

FRCAW Newsletter 46

June 2024

Editorial

Pig welfare in Europe



Image from a [video](#) published on the [European Commission](#) audiovisual portal

European legislation on pig welfare (Directive 2008/120/EC) does not authorize tail docking (caudectomy) as standard practice and requires farmers to provide their pigs with "manipulable" (exploratory) materials such as straw, hay, sawdust to avoid tailbiting among pen-mates. On its website, the European Commission has published [two videos](#) featuring the personal experience of two pig farmers (Italian and Finnish) who no longer dock their piglets' tails, instead employing a variety of alternative strategies; not just the provision of manipulable materials, but also of thermal comfort, good air quality, sufficient feed and suitable pen structures. The sharing of experience by practitioners is also a core aim of the [European WelFarmers project](#), whose launch has been announced by IFIP, the French Technical Institute for Pigs, on its website. The project aims to identify networks of European farmers who have implemented farming practices that go beyond the European regulations in terms of pig welfare. It covers 4 main themes – the free housing of suckling sows (ban of cages and crates), rearing pigs with undocked tails, reduction of castration pain, and space allowance and flooring provision from weaning to slaughter. The practices that will ultimately be shared and promoted will be chosen not only for their high welfare levels, but also for their environmental and economic impacts.

The FRCAW has, for its part, recently published an [expert report](#) on the particular implications for French farming of the EFSA (European Food Safety Authority) opinion on farming practices that pose the greatest threat to pig welfare. The EFSA had been asked by the European Commission to

report on the latest scientific knowledge on animal welfare, in anticipation of the forthcoming revisions to European regulations. And, last, an [article published in Animal](#) has reported findings from a study of pre-weaner piglet behaviour that compared the impacts of being housed with their dams in loose farrowing pens or in a crate system, and of different levels of contact with humans. The study showed that piglets born in a larger farrowing pen, where their mothers were free to move around, had stronger emotional responses to humans (more fear-related behaviours) in early life than the piglets reared in conventional farrowing crates. Fear responses were reduced, however, when piglets were exposed to early contact with humans (scratching, patting, stroking).

Perception of animal slaughter around the world



Image from the unsplash.com website

Last month saw an international [sociological survey](#) of the general public in 14 culturally and religiously diverse countries to assess knowledge of and attitudes towards animal protection during slaughter. The results suggest that concern for the reduction of animal suffering during slaughter is a universal human tendency rather than a cultural development, and that acceptance of slaughter without prior stunning is linked to local interpretations of religious requirements.

The transport of live animals to abattoirs over long distances also contributes to animal stress. In France, a mobile on-farm abattoir pilot project has been in operation since 2019, commissioned by the government in order to identify potential problems in the application of European regulations. Responding to a question from a French National Assembly member on the submission timetable for the report to parliament on the pilot ([Question n°14325](#) published in the Journal Officiel de la République Française), the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty confirmed that the report had been submitted to parliament in February 2024. The Ministry also pointed to the EC's recent official publication of an adopted amendment to European Regulation (EC) 853/53/2004, containing specific hygiene rules for the on-farm use of mobile abattoirs.

Dogs: use of AI to interpret barks and meeting their social needs in shelters



Image from the [ELBLOG.PL](https://elblog.pl) website

The continued development of artificial intelligence offers us opportunities to improve our understanding of animal communication. [One study](#) has looked at the usefulness of artificial intelligence technology to decipher canine communication signals. According to the study, AI models that are pre-trained using human speech patterns can use this training to represent the barks of dogs and help decipher their functions. The models helped in tasks to identify a dog, its breed, its sex and the context in which barking occurred. This opens up new prospects for researchers to interpret the various vocalizations produced by animals.

In shelters, where dogs are often accommodated for relatively short periods, co-housing in pairs could be more stressful than for longer stays, since dogs have to cope with new social situations in confined spaces. However, a [scientific paper](#) published in PLoS ONE reports that dogs housed in pairs, even for a short period, displayed fewer stress-related behaviors (lip licking, whining and ears back) than dogs housed singly. In addition, cortisol:creatinine levels in the urine of non-isolated dogs were lower. Housing in well-matched pairs may therefore in fact have welfare benefits for shelter dogs.



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Cognition-Emotions

[29/04/2024 : Towards Dog Bark Decoding: Leveraging Human Speech Processing for Automated Bark Classification](#)

Document type: scientific article deposited in [arXiv](#)

Authors: Artem Abzaliev, Humberto Pérez Espinosa, Rada Mihalcea

Preview: Similar to humans, animals make extensive use of verbal and non-verbal forms of communication, including a large range of audio signals. In this paper, we address dog vocalizations and explore the use of self-supervised speech representation models pre-trained on human speech to address dog bark classification tasks that find parallels in human-centered tasks in speech recognition. We specifically address four tasks: dog recognition, breed identification, gender classification, and context grounding. We show that using speech embedding representations significantly improves over simpler classification baselines. Further, we also find that models pre-trained on large human speech acoustics can provide additional performance boosts on several tasks.

Pre-publication resulting in an [article in ELBRLO.PL](#) on 07/06/2024

Animal husbandry and Human-animal relationship

[21/05/2024 : European farmers share best practices in pig welfare: WelFarmers](#)

Document type : announcement published on the [Ifip website](#)

Authors: Valérie Courboulay and Patrick Chevillon

Preview: The WelFarmers project brings together networks of producers and applied research institutions from 8 countries that together represent over 50% of European pig production: Portugal, Spain, Italy, France, Romania, Denmark, Ireland and Finland. The aim is to identify farmers or organizations in each of these countries who have implemented practices that go beyond European regulations in terms of pig welfare within 4 themes:

1. Cage-free housing for lactating sows
2. Production of pigs with undocked tails
3. Castration methods
4. Flooring type and space allowance for pigs from weaning to slaughter.

In each country, a regional network of farmers and their organizations will be created to select the most innovative best practices for the 4 themes. The best practices selected in the 8 participating countries will be evaluated by 4 thematic groups consisting of pig producers, policy makers and competent authorities, advisors, scientists and members of the industry. Best practices will be shared so that they can be implemented on a larger number of pig farms in Europe, thereby improving pig welfare. Over the course of the project, a total of 192 good practices will be identified. Of these, 40

best practices will be selected, with 24 winners. The top practices will not only be described in relation to pig welfare but also the environmental and economic impact will be evaluated to ensure that there is a balance between pig welfare, environmental and climate impact, and farm economy.

All the information about the project will be available on the project website hosted by project partner [Pig333.com](https://www.pig333.com).

