

Animal welfare: the role of non-governmental organisations

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Summary

The welfare of animals is of interest to many people in most parts of the world. Concern about the way that animals are treated will depend on many factors, including socio-economic conditions, culture, religion and tradition. The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) is committed to ensuring that all animal welfare standards are science-based, but recognises that these other factors must also be taken into account. The International Coalition for Farm Animal Welfare (ICFAW) was formed to represent the interests of non-governmental animal welfare organisations from most corners of the globe and opinions, comment and information from these animal welfare organisations will play a part in the OIE decision-making process. In coming together for this purpose it was recognised that the views of the various member organisations of ICFAW vary depending on which part of the world they come from. The authors provide information about the situation in three continents: Africa, North America and Europe. This information includes details of relevant legislation, farming practices, and educational and campaign programmes developed by both animal welfare non-governmental organisations and governments. The authors also look to the future to see what issues may influence the way that farm animals are reared, transported and slaughtered.

Keywords

Animal welfare legislation – Animal welfare standard – Consolidation – European Union – Non-trade concern – South African livestock policy – United States livestock industry.

Introduction

The decision of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) in 2001 to include animal welfare as a new initiative in its third strategic plan was momentous and will have significant implications, particularly with regard to international trade in livestock and livestock products.

Resolution No. XIV, which outlines the OIE animal welfare mandate, was agreed unanimously at the General Session of the OIE International Committee in May 2002. In that

resolution it was accepted that 'animal welfare is a complex, multi-faceted public policy issue that includes important scientific, ethical, economic and political dimensions' (20). The resolution included recommendations that key animal welfare stakeholders be included within its communication strategy and that links be established with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that have broad international representation.

From the outset, the OIE was determined that any animal welfare standards or guidelines should be science-based. This principle was accepted by all OIE Member Countries

and by all the major stakeholders. It was also recognised that, regardless of how good the science was it did not necessarily solve the problem of how the welfare of the animal in any particular situation could be protected. In most areas of animal exploitation, whether for food, research, product-testing, recreational and sporting use or even for companionship, the answer is not straightforward and will depend on many factors. A judgement will have to be made which will be based on science, but at the same time, will give consideration to environmental, socio-economic and political factors as well as the biological needs of the animal.

It is inevitable that the OIE will be presented with some unique and demanding challenges, especially as it is necessary to consider each standard from an international perspective. With this in mind it was important that any stakeholder who wished to be involved in the decision-making process be truly international in its composition and in its approach to the various welfare issues which the OIE intends to confront.

Most of the world's largest animal welfare organisations have already developed an international outreach, as so many issues have global implications and require international agreements if progress is to be made. The World Society for the Protection of Animals was formed specifically to give animal welfare organisations in every country an opportunity to have their voice heard on the international stage. It now has 485 member organisations from 126 countries. The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) has an active international section, Humane Society International. The oldest and, arguably, the best known animal welfare organisation is the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), based in the United Kingdom (UK). It has over 200 affiliated overseas organisations from some 70 countries. The RSPCA is also a member of the Eurogroup for Animal Welfare, which is based in Brussels and has as its members the leading animal welfare organisations from the Member States of the European Union (EU). The International Fund for Animal Welfare is based in the United States of America (USA) but has representatives and offices in many countries including Russia and the People's Republic of China. It was logical, therefore, that these five large and influential animal welfare organisations should come together as an international NGO to provide the OIE with informed, scientific and practical animal welfare comment. However it was felt that some more member organisations were necessary to ensure the truly global nature of such an organisation. Therefore, the following four organisations were invited to join the five mentioned above: the National Council of Societies for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (NSPCA) in South Africa, the Japan Farm Animal Welfare Initiative, the RSPCA in Australia (independent of the RSPCA in the UK) and Compassion in World Farming, which is based in the UK. These nine animal welfare

organisations make up the International Coalition for Farm Animal Welfare (ICFAW). The primary focus is on farm animal welfare at present, but within these nine NGOs there is a wealth of expert, scientific and practical knowledge on all aspects of animal exploitation and usage.

It is relatively straightforward for animal welfare organisations to work together in harmony because all share the primary objectives of preventing cruelty and relieving suffering. The strategies used to meet the specific animal welfare objectives of the different organisations will vary depending on the nature of the task and the environment, country or region in which they work.

The animal welfare perspective of ICFAW will depend on which organisation is presenting it. Therefore, for the purpose of this important OIE publication it has been decided to put forward the animal welfare views of animal protection organisations from three continents: Africa, North America and Europe.

A view from South Africa

The NSPCA acknowledges that South Africa is a developing country and advocates education before prosecution in matters of animal welfare. The tools of the organisation are leadership, education and action. The mission and statement of policy are clear: prevention of cruelty to animals. The association aims to achieve this by using such legal means as are most effective and available. The NSPCA endeavours to promote animal welfare in specific situations and strives to bring about new respect for all living creatures.

