

# FRCAW Newsletter 59

April – May 2026

## Editorial

### New European regulation on the protection of dogs and cats



[Image](#) from the [European parliament](#) website. © Antoine-photograph / AdobeStock

To combat the illegal trade in cats and dogs in Europe, on 28 April, the European Parliament adopted a [new regulation on the welfare of dogs and cats and their traceability](#). The regulation not only sets out minimum standards for the welfare of cats and dogs bred and housed in breeding and sales establishments, it also strengthens the requirements concerning their traceability. Microchip identification of all dogs and cats is now mandatory for all animals present within the European Union or entering its borders, including privately-owned animals. The animals must be registered in national databases that are interoperable with those in other EU countries. France is already in possession of such a database (I-CAD).

The regulation contains a requirement that breeders must exclude from their breeding programmes any cat or dog that has been genetically selected for exaggerated or excessive traits, whether for aesthetic reasons or to meet the demands of the market. This is because such extreme conformational traits are a source of significant health risks for the animals. The regulation, originally [published in draft form in December 2023](#), was adopted by the Council on 22 May 2026 and will now enter into force.

The new legislation is in line with a [recent study published in Animal Welfare](#). The longitudinal study provides evidence to support the premise that puppies acquired from low-welfare sources (such as ‘puppy farms’) and/or sold illegally (for example, without the buyers seeing their puppies’ mother pre-purchase), encounter greater health difficulties as adult dogs as a consequence of these negative early-life experiences.

## Publication of the CGAAER’s performance report on the FRCAW



Image from the [Ministère de l'agriculture, de l'agro-alimentaire et de la souveraineté alimentaire](#) website

In 2025, in preparation for the renewal of the FRCAW’s mandate, a panel from the Conseil Général de l’Alimentation, de l’Agriculture et des Espaces Ruraux (French High Council for Food, Agriculture and Rural Areas, CGAAER) was appointed to conduct a performance review. Its remit was to produce a comprehensive report on the actions and operation of the FRCAW, in order to make recommendations that could be taken into account in the formulation of its next mandate, which will begin in 2027. The [evaluation report](#) (in French) was published on 28 April 2026. It recommended that the mandate should be renewed for the FRCAW, whose support was described by the DGAL (French General Directorate for Food) as indispensable, and recommended that certain posts currently occupied by employees on fixed-term contracts should be made more permanent in order to retain the organisation’s existing skills base. The report also contained recommendations intended to improve the functioning and efficiency of the FRCAW. Among these, it stressed the need to evaluate the techno-economic and environmental impacts of the opinions issued by the FRCAW, and for the centre to re-position itself in relation to the farming profession.

## One Welfare: rethinking the balance between animal welfare and sustainability in poultry farming



[Image](#) from the [Volaille Info](#) website. Shutterstock

The One Welfare approach sets out to evaluate the effectiveness of farming systems in a holistic way, taking into account the linked impacts on animal welfare, human welfare and the environment. This approach has been adopted to analyse intensive broiler production through a [literature review](#), setting out the animal welfare and environmental pollution issues that compromise the sustainability of this farming method. The review's authors then list available strategies that can, when integrated, improve animal welfare, reduce environmental impacts, optimise resources and, ultimately, enable sustainable production. These strategies include environmental enrichment, the preventive management of welfare problems, genetic selection, precision feeding, use of alternative protein sources (such as insects) and adoption of renewable energy and improved waste management. Likewise, a study published in [Scientific Reports](#) has tested the application of the One Welfare framework by implementing a multicriteria decisional analysis for extensive broiler rearing systems. These are little-used in poultry farming, but have seen a growth in interest and adoption over the past twenty years. The study demonstrates the benefits of tree and shrub cover as enrichment in outdoor systems (agroforestry) for different chicken breeds, in which varied response patterns were observed with regard to each of the four pillars (welfare, environment, society, economy).

These results are compatible with prevailing outcome-based assessment methods. The framework can be used in on-farm self-assessment, allowing farmers to determine which pillar is acting as the main obstacle to the overall sustainability of their systems. They can also identify the areas where targeted improvements (relating, for example, to housing, shade provision or outside shelter, work conditions, or cost-benefit ratios) could be considered.

## Current challenges for fish welfare

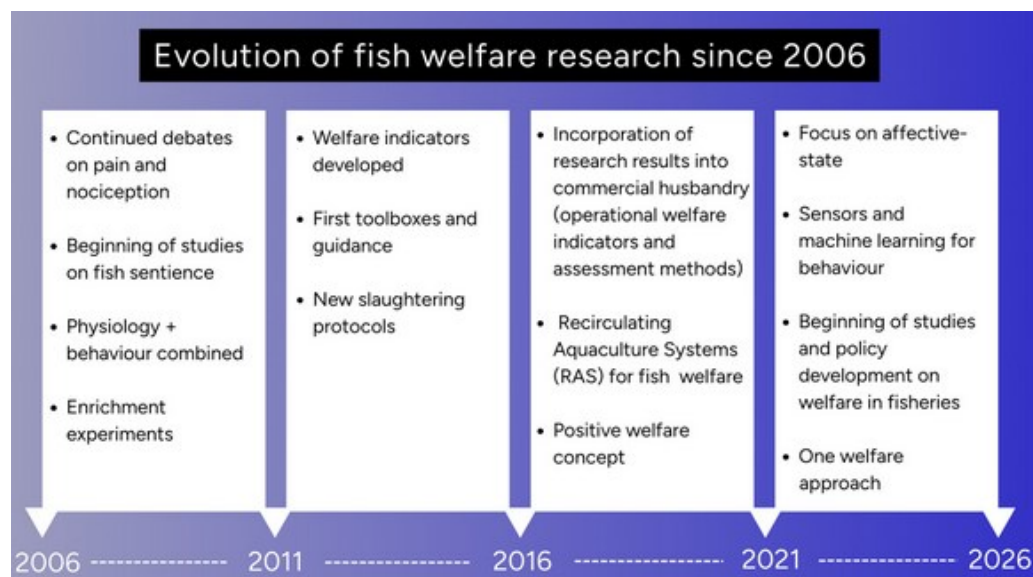


Image from the article by [Rey Planellas et al. \(2026\)](#)

In a review published in the [Journal of Fish Biology](#), the relationship between fish welfare, sustainability, public concerns and consumer demand has been analysed from a One Welfare perspective. This review also looks back at fish welfare over the past twenty years. Concerns over fish welfare are tackled not only as they relate to aquaculture and fisheries, but also to sea and river fishing, aquariums and the ornamental trade. Current challenges include, in particular, getting people to recognise the sentience and cognitive capacities of fish and to take these into account, with the emergence of the concept of Positive Animal Welfare.

Current knowledge on [environmental enrichment in aquaculture](#), a key lever for the stimulation of fish and the improvement of their welfare, has been summarised in a recent review. The authors propose a framework that sets out to align welfare objectives with adapted, specific and operational enrichment strategies. According to them, environmental enrichment should no longer be viewed as peripheral addition to farming systems, but should instead be seen as an integrated of welfare management in aquaculture.

## Why enriched environments are essential to farmed animals



Image from the [Modern Poultry](#) website. © Leo Phelp, Virginia Tech.

Some researchers are exploring the possibility that barren environments generate [boredom in poultry](#), defining boredom as a negative emotional state defined by an unpleasant unfulfilled desire for an experience or activity. In a literature review, researchers have also assembled multiple lines of evidence that barren environments, over which the animals exercise no control, could [amplify and prolong painful states](#), while delaying the healing process. In barren, confined conditions, many endogenous analgesic mechanisms are effectively disabled while, simultaneously, several neurobiological pathways involved in the intensification of nociceptive signalling and delays to healing are activated. The authors conclude that the transition towards higher-welfare housing conditions should now be seen as an ethical and scientific imperative, offering animals raised in captivity the opportunity to express motivated behaviours that engage their cognitive capacities, allowing them to control their environment, engage in physical exercise and social interactions, and experience good sleep quality.

