



# Farm Animal Welfare Council

## Final Report

March 2011

*“The question is not just, “Do they suffer?”  
nor, “Are their needs met?”  
but rather, “Do they have a life worth living?”*

## Introduction

The Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC) was established by the Government in 1979 as an independent advisory body. Its terms of reference are to keep under review the welfare of farm animals on agricultural land, at market, in transit and at the place of slaughter; and to advise Government and the devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales of any legislative or other changes that may be necessary.

The Council is able to investigate any topic falling within this remit; communicate freely with outside bodies, the European Commission and the public; and publish its advice independently.

FAWC fulfils its remit by:

- advising Ministers on specific topics in the form of written Reports, Opinions and Letters, supplemented by formal meetings with Ministers and their Chief Veterinary Officers and Officials in England, Wales and Scotland;
- responding to *ad hoc* consultations, usually originating from Government; and
- developing strategic relationships with decision makers and opinion formers.

As a result of the Government's Review of Arms Length Bodies, the Farm Animal Welfare Council will cease to exist as an advisory Non-Departmental Public Body on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011. However, Government has decided that it would still like independent, expert advice about the welfare of farm animals and the new Farm Animal Welfare Committee, will be constituted on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 to serve this purpose. The Committee will be an expert committee within Defra, also serving the Scottish Department for Rural Affairs and the Environment and the Welsh Assembly Government's Department for Rural Affairs. The Governments have decided that the Committee will operate much as did the Council.

## Chairman's message

In its final year, the Farm Animal Welfare Council has continued to discharge its remit by providing advice to the Governments about the welfare of farm animals.

The number of farm animals 'used' in Britain each year is vast: about 1,000 million farm animals are killed or kept in Great Britain annually, the great majority of which are broiler chickens. This total excludes those animals that are reared abroad and whose products are imported; there are concerns about their welfare too. Although this number is beyond normal comprehension, independent advice is needed because of powerful economic forces and vested interests. Unlike other 'uses' of animals, e.g. as companions or for sport, the quality of life of individual farm animals is at particular risk because of the demand by consumers for affordable food from animals and other products. For this reason, Parliament decided about a century ago that farm animals needed special care to protect them from unnecessary suffering; implicitly this recognises that some suffering is necessary and, indeed, lawful.

Since it was established, FAWC has endeavoured to provide sound advice about the risks - and their management - to the welfare of farm animals. It has had to deal with the many complex issues that arise when sentient animals are kept for farming. While consideration of the science of animal welfare (e.g. assessment) has not been without difficulty, its application has been fraught with ethical, economic, environmental and educational dilemmas. It is only recently that FAWC has advised the Governments to adopt a combination of deontological and utilitarian principles when dealing with the ethics of livestock farming. Even so, there are still weighty questions to be answered: when is suffering necessary; how can (necessary) suffering be avoided; what limits should be imposed? This unresolved business shows how tricky are some of the issues facing the Governments and British citizens as they consume the products of so many animals.

Many would argue that the Five Freedoms were the most important outcome of FAWC's advice. Certainly, these Freedoms have been the cornerstone of much legislation and policy in Britain and elsewhere, have been used widely in marketing, and form the basis of welfare assessment, not only in farm animals. However, some argue that their focus is overly negative. Their origins lie in the Brambell Report of 1965 and they were first cited in 1979 when FAWC was established; they now comprise the foundations of much of policy on farm animals. Recently, FAWC has proposed that the minimum standard of farm animal welfare should be moved beyond the Five Freedoms and be set at the test of whether an animal has a life worth living, from its point of view. This simple concept subsumes the Freedoms; indeed it would be a sad reflection on government policy and commercial practice if the intention was not to give each and every farm animal a life worth living.

This is the final report of the Farm Animal Welfare Council. It concludes the Council's work, as foreshadowed in its Strategic Plan. The new Committee will work to another Strategic Plan that will build on the Council's achievements; necessarily, it will also work to priorities agreed with government. The Council's advice has been provided by its members, past and present, ably supported by its veterinary advisers and the Secretariat. I thank them all and am sure that the new Committee's advice will be as valued and valuable as that of its predecessor.