[17/04/2024 : Early human contact and housing for pigs - part 1: responses to humans, novelty and isolation](#)

Document type: scientific article published in [Animal](#)

Authors: M E Lucas, L M Hemsworth, K L Butler, R S Morrison, A J Tilbrook, J N Marchant, J-L Rault, R Y Galea, P H Hemsworth

Preview: The development of fear and stress responses in animals can be influenced by early life experiences, including interactions with humans, maternal care, and the physical surroundings. This paper is the first of three reporting on a large experiment examining the effects of the early housing environment and early positive human contact on stress resilience in pigs. This first paper reports on the responses of pigs to humans, novelty, and social isolation. Using a 2 × 2 factorial design, 48 litters of pigs were reared in either a conventional farrowing crate (FC) where the sow was confined or a loose farrowing pen (LP; PigSAFE pen) which was larger, more physically complex and allowed the sow to move freely throughout the farrowing and lactation period. Piglets were provided with either routine contact from stockpeople (C), or routine contact plus regular opportunities for positive human contact (+HC) involving 5 min of scratching, patting and stroking imposed to the litter 5 days/week from 0-4 weeks of age. The positive handling treatment was highly effective in reducing piglets' fear of humans, based on +HC piglets showing greater approach and less avoidance of an unfamiliar person at 3 weeks of age. There was evidence that this reduction in fear of humans lasted well beyond when the treatment was applied (lactation), with +HC pigs showing greater approach and less avoidance of humans in tests at 6, 9 and 14 weeks of age. The +HC treatment also reduced piglets' fear of a novel object at 3 weeks of age, and for pigs in FC, the cortisol response after social isolation at 7 weeks of age. Rearing in FC compared to LP reduced piglets' fear of novelty at 3 weeks of age, as well as their vocalisations and cortisol response to isolation at 7 weeks of age. The FC pigs showed greater approach and less avoidance of humans compared to LP pigs at 3, 4 and 6 weeks of age, but not at 9 and 14 weeks of age. These results show that positive handling early in life can reduce pigs' fear of humans, fear of novelty and physiological stress response to social isolation. The LP pigs were reared in a more isolated environment with less overall contact with stockpeople and other pigs, which may have increased their fear responses to humans and novel situations, suggesting that different housing systems can modulate these pigs' responses.

Precision farming

[13/04/2024 : Artificial intelligence in dairy production](#)

Document type: Article published on the [Radio-Canada website](#)

Authors: Chantal Srivastava and Hugo Pothier

Preview: Dairy farmers know that the slightest change in a cow's behavior can be a clue to the state of its health. But since they can't be everywhere at once, artificial intelligence has the potential to help them to improve and extend the lives of their livestock. On the laboratory farm at McGill University, researchers are developing tools to detect problems before they arise (*this work is an outcome of the [Well-e research project](#)*).

Animal welfare assessment and Labelling

[27/05/2024 : Consumers across five European countries prioritise animal welfare above environmental sustainability when buying meat and dairy products](#)

Document type: scientific article published in [Food Quality and Preference](#)

Authors: Jeanine Ammann, Gabriele Mack, Nadja El Benni, Shan Jin, Paul Newell-Price, Sophie Tindale, Erik Hunter, Victoria Vicario-Modroño, Rosa Gallardo-Cobos, Pedro Sánchez-Zamora, Simona Miškolci, Lynn J. Frewer

Preview: Food production systems, especially meat and dairy supply chains, contribute to greenhouse gas emissions. An important question emerges as to whether consumers care about environmental sustainability when buying food products, as this can determine their consumption practices. Further, if sustainability labels are available, identifying information that is relevant to consumers is important. This research therefore aimed to identify the attributes that are most important for consumers when buying meat or dairy products and the perceived helpfulness of sustainability labels for meat and dairy products and important label properties. An online survey was conducted in five European countries (i.e. Czechia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the UK). Consumers valued similar attributes when buying meat and dairy products across all countries. Freshness, quality/taste and animal welfare emerged as the most important attributes, while environmental attributes such as food miles, carbon footprint, and organic production were the least important. Sustainability labels for meat and dairy products were perceived as helpful. Regression analysis identified similar patterns within all five countries regarding the predictors of the perceived helpfulness of sustainability labels. Attitudes towards sustainable food consumption, environmental attitudes, and food production and policies emerged as significant positive predictors in most models. Most importantly, information regarding animal welfare, food safety, and health and nutrition was perceived as being more important than environmental sustainability. This suggests that food choice decisions are unlikely to be made based on the environmental sustainability of a food product's production alone.

Animal welfare initiatives

[17/06/2024 : European Commission: Success stories videos: Animal Welfare / Pigs, tail docking](#)

Document type: Videos published on [the European Commission's audiovisual service portal](#)

Author: DG Santé - Commission européenne

Preview: EU legislation on the welfare of pigs (Council Directive 2008/120/EC laying down minimum standards for the protection of pigs) does not allow routine tail-docking and requires farmers to provide to their pigs "manipulable material" such as straw, hay or sawdust. To better inform farmers how to prevent routine tail docking, the Commission developed educational materials. The two videos present success stories in achieving the goal of rearing not-tailed pigs.

[Link to video: Italy](#)

[Link to video: Finland](#)

[15/06/2024 : Sixty Years of Tinbergen's Four Questions and Their Continued Relevance to Applied Behaviour and Welfare Research in Zoo Animals: A Commentary](#)

Document type: scientific article published in the [Journal of Zoological and Botanical Gardens](#)

Authors: Robert Kelly, Paul Rose

Preview: Understanding animal behaviour can feel like deciphering a foreign language. In 1963, pioneering ethologist Nikolaas Tinbergen offered a key: four fundamental questions to dissect behaviour's complexities and reduce interpretive bias. These "Four Questions" fall into two categories: Proximate (how?) and Ultimate (why?). The Proximate questions ask how the behaviour is triggered (Causation) and develops over time (Ontogeny). The Ultimate questions delve into its evolutionary history (Phylogeny) and purpose (Function). Traditionally used in behavioural ecology, Tinbergen's framework finds new relevance in fields like sentience, welfare, conservation, and animal management. This paper illustrates how further integration of these Questions into applied research can improve outcomes. For example, captive animals can receive enrichment seemingly "unnatural" in origin and form. Does such enrichment trigger species-typical behaviours, fulfilling the same adaptive function as natural stimuli would? Understanding a species' natural behaviour patterns and how the performance of such activities promotes positive welfare states is key to biologically relevant population management. Tinbergen's Four Questions can help scientists to decipher the relevance of natural behaviour, and how a species' responses to their environment indicate what individuals need and want at a specific time or place. By applying the Four Questions, we can answer this question and, in turn, refine husbandry practices and conserve behavioural diversity in managed populations. Sixty years after their conception, Tinbergen's Four Questions remain a powerful tool for behavioural research. By embracing different biological disciplines within a unified framework, applied animal zoo science will continue to advance and provide credible evidence-based outputs.

[10/06/2024 : La newsletter Mai 2024 - Chaire bien-être animal](#)

Document type: May 2024 Newsletter of the [Animal Welfare Chair](#) of VetAgroSup

Author: Luc Mounier

Preview: Headlines:

- Next session of the [training course on "Training in equine care"](#) will be held at INRAE Nouzilly on December 3 and 4

- Welfarm talks to us about [live animal transport](#) and its "TruckAlert" application
- Is man fundamentally a meat-eater? We tell you more in this [article](#)
- An initiative of the AgriCampus Laval high school, we tell you more about the [open stables](#)
- and many other news of the month on animal welfare in the press...

07/06/2024 : FEI creates a fund dedicated to equine welfare

Document type: article published in [Cheval mag](#)

Author: Adèle Vaupré

Preview: The Board of Directors of the FEI [*Fédération Équestre Internationale*] Board of Directors has unanimously approved an Equine Welfare Strategy Action Plan and established a dedicated fund of one million Swiss francs (approximately €1,030,000) to launch the plan. The plan is based on the recommendations outlined in the Final Report of the Equine Ethics and Wellbeing Commission (EEWC). It comprises six priority areas of focus.

