FARM ASSURANCE SCHEMES & ANIMAL WELFARE
CAN WE TRUST THEM?

An Animal Welfare Analysis of Major UK Farm Assurance Schemes
Compassion In World Farming Trust
2002
The CIWF Trust provides understanding of the welfare needs of farm animals by disseminating information based on research, analysis, investigation and study of the relevant scientific literature.
FARM ASSURANCE SCHEMES & ANIMAL WELFARE
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AN ANIMAL WELFARE ANALYSIS OF MAJOR UK FARM ASSURANCE SCHEMES PREPARED FOR
COMPASSION IN WORLD FARMING TRUST
BY PHILIP LYMBERY, ANIMAL WELFARE CONSULTANT

2002

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UK farm assurance schemes allow some of the most intensive forms of factory farming, and often set standards that assure little more than compliance with basic legislation and government guidelines on animal welfare. Major UK schemes allow the use of farrowing crates for breeding pigs, battery cages for egg-laying hens, and intensive rearing of broiler chickens at stocking densities that exceed the maximum stipulated by the government code of practice on welfare. The standards set by nationally recognised schemes covering meat, milk and eggs fail to ensure the use of high welfare systems of production. It follows that these schemes cannot therefore assure high standards of animal welfare.

Farm Assurance

Farm assurance schemes were introduced by the food industry in the 1980’s to boost consumer confidence in livestock products. Increasing concern about animal welfare was a major driving force behind the development of these schemes. Renewed impetus to their development has been given by recent food scares, such as Salmonella in eggs and BSE in cattle.

This study analyses the welfare credentials of the major nationally recognised UK farm assurance schemes that claim to cover animal welfare. Those analysed were Assured British Pigs, Assured Chicken Production, Farm Assured British Beef & Lamb (FABBL) and the National Dairy Farm Assured Scheme, all of which are encompassed by the British Food Standard or ‘little red tractor’ logo. A separate assurance scheme, the Lion Quality Mark for eggs, is also analysed. A distinction is drawn between these schemes and those of the organic farming sector or RSPCAFreedom Food scheme where welfare is implicit in the standards.

British Farm Standard

The public face of farm assurance in Britain is the little red tractor or ‘British Farm Standard’ (BFS, 2002). This standard encompasses a number of individual schemes that cover beef, lamb, pork, chicken and milk production. The National Farmers’ Union of England and Wales (NFU) launched the scheme in June 2000. The little red tractor logo is managed independently by Assured Food Standards (AFS). It claims that its Standard is a “promise to consumers that, when they buy food carrying the British Farm Standard mark on the label, it has been produced to meet exacting food safety, environmental and welfare standards”. Its publicity material implies that food produced to the British Farm Standard is “kind to animals”.

Lion Quality Mark

The Lion Code of Practice has been developed by the British Egg Industry Council (BEIC) and currently applies its logo to 75% of the total UK egg market. The Code covers all aspects of production from farm to retail, including welfare. On animal welfare, the BEIC’s Code states that it “aims to assure customers that laying birds are kept in the best possible welfare conditions by requiring that eggs sold under the “Lion” marks must come from birds kept in accordance with statutory or code requirements on welfare.”
Supermarkets & Farm Assurance

The 10 biggest supermarkets in the UK account for 60% of all grocery sales. The vast majority of fresh meat, milk and eggs sold through these supermarkets are produced under national farm assurance schemes. Farm assurance schemes therefore provide the baseline animal welfare standards for a large part of the fresh livestock products consumed in this country.

Farming with High Welfare Potential

Major concerns for animal welfare arise from farm production methods with low welfare potential. These are systems, such as the battery cage for hens, that fail to meet the behavioural and physiological needs of the animals reared and therefore cause suffering.

In this analysis, we are seeking to establish the degree to which nationally recognised farm assurance schemes forbid the use of low-welfare systems and practices. They are benchmarked against whether they fulfil key determinants of animal welfare, the building blocks of welfare-friendly systems, or set standards that go beyond regulatory requirements.

15 key determinants of high welfare systems were used in this study (adapted from Winter, Fry & Carruthers, 1997):

- Appropriate feed; higher in fibre, lower in energy/protein
- Adequate feed to satisfy hunger at all stages of production
- No yield or growth promoters
- No mutilations such as tail docking
- No electric goads or rough handling
- No embryo transfer or other invasive surgical techniques
- No genetically engineered breeds of animal or products of genetic engineering such as the milk-boosting hormone, BST.
- High quality stockmanship

Conclusions

If husbandry systems are to have the potential to achieve high standards of animal welfare, they should incorporate most key determinants of animal welfare. Farm assurance schemes fail to ensure that the majority of key welfare determinants – the building blocks of animal-friendly rearing methods – are incorporated into their farming systems.

The standards currently set by the main British farm assurance schemes covering beef, lamb, pork, chicken, milk and eggs assure the fulfilment of 4-7 out of 15 key animal welfare determinants. This compares poorly with the standards set for organic farming by the Soil Association. The Soil Association Certified Organic Standard, a scheme recognised as having high standards of farm animal welfare, assures the fulfilment of 11-14 of 15 key determinants. Standard British farm assurance schemes cannot, therefore, assure the use of high welfare systems of breeding and rearing animals.
By failing to insist on high welfare husbandry systems, it follows that standard British farm assurance schemes cannot assure high standards of farm animal welfare.

Examples of intensive and poor welfare systems allowed under standard British farm assurance schemes include:

*The use of narrow farrowing crates for breeding pigs, in which mothering sows cannot turn round, and battery cages for laying hens.*

*Highly intensive methods of rearing broiler chickens in which birds can be crammed even more tightly than recommended by Government guidelines.*

*Chicken and pig breeding can involve restrictive feeding practices whereby animals remain chronically hungry.*

*Breeds of chicken and dairy cattle can be used which, when coupled with high protein diets, can lead to health and welfare problems due to the demands of overproduction.*

*The mutilation of animals, such as the debeaking of chickens and the tail docking or teeth clipping of pigs, is generally not prohibited.*

*The use of genetically engineered animals or substances derived from genetic engineering is not generally prohibited.*

The main national farm assurance schemes provide a framework for good farm management. They generally seek to encourage high standards of stockmanship. They provide a useful mechanism for ensuring that farms comply with minimum legislative requirements and government guidelines regarding animal welfare.

CIWF Trust calls on UK farm assurance schemes to review and raise their standards urgently in order to protect the welfare of animals. Such a review should ensure that fulfilling key determinants of animal welfare is fundamental to their standards. Highly intensive factory farm systems, such as farrowing crates for pigs, battery cages for laying hens, or overstocked broiler chicken sheds should not be permitted.
INTRODUCTION

Consumer concern for the way farm animals are treated has increased as more people become aware of factory farming. Public outcry has resulted in legislation to ban some of the worst systems and practices for animals. Examples in the UK include prohibitions on the use of narrow veal crates for calves or close confinement stalls and tethers for pregnant pigs. In both systems the animals are unable to exercise or even turn round. Yet, still the vast majority of farm animals in the UK and Europe are caged, crammed in their thousands into windowless sheds, or confined for prolonged periods to maximise production.

