

Compassion in World Farming

MANIFESTO

For Farm Animals

2001

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The last decade has seen a steady growth in public concern about animal welfare.

As a result, significant improvements have been achieved. The veal crate has been prohibited in the UK since 1990 and will become illegal throughout the EU in 2007. Sow stalls and tethers have been illegal in the UK since 1999. An EU-wide ban on sow tethers comes into force in 2006 and we hope to achieve an EU-wide ban on sow stalls before long. The EU has prohibited the battery cage for hens as from 2012.

Crucially in 1997, the EU gave animals a new legal status as “sentient beings” in a Protocol annexed to the Treaty of Amsterdam. This means they are now recognised as creatures capable of feeling pain and suffering rather than as being simply goods or products. Major reforms in farming are however needed if this new status is to go beyond mere words and lead to real welfare improvements.

The majority of fattening pigs, chickens and turkeys continue to be factory farmed, both in the UK and the rest of Europe. They are kept indoors throughout their lives, crammed into overcrowded, often barren, sheds. They never experience fresh air or daylight until the day they are taken off to the slaughterhouse.

Animals’ health has in many cases been seriously impaired by the practice of selective breeding. Chickens have been bred to grow so quickly that often their legs cannot properly support their overdeveloped bodies. As a result, millions suffer from painful, sometimes crippling leg disorders. Turkeys, bred to produce a huge amount of breastmeat, have become so misshapen that they can no longer mate naturally and many adult males suffer from degenerative hip disorders.

Each year millions of farm animals are mutilated. Piglets are tail-docked, hens and turkeys de-beaked and lambs castrated. These painful operations are nearly always carried out without anaesthetic. It cannot be right to cut bits off healthy animals for non-veterinary reasons simply to make them more amenable to our purpose.

All this pain and suffering is imposed on farm animals in the quest for ever cheaper food. Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) believes, however, that a responsible society should not treat animals as something placed in this world for our convenience, but should instead ensure that the animals it rears for food are treated humanely. Our well-being should not be founded on the suffering of other creatures who share this planet with us.

Moreover, we now know that there is a clear link between animal welfare and human health. If we want food that is safe to eat and high standards of animal health and welfare we must stop keeping animals in overcrowded, unhygienic conditions. Instead we must introduce much more humane and natural ways of rearing animals.

A major problem is now developing regarding antibiotics. The overuse of antibiotics in farming is leading to bacteria becoming resistant to some of the antibiotics used to treat disease in humans. Antibiotics are being used on farm on a routine basis both as growth promoters and to prevent the diseases which are inevitable in intensive farming systems. If the use of antibiotics as growth promoters is not completely banned and their prophylactic use (i.e. to prevent disease) severely restricted, we could see the antibiotics used in human medicine becoming increasingly less effective. (We have, of course, no objection to antibiotics being used therapeutically to treat disease in animals).

The time has now come for a major change of thinking, for politicians of all parties to commit themselves to ending the cruelties systematically imposed on millions of animals in the name of cheap food and free trade.

In order to promote improved standards, CIWF urges all the political parties to endorse the principles laid down in our Farm Animal Welfare Charter.

COMPASSION IN WORLD FARMING

Farm Animal Welfare Charter:

Housing

- ?? Positive encouragement of systems which allow daily access to the outdoors
 - ?? Comfortable bedding
 - ?? Natural light and ventilation where possible
 - ?? Space allowances to permit natural movement and exercise

Physiology

- ?? A planned move away from fast growing strains in e.g. chickens
 - ?? Use of slower-growing, more sustainable animals
 - ?? Adequate and appropriate feed for each species
 - ?? Access to clean water at all times
- ?? No non-therapeutic mutilations, operations or invasive procedures
- ?? Ability to perform natural behaviours, e.g. rooting, dust-bathing, grazing

Psychology

- ?? Companionship of own kind
- ?? No isolation or overcrowding
- ?? Natural weaning periods
- ?? Prohibition of electric goads and rough handling

General Welfare

- ?? Live exports for further fattening or slaughter should be brought to an end
- ?? Minimum transport, with a maximum total journey time of 8 hours (with a derogation where necessary for the Highlands & Islands)
 - ?? Urgent reform of livestock markets
- ?? Encouragement of alternatives to markets such as direct sales and electronic marketing
 - ?? Licensing of all livestock handlers
- ?? Compulsory minimum stunning currents in slaughterhouses

The Charter principles should, we believe, lead to the adoption of policies designed to achieve fundamental improvements in animal welfare throughout the UK and the rest of Europe:

TRANSPORT

Research by scientists from the University of Bristol concludes that transport is a stressful process and that transport distances and times should be kept to a minimum.

Ministry of Agriculture figures show that in 1999 over one million lambs and sheep were exported for slaughter abroad, which means this cruel trade has more than doubled in just two years. Many of the animals are sent on extremely long journeys to Greece, Italy and Spain where, all too often, they are killed in abattoirs using cruel and illegal slaughter methods.

By the time they reach southern Europe, the animals are increasingly exhausted, dehydrated and stressed. Some get injured, while others collapse on the floor of the truck where they are trampled by their companions. In the worst cases, many die. All this suffering results from overcrowding, high summer temperatures, lack of water and proper ventilation on many vehicles and the sheer length of the journeys.