As an animal welfare organisation (as opposed to an animal rights movement) the NSPCA recognises that animals are used in the service of humans, and although we are not opposed to the legitimate and appropriate utilisation of animals in such service, such utilisation gives humans neither the right nor the licence to exploit or abuse any animal in the process.

The NSPCA considers that the welfare of an animal includes its physical and mental state and that good animal welfare implies both fitness and a sense of well-being. The organisation also believes that the welfare of an animal should be considered in terms of the five freedoms which were first developed in 1993 by the UK Farm Animal Welfare Council, namely:

- a) freedom from thirst, hunger and malnutrition – by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour
- b) freedom from discomfort – by providing a suitable environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area

c) freedom from pain, injury and disease – by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment

d) freedom to express normal behaviour – by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animals own kind

e) freedom from fear and distress – by ensuring conditions that avoid mental suffering.

These five freedoms form a basis on which an evaluation can be made of the welfare of the animals (good or bad) in any particular livestock production system. The NSPCA also believes that every living creature has intrinsic value and is a sentient being. The organisation is mindful that humans have been uniquely endowed with a sense of moral values, and for this reason, it believes that humans are responsible for the welfare of those animals that they have domesticated and those upon whose natural environment humans encroach. This responsibility must be shared by all people, whether or not they benefit from the use of such domestic animals or participate in the alteration of environments supporting the life of other creatures.

South Africa covers 122 million hectares. Of these, 100 million are farmland. Only 13 million are arable, 12 million are under nature conservation and 2 million are under forestry. Grazing area is 84 million hectares. Much of the grazing is semi-arid and therefore utilised for extensive livestock breeding and game ranching.

Small-scale farmers

An increasing number of government and internationally sponsored small-scale individual and cooperative farming projects, as well as large commercial projects for previously disadvantaged people, are being established in commercial farming areas. Commercial farming is therefore being replaced by small-scale farming as well as game ranching. The transition towards small-scale farming, however, is not without effect on animal welfare and often aggravates welfare problems instead of solving them. These issues and problems are not limited to any one species of animal.

This is an enormous challenge as these projects are frequently established without giving adequate education and training to those managing or working on the projects. These projects have generally been seen simply as a business opportunity, without those involved being advised of welfare and legal responsibilities towards the livestock.

The NSPCA has worked reactively and pro-actively on such projects, trying to establish where they are and visiting to make contact, give guidance and monitor. There have been numerous instances when poor administration

or ignorance has led to considerable animal suffering and/or death. In instances where things have developed to the point beyond which there can be effective remedial action or where there is blame to be apportioned, the NSPCA can and will lay charges.

Export of livestock

Traders have discovered a niche market for livestock in Mauritius and consignments of cattle, sheep and goats are shipped to Mauritius where they are slaughtered in very poor conditions.

The government is committed to promoting exports and earning foreign currency, so efforts to have a moratorium placed on this export go unheeded. The NSPCA monitors every consignment transported to the docks, including the loading, and has on numerous occasions accompanied the consignment on the vessel to the importing country.

Industrial style farming

The proportion of livestock that are reared by industrial methods varies between species. In the case of poultry there has been a move to free-range production at a premium price for both eggs and broilers. This is still only a niche market, due to the low per capita income of the major portion of the population. However, this sector is developing fast, with free-range eggs available at premium prices.

Dairy farming is not an easily adaptable enterprise. Industrial farming in the dairy industry is very insignificant. Dairy production has declined in the medium term.

Industrial-type enterprises are more common in pig farming. Farmers have adapted as far as economics have permitted. Free-range pork production in the commercial sector is beginning to develop, but is limited.

In the case of cattle, intensive feeding is a necessity due to the nature of grazing, seasonal effects, meat classification criteria and price ratios in South Africa. There is a period of intensive feeding when the animals are about two years old which lasts for approximately 90 days. This 'rounding off' is either done on farm or in feedlots.

About one million sheep are intensively reared in feedlots annually. The rest are reared on farms or are sold from the veld.

In industrial farming, the professionals employed usually have proper knowledge of the needs and behaviour of animals. This knowledge is applied in planning of projects, designing or purchasing of equipment, training of workers

and supervision of tasks. There are fewer animal welfare problems. Problems that do appear can normally be dealt with speedily.

Do alternatives to industrial animal agriculture exist?

When it is economically feasible, farmers are able to attempt free-range farming or other alternatives to the present stall and battery farming of pigs and poultry. Increasing awareness of animal welfare among consumers and certain retailers is promoting an increase in the purchase of free-range meat and eggs.

Cultural and religious practices

The second worst cases of cruelty are encountered in informal, unsupervised ritual slaughter practices. It is difficult to see any long-term solution to this problem other than a change in the religious, cultural and traditional practices of religious and ethnic population groups.

The informal marketing of livestock in present day urbanised poor communities creates huge animal welfare problems due to ignorance, carelessness, lack of compassion and lack of proper facilities. Cases of illegal 'bush' slaughtering are also encountered.

Kosher, halal and informal ritual slaughter in the African traditions are still issues of welfare concern.

