.



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Around 6.5 billion chickens are bred for meat every year in the EU¹⁷. Most are reared in large sheds with no access to environmental enrichment or natural light and at a high stocking density between 38-42kg/m². Modern birds are genetically selected to grow quickly, increasing the risk that their heart and lung function cannot keep pace¹⁸. Broiler growth rates have increased by over 300% in the past 50 years¹⁹.

Their fast growth rate also contributes to leg problems and lameness. A study in 2008 found that over a quarter of birds have walking difficulties whilst 3.3% were almost unable to walk²⁰.

EU legislation on meat chicken welfare does little to tackle high stocking densities and fast growth rates that can cause serious welfare problems for many millions of birds.

Our long term objectives are:

1. Implementation of mandatory method of production labelling underpinned by welfare outcome measures, that is widely understood and helps to drive change
2. Strengthened EU legislation that effectively addresses the major welfare concerns affecting meat chickens

3. A doubling of the proportion of standard plus and higher welfare chicken consumed in the UK to reach 50% of all chicken meat by 2020
4. The use of higher-welfare broiler breeds for both indoor and free range production.

Over the next five years we will:

1. Campaign for the EU to agree to the introduction of mandatory method of production labelling on all chicken meat sold in Europe, to enable consumer choice
2. Advocate embedding assessment and management of outcome measures into production system descriptors and animal welfare certification schemes
3. Persuade public procurement companies only to use higher welfare chicken
4. Persuade the major food companies only to use higher welfare chicken
5. Establish and campaign for the implementation of effective, achievable, practical, welfare-focused breeding goals.

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PIGS

We believe that pig welfare should be improved such that pigs are not required to be tail docked and do not experience tail biting, and that all sows, boars and rearing pigs are kept in line with their needs.

Almost 40% of the ten million pigs produced in the UK every year are housed in barren environments which lack bedding and appropriate enrichment and rooting material such as straw, for most of their lives^{21,22}. This can lead to tail biting, lifelong bullying from other pigs and additional injuries or even death²³. To reduce the risk of tail biting, the majority of piglets have their tails docked, even though the law specifically prohibits routine docking²⁴. The same is true of pigs farmed in the major producing nations that import pig products to the UK²⁵.

An undamaged, undocked tail on a fully grown pig is one indication that it is likely to have been produced under high standards of welfare.

Our long term objectives are:

1. Full implementation of a complete sow stall ban across Europe
2. Industry wide adoption of free farrowing systems with low piglet mortality
3. Full enforcement of the EU pigs directive including provision of effective enrichment and prohibition of routine tail docking

4. Food industry and public sector procurement policies in the UK that preclude all pork products (including imported product) from systems that routinely tail dock and which do not have effective environmental enrichment. Policies should also require sourcing of products from systems with sows in non-confined housing
5. An end to teeth grinding and clipping in piglets.

Over the next five years we will:

1. Work towards full enforcement of current tail docking regulations
2. Work to achieve full compliance across Europe to the EU partial ban on sow stalls that came into effect in January 2013
3. Campaign for proper enforcement of the EU pigs directive
4. Campaign for the EU to agree to the introduction of mandatory method of production labelling on all pigmeat sold in Europe, to enable consumer choice
5. Support the current move to free farrowing systems which require no confinement of the sow.

DAIRY COWS

We believe that higher dairy cow welfare involves using dairy production systems and management protocols that substantially reduce metabolic disease and lameness as well as improve calf welfare.



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There are currently around 1.8 million dairy cows in the UK²⁶. Whilst many of these will be kept seasonally outdoors, serious welfare problems remain prevalent.

Modern breeds of dairy cow often produce such high milk yields that many suffer from serious health problems as a result, including lameness and mastitis. Higher yielding cows are at greater risk of poor health and lower fertility²⁷. Production pressures on them are so great that they are culled after an average of just 3.6 lactations²⁸.

It is estimated that about 55% of dairy cows experience lameness in any one year²⁹. The factors causing this include poor housing and diet combined with long-term genetic selection for high milk yields that increases the risk of poor welfare and metabolic diseases in dairy cows³⁰.

Mastitis, a painful inflammatory disease of the udder, is highly prevalent in the UK dairy population with over one million cases per annum³¹. As well as impacting on the welfare of the animal, mastitis causes huge economic losses to the dairy industry, estimated at up to £200 million per annum³².