- 1- Training, riding, tack and equipment; (making correct and non-violent use of equipment suited to each horse, avoiding methods that damage the horse's physical and mental health)
- 2- Recognized physical and emotional stress; (being able to recognize stress-related behaviors)
- 3- Accountability, enforcement and knowledge; (failure to act by officials when faced with inappropriate behavior or situations detrimental to equine welfare, or failure to take account of scientific studies)
- 4- The other 23 hours; (meeting the horse's fundamental needs)
- 5- Competitive drive/ horse as a number/object; (putting the horse's interest before sporting performance or financial gain)
- 6- Not fit to compete/masking health problems (doping, administration of treatments/medicines designed to mask discomfort).

"An important day for horse welfare"

In addition to these six areas, the FEI has also listed additional actions that address the EEWC's recommendations. "This is an important day for horse welfare and for the FEI," said FEI President Ingmar De Vos. The Board took its responsibilities [seriously] and devoted time to discuss the detailed Action Plan. Significant actions have been outlined, which will benefit horse welfare and will have a powerful impact on the sport as a whole. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our national federations, stakeholders and equestrian community members for their feedback during and after the dedicated Sports Forum session, which has greatly assisted the FEI in producing a tangible Action Plan." The action plan will be finalized with the suggestions made by the Board of Directors and will be published shortly. Implementation will begin immediately in order to propose changes that safeguard horse welfare at the FEI 2024 General Assembly.

30/04/2024 : Reptile expos: an analysis and recommendations for control

Document type: scientific synthesis published in [Frontiers in Animal Science](#)

Authors: Clifford Warwick, Catrina Steedman, Mike Jessop, Rachel Grant

Preview: Reptile expos are typically itinerant events at which live wild-caught and/or captive-bred turtles, tortoises, crocodiles, lizards, and snakes are displayed, sold, or exchanged for pet keeping

purposes. We conducted a literature review and analysis of reports regarding animal welfare and public health issues of concern associated with the display and sale of reptiles at expos in Europe and North America. We also conducted a limited survey of several relevant government authorities to briefly appraise existing situations regarding governance and law internationally, and performed a further limited examination of online advertisements in order to estimate the number of events. In addition, we conducted an analysis comparing husbandry standards for reptile expos versus other animal display or sale situations using UK formal legal guidance, which adopts the Five Welfare Needs as a basis. Finally, we also conducted a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis of key features associated with reptile expos. We identified at least 10 animal welfare and 5 public health and safety problems as occurring and endemic to the typical operation of reptile expos. Comparisons between the ways in which animal welfare and public health issues are regarded or managed for reptile expos in relation to, for example, traditional zoos, mobile zoos, and pet sales are stark and concerning, with expos constituting the least protective and potentially most harmful situations out of all captive reptile-keeping scenarios. The lack of monitoring and control of reptile expos, combined with their frequent occurrence, strongly indicates the requirement to urgently control and prohibit these events. We recommend that where reptile expos are already essentially prohibited such bans should be immutable and not subject to any weakening provisions. Where reptile expos are permitted and/or subject to limiting conditions, or where reptile expos are not subject to limiting conditions, then our recommended 40 stipulations and overarching control principles should be applied as interim mitigating measures pending the introduction of prohibitions or 'bans'. Governments should aim to ensure that enforcement of such measures is robust.

Housing and Enrichment

[12/06/2024 : Effects of single- or pair-housing on the welfare of shelter dogs: Behavioral and physiological indicators](#)

Document type: Scientific article published in [Plos One](#)

Authors: Hecker G, Martineau K, Scheskie M, Hammerslough R, Feuerbacher EN

Preview: Dogs are often housed alone in shelter settings to reduce injury and disease spread. However, social isolation can be a stressor for dogs. Prior studies have suggested that cohousing can produce behavioral and physiological benefits. These studies have typically focused on laboratory dogs or shelter dogs that have been kenneled for several months. Thus, those results might not necessarily generalize to shelter dogs, many of which have shorter lengths of stay than those dogs studied to date, and might be cohoused soon after intake. In fact, being pair-housed could, in the short term, be more stressful as dogs have to navigate novel social situations in small spaces. We investigated the behavioral and physiological effects of single- or pair-housing shelter dogs, most of which had recently entered the shelter. We collected behavioral data on 61 dogs (30 single-housed; 31 pair-housed) daily across seven days; we also collected urine for cortisol:creatinine analysis on a subset (22 single-housed; 18 pair-housed) for eight days (each day of the seven-day study plus a baseline sample on Day 0, prior to dogs' enrollment). We found pair-housed dogs engaged in three stress-related behaviors (lip licking, whining, and ears back) significantly less frequently than single-housed dogs. When we analyzed the change in urinary

cortisol:creatinine (Days 1–7 values minus Day 0 value), we found that pair-housed dogs generally showed a greater decrease in cortisol:creatinine levels than single-housed dogs. Pair-housed dogs also had significantly shorter lengths of stay, but we did not detect any effect on dog-dog skills. Overall, we found well-matched pair-housing can have both proximate and ultimate welfare benefits for shelter dogs.

[10/06/2024 : Variations in stress responsivity in hens: matching birds to environments - CHICKENSTRESS Project - Results in brief](#)

Document type: Announcement published on the [European Commission](#)

Author: Tom Smulders

Preview: *Brain insights could help reduce stress in hens*

New insights into how and why hens feel stress could lead to the breeding of more resilient chickens and better designed housing systems. The move away from holding hens in tightly enclosed spaces has resulted in a range of new housing designs. (...) While these housing systems are a definite improvement on traditional battery cages - banned in the EU since 2012 - identifying the environments most suitable for hens remains challenging. "We still don't really know what environments birds find least stressful," notes [CHICKENSTRESS](#) project coordinator Tom Smulders from Newcastle University in the United Kingdom. Hens also naturally congregate in small groups. It is possible therefore that the birds might instinctively find big housing systems stressful. Demonstrating this conclusively however has proven difficult.

Identifying causes of and responses to stress

The CHICKENSTRESS project (*Start date 1 May 2019 - End date 30 April 2023, n.d.r.*), undertaken with the support of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions programme, sought to identify possible ways of reducing stress in new housing systems. To achieve this, the project combined questions concerning animal welfare - what causes stress for example - with more neurobiological approaches. "When it comes to how bird brains regulate stress responses, there is a lot we still don't know, explains Smulders. Early-stage chick rearing and genetics could also have an influence on stress resilience. (...) We know that chronic stress can reduce the numbers of certain cells in the hippocampus. So researchers counted these cells, to see how their manipulations were affecting the experience of stress in the birds."

Brain development and stress levels

While some researchers are still to finalise their work, some interesting findings have been made. One suggestion is that letting some light into incubation and hatching facilities - which tend to be constantly dark - could have a positive impact on early-stage brain development. Another project looked at encouraging animal navigation in multilevel housing systems. Moving LED lights were installed on ramps, which encouraged curious young chicks to follow them. A company that builds poultry housing is looking at ways of incorporating this into their systems. "Another researcher found that the more a cage is enriched with items that birds can interact with, the more their stress hormone levels were lowered," says Smulders.

Integrating neuroscience with other disciplines

These results are very preliminary, but Smulders believes that the project's unique integration of neuroscience with more applied science and industry is bearing fruit. (...)

