

# FRCAW Newsletter 52

## February – March 2025

### Editorial

#### New EFSA Scientific Opinions



[Image](#) from the [IFCE](#) website

A pair of new Scientific Opinions on horse welfare during killing have just been published by EFSA (the European Food Safety Authority). [The first](#) reports on the protection of horses during slaughter for human consumption, while [the second](#) examines their welfare during killing for purposes other than human consumption, both individually and on a larger scale. The reports divide the whole slaughter process into three defined phases and evaluate the methods employed for stunning and/or killing. Potential welfare hazards, corrective or mitigating measures and animal-based measures for the assessment of welfare consequences are detailed, as are certain practices considered unacceptable on welfare grounds by the experts. These Opinions, drawn up by EFSA's *Panel on Animal Health and Welfare*, form part of the updated scientific evidence base being produced for the European decision-making bodies overseeing the current overhaul of animal welfare regulations.

## Europe's roadmap for the future of agriculture



Image from the [île-de-France Europe](#) website

The European Commission has issued a press release presenting its [Vision for Agriculture and Food](#) for the next four years, which describes itself as ‘a roadmap for an attractive, competitive, resilient, future-oriented and fair agri-food system for current and future generations of farmers and agri-food operators’. In her announcement, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen referred to the measures proposed in the Vision to simplify and digitize farming, to support farmers, reduce food waste and improve animal welfare. The inclusion of animal welfare in the forthcoming programme echoes the recent appointment of a [European Commissioner](#) for Animal Health and Welfare, which would appear to have been a turning point for the European Union. In particular, the first incumbent, Commissioner Várhelyi, is responsible for the updating of animal welfare legislation to ensure that all 27 EU Member States implement a harmonized system of high welfare standards. There are currently considerable variations in approach across the EU towards animal welfare, highlighted last month in [a report](#) brought out by the Eurogroup for Animals, which shows that many controversial practices are still to be found in some countries, including cage farming and force-feeding, while some species remain unprotected. Nevertheless, [some countries have already acted](#) in anticipation of the ban on cage farming promised by the Commission. In Sweden, 99% of layers are now farmed without the use of cages as the result of strong commitment from businesses in the sector, while Slovenia is planning a total ban by 2028.

## A French public that continues to care about animal welfare

Like most European citizens, the French remain deeply committed to animal welfare. Their enduring concern is expressed in the responses to the [lfop's 2025 poll](#), the eighth of its kind, which reports, for example, that 9 out of 10 French citizens (89%) are in favour of banning cage farming, and 84% are in favor of a ban on the online sale of all animals (up 8 points since last year). 83% of respondents also expressed their support for keeping the slaughter of animals on farm, in the place where they were raised, while 91% agreed that animals should be transported after slaughter.

## New annual review of European animal law



Image from [The European Institute for Animal Law & Policy](https://www.eur-institute.eu/) website

The European Institute for Animal Law & Policy has just launched its [new review series](#) reporting on EU animal law and policy. This compendium summarises recent developments, drawing on the Institute's newsletters and archives and covering both positive advances and ongoing challenges. It examines the field of European animal law and also reports individually on law and policy developments in EU Member States. This inaugural issue provides a five-year review covering the previous European parliamentary term (2019-2024). Annual reviews will follow regularly from 2026.

## Animal consciousness: growing evidence but still a complex matter



Image from [Le Monde](https://www.lemonde.fr/) website. © Masanori Kohda

In February, a perspective article appeared in [Science](#) reviewing recent scientific findings on animal consciousness. The article features studies showing that bumblebees play with wooden balls, that

cuttlefish remember the past and plan for the future, and that [wrasse fish](#) would seem to be able to recognize themselves in a mirror. If the scientific community were to accept these observations as evidence of consciousness in these animals, this would have substantial implications for the fields of neuroscience and animal welfare. However, as the article stresses, we are still far from any widely accepted theoretical consensus over the biological and physical bases for consciousness, and no precise definition of consciousness has been agreed among the scientific community, complicating the task of researchers who seek to expand understanding of this phenomenon.



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## Cognition-Emotions

### 20/02/2025 : [Evaluating animal consciousness: An emerging field shows how animal feelings can be studied scientifically](#)

Document type: perspective article published in [Science](#)

Authors: Kristin Andrews, Jonathan Birch, Jeff Sebo

**Preview:** Honeybees becoming “pessimistic” after stressful experiences; cuttlefish remembering the past and planning for the future; and cleaner wrasse fish seemingly recognizing themselves in a mirror: If scientific reports like these were accepted as evidence of consciousness, then the implications would be substantial. The neuroscience of consciousness would need to expand its focus beyond humans and other primates and include a much wider range of model species. Animal welfare policies likely would need to expand as well. The outstanding question is whether such reports serve as evidence of consciousness. If so, what conclusions can be drawn about animals that display some consciousness indicators but not others? Assessing animal consciousness would be easier if there were a widely accepted theory of consciousness and a precise definition of consciousness tied to that theory. Unfortunately, theories of consciousness abound, with 22 theories identified in a recent study. Although some ideas enjoy more empirical support than others, most researchers agree that all current theories are insecure. In the absence of a secure theory or a precise definition, consciousness science instead starts with sensible examples that involve felt experience in humans. These include sensory experiences such as color perception, affective experiences such as bodily pleasure, and vivid imagery during dreams, memories, imagination, or planning. These examples provide an initial characterization of consciousness that allows researchers to investigate dimensions of conscious experience. (...)

### 19/02/2025 : [If you blink at me, I'll blink back. Domestic dogs' feedback to conspecific visual cues](#)

Document type: scientific article published in [Royal Society Open Science](#)

Authors: Chiara Canori, Tiziano Travain, Giulia Pedretti, Rachele Fontani, Paola Valsecchi

**Preview:** Blinking, along with other facial expressions, has been suggested to play a role in dogs' intra- and interspecific communication, however the feedback this signal elicits from the audience is still poorly studied. In this study, we investigated the behavioural and physiological responses of 54 domestic dogs to videos of conspecifics performing blink. Based on existing literature, we hypothesized that dogs would show a higher rate of blinking when exposed to blink than to another facial expression (nose lick) and to an attentive still-looking face (control). Results showed that dogs blinked more during the blink video compared to the nose lick (NL) video, suggesting a mimicry phenomenon and implying a possible role of blinking in dogs' communication. Cardiac analyses showed increased heart rate variability values during the video sessions independently to the type of facial signal projected, suggesting that the stimuli were not perceived as stressful. The present results open the door to future investigation of blink synchronization, as this aspect was not directly addressed in the present study. Future research should also explore the effects of eye blink and NL in modulating intraspecific social interactions.

## **18/12/2024 : Social learning and cultural enrichment for fish welfare**

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

Authors: Chiaowen Chiang et Becca Franks

**Preview:** This commentary examines how understanding animal culture—shared behaviors and knowledge transmitted through social learning—plays a role in advancing welfare practices for captive fishes. Despite extensive evidence of fishes' complex sociocultural capacities, their psychosocial needs remain underestimated and unmet in zoos and aquaria. We explore what considering fish culture might mean for welfare practices: diverse social learning opportunities, cultural development, and thoughtful group management. More knowledge about wild fishes' lives will help bridge the gap between their full, complex lives and current captive welfare practices.

## **09/12/2024 : Soundboard-trained dogs produce non-accidental, non-random and non-imitative two-button combinations**

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

Authors: Bastos, A.P.M., Houghton, Z.N., Naranjo, L., Rossano, F.

**Preview:** Early studies attempting interspecies communication with great apes trained to use sign language and Augmented Interspecies Communication (AIC) devices were limited by methodological and technological constraints, as well as restrictive sample sizes. Evidence for animals' intentional production of symbols was met with considerable criticisms which could not be easily deflected with existing data. More recently, thousands of pet dogs have been trained with AIC devices comprising soundboards of buttons that can be pressed to produce prerecorded human words or phrases. However, the nature of pets' button presses remains an open question: are presses deliberate, and potentially meaningful? Using a large dataset of button presses by family dogs and their owners, we investigate whether dogs' button presses are (i) non-accidental, (ii) non-random, and (iii) not mere repetitions of their owners' presses. Our analyses reveal that, at the population level, soundboard use by dogs cannot be explained by random pressing, and that certain two-button concept combinations appear more often than expected by chance at the population level. We also find that dogs' presses are not perfectly predicted by their owners', suggesting that dogs' presses are not merely repetitions of human presses, therefore suggesting that dog soundboard use is deliberate.

Publication resulting in an [article in Science](#) on 23/01/2025

## **Animal husbandry and human-animal relationships**

### **10/03/2025 : Industry stakeholders attitudes and beliefs about tail biting and docking in pigs – A case study in Switzerland and Spain**



Document type: scientific article published in [Preventive Veterinary Medicine](#)

Authors: Andrea Knörr, Xiao Zhou, Angela Bearth, Beatriz Garcia-Morante, Carla Correia-Gomes, Joaquim Segalés, Thomas Echtermann, Michael Siegrist

**Preview:** Tail docking is still widely used in major European pig-producing countries despite efforts to ban it. The present study aimed to understand the attitudes and beliefs of pig farming professionals in Spain and Switzerland regarding tail biting and tail docking. For this, n = 275 Swiss, and n = 87 Spanish participants completed an online questionnaire regarding the issue of tail biting and docking in pigs and their attitudes and beliefs. Spanish participants predominantly kept docked pigs (n = 70, 80 %), whereas Swiss participants kept undocked pigs (n = 271, 99 %). While tail biting occurrences in the last two years were reported by most participants (n = 301, 83 %), the attitudes towards them differed: Spanish participants found the management of tail biting more challenging than Swiss participants. In addition, Spanish participants considered welfare to be better for docked pigs than for undocked pigs, whereas Swiss participants perceived the welfare of undocked pigs to be better. Similarly, Spanish participants showed a strong perception of lower production risks for docked pigs than for undocked pigs, a perception that could not be found in Swiss participants. Overall, Swiss participants saw more advantages in keeping long-tailed pigs and more possibilities to prevent tail biting than Spanish participants. The results suggest that Spanish pig-farming professionals' attitudes towards tail docking are dominated by the conviction that docking is a necessity that lowers production risks and ensures animal welfare. Future efforts attempting to enforce the prohibition on tail docking should not only attempt to overcome structural barriers, but also focus on communicating with and changing the perceptions of pig farming professionals. By tackling the reluctance to try non-docking, producers can gain more experience and confidence with raising long-tailed pigs. To create sustainable changes in tail-docking practices, in addition to optimising the environment for pigs, communication should focus on changing attitudes and reducing risk perceptions.