Around 457,100 pure-bred bull calves are born in the UK each year³³. Approximately 54,670 are shot on farm soon after birth³⁴. Considered inappropriate for the meat chain, they may receive inadequate care and attention during the time they are alive.

Our long term objectives are:

1. EU-wide laws to protect the welfare of dairy cows

2. A dairy breeding programme that delivers robust cows which can gain sufficient nutrition from pasture and forage

3. Calves that are robust, fit and successfully integrated into a sustainable high welfare meat and dairy chain.

Over the next five years we will:

1. Campaign for new EU legislation to protect dairy cow welfare

2. Campaign for the EU to agree to the introduction of mandatory method of production labelling on all dairy products in Europe, to enable consumer choice

3. Persuade food companies to source from systems that ensure cows have high welfare standards including access to good quality grazing during the grass-growing season with housing that meets the welfare needs of the cow and proactive management of health and welfare outcomes

4. Work with beef, dairy and food company sectors to further reduce the number of male dairy calves exported or culled at birth by securing sustainable supply chains

5. Campaign for a reduction in the number of bull dairy calves exported live to continental veal systems and increase the proportion of calves that are reared for meat in humane systems

6. Work alongside breeding companies to encourage further adoption of welfare traits in their breeding strategies.

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WHO NEEDS TO ACT TO BRING ABOUT THESE CHANGES

To help bring about better quality food from farm animals that have a decent life, the Farm Animal Welfare Forum urges the following specific actions:

POLICY-MAKERS

We want the European Commission, led by the UK Government:

- To support a ban on the use of all cages, including 'enriched' cages, for egg laying hens in the EU
- To support clear, mandatory labelling of meat products according to the system of farming production, using defined terms that accurately communicate to the buying public
- To take action to support rigorous enforcement of EU legislation prohibiting routine tail-docking in pigs and requiring implementation of environment and management measures that reduce tail biting
- To take action to phase-out the use of the farrowing crate
- To establish EU-wide legislation to protect the welfare of dairy cows
- FAWF also urge the UK Government to support multi-stakeholder efforts to end calf exports and increase the proportion of calves that are reared for meat in humane systems.

PUBLIC PURCHASERS

We will campaign vigorously for public purchasers:

- To purchase eggs and products containing eggs from higher welfare cage-free production systems
- To purchase higher welfare chicken equivalent to RSPCA welfare standards or above
- To purchase pork from pigs reared in systems which do not routinely tail dock and which do not use crates
- To purchase milk from cows allowed to graze during the grass-growing season under higher welfare conditions.

FOOD BUSINESS

We will encourage food industry companies:

On laying hens:

- To sell or use only higher welfare cage-free shell eggs
- To sell or use only higher welfare cage-free egg ingredient in own label products
- To source eggs from systems where the hens are kept to high standards of welfare that minimise risk of injurious pecking and where they are not beak-trimmed.

On meat chickens:

- To sell or use only higher welfare meat chicken
- To use only higher welfare chicken meat in manufactured products or ingredients.

On pigs:

- To source pork exclusively from farms where the rearing pigs are not routinely tail docked or tail bitten
- To source only higher welfare pork from farms where the rearing pigs are bred and reared using extensive systems, equivalent to RSPCA welfare standards or higher.

On dairy cows:

- To sell or use only milk from dairy cows allowed to graze in fields during the grass-growing season under higher welfare conditions
- To audit dedicated milk suppliers against a veterinary management plan for reducing lameness incidence in dairy cattle to 10% or less
- To require dedicated milk suppliers to prohibit the export of bull dairy calves for further fattening
- To require dedicated milk suppliers to demonstrate that they are rearing all calves to finish using higher welfare systems for beef or veal in the UK.

CONSUMERS

We will encourage consumers:

- To buy higher welfare meat, dairy products and eggs and to look out for food labels such as RSPCA Freedom Food, free-range or organic
- To urge the government to press for better labelling to ensure that meat and milk is clearly labelled by law according to the system of farming production used
- To ask their own workplace staff canteens or catering services to source cage-free eggs, higher welfare chicken and pork for the meals they produce
- To buy milk from cows allowed to graze during the grass-growing season under higher welfare conditions.

CONCLUSION

The programme above summarises the aspirations of the Farm Animal Welfare Forum. With your support, our aim to improve animal welfare and the quality of our food can be reached. Let the dialogue begin.

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The **co-operative**
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