[Link to project publications](#)

[31/05/2024 : Access to bedding and outdoor runs for growing-finishing pigs: is it possible to improve welfare without increasing environmental impacts?](#)

Document type: scientific article published in [Animal](#)

Authors: A.K. Ruckli, S. Hörtenhuber, S. Dippel, P. Ferrari, M. Gebaska, M. Heinonen, J. Helmerichs, C. Hubbard, H. Spoolder, A. Valros, C. Winckler, C. Leeb

Preview: Providing bedding or access to an outdoor run are husbandry aspects intended to improve pig welfare, which is currently financially supported through animal welfare schemes in several European countries. However, they may significantly affect the environment through changes in feed efficiency and manure management. Therefore, the aim of this paper was to compare farms differing in animal welfare relevant husbandry aspects regarding (1) the welfare of growing-finishing pigs and (2) environmental impact categories such as global warming (GW), acidification (AC), and freshwater (FE) and marine eutrophication (ME), by employing an attributional Life Cycle Assessment. We collected data on 50 farms with growing-finishing pigs in seven European countries. Ten animal-based welfare indicators were aggregated into three pig welfare indices using principal component analysis. Cluster analysis of farms based on husbandry aspects resulted in three clusters: NOBED (31 farms without bedding or outdoor run), BED (11 farms with bedding only) and BEDOUT (eight farms with bedding and outdoor run). Pigs on farms with bedding (BED and BEDOUT) manipulated enrichment more often ($P \leq 0.001$), pen fixtures less frequently ($P = 0.003$) and showed fewer oral stereotypies ($P \leq 0.001$) than pigs on NOBED farms. There were fewer pigs with a short(er) tail on farms with than without bedding ($P \leq 0.001$). Acidification of BEDOUT and BED farms was significantly higher (compared to NOBED farms $P = 0.002$) due to higher ammonia emissions related to farmyard manure. Also, BEDOUT farms had higher ME than NOBED farms ($P = 0.035$). There were no significant differences regarding GW and FE between husbandry clusters, due to the large variability within clusters regarding feed composition and conversion. Therefore, both husbandry aspects associated with improved animal welfare have a significant influence on some environmental impacts, such as acidification and marine eutrophication. Nevertheless, the large variation within clusters suggests that trade-offs may be minimised through e.g. AC and ME.

[29/05/2024 : Music enrichment improves the behavior and leukocyte profile of dairy cattle](#)

Document type: scientific article published in [Open Agriculture](#)

Authors: Esmeralda G. Contreras-Torres, Juan F. Hernández-Chavez, Carlos A. Díaz-Quiroz, Ramón Molina-Barrios, Paulina Arrayales Millán, Ruth G. Ulloa-Mercado

Preview: Different studies have suggested that musical enrichment in dairy cattle management reduces animal stress and enhances milk production, management, and disease resistance. Thus, in the present work, we proposed to evaluate the response of a group of Holstein cows to musical

stimulation, through the analysis of their leukocyte profile and the recording of voluntary approach to milking parlor. An ABAB design was used, consisting of alternating periods with and without music during the management of 15 Holstein cows for 14 days. At the end of each period, blood samples were collected to determine the number of leukocyte counts. In addition, a voluntary approach to the milking parlor was measured. For statistical analysis, the nonparametric Wilcoxon signed-rank test with an alpha value of 0.05 was used. During periods with music, more cows voluntarily approached the milking parlor and had higher total leukocyte counts. In conclusion, music enrichment improves cattle handling, with a significant positive effect on leukogram profiles.

29/05/2024 : Gilts prefer an open pen to a stall

Document type: scientific article published in [Scientific Reports](#)

Authors: Ede, T., Ceribelli, M. & Parsons, T.D.

Preview: Stalls or crates are a very common type of housing used on pig farms that restrict an animal's movement. How this confinement impacts the animal's affective states is seldom investigated. We conducted a preference test over 7 days where trios of gilts ($n = 10$ trios, 27.4 ± 1.5 weeks old) had free access between individual self-locking stalls (~ 1.2 m²) and a shared open area allowing 2.8 m²/animal (71% of total area). Gilts had access to ad libitum feed and water both inside the crates and in the open area. After 7 days, personality traits of the animals were assessed with open field (OF) and novel object (NO) tests. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) yielded two main components, which we defined as *Passivity* and *Engagement*. The median time spent outside the crate was 95.2% as 21/29 of the gilts exhibited a significant preference for pen over crate during the 7-day trial ($p \leq 0.05$). Passivity had no relationship with time spent in the open area, but engagement during OF/NO was associated with less use of the open area (OR = 0.39, 95CI = [0.25, 0.60]). Interestingly, gilts were likely to spend less time in the open area at nighttime compared to daytime (Odds Ratio = 0.49, 95CI = [0.40, 0.60]), as well as experimental days passed (OR = 0.70, 95CI = [0.66, 0.73]). During the first daytime and nighttime, 1/29 and 2/29 animals preferred the crate respectively, whereas by the last daytime and nighttime 5 and 9 gilts preferred the crate respectively ($p \leq 0.05$). While both intrinsic (personality) and extrinsic (time of day, experimental day) factors appear to influence the gilt's housing preferences, most gilts significantly prefer an open area to a crate when free access is provided between the two. A smaller subpopulation of animals developed a preference for stalls but still utilize both the stall and the pen throughout the day.

One Welfare

03/06/2024 : Understanding dairy farmers' trade-offs between environmental, social and economic sustainability attributes in feeding systems: The role of farmers' identities

Document type: Survey analysis published in [Journal of Agricultural Economics](#)

Authors: Oyakhilomen Oyinbo, Helena Hansson

Preview: There is scope for improving the sustainability of intensive dairy farms through the uptake of sustainable production practices such as more grass-based feeding systems. Such feeding

systems can reduce feed-food competition and the environmental impacts of feed production, among other farm-level and societal benefits. However, empirical research on how farmers' feed choices mis(al)ign with sustainability transitions and the associated drivers is limited. This paper explores the trade-offs that farmers make between the environmental, social and economic sustainability impacts of grass-based feeding systems based on data from Swedish dairy farmers. Using an identity-based utility framework and a hybrid latent class model, we find substantial heterogeneity in dairy farmers' trade-offs between feed-related sustainability attributes: greenhouse gas emissions, biodiversity, animal welfare, feed self-sufficiency, feed cost and milk yield. Furthermore, our findings demonstrate that farmers who are strongly interested in the environmental and social sustainability impacts of their dairy feeding systems, beyond economic gains, are motivated mainly by their pro-environmental and pro-social identities. Overall, our findings imply that identity-enhancing interventions are promising policy instruments for encouraging the uptake of more grass-based feeding systems.

Pain management

17/05/2024 : How can animal pain be identified and treated?

Document type: Technical article published on the [Agri Mutuel](#) website

Author: Céline Peudpièce

Preview: In this Animal Welfare podcast from the Pays de la Loire Chamber of Agriculture, veterinarian Céline Peudpièce discusses pain management in livestock. Although pain is difficult to identify, especially in cattle, its management can improve both comfort and performance. (...) Pain is a survival reflex. It starts with a physical perception: for example, an electric shock when you touch a fence wire. The body's receptors, known as nociceptors, send an impulse through the neurons to the spinal cord. The spinal cord then triggers a reflex command. In the example, this would be to immediately pull away from the electric wire, before receiving a further shock! But the nerve message has not yet finished its journey. It must now travel up to the brain, which interprets the pain. It is the brain that makes the connection between the fence and the unpleasant sensation. In addition to being unpleasant, pain causes a cascade of physical reactions. With the release of adrenalin and cortisol, neurotransmitter synthesis soars, not without consequences. "Cortisol reduces the immune response. It reduces the number of white blood cells and centralizes them in the lymph nodes. It decreases appetite and limits the desire to reproduce...", the vet explains. As a result, pain can impact an animal's zootechnical performance.