### **13/02/2025 : The role of intrinsic motivation and continuous enhancement on the intention to implement animal welfare practices in dairy farming**

Document type: scientific article published in [Applied Economic Perspectives and Policy](#)

Authors: Henrike Grotsch, Marcus Mergenthaler, Sarah Kühl, Holger Schulze

**Preview:** Animal welfare programs alone are insufficient to ensure better welfare for farm animals. Effective farm management, driven by dairy farmers' intrinsic motivation, plays a pivotal role. This study examines the factors influencing dairy farmers' intention to implement animal welfare practices and their commitment to continuously enhancing welfare. Based on a survey of 682 German dairy farmers, the results underscore the importance of intrinsic motivation, habitual behavior, and knowledge acquisition. Farmers' willingness to engage in continuous improvement suggests that policies should focus less on formal programs and more on enabling intrinsic motivation. The study introduces the construct of “continuous enhancement,” offering a novel framework for understanding and improving animal welfare practices.

## 27/01/2025 : Assessing the impact of a human behaviour change intervention to reduce owner-related barriers to interactive cat play

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

Authors: Mikel Delgado, Ellen Marcinkiewicz, Paul Rhodes, Sarah LH Ellis

**Preview:** Although cats are popular pets and often viewed as family members, many cat owners fail to meet their welfare needs. This failure may occur due to several factors, including a lack of awareness and education, a lack of time or interest, and not prioritising the welfare needs of a companion animal due to competing motivations. This study expands on previous research that identified common barriers to owners engaging in daily wand toy play with their pet cat. The Behaviour Change Wheel framework, including the COM-B model, were used to design an educational digital campaign to encourage cat owners to play with their cats daily by removing or reducing several of the identified barriers (COM relates to the three categories of barriers - Capability, Opportunity and Motivation which influence B – the target behaviour). Pre and post-intervention surveys were conducted before and after the campaign. Three hundred and sixty-three cat owners completed the matched surveys. Participants reported positive impacts within the survey, with 35.3 % reporting that they played with their cats more regularly with a wand toy because of the campaign. An additional 11.9 % intended to change how often they play this way with their cats. After the campaign, participants reported fewer Capability barriers ( $S = -2442$ ,  $p \leq 0.0001$ ) and fewer Motivational barriers ( $S = -2532$ ,  $p \leq 0.0001$ ) to interactive play. Participants also reported fewer behaviour problems in their cats after the campaign. Most participants found the campaign materials enjoyable. This study demonstrates the positive impact of a short, digital campaign to increase self-reported play behaviour of cat owners with their pets.

## Precision farming and AI

### 13/02/2025 : Face readers

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

Author: Christa Lesté-Lasserre

**Preview:** Scientists around the world are turning to AI to decipher the facial expressions of animals, from sheep to horses to cats. Some have already developed algorithms that are faster and more accurate at recognizing signs of pain and distress than the most attentive humans. These tools could usher in a new era of caring for animals that gives higher priority to their health, welfare, and protection [...]. There are tantalizing hints that they could go even further. Eventually, AI might even outshine humans in interpreting a range of more complex emotions akin to happiness, serenity, frustration, or fear [...]—feelings that are equally important to understand if we are to give animals the best possible lives. But like most scientists contemplating the powers of AI, animal behavior researchers worry about putting too much stock in machines, especially when animal welfare is at stake. [...] Experts in the field have become skilled at manually coding [...] facial movements in animals, which could—in theory—allow for welfare checks. But it's incredibly tedious work [...]. Human coders need an average of 100 seconds to identify the various facial muscles and code their

positions in a single image, or 2 to 3 hours for 30 seconds of video. AI, on the other hand, can do the same task almost instantaneously—but first, it has to be taught. [...]

Computer scientist Anna Zamansky [...] dreams of developing an artificial intelligence that can interpret a range of emotions in dogs [...] Zamansky began by developing facial recognition software to help people find their lost dogs. Owners upload a picture of their dog's face to the software, which scans for a match in a database of images of strays submitted by concerned strangers. Zamansky [...] have donated the technology to relief organizations working in Ukraine and in flood zones in Brazil, where it has helped reunite dozens of lost dogs with their owners. More recently, the team has turned to a more difficult task: using AI to pinpoint the often subtle signs of discomfort in animals' faces. [...]

[Read complete article here](#)

## **03/02/2025 : Smart farming and Artificial Intelligence (AI): How can we ensure that animal welfare is a priority?**

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

Author: Marian Stamp Dawkins

**Preview:** The increasing use of technology in livestock farming has the potential for making farming easier and more efficient and for improving animal welfare. There are also, however, potential dangers, one of which is that animal welfare becomes subordinated to the drive for greater efficiency. I will argue that for technology to deliver on its promise of being able to improve the lives of animals, three conditions need to be met: (i) Both the public and the agricultural industry must be satisfied that automated measures of welfare can capture what is meant by 'good welfare' (ii) There is scientific evidence that the technology genuinely improves animal welfare when deployed on commercial farms (iii) There are demonstrable financial, environmental and other benefits as well as welfare ones so that industry is convinced that prioritizing welfare is commercially worthwhile. Publication resulting in an [article in Poultry World](#) on 31/01/2025

## **16/01/2025 : Machine Vision Applications for Welfare Monitoring in Aquaculture: Challenges and Opportunities**

Document type: scientific synthesis published in [Aquaculture, Fish & Fisheries](#)

Authors: Fitzgerald, A., Ioannou, C.C., Consuegra, S., Dowsey, A. and Garcia de Leaniz, C.

**Preview:** Increasing consideration of welfare in aquaculture has prompted interest in non-invasive methods of monitoring that avoid unnecessary stress and handling. Machine vision (MV) provides a potential solution to these needs, as it can be used for non-invasive monitoring of animal health and welfare in real-time. We examined the practical applications of MV for welfare monitoring in aquaculture, the hardware and algorithms used for automated data collection, and the main challenges and solutions for data processing and analysis. The most common application of MV has been the estimation of size-related metrics (growth, biomass) in fish, but key aspects of welfare, such as monitoring of parasites and disease or detection of stress-related behaviours, are lagging behind. Numerous camera setups have been used, ranging from single to stereoscopic cameras and from emersed to submerged cameras, but these have often been used under optimal conditions that may not always reflect those prevalent in industry (high densities, low visibility), likely

overestimating performance. Object detection algorithms, such as YOLO, have been the approach of choice for most MV applications in aquaculture, but our review has identified an increasing number of alternatives that can help circumvent some of the challenges posed by high densities and poor lighting typical of commercial farms. MV has the potential to transform welfare monitoring in aquaculture, but there are still important challenges that need to be overcome before it can become mainstream, namely the ability to detect ectoparasites and diseases, identify abnormal behaviours, and work across taxa, particularly in crustaceans.

## Ethics-sociology-philosophy-law

### 13/03/2025 : Translating Ethical Principles into Law, Regulations and Workable Animal Welfare Practices

Document type: commentary published in [Animals](#)

Authors: David J. Mellor, Mette Uldahl

**Preview:** The ethical theories considered in this commentary include Anthropocentrism, Dominionism, Utilitarianism, Reverence for Life, Animal Rights, Biocentrism, Ecocentrism and Care Ethics. It is apparent that Utilitarianism provides a motivating rationale for devising legal instruments to manage animal welfare in many countries. The emphasis of different laws spanning many decades paralleled the trajectory of changing attitudes to animals. Initial laws focussed on serious abuse, and were enacted to deal with relative indifference to animal suffering. Anticruelty laws followed; they dealt with a wider range of noxious acts that also cause suffering. Animal Protection laws accommodated a growing acceptance that much less severe, yet still very unpleasant experiences, are of significant welfare concern. These laws and their amendments, plus the associated instruments (e.g., Codes of Welfare/Practice), were increasingly couched using animal welfare terminology. Finally, contemporary laws that focus directly to animal welfare, increasingly refer to a 'duty of care' towards animals, entailing responsibilities to minimise negative experiences and to promote positive ones. Outlined here is an example of an ethically-based legal structure for providing guidance and outlining requirements for animal welfare management nationally. It has four interacting levels: Level 1—Law; Level 2—Codes of Welfare/Practice; Level 3—Regulations; and Level 4—Cooperation at a National Level. It is noted that although the framing of this legal structure is based on ethical principles, the expression of those principles is more implicit than explicit. However, expression of the ethical principles can be made much more explicit when putting into effect legal requirements to assess the acceptability of different practices in animal welfare terms. There are four interacting steps in this process: Step 1—the Primary Assumption: Animals have intrinsic value and an interest in having good lives. Step 2—Distribution of Responsibility: Humans usually control human-animal interactions and have an overarching responsibility to operate two principles: (1) If in doubt err on the side of the animal; (2) If there are justified concerns, a lack of evidence can never in itself justify a practice. Step 3—Assessment of Impact on the Animals: Use a structured framework to assess the impact of human-initiated activities. The Five Domains Model is suggested as a suitable device for this. Step 4—Rigorous Evaluation: the aim, to choose the least noxious intervention as required by the Principle of Proportionality which, once chosen, supports a justification to proceed. This commentary provides examples of how ethical reasoning, and its

operational consequences, can be made visible at every stage of developing, introducing and operating infrastructures for managing animal welfare nationally.

## **31/01/2025 : Des élèves paysans confrontés à la souffrance animale**

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

Author: Emilie Massemin

**Preview:** Theatre director Aurore Fattier is inviting agricultural high school students to reflect on their relationship with animals. Her show will create a dialogue between their words and philosophical and literary works. (...)

*The show's objective* is to document as closely as possible the relationships between young people in Normandy and the animals in their lives. The small troupe has previously held workshops with the agricultural schools of Thury-Harcourt and La Cambe. During these residencies, the artist has run a practical series of interviews and workshops of the kind already used in the first part of her show, which concerned the tracking of wild animals and was created in February and March 2024 in the Grand Est region of France. (...)

The final part will bring the students' contributions into dialogue with a group of philosophical texts, some of which are aimed at children, on the links that bind us to other species (...)

*"These questions lie at the heart of our educational practices,"* says the teacher, *"because our pupils find themselves caught up in a paradox: they are faced with the deaths of animals while having a very sensitive relationship with both the animals and nature in general."* (...)

It remains difficult for students to deal with this ethical issue. *"All the same, there are a lot of cows who get close to us. I remember a little calf that came to see me as soon as I entered the building and followed me everywhere,"* says Chloé, a second year student of general studies and technology, who comes from a farming family and would like to become a mixed arable-livestock farmer. (...)

The show, which premieres on March 28 at 8:30 p.m. in Noues de Sienne (Calvados) and will tour the Department until the end of June, may help to shed some light on this paradox.