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# Animal feed

## [22/04/2026: Effect of scattering black soldier fly larvae \(\*Hermetia illucens\*\) as enrichment on the litter on growth performance, gut development and active behaviour of fast and slower-growing broilers](#)

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

Authors: Chris Onuoha, Ashraf Alkhtib, Dawn Scholey, Emily J. Burton

**Preview:** The global drive for responsible production and consumption has increased the need for environmental enrichment strategies that promote activity and natural behaviours without compromising growth performance in broiler production. This study evaluated the effects of whole black soldier fly larvae (BSFL) provisioning method (trough or scattered on the litter) as enrichment on growth performance, feeding behaviour, activity and gut development of fast and slower-growing broiler strains (Ross 308 and Hubbard JA 787, respectively). A 2 × 2 full factorial design was used with a total of 320 male broiler chickens, equally representing both strains (8 pens per treatment, 10 birds per pen). The birds received 15 g of dehydrated black soldier fly larvae (BSFL) per pen between 09:00 and 11:00 h on days 8, 15, 22, 29, 36, and 42 of age. Growth performance and bird behaviour were recorded for each pen. Two birds/pen were sampled for gut morphometry at the starter, grower and slaughter stages for both Ross 308 and JA 787 birds. The effect of insect provisioning method (scattering and trough feeding) on slaughter bird weight ( $p = 0.92$ ), overall FCR ( $p = 0.315$ ), overall weight gain ( $p = 0.78$ ), and overall feed intake ( $p = 0.324$ ) was insignificant regardless of bird strain. Scattering BSFL on the litter significantly increased total activity ( $\Delta = 1.02\%$ ,  $p = 0.018$ ) when compared to trough feeding in the fast-growing (Ross308) broiler strains. There was no significant effect of provisioning method on total activity in the slower-growing broilers. Insect provisioning method had no significant effect on gut development ( $p \geq 0.05$ ). It can be concluded that scattering BSFL on the litter increases active behaviours (running, walking, preening, stretching and dustbathing) in the fast-growing broilers without compromising growth performance and gut development. This increase in activity has the potential to improve health and welfare in the fast-growing broilers; however, further study is needed to support these claims.

# Animal husbandry and human-animal relationship

## [21/04/2026: Fish welfare in a changing world: New developments and current challenges](#)

Document type: scientific review published in [Journal of Fish Biology](#)

Authors: Rey Planellas, S., Saraiva, J. L., Gonçalves-de-Freitas, E., Arechavala-Lopez, P., Bovenkerk, B., Breen, M., Cooke, S. J., Føre, M., Northwood, L., Stien, L. H., Kadri, S., Noble, C., Nilsson, J., Rodriguez, F., Salas, C., Sandøe, P., & van deVis, H.

**Preview:** The welfare of non-human animals is central to ethical discussions on animal use, with increasing attention to fish welfare across research, aquaria, aquaculture, and fisheries. This paper reviews current theoretical approaches to animal welfare and recent advances in defining and assessing fish welfare since the seminal paper by Huntingford et al. (2006; *J Fish Biol* 68: 332–372), highlighting the growing role of cognitive and affective processes. It also includes the concept of positive welfare and some of the current research advances in this field. Methods for measuring, monitoring and assessing welfare via the utilisation of outcome- and input-based indicators are outlined, ranging from practical operational tools to laboratory-based measures. Welfare concerns in wild-capture fisheries are examined in relation to stress, flesh quality and sustainability, including the welfare of released fish. Recent advances in fish neurobiology, cognition and pain perception are summarised, together with technological innovations that enhance welfare monitoring and management. The paper also explores the relationship between fish welfare, sustainability, public concerns and consumer demand, and legal and moral recognition across contexts, situating fish welfare within the ‘One Health’ and ‘One Welfare’ frameworks that link animal welfare, environmental stewardship and human well-being. Ongoing challenges include climate change, cultural factors and the interpretation of fish sentience and cognition among others.

## [17/03/2026: Horses Prefer Their Rider: A Strange Situation Test Adaptation Shows Behavioural Evidence for Partner-Specific Bonding](#)

Document type: scientific article available before publication in [Journal of Equine Veterinary Science](#)

Authors: B.A. Kovács, J. Topál, A. Gergely

**Preview:**

*Background:* The relationship between horses and humans is often described as cooperative and affective, yet empirical studies on horse–rider bond remain scarce. Previous findings on horse–human relationships yielded conflicting results on whether and how horses show bonding like behaviour toward their owners.

*Aims/Objective:* We tested whether horses show partner-specific approach and proximity toward their primary rider compared with an unfamiliar experimenter in an adapted Strange Situation Test, and whether the rider’s presence was associated with behavioural patterns indicative of safe haven and secure base effects.

*Methods:* Thirty horse–rider pairs participated in a behavioural test conducted in an indoor riding arena, which included several episodes: recall by owner/experimenter, separation both from rider and experimenter, reunion with rider/experimenter, and exposure to a potentially frightening object in order to examine secure base effect. We compared horses' social behaviours (i.e. proximity, approach, gazing behaviour, etc.) toward their riders versus the unfamiliar experimenter, as well as their stress-related signals (i.e. manure, vocalization) across these episodes.

*Results:* We found that horses approached their rider significantly faster than the experimenter during recall and reunion episodes and spent significantly more time in close proximity to the rider across multiple contexts. Our findings indicate that horses’ gazing behaviour is influenced more by the human’s level of interactiveness than by familiarity. However, no conclusive evidence emerged for a “safe haven” effect during exposure to the frightening stimulus. Rider sex had no effect on the horses’ social or stress related behaviours.

*Conclusions:* These findings suggest that horses may form specific bonds with their riders, characterized by different social behaviours consistent with certain criteria of attachment theory. The study highlights the importance of incorporating socio-emotional components into analyses of human–horse relationships and underscores the relevance of comparative attachment frameworks in equine behaviour research.

## Animal welfare assessment and labelling

### 19/03/2026: [ChickenTrack 2025](#)

Document type: article published by [CIWF Agri-Food](#)

Author: Compassion In World Farming (CIWF) Agri-Food

**Preview:** The [European Chicken Commitment](#) (ECC) starts from a set of criteria based on scientific evidence that, when implemented, significantly improve the lives of millions of broiler chickens each year. More than 410 companies have signed up to the ECC in Europe. ChickenTrack 2025 assesses the progress of 107 of the most influential companies, representing an estimated 794 million animals annually (*based on chicken numbers reported by 44 companies*). ChickenTrack provides a frank

snapshot of the areas where companies are making progress, those where progress has stalled, and cases where additional measures are needed. (...)

#### *Key findings*

- 3 companies were 100% compliant with the ECC: Norsk Kylling, Rema 1000 Norge AS, and Waitrose.
- 5 further companies achieved at least 50% compliance with on-farm criteria: Big Mamma France, Cortilia, Eataly Italy, Groupe Casino, Premier Foods (NB Big Mamma France was 100% compliant with all criteria other than external audits).
- HelloFresh was the only company to have improved by more than 10 percentage points\* since 2024 for all criteria.
- 8 companies (not counting those who signed up in 2025 and companies with approved exemptions) reported less than 20% progress across all livestock criteria: Burger King UK, Picard, Les 3 Brasseurs, Unilever, Pierre Martinet, Plukon Food Group, KFC Denmark, and KFC Germany.

*\*11 to 63 progress points were recorded compared with ChickenTrack 2024 relating to the criteria of stocking density, breed, natural light, CAS (...)*

## Animal welfare initiatives

### [09/04/2026: Newsletter - EURCAW Ruminants & Equines - Volume 13](#)

Document type: [EURCAW Ruminants & Equines](#) Newsletter No. 13

Author: EURCAW *Ruminants & Equines*

**Preview:** Welcome to the first edition of the EURCAW *Ruminants & Equines* newsletter for 2026. This publication provides an overview of the latest initiatives, resources, and outputs from EURCAW, supporting the implementation of evidence-based practices in ruminant and equine welfare across EU Member States.

This edition includes the publication of three new Q2Es, the report from our first roadshow, the launch of the Centre's YouTube channel, a webinar on toolkits for cascade training on working equids, the establishment of a Community of Practice (CoP) for Italian Official Inspectors, an Inspector@Work interview from Spain, and an update on a European Commission public consultation.

# Cognition – Emotions

## [05/05/2026: Bored birds? Researchers are exploring boredom as a potential welfare concern in poultry](#)

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

Authors: Chloe Phelps, Virginia Tech, Leonie Jacobs

### Preview:

- Boredom is an emotional state defined by an unpleasant unfulfilled desire for an experience or activity, likely induced by a barren environment.
- Boredom may be a welfare concern in poultry because they appear to be motivated to interact with novelty, show preferences, and are commonly housed in barren environments.
- Providing animals with positive, neutral, and negative novel items could be developed into a test to detect boredom.
- Understanding boredom in poultry can help determine the impacts of housing conditions, especially related to environmental complexity.