How to spot that an animal is in pain

But animal pain is difficult to spot. "The more different an animal is from us, the harder it is to recognize its suffering. In 2000, we were still unsure whether fish felt pain. Of course they do!" Some animals can externalize their pain, though. "Dogs and pigs can cry out, but it's often difficult to assess to what extent the cry represents the pain." Cows are more stoical in their pain. "A cow in pain is a weakened animal. She becomes vulnerable to predators, so she doesn't show it. There are nevertheless a small number of signs that can betray pain in animals. "Staring, tense facial muscles, ears back, animals that isolate themselves and don't eat". But, as the vet acknowledges, "it's far from obvious".

How to relieve pain

"Relieving the pain of an intervention in veterinary medicine is something we do regularly". There are three stages to the process: - The animal is tranquilized to prevent panic, which would complicate the procedure and make the pain worse. "It's the little tablet we give before an operation in human medicine". - Anesthesia can be local or general, numbing the area or inducing unconsciousness in the whole individual to prevent the nerves from feeling anything. - Analgesia (the use of painkillers) helps to manage pain after the procedure. "We generally inject the analgesic and the tranquilizer at the same time, as the painkiller needs time to act," Céline tells us. "It's extra work", acknowledges the vet. But for her, the process is not without benefit for the farmer. "In the case of cattle castration, it's a safety measure. It's much easier to restrain a tranquilized animal. And, above all, it creates long-term trust between the farmer and the animal. The farmer is no longer the one who causes pain, but the one who cares for the animal".

And what if we could avoid it?

In the world of livestock farming, pain avoidance revolves around the three S approach: "Suppress - Substitute - Soothe", explains Céline.

A number of options are available to the farmer. "Live castration is a good example. It's possible to avoid it, by working with whole males, or by working with genetic bloodlines where puberty is delayed". But there are still other options possible: "To replace it, I can use immunocastration, or can relieve the pain during the procedure". The same applies to dehorning. It is possible to stop dehorning, either by willingly raising a horned herd, by working with hornless breeds, or to relieve the pain of dehorning or disbudding.

This [podcast on animal welfare](#) is available on the Chambre d'Agriculture Pays de la Loire website. (Re)listen to the [first episode in the](#) B2E series, which focused on animal welfare advisers.

Regulation

[10/06/2024 : Parlement européen : Réponse à la question E-001217/24 : Bien-être des crustacés à l'abattage](#)

Document type: Response from the [European Commission](#) to question E-001217/24

Authors: question: Sarah Wiener (Greens/ALE). Answer: Mrs Kyriakides on behalf of the European Commission

Question: Welfare of crustaceans at slaughter

Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing aims to ensure that humane standards are applied at slaughter, however, this legislation still shows undeniable gaps. Its provisions cover fish, but do not extend to crustaceans. National governments can adopt additional legislation to provide further clarification and species-specific regulations. However, this is not a sufficient guarantee that such rules are adopted and that animal welfare is appropriately protected in all Member States. For example, it is still legal and common to kill lobsters by boiling them alive (a practice that causes unimaginable distress and pain to the animals, who can remain conscious for up to two or three minutes), while using electric shocks may be similarly problematic when killing prawns. The Commission was to publish a new proposal on EU Animal Welfare legislation in 2023, after its own inception impact assessment concluded that some requirements of the regulation on welfare at the time of killing 'are not species-specific enough, e.g.

as regards farmed fish'. But even this assessment did not consider the need to introduce species-specific provisions for crustaceans at the time of slaughter. Does the Commission intend to address the issue of cruel slaughter methods for crustaceans and, if so, when could such a proposal see the light of day?

Answer: The existing EU animal welfare legislation on the protection of animals at the time of killing^[1] is not applicable to invertebrate animal species. In the revision of the animal welfare legislation announced under the Farm to Fork Strategy^[2], the Commission is working to assess the economic, social and environmental impacts of the envisaged options, and will consider the available scientific opinions and results of the ongoing impact assessment. In December 2023, the Commission adopted proposals on the protection of animals during transport^[3] and on the welfare of dogs and cats and their traceability^[4]. The work to revise EU rules on the welfare at farm level, at the time of killing and to establish new EU rules on animal welfare labelling is ongoing^[5]. There are still knowledge gaps on the welfare issues related to decapods. To remedy this situation, the Commission has agreed with the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) on an indicative (2023-2030) roadmap for EFSA to provide scientific opinions, including on certain invertebrates such as decapods. The designation, beginning of 2024, of the EU Reference Centre for the welfare of aquatic animals^[6], which activities cover the entire production chain from farming, transport to slaughter/killing, is also an important step to promote scientific and technical expertise on welfare of aquatic animals. In addition, the Commission carries out other activities to promote animal welfare of aquatic animals, including the EU Platform for Animal Welfare^[7].

[1] Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 of 24 September 2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing (Text with EEA relevance) OJ L 303, 18.11.2009, p. 1-30.

[2] https://food.ec.europa.eu/animals/animal-welfare/evaluations-and-impact-assessment/revision-animal-welfare-legislation_en#:~:text=The%20Farm%20to%20Fork%20Strategy%20adopted%20by%20the,uItimately%20ensure%20a%20higher%20level%20of%20animal%20welfare.

[3] <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2023:770:FIN>

[4] <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2023:769:FIN>

[5] https://food.ec.europa.eu/animals/animal-welfare/evaluations-and-impact-assessment/revision-animal-welfare-legislation_en

[6] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec_impl/2024/266/oj

[7] <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/awp/>

[04/06/2024 : Assemblée nationale : réponse écrite à la question n°14325 : Remise du rapport gouvernemental sur l'expérimentation de l'abattage à la ferme](#)

Document type: Answer to question n°14325 published in the [Official Journal of the French Republic](#)

Authors: question: Lisa Belluco (Ecologist - NUPES - Vienna). Answer: Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty.

Question: Submission of government report on on-farm slaughtering trials

Lisa Belluco draws the attention of the French Minister of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty to the evaluation of the pilot to test the implementation of on-farm slaughtering solutions in France. Article 73 of the "EGALIM" law states that "on an experimental basis and for a period of four years from the publication of the decree provided for in the last paragraph of this article, mobile abattoir systems are being tested with the aim of identifying any problems in the application of European regulations. The pilot will be assessed, with regard in particular to its economic viability and impact on animal welfare, the results of which will be conveyed to Parliament no later than six months before the end of the session. This evaluation will draw up recommendations for changes in European Union law. In his reply to written question no. 39648, tabled during the 15th parliamentary session, the Minister of Agriculture and Food gave the following explanation on this subject: "This pilot will run for four years from the date of the decree implementing Article 73 on April 15, 2019. The assessment of this pilot study has been entrusted to an independent provider. It will form the basis of a government report to be submitted to Parliament no later than October 16, 2022." With a due date more than 14 months ago, the honorable member notes that this report has not yet been submitted to Parliament. She therefore asks when the report is due to be published.

Answer: The evaluation report on the mobile abattoir pilot was submitted to Parliament in early February 2024. At European level, discussions have begun on the regulatory changes required to enable mobile abattoirs to operate. These discussions, initiated during the French Presidency of the European Council led to the publication of a delegated regulation amending Regulation (EC) 853/53/2004, which lays down specific hygiene rules for food of animal origin, to regulate the use of mobile slaughter units at the place of operations and of abattoirs that are wholly or partly mobile.