Professor Christopher Wathes, Chairman

## Membership: March 2011

Members of the Farm Animal Welfare Council are drawn from a wide range of disciplines and occupations and serve in a personal capacity, not as representatives of any organisation or interest group.

### Chairman

**Professor Christopher Wathes** holds the Chair of Animal Welfare at the Royal Veterinary College, University of London. He is a research scientist with interests in the environmental biology and management of farm and other animals.

### Members

**Professor Michael Appleby**, chief scientific adviser for the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA). Member of the Scientific Committee of Humane Farm Animal Care and the Animal Compassionate Committee of Whole Foods Market in the USA. Formerly senior lecturer in Applied Animal Behaviour, University of Edinburgh.

**Professor Richard Bennett**, an agricultural economist in the Department of Agricultural and Food Economics at the University of Reading. He is a Trustee of the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare, the Humane Slaughter Association and the Farm Animal Welfare Trust. Until September 2009, he was a member of the England Implementation Group for the Animal Health and Welfare Strategy.

**Professor Henry Buller**, Chair of Rural Geography and Director of the BA Human Geography programme at the University of Exeter. Editor of the international rural science journal, *Sociologia Ruralis*.

**Dr Joanne Conington**, senior animal breeding specialist in the Sustainable Livestock Systems group at the Scottish Agricultural College. Formerly a sheep specialist with the Meat and Livestock Commission.

**Huw Davies**, a sheep farmer from Carmarthenshire. He is a member of the Steering Committee for the Implementation of the Animal Health and Welfare Strategy for Wales and the Welsh Regional Board of the Moredun Research Institute, and a Fellow of the Royal Agricultural Societies.

**Professor Sandra Edwards**, Chair of Agriculture at the University of Newcastle. Previously director of the Scottish Pig Industry Initiative, past President of the British Society of Animal Science and member of the European Food Safety Authority working groups on pig welfare.

**Professor Laura Green**, Chair in the Department of Biological Sciences at the University of Warwick, leading a research group on farm animal veterinary epidemiology. Member of the Society for Veterinary Epidemiology and Preventative Medicine, Chair of the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council's Research Committee A and Member of the Rural Economy and Land Use Strategic Advisory Committee.

**Gwyn Jones**, a dairy farmer from West Sussex. Vice President of NFU, member of COPA Animal Health, past Chairman of the NFU Dairy Board, past Vice-Chairman COPA Milk, and past Council member of the MDC (Milk Development Council).

**Dr David Main**, BVA Animal Welfare Foundation Lecturer in Animal Welfare at the University of Bristol and an RCVS-recognised specialist in Animal Welfare Science, Ethics and Law.

**Professor Richard Moody**, a consultant specialising in food and consumer issues, after 30 years experience as a senior academic and food scientist. Previously an independent Commissioner with the Meat and Livestock Commission and Chairman of its Consumers' Committee, he is also an adviser on food additives research to the Food Standards Agency, was a member of its inaugural research committee, and is a Fellow of the Institute for Food Science and Technology.

**Professor David Morton**, Emeritus Professor of Biomedical Science and Ethics at the University of Birmingham, and a laboratory animal veterinarian. Member of the European Food Safety Authority's Scientific Panel on Animal Health and Welfare, and the Companion Animal Welfare Council.

**Reverend Professor Michael Reiss**, assistant director and Professor of Science Education at the Institute of Education, University of London. His research and consultancy interests are in science education, bioethics and sex education.

**Dr Philip Scott**, Reader in farm animal studies at the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies at Edinburgh University and lead veterinarian in the School's Farm Animal Teaching Hospital. RCVS and European specialist in sheep health and production and European specialist in bovine health management.

**Meryl Ward**, director of a commercial pig breeding and finishing business and a member of the British Pig Executive. She is a Council Member and Selector for the Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust and a Governor of Harper Adams University College.

**Mike Wijnberg**, leading veterinarian for a large pig production and processing company. Member of the Pig Veterinary Society, the American Association of Swine Veterinarians and RSPCA's Freedom Food Technical Advisory Committee on pigs.

**George Hogarth and Andrew Nicholson** retired at the end of 2010. We would like to thank them for their many contributions to the work of FAWC.