## [23/03/2026: Le Podcast de la SFECA](#)

Document type: podcasts broadcast by the SFECA on [Arte Radio AUDIOBLOG](#)

Author: SFECA (French Society for the Study of Animal Behavior)

**Preview:** The SFECA podcasts continue to shed light on the richness and diversity of French research into animal behavior.

In these two new episodes, we had the pleasure of welcoming Ludovic Calandreau and Maryline Beauchaud, who shared their expert knowledge on the neurobiological bases of behavior and on communication and acoustic ecology in fish, respectively.

*Episode 14* – Ludovic Calandreau: explores the neurobiological and emotional mechanisms underlying behavior and cognition, particularly in birds. His work focuses on stress, anxiety, cognitive biases, and the neural processes that underlie them, also exploring the implications of these processes for animal welfare.

Available here: <https://audioblog.arteradio.com/blog/202757/podcast/243005/13-ludovic-calandreau>

*Episode 15* – Maryline Beauchaud: focuses on acoustic communication in fish, particularly in social and agonistic contexts. Her research examines sound signals related to individual identity and size, as well as the effects of anthropogenic noise on the behavior and hearing of aquatic species. Through

this work, she advances our understanding of social interactions and of the issues associated with noise pollution in aquatic environments.

You can listen to the episode here:

<https://audioblog.arteradio.com/blog/202757/podcast/243006/14-maryline-beauchaud>

## Conferences – seminars – training

### 06/05/2026: EURCAW Ruminants & Equines Training Programme 2026

Document type: training information from [EURCAW Ruminants & Equines](#)

Author: EURCAW Ruminants & Equines

**Preview:** The EURCAW Ruminants & Equines is glad to share with you its comprehensive training calendar for the upcoming months, developed within the framework of the 2025-27 Work Programme. The proposed events aim to promote mutual exchanges, improve capacity building, facilitate cascade training activities, and disseminate the Centre's outputs across EU Member States. Please find below the detailed calendar:

28 May 2026 h. 10:00-12:00 (CEST): CARE4DAIRY Webinar- Deadline for enrolment: 18 May, 2026 - Expected participation: no limitations in number of participants per EU Member State The event is open to Care4Dairy stakeholders: farmers, advisors, farm veterinarians, policy makers, and industry representatives.

22 September 2026 h.10:00 – 12:00 (CEST): Webinar on the presentation and discussion about the Toolkit for Cascade Training on QUALITY OF CARE- Deadline for enrolment: 1 September, 2026 - Expected participation: no limitations in number of participants per EU Member State The event is reserved to the staff of the central, regional and local Competent Authorities and Supporting Bodies.

15 October 2026 h. 9:30 – 13:30 (CET): On-line Table Top Simulation Exercise on EFFECTIVE STUNNING AT SLAUGHTER - Deadline for enrolment: 30 September, 2026. - Expected participation: 1 participant per EU Member State (it is strongly recommended to select and communicate one candidate and one substitute in case of unavailability) The event is reserved to the staff of the central, regional and local Competent Authorities and Supporting Bodies.

November 2026 tbd: On-line Training Module on LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNICATION DURING AUDIT AND INSPECTIONS- Deadline for enrolment: 30 September, 2026- Expected participation: 3 participants per EU Member State (it is strongly recommended to select and communicate three candidates and possible substitutes to engage in case of unavailability and in order of priority)The event is reserved to the staff of the central, regional and local Competent Authorities and Supporting Bodies.

## [27/03/2026: Webinaire Colocavo2 : Comment suivre le comportement des veaux laitiers ?](#)

Document type: replay of the COLOCAVO webinar posted on the [Idele](#) website

Authors: Amandine Launay (Institut de l'Élevage), Lucile Oble (Chambre d'agriculture Pays de la Loire - Ferme Expérimentale des Trinottières), Domitille Fouvez (Chambre d'agriculture de Bretagne), Florine Crepel (INRAE), Valérie Brocard (Institut de l'Élevage)

**Preview:** Project objectives overview:

- Calf behavior: How is it measured at the experimental station, and what activities occur outside of rest periods?
- An example of calf behavior measurements at the Trinottières experimental farm.
- Results from the first year of trials at the IEPL-INRAE station in Méjusseume: What are the effects of milk distribution methods on the growth, well-being, and health of dairy calves?

[Enjoy the video](#) !

## [24/03/2026: Evènement de diffusion de pratiques innovantes en bien-être des animaux et des éleveurs ! – LIT Ouesterel](#)

Document type: announcement of an event organized by the [LIT OUESTEREL](#)

Author: LIT OUESTEREL

**Preview:** Knowledge-sharing workshop day on innovative practices to support the welfare of animals and farmers

Technicians and advisors are invited to a knowledge-sharing day of workshops on innovative practices to promote the welfare of animals and farmers. As part of her work to discover innovative practices and for her final research paper, Agathe, under Estelle's supervision, is organizing a knowledge-sharing day for advisors and technicians.

The event will be held on **April 23, 2026, from 10:00 AM to 4:30 PM** at a farm in Ille-et-Vilaine (35). It is intended to put innovative ideas for animal welfare and farmer well-being into practice through hands-on activities. Starting from fact sheets, participants will identify how such practices can become effective tools for advisory and technical support services. Additional tools will also be presented through workshops throughout the day. The event will focus on dairy cattle and pigs.

If you would like to attend the event, or simply receive more information, please contact Agathe by email: [agathe@assolitouesterel.org](mailto:agathe@assolitouesterel.org)

Meanwhile, all LIT OUESTEREL's reports from their innovation hunt can be found via this link: <https://lnkd.in/eWTGrdEK>

We hope to see many of you there!

## 18/12/2025: Colloque final Entr'ACTES : L'élevage face aux enjeux sociétaux : comprendre, agir et accompagner

Document type: Conference announcement published by the [Idele](#)

Author: Elsa Delanoue

**Preview:** Entr'ACTES Final Symposium: Livestock Farming and Societal Challenges: Understanding, Acting, and Supporting – **Tuesday, June 2, 2026** – MNE – Paris

The day will include presentations of the results from this research project and provide the opportunity for practitioners on the ground, including farmers, advisors, educators, researchers, and professional organizations, to share their experiences and practical insights.. The program will address the following points:

- Views of farmers, future farmers, and advisors on societal challenges and how these affect what they do in practice;
- How changes and innovations actually emerge on farms and the innovative pathways that can be observed in the field;
- How agricultural collectives are transforming practices and driving change;
- How to provide effective introductory and continued training on societal challenges, and the operational levers that can improve support and teaching.

A detailed program and registration information will be available in April.

The Entr'ACTES (farmers and the associated sectors, actors facing societal challenges)CASDAR project, launched in 2023, will end in 2026. It has brought together partners from diverse backgrounds to understand the dynamics of change and innovations on the ground. Detailed information (in French) on the project, deliverables, partners, and news can be found at [idele.fr/projet-EntrACTES/](https://idele.fr/projet-EntrACTES/)

Contact: Elsa Delanoue – [elsa.delanoue\(at\)idele.fr](mailto:elsa.delanoue(at)idele.fr)

## Housing and enrichment

### 02/05/2026: Brushing as Environmental Enrichment in Dairy Cattle: Effects of Different Brushing Modalities on Behavior, Health, and Production

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

Authors: Maciel-Torres, S.P.; Ruiz-González, A.; Orzuna-Orzuna, J.F.; Arenas-Báez, P.; Garay-Martínez, J.R.; Granados-Rivera, L.D.

**Preview:** In recent years, brushes have been increasingly implemented on dairy farms to improve animal welfare, health, and productivity. This study presents a narrative review of scientific studies published over the past decade, selected based on their evaluation of brushing effects on behavioral, physiological, and production parameters in dairy cattle. The evidence consistently indicates that access to brushes increases grooming behavior and is associated with reductions in stress-related indicators, supporting improved animal welfare. In addition, brush use has been linked to improved hygiene and may serve as a non-invasive behavioral indicator of health status, as reduced usage has been associated with conditions such as metritis and lameness. In contrast, evidence regarding productive responses remains more variable. Some studies report increases in milk yield and changes in milk composition; however, these effects are not consistently observed and appear to depend on factors such as animal characteristics, management conditions, brush accessibility, and study design. Overall, brushing appears to be a promising enrichment strategy, but further standardized and long-term research is required to better establish its effects on production and reproductive performance.