Farm assurance schemes were introduced by the food industry in the 1980’s to boost consumer confidence in livestock products. Increasing concern about animal welfare was a major driving force behind the development of these schemes. Renewed impetus to their development has been given by recent food scares, such as Salmonella in eggs and BSE in cattle. Retailers were the major force behind the development of farm assurance schemes in the early years. More recently, the schemes have been led by producer organisations (FAWC, 2001).

Farm assurance schemes provide farmers with a way of showing that they are exercising “due diligence” by complying with the standards required. The schemes have generally placed emphasis on food safety and traceability, standards for veterinary treatments, feed composition and storage standards, and compliance with environmental obligations (FAWC, 2001).

According to the main British scheme, the ‘British Food Standard’, farm assurance offers consumers a “system that makes sure that their food is always fresh, safe, and produced with the interests of livestock and environment in mind” (BFS, undated promotional leaflet).

This study seeks to answer the question; are these schemes assuring high welfare standards on the farm, or are they simply adding a “best practice” gloss to intensive systems of animal production that have inherent welfare problems?
UK FARM ASSURANCE SCHEMES

From the animal welfare viewpoint, there are two broad categories of farm assurance schemes. There are those industry-led schemes that include animal welfare by implication but do not necessarily make it a priority. Standard UK farm assurance schemes are included in this category. The main schemes are outlined below. The second category comprises those for which high standards of farm animal welfare are fundamental and inherent in their design. These include the RSPCA’s Freedom Food scheme and organic certification schemes that adopt a ‘whole systems’ approach to food production. This study sets out to analyse the welfare standards of the major industry-led UK farm assurance schemes. For comparative purposes, these schemes are benchmarked against a selected welfare-integral scheme from the latter category.

British Farm Standard

The public face of farm assurance in Britain is the little red tractor or ‘British Farm Standard’ (BFS, 2002). This standard encompasses a number of individual schemes that cover beef, lamb, pork, chicken and milk production. It was launched by the National Farmers’ Union of England and Wales (NFU) in June 2000.

An independent organisation, Assured Food Standards (AFS), has been set up to manage the little red tractor logo. AFS sets the standards with which producers, processors and packers must comply if they are to use the logo. Detailed standards and inspection systems are developed by AFS in collaboration with participating assurance schemes. AFS is owned by a Council of assurance schemes, the NFU and the Meat and Livestock Commission (MLC). It has an independent chairman and board of directors that includes representatives from assurance schemes, retail and food processing sectors, consumers, academics and the environment. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) has recently joined the AFS board (BFS, 2002). AFS information available on its website makes no similar claim of representation from an animal welfare organisation.

British Farm Standard includes schemes covering both crop production and farm animal produce. The schemes relevant to farm animals that are currently recognised are:

- Farm Assured British Beef & Lamb (FABBL)
- Farm Assured Welsh Lamb (FAWL)
- Northern Ireland Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (NIFQAS)
- National Dairy Farm Assured Scheme (NDFAS)
- Assured Chicken Production (ACP)
- Assured British Pigs (ABP)
In its promotional material (BFS, undated promotional leaflet), British Food Standard implies that food produced to its Standard is:

✔ Food you can trust
✔ Kind to animals
✔ Caring to the environment
✔ Independently checked

It claims that its Standard is a “promise to consumers that, when they buy food carrying the British Farm Standard mark on the label, it has been produced to meet exacting food safety, environmental and welfare standards”.

Lion Quality Mark

The Lion Code of Practice has been developed by the British Egg Industry Council (BEIC) and approves eggs produced to its standard. The Code covers all aspects of production from farm to retail including welfare and hygiene (DEFRA, 2002). Eggs that make the grade can be sold using the Lion Quality mark, which is a registered trademark. Lion Quality eggs currently account for 75% of the total UK egg market (BEIC, 2002).

On animal welfare, the BEIC’s Code states, “The Lion Code also aims to assure customers that laying birds are kept in the best possible welfare conditions by requiring that eggs sold under the “Lion” marks must come from birds kept in accordance with statutory or code requirements on welfare.” (BEIC, 1999).

SUPERMARKETS & FARM ASSURANCE

The 10 biggest supermarkets in the UK account for 60% of all grocery sales. The vast majority of fresh meat, milk and eggs sold through these supermarkets are produced under national farm assurance schemes (see table opposite). Farm assurance schemes therefore effectively provide the baseline animal welfare standards for a large part of the fresh livestock products consumed.

Further details about the relationship between supermarkets and farm assurance schemes was provided by a Compassion In World Farming (CIWF) questionnaire survey of major supermarkets and their core animal welfare standards, carried out in 2000. Replies from ASDA, Safeway, Sainsbury’s, Tesco and Iceland indicated that nationally recognised farm assurance schemes are used to provide baseline animal welfare standards for each company except Iceland. It also showed that farm assurance schemes are often used in conjunction with the individual company’s own standards or policy. These core standards were found to apply to own label products and were generally applied to both fresh and frozen meat products. Core standards did not generally extend to branded products.
SUPERMARKET LIVESTOCK PRODUCTS UNDER NATIONAL FARM ASSURANCE SCHEMES

% Total Sales Volume of Fresh Meat, Milk & Eggs Produced Under Nationally Recognised Farm Assurance Schemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fresh Produce</th>
<th>ASDA</th>
<th>CWS</th>
<th>Iceland</th>
<th>M&amp;S</th>
<th>Safeway*</th>
<th>Sainsbury’s</th>
<th>Somerfield*</th>
<th>Tesco*</th>
<th>Waitrose</th>
<th>Wm Morrison*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beef</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep Meat</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(UK own label)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pigmeat</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poultry Meat</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shell Eggs</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question asked: What proportion of your company’s total sales volume of fresh meat (primal product), milk and eggs is produced under nationally recognised farm assurance schemes (e.g. Assured British Meat, Scottish Food Quality Certification, Farm Assured Welsh Livestock, Assured Chicken Production, National Dairy Farm Assured, BEIC Lion Quality, or other recognised schemes operating to equivalent standards)? *Data refers to own label product only.

Data supplied by supermarkets in response to a CIWF questionnaire on farm animal welfare, July-November 2001

Over 60% of all UK grocery sales are sold through the 10 biggest supermarket companies. The above table shows that the vast majority of fresh meat, milk and eggs sold through supermarkets are produced under national farm assurance schemes.

FARMING WITH HIGH WELFARE POTENTIAL

Major concerns for animal welfare arise from farm production methods with low welfare potential. These are systems, such as the battery cage for hens, that fail to meet the behavioural and physiological needs of the animals reared and therefore cause suffering.