## **Animal welfare assessment and labelling**

### **10/03/2025 : Évaluation approfondie du bien-être des bovins en unités expérimentales INRAE : le protocole Welfare Quality®**

Document type: technical article published in [NOV'AE](#)

Authors: Lydiane Aubé, Marie-Madeleine Mialon, Sarah Barbey, Raphaëlle Botreau

**Preview: In-depth assessment of cattle welfare in INRAE experimental units: the Welfare Quality® protocol**

In order to assess and improve the level of welfare of the cattle in the INRAE experimental facilities (EFs), it was decided to carry out a one-off in-depth assessment in addition to the regular use of monitoring grids. Thus, the SBEA Bovine working group therefore proposes that each EU should host staff from another EF with the aim of assessing and establishing a diagnosis of the welfare status of the animals at the time of this in-depth assessment. To improve animal welfare, this



assessment will be followed by an advice phase to identify the measures to be implemented to overcome the weak points while maintaining the positive points. Instead of creating a new cattle assessment tool, it is proposed to use the Welfare Quality® protocols. This assessment tool was developed as part of a European research project and has become a reference tool. Adaptations will nevertheless be necessary to cover all the types of cattle present in the INRAE facilities (the Welfare Quality® protocols having been designed only for lactating dairy cows, fattening young cattle and veal calves) and the various contexts (e.g. assessment of animals on pasture) encountered in the EFs.

## **23/02/2025 : Label Bœuf de pâturage : norme de bien-être animal la plus stricte pour la restauration - Vache mère Suisse, bovins à viande issus de l'élevage allaitant**

Document type: article published in [Vache Mère Suisse](#)

Author: Vache Mère Suisse

**Preview:** Animals bearing the Boeuf de Pâturage (grass-fed beef) label are Natura-Beef animals which enter the food services sector via Transgourmet (a Bell subsidiary). They are subject to Natura-Beef production conditions. In the food services sector, grass-fed beef also appears under the Origin label, an umbrella brand of Transgourmet. In this highly competitive area of the market, grass-fed beef is notable for its animal welfare standards, which are the strictest in Switzerland, and for the exceptional flavor of its meat. It is important for producers to be aware of these labels, because we all act as ambassadors to our customers. If we work together, we can act as multipliers in our country, where there is a plethora of different beef labels.

[Link to label specifications \(pdf\)](#)

## **18/02/2025 : Avancée majeure pour l'Étiquette Bien-Être Animal**

Document type: article published by the [OABA](#)

Author: OABA

**Preview:** We are pleased to announce a significant step forward: Auchan, Carrefour, Casino, Coopérative U, Franprix, Lidl, Monoprix and Mousquetaires have joined forces to promote the Étiquette Bien-Être Animal in their stores and online. This label, co-created and developed with the OABA, enables consumers to discover the welfare level experienced by the chickens that go into the products they buy, by using a scoring system from A to E. It complies with European recommendations and those of the ANSES and, in particular, it helps to improve living conditions for farm animals.

### *Transparency and commitment*

This initiative, supported by the OABA and other NGOs, represents an important step towards greater transparency for consumers. It responds to a growing demand for products that respect animal welfare. Over 50% of European consumers say that animal welfare influences their purchasing choices.

### *Étiquette Bien-Être Animal: a French benchmark*

- Transparency: Provides information on animal welfare with a clear rating.
- Robustness: Ensures complete traceability from birth to slaughter.

- Monitoring: Each structure is audited annually by independent bodies.

#### *Key statistics*

- 24 members: NGOs, producers, processors and distributors.
- 40% of French chicken farmers audited.
- 60% of free-range chicken farmers signed up.
- 70% of supermarkets signed up.

Next steps: labelling for chicken will soon be extended to pork and egg products, offering even greater transparency.

From meat eaters to vegans, customers will welcome this initiative as a step towards better farming, transport and slaughtering conditions.

[Find out more](#)

## **03/02/2025 : Bien-être animal : vers un étiquetage informant les consommateurs ?**

Document type: article published in [The Conversation](#)

Author: Julie Chiron

**Preview:** A proposal for labelling that would inform consumers on farm animal welfare has been submitted to the French Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty, and has also been presented to the European Risk Assessment Agency (EFSA: European Food Safety Authority).

[...] *Animal welfare, an evolving concept*

[...] *Taking animals' feelings into account*

[...] In 2018, the Anses [...] proposed its definition of Animal Welfare, integrating individual consideration, positive aspects and an animal's cognitive and emotional capacity: "The welfare of an animal is the positive mental and physical state linked to the satisfaction of its physiological and behavioral needs, as well as its expectations. This state varies according to the animal's perception of the situation".

*Vers un étiquetage mesurant le bien-être animal*

[...] The decision to label animal products for consumption, as proposed by the European Commission (EC) in 2020 in its Farm to Fork strategy, would enable transparency and harmonization of animal welfare labels for products circulating in Europe. Currently, animal welfare labels have been developed in all EU countries, and the EC Study on animal welfare labelling lists 51 systems covering all the animal production sectors. In France, there is only one specific animal welfare label, created by the [AEBEA](#) (French Animal Welfare Labelling Association). However, no European legislation exists governing animal welfare claims or labelling. Given the proliferation of labels making such claims, the Anses considered it useful to formalize the scientific guidelines on which a labelling reference system and its welfare assessment protocols should be based. This work is based on the definition of animal welfare set out above. These guidelines are intended for scientists and stakeholders who are planning to establish a labelling reference system for a given animal category. The label produced on the basis of this standard is intended for the consumer, who must be able to consult the related labelling standard with complete transparency.

*Taking selective breeding farms into account*

Today's livestock farming systems are highly specialized and are organized into major production chains. The term "commodity chain" covers all the activities relating to a product, from its initial

production through to its sale to the consumer. The food commodities of animal origin that should be labelled are derived from animals belonging, for the most part, to the production stage of the chain in question and, to a lesser extent, to the selection-reproduction stage. However, animals bred for genetic selection or reproduction are the products of genetic choices made for and by the industry, and they are raised and live on farms before being transported and then slaughtered to enter the food processing chain. [...] In line with the definition of animal welfare, each assessment protocol takes account of the fact that animal welfare is both individual (applying to a single animal) and has multiple domains. Six domains are specified: genetics, nutrition, environment, health, behavioral interactions and mental state. Each animal welfare domain has its own criteria, with associated measurable indicators that enable a value to be assigned. A total of fourteen assessment criteria have been defined. An overall animal welfare score is obtained by aggregating the indicator measurements carried out on an animal or its environment, where applicable, for each criterion. The indicators used are selected and described in the labelling reference document. Animal-based measures (ABM) are essential, and must be prioritised over resource-based measures (RBM). This approach is in line with the Anses definition of animal welfare: "indicators based on the environment can only be used to assess the actions taken to promote an animal's welfare, or for reasons of animal protection. Animal-based indicators directly assess the animal's state of welfare, corresponding to the evaluation of outcomes rather than means, that is to say, whether the animal's welfare is satisfactory under the conditions provided. With animal-based indicators, it is genuinely the animal's welfare that is assessed, rather than a human's perception of it". By the same token, if a label indicates only the farming method (the set of resources provided by humans to animals), this cannot be equated with animal welfare labelling. Although the farming method may correspond to a potential for animal welfare, it must be validated by welfare indicators measured on the animals. The aggregation of measurements starts with the measurements of a farm's individual animals, which go towards a final welfare score for all the animals. The final aggregation process combines the two separate welfare scores from different establishments, one for the breeding-reproduction stage and one for the production stage. [...] The final welfare score must have multiple grading levels. The Anses recommendation is to aim for four or five levels - depending on whether the system is mandatory or voluntary - to reflect the varied situations of livestock farms, to enable the system to be progressive, and also to provide consumers with reliable, easy-to-understand information that can be ranked in order of importance. [...]

## **01/02/2025 : Validation of qualitative behaviour assessment for dairy cows at pasture**

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

Authors: L. Aubé, M.M. Mialon, I. Veissier, A. de Boyer des Roches

**Preview:** Qualitative Behaviour Assessment (QBA) has been validated as a measure of emotional state in dairy cows kept indoors. We investigated the validity of QBA as a measure of emotional state of cows at pasture. We focused on intra- and inter-observer reliability and the selectivity of QBA. First, 5 observers watched 20 videos of dairy cows at pasture 4 times (resulting in 400 observations). The observers performed QBA using the fixed list of 20 terms proposed in Welfare Quality. The first axis of the principal component analysis performed on these observations represented emotional valence (PC1, from irritable to content) and a second axis represented arousal (PC2, from calm to

active). Kendall's concordance coefficients (W) and intraclass correlation coefficients (ICC) within and between observers were calculated for PC1 and PC2. Intra-observer reliability was mainly high ( $KW \geq 0.75$  and  $ICC \leq 0.75$ ), except for 3 observers during the first session for PC1, for whom reliability was moderate. Inter-observer reliability was low to moderate for PC1 and moderate to high for PC2. Second, two observers performed live QBA on a herd of cows at pasture during 3 contexts designed to induce different emotional valences and arousal levels: AM, in the morning after milking (when cows are active); PM, in the afternoon before milking (when cows are mainly resting); and during handling to collect cows at pasture for afternoon milking (when cows may be stressed). The effect of context on PC1 and PC2 was investigated using linear mixed effects models. AM and PM contexts had higher scores on PC1 than handling context, indicating a more positive emotional state during AM and PM than during handling. PM context had lower scores on PC2 than AM and handling contexts. Thus, QBA at pasture was able to discriminate between contexts that should differ in emotional valence and arousal. Thirdly, an observer assessed the behavioural responses of cows to handling by direct observations followed by QBA. Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated between the number of behavioural responses and the coordinates on PC1 and PC2. The more cows were observed trotting, the more the cow's mood was perceived as negative ( $r = -0.71$ ) and the more cows were observed galloping and turning, the more the cow was perceived as excited ( $r = 0.77$  and  $0.60$ ). In conclusion, the QBA appears to be a valid measure of the emotional and arousal state of dairy cows at pasture, but inter-observer reliability could be improved.

## Animal welfare initiatives

### 10/02/2025 : Looking back, looking forward: changes in the scope of the subject 'animal welfare' within the World Organisation for Animal Health

Document type: scientific opinion published in the journal of the [World Organisation for Animal Health](#) (WOAH, formerly OIE)

Author: L. J. Keeling

**Preview:** Over the past few decades, the scope of animal welfare has expanded within the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH). This article takes as its starting point the first issue of the Scientific and Technical Review dedicated to the subject in 1994, and compares it to the second of 2005, and to the situation today, almost 20 years later. Changes are grouped into three main areas. The first is the consolidation of animal welfare work within WOAH and the acceptance of it as a subject in its own right, linked to – but nevertheless separate from – animal health. The second is the broadening of the subject's scope from being mainly concerned with farm animal welfare to encompassing all categories of animals, domesticated and wild. The third is the increased contextualisation of animal welfare to account for different regional attitudes and needs around the globe. Changes in the scope of the subject of animal welfare within WOAH reflect the increase in research in the area and demonstrate that animal welfare is becoming integrated into other complex areas, such as sustainable development. The final part of this article looks forward, speculating on roles that WOAH might play in the future in the area of animal welfare.

