



FRCAW Newsletter 58

February – March 2026

Editorial

Fur farming in decline



[Image](#) from [Ici](#) Website. © Getty – Photo from Sean Gladwell

In Europe, the farming of animals for purposes associated with the fur trade is a shrinking industry according to a [recent economic analysis](#), which ascribes the decline to reduced demand and falling exports. The fur industry has certainly become a focus for environmental, health and welfare concerns, attracting 1.5 million signatures to the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) petition for a [Fur Free Europe](#) in 2022. While awaiting the European Commission's response to this ECI, which is expected to appear shortly, some Member States have chosen to implement their own measures at national level. Following the publication last summer of a scientific opinion by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), which demonstrated that the cage systems used in fur farms fail to meet acceptable animal welfare standards (see the August-September 2025 FRCAW [editorial](#)), [Poland has now signed a law banning fur farming](#). This law forbids the establishment of new fur farms in Poland with immediate effect, while existing farms must cease

their activities by the end of 2033. Poland is the largest fur producer in Europe and the second largest in the world, making this a far from insignificant decision for the country, which joins the 24 other European States that have already introduced either restrictions or total bans on the fur farming industry.

Transport of live animals by sea



Image from the [PARADIGMES NEWS](#) website

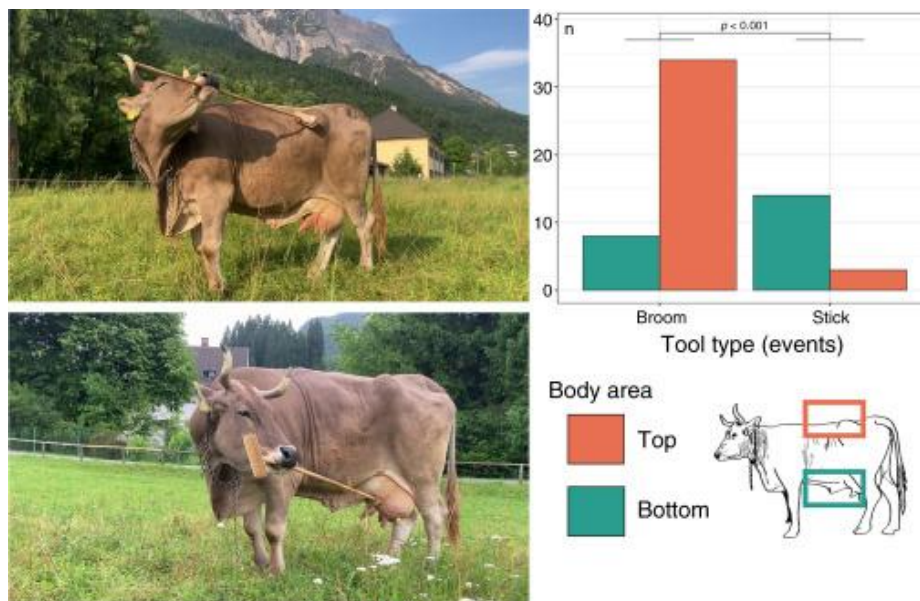
An [international conference on the transport of live animals by sea](#) was hosted in the French Senate on 23 January 2026. The conference, which was co-organised by the Senate and the UN's International Maritime Organisation (IMO) shed light on a technical subject that is often overlooked, at the crossroads of international trade, animal welfare and maritime safety. Speakers stressed the aging nature of the animal transporter fleet, overcrowding on board vessels, and deficiencies in the legal framework. With an average age of 42 years, vessels (sometimes converted oil tankers) are often unsuited to the transport of animals: loading/unloading ramps are too steep, ventilation systems are faulty, ceilings are low, lighting is poor, materials are corroded and surfaces harsh, feeders are too small and are contaminated by animal waste from the decks above. These major failings, combined with long waiting and journey times, are of high concern from the point of view of animal welfare. In terms of regulation, international conventions promoted by the International Maritime Organisation regulate ship safety and pollution prevention (the SOLAS and MARPOL conventions). Meanwhile, animal protection during the voyage is covered at European level mainly by EC Regulation no. 1/2005 (currently [under revision](#)), but speakers pointed to the difficulty of

distinguishing between road transport and transport by sea. The respective legal responsibilities of the loading agent and the carrier are also often confused.

At the conference, speakers reiterated the need for international norms specifically directed at the maritime transport of livestock, for the revision and harmonisation of the European legislation, for clear limits to be placed on the length of sea journeys, for the presence of veterinarians on board, and for a ban on the use of inappropriate vessels. They also cited the examples set by countries such as Luxembourg, New Zealand and Australia, which have banned (or plan to ban) the export of live animals.

Just days before the conference, the [World Organisation for Animal Health \(WOAH\) had issued a statement calling for a strict and urgent application](#) of its animal welfare standards (Terrestrial Animal Health Code) while transporting animals by land, sea or air, asserting that the protection of animal welfare is not optional – it is a shared responsibility that needs urgent attention. The WOAH’s call stresses essential needs, including up-to-date infrastructure, acceptance of responsibility by all parties and whole-journey coordination, and the critical role of training.

Assessment of positive animal welfare



[Image](#) from the article by [Osuna-Mascaro & Auersperg \(2026\)](#)

Non-human animals have complex cognitive abilities. Whether the animal in question is the [domestic chicken](#), whose abilities have recently been documented, or [Veronika the cow](#), who demonstrated cognitive flexibility by using a tool in different ways to satisfy her various needs for physical comfort, the recognition of the cognitive abilities of animals has led researchers to consider the concept of animal welfare afresh. Animal welfare is not simply a matter of the absence of disease or injuries. It also includes the presence of positive mental states resulting



from rewarding experiences, and the capacity to express motivated behaviours, a capacity that depends on cognition. In 2025, Rault and his colleagues defined [Positive Animal Welfare](#) (PAW) as ‘the animal flourishing through the experience of predominantly positive mental states and the development of competence and resilience’.

This definition of PAW offers a framework for researchers studying animal welfare, as demonstrated by two recent articles published recently in [Poultry Science](#) and [Modern Poultry](#). In the latter, the authors show that behavioural indicators such as activity and locomotion, foraging and environmental engagement (made possible by the provision of enrichment), comfort behaviours and play behaviours all provide information on the positive welfare state of broiler chickens. In a different study, seeking to compare different aviary designs for [laying hens](#), play behaviours were used as particular indicators for positive animal welfare.

An [article published in Animal](#) has explored the effect of the hedonic value of the environment on the level of positive welfare an animal can achieve. A situation has a positive hedonic value for an animal when it satisfies the basic and behavioural needs of the animal and also provides something that the animal appreciates but does not necessarily require. According to the authors, welfare depends on a balance between hedonic value, the complexity of the environment and an animal’s agency. The concept of agency here particularly applies to the possibility to act freely and effectively on one’s environment. The authors suggest that the balance between the three factors, which together contribute to an animal’s welfare, must be optimised (rather than maximised), because either excess or insufficiency of any of the factors can overwhelm an animal, frustrate it, or generate boredom or apathy.

Calls for research proposals

Two calls for research and innovation project proposals to promote animal welfare were launched at the beginning of the year. [The first](#) (which is soon to close – on 30/02/2026) was issued by the European partnership for animal health and welfare (EUPAHW) and brings together national and regional financial resources from 24 countries with co-funding from the European Union. [The second](#), posted on the EU’s funding portal, includes a particular focus on the topic of improving the welfare of terrestrial and aquatic animals throughout the entire production cycle, from birth and rearing to transport and slaughter.



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Cognition – Emotions

28/02/2026 : Bien-être et comportement des poules domestiques

Document type: book published by [Editions Quae](#)

Author: Cécile Arnould

Preview : Welfare and behavior of domestic chickens

The number of domestic chickens raised in France reaches several hundred million per year. Whether they are raised for commercial or personal purposes, ensuring conditions conducive to their physical and mental well-being is a crucial ethical issue.

To change the way people view these animals, to encourage everyone to consider their welfare as a necessity and to take action, this book aims to reveal the skills of domestic chickens. Through the rise of scientific research on their welfare and changes in European legislation on their protection, he traces how the sentience of farm animals has gradually been recognized since the second half of the 20th century. He then clarifies the definition of animal welfare and how it can be measured, before detailing the sensory, social, emotional, and cognitive abilities of domestic chickens.

This book draws on more than twenty-five years of the author's experience with domestic chickens of various breeds, living in conditions ranging from thousands of individuals in confinement to a few individuals in semi-freedom. It is aimed at individuals and professionals who breed or work with these birds, as well as anyone who is curious to learn more about them.

10/02/2026 : Quand les poissons souffrent en silence

Document type: podcast of the program [La Terre au carré](#) on France Inter

Authors: Mathieu Vidard, Jérôme Boulet, Lucie Sarfaty, Anna Massardier, Joelle Levert, Jean-Philippe Veret. Invités : Sébastien Moro, Amandine Sanvisens

Preview: Until the 2000s, it was believed that fish did not feel pain. This belief long-justified farming and fishing practices that are now increasingly considered unacceptable. "Fish are constantly challenging everything we thought we knew about the cognitive abilities of animals," smiles Sébastien Moro. We have discovered that fish can use tools and are better than chimpanzees at certain mental tasks."

A gradual realization that fish experience suffering

Fish are discussed as if they were lifeless commodities. How often have we read or heard about fish "resources" or cod "stocks"? Economic terminology still dominates all the debates. When it comes to wild fish, [an article published in the scientific journal Animal Welfare](#) has estimated, based on catch tonnages provided by the FAO (excluding illegal fishing and bycatch), that 1,100 to 2,000 billion

fish are caught each year. That is five to ten times more than there are stars in our galaxy. More than 30 million fish are kept as pets in French households (FACCO-ODOXA Barometer 2024-2025). The less fortunate among them swim around in circles in a bowl-shaped tank — experiencing constant psychological suffering as they do —and all of them are seen as commodities, often as decorative objects. More than 70 studies published in international scientific journals have shown that fish experience and respond to pain, points out researcher Lynne Sneddon, who was the first to prove the existence of nociceptors (pain receptors) in fish. "Before 2002, it was claimed that fish could not feel pain because the presence of nociceptors in their bodies had not been confirmed. But in 2002 and 2003, nociceptors were identified for the first time in rainbow trout, in particularly high numbers on the lips. It was subsequently demonstrated in carp, goldfish, trout, and salmon that potentially painful stimuli generated activity in different areas of their brains from those where responses to non-painful stimuli occur" says Sébastien Moro. (...)

Fish have receptors in their nervous system that respond to pain.

And they do so in a way that is "surprisingly similar" to that of other mammals, reports a study by Lynne Sneddon published in late 2023. "When they are subjected to an event that might cause them pain, fish display undesirable behavioral changes such as the suspension of feeding and reduced activity. These are avoided if an analgesic is administered," said Dr. Sneddon. "When the lips of fish receive a painful stimulus, they rub their mouths against the side of the aquarium in much the same way that we rub our toes when we stub them. If we accept that fish feel pain, there are important implications for how we treat them. Care must be taken when handling fish to avoid damaging their sensitive skin, and they must be caught and killed humanely."

This wealth of evidence has, for the moment, had only a limited effect on how we treat them. In 2021, in a move initiated by the PAZ association, some thirty prominent figures, associations, and academics launched an appeal in Reporterre for [a ban on live bait fishing](#) "It is time for French legislation to move towards a more explicit ban on live bait fishing (given that no case has ever been brought against it using the animal cruelty prohibition in the French Penal Code), in line with the latest scientific knowledge and the sensitivity of the public to violence against animals. It should be noted that this type of fishing is not typically found in the countryside: it is much more common among fishermen in the greater Paris area than in rural communities. Recent commitments by the cities of Paris and Grenoble show that the movement is gaining momentum." [...]

05/02/2026 : Space density affects resting location and proximity of fattening pigs at night

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

Authors: Mathilde Coutant, Juliette Michel, Lene J. Pedersen, Mona L.V. Larsen

Preview: Night rest is an important component of animal welfare, which may be compromised by high stocking density in fattening pigs. This study investigated how varying space density, achieved by reducing the number of pigs per pen, affect resting location and proximity to other pigs at night throughout the fattening period. A total of 197 pigs across 18 pens were assigned to one of three

treatments: 0.7 m²/pig (0.7 M, 18 pigs per pen), 1.4 m²/pig (1.4 M, 9 pigs per pen), or 2.1 m²/pig (2.1 M, 6 pigs per pen), from 30 kg to ~110 kg (11 weeks). On weeks 2, 5, and 10, night video recordings (22:00–07:00) were scanned every 10 min to assess the proportion of pigs resting on different floor types (solid, drained, slatted), and proximity to others (alone, close contact, full contact). All treatments showed a similar overall proportion of pigs lying during the night hours of 95 %. However, 0.7 M pigs had a higher probability of resting on the slatted floor ($P \leq 0.01$), while 1.4 M and 2.1 M pigs had a higher probability of resting on the solid floor ($P \leq 0.01$). 0.7 M pigs also showed more full-contact resting compared to 2.1 M ($P \leq 0.01$), while 1.4 M and 2.1 M pigs rested more often without contact by week 10 ($P \leq 0.01$). In week 10, 1.4 M pigs rested more on the drained floor and showed more full-contact resting than 2.1 M ($P \leq 0.01$). These findings suggest that high stocking densities may hinder pigs' possibility to rest on the solid floor and limit their capacity to rest alone, potentially compromising welfare.