Campaign successes

Since its inception the NSPCA has been able to achieve a certain amount of success, for example:

- import by ship of live animals for slaughter has been banned since 1995
- unexpected raids on saleyards, involving personnel from the NSPCA, traffic authorities, police and the national Veterinary Services, have ensured a comprehensive clampdown on welfare concerns
- live cattle exports by sea have been exposed in the media, and welfare concerns have been addressed
- for kosher slaughter, the organisation obtained an agreement in 1991 that all cattle would be post stunned within 20 seconds of having their throat cut
- production of pâté de foie gras is prohibited in South Africa and the last remaining producer was prosecuted in June 1998 under the Animals Protection Act; the accused closed the farm and left the country

– small-scale farmers have been assisted and animals at failed enterprises rescued or humanely destroyed

– livestock pounds in which animals were mistreated were exposed in the media and welfare concerns were addressed.

Intensive 'farming' of wildlife

The South African game industry has grown at a considerable rate over the past decade or so as people have discovered that money – sometimes large amounts of money – is to be made out of wild animals and their products. The number of wild animals that are captured, auctioned (17,000 head of game were sold at auction in 2000), transported, traded, hunted and bred to service the industry is increasing as South Africa pursues a philosophy of 'use it or lose it'. One unfortunate side-effect is that most wild animals in this country 'have a price tag on their heads', which means that there is an intolerance of predators unless these predators are being captive-bred for hunting or export. This contradicts the claim, propounded by the industry and pro-use groups, that sustainable utilisation benefits the conservation of biodiversity. Biodiversity exists only in large naturally functioning ecosystems where the full spectrum of wild animals occurs; it cannot properly exist in small, fenced off, predator-free game farms. There are other flaws in the sustainable utilisation argument, one being that the parameters for assessing when 'sustainable' becomes 'unsustainable' have never been set.

South Africa is increasingly treating wild animals as commodities, to be bought and sold, captured and auctioned, hunted and subjected to taxidermy, or exported into captivity in foreign countries.

Eloff (13) estimates that 1.7 million large wild animals are contained on intensive breeding facilities in South Africa. In their assessment of these facilities the NSPCA's Wildlife Unit focuses on animal welfare issues and ethical concerns. This approach is criticised as not putting people first, as ranching is said to have economic and social benefits including the employment of 45,491 people (13). However, the welfare issues that arise are significant. They can be summarised as: how the animals live and how the animals die. 'Living' includes not only the conditions of the intensive breeding, but also the utilisation of the breeding animals and their offspring.

A core welfare issue is the fact that the minimum standards that are prescribed by the South African government are based on the so-called best practice of those who are utilising animals in these intensive practices. These problems are further compounded by fragmented legislation and the lack of resources available to the

government agencies based in the nine provinces. Wildlife welfare has a very low priority within all national government departments and within the Provincial Nature Conservation Departments. It is the view of these departments that animal welfare is not within their functions and therefore it is left up to NGOs such as the NSPCA.

Canned hunting was exposed internationally in 1997. This is the practice of 'set-up' hunts, where the animal to be killed is either tame (human-imprinted), drugged, baited (by hanging meat or tethering a live donkey to a tree) or confined in an area so small that any fair chase or hunting as traditionally understood is not possible. Canned hunting continues in South Africa. Whilst large predators, lions in particular, are being captive-bred in intensive systems, the supply of animals for this unethical hunting practice will continue. Other rarer forms of wildlife are known to return a very high income per animal and, according to an unpublished report by J. du P. Bothma to the Northern Game Farmers Organization in March 2005, roan antelope, sable antelope, buffalo, black rhinoceros, nyala and Cape eland are now also being produced intensively. It is fair to point out that income can effectively be doubled if animals being reared for meat also die by hunters' bullets. The NSPCA believes the heart of the problem is the absence of national legislation and the lack of commitment by government in taking action.

In South Africa, there is currently a resurgence in meat production from wildlife. In 2001, one meat processing company processed 65,000 head of wildlife, mainly for export (J. du P. Bothma, unpublished report). The harvesting of export game meat is controlled up to a point by EU regulations, however, the methods of housing and transporting the animals are not prescribed. This impacts negatively on the welfare of these animals.

Difficulties and challenges faced by livestock and wildlife

The export of livestock by sea is an important animal welfare concern, but the State promotes this activity because earning foreign currency is a government priority. Government should be the champion of animal protection, but it tends to disregard its responsibility to uphold the animal protection laws, particularly with regard to small-scale farmers and informal slaughter.

Natural disasters, such as droughts, veld fires, floods and freezing weather spells, can also cause significant animal suffering. Runaway veld fires happen in the spring when the land is dry and the lightning that heralds the first rains sets devastating fires that can travel wide distances. As a result of these fires many animals become trapped behind fences and then need urgent assistance. NSPCA staff go

from farm to farm to assist in these situations, to assess and rescue animals, to provide feed and medical attention, and to humanely destroy animals where required.