## **06/02/2025 : Les Français et le bien-être des animaux - Vague 8 (2025)**

Document type: survey from [Ifop](#)

Author: Ifop and the Fondation 30 Millions d'Amis

**Preview:** For the eighth year running, Ifop's survey, on behalf of the Fondation 30 Millions d'Amis, reveals that the solidity of the French people's interest in animal welfare continues to grow. In 2025, with the European Union stepping up its efforts to ban cage farming - and live cows no longer being used in the Intervilles TV competitive games show - the subject is a priority for a large majority of French people, demonstrating that the public is aware of animal suffering.

### *The French still consider animal suffering to be a topical issue*

Compared to last year, a slightly higher proportion of French people think that there is no guarantee of animal welfare for pets (22%, +3 points) or farm animals (37%, +3 points), and only a small majority (51%, +3 points) believe that it is guaranteed for wild animals: a considerable proportion believe that animal suffering is still a reality (57% think that animal welfare cannot be guaranteed for at least one "category" of animals). As a corollary to this persistent sense that animals are suffering, only a minority of French people consider that pets are well protected by legislation (49%, +1 point) or by judges and the courts (45%, +1 point). It should also be noted that only a third feel that they are well protected by politicians (33%, -9 points compared to 2022): a figure reflecting the feeling among French voters that their representatives do not take sufficient interest in the issue.

### *The French public overwhelmingly supports the various bans designed to improve the lives and living conditions of animals*

This year, the French reiterated their support for the introduction of measures designed to reduce animal suffering, even though some setbacks were noted. More than 8 out of 10 French people (86%, -2 points) say they are in favor of banning all animal experimentation, 83% are in favor of banning intensive livestock farming (-1 point), and 84% - a significant increase of 8 points - are in favor of banning the online sale of all animals.

### *A strong commitment to improving slaughter and transport practices*

Expectations regarding transport and slaughter conditions in abattoirs remain high, at levels similar to last year: 83% of French people say they are in favor of farm animals being slaughtered on site where they were reared, and 89% agree with the FVE's statement that the slaughter of conscious animals is unacceptable (+3 points). It should also be noted that 9 out of 10 French people are in favor of making video surveillance the norm in abattoirs (90%) and of transporting animals after slaughter (91%). Last, and in line with current events, 89% of French people support the European Union's efforts to ban cage farming.

### *A majority of the French are in favor of banning/restricting hunting and bullfighting*

A clear majority of the French are in favor of banning hunting with hounds (76%, -3 points), hunting on Sundays (73%, +1 point), bullfighting (75%) and the sale of pets in pet shops (76%, -2 points): similar trends to last year. With regard to the various proposals concerning bans relating to the hunting season, even though a 4-point fall can be noted concerning the introduction of a ban on Sunday hunting (78%), French support for full weekend and public holiday bans on hunting increased (79%, +2 points compared to 2023). It should be noted that opinion in France is more divided on sterilization : 61% (-1 point) say they are in favor and 39% are opposed.



### *A favorable climate for legislative advances*

Meanwhile, the French are responsive to other framing proposals, such as the creation of the legal status of "non-human person" for animals. This measure is approved by 77% of those polled, a significant increase of 14 points compared to 2019.

### [Link to download all results](#)

Survey leading to an article on 06/02/2025 on the Fondation 30 Millions d'Amis website: [Malgré la conjoncture et l'instabilité politique, la condition animale toujours au cœur des préoccupations des Français](#)

## **28/01/2025 : Excellent progress made towards phasing out cages in Sweden and Slovenia**

Document type: news from [Eurogroup for Animals](#)

Author: Eurogroup for Animals

**Preview:** Big steps have been taken recently to end the cage age in Sweden and Slovenia. Company commitments have led to a huge reduction in cage farming in Sweden, while the Slovenian government has officially committed to banning cages in the coming months. While we wait for the European Commission to officially ban cages in the EU - a change we hope is imminent, due to the huge success of [the "End the Cage Age" ECI](#), and the subsequent declaration by Commissioner Varhelyi that a ban on caged farming will be included in the revised animal welfare legislation - a couple of Member States have been making noteworthy progress towards phasing out cages in their national contexts.

### *99% of laying hens in Sweden are free from cages*

According to the latest statistics from the Swedish egg industry, the number of hens kept in cages in the country has fallen dramatically. When Project 1882 started its mission to phase out cages 17 years ago, roughly 40 percent of laying hens were caged in Sweden. This figure has now fallen to less than one percent, in large part thanks to the several companies that have committed to stop using eggs sourced from caged hens. Due to this significant decrease, spurred along by Project 1882's campaigning efforts to get wholesalers, restaurants, and consumers to exclude eggs from their purchases, it is estimated that over two million hens have been saved from a life of confinement since 2008, with 90,000 in the past year alone. Reflecting this excellent development, Benny Andersson, CEO of Project 1882, surmises Sweden should "*lead the way*" when it comes to addressing a phase-out of cages at EU level, adding that "*a comprehensive EU ban*" is something we have been promised.

### *The Slovenian government has announced it will phase out cages*

Over in Slovenia, the government has officially committed to phasing out cages by 2028, and will now work on putting this into law. This advancement is owed to the work of our member, the Animal Enterprise Transparency Project, which has been advocating tirelessly for a ban on cages. Through its 2024 "Slovenia Against Cages" campaign, it amassed signatures calling for an end to the cage age and shared informative materials on the experiences of caged animals. It also called on the Ministry, coordinated investigative releases, and worked with influencers and allies to spread the word about the need for a cage ban. As the results from the 2023 Eurobarometer showed, 19 out of 20 EU citizens oppose the use of cages, and 94% of Slovenians think it's important to protect farm

animals. This latest government statement is therefore extremely welcome, and bodes positively for the state of animal welfare in the country.

#### *Working towards a cage-free future in the EU*

Member States are proving it's entirely possible and realistic to phase out cages. Along with Sweden and Slovenia, several have reported significant progress towards this goal, including Luxembourg, Austria, and Germany. However, there is still one missing piece to protect the progress that has been made in these nations. European legislation is clearly called for by citizens and decision-makers alike, including those involved in the Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture.

## Invertebrates

### 06/02/2025 : [A History of Pain Studies and Changing Attitudes to the Welfare of Crustaceans](#)

Document type: scientific synthesis published in [Animals](#)

Author: Elwood R. W.

**Preview:** Early discussions about possible pain in crustaceans often comprised speculation and anecdotes. Experiments to investigate pain took guidance from these early debates, and from studies on other taxa. Many experiments provided data that are consistent with the idea of pain. However, that does not mean that pain has been proved, but they open the possibility. With each study that is consistent with pain being felt, the probability increases, but we will probably never have conclusive proof. Some responses appear to be nociceptive reflexes; however, they at least indicate that the animal responds to stimuli such as tissue damage, heat, acid, alkaline, or electric shock. The data are said to be consistent with pain only if they cannot be explained by reflexes. These studies have encouraged various organisations to improve the welfare of crustaceans, e.g., PETA, Crustacean Compassion, RSPCA, British Veterinary Association, UFAW, and HSA. They also formed much of the evidence included in the highly influential review of sentience for the UK government that resulted in the inclusion of decapod crustaceans in the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act 2022. This recognises that decapod crustaceans are sentient. By contrast, the New York Declaration recognises there is a possibility of sentience. Others have argued against the idea of pain in crustaceans. Nevertheless, the 2022 Act provided an impetus to groups that campaign for improved welfare. Some UK retailers now require improved slaughter techniques for the shrimp/prawn they sell, and electrical stunning is the preferred slaughter method.

## Housing and Enrichment

### 06/03/2025 : [Outdoor access versus conventional broiler chicken production: Updated review of animal welfare, food safety, and meat quality](#)

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

Authors: Yan L. Campbell, Lin L. Walker, Brooke M. Bartz, James O. Eckberg, Allison N. Pullin

**Preview:** Growing consumer demand for animal welfare and environmental sustainability in the poultry industry is driving the adoption of outdoor access for broiler chickens in the United States. However, shifting to outdoor access from conventional housing may pose tradeoffs for animal welfare, meat quality, and food safety. Research comparing conventional and outdoor access housing on these attributes has not been reviewed for approximately a decade. We reviewed and compared animal welfare, food safety, and meat quality outcomes in conventional versus outdoor access broiler production, focusing on recent research. Despite the prevailing notion that outdoor access improves animal welfare due to more behavioral opportunities, the utilization of the range is highly variable and affected by a variety of environmental, management, and bird characteristics. Outdoor areas containing vegetation and tree cover promote use by the birds, and slow-growing breeds appear to be best suited for these production systems. Typically, welfare-related health outcomes (i.e., footpad dermatitis, mortality, and lameness) are improved with outdoor access. However, birds with outdoor access are at a higher risk for endo- and ectoparasitic infections. Antimicrobial resistance is typically lower on outdoor access farms, and birds with outdoor access have more diverse microbiomes. There are mixed results for the prevalences of *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* between conventional and outdoor access farms. Meat quality varies in complex ways related to rearing system, age, breed, diet, and behavior. Meat from outdoor access broilers may present better taste or flavor, yet there can be tradeoffs for texture and moisture, particularly for older, slower-growing breeds that are typical of outdoor access production. Taken together, studies to date indicate multiple benefits and tradeoffs for animal welfare, food safety, and meat quality. Variations in management between farms and certification criteria result in inconsistent outcomes. The majority of outdoor access research has been conducted outside of the United States. Region-specific research accounting for geography, climate, and available breeds would be beneficial for improving outdoor access production outcomes in the United States.

### **23/01/2025 : An updated review on the effect of lighting on broilers and the environment of commercial houses**

Document type: scientific synthesis published in [World's Poultry Science Journal](#)

Authors: E. Linhoss, J., B. Falana, O., D. Davis, J., L. Purswell, J., M. Edge, C., A. Olanrewaju, H., B. I. Baker-Cook, Hanlon, C.

**Preview:** Lighting programmes and schedules are key components of modern broiler production that are used to support growth and welfare. As researchers and industry representatives continue to explore the use of new lighting equipment, technologies, and programmes, it is important to have current summaries of the relevant research literature. This review paper explores the effects of lighting on broiler performance and welfare for the years 2018–2024. It includes the primary topics generally associated with broiler lighting (colour, intensity, duration, and source), but also includes the latest research available on natural lighting and efforts to characterise the lighting environment of commercial broiler houses.