So what do we mean by the welfare potential of a farming system? From the outset, it is important to acknowledge that high levels of stockmanship and management are prerequisites in any successful animal farming operation. Nevertheless, the potential to achieve high standards of welfare is inescapably linked to, and limited by, the husbandry system employed. There are a number of factors which affect the welfare potential of any method of livestock farming. These include:

- Housing system - close confinement systems, such as the battery cage, or systems which otherwise restrict behavioural expression, are likely to offer low welfare potential.
Farm Assurance Schemes & Animal Welfare - Can We Trust Them?

- Breeding - animals that have been selectively bred for production traits at the expense of welfare criteria.

- Feeding regime - where animals are fed a diet that secures high production but may not be conducive to maintaining normal health and vitality.

- Husbandry practices – such as mutilations (castration, tail docking, debeaking, etc.) that are likely to cause pain or distress.

The classic example of welfare potential is the battery cage for egg-laying hens. The cramped and barren environment of the cage does not allow for the birds’ behavioural and physiological needs. The birds suffer as a result (Appleby, 1991). The restrictive nature of the battery cage is an inherent part of the system. The battery cage is therefore a system with low welfare potential. No matter how much stockmanship and care you lavish on the birds in the system, their welfare will remain poor.

A free-range system, however - with its space and enriched environment - has a high welfare potential. Of course, if stockmanship levels are poor or neglectful, then the birds will suffer. But then, high standards of stockmanship should be an absolute must, not an option, in any farming system. Similarly, a badly designed unit could also negatively affect the birds’ welfare. However, as the problems are not an inherent part of the system, they can be adjusted or improved. The point is, that any design or husbandry problems in these free-range-type systems can be ironed out, allowing the full welfare potential of the system to be achieved.

Organic farming as a land-based farming system without chemical fertilisers and pesticides, preventing disease through best practice animal husbandry, not drugs, and working with, rather than against, the environment, is a good example of an approach with high welfare potential.

Farming Systems with Low Welfare Potential

Examples of animal rearing systems with low welfare potential include:

- Close confinement systems for animals - battery cages for laying hens, sow stalls and farrowing crates for breeding pigs, veal crates for calves.

- Mass farming methods whereby animals are kept in barren and overcrowded environments - broiler chicken and turkey rearing, for example, as well as intensive pig fattening, caged salmon production, intensive and indoor cattle production (such as ‘barley beef’ systems and US-style outdoor feedlots), etc.

- Physiologically intensive methods - such as fast-growing broiler chickens, high-producing dairy cows, etc.

Farming systems and practices that have low welfare potential, and therefore cause pain or suffering to farm animals, are ethically unacceptable. Broadly speaking, there is a spectrum of welfare potential. This goes from highly intensive systems at the low welfare end, (close confinement systems like battery cages for laying hens), through to less intensive indoor systems (e.g. barn egg production), to extensive outdoor systems, such as free range, at the high end of the spectrum.
FARM ASSURANCE SCHEMES – AN ANALYSIS

The type of farming system and practices allowed limit the capacity of any scheme to assure high standards of animal welfare. In this analysis, we are seeking to establish the degree to which nationally recognised farm assurance schemes forbid the use of low-welfare systems and practices. As shown in the previous section, the welfare-friendly potential of the overall system is affected by the breed of animal and the feeding regime used, as well as the housing system and husbandry practices employed. The farm assurance schemes have been analysed against whether they assure the determinants, or building blocks, of high welfare systems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Welfare Ideal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Animal Husbandry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breed-environment compatibility</td>
<td>Adapted breeds only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of stockmanship and skills</td>
<td>High quality stockmanship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeding regime</td>
<td>Diets higher in fibre, lower in energy and protein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutilations</td>
<td>No mutilations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yield and growth promoters</td>
<td>No use of yield or growth promoters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embryo transfer technology</td>
<td>No use of embryo transfer technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genetic engineering</td>
<td>No use of genetic engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enterprise Characteristics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to outdoors</td>
<td>Unhindered access to outdoors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to appropriate shelter</td>
<td>Unhindered access to appropriate shelter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confinement</td>
<td>No close confinement (veal crates, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head per herd/flock</td>
<td>Small flocks and herds (appropriate for species)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head per unit land area or building area/volume</td>
<td>Low stocking densities (outdoors and in-house)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yield per head</td>
<td>Lower yield per head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stockmen per head</td>
<td>High stockmen to animal ratios</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm/Agricultural Practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enterprises per farm</td>
<td>High frequency of mixed farming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production efficiency</td>
<td>Lower productivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit value</td>
<td>High unit values</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


These determinants of animal welfare potential were identified as part of a study of farm animal welfare and the Common Agricultural Policy conducted for CIWF and the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA), and are explained in greater detail by Winter, Fry & Carruthers (1997).
Other determinants include:

- Provision of bedding material (for mammalian species) and litter (for avian species).
- Provision of nesting facilities for hens
- Provision of perching for hens
- Natural lighting & ventilation

A determinent is a factor that is built into the system to influence its welfare-friendly potential. Examples of key determinants – building blocks of a good system – include the provision of enough living space and access to bedding material. Determinants should not be confused with welfare indicators. Indicators measure outcomes of performance of the system. Examples of indicators include levels of mortality or lameness. Indicators can measure the overall performance of a system. However, the performance will be influenced by both the determinants built into the system, and the level of human management skill applied to it. In other words, determinants define the welfare potential of the system, and the human operators influence the level to which this potential is reached.

Assumptions of Analysis

The starting premise of this analysis is that high standards of animal welfare require systems with high welfare potential. It is therefore reasonable to expect only high-welfare systems to be used under farm assurance schemes claiming to assure good welfare.

The second premise is that although some of the worst factory farm systems have been banned by legislation, there is still much progress to be made. Government guidelines in the form of welfare codes and legislation often set minimum standards that fall short of the level required for high welfare. Farm assurance schemes that do not set standards above and beyond these regulatory requirements cannot be trusted to deliver on farm animal welfare.

In this analysis, the main farm assurance schemes are benchmarked against whether they fulfil key determinants of animal welfare or set standards that go beyond regulatory requirements.

**CRITERIA FOR ANALYSIS**

The following criteria represent a method of assessing each farm assurance scheme against key animal welfare determinants. By analysing the standards for each scheme, this study can provide a tabulated representation of the extent to which farm assurance schemes fulfil key determinants of animal welfare or set standards that go beyond regulatory requirements.

- **No Close Confinement permitted at any stage of production** – schemes should not permit any long-term confinement system that prevents or makes it difficult for the animal to stand up, lie down, turn round, walk normally, or fully stretch its limbs.

- **Low Stocking Densities only permitted** – standards must set lower stocking densities than regulatory requirements.
Assured daytime Access to outdoors at an appropriate age or during the grazing season – schemes must specify that animals should be given access to the outdoors at an appropriate life-stage or when climatic or environmental conditions allow.

