

Scientific Opinion on the Use of Animal-Based Measures to Assess Welfare of Dairy Cows (2012). A4, 81 pages. EFSA Panel on Animal Health and Welfare. *EFSA Journal* (2012): 10(1): 2554. doi: 10.2903/j.efsa.2012.2554. Available online at: www.efsa.europa.eu/efsajournal.

Scientific Opinion on the Use of Animal-Based Measures to Assess Welfare in Pigs (2012). A4, 85 pages. EFSA Panel on Animal Health and Welfare. *EFSA Journal* (2012) 10(1): 2512. doi: 10.2903/j.efsa.2012.2512. Available online at: www.efsa.europa.eu/efsajournal.

E Carter,
UFAW

The Farm Animal Welfare Committee publishes two reports to inform government within the United Kingdom

The Farm Animal Welfare Committee (FAWC) is an expert committee within the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) whose remit is to provide independent advice on the welfare of farmed animals to governments within England, Wales and Scotland. In December 2011, the FAWC published two reports.

Education, Communication and Knowledge Application in Relation to Farm Animal Welfare

A key message within the FAWC's *Education, Communication and Knowledge* report is that educating society about farm animal welfare issues should begin in school. According to FAWC, approximately 95% of five to 16 year-olds are in full-time education on any given school day and it suggests that primary and secondary education could play a fundamental role in engaging children on the importance on animal welfare. FAWC notes that there are a range of subjects in which animal welfare elements could be incorporated, including biology, geography, citizenship, and design and technology. Children are receptive to different aspects of animal welfare at different ages therefore this should be taken into account when considering lesson plans: the younger years (three to six year-olds) are open to learning biology; seven to 12 year-olds are interested in learning about animals in general; and 13 to 16 year-olds are more responsive to ethical and moral dilemmas of animal use. The report states that currently very little animal welfare is taught in schools and, where the subject is touched upon, this is often undertaken using materials lacking in quality control and by teachers who themselves often have only a limited understanding of animal welfare science.

FAWC makes four recommendations to governments with regards to animal welfare in education including: "Any government revisions of the national curricula in England, Scotland and Wales, need to ensure that school pupils, in an age-appropriate manner, learn about where our food comes from and about how farm animals are — and should be — treated. Educational initiatives should, at a minimum, address the basic legal obligations for farm and

companion animals, such as the duty of care and the requirement to provide an animal's five freedoms". The need for primary and secondary teachers to be provided with continuing professional development to enable them to teach animal welfare is also recommended, along with the benefits of encouraging and facilitating commercial farm visits by schoolchildren.

The report then goes on to discuss how best to communicate with adult consumers on farm animal welfare and a variety of means through which this can be achieved are put forward, such as: product information and labelling at the point of sale; corporate social responsibility statements; and public information campaigns. FAWC considers that: "The consumer should be able to compare meat and other animal products in terms of welfare provenance either at the product, the brand or the retailer level". Although various farm assurance schemes and supermarket-own brand 'higher welfare' products are currently in circulation, FAWC notes that there is a lack of information and comparability between products and retailers and that this can hinder shoppers when attempting to make more ethical purchasing decisions: "Consumers may be confused by the different standards used, different units of measurement, means of welfare assessment employed, assessment times in the animal's lifecycle and distance from mandatory welfare requirements that limit their ability to compare products, ranges and brands directly and thus ultimately frustrate choice".

Nine recommendations are made on how government may improve the communication on farm animal welfare to wider society, including the need to "align higher welfare claims to a common and identifiable set of defined welfare objectives and outcomes against which welfare claims can be compared directly by interested consumers". Another key recommendation suggests that: "Where marketing claims are used that imply that animals enjoy higher welfare standards, this should be demonstrated by whole life welfare advantages over and above current minimum legislative compliance".

Finally, the report considers knowledge generation, transfer and application. This section begins by accepting that there is frequently a gap between the generation of knowledge and its application and that in farm animal welfare "the pace and uptake of change is often slow, despite the demonstrable benefits of such changes to the animals concerned". FAWC highlights the need to better understand how those responsible for the care of animals respond to the expanding amount of research available on agricultural and animal welfare knowledge transfer.

A key route through which farmers receive information on farm animal welfare is through advisory and extension services. FAWC emphasises the importance of these services, such as those provided by EBLEX, BPEX and Dairy Co (the levy bodies for beef and sheep, pigs, and dairy cows, respectively), which include: farm-specific advice on animal health and welfare; training schemes; and forums for sharing ideas, learning and networking. A number of other strategies are also put forward by FAWC on

how to engage with farmers and facilitate improvements in farm animal welfare, including: participatory learning; social marketing; benchmarking; open and demonstration farms; and continuing professional development.