Link to the approved text: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/FR/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L_202401141.

03/06/2024 : Parlement européen : réponse écrite à la question E-001193/2024 : Propositions législatives sur des règles harmonisées en matière de bien-être animal pour les dindes

Document type: Response from the [European Commission](#) to question E-001193/2024

Authors: question: Tom Vandenkendelaere (PPE). Answer: Mrs Kyriakides on behalf of the European Commission

Question in English (original) : Legislative proposals on harmonised animal welfare rules relating to turkeys

At the Commission's request, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) is currently working on a scientific opinion on the welfare of animals, including turkeys. For the sector, it is particularly important that this should ensure a level playing field within the EU. According to the mandate given to EFSA, the opinion should be delivered by December 2025.

1- Are there specific plans to put forward legislative proposals on animal welfare relating to turkeys after EFSA submits its opinion?

2- If so, when is the Commission expected to present those legislative proposals?

Answer in English (original): The Farm to Fork Strategy [\[1\]](#) foresees a revision of the EU's animal welfare legislation including Council Directive 98/58/EC [\[2\]](#) concerning the protection of animals kept for farming purposes. Preparatory work is ongoing, including elaboration of certain general welfare

standards for turkeys. The Commission is now reflecting and carefully assessing important aspects, including the related costs for animal welfare improvements by farmers and the appropriate length of the transition period for such improvements. The Commission will consider the outcome of the ongoing European Food Safety Authority scientific opinion on the welfare of turkeys and other farmed animals in that process. No date of adoption of a possible legislative proposal has been decided.

[1] https://food.ec.europa.eu/horizontal-topics/farm-fork-strategy_en#:~:text=The%20Farm%20to%20Fork%20Strategy%20is%20at%20the%20heart%20of,if%20they%20are%20not%20sustainable

[2] <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:31998L0058>

[03/06/2024 : Parlement européen : réponse écrite à la question E-001190/2024 : Utilisation d'œufs dans les aliments transformés - des conditions égales pour tous](#)

Document type: Response from the [European Commission](#) to question E-001190/2024

Authors: question: Tom Vandenkendelaere (PPE). Answer: Mrs Kyriakides on behalf of the European Commission

Question: Use of eggs in processed foods – a level playing field

Eggboxes clearly state whether eggs are caged, barn-laid, free-range or organic. More than half the eggs a person eats are contained in a host of processed products without it being known where the eggs come from, however, since the origin of eggs in processed foods does not have to be clearly stated. A considerable proportion of eggs used in processed foods is likely to come from outside the EU, including eggs from hens kept in conventional cages. That would be detrimental to level-playing-field arrangements for European poultry farming.

1. Is the Commission aware of the use of caged eggs in processed foods, and can it cite figures to illustrate this?
2. Is the Commission planning to tighten up the regulatory framework, at least as regards labelling, in order to inform consumers about which eggs are used in processed foods?

Answer: The Commission is not aware of an established data collection on caged eggs used in processed products. The system put in place by the Commission to collect data on the farming method of laying hens covers the Union (not third countries) and allows to trace egg production (not egg processing). Current rules allow EU consumers to be informed of the farming method when buying shell eggs. This is ensured by the design of a producer code for Union production. For third country eggs, the origin must appear on the label and, when third country marketing standards are different, the label must bear the words 'non-EU standard'. Those rules do not extend to eggs used in processed products. The Farm to Fork Strategy [1] foresees a revision of the European Union's animal welfare legislation and the introduction of new rules on animal welfare labelling. Preparatory work is ongoing, and the Commission is considering options for animal welfare labelling, which may include processed food containing products of animal origin and imported products.

[1] https://food.ec.europa.eu/horizontal-topics/farm-fork-strategy_en#:~:text=The%20Farm%20to%20Fork%20Strategy%20is%20at%20the%20heart%20of,if%20they%20are%20not%20sustainable

[30/05/2024 : Newsletter of the European Institute for Animal Law \(first edition in French\)](#)

Document type: Newsletter from [The European Institute for Animal Law & Policy](#)

Author: The European Institute for Animal Law & Policy

Preview: On the eve of the European elections on June 9, we are pleased to share with you this launch edition of the French-language version of The European Institute for Animal Law & Policy's bi-monthly newsletter. The Institute is a non-profit association founded in 2022 with its headquarters in Brussels, Belgium. Our association specializes in issues relating to the place of animals in European law and public policy, with the mission of improving the treatment of animals. Our team is made up of lawyers specialized in animal law (national, European and international) and professionals in public affairs. More information about our work can be found on our website. Each issue provides an update on news concerning animal law in French-speaking EU countries, in the EU and internationally. From July onwards, each issue will also include a research note providing a detailed analysis of a topic that relates to animal law. In the meantime, we invite you to consult our [annual report](#) (in English).

Contents of the first French-language issue:

- Institute news
- EU news (EU, France and other member states)
- International news
- Events
- Publications
- Training and career opportunities

[28/05/2024 : Luxembourg Introduces New Contact Point for Animal Welfare Complaints](#)

Document type : article published in [Chronicle.lu](#)

Author : Chronicle.lu

Preview: On Tuesday 28 May 2024, Luxembourg's Minister of Agriculture, Food and Viticulture, Martine Hansen, presented the new help@deier.lu contact point dedicated to questions relating to animal welfare. This service aims to simplify the process for citizens to report violations of the Animal Protection Act to trained staff. The creation of this contact point was part of the new government's measures, retained in the coalition agreement, to guarantee animal welfare, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Viticulture stressed. The ministry stressed that animal welfare features are among its key priorities. Luxembourg's animal protection law is based on the legal recognition of the dignity of animals, which must be respected by the people who care for them. The law includes a catalog of sanctions intended to guarantee the dignity, well-being and safety of animals. Martine Hansen explained that the creation of this new contact point aims to make the reporting of offences more accessible: *"Although it has always been possible to file a complaint with our colleagues at ALVA [Luxembourg Veterinary and Food Administration], we wanted to create a simple and easy-to-remember address. This new point of contact is also the ideal opportunity to reiterate that we do not tolerate any form of mistreatment or neglect of our animals."* (...) Citizens can report offences by

mail: help@deier.lu or by calling tel:247-82539. Complaints must include full contact details of the plaintiff as well as a precise description of the situation. Anonymous complaints are not accepted. For emergencies, it is recommended to contact the veterinarians' on-call service (information on 112 or on www.collegeveterinaire.lu), the animal rescue group (by calling 112) or the police (113).

Examples of valid complaints

Permanently tethered dogs or horses; dogs kept in cages that are too small; lack of food or water; hygiene issues.

Non-compliant situations for a complaint

Dogs that bark too much; dog droppings not collected by owners; situations involving wild animals (to report to the Nature and Forest Agency); handling complaints.

After receiving a complaint, the information received is verified, the degree of urgency and the potential impact on animal welfare are assessed and the necessary measures are implemented. ALVA collaborates with the police, the public prosecutor's office, municipalities and animal protection associations to ensure an effective response, the ministry added. In the event of non-compliance noted, a deadline is imposed on the owner to comply. If no action is taken, legal action will be taken. (...)