## **FAWC's work during 2010-2011**

All Reports, Opinions and Letters are approved by the Council before submission to Ministers and Departments and are published on FAWC's website. As from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011, the Council's work can be accessed via the National Archives website:

[http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/\\*/http://www.fawc.org.uk/](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/*/http://www.fawc.org.uk/)

As from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011, the work of the Farm Animal Welfare Committee can be viewed on its website, <http://www.defra.gov.uk/fawc>.

A summary of advice published since publication of the last Annual Review, in June 2010, is set out below.

### **Response to a Defra consultation on proposed amendments to the Veterinary Surgeons Act exemption order regime – July 2010**

FAWC commented on proposed amendments to the Veterinary Surgeons Act exemption order regime to enable EU trained technicians to carry out artificial insemination in cattle and mares, epidural anaesthesia and rectal ultrasound scanning of bovines.

In the longer term, FAWC would prefer to see a full review of the Veterinary Surgeons Act that brings veterinary paramedics within its control. In the meantime, the principles to be followed should include training of operators to a consistently high standard with consistent assessment of competence (perhaps requiring evidence of technicians carrying out procedures safely and effectively).

### **Advice on the welfare of dairy cows housed all year round and/or in large herds – August 2010**

FAWC sought to answer the question can a dairy cow that is housed all year round with little or no access to grazing and/or is kept in a very large herd have a (legally) satisfactory standard of welfare?

The advice sent to Ministers weighed the advantages and disadvantages of year-round housing and flagged up the particular risk to the Fourth Freedom, which is the freedom to express normal behaviour - by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind. FAWC called for further research to be undertaken on how all year round housing affects the ability of dairy cows to express normal behaviour and the extent to which any impediments might affect welfare (research which Defra has since commissioned).

For dairy cows to be housed all year round, it is particularly important that housing and general facilities are appropriate so that the cow remains healthy and has the opportunity for good welfare whilst providing the desired milk yield. In addition to the provision of resources, good management, highly skilled veterinary care, adequate numbers of stockmen and stockmanship of the highest standard are essential.

Provided that these conditions are met and pending the new evidence about the Fourth Freedom, FAWC's advice is that a cow housed all the year round can have a satisfactory standard of welfare.

FAWC concluded that dairy cows could be kept in large groups provided that the herd is divided into appropriate groups, each managed according to nutritional and other needs, and stockmanship is of the highest standard.

## **Advice on the welfare requirements of sheep in Great Britain, New Zealand, and Australia – December 2010**

On the basis of the available evidence, FAWC concluded that:

- The legal requirements in terms of animal welfare are similar in Great Britain, New Zealand and Australia.
- There are some differences between these countries in permitted husbandry practices, e.g. mulesing is currently permitted in Australia though alternative methods of fly strike control are being investigated.
- It is not possible to compare the welfare of sheep in these countries because of a lack of public (i.e. independent and published) surveillance data.
- Public surveillance and farm assurance schemes in Great Britain continue to provide a framework to protect the welfare of individual sheep in Great Britain.

## **Discussion paper by the Liaison Group of Animal Welfare Advisory Bodies on Animal Welfare Surveillance – December 2010**

The Liaison Group of UK Animal Welfare Advisory Bodies (i.e. FAWC, Companion Animal Welfare Council, Animal Procedures Committee and Zoos Forum) identified animal welfare surveillance as an issue relevant to all the varied sectors it covered and sought to present information on animal welfare surveillance across the sectors (including current issues, problems and potential shared working practices) to interested parties for wider discussion.

It concluded that there should be effective within-sector and cross-sector animal welfare surveillance systems: i) to identify priorities within and across all sectors for the information of society and all interested parties, and so that resources for animal welfare can be focused where needs are greatest; ii) to identify trends in levels of animal welfare; and iii) in pursuit of the 'levelling upwards' of animal welfare standards across the sectors and to promote work where serious issues appear to have been overlooked.

These systems should therefore be designed so that data can be provided to a central body to help inform priority actions and with the authority to provide sound and independent advice to those specifically involved and to society in general.