19/01/2026 : Flexible use of a multi-purpose tool by a cow

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

Authors: Antonio J. Osuna-Mascaró, Alice M.I. Auersperg

Preview: Imagine the tools a cow would make. This idea, humorously illustrated in Gary Larson's Far Side cartoon, captures a widespread assumption: cows are neither problem-solvers nor tool users. In science, as in culture, livestock species are often cognitively underestimated, reinforced by their utilitarian role and persistent mind-denial biases associated with meat consumption. Despite over 10,000 years of domestication, research on cattle cognition remains scarce and confined to applied contexts such as productivity and welfare. Tool use, while rarely observed, offers a stringent test of cognitive flexibility. Defined as the manipulation of an external object to achieve a goal via a mechanical interface, tooling ranges from species-typical routines to innovative, problem-specific acts. We report here our experimental demonstration of flexible egocentric tooling in a pet cow (*Bos taurus*), Veronika, who uses a deck brush to self-scratch. Across randomized trials, she preferred the bristled end but switched to the stick end when targeting softer lower-body areas. This adaptive deployment of tool features reveals multi-purpose tool use not previously reported in non-primate mammals. Our findings broaden the taxonomic scope of flexible tool use and invite a reassessment of livestock cognition.

Conferences – seminars – training

05/03/2026 : 32nd EAAP Webinar titled: “Nutrition: a key factor in the health, well-being, and performance of horses”

Document type: announcement of a webinar organized by the [EAAP](#)

Author: Federica Motterle

Preview: The webinar will be held on Thursday, March 5, 2026, 15.00 CET and organized in collaboration with the EAAP Horse Study Commission, will open with a presentation by Andrea D. Ellis (UNEQUI, Science & Creativity Ltd., United Kingdom), who will share insights on nutrition and welfare, describing the physiology of ingestion and how feeding practices can be adapted to meet horses’ needs. Following that, Samy Julliard (Lab to Field, France) will detail the impact of feeding on horse health, while Emanuela Valle (University of Turin, Italy) will discuss the relationship between nutrition and performance in training horses. For further details and registration, please consult the webinar dedicated page [here](#).

Animal husbandry and human-animal relationship

07/03/2026 : The Influence of Environmental Conditions and Husbandry Practices on Goat Welfare

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

Authors: Pilarczyk R., Bąkowska M., Tomza-Marciniak A., Udała J., Seremak B., Kwita E., Sablik P., Pilarczyk B.

Preview: Goat (*Capra hircus*) welfare is an important issue in any farming system. The aim of the study was a comprehensive analysis of the impact of environmental factors and farming practices on the welfare of goats, with particular attention to physical, behavioural, and emotional aspects. It includes a review of the up-to-date literature on the effects of environmental conditions including air temperature, air humidity, space, feeding systems, social relationships (mother–offspring, human–animal, animal–animal), zootechnical procedures (dehorning, castration, hoof trimming) and welfare assessment methods. It compares the AWIN, Anzuino, Muri and Leite protocols for assessing goat welfare and their application in the Five Domain Model. Goat welfare is strongly

influenced by their environment, nutrition and socialisation: heat stress and confined space cause physiological disorders, decreased immunity and increased aggressive behaviour and a monotonous diet leads to frustration and reduced cognitive activity, whereas positive early contact with humans reduces anxiety and maintaining the mother–kid bond supports the social development of young goats. Furthermore, significant improvements in welfare and stress reduction can be achieved by providing anaesthesia and painkillers where necessary to minimise pain and enriching the environment with items that support natural behaviour, such as platforms, brushes and items for cognitive tasks. In general, the keeper should take a holistic approach, combining environmental optimisation, humane husbandry practices and regular monitoring using validated assessment protocols to improve welfare. These measures are both an ethical obligation and a prerequisite for animal health and production efficiency. Nevertheless, there is a need for further research focussing on the development of non-invasive assessment methods and innovative forms of environmental enrichment.

11/02/2026 : Welfare indicators in cattle farming in the face of heat stress: a review in climate change scenarios

Document type: scientific review published in [Frontiers in Veterinary Science](#)

Authors: IMF de Souza, CEL Sousa, VS Pinto, LGP Vilela, AdS Souza, JPS Cunha, CV Araújo, MdNB Gomes, LKX Silva, LG Martorano, KAL Neves, RNC Camargo-Júnior, ÉBR Silva, WC da Silva

Preview: This work consists of a narrative review that addresses the differences between European cattle and Zebu cattle in their resilience to environmental challenges. It was developed based on scientific articles, theses, dissertations, and technical documents available in recognized databases such as Web of Science, ScienceDirect, Scopus, and PubMed, prioritizing recent studies from 2020 to 2025 that are relevant to the topic. The method used was a narrative review, in which publications addressing the physiological, behavioral, bioclimatic, and adaptive production parameters of each animal group were selected, allowing for a comparative analysis of their main characteristics. The results indicate that European cattle, although highly productive, are less adapted to heat, while zebu cattle stand out for their hardiness, resistance to high temperatures, and lower incidence of diseases. The conclusion is that analyzing these differences is essential to guide breed selection, genetic improvement strategies, and the adoption of more sustainable production systems, favoring greater livestock efficiency and resilience under diverse environmental conditions.

03/02/2026 : Most common housing systems and practices of keeping turkeys (*Meleagris gallopavo gallopavo*) in the EU

Document type: technical report from the [EFSA](#)

Authors: European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), Jutta Berk, Joanna Marchewka, Virginie Michel, Nienke van Staaveren, Oana Maria Balmos, Chiara Fabris, Yves Van der Stede, Cristina Rojo Gimeno, Antonio Velarde, Anja Brinch Riber

Preview: This Technical Report addresses a mandate from the European Commission according to Article 31 of Regulation (European Commission) No 178/2002, which requests a review of the most common husbandry systems and current practices for keeping turkeys (*Meleagris gallopavo gallopavo*) of all ages on farm. The mandate requests a description of litter availability, access to outdoors (including covered veranda), stocking density, the enrichment provided and the light scheme of each housing system, the use of cages and the practices of separation of sexes, mutilations and breeding practices, including artificial insemination. An extensive literature review, a survey amongst stakeholders, a public call for evidence addressed to stakeholders, data from EFSA Networks, reports from the European Commission (fact-finding studies), Eurostat and input from experts in the EFSA working group on the welfare of turkeys were considered. This report provides an overview of the turkey production process and the duration of its various stages. In the European Union the most common housing systems for keeping fattening turkeys are indoor floor systems with and without outdoor access and/or a covered veranda. Turkey breeders are kept in indoor systems. These systems, including hatcheries, are described in this report considering the availability of litter and enrichment, the stocking density and the light scheme applied. In addition, the practices of processing poults in hatcheries, including mutilations, and the practices of flock thinning and separation of sexes in fattening turkey farms, and artificial insemination in turkey breeders are described.

03/02/2026 : Welfare assessment of turkeys (*Meleagris gallopavo gallopavo*) on farm

Document type: Scientific opinion published in the [EFSA Journal](#)

Authors: EFSA Panel Animal Health and Animal Welfare (AHAW), Søren Saxmose Nielsen, Julio Alvarez, Anette Boklund, Sabine Dippel, Fernanda Dorea, Jordi Figuerola, Mette S. Herskin, Virginie Michel, Miguel Angel Miranda Chueca, Eleonora Nannoni, Romolo Nonno, Karl Stahl, Jutta Berk, Joanna Marchewka, Nienke van Staaveren, Oana Maria Balmos, Chiara Fabris, Olaf Mosbach-Schulz, Yves Van der Stede, Marika Vitali, Cristina Rojo Gimeno, Antonio Velarde, Anja Brinch Riber

Preview: This Scientific Opinion assesses the welfare of turkeys of all ages (*Meleagris gallopavo gallopavo*) on farm in relation to the type and condition of the litter, type and availability of enrichment (including covered veranda and outdoor range), space allowance, concentrations of ammonia and carbon dioxide, effective environmental temperature, group size, nest conditions, lighting conditions and hatchery conditions, by using 19 welfare consequences and associated animal-based measures (ABMs) for their assessment. In addition, the risks posed by the practices of flock thinning and removal of hens, mutilations (i.e. beak trimming, desnooding and toe trimming), artificial insemination (including semen collection) and feed restriction are assessed, with the latter

two practices only in turkey breeders. The welfare consequences of breeding is assessed. Recommendations to prevent and/or mitigate relevant welfare consequences in fattening and breeder turkeys include increasing space allowance compared to the currently provided space, avoiding feed and water deprivation of newly-hatched poults for more than 48 h, and providing enrichment such as elevated platforms, straw-bales and a covered veranda. It is recommended to maintain dry litter conditions, i.e. below a threshold of 35%–40% humidity. Beak trimming, desnooding and toe trimming as well as the associated welfare consequences can be avoided if the recommended housing and management practices are implemented, e.g. increasing space allowance and providing suitable enrichment. It is recommended to discontinue flock thinning and avoid quantitative feed restriction, the latter currently practised in breeder toms. Also, it is recommended to place more emphasis on leg health and less on weight gain in genetic selection. The selected ABMs to monitor relevant welfare consequences at the slaughterhouse are total mortality, plumage damage, carcass condemnation, wounds, breast blisters and footpad dermatitis.

27/01/2026 : Bien-être animal : l'intérêt de la socialisation des truies et des porcelets démontré en maternité

Document type: article published in [Réussir Porcs](#)

Author: Alexandre Poissonnet

Preview: In a study carried out in the free-roaming maternity area of its experimental station, the IFIP (the French professional body for pig farming) has demonstrated the benefits of early socialization in piglets, with or without the presence of sows, with improved exploratory behaviors, better establishment of new hierarchies, and no reduction in technical performance. *(The remainder of the article is for subscribers only)*

30/09/2025 : Animal welfare indicators and stress response of broiler chickens raised at low and high stocking density

Document type: scientific article published in [Journal of Animal Science and Technology](#)

Authors: Chan Ho Kim, Ki Hyun Kim, Ju Lan Chun, Se Jin Lim, Jung Hwan Jeon

Preview: Stocking density is a crucial parameter that impacts animal welfare, performance, and economic returns for producers. In our current investigation, we explored the influence of stocking density on the growth performance, litter quality, footpad dermatitis, and corticosterone concentrations in broiler chickens. Low and high stocking densities were defined as 16.7 birds/m² (certified for animal welfare, n = 32,000; initial body weight [BW] = 42.1±0.32 g; Arbor Acres) and 20.3 birds/m² (commercial farm, n = 32,000; initial BW = 42.9±0.31; Arbor Acres), respectively. A basal diet typical of commercial standards was developed to meet or surpass the nutritional requirements outlined by the National Research Council (NRC) for broiler chickens. The control

group was housed for 29 days to compare productivity and animal welfare indicators in high stocking density (20.3 birds/m²) as per livestock industry regulations and low stocking density (16.7 birds/m²) according to animal welfare standards. During the grower periods (21–29 days) and the overall period (0–29 days) of the experiment, feed intake and BW were lower in the lower stocking density group ($p \leq 0.05$). Additionally, the feed conversion ratio significantly improved at the lower stocking density. By day 29, the average footpad dermatitis score, litter moisture, NH₃ concentration, and feather cleanliness were significantly higher at the higher stocking density. Corticosterone concentrations decreased by 2.35% at the lower stocking density by day 29. These results indicate that decreasing stocking density enhances the welfare and growth performance of broiler chickens, as indicated by decreases in litter moisture, footpad dermatitis, and corticosterone concentrations.