## **Regulation**

## **11/03/2025 : Assemblée nationale : réponse écrite à la question n°3207 : Abandons d'animaux, obligation d'identification et stérilisation**

Document type: response to question no. 3207 published in the [Journal Officiel de la République française](#)

Authors: question: Aurélien Dutremble (RN). Answer: Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty

**Question :** Mr. Aurélien Dutremble draws the attention of the Minister of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty to the situation of associations and shelters for pets. In France, the Observatoire de protection des carnivores domestiques (OCAD) estimates the number of domestic carnivores at 15.1 million cats and 7.5 million dogs, representing a pet in more than half of French households. In addition, there are between 200,000 and 300,000 ownerless pets. Of these ownerless animals, 100,000 have been abandoned by their families, including 60,000 during the summer months. According to associations, this situation makes France the European champion for pet abandonment. Those involved in the sector deplore the fact that shelters are full to bursting and volunteers are exhausted. In just a few years, the number of abandoned animals has multiplied by 3, as the collective of animal associations in Burgundy and its members in Saône-et-Loire have testified to the MP. With regard to the ever-increasing influx of stray cats, it is imperative to ensure compliance with article L. 212-10 of the French Rural and Maritime Fishing Code, which requires cats to be identified before being sold. If a cat is lost, identification enables it to be found, prevents feral abandonment and, it has been proven, enables the animal to be sterilized. *On the other hand*, the absence of identification leads to massive proliferation, as 95% of owners who don't have their pets identified don't sterilize them either. Against this backdrop of uncontrolled reproduction, leading to mistreatment and intolerable damage to animal welfare, he would like to know what measures the Minister intends to implement, as well as the figures for penalties imposed on those who fail to comply with the identification obligation. Lastly, he would like to know how much money is allocated to animal shelter associations, and whether she plans to increase this budget in the near future.

**Answer:** The government has been committed to animal welfare for several years, in response to a strong and legitimate societal expectation, and condemns all acts of mistreatment of animals, whether in breeding, slaughter establishments or domestic animals. To this end, since 2020 and thanks to the France Relance plan, more than 36 million euros have been granted to animal protection associations and veterinary medicine. Similarly, since the adoption of the law to combat animal mistreatment on November 30, 2021, four implementing decrees and six ministerial orders have been published, to enable the reinforcement of training for personnel in contact with pets, information for new buyers, control of animal identification on online offers, as well as the strengthening of penalties against acts of mistreatment. To extend the positive momentum initiated by the Government, a plan dedicated to the well-being of companion animals was announced on May 22, 2024. Its national monitoring committee, chaired by the Minister for Agriculture, brings together four ministries, industry professionals and civil society players, to ensure that its actions are properly coordinated. For the State, the aim is to support and make the most of current and future initiatives in three areas: preventing and combating pet abandonment, improving the management of canine and feline strays, and preventing and combating pet abuse. To achieve this, it is structured around concrete measures contributing to five key areas: understanding the situation and identifying

levers for action; informing, questioning and training; facilitating synergies between players involved in animal protection; making regulations more protective; and renewing funding mechanisms. The first priority of this plan is to better characterize and objectify situations of abandonment, straying and mistreatment, and to produce reliable, accurate statistics. In this respect, the mobilization of the expertise of the observatory for the protection of domestic carnivores and the centralization of data relating to the above-mentioned situations on a single platform will enable public authorities to make informed decisions. In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture will make it easier for professionals and private individuals to assimilate the new regulatory obligations, notably through a responsible acquisition program, as well as by renewing communication campaigns on the fight against abandonment and mistreatment, on sterilization and identification of animals, and on access to care for the underprivileged. In addition, the ministry will strive to integrate these concerns into animal-related vocational training courses.

If these measures are to be effectively implemented, synergies between the various players involved in animal protection need to be facilitated, notably through the establishment of interministerial governance specifying the role of each. Within this framework, the Ministry of Agriculture steers public policies relating to the protection of domestic animals, the Ministry of Ecological Transition and Territorial Cohesion ensures those relating to wild animals, the Ministry of the Interior and Overseas Territories ensures the repression of animal mistreatment and trafficking, and supports the other ministries in the application of legal procedures, under the control of the Ministry of Justice. As part of this, an interministerial training course on combating animal abuse has been developed for all agents concerned, including law enforcement officers, and will go online in autumn 2024. In addition, the "Ma sécurité" platform, run by the Ministry of the Interior, will be consolidated, to become the preferred centralized tool for reports of mistreatment sent to government departments. Similarly, discussions will be held with animal protection associations to identify ways of professionalizing local associations in terms of training in best practices and regulatory provisions. Lastly, the Ministry of Agriculture will step up its efforts to raise mayors' awareness of the need to prevent stray animals and to manage pounds. The aim will also be to make current regulations more protective, on the one hand by assessing the application of the Animal Abuse Act of 2021 and on the other by updating the April 3, 2014 decree framing pet-related activities. In addition, a change in European legislation is underway, under the impetus of the French government, with the European Commission's proposal on December 7, 2023, on the welfare and traceability of dogs and cats placed on the European market. The French government played an active role in the European discussions on this draft regulation, putting forward strong measures such as a ban on the use of electric collars, tail docking and the prolonged use of muzzles in places where animals are kept. This draft regulation is currently under discussion in the European Parliament. The State will be on hand to renew the funding mechanisms implemented under previous Finance Acts, notably for the sterilization of stray animals and aid to local authorities for this purpose, through the creation of a fund entitled "France protection animale", designed to collect any donations from companies. Several actions under this plan have already taken place, are underway, or are planned for the near future, notably to make pet purchases more responsible and thus prevent abandonment. The government is determined to step up animal protection initiatives, and will remain attentive to reports of stray, abandoned or mistreated animals. The latter may be prosecuted, both in mainland France and in the overseas territories.



## **07/03/2025 : Instruction technique : Avenant - Modalités d'attribution et de mobilisation de la dotation budgétaire de trois millions d'euros dédiée à la stérilisation des chats errants par les collectivités territoriales et inscrite dans la loi de finances pour l'année 2024**

Document type: technical note DGAL/SDSBEA/2025-140 from the French [Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty](#)

Author: Bureau bien-être animal DGAL/SDSBEA

**Preview:** The purpose of this note is to extend the spending deadline for grands awarded under the three-million-euro budget allocation for the sterilization of stray and domestic cats by local authorities and included in the Finance Act for the year 2024.

This note modifies:

DGAL/SDSBEA/2024-486 du 29/08/2024: Modalités d'attribution et de mobilisation de la dotation budgétaire de trois millions d'euros dédiée à la stérilisation des chats errants par les collectivités territoriales et inscrite dans la loi de finances pour l'année 2024.

## **04/03/2025 : Parlement européen : réponse écrite à la question E-002928/2024 : Protection of hunting dogs in Spain**

Document type: response from the [European Commission](#) to question E-002928/2024

Authors: question: Maria Ohisalo (Verts/ALE). Answer: Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission

**Question:** Roughly speaking, between 50 000 and 100 000 hunting dogs, glagos and podencos, are killed in Spain every year when the hunting season ends [\[1\]](#). This is based on an old belief that the more a dog suffers when dying, the more it will bring the hunter good luck the following hunting season. The dogs are killed in the most horrendous ways: they are hanged, beaten, burned, pelted with stones, poisoned, dragged behind a vehicle or thrown into a ravine. Dogs are also abandoned after the hunting season, which is another major problem. It has been challenging to do anything about this, because rules on animal welfare have largely been left to the individual countries to decide on, which means that Spain cannot be obliged directly to improve the situation for hunting dogs through any EU legislative procedure [\[2\]](#). The European Commission updated its animal welfare strategy in 2020 [\[3\]](#), since when steps have been taken to safeguard animal welfare, including rules at EU level. In December 2023, the Commission published a proposal for a Regulation on the welfare of dogs and cats and their traceability [\[4\]](#). 1.What is the Commission's assessment of how the forthcoming Regulation will also improve the situation for Spanish hunting dogs? 2.Does the Commission intend to propose legislation that would provide for minimum standards at EU level to protect all animals?

[\[1\] https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/article/spanish-galgo-hunting-dog-killing-welfare](https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/article/spanish-galgo-hunting-dog-killing-welfare)

[\[2\] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/P-9-2020-000675-ASW\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/P-9-2020-000675-ASW_EN.html)

[3] [https://food.ec.europa.eu/animals/animal-welfare/evaluations-and-impact-assessment/revision-animal-welfare-legislation\\_en](https://food.ec.europa.eu/animals/animal-welfare/evaluations-and-impact-assessment/revision-animal-welfare-legislation_en)

[4] <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/FI/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52023PC0769>.

**Answer:** The Commission condemns any form of cruelty to animals. In 2023, the Commission adopted a proposal for a regulation on the welfare of dogs and cats and their traceability [1] that aims to raise the level of protection for the welfare of dogs and cats. The proposal requires animal welfare conditions for all premises or structures, including households, where dogs are bred with a view to placing the offspring on the market [2]. If hunters are breeding dogs at a frequency above the thresholds foreseen by the Commission proposal, these breeding and keeping activities would have to comply with the requirements specified by the EU legal act. In addition, the proposal foresees that dogs kept in establishments for supply [3] in the Union, including dogs supplied by natural persons, be identified and registered in a national database. Therefore, if any supply would take place in the context of hunting activities, the dog should be identified and registered. Such a requirement should discourage the abandonment of dogs, as traceability would make it possible to locate the person abandoning the dog. The examination of the Commission's proposal by the European Parliament and by the Council is ongoing. Different regulations concern different animal species. As foreseen in the Mission Letter for the Commissioner for Health and Animal Welfare [4], the Commission intends to modernise the existing EU animal welfare legislation on the basis of new scientific, social and economic elements during its current mandate.

## **26/02/2025 : Special Newsletter: Recent Developments in EU Animal Law and Policy**

Document type: special newsletter published by [the European Institute for Animal Law & Policy](#)

Author: Animal Law Europe

**Preview:** We are thrilled to share an exciting new development: the official launch of our publication series titled “EU Animal Law in Review,” which will summarize recent advancements in EU animal law.

Our inaugural publication in this series is a five-year review of EU animal law, highlighting the most significant developments from 2019 to 2024 at both EU level and within the 27 EU Member States. This review comes at a pivotal moment, following the appointment of new Commissioners to the European Commission in December of last year and just days after President Ursula von der Leyen presented her work program for the next four years. This shift in administration presents a timely opportunity to reflect on the progress and changes in animal law and policy throughout the European Commission’s past mandate.