Access to appropriate shelter should be available – Where animals do have access to the outdoors and are not given free access to fixed housing, as in the case of grazing sheep or cattle, schemes must indicate that appropriate shelter should be available.

Provision of bedding/litter mandatory for all housed animals – Schemes must specify that appropriate bedding (for mammals) or litter (for poultry) should be provided for all animals in the scheme. It is not enough to state that a well-drained lying area must be provided or a flooring of unbedded concrete and slats.

Small Group sizes only permitted – Schemes should specify the need to keep group sizes small, or set maximum permitted group sizes. In the latter case, these should be set below levels that might be stated in MAFF codes or legislation.

Adapted Breeds suited to rearing environment only – schemes must stipulate the use of slow-growing strains (in the case of broiler chickens), or lower yielding animals that are less susceptible to physiological problems related to over-production (dairy cattle). Breeds that are prone to birthing difficulties (e.g. Belgian blue beef cattle) should also not be permitted.

Appropriate feed; higher in fibre, lower in energy/protein – Schemes should stipulate the use of appropriate feed rather than high levels of protein concentrates.

Adequate feed to satisfy hunger at all stages of production – Schemes must specify that restrictive feeding practices should not be used (broiler breeders, breeding pigs) and that bulky, less nutrient-dense diets should be used to satisfy hunger.

No Yield or growth promoters permitted – Schemes must forbid the use of growth-promoting antibiotics.

No Mutilations permitted except for strict veterinary reasons – Mutilations are widely accepted as painful practices that generally tackle the symptoms but not the cause of husbandry problems. Many welfarists see the absence of routine mutilation as the litmus test of a good system. Schemes must not permit mutilations except on strict veterinary advice. Veterinary ‘approved’ routine mutilations are not acceptable.

Electric goads and rough handling not permitted – schemes must indicate that these are not allowed.

No Embryo transfer technology permitted – Another absolute determinant of good welfare. Schemes must state that ET is not acceptable.

No Genetic Engineering Permitted – Schemes must state that genetically engineered animals or GE products cannot be used.

Encouragement of High Quality Stockmanship – Schemes must at least insist that stockpersons fulfil their legal obligations under The Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2000 by having access to and being acquainted with the provisions of all relevant statutory welfare codes. Explicit insistence is needed on this basic criterion, as well as a general requirement for careful husbandry and handling.
The table opposite shows that the standards set by the UK’s major farm assurance schemes fail to ensure that more than half of the key building blocks of welfare-friendly systems are fulfilled. The “Welfare Score” is the total number of determinants on which schemes score positively. The standards covering beef and sheep production, where farming methods tend to be less intensive anyway, fare best with 7/15. Pigs and poultry are generally farmed more intensively, with the majority of animals in the UK being factory farmed. Of the schemes covering these sectors, Assured British Pigs scores 4/14, Assured Chicken Production for poultry meat achieves 5/13, whilst the Lion mark for eggs fulfils 5/14 determinants. The National Dairy scheme also fulfils 5/14.

**RESULTS - BRITISH FARM ASSURANCE SCHEMES ANALYSED**

The standards of 6 nationally recognised UK farm assurance schemes were analysed against the criteria set out in the previous chapter. The schemes were assessed on whether they insist on the fulfilment of key determining factors of animal welfare or set standards that go beyond regulatory requirements. If the criterion is satisfied, then “Yes” appears in the relevant box, a positive point. Where schemes fail to ensure the welfare determinant or do not go beyond the standard set by minimum legislation or government guidelines, then “No” appears. “N/A” means determinant not applicable.

The table opposite shows that the standards set by the UK’s major farm assurance schemes fail to ensure that more than half of the key building blocks of welfare-friendly systems are fulfilled. The “Welfare Score” is the total number of determinants on which schemes score positively. The standards covering beef and sheep production, where farming methods tend to be less intensive anyway, fare best with 7/15. Pigs and poultry are generally farmed more intensively, with the majority of animals in the UK being factory farmed. Of the schemes covering these sectors, Assured British Pigs scores 4/14, Assured Chicken Production for poultry meat achieves 5/13, whilst the Lion mark for eggs fulfils 5/14 determinants. The National Dairy scheme also fulfils 5/14.
## NATIONAL FARM ASSURANCE SCHEMES & FARM ANIMAL WELFARE

### ‘BRITISH FOOD STANDARD’ (Red Tractor Logo)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Animal Welfare Determinant</th>
<th>FABBL Beef</th>
<th>FABBL Lamb</th>
<th>ABP Pigs</th>
<th>ACP Chickens</th>
<th>NDFA Milk</th>
<th>BEIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Close Confinement</td>
<td>YES (But not specified)</td>
<td>NO (But not specified)</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stocking densities lower than required by regulation</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO (exc. Non-cage)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to Outdoors</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO (exc. Free range)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proper Shelter</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
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A Benchmark Analysis of Soil Association Certified Organic Standards

For comparison, the standard farm assurance schemes are benchmarked against the standards set by the Soil Association’s organic farming standards that are recognised as having high welfare potential.

As the table below shows, the organic standards fulfil most, if not all, key welfare determinants (11-14/15).

This compares to the 4-7/15 fulfilled by the schemes

### NATIONAL FARM ASSURANCE SCHEMES & FARM ANIMAL WELFARE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Animal Welfare Determinant</th>
<th>Beef</th>
<th>Lamb</th>
<th>Pigs</th>
<th>Chickens</th>
<th>Milk</th>
<th>Eggs</th>
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<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Yield or Growth Promoters</td>
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</tr>
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<td>YES</td>
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<td>YES</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Husbandry</strong></td>
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<td>13/14</td>
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</table>
covered by the British Food Standard ‘little red tractor’ logo and the BEIC Lion Quality Mark.

The extracts from the standards of each scheme used in this analysis appear in the final section of this report.

The schemes analysed are:

**British Food Standard (‘little red tractor’ logo)**

**Assured British Pigs (ABP)**

**Assured Chicken Production (ACP)**

**Farm Assured British Beef & Lamb (FABBL)**

**National Dairy Farm Assured Scheme**

**British Egg Industry Council (BEIC)**

**Lion Quality Mark**

**Soil Association**

**Soil Association Certified Organic Standards**

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**CONCLUSIONS**

- Over 60% of all UK grocery sales are sold through the 10 biggest supermarket companies. The vast majority of fresh meat, milk and eggs sold through supermarkets are produced under national farm assurance schemes.

- The main national farm assurance schemes provide a framework for good farm management. They generally seek to encourage high standards of stockmanship. They provide a useful mechanism for ensuring that farms comply with minimum legislative requirements and government guidelines regarding animal welfare.