Precision farming and AI

09/03/2026 : Integration of computer vision-based behavioral monitoring and machine learning to enhance precision in health and welfare monitoring systems in pig farming

Document type: scientific article published in [Smart Agricultural Technology](#)

Authors: Eddiemar B. Lagua, Hong-Seok Mun, Md Sharifuzzaman, Md Kamrul Hasan, Ahsan Mehtab, Jin-Gu Kang, Young-Hwa Kim, Chul-Ju Yang

Preview: This study proposed a stressor-specific anomaly detection system by integrating computer vision-based behavioral monitoring with machine learning techniques in growing pigs. Multiple algorithms were trained for binary (Normal vs. Abnormal) and multi-class (Normal, Heat Stress + Poor Ventilation, Heat Stress, Heat Stress + Infection, and Heat Stress + Recovery) anomaly detections, and the best-performing models were identified. Results revealed that pigs exhibited distinct behavioral patterns in response to different stressors: healthy pigs showed higher feeding activity but lower drinking activity compared to those under stress. Binary classification models achieved high accuracy, with most algorithms reaching precision, recall, and F1-scores $\geq 90\%$. Among them, the Decision Tree (DT) performed best, achieving perfect classification by relying on a single highly discriminative feature, indicating strong potential for real-time anomaly detection. For multi-class classification, XGBoost demonstrated the highest overall performance (accuracy = 0.923, precision = 0.954, recall = 0.861, F1-score = 0.892). However, its performance decreased for minor classes, particularly with infection and recovery. Independent testing with unseen data confirmed that both DT and XGBoost effectively detected anomalies during heat stress days, though XGBoost struggled to identify specific classes. These results highlight that pigs display distinct behavioral responses to various stressors, which can be reliably detected using integrated computer vision and machine learning approaches. Future research should expand datasets under commercial settings and incorporate finer temporal analyses to enable robust, real-time health monitoring. The proposed

multi-class classification framework holds promise for advancing precision livestock farming through improved animal health, welfare, and decision-support systems.

18/02/2026 : Review: Understanding cattle social behaviour in modern penned production systems with AI technology: Are we tracking welfare indicators?

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

Authors: A. Fuentes, S. Han, J. Liu, J. Park, S. Yoon, D.S. Park

Preview: Monitoring cattle social behaviour is fundamental for assessing animal welfare in modern penned production systems. Traditional observation methods are constrained by subjectivity, labour demands, and limited scalability, prompting increased interest in artificial intelligence (AI) for automated behaviour tracking. While recent advances in computer vision, sensor technologies, and machine learning offer promising tools for continuous and objective monitoring, many systems focus on identifying “what” an animal is doing (e.g., lying, feeding), without interpreting the underlying “why”, such as whether a posture indicates rest, discomfort, or illness, due to lack of contextual modelling. This review synthesises findings from over 180 peer-reviewed articles sourced from Scopus, Web of Science, and PubMed databases using targeted keywords related to cattle behaviour, welfare indicators, and AI-based monitoring. We examine the biological foundations of cattle social behaviour, the effects of modern penned production environments on behavioural expression, and how current AI-based technologies align with established welfare assessment protocols. Our analysis reveals that while current AI systems effectively capture indicators like activity level, walking, standing, feeding, and lying, they often fail to account for complex affiliative behaviours, social dynamics, and context-dependent stress signals. Major limitations include poor generalisability across farm contexts, insufficient temporal and multimodal data integration, and a lack of transparency in system outputs. To address this gap, we propose a welfare-centred AI framework grounded in five principles: multimodal data integration, context-aware behavioural modelling, shared behavioural ontologies, human-in-the-loop system design, and explainable AI. This approach supports a more accurate interpretation of cattle behaviour, facilitating early detection of welfare risks and informed decision-making. We conclude by outlining future research needs in system validation, ethical co-design, and cross-disciplinary collaboration to enable responsible scaling of AI technologies in livestock systems.

06/02/2026 : Precision Livestock Farming for Dairy Sheep: A Literature Review of IoT and Decision-Support Systems for Enhanced Management and Welfare

Document type: scientific review published in [AgriEngineering](#)

Authors: Mura M.C., Trimasse O., Carcangiu V., Luridiana S.

Preview: The dairy sheep, vital to the Mediterranean economy, struggles to balance productivity, sustainability, and animal welfare, especially in extensive, small-scale systems. Precision livestock farming (PLF) technologies offer new opportunities by enabling continuous, non-invasive, and data-driven monitoring across diverse farming conditions. Despite rapid progress in sensors, computer vision, wearable devices, and artificial intelligence (AI), a comprehensive synthesis focused on dairy sheep remains limited. This review provides an updated overview of PLF applications in dairy sheep farming, based on a literature review. The 2018–2025 timeframe was chosen to capture recent advances in Internet of Things (IoT), AI, and sensor technologies that have achieved practical relevance only in recent years. The review identifies core technological domains such as automated weight and body condition monitoring, biometric identification, wearable and IoT-based sensors, localization systems, behavioral and thermal monitoring, virtual fencing, drone-assisted herding, and advanced decision-support tools. Innovations including lightweight deep-learning models, multimodal sensing frameworks, and digital twins highlight the growing potential for scalable, real-time applications. While technological progress is substantial, practical adoption is hindered by economic, technical, interoperability, and ethical barriers. This review consolidates current evidence and identifies future priorities to guide the development of integrated, welfare-focused PLF solutions for dairy sheep farming.

31/01/2026 : Measuring shade use of dairy cattle at pasture with an on-cow light sensor: a case study

Document type: scientific article published in [Computers and Electronics in Agriculture](#)

Authors: Lydiane Aubé, Bruno Meunier, Romain Lardy

Preview: Grazing cows preferentially access shade to shield against the sun. However, the conditions that provide cows with optimal shade access and use (e.g. no competition for access to shade) are still unknown. Continuous monitoring of shade use by grazing cattle could help to understand how and when cows use shade resources. The aim of this study was to validate a method based on a light sensor (HOBO Pendant MX2202) attached to the back (on the transverse processes of the lumbar vertebrae) of 7 dairy cows at pasture to continuously record their use of natural shade for research purposes. Live behavioral observations of shade use and cow posture were recorded in summer (June to September, between 9 am and 6 pm). Based on the behavioral observation data, we determined thresholds in lux to discriminate between cows in shade and cows in sun on a randomly-generated training dataset representing 15 % of the initial dataset. This process was repeated 100 times, generating 100 thresholds and threshold performances. Data loss due to sensor loss or battery discharge was 9 %, which is acceptable. The thresholds ranged from 15,688 to 40556 lx: sensitivity ranged from 92.0 % to 99.8 % and specificity ranged from 88.7 % to 99.9 %, showing that the performances were robust to threshold variation within this range. This study demonstrates that an efficient threshold to discriminate cows in shade from cows in the sun can be determined via a

relatively short (about 12 h) series of live observations. As performances seem to be slightly lower for lying cows than for standing cows (mean false-positive rate is 7.4 % for lying cows versus 1.8 % for standing cows), future studies should consider the posture (which can also be monitored continuously with other sensors such as accelerometer installed on the legs or on the neck collar of the cows).

Publication that led to an [article on the INRAE website on 25/02/2026](#)

15/12/2025 : Real-Time Behavior Recognition Using a Legged Robot for Animal–Robot Interaction

Document type: scientific article published in the [Journal of Field Robotics](#)

Authors: Edoardo Fazzari, Donato Romano, Fabrizio Falchi, Cesare Stefanini

Preview: Animal–robot interaction is an emerging interdisciplinary field that explores the dynamics between animals and robotic systems, as well as the design principles for effective engagement. While previous approaches have investigated animal responses to robotic stimuli, they have yet to integrate artificial intelligence (AI) for real-time behavioral analysis during the interaction. This paper addresses this gap by introducing an AI-driven framework that enables a robotic dog to autonomously monitor and analyze livestock behavior, specifically in cows and chickens. Our system processes real-time camera observations using deep-learning models to detect animal presence and recognize actions. It integrates three neural networks: YOLO-Chicken and YOLO-Cows, for accurate detection of chickens and cows, respectively, and DARTEMIS, a novel, distilled unimodal variant of a state-of-the-art Animal Action Recognition model. The networks communicate efficiently via Redis in a lightweight manner, with all processing conducted onboard the robot. We trained YOLO-Cow and YOLO-Chicken on a subset of the COCO data set for cows and a public data set for chickens, achieving mAP@50-95 scores of 0.67 and 0.56, respectively. DARTEMIS, trained on the Animal Kingdom data set like ARTEMIS, reached an mAP of 77.3. With these models, we tested our system in real-world conditions through field trials, evaluating its ability to accurately detect animals and classify their behaviors. This study presents the first successful integration of efficient deep-learning models into a robotic platform for real-time animal behavior analysis. The proposed framework paves the way for continuous automated livestock monitoring, with potential applications in improving animal welfare and farm management. The full implementation is publicly available and designed to be adaptable to various robotic platforms and related challenges.

Ethics – sociology – philosophy – animal rights

24/02/2026 : Chiens de race : l'esthétique peut-elle justifier la souffrance ?

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

Author: Valérie Chansigaud

Preview: The European Council and Parliament recently reached a provisional agreement designed to impose stricter regulations on dog and cat breeding, notably by prohibiting the breeding and showing of animals with "extreme traits." This particularly affects certain conformational traits associated with serious and lasting disorders, such as dogs with flat faces, for which breathing difficulties, inability to exercise, and locomotor problems are now well documented issues. This regulatory change is a response to repeated warnings from the veterinary world and growing public sensitivity to animal suffering. It is also part of a long history of the excessive importance placed by human societies on the appearance of domestic animals and their desire to shape it.

Selecting for looks: an ancient practice with multiple uses

It is impossible to date precisely when humans began to practise the selection of animals for aesthetic reasons. Long before the existence of "breeds" in the modern sense of the term (a phenomenon that emerged in the 19th century), animals were already selected based on sex, age, color, or conformation. (...)

A belated concern for health and welfare

Modern breeds emerged in the 19th century, in a cultural context marked by a taste for classification, hierarchy, and social distinction based on the notion of "race." This passion for "pure" bloodlines was not unrelated to the intellectual conceptual systems that were, at the same time, developing racial theories for humans.

For many years, the effects of selection were assessed almost exclusively in terms of productivity, efficiency, or conformity to a standard. Animals were known to suffer but their suffering was widely tolerated, considered to be of secondary importance, or even inevitable. Veterinary practices themselves bore witness to this: for a long time, major procedures, such as the sterilization of female dogs, were performed without anesthesia.

Other procedures, which are now recognized as unnecessary and painful, were also common: for example, dogs' tongue ties were cut in the mistaken belief that this would prevent rabies. These practices reflect an attitude towards the bodies of animals in which suffering was largely ignored, more from indifference than ignorance.

It was not until the second half of the 20th century that chronic pain, quality of life, and long-term health in animals began to be considered as issues in their own right. Current concerns over dogs

with extreme body traits—causing breathing difficulties, locomotor disorders and exercise intolerance—are fully in line with this recent history of sensitivity to animal welfare.

Cats have long avoided this selective breeding process

Recent European regulations would appear more directly concerned with dogs than cats, an impression that chimes with historical, biological, and sociological reality. In France, as in many European countries, there are higher proportions of purebred dogs than purebred cats. This difference can be explained in large part by the histories of dog and cat breeding. There has been a long-standing and basic interest taken in breeds of dogs. The selection of particular conformational traits became one of the central drivers for dog breeding in the 19th century, systematizing and standardizing much older practices where dogs were differentiated by the functions they perform. Since ancient times, certain dogs have been sought after for warfare or combat, focusing on their size, power, or aggressiveness. (...)

By contrast, cats have long avoided this selection process. The first cat shows in the 19th century rewarded individuals—often alley cats—over representatives of breeds that had not yet become standardized. Cats remained ordinary animals for longer, less subject to the demands of conformational selection.

Recent crossbreeds, such as the Pomsky (a cross between a Siberian Husky and a Miniature Spitz), reflect the current high demand for animals that are perceived as original and endearing, but which are, above all, emblematic of a fashion trend.

The choice of these dogs is less about their needs or health than about standing out from the crowd: people choose a dog as they would choose a pair of shoes, because it flatters their self-image and signals social status. Long criticised by veterinarians, who see the consequences of extreme conformational selection on a daily basis, these practices could now be curbed by new European regulations, which clearly state that any cross-breeding is unacceptable if it compromises the health or welfare of the animals concerned.

It remains hard to predict how dogs will look in the future, though. History shows that advances in animal protection are neither linear nor irreversible. The emergence of brutal or violent ideologies could very well lead to a decline in the consideration shown for animal suffering. The prohibition of extreme traits thus exposes an age-old tension between the vanity of sometimes cruel human desires and the need to establish moral rules to restrict their effects—a debate which is as old as philosophy itself. (...)