### [03/04/2026: Do windows matter in poultry housing? What welfare and behavior tell us](#)

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

Author: Tarek Youssef

**Preview:** Although artificial light remains the industry standard for lighting, limited research indicates that natural light may offer some potential welfare-related benefits, such as increased activity, some indication of reduced fearfulness, and birds' preference for naturally lit areas. However, the results on physical welfare indicators are mixed; therefore, more research is needed to understand natural light's beneficial effects on broiler health and welfare.

### [18/03/2026: Environmental Enrichment in Aquaculture: Linking Welfare Goals to Practical Application](#)

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

Authors: O. Spiliopoulos, S. Kadri, M. Sinclair, M. Vanderzwalmen, C. Brown

**Preview:** Aquaculture is the fastest growing food production sector globally, comprising freshwater and marine species reared under highly variable farming contexts, ranging from extensive earthen ponds to intensive recirculating and sea-based systems. Together with growth, production has also intensified, and the welfare of fish farmed in these systems has thus gained increased recognition as an essential contributor to sustainability of aquaculture. Environmental enrichment has emerged as a promising welfare management tool to improve fish welfare and deliver potential production

benefits by promoting species-appropriate behaviour and reducing chronic stress; however, its effective implementation remains highly context dependent. This review synthesises current knowledge on environmental enrichment across five categories: Physical, Sensory, Dietary, Occupational, and Social, to evaluate their potential to produce measurable changes in physiological and behavioural indicators of welfare. Enrichment strategies are further assessed for their practicality and feasibility, identifying areas where enrichment is already integrated into aquaculture and where further innovation is required. To guide implementation, a goal-oriented framework is proposed that outlines a stepwise process for aligning welfare objectives with appropriate enrichment strategies while considering species, system, and operational contexts. This combined approach reframes environmental enrichment from a peripheral addition to an integrated component of welfare management in aquaculture.

## [03/03/2026: Existing Soundscapes and the Impact of Noise on the Welfare of Farmed Salmonids: A Review](#)

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

Authors: Kathy Overton, Tim Dempster, Marco A. Vindas, Frode Oppedal, Luke T. Barrett

**Preview:** Understanding how farmed salmonids sense and respond to their environment is key to securing animal welfare and efficient production. However, hearing has rarely received attention, despite the omnipresence of underwater sound and its potential effects. We describe how and what salmonids hear, and explore how hearing may differ between wild and farmed conspecifics. We then conduct two systematic reviews, to: (1) understand the existing soundscapes experienced by farmed salmonids; and (2) identify potential short- and long-term impacts of sound on salmonid behaviour and physiology. Sound can be measured via pressure changes or particle motion; pressure levels are commonly reported, whilst particle motion is rarely measured due to logistical challenges. Salmonids have an open, physostomous swim bladder, relying primarily on their lateral line to sense sound via particle motion. Because of this, they are most sensitive to low frequencies, with startle responses most apparent between 7 and 400Hz. Few studies have tested for effects of sound on salmonid physiology, although there is evidence that some sound exposure regimes lead to chronic stress, whilst very loud sounds (e.g., cumulative sound exposure level  $\geq 216$  dB re 1  $\mu$ Pa<sub>2a</sub>) can cause fatal injuries. Quantifying salmonid aquaculture soundscapes, their potential welfare impacts, and strategies to mitigate these impacts should form a new frontier in salmonid aquaculture research. We make a series of recommendations, specifically: (1) conduct targeted research to fill knowledge gaps; (2) develop a standardised protocol to measure and report sound in salmonid aquaculture; and (3) apply mitigation strategies to reduce impacts of noise.

# Invertebrates

## 16/04/2026: Towards Bioethical and Functional Standards in the Slaughter Methods of Edible Insects: A Narrative Review

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

Authors: Sánchez-Velázquez, O.A., Hernández-Álvarez, A.J.

**Preview:** The rapid expansion of edible insect production has focused primarily on rearing, processing efficiency, safety, and nutritional composition, while the slaughter of insects has received comparatively little scientific and ethical scrutiny. This narrative review examines insect slaughter as a critical control point linking bioethics, physiology, and ingredient quality. The review synthesizes evidence from neurobiology, food science, and processing studies to evaluate how commonly used slaughter methods interact with biological aspects of insects. Existing literature shows that slaughter techniques influence protein stability and hydrolysis, lipid oxidation, antioxidant retention, techno-functional properties such as emulsification and gelation, as well as sensory attributes and consumer acceptance. Available evidence suggests that methods designed to rapidly suppress metabolic activity may be associated with improved preservation of certain nutritional and functional parameters, although findings remain species- and context-dependent. The review further highlights major knowledge gaps, including the lack of species- and life-stage-specific welfare indicators and standardized assessment protocols. Overall, the findings support the need to reconceptualize insect slaughter as a strategic upstream decision rather than a neutral processing step. Integrating ethical considerations with nutritional, functional, and regulatory perspectives is essential for establishing science-based standards and ensuring the responsible development of edible insect-based food and feed systems.

# One Welfare

## 29/04/2026: Impact of broiler chicken production on welfare, environment, and potential mitigation strategies: a review

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

Authors: Prakash A., Singh M. K., Dash S. K., Malav O. P., Singh Y., Sharma A., P. Acharya S. K., Joshi Patel M. K.

**Preview:** Rapid growth rates in commercial broilers have led to increased occurrences of metabolic diseases, skeletal disorders, and poor immunity. In addition, high stocking density under the intensive rearing system further exacerbates welfare issues. Along with welfare issues, intensive broiler farming causes environmental pollution, such as the release of significant amounts of dust, greenhouse gases and nutrient runoff, largely from manure and feed production. Further, improper waste management contributes to soil and water contamination and the spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria. The welfare issues, along with environmental problems due to intensive broiler farming, compromise its sustainability. This work examines the impacts of intensive broiler production on birds' welfare and the related environmental issues, along with their mitigation strategies. The mitigation strategies for the welfare issues of birds include genetic interventions like marker-assisted selection for robustness, a shift towards slower-growing or indigenous breeds, combined with regulatory and industry incentives, along with smart housing management. The mitigation of related environmental issues involves the strategies for efficient digestion and better gut microbiota composition, precision feeding, enzyme supplementation, and the use of alternative protein sources (e.g. insect meal, by-products), which will enhance nutrient absorption and reduce nitrogen and phosphorus excretion. Adoption of composting, biofiltration, smart ventilation, monitoring systems and renewable energy, can optimise resource use, minimise emissions, and support welfare. Sustainable broiler production demands an integrated approach encompassing genetics, nutrition, and management to ensure animal well-being, environmental stewardship, and economic viability.

## [09/04/2026: First evaluation framework based on the one welfare concept in extensive broiler rearing systems](#)

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

Authors: Rocchi, L., Mattioli, S., Collin, A. C. Bonnefous, L. Warin, F. Tuytens, P. Thobe, M. Re, C. Castellini

**Preview:** The One Welfare concept has emerged to counter the traditional separation of human well-being, environmental sustainability, and animal welfare, emphasizing their interdependence within specific ecological and socio-technical contexts. Despite its promise, the practical operationalization of One Welfare as an evaluation framework remains limited. This study proposes and tests an operational One Welfare approach (OWA) for extensive broiler rearing systems (ERS), explicitly promoting direct and indirect links between animal and human welfare and situating them within the environmental performance. Although ERS constitute a minor share of EU broiler output ( $\approx 5\%$ ), interest in and adoption of ERS have grown markedly over the past two decades, underscoring the need for assessment tools that capture their broader contributions. Conventional evaluation methodologies, designed around intensive systems, tend to prioritize yield, short-term efficiency, and market indicators, and may therefore underrepresent the ecological, social, and welfare advantages achievable in diversified, outdoor systems. We implemented a multicriteria decision

analysis (MCDA) using the One Welfare Approach to synthesize indicators across the animal welfare, environmental, economic, and social pillars in a broiler case study. The framework proved feasible despite data constraints (limited availability and some invariant parameters typical of ERS, and its outputs aligned with published evidence on slow-growing genotypes in outdoor systems, supporting construct validity. The Key results showed that: (1) Environmental enrichment with olive trees improved OWA performance: all enriched options outperformed their non-enriched counterparts, showing that tree/shrub cover increases outdoor use, reduces predation and fear, and improves integument condition in free-range birds. (2) Under enrichment, RJ\_E ranked first overall. Flow decomposition indicated that CB\_E exhibited higher positive flow ( $\Phi^+$ ), but RJ\_E had a lower negative flow ( $\Phi^-$ ); given the non-compensatory OWA stance, suppressing negatives proved more decisive than marginal gains in positives. A weight-sensitivity check showed ranking stability across pillars, with limited shifts confined to the Economic pillar, where criterion values were tightly clustered. Taken together, these findings indicate that One Welfare assessment can capture trade-offs and synergies that conventional metrics overlook, offering actionable guidance for extensive organic broiler systems. The approach is compatible with prevailing outcome-based welfare assessment practice. It can be simplified into a transparent index for on-farm self-assessment and external communication, provided that its governance and evidence base meet current best practice expectations.