Most of the animals involved in the live export trade will be slaughtered on, or soon after, arrival at their destination. It makes no sense to subject animals to the stresses of long journeys only to slaughter them at the journey's end. CIWF believes that animals going for slaughter must be sent to a slaughterhouse as near as possible to the farm on which they have been reared.

EU Council Directive 91/628/EEC on the protection of animals during transport is due to be reviewed shortly. The Directive is regularly ignored in many EU countries. We want the EU to (i) insist on rigorous enforcement of the Directive and (ii) adopt a major change of policy whereby the long distance transport of live animals is brought to an end throughout the EU and replaced by a trade in meat.

ON FARM

“We have, at present, laws to define minimum welfare standards in intensive husbandry systems, although most constitute no more than a cynical acceptance of the status quo”.

*Professor John Webster
Department of Clinical Veterinary Science
The University of Bristol*

Intensive husbandry systems frustrate animals' behavioural needs and often lead to serious physical disorders and pain. To address these problems:

- ?? Substantial reforms are needed in pig rearing. Sow stalls have been illegal in the UK since 1999. Sow stalls are so narrow that the sow cannot even turn round. Sows are kept in these stalls for most of their adult lives. The EU Pigs Directive is currently being reviewed and CIWF is campaigning for sow stalls to be banned throughout the EU.
- ?? As regards the pigs fattened for their meat (as opposed to the breeding sows referred to above) both in the UK and the rest of the EU most are factory farmed. Scientific research shows that in natural conditions pigs spend 75% of their daylight hours in activity - rooting, foraging, exploring. None of these activities are possible for most of today's fattening pigs. They are kept indoors throughout their lives in overcrowded, sometimes unhygienic sheds. All too often they are kept on slatted or bare concrete floors. These barren conditions are typical of intensive farming. All pigs should be provided with bedding (preferably straw) and ample space.
- ?? The EU ban on the conventional battery cage comes into force in 2012. Some egg producers are trying to get the ban overturned. We hope the EU will stand firm and insist that this cruel system must go. Some egg producers are saying they will turn to so-called 'enriched' cages rather than adopting more humane free-range or perchery systems. CIWF is totally opposed to enriched cages. They will give hens just a little bit of extra space as compared with ordinary cages, and minimal nesting, perching and dust-bathing facilities. They are still cages and will do very little to improve hen welfare. We believe they should be prohibited.
- ?? Until the cage is abandoned, battery eggs should, in the interests of informed consumer choice, be clearly labelled as 'Eggs from caged hens'.
- ?? Urgent steps are needed to reverse the selective breeding of animals for ever faster or larger growth. This has led to painful leg problems in broiler chickens, degenerative hip disorders in turkeys, and leg and cardiovascular problems in pigs. Moreover, dairy cows have been pushed to such high milk yields that many suffer from production-related disease and reduced life expectancy.
- ?? Tail-docking of piglets, castration of lambs, and de-beaking of hens and turkeys should be halted (regulations prohibit the routine tail-docking of pigs, but provide an extremely wide loophole and are widely ignored by farmers). CIWF fully agrees with the Farm Animal Welfare Council (an independent advisory body) that "It is difficult to give general approval to any system of husbandry that relies on painful mutilations to sustain the system".

SLAUGHTER

Each year millions of animals and poultry suffer terribly during the slaughter process. We should continue to question whether - in the currency of animal suffering - the costs of providing our traditional rashers of bacon and Sunday joints, can be too high. Urgent changes in slaughterhouse practice and legislation are needed to stop this suffering. These include:

- ?? Scientific research shows that the use of sufficient electric current is vital to ensure effective stunning. Animals stunned with too low a current are in danger of regaining consciousness as they bleed to death. CIWF believes that minimum stunning currents

should be laid down by law rather than, as at present, being left to unenforceable Codes of Practice.

?? Scientists agree on the importance of severing both carotid arteries (the main blood supply to the brain) in order to achieve a rapid death and so minimise the risk of animals recovering consciousness during bleeding-out. CIWF believes that the severing of both carotids should be required by law (at present the law only requires one carotid to be severed).

MARKETS

Conditions at markets are often poor, with overcrowding and rough, sometimes brutal handling being commonplace. Often animals do not have proper access to water; this can be a particularly serious problem in hot weather. Urgent reforms are needed in the way animals are treated at markets and alternatives to livestock markets such as direct sales and electronic marketing should be encouraged.

COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY

The CAP should be reformed to encourage a move away from intensive farming to systems with high welfare standards. In particular, we believe that, alongside the agri-environment measures, a new Farm Animal Welfare Scheme should be introduced to give financial support to farmers who wish to change from intensive to extensive husbandry systems. Help would be available both with the capital costs of change and, for a transitional period of, say, four years, with the additional running costs.

Moreover, we believe that subsidies under the CAP should only be available where farmers adhere to certain standards in the rearing of their animals.

WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION

The World Trade Organisation (WTO) is making it difficult for the EU to introduce significant welfare improvements. The EU may, for example, wish to prohibit the use of a cruel rearing system. The fact, however, that under the WTO rules the EU cannot ban the *import* of meat or eggs from animals reared in that system, in practice strongly deters the EU from going ahead with a ban in its own territory.

We believe that the WTO must be reformed so that when the EU sets high welfare standards within the EU, it is free to insist that imported meat and eggs come from animals who were reared to those same high standards.