09/02/2026 : Les Français et le bien-être des animaux (Vague 9)

Document type: [Ifop](#) survey for the [Fondation 30 Millions d'Amis](#)

Authors: Hugo Masserre, Léo Major

Preview: For the ninth publication of this barometer, three months ahead of the 2026 municipal elections in France, Ifop has conducted a survey of the French public's perceptions of animal welfare on behalf of the 30 Millions d'Amis Foundation.

Pets are perceived to be significantly better-protected than wild animals

The French view animal welfare through the lens of the emotional bond they share with animals. Pets, who are in a relationship with their owners that is both everyday and emotional, are thus perceived as being well-treated in general (80%, up 2 points compared to 2025). By contrast, the further away an animal finds itself from this emotional context, the more precarious its condition is perceived to be - only 48% of French people believe that the welfare of wild animals is well-protected (-3 points compared to last year). This hierarchy thus reveals a vision of animal welfare that is strongly linked to animals' emotional closeness with French individuals, rather than to public institutions, which are viewed as lacking in sufficient engagement. Indeed, mistrust of the authorities has increased: only 43% of French people believe that the law is effective in protecting animals (-6 points in one year), and confidence in the judiciary and the courts is also declining (-2 points). This protection is perceived as being even weaker for wild animals, with a legal framework that is seen as less favorable to wild animals than pets. In light of this, 82% of the French public support the proposal by the Fondation 30 Millions d'Amis to grant animals the legal status of "non-human persons." (...)

Faced with what they perceive as a lack of protection for animals by the national authorities, the French overwhelmingly support the proposals tested in our survey

The proposals we put to the public can be grouped into four main areas:

- the selling of animals as commodities;
- farming and slaughter conditions;
- human leisure activities (hunting and bullfighting);
- scientific and medical uses of animals.

There is still widespread support for a ban on pet sales and this support has grown this year

The French remain strongly opposed to the commercialization of pet sales. 86% of French people are in favor of banning the online sale of all animals (+2 points compared to January 2025). Support is slightly less overwhelming, but still very high, for banning the sale of pets in pet stores (77%, up 1 point).

The French are uncompromising on issues related to animal breeding and slaughter

The French are particularly "firm" on issues related to animal breeding and slaughter. For example, 82% are in favor of banning intensive farming (with very strong support among young people), and 91% (= 2025) advocate banning the transport of live farm animals. Farming issues appear to be closely linked to those of slaughter. 81% of French people are in favor of slaughtering farm animals directly on the farm rather than in slaughterhouses, and 92% are in favor of widespread video surveillance in slaughterhouses—a record level since our barometer began. Finally, more broadly, 88% believe that the slaughter of conscious animals is unacceptable.

French people against human activities involving animals for "pleasure"

The French are sensitive to leisure activities that involve animal suffering. When it comes to bullfighting, 78% are in favor of banning it, the highest level measured since the barometer began. Conversely, only 21% believe it is legitimate to cause animals to suffer in the name of certain local traditions, a level of legitimacy that is in sharp decline (down 6 points since January 2025). The majority of respondents are also in favor of banning hunting with hounds (78%, up 2 points over one

year) and making school holidays, weekends, and public holidays non-hunting days (between 79% and 82% support).

Scientific and medical uses of animals: the majority of French people say "no" to animal testing
A considerable proportion (80%) of French people are in favor of a total ban on all animal testing. [...]

Election focus: animals take center stage in the 2026 municipal elections

Nearly half of French people (51%) believe that a candidate's stance or measures in favor of animal welfare would influence them to vote for that candidate. We observe differences based on age: young people (67% of those under 35) are more sensitive to this issue than seniors (41%), as are "pet owners" (63% compared to 37% of French people who do not own pets). It should be noted that there is no difference based on geographical location or level of education. In addition to sociodemographic variables, differences emerge based on partisan affiliation. Sixty-six percent of left-wing supporters (including 74% of LFI and Ecologist supporters) believe that a candidate's stance or measures in favor of animal welfare would encourage them to vote for them, compared to 35% of Republican supporters and 51% of National Rally supporters. The study also highlights a hard core of 18% of French people who believe that a candidate's positions or measures in favor of animal welfare would definitely encourage them to vote for them, an increase of 3 points compared to 2020. Although well behind the top three issues determining how people will vote in the upcoming municipal elections (security, finances, and healthcare), consideration for animals will have a significant impact on voters' choices!

[Download the presentation of the results](#)

27/11/2025 : La condition des animaux dans l'agriculture industrielle peut-elle faire souffrir les hommes ? Une étude sociologique portant sur les conflits éthiques et les tensions identitaires des travailleurs en production animale

Document type: thesis report published in [HAL](#)

Author: Aurore Peinado

Preview (provided by the author): Can the conditions of animals in industrial agriculture cause humans to suffer? A sociological study on ethical conflicts and identity tensions among workers in animal production

This thesis focuses on the difficulties experienced by workers in intensive animal farming, both employees and farmers, in terms of ethical conflicts and identity tensions. Based on a sociological study using an inductive and comprehensive approach, it highlights situations in which these workers experience difficulties related to animal husbandry conditions. It describes the stages of occupational socialization that lead to the development of a distanced relationship with farm animals, marked by the erosion of the emotional dimension. This thesis also shows that these workers face identity tensions arising from the fact that the values central to their social and

professional identity are being challenged in a context where industrial farming and the condition of animals in industrial agriculture are the subject of critical social representations. Finally, this work falls within the disciplinary fields of rural and agricultural sociology, while drawing on the fields of sociology of work and professions, anthropology of human-animal relationships, psychodynamics of work, and philosophy dealing with the condition of animals.

12/06/2025 : Economic Decline and Ecological Impact: What Future for European Fur Farming?

Document type: economic analysis published in [EuroChoices](#)

Authors: Martina Bozzola, Farah Hamdan

Preview: The economic, ecological and animal welfare impacts of fur farming in the European Union have been debated for decades, culminating in proposals for an EU-wide ban on keeping animals solely for fur production. The Covid-19 pandemic further intensified these discussions, particularly within individual Member States.

This study analyses the economic trends, environmental consequences and disease risks associated with fur farming, providing insights to inform political and societal debate. Our findings indicate that, even before the pandemic, fur exports and consumer demand were in steady decline. This trend has been driven by shifting consumer preferences, major fashion brands phasing out fur, and growing concerns over animal welfare and sustainability. Additionally, the industry has been linked to biodiversity threats, zoonotic disease transmission, and negative environmental impacts, including a high carbon footprint.

While concerns remain over the relocation of fur farming to regions with weaker regulations, the industry requires a strategic transition. Supporting fur farmers in shifting to alternative activities, for example, through training, targeted subsidies, compensation and other policy incentives, can help repurpose land and employment towards viable and sustainable alternatives.

Animal welfare assessment and labelling

18/03/2026 : Stereotypic behaviors across species: From neurobiological mechanisms to farm animal welfare

Document type: scientific review published in [Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews](#)

Authors: Chenyang Li, Jie Gao, Hang Shu, Guangyong Zhao, Xianhong Gu

Preview: Stereotypic behaviors, characterized by repetitive, fixed, and seemingly functionless behavioral patterns, are critical indicator of compromised animal welfare and neuropsychiatric

disorders. While stereotypic behaviors have been extensively studied in humans and laboratory animals, the neurobiological mechanisms of farm animals and their cross-species commonalities remain to be systematically elucidated. This review summarizes the progress in the research on stereotypic behaviors, with a particular focus on comparing the phenotypic similarities among humans, laboratory animals, and farm animals. It delves into key biological principles underlying stereotypic behaviors, including neurotransmitter system imbalances, basal ganglia circuit dysfunction, and the modulatory effects of environmental enrichment. Although these mechanisms have been thoroughly investigated in humans and laboratory animals, corresponding evidence in farm animals is still limited. Furthermore, this paper systematically analyzes the current limitations in farm animal stereotypic behaviors research, such as the lack of standardized quantification tools, inconsistent phenotypic descriptions, high economic costs, and insufficient interdisciplinary communication. However, several emerging opportunities promise to advance future developments, including the use of physiological and structural similarities across species for translational research, the application of computer vision, a focus on the potential regulatory mechanisms of the microbiome-gut-brain axis, and the integration of other advanced methods such as multi-omics and genetic marker screening. This review aims to provide new perspectives for a deeper understanding of the mechanisms underlying stereotypic behaviors in farm animals, offer a theoretical basis for developing precise behavioral welfare assessment and intervention strategies, and ultimately promote the advancement of farm animal welfare.

16/03/2026 : Assessing good physical health and resilience as a foundation for positive welfare in chickens

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

Authors: Lisa Jung, Ruth C. Newberry, Yukari Togami, Manja Zupan Šemrov

Preview: This review proposes candidate animal-based indicators of good physical health and resilience in chickens (*Gallus gallus domesticus*) as a foundation for assessing positive animal welfare, complementing existing approaches to animal welfare assessment focused on use of iceberg indicators to detect severe health problems. We outline potential anatomical indicators involving the comb and wattles, eyes, beak, plumage, skin, footpads, claws, and overall body for rapid on-farm screening that could be automated for ease of application (e.g. using computer vision). We also identify health- and resilience-related anatomical and physiological indicators that could provide deeper, context-dependent insights but require controlled testing conditions and/or laboratory analysis. For each indicator category, we summarize biological significance, influencing factors, and measurement methods under commercial and research settings. We classify candidate indicators according to their focus (health vs resilience) and response directionality on a scale from tolerable to optimal (whereby optimal values are highest for unidirectional measures such as plumage condition and intermediate for bidirectional measures such as claw length). We also rate potential ease of data collection (invasive, catching required, or remote sampling), on-farm applicability, and level of promise as a guide for indicator selection and prioritization for validation.

Following validation and establishment of an appropriate scoring range from tolerable to optimal for each indicator depending on age, breed type, and reproductive status, we propose the use of continuous visual analogue scales or algorithms for scoring, followed by aggregation of indicator scores to obtain an overall rating of each bird's health and resilience. This narrative review thus provides a biologically grounded roadmap for developing proactive assessment tools that support thriving in poultry, as a foundation upon which affective and cognitive components of positive animal welfare can also be added.

10/03/2026 : Normes UE de commercialisation volailles : consommateurs et élevages plein air mieux protégés

Document type: article published on the [ANVOL website](#)

Author: French Poultry Interprofession (ANVOL)

Preview: *A victory for outdoor production*

The European marketing standards for poultry meat, revised by the European Commission, will take effect on March 9, 2026. The new text ensures, in particular, that consumers receive reliable information about what they are buying.

Since their creation in 1991, these standards—by establishing the principles of voluntary labeling—have been effective tools for protecting and promoting free-range poultry farming methods. They allow consumers to know exactly what they are buying and provide European producers with consistent rules.

Seriously threatened in 2022 by a proposed revision, this regulatory framework nearly disappeared. As a result, all sorts of labels could have proliferated freely, such as: “Free-range chickens,” “Open-air chickens,” “Outdoor chickens.” This would have fueled consumer confusion and further disrupted the promotion of free-range farming.

The outcome of a 4-year battle

SYNALAF and ANVOL, supported by the European association ERPA, took action to preserve these labeling rules, particularly those concerning outdoor farming. On Monday, March 9, the former Regulation 2008/543 was repealed. Two texts are taking effect to replace it: Delegated Regulation 2026/343 and Implementing Regulation 2026/344. These texts ensure, in particular, an unambiguous definition and use of essential claims for free-range poultry.

Analysis of Delegated Regulation 2026/343

Specifically, the optional reserved claims “Outdoor access,” “Farm-raised – free-range,” and “Farm-raised – free-range” are exclusive to poultry with access to outdoor rearing. No other type of farming may use them or refer to them.

However, operators may use new claims for poultry not raised outdoors provided they comply with a strict framework. Among other conditions, it is required that “these terms be consistent with the product's production method and not mislead consumers [...]; the product's specifications be documented; and appropriate controls be carried out under the supervision of the competent authorities of the Member State [...].”

While protection has been strengthened regarding the terms themselves, it is also more restrictive for illustrations appearing in advertising, commercial materials, or even packaging. In short, it is now impossible to use a landscape image as an illustration of poultry raised inside a chicken coop. Delegated Regulation 2026/343: [Delegated Regulation – EU – 2026/343 – EN – EUR-Lex](#) Implementing Regulation 2026/344: [Implementing Regulation – EU – 2026/344 – FR – EUR-Lex](#)

04/03/2026 : Behavioral indicators of positive welfare in broilers

Document type: article published in [Modern Poultry](#)

Authors: Jenna Boewe, Marisa Erasmus

Preview: Broiler welfare assessment has moved beyond a framework based solely on minimizing harm to one that incorporates opportunities for positive affect. Jenna Boewe, graduate student, and Marisa Erasmus, PhD, Purdue University, explore this new paradigm in animal welfare as it applies to today's broilers. Having good welfare is not only the absence of disease and injury but also the presence of positive states and the ability to express motivated behaviors (Mellor, 2016; Yeates and Main, 2008; Rault et al., 2025). Behavioral indicators such as activity and locomotion, foraging and environmental engagement, comfort behaviors, and play behavior give an indication of broilers' physical capabilities and overall welfare. Environmental enrichment can further help to support positive welfare by encouraging natural behaviors and engagement within broilers' housing environment.