Starting in 2026, we will release annual reviews to provide animal advocates in the EU and globally with a unique resource, summarizing the positive strides made by our movement for animals, as well as the ongoing challenges faced in legislatures and courts.

This publication is the result of careful monitoring by animal law and policy specialists, who are diligent in cross-checking information with primary sources, before compiling and summarizing information in a digestible way. Overall, this publication series will develop and progress as the Institute grows its presence in each EU Member State. The editors would like to extend their heartfelt gratitude to Hugo Marro-Menotti, Angie van Dijk, and Joren Vuylsteke for their important contributions to this first edition.

While the new political dynamics in the EU do not appear favorable to animals, we hope you will find this first edition informative and invigorating, full of reasons for optimism, as advocates have achieved key wins across the EU over the past five years, often overcoming challenging political environments.

[Read the Review](#) (pdf)

## **25/02/2025 : Transport standards urgently needed for aquatic animals**

Document type: article published by [Eurogroup for Animals](#)

Author: Eurogroup for Animals

**Preview:** The EU's animal transport rules are finally being updated, but one group of animals is still largely overlooked. As some of the most farmed yet least protected species; fish need strong, clear regulations to prevent unnecessary suffering during transport. Each year, around one billion farmed fish and other aquatic animals such as crustaceans and decapods are transported live across the EU, by boat, truck or even plane. Fish are transported between fish farms as they grow, and also transported to slaughter at market size.

*Fish are highly sensitive animals.* Handling, netting, pumping and transport all cause stress to the fish, which can lead to pain, injury and long-term suffering. Even a short period of stress can weaken their immune system, making them more prone to disease, loss of appetite, growth deformities and even death.

As shown in [this investigation by Essere Animali](#), the most critical aspects of welfare in the transport of aquatic animals are:

- Starvation periods before transport;
- Rough handling and loading procedures;
- Poor water quality during transport.

This year, we have a crucial opportunity to ensure aquatic animals are protected under EU transport legislation, which is currently being debated in the European Parliament. Here are five essential changes we're asking for:

1. *Make the rules enforceable [...]*
2. *Set species-specific standards [...]*
3. *Include ornamental aquatic animals [...]*
4. *Include fish and crustaceans delivered to restaurants [...]*
5. *Apply rules to shorter journeys [...]*

The draft transport proposal is currently with the European Parliament's fisheries committee, who will vote on the [draft opinion](#) on 17 March 2025.

## **19/02/2025 : Commission presents its roadmap for a thriving EU farming and agri-food sector - European Commission**

Document type: press release published on the [European Commission](#) website

Author: European Commission

**Preview:** Today, the Commission is presenting its Vision for Agriculture and Food, an ambitious roadmap on the future of farming and food in Europe. This roadmap sets the stage for an attractive,

competitive, resilient, future-oriented and fair agri-food system for current and future generations of farmers and agri-food operators. Simplifying further our policies and increasing the uptake of innovation and digitalisation are pre-requisites to all actions outlined in the Vision. Later in 2025, the Commission will propose a comprehensive simplification package for the current agricultural legislative framework, along with an EU digital strategy for agriculture to support the transition to digital-ready farming. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, said: *“Our farmers take centre stage in the EU's food production system. It is thanks to their daily, hard work that all of us have safe and high-quality food. Yet, our farmers face the growing challenges of global competition and climate change. That is why today, we are offering a comprehensive strategy that makes farming more attractive, more resilient and more sustainable.”*

The Vision outlines four priority areas:

- An attractive sector: (...)
- A competitive and resilient sector: (...)
- A future-proof sector: (...)
- Fair living and working conditions in rural areas: The Commission will come forward with an updated Rural Action Plan to ensure that rural areas remain vibrant, functional, and deeply linked to the EU's cultural and natural heritage. An annual Food Dialogue will also be launched with a broad range of actors, including consumers, farmers, industry and public authorities to find solutions for issues such as food affordability and innovation. **Reducing food waste and addressing societal concerns for animal welfare will also be closely looked at by the Commission going forward.**

Looking ahead, the future common agricultural policy (CAP), as part of the upcoming MFF proposal, will be simpler and more targeted, with support more directed towards farmers who actively engage in food production, with a particular focus on young farmers and those farming in areas of natural constraints. Incentives, rather than conditions, will be favoured.

[Link to factsheet \(pdf\)](#)

## **17/02/2025 : Evidence shows approaches to animal welfare vary widely across the EU**

Document type: report published by [Eurogroup for Animals](#)

Author: Eurogroup for Animals

**Preview:** At the moment, the quality of an animal's life in the EU depends largely on which country they live in. Why? Because the EU's 27 Member States approach animal welfare issues in their own way. With only vague and outdated EU animal welfare laws to guide them, each country is left to interpret or set the rules as they see fit, leading to a highly fragmented landscape where few animals receive sufficient care.

Some of the key findings from the study are as follows:

- Only 6 Member States explicitly include animal welfare in their constitutions;
- 5 Member States still allow force-feeding for foie gras production;
- 16 Member States have no legislation for the protection of [farmed fish](#);
- 25 Member States are actively in breach of a Directive that lays down the minimum standards for pigs kept for farming (mostly by still subjecting piglets to painful mutilations such as tail docking);
- While 16 Member States have a full ban on [fur farming](#) or no operational fur farms, 11 still need

to take action, answering to the calls of the EU citizens who voted for a ban on the industry in the Fur Free Europe ECI.

One of the study's main conclusions highlights the pressing need for an EU-wide ban on cage farming. Across Europe, the percentage of farm animals kept behind bars varies widely, with 99% kept in cages in Malta, 87% in Spain, 81% in Portugal, and on the other end of the scale, just 3% in Austria and 2% in Luxembourg. Even in the top-performing countries that are using cages far less, no Member State can claim to be completely cage-free. Until the EU adheres to the wishes of the 1.4 million EU citizens who signed the End the Cage Age ECI and legislates on an EU-wide cage ban, countless animals will continue to live in confinement.

#### *Harmonised legislation*

While some countries are leading the way when it comes to prioritising animal welfare, others are lagging behind. Modernising the EU's laws for animal welfare, factoring in everything from cage farming and live animal transport to species-specific welfare needs, would ensure the lives of millions of sentient beings are equally protected no matter where they are based. Harmonised standards would also support farmers and other operators in achieving better welfare for animals in their contexts. At the moment, over 430 laws, regulations and constitutional provisions govern animal protection across Europe, and the degree to which these affect individual Member States differs greatly. In some countries, only a handful of legislative acts govern all animal welfare issues, while in others, there are over 140 pieces of legislation to which to refer. This has created a very uneven playing field that only EU-wide animal welfare laws can balance.

20 years have passed since the EU updated the animal welfare legislation, and at least forty scientific opinions by the European Food Safety Authority have been published in that time. It is critical the EU's outdated laws are modernised and improved as soon as possible, ensuring all Member States are achieving the same high welfare standards for the kept animals in their systems, and leaving no species behind.

[Link to the report \(pdf\)](#)

## **11/02/2025 : Les normes de bien-être animal en aquaculture**

Document type: research note #7 published by the [European Institute for Animal Law & Policy](#)

Authors: Alice Di Concetto, Anatole Poinot, Wasseem Emam, Carlos Vera

### **Preview: The Treatment of Farmed Fish Under EU Law**

This Research Note provides an overview of recent commitments made by EU institutions to improve the treatment of farmed aquatic animals in the EU, with a particular focus on fish (1). These policy announcements have yet to be codified, as EU farm animal welfare laws largely fall short of ensuring minimum standards for the protection of fish (2). Besides animal welfare laws, other pieces of EU legislation offer space for aquatic animal protection standards. For instance, the EU institutions could amend the Common Fisheries Policy (3) and animal health regulations (4) to include rules that would benefit farmed fish. Lastly, voluntary standards also contribute to the protection of farmed fish, by incentivizing producers to engage in better practices that could form the basis of new legal reform for fish welfare (5).

Link to the English version: <https://animallaweurope.org/wp-content/uploads/Research-Note-7-The-Treatment-of-Farmed-Fish-Under-EU-Law.pdf>



## **05/02/2025 : February 2025 Newsletter – A Look at the Year Ahead**

Document type: February 2025 n published by the [European Institute for Animal Law & Policy](#)

Author: Animal Law Europe

**Preview:** In this edition of the newsletter:

- Updates from the Institute
- Research Note: The Treatment of Farmed Fish Under EU Law
- Policy Update: Cats and Dogs Legislation Poised to Enter EU Law
- Animal Law News: EU, Member States, International Law
- Events
- Professional Opportunities
- Publications

[Link to subscribe to the French version of the Newsletter](#)

## **20/01/2025 : Parlement européen : réponse écrite à la question E-002402/24 : Nouvelles preuves d'infractions à la législation communautaire lors du transport de veaux irlandais**

Document type: response from the [European Commission](#) to question E-002402/24

Authors: question: Anja Hazekamp (The Left). Answer: Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission

### **Question: New evidence of breaches of EU law during transport of Irish calves**

Animal welfare organisations have once again identified serious and persistent breaches of EU law during the export of unweaned calves from Ireland, via France, to the Netherlands and Poland. Such breaches include falsified logbooks, unsuitable water systems in trucks and transports during which milk is systematically not given to the animals for more than 30 hours, even 48 hours in some cases<sup>[1]</sup>. In addition, piles of decomposing calf carcasses were found at the Hallissey collection centre in Ireland, where severe mistreatment of calves took place, and weakened animals were force-fed or injected so that they could be exported and further fattened in Poland and Romania. The calves end up in Israel and Libya, where they are slaughtered without anaesthesia after having endured a horrific journey<sup>[2]</sup>.

1- What is the Commission's view of the fact that the Irish authorities continue to authorise these transports and that Dutch veal companies, such as the VanDrie Group, continue to carry them out, fully aware that they are systematically breaching EU law and are responsible for starving the calves?

2- What specific action does the Commission intend to take in the short term to decisively address these ongoing breaches, such as entering without delay into discussions with the relevant Irish authorities and insisting on the closure of the Hallissey collection centre?