Education, Communication and Knowledge Application in Relation to Farm Animal Welfare (December 2011). A4, 36 pages. Farm Animal Welfare Committee. Available for download from the FAWC website: www.defra.gov.uk/fawc or by contacting the FAWC at the following address: Area 8B, 9 Millbank, c/o Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London SW1P 3JR, UK.

Economics and Farm Animal Welfare

Economics is a complex discipline which is, in essence, about how best to assign resources to satisfy human wants. The report begins by explaining how animal welfare does not fit directly into an economic framework but is considered to be an ‘externality’. Within economics, animals may be considered a resource which, following production (eg farming), result in an output that people want (eg food). However, along with producing the desired output, the production process may also result in a by-product(s), eg quality of life for farm animals. If the quality of life of farm animals were poor then this would be considered a negative externality due to the negative impact that this would have on people in society who are concerned about animal welfare. Conversely, if the quality of life of farm animals is high, then animal welfare may also be considered to be a positive externality. Negative externalities are unwanted by-products which may raise concerns in consumers thereby affecting the market success of a product. Environmental pollution is given as an example of a negative externality of industrial production.

The report then considers the role that farmers and their decision-making has on animal welfare. FAWC notes that most farmers are not simply profit maximisers and that a whole range of drivers are involved in any decision-making process, including a concern for animal welfare. FAWC recommends that “Research should be carried out to provide a better understanding of the financial and other drivers for farmers to safeguard and improve animal welfare” and also that “It is likely that the most effective means to protect and improve farm animal welfare that is linked to farm profitability is to provide some form of incentive payments to farmers to do this; these should be paid according to the delivery of welfare outcomes”.

The relationship between animal welfare and animal productivity is then explored. Some improvements in animal welfare will also result in an improvement in productivity, and thus profitability for the farm. However, this is not always the case and FAWC considers that where measures to improve animal welfare impose a net cost on the farmer, then other forms of incentive may be required to promote their adoption. This leads onto the next section which considers the relationship between animal welfare and economics in the marketing chain. A number of studies have indicated that some consumers are willing to pay a higher price premium for products from farming systems which deliver higher animal welfare (although this is not

always found to be the case at the point of purchase). The role of retailers, the media and the imbalance of power between primary producers and retailers is also discussed.

FAWC goes on to describe how animal welfare could be classed as a ‘public good’. Public goods are those which have a positive benefit on society as a whole, or a subset of it. They often do not have their own inherent market value therefore it is not cost effective for a market to allocate resources to them; other means of ensuring public goods are valued are therefore utilised, such as government intervention. If animal welfare were considered to be a public good then government could seek to protect animal welfare through regulation, financial incentives, and provision of appropriate information. As part of its recommendations in this area, FAWC urges government, “to continue to assess the need for new legislation, rather than relying on market mechanisms to satisfy its objective of improved standards of farm animal welfare”.

The impact of globalisation on animal welfare is also taken into consideration within the report. FAWC notes that decisions taken within one country cannot be wholly independent of those taken in others due to international trade and other trans-national issues, such as disease control, disaster management and climate change. In particular, when legislation is updated, this can have major cost implications for farmers, especially changes which involve alterations to animal housing. FAWC stresses that increased regulations should not put farms and other business in Great Britain out of business since this is likely to lead to an increase in imports and an export of any welfare problem. Other countries do not necessarily have lower animal welfare standards than the UK, but where this is the case, imports from these countries cannot be prevented from entering the UK on animal welfare grounds due to World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules. FAWC discusses the complexities of this situation and also talks about global animal welfare standards of intergovernmental organisations, such World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), and the possibilities of EU-wide welfare labelling.

The final parts of the report reflect on where financial pressures have brought the livestock industry and then close with how economic mechanisms may be utilised to improve animal welfare in the future. One idea put forward is to use the current Government Environmental Stewardship Scheme as a template for a ‘Welfare Stewardship Scheme’ — which would provide farmers with a financial incentive when measurable improvements in welfare outcomes are achieved.

Economics and Farm Animal Welfare (December 2011). A4, 49 pages. Farm Animal Welfare Committee. Available for download from the FAWC website: www.defra.gov.uk/fawc or by contacting the FAWC at the following address: Area 8B, 9 Millbank, c/o Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London SW1P 3JR, UK.

*E Carter,
UFAW*