10/02/2026 : Meat Institute Animal Handling Guidelines and Audit

Document type: news item from the [Meat Institute](#)

Author: Meat Institute

Preview: Since 1991, the Meat Institute has encouraged its members to subscribe to voluntary animal welfare guidelines and embrace auditing programs and they have done so. The meat industry was the first sector in animal agriculture to develop such guidelines and begin self-audit program. To help promote good animal welfare practices, the Meat Institute houses the widely-utilized Meat Industry Animal Welfare Guidelines and Audit. The Meat Institute Animal Welfare Committee updated the Meat Industry Animal Welfare Audit & Recommended Animal Handling Guidelines and published the latest versions in 2026.

The Meat Industry Recommended Animal Handling Guidelines: The guidelines provide industry stakeholders with best practices on transport, handling, and stunning. [Download the guidelines](#)

The Meat Industry Animal Welfare Audit: The audit provides a tool to objectively assess animal welfare through transport, holding, and slaughter. [Download the audit](#)

Animal welfare initiatives

13/03/2026 : Newsletter EURCAW-Poultry-SFA - Edition 15

Document type: Newsletter No. 15 from the [EURCAW-Poultry-SFA](#)

Author: EURCAW-Poultry-SFA

Preview: Newsletter 15 EURCAW-Poultry-SFA

Included:

- Questions to EURCAW-Poultry-SFA (Q2E):

[Pre-stun shocks in waterbath stunning of Poultry](#)

[Duck catching](#)

- New Good Practice Factsheets:

[Elevated platforms in broiler chicken barns](#)

[On-farm hatching to improve broiler welfare from the start](#)

- New Thematic Factsheet:

[The most relevant environmental enrichment for rabbit welfare on farm](#)

25/02/2026 : Baromètre régional de la transition hors-cage 2026

Document type: news item from [CIWF France](#)

Author: CIWF France

Preview: The French Regional Barometer for a Cage-Free Transition, produced by CIWF France, contains a comparative analysis of regional calls for projects. and focuses specifically on the provision of funding for cages in livestock farming. It plans to track key regions' progress towards cage-free farming over time, while encouraging these regions to redirect their funding away from cage-based farming systems. (...)

An almost total lack of commitment to cage-free farming

Whereas analysis of regional policies has painted a picture of mixed approaches to animal welfare and farming, the transition to cage-free farming is being ignored by the regions almost without exception. The five regions analyzed—Brittany, Nouvelle Aquitaine, Grand Est, Hauts-de-France, and Pays de la Loire—continue to allow funding for cage farming. Only Nouvelle Aquitaine has explicitly excluded certain cages from its calls for projects. It is important to note that this picture does not reflect funding actually allocated, but rather funding opportunities as they appear in calls for projects. In other words, the fact that a form of investment is listed as eligible does not necessarily mean that it has been funded. However, it would appear essential for the regions to explicitly exclude cage farming systems from their funding. Even when cage farming does not receive funding, or when the cages themselves are not funded on the ground by a region, failing to explicitly state non-

eligibility leaves the door open for such funding to occur and the possibility for a reversal of commitment. A clear statement that funding for cages is excluded therefore represents an important commitment, not only to secure the direction of travel of the regions, but also to ensure greater visibility for farmers and taxpayers. As reported by CIWF France, the five regions analyzed have not yet specifically identified the transition to cage-free farming as one of the issues in the transition of livestock farming. Although some do identify animal welfare as an issue for livestock farming, these regions still have difficulty in understanding the criteria that must be applied to support the improvement of practices in this area, or the species that should be targeted.

Lack of transparency

A further major finding of this barometer has been the regions' continued struggles to make their animal welfare commitments and objectives clear and transparent. In addition, the lack of harmonized and accessible data severely constrains the objective assessment and monitoring of the transition to cage-free farming. No access is provided to data reporting systems that would allow for objective assessment of the progress made by the different regions in moving away from the use of cages.

Lack of quantitative data

In general, it is currently very difficult to obtain an accurate picture at regional level of the proportion of animals raised in cages, due to the absence of systematic public recording according to farming method. Only laying hens are classified by farming method: under European regulations, eggs that are sold must carry a code that indicates the farming method (codes 0 to 3), with code 3 indicating cage-farming systems. This system indirectly provides monitoring data on this sector, but the regions do not publish consolidated data on the number of caged hens in their area.

02/02/2026 : Call for proposals to address critical challenges in the health and welfare of both terrestrial and aquatic animals, contributing to sustainable and ethically responsible livestock and aquaculture systems across Europe

Document type: call for proposal published in [EU funding portal](#)

Author: EU funding

Preview: Call for proposals aimed at addressing critical research and innovation challenges in terrestrial and aquatic animal health. This initiative is designed to accelerate the transition toward sustainable, resilient, and ethically responsible livestock and aquaculture systems across Europe. Applicants must focus their proposals on one of two primary thematic areas: Topic 1: Animal Welfare: This track focuses on improving welfare throughout the entire production cycle—from birth and rearing to transport and slaughter. Projects should prioritize the development of indicators for positive emotional states, sensor-based monitoring technologies, and more humane stunning or killing methods. Topic 2: Prevention & Control: This area supports the development of innovative therapeutics and vaccines. Research actions include creating tools to differentiate infected from

vaccinated animals (DIVA), reinforcing animal resilience through breeding and nutrition, and developing infection models that reduce the need for traditional animal testing.

To view calls for proposals, a [subscription](#) is required. Members get full access to our grant database and receive 2-3 updates on new opportunities every week.

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Not a member yet? Subscribe to the [EU Funding Portal Membership](#), and gain full access to all funding opportunities on the portal.

26/01/2026 : EUPAHW: Call 2 - Preproposal

Document type: call for proposals published by the [European Partnership on Animal Health and Welfare \(EUP AH&W\)](#)

Author: EUP AH&W

Preview: Welcome to the 2nd co-funded call for proposals of the European Partnership on Animal Health and Welfare (EUPAHW)

“Shaping the Future of Animal Health and Welfare”

The 2nd call for research projects is open since 26th January, 2026. Pre-Proposals must be submitted electronically via this EUPAHW submission tool. **Submission deadline: March 30th, 2026, 12:00 h (CEST)**

Invertebrates

22/01/2026 : Do Insects Feel Pain? How Insect Nervous Systems Reveal Hidden Suffering

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

Author: Renz Soliman

Preview: For decades, insects have been dismissed as simple, mechanical creatures incapable of true suffering. This assumption has shaped everything from laboratory protocols to pest management practices. Yet recent breakthroughs in neuroscience reveal a far more complex reality: insects possess nervous systems sophisticated enough to experience genuine pain, including long-lasting chronic pain that persists long after injuries heal. The question of insect pain has shifted dramatically. What once seemed like straightforward reflex responses now appears to involve subjective experience. Understanding how insects process painful stimuli not only challenges our assumptions about animal consciousness but also has profound implications for how we treat billions of insects in research, agriculture, and daily life. (...)

How the Insect Nervous System Processes Pain

The insect nervous system, while far smaller than a human brain, possesses remarkable sophistication. Running down the insect's abdomen is the ventral nerve cord, the functional equivalent of a vertebrate spinal cord. This nerve cord serves as a processing hub where sensory information is integrated, filtered, and acted upon. Along this ventral nerve cord exists a system of inhibitory neurons, specialized cells that act as gatekeepers. These neurons control whether pain signals pass through or get blocked, functioning much like a filter that adjusts based on context and the animal's physical state. Here's where the system becomes genuinely fascinating: when an insect sustains a catastrophic injury, such as losing a leg, something striking happens. The damaged nerve floods the ventral cord with pain signals. This overwhelming barrage overpowers the gatekeeper neurons, a process called central disinhibition. Once these gatekeeping mechanisms fail, the insect enters a state of heightened pain sensitivity that can persist indefinitely. Additionally, insects possess a central complex, a specialized brain region that processes spatial information and sensory input from multiple sources. This structure performs functions analogous to the vertebrate midbrain, creating an integrated neural representation of the insect's body position and state in space. (...)

The Breakthrough: Evidence of Chronic Pain in Insects

The defining moment in insect pain research came in 2019, when researchers at the University of Sydney published findings in *Science Advances*. Using fruit flies (*Drosophila melanogaster*), they performed a deceptively simple experiment: they amputated one leg, allowed the fly to heal, and then tested how the insect responded to heat. The results were striking. Even weeks after complete healing, the injured flies displayed exaggerated escape responses at lower temperatures than uninjured flies could tolerate. A temperature that normal flies could comfortably endure sent injured flies into frantic escape attempts. This wasn't an acute response to active injury, the flies had fully recovered from amputation. This was chronic pain, persisting long after the wound closed. Scientists traced this phenomenon to a specific cellular mechanism. Nerve injury triggers GABA neurons (inhibitory neurons in the ventral cord) to die, destroying the "pain brake" mechanism that normally suppresses pain perception. Without these protective neurons, even normal stimuli trigger exaggerated pain responses. When researchers genetically prevented GABA neuron death, injured flies never developed chronic pain-like behavior. Conversely, artificially killing these neurons in uninjured flies was sufficient to create chronic pain without any actual injury. (...)

Which Insects Can Feel Pain?

Not all insects are created equal when it comes to pain capacity. Research reveals significant variation across insect groups. Flies and mosquitoes (order Diptera) show the strongest evidence for pain perception. The intensive research on fruit flies has revealed detailed mechanisms of nociception, chronic pain, and central nervous system control over pain responses. Their relatively simple nervous systems remain complex enough to exhibit the neural signatures of pain experience. Cockroaches and termites (order Blattodea) similarly demonstrate robust nociceptive abilities and behavioral evidence of pain-like states. These insects navigate complex environments and modify their behavior based on learning, suggesting the neural sophistication necessary for pain experience. Other insects, including bees, wasps, ants, beetles, and many others, possess nociceptors and display pain-like behaviors, yet research remains less complete. The variation across insect orders suggests

that pain capacity evolved independently multiple times or was present in an ancient ancestor, then lost in some lineages. (...)

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Do insects lack pain-killing systems like mammals because they don't have opioid receptors?

No. While insects lack opioid receptors, they possess alternative neurochemical systems that manage pain. Local anesthetics and NSAIDs effectively block insect pain responses, and some insects even respond to morphine through non-opioid pathways. Insects simply evolved different mechanisms for pain relief than mammals.

2. How long does insect pain last after an injury, and can they fully recover?

Physical wounds heal within one to fifty days, but chronic pain persists throughout the insect's lifetime after nerve damage. Since fruit flies live only about two months, serious injuries could cause pain for their entire remaining life. Even after wounds close, heat hypersensitivity lasts at least three weeks.

3. If an insect dies instantly from being squished, does it suffer pain before death?

Instantaneous death likely prevents subjective pain experience, though nociceptive responses fire immediately upon impact. The distinction between automatic nerve signals and conscious suffering remains unclear in rapid-injury cases.

4. What are more humane alternatives to traditional pest control methods?

Integrated Pest Management (IPM), biological control with natural predators, sticky traps, and botanical repellents (neem oil, essential oils, citrus) offer less harmful alternatives. The UK government advocates IPM over chemical pesticides for sustainability and welfare.

25/11/2025 : Applying the five domains to farmed black soldier fly, house fly, and yellow mealworm welfare

Document type: scientific review published in [CABI Reviews](#)

Authors: Samuel Olutunde Durosaro, Meghan Barrett

Preview: Trillions of insects are currently farmed as food and feed around the globe. The insects as food and feed industry can provide opportunities for greater food security and increase agricultural sustainability through waste remediation and a circular bioeconomic model. Currently, little is known about the welfare of the insect mini-livestock at the heart of this growing industry. Recent neurobiological and behavioral data suggest at least some insects are plausibly sentient and may feel pain. When animals may be sentient, the precautionary principle suggests we consider their welfare to avoid unnecessary suffering. Alongside the ethical imperative to consider farmed insect welfare, producers may also see economic benefits through enhanced productivity or product quality, improved consumer acceptance, and greater opportunities for product differentiation. Insects farmed as food and feed may be subjected to practices that induce morbidity, mortality, stress, or otherwise cause negative affect during rearing, transportation, and slaughter or depopulation. Furthermore, farming practices may not always provide adequate opportunity for animals to experience positive affective states, e.g., through behavioral expression. Where these practices

occur, they may represent welfare concerns. This review examines what is known about the welfare of three insects farmed as food and feed (black soldier flies, houseflies, and yellow mealworms) based on the Five Domains Framework (nutrition, physical health, environment, behavior, and mental state). Although welfare research is beginning to pick up pace for these species, we identify significant gaps in our knowledge, representing opportunities for greater research attention and producer–academic partnership.