Staff from the NSPCA can also assist during disease outbreaks, such as the outbreak of avian influenza in mid-2004 when they were actively involved in the culling of thousands of ostriches in the Eastern Cape. The NSPCA was involved in the early government negotiations on this issue and their presence was both invited and appreciated during the culling process.

A further challenge for livestock is the cruelty associated with stock theft, which is one of the crimes with the highest incidence in South Africa. The NSPCA works very closely with the National Stock Theft Unit of the South Africa Police Services who regularly report crimes such as the inhumane practice of hamstringing animals to disable them until the thieves return with adequate transport to remove them. Many are taken across the borders into neighbouring Lesotho.

Closing remarks on major issues

Statistical indicators of suffering

Monitoring of dead-on-arrival, emergency slaughter and bruising figures at ten of the biggest abattoirs in South Africa in the 1980s (which carried out 60% of all slaughter) proved that cooperation between animal welfare organisations, livestock industry organisations, the State and scientists had resulted in an 80% decrease in those figures in a matter of five years. This reflected an enormous improvement in livestock welfare in the commercial sector of South African agriculture. The cooperative approach was made possible by the establishment of the Livestock Welfare Coordinating Committee in 1978. The two animal welfare associations involved with farm animals, the Livestock Animal Welfare Association and the NSPCA, played significant roles in the work of the Committee and in the co-operative efforts to improve livestock welfare.

Veterinary services back-up

South Africa is a vast country in which population and services tend to be focused on the main urbanised areas, with the effect that immense areas are bereft of adequate veterinary services. These tend to be the indigent, rural areas. The State Veterinary Services do not exist in certain (usually remote and impoverished) areas and in other areas, they are inadequate to cope with the demand. This is why the NSPCA has taken on the role of outreach – to provide a veterinary service back-up. Specific outreach programmes and projects are planned and undertaken, in addition to any reactive or response work that may be required.

Small-scale farmers

The NSPCA considers the way forward as being our continued involvement and action in projects for small-scale farmers. There are hundreds throughout South Africa, and their number is increasing virtually daily. The NSPCA liaises with the National Department of Agriculture and has been able to request involvement with the new Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme, which currently receives input from all stakeholders except welfare organisations. The NSPCA hopes that it will be involved in this programme as this will allow the organisation to offer advice and recommendations, but also to have a better understanding of current projects and to ensure that welfare standards are met and maintained in any new ventures.

Wildlife

An industry has developed which rears wildlife by intensive farming methods, yet this is often carried out in a haphazard way or entered into without the business and economic planning that would be customary for traditional types of farming. As a consequence, welfare is compromised. Added to this are the ethical concerns about why wild animals are being produced in this manner. The acceptance of the sustainable utilisation ethic within South Africa is an additional factor that impacts negatively on the issue.

The management of wildlife in South Africa is amongst the best in the world. However there are doubts about the effectiveness of existing laws and management structures to control the country's wildlife trade and utilisation activities.

Legislation and regulations

The Animals Protection Act No. 71 of 1962 and the Performing Animals Protection Act No. 24 of 1935 are the primary legislation that the NSPCA is involved in enforcing. They compile the dossiers and lay the charges and the Public Prosecutor handles the case in court. The NSPCA and other role players in conjunction with the Livestock Welfare Coordinating Committee and the South African Bureau of Standards have also compiled numerous codes that have been implemented by the respective livestock and wildlife industries. They cover a wide range of issues, as follows:

- feedlots
- poultry associations
- the welfare of pigs
- the handling and transport of livestock
- sale yards and vending sites
- the export of livestock by sea

- the use of prodders and stunning devices in abattoirs
- the duties and functions of abattoir managers regarding the welfare of animals
- trade in ostrich feathers and the stunning of ostriches
- the translocation of certain species of wild herbivores
- holding pens for wild herbivores
- the transport of wild animals by sea.

These codes are designed to be read in conjunction with the two animal protection acts and have been of enormous use in ensuring that minimum standards are met and maintained.

A view from the United States of America

Farm animal welfare in the United States of America

The USA is a single country, but as a union of semi-autonomous states it has much in common with the EU. It is also comparable with the EU (before the enlargement in 2004) in population of both people (293 and 377 million respectively) and livestock (e.g. 243 and 305 million laying hens) (14, 15, 28). Three features of livestock agriculture are particularly relevant to welfare: consolidation, intensification and legislation – or rather, the lack of legislation.

Consolidation is particularly strong in the pork industry. More than 80% of pigs are now raised on farms housing more than 1,000 animals. About 65% of pigs are raised in only five states: Iowa (25%), North Carolina, Minnesota, Illinois and Indiana (31). There is massive concentration in vertically integrated companies. Notably, farms owned by one single company – Smithfields – house about 675,000 sows (1). In the dairy sector, 51% of cows are in herds of over 200, and these large herds have an average size of 694 cows (30).