## **Opinion on osteoporosis and bone fractures in laying hens – December 2010**

This Opinion advised the Governments about the concerning extent of bone fractures experienced by laying hens in all production systems and their impact on the hens' welfare.

Past research has provided evidence that the incidence of bone damage in laying hens is high; more recent work indicates that rather than improving over time the situation may be getting worse. Bone fractures experienced either during lay or at depopulation have a serious impact on the welfare of the birds affected.

Bone fractures come about by a combination of underlying and immediate causes, including osteoporosis, injuries occurring as a result of poor design and management of housing systems and poor handling during depopulation. FAWC identified that improvements could be made through nutrition, breeding, housing systems that enable birds to exercise and improve bone strength without injury and careful and considerate handling at depopulation; alternative methods of killing on-farm should also be considered.

The Council would like to see bone damage in live birds eliminated entirely and to that end the egg industry and Government should work towards a strategy of time-related reduction in bone fractures both during lay and at depopulation.

### **Opinion on mutilation of piglets and growing pigs and environmental enrichment – March 2011**

This Opinion advises the Governments about the impact on pigs' welfare of the various mutilations to which they may be subject during their lives. The mutilations include tail docking, tooth clipping, identification and castration. The Opinion assesses the need for these mutilations in terms of the welfare costs and benefits and the extent to which management or husbandry practices, including environmental enrichment, might reduce the necessity. Where mutilations are necessary, the Opinion addresses how procedures can be refined, including the possibility of providing pain relief.

Mutilations involve handling stress, acute pain and the possibility of chronic pain. Opportunities to improve welfare arise from either avoiding the need to carry out the mutilation or refining the procedure to reduce stress and pain. Many mutilations are carried out to prevent undesirable consequences of behaviours that may be manifested later. An ethical balance has to be struck between the harms associated with the mutilation and the risk and severity of subsequent events that the mutilation may alleviate.

Environmental enrichment plays a role in facilitating good welfare and is one of the management procedures that, by reducing injurious behaviour, might make the use of some mutilations less necessary.

The pig industry, Governments and other stakeholders should work towards systems where pig behaviour is such that mutilations become unnecessary. Where mutilations are still necessary then every effort should be made to refine procedures to minimise pain and distress, for example by provision of pain relief.

### **Opinion on lameness in sheep – March 2011**

This Opinion advises the Governments about the extent of lameness experienced by sheep in Great Britain and the impact on sheep welfare. The Opinion reviews the evidence for the welfare issues linked to sheep lameness and considers appropriate means of prevention, control and treatment of the common types of lameness in sheep.

Footrot, including digital dermatitis, is responsible for 90% of lameness in British sheep and is present in 97% of flocks. Some estimates put prevalence of lameness in the national flock at 8-10%. However, for most causes of foot lameness there are effective treatments that, if applied promptly, can reduce the prevalence in a flock to less than 2%. Shepherds must ensure that they are able to recognise the various causes of lameness and treat all lame sheep promptly.

Council recommends that the prevalence of lameness in flocks farmed in Great Britain should be reduced to 5% or less within 5 years as an interim target and to 2% or less, already achievable with best practice, within ten years.

## **Ongoing work to be passed to the Farm Animal Welfare Committee**

FAWC's three Standing Committees undertake 'horizon scanning' for new welfare issues, keep under review and press for action on contemporary welfare topics, and carry out studies leading to short reports in the form of Opinions. They cover welfare issues within three broad areas:

- Ethics, Economics, Education and Regulation;
- Pigs, Poultry and Fish; and
- Ruminants.

Working Groups are set up to produce Reports about specific welfare issues or species. Ongoing Working Groups are considering economics and farm animal welfare; education, communication and knowledge application in relation to farm animal welfare; and disease and farm animal welfare.

Work streams, Reports and Opinions already begun by the Farm Animal Welfare Council will be completed by the new Committee. However, budgetary constraints will in future reduce the number of Reports that the Committee can tackle at any one time. Current work is summarised below.

### **Ethics, Economics, Education and Regulation Standing Committee**

This Committee is working on an Opinion on contingency planning for farm animal welfare in disasters and emergencies, both natural and resulting from human actions, and disease outbreaks. Work is well underway and the Opinion will be published in summer 2011.