## Pain management

### [24/03/2026: The pain echo chamber: how barren environments amplify pain in captive animals](#)

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

Authors: Schuck-Paim C, Alonso WJ, Hartcher K, Chiang C, Pereira PA, Veit W, Mendl M, Nicol CJ and Lecorps B

**Preview:** Pain is not solely a function of tissue damage but can be strongly shaped by environmental context. Its perceived intensity, duration, and likelihood—the core features of affective experience—are modulated by factors including opportunities for behavioral engagement, control over environmental conditions, social environment, physical activity, sleep quality, maternal stress and pain early in life. All of these factors affect pain responses of captive animals, yet most welfare assessments and mitigation protocols treat pain as if it were context-invariant. Here, we review multiple lines of evidence indicating that environmental and rearing conditions modulate pain processing and healing in captive animals. We show that barren, confined environments disable multiple endogenous analgesic mechanisms, while simultaneously activating several neurobiological pathways that intensify nociceptive signaling and delay healing. Pain perception amplification and

impaired healing are particularly likely when captivity is associated with intensive and barren environments. The implications of these findings are substantial. First, they highlight the need for animal welfare assessment models, and animal welfare research in general, to take environmental modulation of pain explicitly into account. Likewise, certification and regulatory frameworks must acknowledge that seemingly identical ailments or procedures can produce fundamentally different welfare experiences depending on the environment where they take place. Additionally, analgesic dosing protocols and laboratory-based pain models must be reevaluated for translational validity. More broadly, these findings challenge the acceptability of barren housing systems ubiquitous in farms, laboratories, and other settings. Given the substantial evidence that barren environments amplify and prolong painful states from common routine procedures and ailments, the transition to higher welfare housing systems becomes an ethical and scientific imperative.

## [23/03/2026: Consensus report from the Havemeyer Working Group Meetings on Equine Pain Assessment](#)

Document type: consensus report published in [Equine Veterinary Education](#)

Authors: Hopster, K., Spadavecchia, C., Lindegaard, C., Dalla Costa, E., de Grauw, J., Gudden, D., Andersen, P.H., McDonnell, S., van Dierendonck, M. and van Loon, T.

**Preview:** Recognition and assessment of pain in horses remain fundamental yet challenging aspects of equine clinical practice and welfare. Unlike human patients, horses cannot self-report pain, requiring clinicians to rely on behavioural observation, physiological indicators and structured assessment tools. Over the past two decades, numerous pain scales and methodologies have been developed; however, inconsistent adoption in everyday practice persists due to complexity, training requirements and limited applicability across clinical contexts. The Havemeyer Working Group on Equine Pain Assessment convened international experts in equine medicine, anaesthesia, surgery, behaviour and welfare to evaluate current methodologies and establish a pathway toward standardisation. Two consensus meetings were held in Reykjavík (2022) and West Chester (2024). The first meeting reviewed existing approaches, including behavioural observation, facial expression analysis, ethogram-based systems, composite pain scales, gait analysis, quantitative sensory testing and condition-specific tools for foals, donkeys and postoperative or chronic pain. Participants concluded that no single method adequately captures the multidimensional nature of equine pain. The second meeting focused on practical implementation. Among available instruments, the Equine Pain Scale (EPS) was identified as the most feasible candidate for routine clinical use due to its brevity, multidimensional structure and demonstrated reliability across observers. The Working Group emphasised that successful implementation requires education, integration into electronic medical records and multicentre data collection rather than further proliferation of new scales. Overall, the consensus report highlights the need to treat pain assessment as a core clinical vital sign. Immediate adoption of standardised, practical scoring – particularly the EPS – combined with

ongoing validation studies and emerging technologies such as automated video analysis represents the most effective strategy to improve equine welfare and clinical decision-making.

# Population management and animal welfare

## [01/04/2026: Sold a pup? Impact of purchasing practices, owner and dog demographics, and puppy early-life experiences on later canine health outcomes in the UK](#)

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

Authors: Fiona C. Dale, Dan G. O'Neill, Claire L. Brand, Zoe Belshaw, Bree L. Merritt, Camilla L. Pegram, Rowena M. A. Packer

**Preview:** Despite common assertions that puppies acquired from low-welfare sources (e.g. 'puppy farms') and/or sold illegally (e.g. without buyers seeing their puppies' mother pre-purchase) have poorer future health and welfare, remarkably little evidence supports this. We investigated the impact of puppy early-life risk factors, including owner acquisition behaviours, upon adult dog health outcomes. An online longitudinal survey followed a cohort of  $n = 985$  'Pandemic Puppies' purchased in the UK during 2020 aged  $\leq 16$  weeks of age as they reached 21 months of age. Owners reported their dogs' diagnosed health disorders and their expectations vs realities of veterinary costs since a 'puppyhood' questionnaire (while  $\leq 7$  months of age) in 2020. Multivariable modelling investigated risk factors for these outcomes, including early-life health, behaviour, and acquisition-related variables. Most owners ( $n = 931/985$ ; 94.5%) reported  $\geq$  one health problem in their dog since the 2020 questionnaire. Puppies sold  $\leq 6$  weeks of age, without their owner having seen the puppy's mother prior to purchase, or acquired by first-time owners were more likely to have a higher number of health disorders at 21 months old. One-quarter ( $n = 220/936$ ; 23.5%) of owners had spent more than they expected on veterinary costs since acquiring their puppy, with owners of puppies sold without a microchip more likely to report this. Results suggest that longer-term health outcomes are linked to how and where a puppy is acquired. As many risk factors identified here are already illegal in England, Wales and Scotland, greater enforcement and awareness of this legislation is urgently needed to protect canine welfare.

# Precision farming and AI

## [30/03/2026: 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.

## [30/03/2026: Rethinking Poultry Welfare—Integrating Behavioral Science and Digital Innovations for Enhanced Animal Well-Being](#)

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

Author: Suresh Neethirajan

**Preview:** The relentless drive to meet global demand for poultry products has pushed for rapid intensification in chicken farming, dramatically boosting efficiency and yield. Yet, these gains have exposed a host of complex welfare challenges that have prompted scientific scrutiny and ethical reflection. In this review, I critically evaluate recent innovations aimed at mitigating such concerns by drawing on advances in behavioral science and digital monitoring and insights into biological adaptations. Specifically, I focus on four interconnected themes: First, I spotlight the complexity of avian sensory perception—encompassing vision, auditory capabilities, olfaction, and tactile faculties—to underscore how lighting design, housing configurations, and enrichment strategies can better align with birds’ unique sensory worlds. Second, I explore novel tools for gauging emotional states and cognition, ranging from cognitive bias tests to developing protocols for identifying pain or distress based on facial cues. Third, I examine the transformative potential of computer vision, bioacoustics, and sensor-based technologies for the continuous, automated tracking of behavior and physiological indicators in commercial flocks. Fourth, I assess how data-driven management platforms, underpinned by precision livestock farming, can deploy real-time insights to optimize welfare on a broad scale. Recognizing that climate change and evolving production environments intensify these challenges, I also investigate how breeds resilient to extreme conditions might open new avenues for welfare-centered genetic and management approaches. While the adoption of cutting-edge techniques has shown promise, significant hurdles persist regarding validation, standardization, and commercial acceptance. I conclude that truly sustainable progress hinges on an interdisciplinary convergence of ethology, neuroscience, engineering, data analytics, and evolutionary biology—an integrative path that not only refines welfare assessment but also reimagines poultry production in ethically and scientifically robust ways.