Most of the industry is very intensive. For example, over 99% of laying hens are in battery cages, which are very crowded: in 1999 they provided an average of 53 in² per bird (342 cm²) (29). There are also many other welfare problems associated with pressure for increased 'efficiency': most birds are beak trimmed, and forced molting is usual, involving feed withdrawal for up to 14 days. In dairy production, average yield is considerably higher in the USA (8,600 kg of milk per cow) than in the EU (5,400 kg per cow) (32). This much higher figure is due to a number of factors, including the use of recombinant bovine somatotropin in the USA. It is used on

15% of farms overall, but on 54% of the largest farms (those with 500 or more cows) (30).

There are no federal laws concerning how animals should be kept on farms. In fact the only federal law that significantly affects farm animals is the 1958 Humane Methods of Slaughter Act (amended in 1978) – and this excludes poultry. Furthermore, there are almost no state laws concerning the treatment of farm animals (except those against non-routine acts of cruelty). There are two exceptions: a ban on gestation crates for sows in Florida, passed in 2002, and a ban on force feeding waterfowl for foie gras production in California, passed in 2004.

Initiatives to improve animal welfare

One change in the last few years has been the development of husbandry guidelines by many producer organisations and retailers (18). These are important in recognising the importance of farm animal welfare, but as yet they require few actual improvements to be made. Among producers, United Egg Producers (27) have been ahead of the field and are achieving voluntary benefits for hen welfare from their members, but even these are modest: for example, an increase of space in battery cages to 56 in² per bird (360 cm²) in 2003, and to 67 in² (430 cm²) by 2008. Similarly, the National Pork Board (19) has introduced the Swine Welfare Assurance Program. This voluntary scheme does not provide guarantees of animal welfare, but it does ensure that participating producers consider welfare carefully.

McDonalds was the first major retailer to require improved conditions for animals from their suppliers. They buy 2.5% of eggs in the USA, and farms supplying these eggs must now provide 72 in² of space per hen (465 cm²). The National Council of Chain Restaurants (NCCR) and the Food Marketing Institute (FMI) (representing major supermarkets) are now coordinating the requirements of most retailers, which mainly involve endorsing the husbandry guidelines of producer organisations.

Higher standards are achieved by some of the minority of the livestock industry that has not followed the route of consolidation and intensification. This involves an increasing number of farms, mostly small, that are developing niche markets on the basis of criteria such as animal welfare and environmental protection. These farms are being assisted by a number of programmes offering defined standards, such as the National Organic Plan, the pig welfare standards of the Animal Welfare Institute, and the Certified Humane label administered by Humane Farm Animal Care. The latter is supported by animal advocacy groups including the HSUS and the American Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Involvement of the government in improving farm animal welfare is confined to enforcement of the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act – although this is not done well – and funding of some research, such as that carried out by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Livestock Behavior Research Unit at Purdue University in Indiana.

International trade

In the period from 2000 to 2002, the USA and the EU together accounted for over a third of the world's agricultural exports, with 19% from the USA and 17% from the EU (17). In the 12 months to September 2004, exports of live animals by the USA were worth over US\$450 million and those of red meats and red meat products about US\$3.7 billion, both about one third lower than the year before, primarily because of the impact of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). Animal exports totalled US\$10.6 billion. Imports of live animals cost US\$1.4 billion, and animal imports totalled US\$10.4 billion (Table I) (3). Transport of live animals internationally is likely to cause even more problems for welfare than that within countries, while movement of animal products around the world carries the danger of disease transmission.

Government policy is actively to promote agricultural exports, including animals and animal products. In September 2003, the Secretary of Agriculture gave introductory comments at a meeting called Future Trends in Animal Agriculture and said in reference to trade: 'We will continue to aggressively pursue opportunities for our producers' (34). The website of the USDA (33) includes a section on Marketing Operations which lists a number of programmes, including the following:

- Emerging Markets Program
- Foreign Market Development Cooperator Program

Table I
Trade in animals and animal products in the United States of America in the 12 months to September 2004, in million dollars (3)

Animal/animal product	Exports	Imports
Live animals	454	1,357
Red meats and products	3,700	5,527
Poultry meats and products	2,435	364
Dairy products	1,321	2,332
Other animal products	2,685	772
Total	10,595	10,352

- Market Access Program
- Unified Export Strategy.

A USDA 'task force report' in July 2004 recommended the creation of a 'USDA basic science institute', of which the first objective would be 'nurturing American agriculture that is more competitive internationally' (25).

Education and information

As the USA is so large it has no truly national media, so few publications or events relevant to animal welfare generate widespread publicity. Occasional high-profile exceptions include papers such as the *New York Times* (22), books by well-known individuals (26), and provocative news such as the activities of more extreme animal rights groups. It is often pointed out that in the USA the public is much less informed about farm animal welfare than in other areas such as Europe (24).

The USDA undertakes some animal welfare education through the Animal Welfare Information Center and the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service. For example, the latter coordinates a group called Future Trends in Animal Agriculture, bringing together representatives from government, industry and animal advocacy for an annual meeting (23) and other discussions. There has been more involvement with farmers through the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Extension Service, and the issues of sustainability and animal welfare are increasingly seen as overlapping (2). One of the activities of animal advocacy groups like the HSUS has been to work with existing farmer groups such as organic producers, promoting consideration of welfare issues. Many such groups also provide educational material; to take the HSUS as an example, material on the website is seen by many of the organisation's eight million supporters, by farmers and by others interested in the subject.