[\[1\] https://www.eyesonanimals.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/2024-March-21-29-Investigation-into-the-welfare-of-Irish-calves-exported-to-factory-farms-in-The-Netherlands-and-Poland.pdf](https://www.eyesonanimals.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/2024-March-21-29-Investigation-into-the-welfare-of-Irish-calves-exported-to-factory-farms-in-The-Netherlands-and-Poland.pdf)

[\[2\] https://www.rte.ie/player/series/prime-time/SI0000000825?epguid=IH10002396-24-0071](https://www.rte.ie/player/series/prime-time/SI0000000825?epguid=IH10002396-24-0071)

**Answer:** The Commission is concerned by the practices and handling of calves shown in the footage referred to by the Honourable Member. Animals must be handled in accordance with the regulation (EC) No 1/2005<sup>[1]</sup>, which governs their protection during commercial transport. The enforcement of EU rules on the protection of animals during transport is primarily a responsibility of the Member States. The Commission is in contact with the Irish authorities regarding this case. They have confirmed that an ongoing investigation is examining potential animal welfare-related infringements that may have occurred at the assembly centre shown in the footage referred to by the Honourable Member and that they will take further follow-up action as necessary. As the investigation by the Irish authorities is ongoing, the Commission has no further information on specific authorisations. In December 2023, the Commission adopted a legislative proposal for a new Regulation on the protection of animals during transport<sup>[2]</sup> which provides for stricter rules aimed at ensuring higher protection of calves during transport and other vulnerable categories of animals, and to facilitate better enforcement of these rules through clearer provisions. The proposal reflects the latest scientific evidence and the progress made in the technologies dedicated to animal transport.

<sup>[1]</sup> Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 of 22 December 2004 on the protection of animals during transport and related operations and amending Directives 64/432/EEC and 93/119/EC and Regulation (EC) No 1255/97; OJ L 3, 5.1.2005, p. 1-44.

<sup>[2]</sup> Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the protection of animals during transport and related operations, amending Council Regulation (EC) No 1255/97 and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005; COM/2023/770 final.

## **17/01/2025 : Parlement européen : réponse écrite à la question E-002435/24 : Le secteur de la viande mécontent de la nouvelle proposition de la Commission modifiant le règlement relatif à la protection des animaux en cours de transport**

Document type: response from the [European Commission](#) to question E-002435/24

Authors: question: Mireia Borrás Pabón (PfE). Answer: Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission

**Question: Meat sector unhappy with the Commission's new proposal amending the Regulation on the protection of animals during transport.**

The Spanish poultry and livestock sectors are concerned about the Commission's proposal of 7 December 2023 for a new regulation on the protection of animals during transport. They feel that the new requirements it lays down will compromise both the competitiveness of the sectors, which are already worried about their profits, and the purses of vulnerable families, who will see hikes in meat prices in the shops. The text tightens up the animal transport requirements, for example by reducing stocking density and increasing container heights. These measures have no evidence base: according to the livestock sector itself, larger containers mean that animals could be bounced around during transport, which could lead to serious injuries or even death. In view of this:

1- Can the Commission provide evidence of the studies it used as the basis for its new animal transport requirements and their impact on food safety?

2- Has the Commission carried out any studies on the economic impact of its proposal to support families' finances in the light of the expected price increases?

**Answer:** The EU legislation on the protection of animals during transport<sup>[1]</sup> is being revised to align it with the latest scientific evidence, to broaden its scope, to make its enforcement easier and ultimately, to ensure a higher level of animal welfare. The process of preparing the Commission proposal has been supported by scientific opinions developed by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)<sup>[2][3][4][5][6]</sup> that always considers the related animal health, public health, and welfare risks. Various social, economic, and environmental considerations were taken into account by the Commission in its impact assessment on the proposal<sup>[7]</sup>. In particular, the Commission looked into the potential impact of the proposed measures on food security and other related elements, including affordability of food for end consumers. For this purpose, the Commission asked the Joint Research Centre to prepare the 'Modelling of policy options to support the impact assessment accompanying the revision of the EU legislation on the welfare of animals during transport'<sup>[8]</sup>. The modelling includes an analysis of the impacts of the changes in food prices resulting from the proposed measures on food affordability in the EU. As the modelling shows, the proposed measures will only have an insignificant impact on the quantities of animal-based products produced, traded and consumed, and on consumer prices. Food affordability will therefore not be substantially impacted. EU and global food security will not be affected.

<sup>[1]</sup> Protection of animals during transport [https://food.ec.europa.eu/animals/animal-welfare/eu-animal-welfare-legislation/animal-welfare-during-transport\\_en](https://food.ec.europa.eu/animals/animal-welfare/eu-animal-welfare-legislation/animal-welfare-during-transport_en)

<sup>[2]</sup> Welfare of pigs during transport

<https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.2903/j.efsa.2022.7445>

<sup>[3]</sup> Welfare of equidae during transport

<https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.2903/j.efsa.2022.7444>

<sup>[4]</sup> Welfare of cattle during transport

<https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.2903/j.efsa.2022.7442>

<sup>[5]</sup> Welfare of domestic birds and rabbits transported in containers

<https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.2903/j.efsa.2022.7441>

<sup>[6]</sup> Welfare of small ruminants during transport

<https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.2903/j.efsa.2022.7404>

<sup>[7]</sup> Impact assessment [https://food.ec.europa.eu/document/download/e4e762eb-bdd5-4540-baa5-15d5c0badb21\\_en?filename=aw\\_in-transit\\_swd\\_2023-401\\_ia-report\\_prt-1.pdf](https://food.ec.europa.eu/document/download/e4e762eb-bdd5-4540-baa5-15d5c0badb21_en?filename=aw_in-transit_swd_2023-401_ia-report_prt-1.pdf)

<sup>[8]</sup> Modelling of policy options to support the impact assessment accompanying the revision of the EU legislation on the welfare of animals during transport <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/b9c3c05d-94e1-11ee-b164-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

## Animal health

### 01/02/2025 : [Application of the horse grimace scale in horses with dental disease: Preliminary findings](#)

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

Authors: Amelia E. Sidwell, Marco Duz, Bradley Hill, Sarah Freeman, Sam L. Hole

**Preview:** Dental disease is a common but often under-recognised condition in horses, possibly due to an inability to recognise clinical signs of oral discomfort. Some dental disorders are reportedly more painful than others, but there is no current metric by which dental pain can be objectively assessed. This study aimed to determine whether a facial expression-based pain scale offered an objective and reliable method for assessing dental pain in horses. It was hypothesised that dental disorders affecting the periodontium would produce high pain scores. Twelve horses with dental disease were evaluated for pain using a numerical rating scale (NRS) and a horse grimace scale (HGS) by blinded observers using still, lateral photographs. Interobserver reliability was poor across all observers when both the NRS (intraclass correlation coefficient [ICC] = 0.36) and the HGS (ICC = 0.27) were used in horses with dental disease. The highest mean scores were given for horses with equine odontoclastic tooth resorption and hypercementosis (EOTRH) and periodontal disease (PD). This study has a small sample size of both horses and questionnaire respondents, and the respondent demographics are not representative of the wider veterinary population. Furthermore, no positive or negative controls were used for the pain scoring. The results of this study indicate the unreliability of tools designed for identifying acute pain for assessing chronic pain, such as dental pain. A more dental-specific ethogram is required to accurately identify dental pain in horses. Both the NRS and HGS produced the highest mean scores for EOTRH and PD, supporting existing literature that these conditions are associated with more obvious signs of pain.

## **21/01/2025 : Santé : Prendre soin des vieux chevaux en hiver**

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

Author: Cheval Mag

**Preview:** During the winter season, it's important to keep your older horses in good health. Depending on your region and climate, you'll need to adjust your horse's living conditions. Doctors Jérôme Transetti, Fanny Puech and Jean-Marie Laudat provide advice on how to take good care of older horses.

Whether they live indoors or on pasture, older horses need special attention in winter. A cold, dry climate is better for them as it allows them to go outside more often. But watch out: older horses are more sensitive to draughts. Slippery ground is dangerous, so opt for level terrain and keep an eye on the ground around shelters, which is often muddy. In the field, make sure the water in the troughs doesn't freeze. As a precaution, you should turn off automatic drinkers and use buckets instead. Older horses can be provided with a blanket that is not just thick, waterproof but is above all properly fitted so that they do not injure themselves. If your horse lives in a box or shelter, be sure to check the insulation of the accommodation. Older horses spend longer lying down in winter. Their bedding must therefore be thick. Leave a good layer of dry, urine-free manure before adding clean straw. Check their feet regularly. Hoof horn softens with age, and can cause abscesses if neglected.

### *Feeding your horse*

Feeding equines in winter is very important. It's advisable to increase the hay ration and supplement older horses' diets to give them extra energy and help them withstand the cold. For example, you can give them carrots or chopped apples. Older horses who are losing their teeth will appreciate sugar, which they'll allow to melt in their mouths. Don't forget to worm your horse at the start of each season. If your horse is showing signs of weakness, ask your vet for a blood test.

## Transport, Slaughter, Pick-up

### 13/02/2025 : The Guide to Good Practice: Welfare at Slaughter

Document type: best practice guide published by [BMPA](#)

Author: BMPA (British Meat Processors Association)

**Preview:** This updated version of "The Guide to Good Practice: Welfare at Slaughter" provides guidance on the humane treatment of animals prior to and during slaughter or killing in slaughterhouses and on premises other than slaughterhouses (e.g. on farm) in order to safeguard or improve welfare conditions for animals. It applies to the UK and complements (but does not replace) the provisions of the Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing Regulations (England) 2015 (WATOK), which implements Council Regulation 1099/2009/EC on the protection of animals at the time of killing in England (similar legislation applies in the devolved administrations). It provides advice on how compliance can be achieved as well as giving additional guidance on best practice. This guidance is intended to supplement and inform the practices of Food Business Operators (FBOs). It is not intended to replace thorough and ongoing good practice by an FBO on a site-by-site basis.

[Download The Guide to Good Practice](#) (pdf)

### 28/01/2025 : EFSA Opinion - Welfare of horses during killing for purposes other than slaughter

Document type: [EFSA](#) opinion

Author: EFSA (AHAW Panel on Animal Health and Welfare)

**Preview:** Horses of different ages may have to be killed on-farm for purposes other than slaughter (where slaughter is defined as killing for human consumption) either individually (i.e. on-farm killing of unproductive, injured or terminally ill animals) or on a large-scale (i.e. depopulation for disease control purposes and other situations, such as environmental contamination, disaster management, etc.). The purpose of this opinion is to assess the hazards and welfare consequences associated with the on-farm killing of horses. The killing procedure is divided into Phase 1 (pre-killing), which includes the processes (i) handling and moving the animals to the killing place and (ii) restraint of the animals before application of the killing method; and Phase 2 (stunning and/or killing), which includes stunning and killing of the animals (for methods that require one step for stunning and another for subsequent killing) or killing only (for methods that simultaneously stun and kill the animals). Three stunning and/or killing methods for Phase 2 for horses were identified: (i) penetrative captive bolt followed by killing, (ii) firearms with free projectiles and (iii) lethal injection. Welfare consequences that horses may experience during each process (e.g. handling stress, restriction of movement and injuries during restraint) were identified and potential hazards are listed for all phases, along with preventive and corrective measures. Animal-based measures (ABMs) to assess all identified welfare consequences were proposed. During the application of the stunning and/or killing methods, horses will experience pain and fear if they are ineffectively stunned/killed or if they recover consciousness. A flowchart including ABMs for the assessment of consciousness and death to monitor stunning and killing effectiveness is provided. Additionally, specific practices deemed unacceptable on welfare grounds are listed.