Housing and enrichment

26/02/2026 : Animal Board Invited Review: Intrinsic hedonic value, complexity and possibility for action as essential characteristics of a welfare-friendly environment for animals

Document type: scientific review available before publication in [Animal](#)

Authors: I. Veissier, C. Terlouw, R. Botreau, V. Deiss, S. Cowie

Preview: Animal welfare was initially conceived as the absence of negative experiences. More recently, the importance of positive affects was recognised. This suggests a continuum from very poor welfare, where suffering predominates, to very good welfare, where positive affects predominate, and that the intrinsic hedonic value of the environment, i.e. whether it is pleasant or not, determines the level of welfare an animal can reach on this continuum. In this paper we question whether environments with a high intrinsic hedonic value are enough to allow good welfare. For instance, pleasant but monotonous environments can induce boredom, which is likely to affect animals negatively. By contrast, complex environments can encourage engagement. In addition, the possibility to act freely and efficiently plays a role. Environments that limit behavioural expression or make behaviour inefficient can lead to frustration and apathy. By contrast, environments that give freedom of action and make these actions efficient encourage animals to exert their agency – through choices, control, problem solving, free action, or exploration. We argue that intrinsic hedonic value, complexity, and possibility for action all contribute to welfare. However, a constant high level of hedonic value may result in a decrease in the hedonic value perceived by the animal. An overly complex environment or one that affords too wide a variety of actions may overwhelm animals. Therefore, rather than being maximised, hedonic value, complexity, and possibility for action need to be optimised to maximise animal welfare. Where the optimum sits varies between individuals depending on factors such as species, age, physiological status, or individual traits.

20/02/2026 : Perch-based enrichment and broiler growth, welfare and behaviour

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

Authors: B. F. Sevinç B. Yılmaz Dikmen

Preview: This study examined the impact of perch-based enrichment on the growth performance, welfare and behavioural parameters of broilers. A total of 180, one-day-old male Ross 308 broilers were used in this study. The experiment was conducted using six pens in a commercial broiler house, each with three deep litter systems and three perch-based enriched systems. Both rearing systems had similar effects on final body weight, final body weight gain, cumulative feed consumption, feed conversion ratio and mortality rate ($p \geq 0.05$). The broilers in the deep litter system had worse hock burn ($p=0.000$) and gait score ($p=0.052$) than the enriched system. Plumage cleanliness, body wounds, toe damage, foot pad and bumble foot lesions and tonic immobility reaction had similar effects on both systems ($p \geq 0.05$). The investigated behaviours were similar in both systems ($p \geq 0.05$).

In conclusion, perch-based enrichment had no significant effects on broiler growth performance, behaviour or most welfare indicators. However, perch-based enrichment improved hock burn and tended to improve gait.

18/02/2026 : Fowl play: Do age and aviary design affect play in cage-free laying hens?

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

Authors: Xiaowen Ma, Vrinda Ambike, Valentina Bongiorno, Jacquelyn A. Jacobs, Janice C. Swanson, Tina M. Widowski, Janice M. Siegford

Preview: The laying hen industry in the United States is undergoing a transition toward cage-free housing systems, but the impact of specific layout designs on hen welfare remains poorly understood. Play behavior is widely recognized as a positive welfare indicator in mammals but has rarely been studied in birds. The goal of this study was to explore the effects of aviary design on play behavior in laying hens. We hypothesized that aviary design and age would significantly influence the frequency of play. A total of 2464 Hy-Line Brown laying hens were randomly assigned at 16 weeks of age to two designs of multi-tiered aviary systems with litter area (N60 and STEP). Video recordings of the litter area were conducted on the first day of 17, 21, 27, and 32 weeks of age. After each play event, the number of birds in the litter area was recorded to estimate space per bird, and whether the behavior was triggered by play or flight of another bird in the same pen was noted. Running was most frequent at 17 weeks of age and declined sharply by 21 weeks, nearly disappearing thereafter, while frolicking and sparring showed similar early declines. In contrast, wing flapping decreased more gradually and remained present across all ages. The frequency of frolicking, running, wing

flapping, and sparring declined significantly with age ($p \leq 0.0001$). Aviary design significantly influenced the occurrence of running and wing flapping only ($p \leq 0.0005$), with running occurring more frequently in STEP and wing flapping more frequently in N60. In terms of the proportion of each play behavior relative to total play, significant age \times design interactions were found for frolicking ($p = 0.0003$), running ($p \leq 0.0001$), and wing flapping ($p \leq 0.0001$). Flying and play by other birds triggered over 50% of some behaviors, with play being the most common trigger. Play behaviors were most frequent in both designs when individual litter space ranged from 1400–2200 cm² per hen, while wing flapping peaked in N60 with 600–1400 cm² per hen. Behavioral patterns were influenced by age in interaction with aviary design, emphasizing that the impact of housing layout may depend on the hens' developmental stage.

09/02/2026 : Aggressive behaviors in rabbits. A review

Document type: scientific review published in [Livestock Science](#)

Author: Zsolt Szendrő

Preview: Aggression is a common form of behavior in animals living in groups, including wild rabbits. Animal welfare is a central issue in rabbit farming, including reducing aggressive behavior, stress and injuries. Although experiments on rabbit behavior and improvements in housing conditions have been ongoing for decades, the animal protection movements, often based on emotional grounds, have emerged as a new challenge. The purpose of this review is to present the knowledge gained in this field to researchers, farmers, and animal protectionists. In domestic rabbits, aggression begins at puberty. In a larger group of growing rabbits, more individuals are injured; however, providing chewable materials (e.g., gnawing sticks) significantly reduces aggressive behavior. When does are housed in groups, aggression has been an insoluble problem so far. If females are housed together continuously, their lifespan is shortened due to chronic stress, and many kits are injured, and several die due to the aggressive behavior of does. The part-time group-housing system was developed to eliminate this problem. Usually, 18 days after birth, the does and their offspring are in a common group. Fighting occurs when groups are formed, and 40–80% of the does are injured. None of the methods tested to reduce this problem (grouping at a young age, elevated platforms, wooden panel, PVC pipe, straw rack, and alfalfa block) has been effective. Currently, there is no better solution for animal welfare than individual housing of does.

One Welfare

19/02/2026 : Améliorer le bien-être des animaux d'élevage est-il toujours bénéfique pour l'environnement ?

Document type: online article published on the [Sésame website](#)

Authors: Luc Mounier, Amandine Rave

Preview: Against a background of societal expectations over changes in agricultural practice, livestock farming finds itself the target of much criticism related to animal welfare, environmental impacts, and human health issues. While a reduction in the consumption of animal products and support for more sustainable production methods are identified as levers for change, their implementation remains constrained by consumer habits and a difficult general economic situation. In this context, the concept of "One Health" offers an approach that reconciles animal and human welfare with environmental protection. However, this sharing of goals and actions does not always occur, sometimes raising the question of compatibility and tensions between improvements to animal welfare and protecting the environment.

Regulation

09/03/2026 : Parlement européen : Réponse écrite à la question E-004230/2025 : Impact assessment on animal welfare during transport

Document type: Answer from the [European Commission](#) to Question E-004230/2025

Authors: Question: Esther Herranz García (PPE). Answer: M. Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission

Question: It has come to light that the European Commission commissioned Ernst & Young (EY) to conduct a study on animal welfare at the time the proposal on animal welfare during transport was being dealt with^[1]. It has emerged that EY professionals met with industry representatives in Spain to hear their views.

However, this study – which reportedly would have served as a basis for analysing the proposal's impact – is not available on the Commission's website, nor is it attached to the proposal.

In light of this situation:

1- Does the Commission plan to make the EY study public?

2- What are the main findings of that study and what methodology did it use?

[\[1\]](#) 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, 2023/0448(COD)).

Answer: An external study supporting the impact assessment accompanying the legislative proposal to revise the regulation on the protection of animals during transport was concluded in 2023. The study is publicly available [\[1\]](#).

The study, together with other studies, supported the Commission's impact assessment published together with the legislative proposal in December 2023 [\[2\]](#).

The study the Honourable Member is referring to has not been commissioned in the context of the animal transport proposal, but carried out, in line with the Commission's rules on Better Regulation, in the context of the work related to aspects of animal welfare other than animal transport.

[\[1\]](https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/d67220ce-94e1-11ee-b164-01aa75ed71a1) <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/d67220ce-94e1-11ee-b164-01aa75ed71a1>.

[\[2\]](https://food.ec.europa.eu/animals/animal-welfare/animal-welfare-during-transport_en) https://food.ec.europa.eu/animals/animal-welfare/animal-welfare-during-transport_en (see 'Link to impact assessment and supporting documents').

27/02/2026 : Factual summary report of the public consultation on the modernisation of EU's on-farm animal welfare rules for certain animals

Document type: report published by the [European Commission](#)

Author: European Commission

Preview: Consultation period: 19 September 2025 - 17 December 2025 (midnight Brussels time)

Target audience

Any group directly affected by the legislation, such as farmers and other food business operators, and the public, animal welfare NGOs and consumer organisations.

Why we are consulting

The initiative will explore several options to address certain shortcomings identified in the 2022 fitness check of the EU animal welfare legislation. The aim is to revise this legislation insofar as on-farm welfare is concerned, including phasing out the use of cages.

Responding to the questionnaire

The response period for this consultation has ended. The questionnaire is no longer available. You can track further progress of this initiative by subscribing to receive notifications.

Consultation outcome

Further information on this consultation is provided below.

Follow developments to this initiative by subscribing to receive notifications.

Summary report

To access the report: https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/14671-On-farm-animal-welfare-for-certain-animals-modernisation-of-EU-legislation/public-consultation_en

24/02/2026 : Assemblée nationale : réponse écrite à la question n°12679 : Exploitation d'animaux carnivores non domestiques à but commercial

Document type: answer to question no. 12679 published in the [Journal officiel de la République française](#)

Authors: Question: Mr. Sylvain Carrière (Hérault (8th district) – La France Insoumise – Nouveau Front Populaire). Answer: Ministry of Ecological Transition

Question: Mr Sylvain Carrière draws the attention of the Minister for Ecological Transition, Biodiversity, and International Climate and Nature Negotiations to the exploitation of non-domestic carnivorous animals in commercial and entertainment activities. Although the ruling of March 25, 2004 regulates zoological establishments in this matter, many private establishments are not subject to it and continue to exploit wild carnivores. This was revealed in an investigative report, published on September 25, 2025 by the Association Quatre Pattes, on the organization of photo shoots with an American black bear in an establishment located in France. During these sessions, the animal was made to pose with visitors from outside the establishment, allowing itself to be petted, fed, and kissed. These practices involved contact between a wild animal and the public, with no separation or safety measures. Such activities are likely to create serious problems in terms of animal welfare and public safety, risking accidents and the transmission of zoonotic diseases. The scientific community and animal welfare organizations have issued warnings for several years concerning the inherent risks of close interactions with wild animals, particularly where *selfies* with these animals are concerned, as these normalize their exploitation and undermine awareness-raising efforts on wildlife protection. Although the Decree of October 8, 2018, sets out the general rules for the keeping of non-domestic animals, it does not specifically regulate commercial activities that bring the public into contact with wild animals. This gap in the legislation is all the more questionable given that the Decree of March 25, 2004, which applies to zoological establishments, strictly regulates physical contact between the public and animals, along with the giving of food, in order to protect against risk. He would therefore like to know what measures she intends to take to put an end to these practices, which compromise both the safety of citizens and the welfare of captive wild animals. He also asks her whether she intends to ban activities involving direct contact or physical proximity between wild carnivores and third parties in all non-zoological establishments.