The HSUS also works with the academic community, e.g. by giving annual awards to college courses that promote consideration of animals in society. However, animal welfare is included in the curriculum of only a minority of the colleges and universities that teach agriculture and animal science – by some estimates only 5%. However, some Land Grant Colleges (colleges set up by states to teach technical subjects, especially agriculture) are particularly active in this area, e.g. Purdue University in Indiana. Another university with an interesting programme is Michigan State University, which has launched an educational Animal Welfare Judging Competition (16). Attention to welfare among most academics involved with animal production is still relatively undeveloped, but it is growing slowly, e.g. there has for some years been a session

on behaviour and welfare at the annual meeting of the American Society for Animal Science.

Future developments

Interest in farm animal welfare will continue to grow, with a positive effect on niche markets, such as those for free-range, organic and humanely reared animal products. As in Europe, sale of such products will affect more of animal production than just the proportion directly covered by their own sales. However, whereas in Europe this has resulted in increased legislation, in the USA effects are still primarily confined to the retail sector. There will be increased pressure for legislation; for example, one current campaign of the HSUS is for the addition of poultry to the species covered by the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act. It is not yet clear, however, whether legislative change will gather pace.

Husbandry guidelines continue to proliferate (18), with some substantive and some more cosmetic. The resultant consumer confusion may lead to consolidation, as in the programme of the NCCR and FMI, but also carries the risk of provoking a leveling-down effect of competition. Factors encouraging improvement of welfare are also, of course, countered by continuing competitive pressure for intensification of livestock production, especially as that competition is increased by international trade. The OIE animal welfare programme offers some hope of regulating this pressure, with the chance of influencing the treatment of at least those animals raised for export. It will also increase the attention paid to farm animal welfare in the USA, emphasising the importance of this issue and providing a basis for possible future improvements. Indeed, increased communication about animal welfare is maintaining the upward trend in international awareness. People concerned for animals hope, with some justification, that these positive effects are accelerating.

A view from the European Union

The key issue concerning farm animal welfare in the EU, as seen by the animal welfare movement, remains the need to replace industrial animal production with humane, sustainable farming.

In addition to their detrimental impact on animal welfare, the policies that have shaped European agriculture are also criticised for causing overproduction, for undermining markets in developing countries, for compromising animal health, food quality and food safety, and for their negative impact on the environment and rural livelihoods.

The dissatisfaction with such methods, coupled with an increasing consumer demand for foods that have not been produced at the expense of animal suffering, have led to important steps being taken within the EU to improve the welfare of farm animals. Much, however, remains to be done before the EU has truly acceptable welfare standards.

Legislation

The EU has enacted a range of legislation to protect farm animals, underpinned by the Treaty establishing the European Union and its mandate to harmonise those national regulations which could cause imbalances in the European market.

Further legal obligations arose from the 1999 Treaty of Amsterdam and its protocol on animal welfare which explicitly recognises animals as 'sentient beings', and no longer merely as agricultural goods (12). This requires the EU and its member states, in formulating and implementing EU policies on agriculture, transport and research, to pay 'full regard to the welfare requirements of animals'.

Furthermore the EU, as a signatory to the Council of Europe (CoE), is bound by its conventions. There are five of these conventions relating to animal welfare, each obliging the EU to legislate in line with agreed CoE standards.

Below, we give an overview of some of the main areas in which progress has been made through legislation.

On-farm welfare

The EU has prohibited some of the worst aspects of industrial farming. The 1999 Hens Directive prohibits existing conventional battery cages from 2012 and stipulates that no new conventional cages may be installed from 2003 (7).

A 2001 amendment to the Pigs Directive prohibits existing sow stalls (also known as 'gestation crates') from 2013 and forbids new stalls from 2003 (9). The Directive provides that sows must be kept in groups although, unfortunately, it permits the use of stalls/crates during the first four weeks of pregnancy. Existing tethering systems for sows are prohibited from 2006 and the installation of new tethering systems has been prohibited since 1996.

From 2003 the Pigs Directive also:

- stipulates that, to prevent hunger, pregnant sows must be given a sufficient quantity of bulky or high-fibre food
- provides that pigs must have permanent access to straw or some similar material to enable them to engage in natural activities

- prohibits routine tail-docking
- prohibits the use of fully slatted floors for pregnant sows. This provision applies to existing farms from 2013.

A 1997 amendment to the 1991 Calves Directive prohibits new veal crates from 1998 and existing crates from 2007 (5). Since 1998 the Directive has required calves to be given dietary iron and a specified amount of fibrous food.

The 1998 General Farm Animals Directive applies some broad provisions to all farm animals (6). It provides, for example, that an animal's freedom of movement must not be restricted in such a way as to cause it unnecessary suffering or injury.