- If husbandry systems are to have the potential to achieve high standards of animal welfare, they must incorporate most key determinants of animal welfare. Farm assurance schemes fail to ensure the incorporation of the majority of key welfare determinants – the building blocks of animal-friendly rearing methods – into their scheme’s farming systems.

- The standards currently set by the main British farm assurance schemes covering beef, lamb, pork, chicken, milk and eggs assure the fulfilment of 4-7 out of 15 key animal welfare determinants. This compares poorly with the standards set for organic farming by the Soil Association. The Soil Association Certified Organic Standard, a scheme recognised as having high standards of farm animal welfare, assures the fulfilment of 11-14 of 15 key determinants. Standard British farm assurance schemes cannot, therefore, assure the use of high welfare systems of breeding and rearing animals.

- As they fail to insist on the use of high welfare husbandry systems only, it follows that standard British farm assurance schemes cannot assure high standards of farm animal welfare.

- Examples of intensive and poor welfare systems allowed under standard British farm assurance schemes include:

  - The use of narrow farrowing crates for breeding pigs, in which mothering sows cannot turn round, and battery cages for laying hens.

  - Highly intensive methods of rearing broiler chickens are permitted in which birds can be crammed even more tightly than recommended by Government guidelines.
Chicken and pig breeding within these schemes can involve restrictive feeding practices whereby animals remain chronically hungry.

Breeds of chicken and dairy cattle can be used which, when coupled with high protein diets, can lead to health and welfare problems due to the demands of overproduction.

Farm assurance schemes do not generally prohibit the mutilation of animals such as the debeaking of chickens and the tail docking or teeth clipping of pigs.

Farm assurance schemes do not prohibit the use of genetically engineered animals or substances derived from genetic engineering.

Standard UK farm assurance schemes must review and raise their standards urgently in order to properly protect the welfare of the animals reared under them. Such a review should ensure that fulfilling the key determinants of animal welfare is fundamental to their standards. Highly intensive factory farm systems such as farrowing crates for pigs, battery cages for laying hens, or overstocked broiler chicken sheds should not be allowed.

WHAT THE SCHEMES SAY ABOUT THEMSELVES

Assured British Pigs (ABP)

The ABP Standards document states in its introduction that, “British Pigmeat is world class. It is produced in the best conditions on farms that are well managed by highly professional, well-qualified and caring stockmen. Certification to the Assured British Pigs Scheme allows producers to demonstrate that their standards of husbandry and welfare meet nationally agreed levels of best commercial practice, and give an assurance to the consumer that the product is safe.”

Assured Chicken Production

The launch press release for the scheme (ACP, 2000) announced, “Today sees the launch of a new company whose sole aim is to reassure consumers that the chicken they buy is reared and produced to the highest standards.” The company’s website says that “The scheme is designed to: assure consumers of high standards of food safety and animal welfare” and to “encourage the consumer to recognise and demand chicken grown to these standards” (ACP, 2002).

British Egg Industry Council (BEIC)

Lion Quality Mark

According to its Code of Practice, the Lion Code “aims to assure customers that laying birds are kept in the best possible welfare conditions by requiring that eggs sold under the “Lion” marks must come from birds kept in accordance with statutory or code requirements on welfare.” The BEIC Chairman’s Introduction states that the Lion Code “has been developed to provide an approved scheme for the production of eggs to a standard above and beyond those set by the EU and UK law at all times realising the importance of providing a safe food product of the highest quality, whilst maintaining the highest possible welfare standards and environmental control.”
For loose housed (non-cage) birds, the Lion Code provides a “lower maximum stocking density, plus guaranteed litter or scratching areas”.

**Farm Assured British Beef & Lamb (FABBL)**

The Producer Manual for FABBL claims that, “British food production is world-class. It is produced in ideal conditions on farms well managed by highly professional, well-qualified stockmen and growers. Membership of the FABBL Farm Assurance Scheme allows producers of beef, lamb and combinable crops to prove that standards of husbandry, welfare and environmental protection on-farm meet nationally agreed levels of best practice, and gives an assurance to the consumer that the product is safe.”

The Manual continues, “The Scheme has been designed to provide assurances that farm produce is produced in accordance with a specified Standard which goes beyond the relevant legislation and demands best commercial practice.”

**National Dairy Farm Assured Scheme**

According to its website (NDFAS, 2002), the “National Dairy Farm Assured Scheme has been developed to address the concerns of all the interested parties in the milk supply chain. Consumers and retailers need to be reassured that standards are being achieved to provide confidence about the production methods”. It goes on to say that the standards cover “Herd Health: To provide assurance about the level of health and welfare of the dairy herd”.

**WHAT THE SCHEMES SAY ON EACH KEY ANIMAL WELFARE DETERMINANT**

NB: Generally, if a criterion is not specified within a scheme’s standards, this is taken to mean that the welfare determinant is not fulfilled.

1. **No Close Confinement permitted at any stage of production** – The scheme must not permit any long-term confinement system that prevents or makes it difficult for the animal to stand up, lie down, turn round, walk normally, or fully stretch its limbs.

   **FABBL Beef & Lamb** – Although not specified, close confinement systems are not generally used for beef cattle or sheep. The benefit of the doubt is therefore given to the scheme for this determinant.

   **Assured British Pigs** – Permits the use of farrowing crates for sows kept indoors. These can be used up to 7 days prior to farrowing, and for no more than 28 days afterwards. *Farrowing crates are not permitted in outdoor production.*

   **Assured Chicken Production** – States that “All birds must have sufficient space to walk, turn, sit, preen, flap/stretch their wings and dustbathe.”

   **BEIC ‘Lion Quality’ Eggs** – Permits the use of the battery cage.
**National Dairy Farm Assured** – States that “Cattle must not be closely confined for long periods and when they are tied in cowsheds, untethered exercise must be provided every day”

**Soil Association Organic Standard** – Prohibits the prolonged confining or tethering of animals (shippons, steadings, etc.). Also states that all housed animals will be provided with sufficient space to “stand naturally, lie down easily, turn round, groom themselves, assume all natural postures and make all natural movements such as stretching and wing flapping.”

2. **Low Stocking Densities only permitted** –
   Schemes should stipulate that all animals within the scheme are kept at stocking densities lower than those set by regulatory requirements.

**FABBL Beef** – Sets minimum space allowances for loose-housed beef cattle (excluding bulls) and suckler cows, and minimum cubicle sizes for beef cattle. Neither provision is made in law or *MAFF codes.

**FABBL Lamb** – Not specified. Makes the general statement that “Housing must be of sufficient size allowing appropriate stocking densities…” MAFF welfare code (2000) gives recommended space allowances for indoor housed sheep.

**Assured British Pigs** – Requires compliance with legal requirements and the provisions of the MAFF welfare code on pigs.

**Assured Chicken Production** – States “this scheme does not permit stocking regimes which exceed 38kg/m².” This is in contrast to the MAFF welfare code for domestic fowl (1990 reprint), which recommends a maximum stocking rate of 34kg/m².