Answer: The government is committed to the proper enforcement of the law to combat animal abuse passed by the nation's elected representatives, and responds promptly when notified by associations of proven cases. In order to determine the rules that apply to the activity described, several checks must be carried out, which are the responsibility of the devolved government services

in the Department in question. These services have been notified of the case reported by the Association Quatre pattes. Article 49 of Law No. 2021-1539 of November 30, 2021, to combat animal abuse and strengthen the bond between animals and humans, prohibits the keeping of non-domestic animals, including bears, for the purpose of presenting them to the public in traveling shows from 2023 onwards. If the photo shoot takes place on the road—and not in the animal's enclosure—it is prohibited on these grounds. In accordance with Article L. 413-2 of the Environmental Code, "those responsible for establishments breeding and rearing non-domestic animals, selling, renting, or transporting them, as well as those responsible for establishments intended for the presentation of live specimens of local or foreign fauna to the public, must hold a certificate of competence for the care of these animals." In addition, the Decree of March 25, 2004, establishing the general operating rules and general characteristics of permanent zoological establishments presenting live specimens of local or foreign fauna to the public, applies to establishments presenting animals "for at least seven days per year." Thus, depending on whether the activity of presenting animals to the public falls below or above this threshold, a certificate of competence known as a "breeding and rearing" certificate or a certificate of competence known as a "presentation to the public" certificate will be required, respectively. The rules that strictly govern physical contact between the public and animals, as set out in the Decree of March 25, 2004, apply only to establishments covered by that decree. Other establishments, given their diversity, are not subject to a similar decree, and the Government does not intend to amend the regulations on this point. However, in the event of an incident, the person responsible for the animal will obviously be held liable, pursuant to Article 1243 of the Civil Code, which states that "the owner of an animal, or the person who uses it while it is in their care, is liable for any damage caused by the animal".

27/01/2026 : Parlement européen : réponse écrite à la question E-004663/2025 : Economic challenges of compliance with EU animal welfare rules

Document type: Answer from the [European Commission](#) to question E-004663/2025

Authors: Question: Daniel Buda (EPP). Answer: Mr. Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission

Question: The study supporting the impact assessment for the review of the EU legislation on animal welfare during transport (Milieu SRL, 2023) concluded that compliance with Regulation 1/2005 remains 'economically unattractive'. Despite this, the Commission has brought forward a proposal for a regulation which has high implementation costs.

The impact assessment for the new legislative proposal shows that limiting travel times and increasing available space will result in annual costs of EUR 642 million for the pig-rearing sector, EUR 35 million for laying hens, EUR 914 million for broilers and EUR 1 069 million for cattle. On top of this, the installation of feeder systems for calves would cost transporters EUR 3 million annually, and then come the additional costs of ensuring long-distance transport conditions based on weather

forecasts, which will cost EUR 5 million for the transport of broilers, EUR 3 million for pigs, EUR 2 million for cattle and EUR 1 million for calves.

1- How does Commission expect to ensure greater compliance with stricter animal welfare requirements during transport if compliance with the current rules is already 'economically unattractive'?

2- Will it be possible to use the European Competitiveness Fund to help the sector comply with the provisions of future EU animal welfare legislation?

Answer: 1. The study^[1] found that compliance with Regulation (EC) No 1/2005^[2] is 'economically unattractive' because of inconsistent enforcement and low sanction levels across Member States, granting non-compliant operators a competitive advantage. The Commission's proposal aims to reverse this dynamic by introducing clearer rules, harmonising enforcement tools and sanctions, thus ensuring better compliance and fair competition.

Regarding costs, the Impact Assessment^[3] distinguishes between costs borne by farmers and those borne by transporters and other sectors. Specific costs for vehicle improvements, space allowance and weather-dependent logistical planning, are operational investments for transporters. To mitigate these impacts, the proposal includes transition periods. As the most important economic impacts identified relate to space allowance, the Commission has shown openness to discuss with the co-legislators adaptations to these rules to balance economic impacts and animal welfare improvements.

2. The European Competitiveness Fund^[4] will only support activities contributing to its relevant objectives. In sectors like agriculture and bioeconomy, support is foreseen for the development, implementation, monitoring, and enforcement of relevant Union legislation and policies. This includes supporting relevant institutions, cooperation between national authorities and with stakeholders, studies, development and deployment of tools and infrastructures. Other EU funds are also relevant. For farmers, funding is possible under the Common Agricultural Policy. For the transporters, which are generally small and medium enterprises (SMEs), the 'SME window' of InvestEU^[5] facilitates loan guarantees.

^[1] Study supporting 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/ad660d3f-94e2-11ee-b164-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>.

^[2] 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, pp. 1–44. ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2005/1/oj>.

^[3] <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52023SC0401>.

^[4] COM(2025) 555 https://commission.europa.eu/publications/european-competitiveness-fund_en.

^[5] https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/access-finance/investeu/investeu-fund-sme-window_en.

02/12/2025 : Breaking: Poland bans fur farming

Document type: article published by the [Fur Free Alliance](#)

Author: Brigit Oele

Preview: In a landmark victory for animals, Polish President Karol Nawrocki has signed legislation to reject fur cruelty, making Poland the 24th country in Europe to end fur farming. Under the new law, establishing new fur farms is prohibited with immediate effect, and all existing facilities must cease operations by 31 December 2033.

During the signing, President Nawrocki emphasised that the legislation is supported by two-thirds of the Polish population and that their voices should not be ignored, while also ensuring fair support for farmers leaving the trade. The new law includes early-closure compensation to help farmers transition swiftly into a more sustainable industry.

Marta Korzeniak of Anima International, says:

“This is definitely a breakthrough and a historic moment that we have been waiting for for a very long time. We are extremely pleased that the president listened to the voices of the Polish citizens and signed this bill.”

The legislation follows decades of public debate and growing pressure from concerned citizens, animal protection organisations, and rural communities affected by the negative local impacts of the industry. The long-awaited new law marks the seventh attempt since 2011 to shut down the industry for good, following numerous investigations that laid bare the systemic animal cruelty across Polish fur farms.

Poland’s decisive action comes just months after a scientific opinion from the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), which confirmed that current caging systems on fur farms are fundamentally incompatible with animal welfare standards, and ahead of the European Commission’s March 2026 decision on the future of Europe’s cruel fur trade.

Joh Vinding, Chairman of the Fur Free Alliance, says:

“We applaud Poland’s decision to ban fur farming. As the largest producer in the EU, this is yet another nail in the coffin for the dying fur industry, already in structural decline. Now the European Commission must act, because tinkering with cage sizes won’t end the suffering of millions of animals bred and killed for fur—only a full ban will. We call on the Commission to heed the 1.5 million citizens who demanded a Fur Free Europe, and the majority of Member States who have already banned the practice, by delivering an EU-wide ban on fur farming and trade.”

Poland is the largest fur producer in Europe and second-largest in the world, with over 3 million animals killed every year, including mink, foxes, raccoon dogs and chinchillas. With this ban, millions of animals will be spared a life of confinement and suffering, marking one of the most significant steps forward in the move toward a Fur Free Europe.

Fur facts:

- Tens of millions of animals suffer and die each year in the global fur trade, the majority reared in barren battery cages on fur farms.
- There are 281 fur farms in Poland, including 169 mink farms, 37 fox farms, 11 raccoon dogs farms, and 64 chinchilla farms).

- For nearly a decade, Poland has seen a decline in both the number of farms (from 810 in 2015 to 281 in October 2025) and the number of animals bred. Since 2015 there has been a decline in mink skin exports in Poland by approximately 80% (from 10.1 million to 2.4 million pelts).
- Over the past two decades, 24 European countries have taken a stand against fur cruelty, introducing bans on fur farming and phasing out the industry entirely—the 18 European Member States: the Netherlands, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria (mink breeding ban), Czech Republic, Slovakia, Croatia, Slovenia, Luxembourg, Malta, Ireland, Estonia, France (non-domestic species ban), Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania (mink and chinchilla breeding ban), plus 6 European countries: United Kingdom, Norway, Guernsey, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. A number of other European countries have restricted the farming of some species or introduced stricter rules that have effectively curtailed the practice.
- Political discussion of a ban is currently underway in Bulgaria, Finland and Sweden.

28/11/2025 : New rules for dogs and cats in the EU : new rules to apply starting from 2028

Document type: fact sheet from the [European Commission](#)

Author: Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (European Commission)

Preview: New rules to apply starting from 2028 for dogs and cats in the EU

25/11/2025 : Commission welcomes provisional agreement on new rules to improve welfare of dogs and cats

Document type: Press release from the [European Commission](#)

Author: European Commission

Preview: The European Commission welcomes the agreement by the European Parliament and the Council of the EU on the first ever EU legislation on the welfare of dogs and cats, which will significantly improve the way these animals are treated, when bred, sold or adopted in the EU. The new measures will also help to clamp down on the illegal trade into and within the EU.

Once adopted and implemented, this legislation will ensure that:

1- Uniform welfare standards will apply across the EU when it comes to breeding, housing and care of dogs and cats in professional establishments. For example, breeders, sellers and shelters will need to provide outdoor access to dogs and will not be able to keep dogs and cats in containers. Minimum space allowance rules are also set for breeders and sellers.

- 2- Animal caretakers in breeding, selling establishments or shelters will need to have sufficient competence to look after dogs and cats. At least one caretaker per establishment will need to follow specific training approved by the competent authorities.
- 3- Commercial imports will be subject to the same or equivalent animal welfare standards, and the establishment of origin will need to be approved by the competent authorities of the non-EU countries.
- 4- Responsible ownership will be promoted, including through warnings on online advertising.
- 5- Dogs and cats with extreme conformational traits will be excluded from reproduction and from being displayed in shows and competitions. This is due to the negative health and welfare impacts of such extreme traits.
- 6- Traceability requirements will apply in order to empower Member States to fight serious fraud currently ongoing on the dog and cat market. Microchipping and registration in inter-operable national databases will be required for all dogs and cats based on already functioning national systems. In a first stage, this will apply to any dog or cat placed on the market. After a transition period, any remaining pet owner in possession of a dog or cat which has not been microchipped or registered will also be required to do so. This will close any loophole, as illegal traders often pretend to be pet owners.
- 7- A verification system will be established to empower prospective buyers to check that online advertisements are not fraudulent.
- 8- Exemptions are clearly defined where the stricter requirements would not serve the goals of the regulation (for example for farmers accommodating free roaming cats in rural areas).

Next steps

The new Regulation must be formally adopted by the Council and European Parliament. It will be published in the Official Journal in the course of 2026 and will start applying two years later (except in the case of specific provisions, subjected to transition periods).

For more information: [Protecting the welfare of dogs and cats](#)

Animal health

17/02/2026 : Heat stress: an environmental challenge to immune resilience and health in dairy cows

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

Authors: Arslan Tariq, John J. Bromfield

Preview: Increasing environmental temperatures pose significant challenges to food security and animal welfare. In dairy production systems, heat stress detrimentally affects cow health, reproductive function, and immune resilience. This review summarizes the current knowledge on the impacts of heat stress in dairy cattle, emphasizing cellular targets, physiological and molecular

consequences, and implications for health and productivity. Heat stress is associated with increased disease incidence in dairy cows. Elevated temperatures can increase pathogen abundance or alter host immune function, thereby compromising overall health. Both peripheral immune responses and local tissue responses are disrupted under heat stress. These effects could be mediated by various molecular mechanisms which contribute to dysregulated immune signaling. Moreover, heat stress can impair key immune pathways leading to either insufficient or excessive inflammatory responses, both of which predispose cows to disease. Effective mitigation of heat stress requires a multifaceted approach. While no single strategy fully offsets the detrimental effects of heat stress, a combination of environmental modifications (fans, shade, sprinklers), nutritional interventions (vitamins, minerals, targeted feed additives), and genetic selection for thermotolerance offer promising avenues to support cow health, immune resilience and maintain productivity in a warming climate.

Transport, slaughter, pick-up

26/02/2026 : The use of Diathermic Syncope® for stunning cattle - EFSA Opinion

Document type: Scientific opinion published in the [EFSA Journal](#)

Authors: EFSA Panel on Animal Health and Welfare (AHAW), Søren Saxmose Nielsen, Julio Alvarez, Anette Boklund, Sabine Dippel, Fernanda Dorea, Jordi Figuerola, Mette S. Herskin, Miguel Angel Miranda Chueca, Eleonora Nannoni, Romolo Nonno, Anja B. Riber, Karl Stahl, Jan Arend Stegeman, Hans-Hermann Thulke, Frank Tuytens, Virginie Michel, Christoph Winckler, Mohan Raj, Antonio Velarde, Alexei Vyssotski, Yves Van der Stede, Aikaterini Manakidou

Preview: The EFSA Panel on Animal Health and Welfare (AHAW) was asked to deliver a scientific opinion on the use of Diathermic Syncope® (DTS) for stunning cattle. A dossier was provided by the applicant as the basis for an assessment of the extent to which the method is able to provide a level of animal welfare at least equivalent to that ensured by the currently allowed methods for stunning cattle. This scientific opinion followed the EFSA Guidance (2018) on the assessment criteria for applications for new or modified stunning methods regarding animal protection at time of killing. Under Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009, approval of novel stunning methods requires demonstration of (1) the absence of pain, distress or suffering until the onset of unconsciousness and (2) that the animal remains unconscious until death. An ad hoc Working Group (WG) by EFSA performed the assessment as follows: (1) check of provided data against the criteria laid down in the EFSA Guidance; (2) extensive literature search; (3) data extraction and quantitative assessment; (4) exercise based on non-formal expert elicitation and qualitative assessment. Although the data and studies provided in the dossier only partially fulfilled the necessary criteria, they were sufficient to proceed with the animal welfare risk assessment. According to the data and the use of DTS parameterised by the applicant (delivering 160–200 kJ of energy and an incident power of 16–20 kW

for 10 s), DTS does not ensure a level of welfare at least equivalent to one or more of the currently allowed methods listed in Annex I of Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009.