The above legislative reforms are extremely welcome. Nonetheless, most pigs and poultry in the EU and many cattle continue to be industrially farmed. This is because:

- a) the legislation does not go far enough
- b) it is poorly enforced in many member states
- c) there is not yet any species-specific legislation for key species such as cattle, meat chickens, turkeys and ducks.

Transport

Each year around 3 million farm animals are transported huge distances across Europe and beyond, on journeys lasting anything from around 30 h to 90 h or more (<http://epp.eurostat.cec.eu.int>). Although legal standards relating to the conditions under which animals are transported are in place, EU law does nothing to prevent these long journeys. Legislation on transport provides that cattle and sheep can be transported for 28 h (with a rest period of at least 1 h after 14 h) and pigs and horses for 24 h, after which they must be unloaded and given food, water and 24 h rest (11). This cycle can be repeated indefinitely.

The EU welfare NGOs have campaigned for many years against long journeys and insisted that a single maximum journey time be introduced. They believe animals should be slaughtered as near to the farm of rearing as possible; long distance trade should take place in carcasses, not live animals.

Transport regulation provides a strong illustration of the limits of legislation alone. Illegal transport practices persist, taking advantage of weak monitoring and enforcement procedures, and resource constraints or lack of political will in some countries.

In addition to the intra-EU trade referred to above, the EU exports over 200,000 live cattle per year to the Middle East and North Africa, mainly for slaughter, but also for breeding (<http://epp.eurostat.cec.eu.int>). This trade is subsidised by export refunds. The EU welfare NGOs

oppose the use of subsidies to promote a live trade that has been shown to cause great suffering (21).

Slaughter

The 1993 Slaughter Directive requires all animals, including poultry, to be stunned before slaughter (4). Stunning must cause immediate loss of consciousness. The Directive allows religious slaughter in a slaughterhouse to be carried out without pre-stunning. Ritual slaughter performed outside the slaughter house must use pre-stunning, but in this case enforcement remains a concern.

The provision of legislation represents progress in itself, but it frequently fails to provide the level of protection that welfare science demands of it, and often proves difficult to enforce. For that reason, other policy mechanisms are applied in tandem. Two of these mechanisms are examined below, starting with consumer-focused initiatives.

Consumer-focused initiatives

Information

Labels which clearly indicate the farming method are seen as vital to enable consumers to make an informed choice when buying food. The EU law has made it compulsory to label egg packs and eggs with details of the farming method (10). Welfare NGOs want this compulsory labelling to be extended to meat.

Food quality schemes

Several producer groups have established schemes under which standards are set regarding food safety, the environment and animal health and welfare. The objective of these schemes is to provide assurances to consumers on the quality of the product or – crucially for animal welfare – the production process. Farmers who participate in such schemes receive a higher return as some consumers are willing to pay a premium price for high welfare produce.

Some schemes have set standards that go significantly beyond normal commercial standards. Meat chickens farmed under the French '*label rouge*' scheme are kept free-range and housed at much lower stocking densities and in much smaller groups than intensively reared broilers. Because they are slow-growing birds, they are not prone to the leg disorders and heart failure that are common in fast-growing broilers.

In the German '*Neuland*' farms pigs and other animals are kept on straw; slatted floors are not permitted. They have access to the outdoors throughout the year and tethering is prohibited.

In the UK, the RSPCA has established the 'freedom food' scheme in response to consumer demand for higher welfare products.

European Union regulations for organic production involve higher welfare standards than industrial farming (8) and organic farmers are rewarded with premium prices.

Supermarkets

Some supermarkets have set their own high welfare standards that go beyond legislative requirements. For example, one supermarket in the UK – Marks & Spencer – only sells free-range eggs; this policy applies both to its shell eggs and the eggs used in its processed foods. Several supermarkets set a maximum journey time of 8 h or less for animals being transported to slaughter; others only sell salmon that have been slaughtered humanely. Similarly, some chain restaurants only use free-range eggs.

Consumer-focused schemes therefore use the market to achieve animal welfare goals. Challenges remain however, often relating to consumer information on the various schemes, to the reluctance of consumers to engage with the more unpleasant aspects of livestock production or their reluctance to pay for welfare, when they feel this to be the responsibility of government.

Such schemes are useful tools, but there is a worrying trend among some governments to use consumer power as an excuse to avoid their obligation to legislate and enforce.

Common Agricultural Policy

Fiscal mechanisms have great potential, and the EU is beginning to use its Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to support animal welfare. From 2007 the receipt of certain subsidies will be dependent on compliance with specific welfare legislation. Moreover, other subsidies can now be given to help farmers with part of the costs of moving to and running improved welfare systems. Regrettably, very few such subsidies have so far been granted.

Under the CAP, farmers can be helped with the costs of using advisory services which identify the improvements the farmer needs to make in order to comply with welfare legislation.

Despite the advances made by these mechanisms, European animal welfare may be threatened by producers who farm to lower standards, but can use international trade rules to force their products on the European market. The impact of the World Trade Organization (WTO) is discussed below.