**BEIC ‘Lion Quality’Eggs** – Battery-caged hens can be stocked at the legal minimum space allowance. For hens in alternative systems, the maximum permissible indoor stocking density is 15.5 birds/m².

**National Dairy Farm Assured** – Sets space allowances for straw yards, loose housing and cubicles for dairy cows. Government guidelines offer the following advice: “The space allowance for cattle housed in groups, should be calculated in relation to the whole environment, the age, sex, liveweight and behavioural needs of the stock, taking account of the presence or absence of horns and the size of the group, and should be based on appropriate advice.”

The setting of space allowances for dairy cows under Annex 1 of this scheme therefore could be seen as going beyond regulatory requirements in setting a baseline. However, it should be borne in mind that the minimum total area of 3 m² per head specified for a 200 kg animal is in line with that laid down for calves of the same weight under The Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2000. It is therefore debatable whether this Scheme actually goes beyond regulatory requirements by setting space allowances for dairy cattle.

As these are only “recommended allowances” under the ‘Housing and Facilities’ section of the Scheme’s Standards, it seems difficult to argue that these amount to a categorical insistence that participants go beyond regulatory requirements in this respect. However, the benefit of the doubt is given to the Scheme in this case.

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* Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (now DEFRA)
Soil Association – Standards set the following:

- **Cattle**: Sets space allowances for cattle housing (not specified by law or welfare codes). For dairy cows, for example, insists on 1m$^2$ of space per 100 kg of animal, with a minimum space allowance of 6m$^2$.

- **Sheep**: Sets minimum space allowances for housed sheep and lambs, but these do not exceed those given by MAFF in the Sheep welfare code (2000) as examples of “current good practice”.

- **Pigs**: Sets a minimum indoor area for fattening pigs that exceeds (doubles the minimum) space requirements laid down in The Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2000. Boars housed for breeding purposes under Soil Association standards must be given an outdoor exercise area and an overall space allowance (lying area and exercise area) that exceeds MAFF (1983) recommended minimums. The space requirements for the indoor housing of sows alone (not counting outdoor exercise area) exceeds the minimums set by EU Directive 2001/88/EEC for pigs.

- **Broiler chickens**: Maximum indoor stocking rate in fixed housing of 10 birds/m$^2$ (21 kg/m$^2$, or in mobile housing, 16 birds/m$^2$ (30 kg/m$^2$). This compares with a MAFF recommended maximum stocking density of 34 kg/m$^2$ for broiler chickens reared for meat.

- **Laying hens**: Maximum indoor stocking rate of 6 birds/m$^2$ for both fixed and mobile housing. This compares with a maximum of 9 birds/m$^2$ of usable area allowed under EU Egg Marketing rules for non battery-cage systems of egg production.

3. **Assured daytime access to outdoors at an appropriate age or during the grazing season** – Schemes must specify in some way that animals should be given access to the outdoors at an appropriate life-stage or when climatic or environmental conditions such as the weather allow.

FABBL Beef & Lamb – Not specified. However, permanent indoor housing is not generally used for sheep production in the UK and therefore the scheme is deemed to meet this welfare criteria for sheep.

Assured British Pigs – Allows permanently housed pig keeping (both breeding and fattening).

Assured Chicken Production – Not specified. Normal practice is for broilers to be permanently housed.

BEIC ‘Lion Quality’ Eggs – Not provided for battery-caged hens. For free range hens only, as stipulated by EU Egg Marketing Regulations.

National Dairy Farm Assured – Not specified.

Soil Association Organic Standard – Permanent housing of livestock is prohibited. Standards state “All classes of livestock must have access to pasturage whenever the physiological condition of the animal, the weather conditions and the state of the ground permit”. Zero-grazing systems are prohibited.

4. **Access to appropriate shelter should be available** – Where animals do have access to the outdoors and are not given free access to fixed housing, as in the case of grazing sheep or cattle, schemes must indicate that appropriate shelter should be available.
FABBL Beef & Lamb – States that “in the absence of appropriate natural sheltering, protection from inclement weather should be available.” Natural shelter such as hedges and trees are accepted. Temporary shelter of straw bales or other materials are accepted where outdoor lambing is practised.

Assured British Pigs – For outdoor pig keeping only, specifies that “arks or other equivalent accommodation shall be available to pigs and positioned in a manner that provides shelter from the prevailing wind.”

Assured Chicken Production – Not applicable to permanently housed broiler chickens.

BEIC ‘Lion Quality’ Eggs – Not applicable for battery caged birds or those housed in indoor barn/perchery systems. For free range hens only, “shaded areas” outdoors are required if there is no external veranda.

National Dairy Farm Assured – The ‘Contingency Procedures’ of the Standards states “Provision should be made to avoid cattle being exposed to extreme weather and temperature for prolonged periods.” It is debatable whether this constitutes making appropriate shelter available to the animals. The benefit of the doubt is given to the Scheme in this case.

Soil Association Organic Standard – Where animals are outwintered, adequate shelter to prevent any welfare problems must be available at all times. Animals kept free range or with access to open air must, if necessary, be provided with “sufficient protection against rain, wind, sun and extreme temperatures, depending on local weather conditions and the breed concerned.”

Poultry: Must have access to shelter at all times.

5. **Provision of bedding/litter mandatory for all housed animals** – Schemes must specify that appropriate bedding (for mammals) or litter (for poultry) should be provided for all animals in the scheme. It is not enough to state that a well-drained lying area must be provided as such a criteria can be fulfilled by a flooring of unbedded concrete and slats.

FABBL Beef & Lamb – Simply states under ‘Housing and Handling Facilities’ that “All stock must have a well-drained lying area” and thereby makes no specific requirement for bedding material.

Assured British Pigs – Does not specify provision of bedding except in solid floor loose-housed systems or outdoors. Otherwise: Floors shall be well drained, or well maintained with dry bedding. Slatted floors shall be maintained in good condition. Pigs kept in open yards or loose housing systems shall be thermally comfortable, with particular attention paid to bedding and environmental controls.

Assured Chicken Production – States that “All flocks must be provided with clean fresh litter to an average of 2cm.”

BEIC ‘Lion Quality’ Eggs – No litter requirement in battery caged birds. For non-cage loose-housed flocks only, at least a third of the floor must be covered by a litter area.

National Dairy Farm Assured – Dairy cow housing must provide clean, dry bedding (or cow mat for cubicles). This is in line with The Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2000, which requires housed lactating or calving cows to have access at all times to a well-drained and bedded lying area.
Soil Association – Requires all livestock housing to be strewn with “Ample dry bedding” in the lying/resting area. Lying areas without bedding are prohibited.

6. Small Group sizes only permitted – Schemes should specify the need to keep group sizes small, or set maximum permitted group sizes. In the latter case, these should be set below levels that might be stated in MAFF codes or legislation.