## **28/01/2025 : EFSA Opinion - Welfare of horses at slaughter**

Document type: [EFSA](#) opinion

Author: EFSA (AHAW Panel on Animal Health and Welfare)

**Preview:** The objective of this Scientific Opinion is to assess the hazards and welfare consequences associated with the slaughter of horses for human consumption. The entire slaughter procedure, from arrival at the slaughterhouse until death, is divided into three phases: Phase 1 – pre-stunning, Phase 2 – stunning and Phase 3 – bleeding. Phase 1 includes the following processes (in chronological order): (a) arrival, (b) unloading of the animals from the vehicle, (c) lairage, (d) handling and moving to the stunning area and (e) restraint before application of the stunning method. Phase 2 encompasses the stunning methods, while Phase 3 involves the bleeding process (i.e. exsanguination following stunning). Stunning methods for horses include penetrative captive bolt and firearms. Welfare consequences that horses may experience (such as handling stress, restriction of movement and injuries) and potential hazards were identified for all the phases along with preventive and corrective measures. For arrival and unloading during phase 1, this Opinion refers to a previous EFSA assessment on the transport of Equidae. Animal-based measures (ABMs) to assess all identified welfare consequences are proposed. A flowchart of ABMs to assess the state of consciousness is provided to allow monitoring during the stunning and bleeding phase at three key stages ((1) between the end of stunning and shackling, (2) during neck cutting or sticking, (3) during bleeding). Additionally, specific practices deemed unacceptable on welfare grounds are listed.

## **13/01/2025 : Observational study: effect of varying transport durations and feed withdrawal on the physiological status and health of dairy calves**

Document type: article published in [Irish Veterinary Journal](#)

Authors: van Dijk, Luca L., Siegmann, Susanne, Field, Niamh L., Sugrue, Katie, van Reenen, Cornelis G., Bokkers, Eddie A. M., Conneely, Muireann, Sayers, Gearoid

**Preview:** Long-distance transport and associated fasting of unweaned calves have the potential to compromise the animals' welfare. This observational study aimed to determine how transport and fasting durations impacted the physiology and health of 115 transported calves in three transport groups; IRE ( $n = 20$ , mean age 29.8d; short road transport (~ 29 h incl. resting time) and short feed deprivation (~ 11 h)), INT ( $n = 65$ , mean age 24.9d; long road/ferry transport (~ 79 h incl. resting times) and long feed deprivation (~ 28 h and 25 h)), and NLD ( $n = 30$ , mean age 17.7d; short road transport (~ 28 h incl. resting time) and long feed deprivation (> 18 h)). All calves travelled through an assembly centre. Each calf was blood sampled (arrival at destination farm, 1-week and 3-weeks post-arrival), health scored (arrival, 1, 3, 7, 8, 20d post-arrival) and weighed (farm/mart of origin [IRE and INT only], arrival, and 3-weeks post-arrival). (Generalised) linear mixed models were used to analyse differences in blood variables, weight, and health scores on arrival and during recovery (all other timepoints). Despite differing transport durations, both INT and NLD calves exhibited glucose, beta-hydroxy-butyrate, non-esterified-fatty-acids and sodium levels outside reference limits upon arrival, which were different from values observed in IRE calves ( $p \leq 0.05$ ). Lactate and potassium were above reference range for INT calves on arrival, and higher than in IRE and NLD groups

( $p \leq 0.05$ ). One- and three-weeks post arrival, most variables returned to within reference ranges, and differences between groups were minimal and not clearly associated with either transport duration or fasting during transport. Health scores did not differ between transport groups at arrival, and differences were minimal during the three-week recovery period. INT calves lost more weight during the journey than IRE calves ( $p \leq 0.01$ ), while INT and NLD calves gained similar weight in the 3-weeks post-arrival, but less than IRE calves (both  $p \leq 0.01$ ). Overall, changes in the physiological status of calves post transport appeared to relate more to the duration of feed deprivation than to the duration of transport, except for potassium and lactate (muscle fatigue), which were impacted more for INT calves. Most variables showed clear signs of recovery to within reference levels for all groups within three weeks. Minimizing the duration of feed deprivation during transport should be a key consideration for the dairy industry to reduce the impact of transport on calf welfare.

## Working animals

### 15/02/2025 : [Bien-être animal ou maltraitance : peut-on encore monter à cheval ?](#)

Document type: article published on the [France 3 Normandie](#) website

Author: Marie Lorillec

**Preview:** Daniel Daniel Reyssat runs a stable in Normandy and offers "relationship therapy" between riders and their mounts. In his book "Peut-on encore monter à cheval?" (Can we still ride horses?), he questions our relationships with horses and takes a look at what needs to change to make them more ethical. The sport with the third highest number of licenced practitioners in France, after soccer and tennis, horse-riding is sometimes seen as elitist and harsh on animals, and regularly attracts its share of criticism. Cases of abuse at top level, such as during the Olympic Games in Paris and Tokyo in 2020, have raised questions about the very legitimacy of the sport itself. In *Peut-on encore monter à cheval?*, Normandy horseman Daniel Reyssat sets out to answer this question by proposing to rebuild, without inflicting pain and with the animal's consent, the relationship between humankind and its most noble conquest.

*D.Reyssat:* I've been a horseman for a number of years. I did a lot of competitions, I played horseball for 25 years. And I was known for having a rather gentle riding style. During the French championships, I caused my mare to have a spur injury, and from then on it was as if I'd had an electric shock. How could I have injured her just to win a match, when everyone knew I was gentle on my horses? I wanted to take a closer look at the subject of violence in dressage, the use of pain in dressage. To see if we could do things differently. I have a stable where people bring horses to live on my premises and look after them themselves. I give lessons to improve the rider-horse relationship. And then I have another part of the business where people bring their horses to me, either for breaking in (getting the horse to accept the saddle, the rider, to understand basic commands, NdR), or to rebalance their relationship when things aren't going well. People call it behavioral therapy, but I'm really more into relationship therapy. I don't retrain the horse in its behavior, because the horse just reacts like a horse. The problem arises when you forget that it's a horse and just use it as a tool. In fact, then, there's no longer any relationship; you use physical constraints to impose obedience. If you want to establish a relationship of trust, you have to obtain

the horse's consent. This takes more time, but the more time you take, the more time you gain. That's what we usually say. Once the horse trusts you, you can ask a lot more of it than if it doesn't want to respond. And at the same time, it's a real paradigm shift.

What's important is what you want to achieve with the horse. Maybe that's the problem. If you want your horse to perform better and better, being gentle isn't enough. In competition, you always want more. The aim of competition is to be better than the other horses. It's not about riding cleanly, it's not about having a happy horse. It's not about having a horse that's cooperative, it's about having a horse that's better than the others, that jumps faster, harder, often with a little more stress. In my book, I've looked at our everyday practices in leisure and sport riding, things we do that we think are good, but which aren't. I wasn't at all interested in looking at people who commit major abuses, which we are all aware of in the horse world. You have to combat major abuses, of course, but that isn't what I wanted to say. I really look at what made me, as a rider who thought he was being gentle, hurt my mare? Riders need to know the history of how we have gained control over horses. I explain this in the first part of the book. In a nutshell, we gained control over horses by controlling their housing, feed and reproduction. In this way, we made them dependent on us. For them to be well, we need to satisfy their basic needs, of which there are three: 1/ horses need to be able to move around freely 24 hours a day, 2/ they need to be able to feed whenever they want, mainly on grass, 3/ they need to be able to socialize 24 hours a day. If we can guarantee these three basic needs, we're doing well. Yes, we use these needs to motivate them to work. Horses are very happy to be fed. When a horse lives in a stall, going to work allows it to move around (a free-ranging horse walks an average of 10 km a day, while in a stall, it walks 2 km a day). And since the horse is all alone in its stall, it's happy to interact with the rider. When a horse's basic needs are taken care of, you have to make more of an effort to get them interested in people. If you want to build a real relationship, you put yourself in a bit of a bind; in fact, you deprive yourself of the means to control the horse. You really have to spend a lot of time with a horse, time doing nothing - horses love to spend time doing nothing. We have to try to focus on our goals. The relationship itself must be the main goal. It's customary to make horses work by using negative reinforcement: you create a hindrance which you remove when the horse does what you want. The problem is that, if the horse still doesn't do what you ask, how far do you go along the scale from discomfort to pain in order to assert your will? The alternative is positive reinforcement (if the horse does what you ask, it wins itself a treat). It takes longer, but it's effective. Most of the people who come to see me are already committed, but some have just been advised to come by somebody else, and I try to get them to open their minds a little. I remember a show jumping professional who had a great horse, but the horse didn't want to jump over bars anymore. So we spent some time with the horse free in the work area. I asked the rider to attract his horse's attention, so that it would follow him, walking and running. And in the end it's the rider who runs and jumps the obstacle running with the horse following him. People know who they've come to consult and how we're going to work together.

## **14/01/2025 : Horses are worthy of care: Horse sector participants' attitudes towards animal sentience, welfare, and well-being**

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**Preview:** Organisations for which sentient animals are central to the business model need to demonstrate the safeguarding of animal welfare and well-being. This requires providing positive experiences for animals which is critical to maintaining the social licence to operate. A cross-sectional survey captured the attitudes of experienced horse sector participants regarding sentience, welfare and well-being. Almost all respondents (99.9%; n = 676/677), believed horses were sentient. Analysis of open-ended responses identified two themes: (1) Sentience is a pathway to understanding the mental state, welfare and well-being of horses; and (2) A moral obligation for humans to consider sentience. Respondents' observations that horses reacted to stimuli and responded to their surroundings underpinned their belief that horses were sentient. Theme one related to respondents' understanding of sentience and how sentience informed their interpretations of horse behaviours and the making of inferences regarding the equine mental state. Theme two related to a moral obligation believed to exist towards horses because humans manage the horses' environment and need to consider the impact of their interactions with horses. These obligations were perceived as responsibilities to consider sentience when determining good welfare and well-being in horse activity settings, when interacting with horses and when training and competing with horses. The results suggested a sophisticated understanding of sentience existed among experienced horse sector participants, who recognised the sentient horse as worthy of care. We propose that leveraging experienced participants' existing knowledge of sentience could support the implementation of the Five Domains model when updating organisational policies.