[27/05/2024 : Final report of a fact-finding mission of Italy in order to collect information on the national system for the protection of turkey welfare on farm - European Commission](#)

Document type: activity report published on the [European Commission](#) website

Author: DG Health - European Commission

Preview: This report describes the outcome of a fact-finding study mission of the turkey sector in Italy, carried out from 28 February to 13 March 2024 as part of Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety work programme. The objective of this fact-finding study was to gather information on national legislation, and systems developed and implemented by Italy for the protection of turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) welfare at the time of production. Its scope covers commercial production and includes parental breeder flocks, hatcheries, and fattening flocks. Italy has transposed, implemented, and for certain parameters further developed, the EU legal framework governing turkey welfare at time of production. Current industry practices show a high level of standardisation, regular monitoring and they take corrective action for factors related both to turkey welfare and good husbandry practices. However, there is potential for enhancing certain aspects impacting welfare such as stocking densities, mutilations, and environmental enrichment.

1. The Italian authorities have effectively incorporated EU legislation and introduced additional requirements such as limitations on mutilations and farmers' competency.
2. The turkey industry shows a high level of integration and operates with a high level of professionalism. It conducts regular monitoring and takes corrective actions when deviations occur, for parameters related to production and welfare such as air quality, temperature, relative humidity, and mortality. However, there is opportunity for further improvement in reviewing current high stocking densities applied at turkey fattening farms, decreasing mutilations performed, and providing enrichment material.

3. There is a well-structured and implemented programme for the delivery of official controls at farm level. The newly introduced guidance and checklist for the performance of official controls on turkey welfare should provide further support and advice to officials.
4. There are welfare indicators monitored at slaughter level, however there is a need for further work and analysis to increase their overall value and impact.
5. The impact and penetration of private certification schemes with additional welfare standards is low in the turkey industry.

[Link to the report](#)

[27/05/2024 : Final report of an audit carried out in the Netherlands in order to evaluate the protection of unweaned calves during long journeys - European Commission](#)

Document type: activity report published on the [European Commission](#) website

Author: DG Health - European Commission

Preview: This report describes the outcome of an audit of the Netherlands, carried out remotely from 19 to 23 June 2023 and on-the-spot from 27 to 30 June 2023 as part of the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety work programme. The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness of the official controls on the protection of unweaned calves (still on a milk diet) during long journeys. The audit concludes overall that the Netherlands has a satisfactory system of official controls, although it has some weaknesses concerning official controls after the unweaned calves have been unloaded at their destination. The Netherlands primarily serves as the destination for unweaned calves. Competent authorities have well-documented procedures for official controls on the welfare of all animal species and types, including unweaned calves, during most stages of transportation. However, these are not very relevant nor have great impact on the transport of unweaned calves arriving to the Netherlands. By contrast, the lack of documented procedures for animal welfare controls after unweaned calves have been unloaded at their destination is an issue, as this phase is crucial for safeguarding the welfare of these animals during transport. The competent authority has taken effective steps to ensure that transport vehicles are equipped with drinkers adapted specifically for unweaned calves. In 2021 and 2022, the official control campaign targeting the transport of unweaned calves, detected non-compliances – mainly related to watering devices – in nearly half of the transports inspected, mostly involving transporters authorised by other Member States. These control measures have spurred the adoption of rubber teats for vehicles transporting these animals as a standard across the European Union. Transporters are failing to leave completed journey logs at the destination. This hinders the ability to verify, e.g. whether the transporter has planned the journey adequately (resting and travel times), adhered to stocking densities, tracked the number of unfit or deceased animals during the journey, and more. This is particularly relevant since Member States of departure no longer need to check 100% of journey plans before a journey starts. Non-compliance cases involving other Member States have only been notified directly to the National Contact Points for animal welfare during transport. The lack of response from some Member States has led the Dutch authorities to cease such notifications in certain instances. The competent authority is not yet using iRASFF to notify these non-compliances to the Liaison Bodies of other Member States, despite the effectiveness of this notification and response system. The report

contains recommendations to the competent authorities aimed at addressing areas in which further improvements are required or to address the shortcomings identified.

[Link to the report](#)

25/05/2024 : ANIMAL HEALTH: five EU countries call for animal welfare to be a priority for the next European Commission

Document type: article published in [Agence Europe](#)

Author: Agence Europe

Preview: The revision of European rules on the welfare of animals on farms and at the time of slaughter is an issue on which the European Union must take the lead, according to a note from Slovenia, supported by Bulgaria, France, Portugal and Sweden, which will be discussed at the Agriculture Council meeting in Brussels on Monday 27 May. These five delegations believe that "the Commission should continue to place animal welfare at the heart of its next agenda" (...) *(Full article accessible to subscribers only)*

[Link to the note from the Council of the European Union](#) Placing Animal Welfare at the core of the Next European Commission's Agenda

25/04/2024 : Analyse française de l'avis EFSA sur les porcs - CNR BEA

Document type : expertise report published on the [FRCAW](#)

Author: FRCAW

Preview: Opinion of the FRCAW on the implications for French farming of the EFSA opinion on pig welfare

As part of the European Union's Farm to Fork strategy to support more sustainable farming practices, the European Commission is undertaking a complete revision of its regulations on animal welfare. To fulfil this task, the Commission ordered the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA, the European reference authority for the assessment of risk in the food sector) to report to it on the most recent advances in scientific knowledge with regard to animal welfare. The opinions delivered by EFSA constitute the scientific basis on which the Commission will rely in its revisions to the regulations. EFSA's opinions cover several areas: 1. Welfare of animals at slaughter; 2. Welfare of animals during transport, and 3. Welfare of animals on farm. In preparation for the European negotiations over the revision of the legislation, the Directorate General for Food's Animal Welfare Office formally requested the FRCAW to study, as a matter of priority, the opinions delivered by EFSA concerning on-farm animal welfare in order to highlight those farming practices most likely to impact animal welfare in France. The present report concerns itself with the particular case of pig welfare on French farms, looking individually at several categories of animal: gilts and sows in the servicing area, gestating gilts and sows, gilts and sows during farrowing and suckling, pre-weaners, weaners, rearing pigs and boars.

[Link to the report \(in french\)](#)

Animal health

11/06/2024 : Dairy advice: Regular foot bathing to limit lameness

Document type: article published in [Agriland](#)

Author: Hugh Harney

Preview: At this time of the year, it can be difficult to stay on top of lameness issues and foot bathing in your herd because with breeding, grassland management and second-cut fertiliser application, there is a lot of work going on. However, during the breeding season especially, it is crucial to limit any lameness problems as it could hinder a cow's chances of going back in calf. Lameness will affect a cow's behaviour as she will show less signs of oestrus making it difficult to detect her heat. This may disrupt your breeding plan – with lower submission rates, delayed ovarian cyclicity, reduced conception rates, increased calving interval and higher chance of ovarian cysts forming. A single case of lameness could potentially cost €350 – from loss in production, to reduced fertility, to the cost of treating and culling. Prevention through grazing infrastructure is the best practice, however, foot bathing is a key part of the prevention and control of infectious lameness-causing diseases.

Foot bathing

Foot bathing is particularly important to manage digital dermatitis, also known as mortellaro's disease, which is a painful and infectious. This disease can spread rapidly through a herd and can disrupt a herd's lameness status. A Teagasc study took place in 2023, which identified that 44% of farmers reported having digital dermatitis issues on their farm and yet only 31% had a regular foot bathing. Foot bathing will allow for a disinfectant solution to be applied to each cow's hooves at milking time, killing infectious agents and improving hoof hygiene. Foot bathing could prove to be a waste of time if it is done incorrectly, or worse still, it may actually contribute to the spread of the disease, thus emphasising the importance of correctly doing it.