FABBL Beef & Lamb – Not specified. Only states that social groupings of loose housed cattle “should be retained” where possible. For sheep, states that “Sheep should be grouped to provide social groupings of similar type.” MAFF welfare code (2000) recommends pregnant ewes be kept in groups of less than 50 “to allow for better individual recognition and attention at lambing time.”

Assured British Pigs – Not specified.

Assured Chicken Production – Not specified.

Normal practice is to keep intensive broilers in groups of thousands, or even tens of thousands.

BEIC Lion Quality Eggs – Battery cages, by definition, keep birds in small groups. For hens in alternative systems, the maximum group or “colony” size is 4,000 birds.

National Dairy Farm Assured – Not specified.

Soil Association – Standards state the following:

- Cattle: Not specified.
- Sheep: Specifies a maximum of 40 ewes per pen if in-wintered, or 100 ewes if yarded at lambing. MAFF (2000) recommends pregnant ewes be kept in groups of less than 50.
- Pigs: Specifies a maximum group size of 30 for fattening pigs housed indoors for the final fattening phase; and a maximum of 10 gilts or sows in each stable, social group. There is no regulatory requirement on pig welfare that sets limits on group size. Soil Association standards therefore exceed regulatory requirements.

- Broiler chickens: Recommends a “housing unit” or group size of 500 birds. On a restricted basis only will allow up to 1,000 birds in a group.
- Laying hens: Recommends a “housing unit” or group size of 500 birds. On a restricted basis only will allow up to 2,000 birds in a group.

7. Adapted Breeds suited to rearing environment only – To fulfil this criterion, schemes must stipulate the use of slow-growing strains (in the case of broiler chickens), or lower yielding animals that are less susceptible to physiological problems related to over-production (dairy cattle). Breeds that are prone to birthing difficulties (beef cattle) should also not be permitted.

FABBL Beef & Lamb – For cattle only, states that careful selection of appropriate sires should be made when breeding “so as to reduce the likelihood of subsequent calving difficulties.”

Assured British Pigs – Recommends that replacement breeding females are homozygous negative for the “halothane” (stress) gene.

For outdoor pigs only, “Breeding stock shall be of a type that is bred for outdoor production.”

Assured Chicken Production – Not specified. Fast-growing strains with a susceptibility to physiological disorders (leg problems, ascites, etc.) are the norm.

BEIC ‘Lion Quality’ Eggs – Not specified.
National Dairy Farm Assured – Not specified. About 90% of dairy cattle in the EU are of the Holstein/Friesian breed, which is susceptible to physiological problems related to high yield.

Soil Association – Recommends that attention is paid to the choice of livestock breed in order to produce animals suited to Organic systems, local conditions and to avoid birth problems.

Pigs: Specifies that “Breeds chosen should be of a suitable disposition and physique to thrive under organic, free range conditions.”

Broiler chickens: Recommends the use of slow-growing strains of bird. It also sets a minimum slaughter age of 81 days. This further encourages the avoidance of fast growing Cobb/Ross type hybrids that often suffer fast-growth related health and welfare problems.

Dairy Cattle: Modern Freisian cattle breeds are used under Soil Association organic standards. However, there is general encouragement for adaptive breeds only through the general recommendation that “Attention to the choice of livestock breeds of the sire and dam in order to produce animals suited to Organic systems, local conditions and to avoid problems at birth.”

Laying Hens: Not specified. Modern hybrid laying hens are permitted.

8. Appropriate feed; higher in fibre, lower in energy/protein – Schemes should stipulate the use of appropriate feed rather than protein concentrates.

FABBL Beef & Lamb – Specifies that “Animals must be given appropriate feed that is stored under good conditions”. “All stock must receive a daily diet which is adequate to maintain health and vigour.”

Assured British Pigs – Not specified. High protein concentrated feeds are commonly used. These often lead to feed restriction and therefore welfare problems in breeding pigs.

Assured Chicken Production – Whilst specifying that birds must have “sufficient feed capable of satisfying their dietary requirements and to maintain good health”, protein-rich diets that boost growth rate and exacerbate leg and cardiovascular problems are the norm.

BEIC ‘Lion Quality’ Eggs – States that “Poultry diets must be balanced, of good quality and must provide adequate nutrients such as to maintain pullets and laying birds in good health and production.”

National Dairy Farm Assured – Not specified. Concentrated high-protein feeds are often used to boost milk yield. Scheme states that a balanced diet that provides sufficient nutrients should be provided.

Soil Association – States that “Feed is intended to ensure high quality production rather than maximising production, while meeting the nutritional requirements of the livestock at various stages of their development.” Requires scheme participants to pay particular attention to the “physiological adaptation of livestock to different types of feedstuffs”.

Cattle: A “minimum of 60% of the cattle’s DMI [dry matter intake] must consist of fresh or dried fodder, roughage or silage.” This enforced ratio of forage to concentrates reduces high protein-induced metabolic health and welfare problems. “High energy, low fibre rations and rations containing more than 40% DM [dry matter] concentrates (e.g. barley beef systems)” are prohibited.
Poultry: Diets must contain a minimum of 65% cereals or cereal by-products. Synthetic yolk colorants and all other feed additives are prohibited.

9. Adequate feed to satisfy hunger at all stages of production – Schemes must specify that restrictive feeding practices should not be used (broiler breeders, breeding pigs) and that bulky, less nutrient-dense diets should be used to satisfy hunger.

FABBL Beef & Lamb – “All stock must receive a daily diet which is adequate to maintain health and vigour.” Restrictive feeding practices are not generally known for sheep.

Assured British Pigs – Only requires the diet to be “nutritionally adequate to maintain health and vigour.” Restrictive feeding of breeding sows a widespread practice.

Assured Chicken Production – Whilst sufficient feed should be provided to satisfy “dietary requirements and to maintain good health”, restrictive feeding of breeding stock (males) is permitted.

BEIC ‘Lion Quality’ Eggs – Feed must provide “adequate nutrients”. Laying hens are most likely to be subjected to restrictive feeding or a period of total feed withdrawal during forced moulting, a practice not permitted under the Scheme.

National Dairy Farm Assured – Not specified.

Soil Association – Makes no specific reference to restrictive feeding practices, either for organic reared livestock or bought-in animals including birds.

Cattle: Does not specify a prohibition on restrictive feeding, but does prohibit high energy, low fibre rations and rations containing more than 40% dry matter concentrates.

Sheep: Restrictive feeding practices are not generally known for sheep.

Pigs: The SA standard does prohibit the “withholding of food and water for drying off” lactating sows after weaning.

Poultry: Must have access to feed and water at all times in daylight hours, except just prior to transport and/or slaughter when feed may be withheld for a limited period.

10. No yield or growth promoters permitted – Schemes must forbid the use of growth promoting antibiotics.

FABBL Beef & Lamb – Not specified. States that “dietary enhancers etc. which are legal may be used.”