Trade in livestock products and the impact of the World Trade Organization

The EU pig and poultry farmers fear that EU welfare legislation will add to their production costs and make

them vulnerable to imported meat and eggs produced to lower, and hence less costly, welfare standards. The WTO rules are generally viewed as preventing member countries from restricting imports on welfare grounds.

The EU is not at present a major importer of eggs. However, the EU prohibition on conventional battery cages will increase production costs. This could lead to a significant increase in the import of cheaper cage-produced dried egg products, which would result in EU farmers losing market share.

The EU is also not a significant importer of pig meat. As with eggs, however, the improved welfare standards required by EU legislation will increase costs and so could make it economically attractive for other countries to export cheaper, lower-welfare pig meat to the EU. This indeed is one of the central challenges for the EU: how can it maintain its welfare standards and introduce improvements if these will put its farmers in danger of

being undermined by lower-welfare imports? Clearly, it would be helpful if the WTO were to fully recognise the legitimacy of animal welfare as a non-trade concern. In particular:

- payments to help farmers with the costs of meeting high welfare standards should be included among the subsidies that qualify for the WTO 'green box', i.e. 'permitted' subsidies which do not distort trade
- mandatory labelling schemes should be accepted as being compatible with the WTO rules
- WTO members should be permitted to operate differential tariff rates whereby a lower rate is placed on high-welfare produce.

Equally, it is essential that the EU makes access to its markets a reality for high-welfare produce from developing countries by offering support through technical assistance and capacity building.

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Bien-être animal : le rôle des organisations non gouvernementales

D.B. Wilkins, C. Houseman, R. Allan, M.C. Appleby, D. Peeling & P. Stevenson

Résumé

Le bien-être animal importe à un grand nombre de personnes dans la plupart des régions du monde. L'intérêt suscité par le traitement des animaux est fonction de nombreux facteurs, notamment des conditions socio-économiques, de la culture, de la religion et des traditions. L'Organisation mondiale de la santé animale (OIE) est déterminée à garantir que les normes relatives au bien-être animal soient fondées sur des critères scientifiques, mais est consciente que ces autres facteurs doivent également être pris en compte. La Coalition internationale pour le bien-être des animaux d'élevage (ICFAW) a été créée pour représenter les intérêts des organisations non gouvernementales chargées d'assurer le bien-être animal dans la plupart des régions du monde et les avis, commentaires et informations émanant de ces organisations pour le bien-être animal influenceront sur le processus de décision de l'OIE. Il est apparu que les points de vue des divers membres de l'ICFAW réunis à cet effet varient en fonction de la région du monde dont ils sont originaires. On trouvera dans cet article des informations relatives à la situation sur trois continents : Afrique, Amérique du Nord et Europe. Parmi ces données figurent des renseignements concernant la législation en vigueur, les pratiques d'élevage et les programmes d'éducation et de campagne élaborés à la fois par les organisations non gouvernementales chargées du bien-être des animaux et par les gouvernements. Les auteurs se tournent aussi vers l'avenir pour définir les aspects susceptibles d'influer sur les pratiques d'élevage, de transport et d'abattage des animaux.

Mots-clés

Législation en matière de bien-être animal – Norme applicable au bien-être animal – Politique d'élevage de l'Afrique du Sud – Préoccupation autre que d'ordre commercial – Regroupement – Secteur américain de l'élevage – Union européenne.

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El papel de las organizaciones no gubernamentales en el terreno del bienestar animal

D.B. Wilkins, C. Houseman, R. Allan, M.C. Appleby, D. Peeling & P. Stevenson

Resumen

El bienestar de los animales es un tema de interés para mucha gente en buena parte del mundo. La preocupación por el trato que se dispensa a los animales dependerá de muchos factores, en especial las condiciones socioeconómicas y la tradición cultural y religiosa de cada lugar. La Organización Mundial de Sanidad Animal (OIE) tiene la firme voluntad de dictar normas científicamente fundamentadas en la materia, pero es consciente de que también hay que tener en cuenta esos otros factores. La Coalición Internacional para el Bienestar de los Animales de Explotación (ICFAW) fue creada para defender los intereses de organismos no gubernamentales dedicados a la protección de los animales de prácticamente todos los rincones del globo, cuyas opiniones, observaciones e información tendrán su lugar en el proceso decisorio de la OIE. El hecho de agruparse con tal objetivo era un reconocimiento de que los puntos de vista de las distintas organizaciones integrantes de la ICFAW difieren según el lugar del mundo del que provengan. Los autores exponen la situación en tres continentes: África, América del Norte y Europa, ofreciendo información detallada sobre la legislación en la materia, los métodos productivos y los programas y campañas de formación iniciados desde organizaciones no gubernamentales o instancias oficiales. Además, en un ejercicio de prospectiva, también examinan los temas que en el futuro podrían influir en los procedimientos de cría, transporte y sacrificio de los animales de granja.

Palabras clave

Consolidación – Cuestión no comercial – Industria ganadera estadounidense – Legislación de bienestar animal – Norma de bienestar animal – Política ganadera de Sudáfrica – Unión Europea.



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