03/02/2026 : Transport maritime d'animaux vivants : enjeux et perspectives

Document type: article published by [Paradigmes News](#)

Authors: Evguenia Derviankine et Matthieu Levasseur

Preview: On January 23, an international conference on the sea transport of livestock was held in the Senate, organized by Senator Arnaud Bazin, Senator for Val d'Oise, President of the "Animals and Society" section, Vice-President of the "Livestock Farming" study group, and the [French Maritime Law Association](#), represented by Ms. Nathalie Soisson, chair of the "Transport of Live Animals" commission. The conference brought together industry experts, lawyers, and representatives of maritime authorities. This event shed light on a technical subject that is often overlooked, at the crossroads of international trade, animal welfare, and maritime safety, which deserves widespread publicity and strong commitments.

An aging fleet and unsuitable vessels

The sea transport of livestock mainly concerns cattle intended for breeding or slaughter. This trade is driven by economic considerations based on the low cost of sea transport and differs from other forms of animal transport, such as that of elephant calves, rhinos, or giraffes, which are transported by air from Africa to China, Saudi Arabia, or the United States.

The global fleet dedicated to the maritime transport of livestock, estimated at around 110 to 120 vessels, is characterized by advanced aging. The average age of vessels transporting these animals is around 42 years, with some exceeding 60 years. It is important to note that the retirement age for a vessel is around 29/30 years.

Concerning transport conditions

Loading operations are a high-risk phase. Animals often endure long periods of waiting before boarding. The pressure to load quickly encourages rough handling. Veterinary intervention remains very limited.

Once on board, overcrowding is regularly observed. In addition, ramps are often steep and slippery, access points are inadequately lit, and corridors are poorly designed. Unsuitable barriers lead to animals falling or escaping, exposing crews to risks.

Ventilation, heat, humidity, and waste management systems remain inadequate on many ships. The sector is referred to as "dark shipping" because it relies on flags of convenience and is accompanied by social dumping practices. No specialized ships sail under the French flag.

A deficient legal framework

International conventions promoted by the International Maritime Organization regulate ship safety and pollution prevention (SOLAS and MARPOL). However, there are currently no international regulations specifically dedicated to the maritime transport of livestock.

At the European level, Regulation (EC) No. 1/2005 is the main applicable legal framework. However, it is difficult to distinguish between road and sea transport. Furthermore, the concepts used remain general and leave a wide margin of discretion to national authorities.

Otherwise, the liability of the maritime carrier remains governed by contractual freedom, allowing it to limit its liability (see, for example, the [Pearl of Para case](#) , January 21, 2021, Paris Court of Appeal, where more than 2,000 cattle died during maritime transport between the United States and Russia – the Court of Cassation dismissed the appeal in 2022).

International examples and areas for improvement

Australia and Ireland are the only two countries in the world to have adopted regulations in this area. As a result of these regulations, out of the entire global fleet (~110/120 vessels), only 20 vessels are allowed to operate in Australia, as they are the only modern and safe ships. New Zealand has banned all exports of livestock in 2023. India is planning a similar ban by 2028.

Improving the existing framework requires the development of specific international standards. The maritime transport of livestock must be placed on the IMO's agenda. A revision of European regulations is also underway. The draft provides advances in terms of the age of animals, density, temperature, and duration of journeys.

Finally, clarification of legal responsibilities appears necessary. Stricter supervision of contractual clauses and the development of a dedicated standard maritime contract could reinforce the diligence of stakeholders and improve the traceability of obligations throughout transport.

20/01/2026 : Déclaration sur le bien-être animal durant le transport

Document type: statement published on the [WOAH – World Organisation for Animal Health website](#)

Author: Omotolani Badara

Preview: The World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) again asserts, and with fresh urgency, that, although the transport of animals—by land, sea, or air—may be essential to global trade, food production, research, and other activities, it is imperative that welfare standards should be rigorously implemented at all stages of transport in order to protect the health and welfare of animals.

Long-distance transport can cause serious risks resulting from missing or incomplete health certificates, unclear customs regulations, trade disputes, and unforeseen problems. These difficulties must be anticipated and carefully managed from the outset in order to preserve animal welfare. Animal welfare during transport is essential. It keeps animals healthy and safe. All those involved — animal owners, operators, transporters, government authorities, and veterinary services — share this responsibility. The WOA is updating its standards to respond to the growing complexity of today's transport challenges. To ensure that animals are properly cared for at every stage — starting with certification — the following points are essential:

- WOH standards should be complied with: The Terrestrial Animal Health Code provides clear, science-based rules for all modes of transport. These rules must be supported by robust legal frameworks and effectively enforced.
- Clarification of responsibilities: every actor in the transport process must understand and assume their role, with clear communication from one stage to the next.
- Training and capacity building: properly-trained veterinary services and workforces are essential to ensure compliance with standards.
- Infrastructure and technology: transport equipment and tracking systems must be modern and appropriate to the animals to protect animal welfare the journey.
- Effective communication and coordination: all parties must work together closely to ensure that animals arrive safely and in good condition.
- Continuous improvement: rules must be regularly updated based on scientific advances, good practices, and needs on the ground.

Recent events have demonstrated the critical need for full compliance with WOH standards. We strongly condemn any suffering endured by animals during transport and call on all stakeholders to adhere to the highest welfare standards. The protection of animal welfare is not optional - it is a shared responsibility that requires urgent attention. The WOH recently organized a workshop on "[Whole Journey Scenarios](#)" for the transport of live animals, hosted by the Government of Jordan, with the participation of representatives from Africa, the Americas, Europe, and the Middle East, in the course of which our principles were highlighted.

Because the health of animals is our health — it is everyone's health.

You can find WOH's current standards on animal welfare during transport here:

- [Chapter 7.2: Transport of Animals by Sea](#)
- [Chapter 7.3: Transport of animals by land](#)
- [Chapter 7.4: Transport of animals by air](#)

22/01/2026 : Live animal transport: EU citizens demand strong reform in new survey

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

Author: Eurogroup for Animals

Preview: A newly-launched [survey](#) conducted across nine EU member states has highlighted public concern for the plight of millions of animals transported over long distances, with an overwhelming majority supporting the need for stricter rules.

Eight of ten participants (80%) agree that long-distance journeys cause unnecessary suffering to animals, in particular for vulnerable animals, with up to 84% supporting stricter rules or a ban for pregnant or unweaned animals. Each year, over one billion animals are transported on journeys lasting up to three weeks.

Almost 9 out of 10 (89%) of citizens agree that transporting animals in extreme hot or cold conditions poses a risk to their welfare. Within the EU, animals often endure temperatures as high as 50 degrees celsius, deprived of basic needs.

Animals suffer greatly during transport - overcrowded into trucks, they suffer from exhaustion, dehydration and stress leading to injuries and often, death. Unweaned animals are deprived of necessary nutrition and are extremely prone to disease.

These survey results emerge as the European Parliament is reviewing the Transport Regulation, yet proposed amendments have raised significant concerns among animal welfare advocates, as some proposals may significantly undermine the welfare of animals. 72% of survey participants expressed concern about the potential weakening of the EU's live animal transport rules, and the same percentage expressed strong support for stricter national and EU laws. Meanwhile, over 12,500 citizens have written to their MEPs urging ambitious reforms.

The survey by Savanta interviewed 8,531 adults between October and November 2025 across Belgium, Cyprus, France, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Spain.

13/11/2025 : Impact of 'hands-free' rational handling on operational performance and economic losses in beef cattle

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

Authors: Daniela Costa Cotrim Campos, Adriane Lermen Zart, Cláudio Vaz Di Mambro Ribeiro

Preview: Pre-slaughter handling is a critical factor affecting animal welfare, carcass quality, and economic performance in beef production systems. This study evaluated the impact of a novel low-stress protocol, Hands-Free Handling (HFH), compared to Conventional Handling (CON), on operational efficiency, carcass bruising, and financial losses in feedlot cattle. A total of 715 Nelore steers were randomly allocated to the two handling treatments. Loading time, incidence and anatomical location of carcass injuries, amount of meat discarded due to bruises and meat pH were evaluated. Data were analyzed using generalized linear models. HFH significantly reduced loading time by 43 %, the incidence of bruising by 7.6 %, and meat discard by 61.7 % ($P < 0.05$), without affecting carcass yield or meat pH. Despite improvements, injuries remained a major source of financial loss. Economic modeling based on bruise discard data demonstrated that financial losses per carcass ranged from R\$ 2.40 to R\$ 2.83 for CON, and from R\$ 1.48 to R\$ 1.75 for HFH. Extrapolating to a slaughterhouse processing 1200 head per day, the estimated annual loss was R\$ 978,781.05 for CON and R\$ 604,116.36 for HFH, indicating a potential 38 % reduction in economic losses when adopting rational handling practices. In conclusion, the results highlight the relevance of rational handling strategies to improve animal welfare, reduce economic losses, and meet societal and market expectations for humane livestock practices.

Working animals

14/02/2026 : The Influence of Environmental and Genetic Factors and Training Background on the Welfare of Herding Dogs

Document type: systematic review of the literature published in [Animals](#)

Authors: B. Pilarczyk ; R.Pilarczyk ; M. Bąkowska ; A. Tomza-Marciniak ; E. Kwita ; J. Udała

Preview: Herding dogs play an important role in the management of herds of sheep and cattle, and their effectiveness depends on various genetic and environmental factors, and the choice of training method. The aim of this study is to explain how these factors determine the effectiveness of herding work, the level of stress and psychological comfort experienced by the dogs, as well as their physical health. The study also examines the choice of training method, the influence of socialisation and relationship with the handler, as well as the living conditions. Information on the welfare of herding dogs and the factors that influence this welfare were obtained based on a search of PubMed, Web of Science, Google Scholar and Scopus using defined keywords. Research indicates that positive reinforcement, early socialisation and trust-building with the handler increase performance, reduce behaviour indicative of any stress the dogs may be experiencing, and improve psychological wellbeing. Selective breeding has developed herding predispositions, including herding instinct and cognitive abilities, at the expense of predatory instinct. Understanding the genetic and environmental factors associated with wellbeing, and using ethical training methods benefits both dogs and livestock by allowing herding dogs to fully realise their natural behaviours.

10/02/2026 : Riding with care: A review of factors that influence the welfare of the ridden horse and a case for the application of the precautionary principle in equestrian pursuits

Document type: scientific review published in the [Journal of Equine Veterinary Science](#)

Authors: Caleigh Copelin, Katrina Merkies

Preview: Equestrian sport's social license to operate has come under scrutiny due to concerns surrounding the well-being of ridden horses. Inappropriate equipment use, such as harsh bits or overtight nosebands, can negatively influence well-being by generating inescapable pressure or pain on the sensitive structures of the horse's head and limiting natural behaviours. Restrictive equipment may also be used to generate exaggerated, stressful and uncomfortable head and neck positions such as hyperflexion. Saddles must be properly fitted to both horse and rider to ensure appropriate distribution of kinematic forces across the horse's back and promote the horse's comfort. The rider's balance, body control, ability to cue the horse, decision-making capabilities and

understanding of equine behaviour can also influence the horse's experience under saddle. Physical health conditions such as ulcers or unidentified lameness can cause pain, stress and mechanical damage if left untreated, which may be further exacerbated by riding. The ridden horse's well-being is a multifactorial and complex equation. However, riders must seek to understand these nuanced aspects of well-being, and act on the precautionary principle (stating that a practice should not be assumed harmless until it is proven to be so) if there is not yet enough evidence on a subject to draw firm conclusions. Such directives will safeguard the welfare of ridden horses and the social license to operate for equestrian sports.