## Regulation

### [28/04/2026: Évaluation du Centre National de Référence pour le Bien-Être Animal](#)

Document type: Report on consultative mission no. 24115 published by the [French Ministry of Agriculture, Agri-Food, and Food Sovereignty](#)

Authors: Véronique Bellemain, Arnaud Martrenchar

**Summary:** The FRCAW was established in 2017 as the result of a provision of the 2014 Law on the Future of Agriculture in France. Its funding is provided by its member organizations, foremost among which is INRAE, the appointed legal entity under which the FRCAW operates, and through annually agreed financial support from the French Ministry of Agriculture. As part of the renewal of the Centre's founding agreement, the Ministry requested an appraisal of work carried out, and

proposals, should these be required, for changes to the organizational structure to better address current challenges and the expectations of the Centre's various target audiences.

The task force reviewed the various outputs of the FRCAW since 2017 and consulted with more than forty organizations: overseeing authorities, the Centre's member organizations (through their boards and representatives to the FRCAW), the permanent staff, professional organizations (relating to farm animals and companion animals, the veterinary profession), animal welfare associations, etc. The FRCAW was established through a framework agreement for an initial five-year term (2017–2021), and this was renewed in 2022 (2022–2026).

Its primary mission is to provide scientific and technical support to the French Ministry of Agriculture for the development of public policy, as well as to all professional stakeholders, particularly livestock farmers. It contributes to the dissemination of information through resource platforms and a newsletter. It has also been designated as the expert body for the Observatory for the Protection of Domestic Carnivores (OCAD), established in 2021. In addition, it maintains ties with the European Union Reference Centres for Animal Welfare and the National Reference Centres of six other Member States.

Having no legal status of its own, the FRCAW is managed by INRAE. It is funded by its members and an annual grant from the Ministry of Agriculture (€246,500 in 2024). In 2025, the permanent staff consisted of two INRAE employees and four employees on fixed-term contracts. It uses the services of a network of experts as required by the referrals it receives.

In 2025, the Centre had attained a certain level of maturity. The permanent staff and member representatives on the steering committee are highly engaged and generally satisfied with the work accomplished.

With regard to target audiences, perceptions of the relevance of the FRCAW greatly depend on who is asked.

The Centre provides indispensable scientific support for the DGAL, which nevertheless has a critical need for technical and economic expertise (on feasibility, impacts, etc.) to complement the animal-centered expertise currently provided. For animal welfare organizations, it acts as a valuable reference tool. Conversely, professional agricultural organizations criticize the animal-centered approach which, coupled with a lack of understanding of the economic and technical realities, leads to opinions that are cut off from the reality on the ground, of no utility, and even harmful as the consequence of the errors they convey.

The report proposes that the FRCAW's convention should be renewed, while making recommendations to reform its governance and operations: reviewing its strategic management, replacing the advisory committee with briefing meetings, changing the functions of staff, securing the long-term employment of certain personnel through long-term scientific assignment contracts, etc.

It is also recommended that an independent unit be created within the FRCAW to assess the impacts of certain measures resulting from animal-centred opinions. Last, it is essential to restore genuine trust with professional organizations.

[Download the report](#) (PDF)

## [28/04/2026: Premières règles de l'UE pour protéger les chiens et les chats de maltraitance](#)

Document type: press release from [European Parliament](#)

Author: European Parliament

### **Preview: First EU rules to protect cats and dogs from abuses**

By 558 votes in favour, 35 against, and with 52 abstentions, MEPs gave their final green light to the first ever EU standards for the breeding, housing, traceability, import and handling of cats and dogs. The new regulation, [already agreed with Council](#), introduces an obligation for all dogs and cats kept in the EU, including those in private ownership, to be identifiable with microchips and registered in interoperable national databases. Sellers, breeders and shelters will have four years from the entry into force of the legislation to prepare for this. For pet owners who do not sell animals, the obligation will kick in after 10 years for dogs, and after 15 for cats.

### *Ban on commercial practices leading to abuses and health risks*

Breeding between parents and their offspring, grandparents and grandchildren, as well as between siblings and half-siblings, will be forbidden. The breeding of dogs or cats to give them exaggerated or excessive traits that lead to significant health risks will also be banned. The new measures include a prohibition on the mutilation of dogs and cats for shows, exhibitions, or competitions. Tying a dog or a cat to an object (tethering), except when necessary for medical treatment, and the use of prong and choke collars without built-in safety mechanisms, will also be prohibited.

### *Dogs and cats from non-EU countries*

To close loopholes that allow dogs and cats to enter the EU as non-commercial pets only to be subsequently sold, the new legislation covers not only imports for commercial purposes but also non-commercial animal movements.

Dogs and cats imported from non-EU countries for sale will have to be microchipped before they enter the EU, and then registered in a national database. Pet owners entering the EU will be obliged to pre-register their microchipped animal on a database at least five working days before arrival, unless it is already registered in an EU country's database.

### *Quote*

Rapporteur and Agriculture and Rural Development Committee chair, Veronika Vrecionová (ECR, CZ), said: "Today we have taken an important step towards bringing real order to the trade in dogs and cats in the European Union. Our message is clear: a pet is a family member, not an object or a toy. We finally have stronger rules on breeding and traceability that will help us push back against those who see animals as a means of making a quick profit. At the same time, we are levelling the playing field for honest breeders in the EU."

### *Next steps*

The legislation now needs to be adopted by the Council before it can enter into force.

### *Background*

Around 44% of EU citizens have a pet and 74% believe their welfare should be better protected. The trade in dogs and cats has grown considerably in recent years and is worth €1.3 billion a year.

According to the Commission, around 60% of owners purchase their dogs or cats online. In the absence of animal welfare standards for dogs and cats across EU countries, the Commission proposed [the new rules on 7 December 2023](#).

## [27/04/2026: Spain moves to redefine legal pets as draft law raises wider welfare concerns](#)

Document type: article published in [EuroWeekly News](#)

Author: Molly Grace

**Preview:** Spain is moving through a public consultation phase on a draft Royal Decree introducing so-called “positive lists” of companion animals, which would determine which species can legally be kept as pets in households. The Government has stated the measure forms part of the implementation of Law 7/2023 on animal welfare, although no final list of permitted species has yet been published. The draft does not set out a fixed list of animals but instead defines criteria that species must meet in order to qualify as domestic companions. These criteria relate to welfare needs, safety, and environmental risk. The proposal has already generated debate due to the scope of exclusions and legal consequences attached to them.

### *Legal consequences for excluded animals*

A key aspect of the draft is how it reclassifies animals not included in the positive lists. Under the proposal, any species not appearing in either the domestic or companion animal lists would be treated as wild fauna under Law 42/2007 on Natural Heritage and Biodiversity. (...)

### *Debate over responsibility, enforcement and consistency*

The proposals have prompted discussion between conservation groups, breeders and pet owners. Conservation-focused organisations argue that tighter regulation is necessary to reduce ecological harm, particularly where non-native animals escape and establish populations that compete with native wildlife. However, many responsible exotic pet owners argue that policy is shaped by the actions of a minority rather than by the wider standards of care already in place among experienced keepers. They point out that poor outcomes are often linked to irresponsible ownership rather than the species itself. (...)

### *Ownership rights and restrictions*

The proposal includes transitional arrangements for current owners of animals that may be excluded. (...)

### *Expert perspective on welfare, enforcement and responsibility*

From my perspective as an animal welfare and behaviourist, as well as an exotic veterinary nurse, the current debate in Spain highlights deeper structural issues in animal welfare policy. Since the introduction of new animal welfare laws, there has been little visible improvement in the protection of domestic animals. (...)

### *Wider responsibility across all species*

These issues should not be approached through a single professional lens. Effective policy requires collaboration between veterinarians, welfare specialists, conservationists, and biologists. (...)

### *Education-based approach to ownership*

A more effective long-term solution would include mandatory education or certification before acquiring any animal. This would apply universally and cover basics knowledge on the animal such as behaviour, nutrition, housing, enrichment, and veterinary costs. Such an approach would extend across all animals, whether horses, snake or ferret. (...)

### *Legal status and next steps*

The draft proposals remain in consultation and have not yet been adopted into law. Feedback from veterinary professionals, conservation organisations, industry stakeholders and the public is still being reviewed, and the final list of permitted species may change before approval. If implemented, Spain's system would represent a shift from reactive restrictions to pre-authorisation of pets through defined lists. Until then, existing animal ownership laws remain fully in force.

## **22/04/2026: A Pig's Tail: How Europe is moving beyond routine tail docking**

Document type: report published by [The Animal Law Foundation](#)

Author: The Animal Law foundation

**Preview:** A comparative analysis of legal measures used to combat tail docking in Europe and how the UK is falling behind.