### **Pigs, Poultry and Fish Standing Committee**

An Opinion on mutilations and environmental enrichment for piglets and growing pigs has just been published. This Committee will continue to horizon scan animal welfare issues within its remit and will tackle the next Opinion topic identified for it by the new Strategic Plan for 2011-2015, to be agreed soon after the establishment of the new Committee.

### **Ruminants Standing Committee**

An Opinion on lameness in sheep has just been published. This Committee will continue to horizon scan animal welfare issues within its remit and will tackle the next Opinion topic identified for it by the new Strategic Plan for 2011-2015, which will be agreed soon after the establishment of the new Committee.

### **Economics Working Group**

This Working Group is examining the interactions between the economics of livestock production and farm animal welfare in Great Britain and further afield and will make recommendations on relevant actions to safeguard and promote welfare. A Report will be published in Autumn 2011.

### **Education, Communication and Knowledge Application Working Group**

The remit of this Working Group is to examine how education and communication can positively affect the welfare of farmed animals. The Group is looking at mechanisms for promoting responsible attitudes among schoolchildren and students in higher education; better informing consumers and policy makers about welfare issues; and promoting the application of existing knowledge amongst producers. A Report will be published in Winter 2011.

**Disease and Welfare Working Group**

This Working Group is examining the impact on animal welfare of disease in farm animals. The Report, due to be published in 2012, will cover the main sectors of farm animals, except fish. The scope is wide and the Report will use examples to illustrate points of principle, rather than deal with all diseases.

**Slaughter and Killing Standing Committee**

A new standing committee of the Farm Animal Welfare Committee will be established to discharge the new requirement to provide independent scientific support and advice as required by Article 20 of Council Regulation (EC) No.1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing.

## FAWC Activity in 2010/11

During 2010/11, Council, its Standing Committees and Working Groups held 32 meetings and went on one visit to agricultural premises. In addition, Council members and the Secretariat represented FAWC at more than 20 meetings, conferences and workshops on farm animal welfare.

FAWC held an Open Meeting in July 2010 to provide an overview of its work over the preceding year and an opportunity for communication with stakeholders.

### Costs

FAWC's work is financed principally by Defra, which also provides the Secretariat. During the financial year 2010/11, total public expenditure on the Council was £314,172. This sum comprised £89,821 for members' fees, travel and related costs; £196,809 for the Secretariat's salaries, travel and other costs; £24,542 for Defra advisers; and £3,000 for printing and publicity.

### Secretariat

The FAWC Secretariat is staffed by officials on secondment from Defra. In 2010/11 the Secretary was Richard Aram and other members of the Secretariat were Simon Renn and Louise Mulcahy.

### Communications

FAWC's website has developed into the main route by which its advice is accessed by the public. On average in 2010, about 500 copies of Reports, Opinion and Letters were downloaded by visitors to the website each day.

Average levels of traffic on the FAWC website per month:

	<b>Total hits</b>	<b>Visitor sessions</b>	<b>Pages viewed</b>	<b>Unique visitors</b>	<b>Files downloaded</b>
<b>2006</b>	93,688	28,773	42,333	7,239	4,716
<b>2007</b>	95,804	31,178	42,320	7,551	4,618
<b>2008</b>	102,033	27,386	43,477	6,353	5,428
<b>2009</b>	136,688	40,987	62,998	6,924	9,443
<b>2010</b>	136,189	40,593	52,208	7,738	15,585

Downloads of FAWC Reports and Opinions, 2006 to 2010:

<b>Opinions</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2006-10</b>
Osteoporosis and Bone Fractures in Laying Hens; December 2010					349	349
Dairy Cow Welfare; November 2009				1,403	4,605	6,008
Policy Instruments; December 2008			181	2,012	1,126	3,319
Farmed Game-birds; November 2008			1,114	2,423	2,799	6,336
Enriched Cages for Laying Hens; November 2007		471	1,434	1,451	3,286	6,642
Beak Trimming of Laying Hens; November 2007		357	1,354	1,794	2,978	6,483
<b>Reports</b>						
Farm Animal Welfare in Great Britain: Past, Present and Future; October 2009				14,719	31,146	45,865
White Meat Slaughter; May 2009				9,645	18,729	28,374
Castration & tail docking lambs; June 2008			2,544	2,716	3,410	8,670
Stockmanship; June 2007		1,438	1,970	2,297	2,366	8,071
Welfare Labelling; June 2006	1,761	1,918	1,420	1,891	2,128	9,118
Farm Assurance; June 2005	9,269	7,862	7,759	8,402	10,778	44,070
Gatherings; June 2005	8,142	7,590	2,876	3,723	6,199	28,530
Breeding; June 2004	8,910	7,014	5,826	6,133	9,115	36,998
Red Meat Slaughter, June 2003	12,496	8,852	9,734	10,810	12,491	54,383

# Publications

## Opinions

Lameness in sheep, 2011  
Mutilation of growing pigs and environmental enrichment, 2011  
Osteoporosis and Bone Fractures in Laying Hens, 2010  
The Welfare of the Dairy Cow, 2009  
Policy Instruments for Protecting and Improving Farm Animal Welfare, 2008  
The Welfare of Farmed Gamebirds, 2008  
Beak Trimming of Laying Hens, 2007  
Enriched Cages for Laying Hens, 2007

## Reports

Farm Animal Welfare in Great Britain: Past, Present and Future, 2009  
The Welfare of Farmed Animals at Slaughter or Killing - Part Two: White Meat Animals, 2009  
The Implications of Castration and Tail Docking for the Welfare of Lambs, 2008  
Stockmanship and Farm Animal Welfare, 2007  
Welfare Labelling, 2006  
The Welfare Implications of Farm Assurance Schemes, 2005  
The Welfare of Farmed Animals at Gatherings, 2005  
The Welfare Implications of Animal Breeding and Breeding Technologies in Commercial Agriculture, 2004  
The Welfare of Farmed Animals at Slaughter or Killing - Part 1: Red Meat Animals, 2003  
Foot and Mouth Disease 2001 and Animal Welfare: Lessons for the Future, 2002  
Interim Report on the Animal Welfare Implications of Farm Assurance Schemes, 2001  
The Implications of Cloning for the Welfare of Farmed Livestock, 1998  
The Welfare of Broiler Breeders, 1998  
The Welfare of Dairy Cattle, 1997  
The Welfare of Laying Hens, 1997  
The Welfare of Farmed Fish, 1996  
The Welfare of Pigs Kept Outdoors, 1996  
The Welfare of Turkeys, 1995  
The Welfare of Sheep, 1994  
The Priorities for Animal Welfare Research and Development, 1993  
The Welfare of Broiler Chickens, 1992  
The Welfare of Laying Hens in Colony Systems, 1991  
The European Commission Proposals on the Transport of Animals, 1991  
Advice to Ministers on the Handling and Transport of Poultry, 1990  
Report on the Enforcement Working Group, 1990  
Report on the Priorities in Animal Welfare Research and Development, 1988  
Advice to Agriculture Ministers on Transportation of Unfit Animals, 1988  
Assessment of Pig Production Systems, 1988  
Report on the Welfare of Livestock at Markets, 1986  
An Assessment of Egg Production Systems, 1986  
Report on the Welfare of Livestock when Slaughtered by Religious Methods, 1985  
Report on the Welfare of Farmed Deer, 1985  
Report on the Welfare of Livestock (Red Meat Animals) at the Time of Slaughter, 1984  
Report on the Welfare of Poultry at the Time of Slaughter, 1982  
Advice to the Agriculture Ministers of Great Britain on the Need to Control Certain Mutilations of Farm Animals, 1981  
Report on the Animal Welfare Implications of the Harvesting of Deer Antlers in Velvet, 1980

## Contacts

To find out more about the new Farm Animal Welfare Committee, please contact:

Farm Animal Welfare Committee Secretariat  
Area 8B, 9 Millbank  
c/o Nobel House  
17 Smith Square  
London  
SW1P 3JR  
Tel: +44 (0)20 7238 5124/6340/5016  
Website: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/fawc>  
Email: [fawcsecretariat@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:fawcsecretariat@defra.gsi.gov.uk)