Ensuring results

It is essential to make sure that there is good cow flow through the foot bath and ideally, the foot bath should be close to the exit of the milking parlour. The foot bath should be level with the ground with no steps up or down to further ensure that there is a good cow flow and that the cows are not damaging their feet going into the bath. To allow for further ease, the bath should be wide enough – a minimum of 700-800mm wide and 3m in length will be adequate for a herd of up to 250 cows. For herds of over 250 cows, a foot bath should be at least 2m wide to allow for two cows to pass through simultaneously, allowing for better cow flow. The length of your foot bath is crucial as an adequate size (2.5-3m) will allow for each foot to be sufficiently immersed in the solution, as per guidance from Animal Health Ireland (AHI). In order for this to be effective, your solution depth should be 100-125mm with the volume of solution equating to 1L/cow, meaning in a 120-cow herd, you will need 120L of solution to do the whole herd at once. It is important to change your solution regularly. The 1L of solution should be used and changed after one cow goes through. By multiplying the length by the width by the depth of the solution, measured in metres, will give you the volume of your foot bath in cubic metres and by knowing this information you can get the right concentrations. You should consult your vet to get the most appropriate solution for your herd. Formalin, copper sulphate, or other commercial products containing peracetic or organic acids are all options. The frequency with which cows need to be foot bathed depends on how common or severe the disease is within your

herd. Herd's where digital dermatitis (DD) is a major problem should be foot bathed after every milking until the disease is under control. It's important to not substitute good management practices with foot bathing – a foot bathing programme will not solve a DD problem if your yard and facilities are not in good order.

Transport, slaughter, Pick-up

03/06/2024 : The port of Sète defends animal welfare during sea transport

Document type: article published on [Web agri](#)

Author: AFP

Preview: A young farmer is preparing to board a cargo ship to make sure that 780 bull calves have an untroubled crossing of the Mediterranean. Faced with NGOs calling for an end to live cattle exports, the French Port of Sète is defending its practices. One by one, the young males, already weighing in at over 300 kg, make their way down the cattle truck ramps. They are held for a few minutes, provided with thick bedding underfoot. The cargo ship that will take them to Bizerte (Tunisia) has arrived the previous day. Workers whistle, clap their hands, and sometimes tap their hides with a cane to direct them to the ship, where they will be accommodated across four levels. Before boarding, 30-year-old Justine Donnet looks admiringly at the solid flanks of a Blonde d'Aquitaine, that hold the promise of a "beautiful barbecued rib of beef". The milk producer from eastern France will be leaving terra firma for a few days with these animals, which are going to be fattened on the other side of the Mediterranean. She'll be keeping an eye on them, taking regular readings of on-board temperatures and humidity, and of the ammonia given off by the animals' excrement. And, on the basis of her readings, she'll then ask the sailors to add straw, or increase ventilation or air extraction. Since the end of 2022, Sepab, the company that operates the livestock yards in the Port of Sète, has been selling this service to exporters. On seeing his business being called into question, company director Laurent Trémoulet decided to "record the data on the reality of transport at sea". Cattle were fitted with smart collars, and their urine was collected to measure stress hormones. The goal of the Sepab boss was to show "decision-makers" that animals can cope well with the journey. The NGOs who campaign to stop live animal exports argue that ships are often old and ill-suited to animals, and that the latter are at risk of mistreatment at their destination... They advocate the transport of meat rather than animals. These arguments have been listened to in Great Britain, which recently banned the export of live animals for slaughter or fattening. Australia has pledged to stop the shipping of live sheep from May 2028. And since last year, New Zealand has banned the export of live cattle by sea. In the European Union, rather than impose a ban and inflicting "detrimental effects on the sector", the European Commission is proposing tougher requirements for ships and the on-board presence of an "animal welfare officer". According to its impact study, the EU exports almost one million cattle and 3.2 million sheep and goats annually, mainly by sea, to a value of almost 1.5 billion euros.

"Attitudes have changed"

In Sète, the loading of bullocks is carried out in the presence of a government representative sporting a "veterinary services" armband. The inspector, who asks to remain anonymous, has inspected the

boat before loading, checking that there are no features that might cause injury to the animals, that the watering and ventilation systems are working properly, and that there is enough hay for the animals should the journey take longer than expected... Crossings take between two and six days, depending on the destination. "Five or six years ago, the priority was to maximize profits, not make the animals comfortable on board. Attitudes have changed on both sides," says the veterinary services employee, who takes a positive view of the move to carry couriers to oversee the journey". This is the third crossing for Justine Donnet, who will be providing the exporter with ample photos and videos. "The cows are really not disturbed by the journey," says the farmer, who is confident enough to sell some of her young gestating cows for export - they will produce milk on location. "There's no longer any question of making a journey without a courier, it's a security measure, the animals arrive in better shape," observes the exporter, Jérôme Larroque. It's a question of "transparency", adds Laurent Trémoulet. However, AFP is not permitted to go near the 46-year-old vessel, which flies the Guinea-Bissau flag. Access that had been promised was suddenly withheld. The reason given was that they were "fed up with media coverage" of livestock-related issues. Laurent Trémoulet reiterates that animal welfare is a "no-brainer" for them, over and above the moral issues: "If an animal arrives in poor condition, it's no longer fit to continue its career, and that would kill off trade."

[12/05/2023 : Animal welfare at slaughter: perceptions and knowledge across cultures](#)

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Preview: Most people around the world eat meat and billions of animals are slaughtered each year to meet that demand. For many, eating meat is a biocultural activity steeped in tradition and formative in cuisines and identity. Eating meat, however, comes with a myriad of ethical and practical considerations. In tandem with animal rights and environmental sustainability concerns surrounding the impact of animal slaughter for meat, animal welfare science has identified numerous ways animals may suffer on an individual level during various methods of slaughter. Practices of slaughter differ around the world and the degree to which culture and regional interpretations of religion impact consumer expectations and perceptions of suffering at slaughter are relatively unknown. We begin to address some of these gaps by conducting a survey of 4,291 members of the general public to assess knowledge and attitudes around animal welfare at slaughter and religious slaughter, across 14 culturally and religiously diverse countries in local languages; Australia, Philippines, Nigeria, United Kingdom and United States (English), Bangladesh (Bengali), Brazil (Portuguese), Chile (Spanish), China (Traditional Chinese), India (Hindi and English), Malaysia (Bahasa Malay, Chinese and English), Pakistan (Urdu), Sudan (Arabic) and Thailand (Thai). Our results demonstrate that in highly developed countries where exposure to slaughter is low, comfort witnessing slaughter and knowledge about animal welfare at slaughter and the local application of stunning is also low. Cultural and religious differences exist by country, however in all countries except Bangladesh, the majority of participants stated that it mattered to them that animals do not suffer during slaughter,



and in most countries, participants would prefer that animals be rendered unconscious before they are slaughtered (preslaughter stunning); including in countries where this practice is not currently widespread. These findings suggest that concern for the reduction of animal suffering during slaughter is a universal human tendency, rather than a cultural development, while opinion of how best to achieve this (i.e., to stun or not to stun) may be cultural and tied to local interpretations of religious slaughter requirements. The findings of this study serve as an indication for meat industries and governments that continual review and improvement of animal welfare processes at slaughter are required to continue to meet evolving general public sentiment.