This report examines a critical question: if routine tail docking is prohibited in law, why does it remain so prevalent in practice in the United Kingdom? In addressing this question, The Animal Law Foundation has undertaken a detailed and evidence-led comparative analysis of legal frameworks and farming practices across several European jurisdictions.

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

## **25/03/2026: Parlement européen : réponse écrite à la question P-000369/26 : Resources allocated to animal welfare**

Document type: Answer from the [European Commission](#) to Question P-000369/26

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

**Question:** In 2024, following repeated calls from EU citizens, the Commission appointed the first-ever Commissioner responsible for animal welfare. The Commissioner is currently responsible for

several major files related to animal welfare, including the forthcoming response to the European Citizens' Initiative entitled 'Fur Free Europe', concerning the revision of EU farm animal welfare legislation, and the implementation of new legislation on the welfare of dogs and cats.

In this context, could the Commission clarify the following in concrete terms:

1. How many resources (in terms of the number of full-time equivalent staff and other relevant staff or budgetary allocations) are currently dedicated to animal welfare, both within the Commissioner's cabinet and at directorate-general level?

2. What changes are expected in terms of the resources it allocates specifically to animal welfare in the coming years?

**Answer:** 1. In the Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE), there is a dedicated unit (SANTE.G.3) responsible for animal welfare<sup>[1]</sup>. The work of that unit, which currently counts 14 members (including two seconded national experts) insofar as animal welfare-related matters are concerned, is presented in the Directorate-General's Annual Activity Reports<sup>[2]</sup>. As for any cross-cutting policy area, other Directorate-Generals contribute with their staff to the Commission's work on animal welfare-related affairs.

In the Cabinet of the Commissioner for Health and Animal Welfare, there is a policy assistant responsible for animal welfare and a Member of Cabinet following animal welfare related dossiers from the European Parliament<sup>[3]</sup>.

2. The allocation of human resources is decided on an annual basis, based on how the needs develop in the respective policy areas, with the evolution of external — and sometimes unforeseen — factors considered, such as pandemics and other crises. It is therefore not possible to provide a prediction of how the resources allocated specifically to animal welfare will evolve in the coming years.

<sup>[1]</sup> [https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/277adfe3-745d-40ad-b530-450af9d715e2\\_en?filename=organisation-chart-dg-sante\\_en.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/277adfe3-745d-40ad-b530-450af9d715e2_en?filename=organisation-chart-dg-sante_en.pdf).

<sup>[2]</sup> E.g. the 2024 Annual Activity Report: [https://commission.europa.eu/publications/annual-activity-report-2024-health-and-food-safety\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/publications/annual-activity-report-2024-health-and-food-safety_en).

<sup>[3]</sup> [https://commission.europa.eu/about/organisation/college-commissioners/oliver-varhelyi/oliver-varhelyis-team\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/about/organisation/college-commissioners/oliver-varhelyi/oliver-varhelyis-team_en).

## [17/03/2026: Assemblée nationale : réponse écrite à la question n°12372 : Fin de l'exploitation des animaux sauvages pour les tournages de cinéma](#)

Document type: answer to Question No. 12372 published in the Official Journal of the French Republic on the website of the [National Assembly](#)

Authors: Question: Ms. Andrée Taurinya Loire (2nd constituency) – La France insoumise – Nouveau Front Populaire. Answer: Ministry of Ecological Transition

**Question:** Ms Andrée Taurinya draws the attention of the Minister for Ecological Transition, Biodiversity, and International Climate and Nature Negotiations to the possibility of extending to

audiovisual recordings and cinematic productions the ban on the use of non-domesticated animals—as provided for in Law No. 2021-1539 of November 30, 2021, and also the measures regarding the end of their use in traveling establishments by 2028. The current regulations do not provide sufficient protection and fail to prevent the suffering that is inherent to captivity and the on-screen use of wild animals. These animals cannot meet their basic biological needs in the context of their training and filming. The argument that filming is strictly controlled is, in fact, debatable: inspections are rare, are often announced in advance, and are neither comprehensive nor thorough. They do not address training, methods of psychological coercion, conditions of captivity beyond filming itself, or the acute stress caused by noise, lights, rehearsals, and restriction of movement. Furthermore, the decrees that are issued by the office of the Prefect are proof of the responsibility of the administration but do not guarantee effective compliance with animal welfare standards. The decree authorizes the keeping of animals, sets thresholds, and prescribes standards, but does not challenge the practice itself. Film is not fundamentally so different from television entertainment. Consequently, the distinction lacks weight. If the presence of wild animals is deemed unacceptable in entertainment programs in the name of animal welfare, there is no justification for it to become acceptable simply because the format is a work of fiction pursuing the same artistic goal. The AFNOR framework for responsible and sustainable film, audiovisual, and advertising production, published by the French Directorate General for Media and Cultural Industries of the Ministry of Culture, and the “3Rs” rule are voluntary but non-binding tools. The AFNOR framework has no binding force and relies solely on the goodwill of producers. The “3R” rule acknowledges only implicitly that the use of animals is problematic, without, however, requiring an effective alternative, thereby allowing such practices to continue. Furthermore, digital alternatives are already in existence and now make this sort of ban a realistic prospect. Consequently, she wishes to know whether the Government plans to extend the ban on the use of wild animals to audiovisual and cinematographic works, taking into account the existence of digital alternatives already supported by the CNC, and would like to know what conditions apply for the care and future of these animals once filming is complete.

**Answer:** Law No. 2021-1539 of November 30, 2021, to combat animal abuse and strengthen the bond between animals and humans, marked a major step forward by prohibiting, in particular, the display of non-domesticated animals—whether in captivity or removed from their natural habitat—in variety shows, game shows, and non-fiction programs as of December 2023, also bringing an end to their confinement in traveling establishments from 2028. This provision, which applies solely to entertainment programs broadcast on a television channel or made available through an on-demand audiovisual media service, does not prohibit the presence of animals in other artistic fields, such as film or advertising, where the principle of artistic freedom is applied. Given that this freedom to create and disseminate intellectual works is guaranteed as a fundamental right, there are no plans to ban the use of such animals in audiovisual and film productions. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Culture is currently conducting a sector-specific study to determine the impact of this measure. With regard to the living conditions of animals employed during filming, their housing and health care are the responsibility of the owner. The owner must demonstrate that facilities comply with regulatory standards and ensure the fulfillment of basic biological needs, while also guaranteeing the care of each animal in the event that activities are terminated. The Government is closely monitoring the

development of digital alternatives and remains fully committed to supporting film and audiovisual professionals in adopting filming practices that respect animal welfare and meet the expectations of the public.

## [17/03/2026: Assemblée nationale : réponse écrite à la question n°12538 : Échéance 2028 d'interdiction de la détention d'animaux sauvages dans des cirques](#)

Document type: answer to Question No. 12538 published in the Official Journal of the French Republic on the website of the [National Assembly](#)

Authors: Question: Mr. Vincent Ledoux Nord (10th District) – Together for the Republic. Answer: Ministry of Ecological Transition

**Question:** Mr Vincent Ledoux asks the Minister for Ecological Transition, Biodiversity, and International Climate and Nature Negotiations about the operational preparations for the 2028 deadline set by the Law of November 30, 2021, regarding the phased ban on the keeping of wild animals in traveling circuses. As this deadline approaches, many accounts from on-the-ground stakeholders involved in the transition agree in reporting significant delays in establishing suitable sanctuaries, a lack of clarity regarding the capacity actually available in the medium term, and insufficient coordination between government agencies, sanctuaries, and the professionals involved. These difficulties are currently stranding people who have chosen to comply with the law in a health, economic, and humanitarian dead end, which paradoxically risks having negative effects on animal welfare, even as the law aims to provide enhanced protection. The question is all the more well-founded given that, well before the adoption of the 2021 law, the Member of Parliament, in his capacity as mayor, had decided to ban the presence of circuses that kept wild animals within his municipal area of authority, since he already considered that ethical requirements must necessarily be accompanied by concrete, realistic, and operational solutions for the stakeholders involved. In this context, he asks the Minister how many sanctuaries have actually been created to date that are fully operational and able to accommodate the animals in question, as well as what additional capacity will be available by 2028; and what measures the Government intends to take to strengthen coordination between the State, sanctuaries, and professionals. He also asks, if applicable, what adjustments are being considered to ensure a gradual, responsible, and humane implementation of the law, in line with its primary objective of animal protection.