Assured British Pigs – Not specified. States that “Producers not using antibiotic growth promoters (avilamycin; salinomycin; flavophospholipol) will be recorded as not so doing, and this information will be made available to marketing groups and abattoirs.” The implication is that growth promoting antibiotics are used by at least some scheme participants.

Assured Chicken Production – Companies within the scheme must demonstrate that feedstuffs “do not contain antibiotic growth promoters”.

BEIC ‘Lion Quality’ Eggs – States “Growth promoting substances must not be included in the feed.” Also does not permit canthaxanthin in feed for birds producing shell eggs rather than eggs for processing.

National Dairy Farm Assured – Not specified.

Soil Association – Standards prohibit “All growth promoters and hormones for heat synchronisation, production stimulation (including Bovine Somatotropin) and suppression of natural growth controls.”
11. No Mutilations permitted except for strict veterinary reasons – Mutilations are now widely accepted as painful practices that generally tackle the symptoms but not the cause of husbandry problems. Many welfarists see routine mutilation as the litmus test of a good system. To satisfy this key determinant, schemes must not permit mutilations except on strict veterinary advice.

FABBL Beef & Lamb – Allows surgical operations (disbudding of cattle, castration or tail docking in sheep) to be carried out so long as by a competent stockperson or a vet. Cattle dehorning only permitted by a vet where necessary.

Assured British Pigs – Allows “veterinary approved” tail docking and tooth clipping on piglets under 72 hours old, where there is evidence on the farm, that injuries to pigs have occurred or are likely to occur as a result of not carrying out these mutilations. For outdoor pigs, nose ringing is allowed where conditions “would otherwise lead to injury”. Castration is not permitted.

Assured Chicken Production – Broiler breeding stock (layers) may be beak trimmed in line with FAWC recommendations and with written veterinary approval. It must be carried out by trained operatives.

BEIC ‘Lion Quality’ Eggs – “Beak tipping” is allowed under the scheme.

National Dairy Farm Assured – The scheme states that staff should demonstrate competency when carrying out procedures such as debudding, castration, dehorning and removal of supernumerary teats of a calf less than three months old. Tail docking, hot branding and amputations are prohibited under the scheme.

Soil Association – Standards state the following:

- Cattle: Disbudding and castration (where necessary) are recommended under 3 months of age.
- Sheep: Permits tail docking and castration “where practised for animal welfare reasons”. Prohibits teeth cutting and grinding.
- Pigs: Prohibits tail docking, teeth cutting, castration of all pigs, and ringing of sows, gilts and boars to preserve pasture.
- Broiler chickens: Beak clipping and tipping, caponisation and all other mutilations are prohibited.
- Laying hens: Beak clipping and tipping, caponisation and all other mutilations are prohibited.

12. No Embryo transfer technology permitted – This determinant is mainly applicable to schemes dealing with cattle and sheep. Schemes must state that ET is not acceptable under its provisions.

FABBL Beef & Lamb – Not specified.

Assured British Pigs – Not specified/Not generally applicable

Assured Chicken Production – Not applicable.

BEIC ‘Lion Quality’ Eggs – Not applicable.

National Dairy Farm Assured – Does not prohibit embryo transfer programmes, but states they should be shown in the Herd Health Record.

Soil Association Organic Standard – Prohibits the use of “surgical or chemical interference which is not designed to improve the animals’ own health or well-being or that of the group”. Also, prohibits those
“Breeding practices which make the livestock systems over reliant on inappropriate technology” such as embryo transfer and routine caesarean sections.

13. **No Genetic Engineering Permitted** – Schemes must state that genetically engineered animals or products cannot be used within its terms.

- **FABBL Beef & Sheep** – Not specified.
- **Assured British Pigs** – Not specified.
- **Assured Chicken Production** – Not specified.
- **BEIC ‘Lion Quality’ Eggs** – Not specified.
- **National Dairy Farm Assured** – Not specified.
- **Soil Association Organic Standard** – Prohibits “Breeding practices based on genetic engineering”.

14. **Encouragement of High Quality Stockmanship** – Schemes must at least insist that stockpersons fulfil their legal obligations under The Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2000 by having access to and being acquainted with the provisions of all relevant statutory welfare codes, as well as a general requirement for careful husbandry and handling.

- **FABBL Beef & Lamb** – States that “It is a policy of FABBL that all beef and/or lamb farms: Comply with relevant legislation; ensure the health and welfare of the stock based on five basic needs”. It also states that “Animals must be well managed … by a competent stockman”, and that “Stockmen should be competent based on experience or a combination of formal training and experience.”

- **Assured British Pigs** – Requires a person to be nominated with responsibility for animal welfare for each unit. Requires MAFF codes to be present, and for all staff to read and understand them.

- **Assured Chicken Production** – Stockmen must demonstrate competence and be trained in a range of skills including signs of bird health and behaviour, “correct handling of birds in a positive and compassionate manner”, humane slaughter, and litter management.

- **BEIC ‘Lion Quality’ Eggs** – Not specified. Simply says that “Staff must be fully trained and competent to care for the health and welfare of the birds throughout the life of the flock.” Provides no further guidance or measure of competence.

- **National Dairy Farm Assured** – Comprehensive set of requirements given in “Stockmanship and Training” section of standards for the scheme. These include that farmers and stockmen “must follow good welfare practice which recognises the Five Freedoms”, and “observe all relevant UK and EU legislation and codes of practice”.

- **Soil Association** – Introduction to general livestock standards specifies that “The development and management of Organic livestock systems requires special care in nurturing positive health and vitality, ensuring the proper control of disease and encouragement of positive* animal welfare.

Soil Association standards also insist that “All livestock must be handled, housed and transported under conditions which reflect proper care and concern for their welfare at all times and which comply at least with the requirements of all relevant legislation and MAFF Codes of Recommendations for Animal Welfare.”

* ‘Positive welfare’ is used here in the sense used by the Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC) to mean the satisfaction of the animal’s needs including behavioural needs and not merely the avoidance of cruelty.”
15. Electric goads and rough handling not permitted – schemes must indicate that these are not allowed.

FABBL Beef & Lamb – “The use of electric goads is not permitted.” Also states “At all times, animals must be handled in such a way as to avoid injury and minimise stress.”

Assured British Pigs – “The use of electric goads, sticks and pipes for handling stock is not permitted.”

Assured Chicken Production – “Birds must be handled in a compassionate and positive manner.”

BEIC ‘Lion Quality’ Eggs – Not specified (handling).

National Dairy Farm Assured – Not specified.

Soil Association – Prohibits the “use of undue force including electric goads”, specifically for cattle, sheep and pigs. General standards demand that all animals, including birds, are “handled with proper care and concern for their welfare”.

REFERENCES


FARM ASSURANCE SCHEMES & ANIMAL WELFARE
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