**Answer:** The government is fully aware of the challenges involved in the care of captive wild animals in circuses. The implementation date of 2028 is fast approaching, and the government is actively working, in consultation with stakeholders, to find appropriate solutions. To support the implementation of Law No. 2021-1539 of November 30, 2021, to combat animal abuse and strengthen the bond between animals and humans—which, among other things, prohibits the public display of non-domestic animal species from December 1, 2028— the Ministry of Ecological

Transition, Biodiversity, and International Negotiations on Climate and Nature launched two Calls for Expressions of Interest (AMI) for the creation of facilities to accommodate non-domestic animal species in 2022 and 2023. As part of these Animal Sanctuary AMIs, the Ministry has supported nine projects. Three projects have been fully completed to date (Zoo di Corsica, Parc Phoenix, and Terres de Nataé), and others are currently underway. Efforts must continue to create new accommodation, and the ministry continues to support the development of sanctuary projects. The launch of a third Animal Sanctuary AMI call for proposals is scheduled for the current year to strengthen available accommodation capacity by 2028. To ensure animal welfare while animals are awaiting placements and facilitate the successful completion of the transition by circus animals affected by Law No. 2021-1539 of November 30, 2021, the Government has also developed a support plan for circus performers, implemented by Decree No. 2025-396 of April 30, 2025, regarding financial support for traveling establishments displaying non-domestic animals to the public. This plan provides, in particular, for financial support to assist circus performers in their transition to new careers, as well as funding for the care of animals while they await a place in a sanctuary. This one-stop shop, open since December 15, 2025, is operated by the French Agency for Services and Payments (ASP).

## [05/03/2026: Court hearing puts EU participatory democracy on trial in End the Cage Age case](#)

Document type: press release published by [The Good Lobby](#)

Author: Marco Giufrè

**Preview:** Today's public hearing before the Court of Justice of the European Union offered a rare opportunity for over 1.5 million citizens to ask the Court to hold the European Commission accountable for failing to follow up on their demand to ban cages in animal farming.

The case concerns the [End the Cage Age](#) European Citizens' Initiative, which gathered more than 1.4 million signatures across the EU and in 2021 secured a formal commitment from the Commission to propose legislation to phase out cages in animal farming by the end of 2023. That deadline passed – followed by 2024, and now 2026 – without any legislative proposal.

At the hearing, a five-judge chamber questioned the animal welfare organisations involved in the case and pressed the Commission's representatives on why it has not provided a clear timeline for delivering on its commitment.

The Good Lobby's legal team was present in Luxembourg, representing Eurogroup for Animals as a third-party intervener in support of the citizens' case.

"The European Citizens' Initiative was designed to give ordinary people a voice in EU law," said Professor Alberto Alemanno, founder of The Good Lobby. "End the Cage Age is the only initiative in history to secure a full Commission commitment. And yet here we are, before the Court of Justice, because that commitment was broken. If this case fails, future citizens will rightly ask: why bother?" A ruling against the Commission would not only benefit the hundreds of millions of animals still kept in cages across Europe. It could also set a critical precedent confirming that EU participatory

democracy has legal consequences – and that citizens who mobilise through the European Citizens' Initiative cannot simply be ignored when their demands become politically inconvenient. The Court's ruling is expected in the coming months. (...)

## Transport, slaughter, pick-up

### 20/04/2026: Exploring the relationship between whole carcass condemnations and farm animal welfare: A rapid scoping review

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

Authors: Christine Kuo, Emma G. Gardner, Murray Gillies, Marianne I. Parent

**Preview:** Whole carcass condemnation data is regularly collected at abattoirs in some regions and presents a potential data source for animal welfare surveillance. This rapid scoping review aimed to characterize the body of research that has used condemnation data from abattoirs to investigate relationships between whole carcass condemnations and animal welfare, and identify gaps in the literature, with the secondary aim of considering the potential for condemnation data to be used in an animal welfare surveillance system. Peer-reviewed literature was searched using Scopus, and grey literature was searched using Google search. Following the screening process, 53 peer-reviewed records were identified. No grey literature records were identified. General study characteristics and data on the relationships (including associations and lack thereof) between animal welfare variables (which were categorized according to the following animal welfare factors: feeding, housing, health, behaviour, transport, and slaughter) and whole carcass condemnation reasons were extracted. We found that most research on this topic has been conducted in Europe (n = 41/53) and has focused on poultry (n = 29/53), particularly on broiler chickens (n = 21/53). In addition, most existing research focuses on understanding the relationship between on-farm health-related animal welfare factors and whole carcass condemnations, rather than other factors such as those related to feeding, housing, and behaviour, or during the transport and slaughter phases of the production chain. Gaps in the literature include research on cattle and small ruminants, and research on non-health-related animal welfare factors and how they relate to whole carcass condemnations. Overall, we found that condemnation data is a valuable secondary data source that can allow for the monitoring of large numbers of animals over long periods, and can contribute to animal welfare surveillance systems.

### 13/04/2026: Manual Catching and Transportation of Poultry with a Focus on Chickens and European Practices

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

Authors: Hettmannsperger, M.A., Ruhnke, I.

**Preview:** The manual handling of poultry is an essential part of raising and caring for birds. The different manual catching methods have various impacts on the bird's welfare and health, the well-being and work satisfaction of the people who are handling the birds, and the economic and logistical requirements of everyone involved. The traditional approach of using the Five Freedoms for investigating animal well-being has been amended with animal-based measures (ABMs) as well as the evaluation of five welfare domains, which consider the subjective response of an animal towards its environment. The assessment of single individual animal welfare parameters without context can be non-specific, only partially informative, or even misleading when considered in isolation. The objective measurement of suitable parameters for the evaluation of the various steps of poultry catching and transport is complex and should be carried out in a differentiated manner. This review summarizes the current knowledge about the manual catching of poultry, with special focus on the upright and inverted handling of chicken and current considerations in Europe. The implementation of consistent, transparent, and traceable central data collection on animal health and welfare at various critical control points of bird transportation would allow systematic evaluation of the multifactorial welfare assessment in the future.

## [27/03/2026: Effects of age and feeding protocols on the metabolic and physiological condition of unweaned calves during and after long-distance transport](#)

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

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

**Preview:** Long-distance transport and associated extended fasting periods challenge the physiological state of young calves, leading to energy loss, dehydration, and potentially hunger and exhaustion. Older calves with greater body reserves may better withstand fasting, while providing larger volumes of milk replacer pre-transport could help sustain energy balance and hydration. The aim of this study was to investigate how calf age and pre-transport feeding protocols affect the physiological status of unweaned calves during and after long-distance road and ferry transport. We followed a commercial shipment of 138 male dairy calves from an assembly centre (AC) in Ireland via road and roll-on-roll-off ferry to a lairage in France and then via road to a veal farm in the Netherlands (total transport duration 51 h). Study design was a 2×2 factorial with factors calf age (2–3 or 4–5 weeks) and pre-transport feeding protocol (2–4 L of milk replacer). We collected four blood samples (AC, lairage, arrival, Day 7 post-transport) and analysed them for 15 variables indicating energy balance, hydration status, muscle fatigue, and physiological stress responses. Twenty calves were fitted with continuous glucose monitors (CGMs) to measure interstitial glucose from 13 h before to 90 h after departure. Body weight was recorded at AC, lairage, arrival, Day 7 and

21 post-transport. The effects of age and feeding protocol on physiological responses were assessed using linear mixed models with repeated measures and random effects for calf and farm of origin. Younger calves weighed less than older calves overall (49.8 vs. 53.0 kg,  $P=0.004$ ) and at all sampling moments; they had higher plasma glucose concentrations than older calves overall (4.61 vs. 4.42 mmol/L,  $P=0.038$ ) and at all sampling moments except lairage, lower sodium concentrations at arrival (139.9 vs. 140.8 mmol/L,  $P=0.034$ ) and lower chloride concentrations at AC (97.4 vs. 99.0 mmol/L,  $P\leq 0.001$ ) and lairage (96.6 vs. 97.5 mmol/L,  $P=0.009$ ). Calves fed 2 L pre-transport had lower CGM glucose readings for two hours after feeding at AC and higher urea concentrations at lairage (4.01 vs. 3.10 mmol/L,  $P\leq 0.001$ ) than calves fed 4 L. Although feeding 4 L compared to 2 L before transport had some positive effects on calf energy balance and hydration, our findings suggest that pre-transport feeding has only limited capacity to alleviate the negative impacts of transport and prolonged fasting on the physiological status of calves, especially during multi-day transport. Effects of age on calf resilience were few and inconclusive, and further research should include a larger age range.