

EVALUATING FARM LIVESTOCK WELFARE

Prof Gareth Bath

Chair: Livestock Coordinating Committee

The Veterinary and Para-veterinary professions need to evaluate livestock welfare on farms in a consistent and defensible way. A standardized checklist and scoring system will assist in achieving this. The following items need to be considered:

1. Knowledge of industry codes, standards, guides and laws, and their proper application. (See attached)
2. Knowledge of good management routines, animal behaviour and the best methods of handling. Does the farmer know and follow good routines in the management of his/her livestock? How animals move and respond will determine if they are handled correctly.
3. Training of animal handlers, monitoring of consistent implementation and taking appropriate corrective actions. Have the staff been trained, when and by whom? Does the farmer regularly monitor how animals are treated, and correct any mistakes?
4. Correct handling facilities and equipment that is properly maintained. Examine the handling facilities (crushes) for potential harm, and check that all equipment used is both appropriate and well-maintained.
5. Best methods for performing routine farm procedures, with knowledge of risks involved and how to minimize them. Is the farmer using the best methods appropriate for the farm conditions, does he/she know the risks involved and how to lower or prevent them?
6. Monitoring feed availability and quality and taking appropriate corrective action when necessary. Does the farmer ensure that there is enough feed of the right quality for each category of livestock? Does he monitor condition scores? Does she take appropriate action (feed, cull or sell) livestock when feed is scarce?
7. Breeding policy and management, especially care of offspring. Are livestock bred at the best times that ensure the offspring are born at times when there is sufficient feed and low disease risk? Are the calves/lambs well protected from dangers (cold, sun, predators)?
8. Monitoring of health and welfare, and taking the right action, e.g. treatment. Are there ways of monitoring health and welfare? Do animals get speedy accurate disease or problem identification, and is the best treatment given?
9. Appropriate measures to prevent or limit diseases. Are the right vaccines, dips and doses given at the correct times? Are there effective measures in place to reduce or remove factors that increase disease risk?
10. Adequate records available to assess the level of livestock welfare. There should be records of times and numbers of animals affected by identified diseases, as well as injuries and untoward circumstances affecting welfare, as well as the action taken as a result.

The assessment should be in the form of a consolidated checklist so that individual items can be marked, allowing a score of between 0 and 10 to be given per category. These can be added to give a percentage score and reveal where improvements should be made. The scoresheet can initially be used by farmers for self-evaluation, but the farmers should subsequently be independently assessed from time to time by outsiders with appropriate knowledge. A single sheet scorecard is preferred, and should display the identifying logos of organisations that support its use. (see later)

PROMOTING LIVESTOCK WELFARE

Africa is seen somewhat unfairly as a continent where animal care and welfare is uniformly poor and neglected. While this may be true of many countries, it is not a balanced reflection of the situation in South Africa. Admittedly there are many circumstances that give rise to concern and situations that can threaten the welfare of animals, but there are effective laws, standards, codes, agreements, monitoring systems and if needed prosecutions to protect the welfare of animals wherever possible. These interlocking systems and organisations work together towards the betterment of the lives of animals and can serve as a realistic exemplar and inspiration for other countries in Africa.

1. EDUCATION

A key contribution is educating and persuading the public at large that animal welfare is a commendable and worthwhile goal. The most effective place to initiate this process is in the home and at school. Children are open to the idea of animal care and early exposure leads to the establishment of lifetime values. This process must be taken further at tertiary education level, and most institutions with animal science, zoology or veterinary science courses address the issues of ethics in dealing with animals. This helps guide and reinforce favourable attitudes in the public. Public awareness and attitude change is also promoted by the sympathy and publicity given by most media organisations. Opinion formers must be recruited to help this process.

2. SUPPORT

The second major area needed to protect animals is the support of major animal owning, and processing organisations. Breed societies, farmer organisations, feedlots, transporters, auctioneers, sellers and abattoirs must take an active part by setting down and promoting series of minimum expectations in the form of a Code of Best Practice. This is already in place for most large organisations in South Africa. The great problem remains with small scale, informally run farms or indigent animal owners.

3. LEGISLATION

A third requirement, linked to the first two, is a legislative framework that must underpin all other initiatives. In this respect South Africa is well advanced and some of the legislation dates back over a century. It is still effective, the more so when strengthened by industry norms and standards. Unfortunately police and prosecutors do not always investigate cases of alleged animal cruelty or neglect as they should and it is often left to NGO's to be the initiators and drivers in these cases. Another major challenge is to get animal issues promoted while still permitting the religious and cultural freedoms that are enshrined in the State Constitution. Many clashes remain serious and unresolved.

4. ORGANISATIONS

The fourth major requirement is a comprehensive set of organisations, both outside and inside government, to promote and defend the care of and respect for animals. South Africa is well endowed with active, committed NGO's that do an admirable job of protecting the interests of a wide variety of animals. Unfortunately State involvement has been limited or minimal to date and this needs rectification urgently.

The current challenge is to get animal welfare a higher priority rating in the minds of the public and politicians. This is difficult in a country where basic human rights and issues like poverty, joblessness, poor education, housing and health are justly seen as being much more important.

DRAFT LIVESTOCK WELFARE ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST (2019)

Farm owner _____ Manager _____

Farm ID _____

Livestock Species _____

Assessed By: _____

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

Guide per category:
 0 – 20 % = extremely poor
 21 – 40 % = very poor, unacceptable
 41 - 50 % = poor
 51 – 60 % = barely acceptable
 61 - 70 % = good
 71 – 80 % = very good
 81 – 90 % = exemplary
 91 – 100 % = perfect

CATEGORY	RATING	REMARK
1. Knowledge of laws, standards, codes & guides		
2. Knowledge of behaviour, handling and management		
3. Training, monitoring and corrections		
4. Facilities and equipment in use		
5. Methods used, risk management of methods		
6. Feed quantity and quality, corrective action		
7. Breeding, birthing and offspring		
8. Health and welfare monitoring and action		
9. Disease prevention system		
10. Records available for assessment		
FINAL SCORE		

(LOGOS of supporting organisations)

AUCTION AUDITS FOR LIVESTOCK WELFARE

PURPOSE

To establish at livestock auctions:

1. Are livestock welfare issues addressed?
2. Have the 6 main issues been checked?
3. How well are these issues covered?
4. Have any glaring problems been established?
5. Are the organisers aware of faults?
6. Are the organisers co-operative?

RATING SYSTEM

- 0 = totally unacceptable / dangerous / nothing / drastic action needed
- 1 = very poor, unacceptable, needs much improvement
- 2 = poor, not acceptable, needs improvement, substandard
- 3 = fair, acceptable, most items right, room for improvement
- 4 = good, completely acceptable, little extra needed
- 5 = excellent, serves as an example, perfect

PROPOSED CHECKLIST (2019)



LIVESTOCK WELFARE AT SALES

Saleyard: _____ Place: _____ Date: _____
 Agent/Auctioneer: _____
 Contact email: _____ Phone: _____
 Inspector: _____

SPECIES	CATTLE	SHEEP	GOATS	PIGS	POULTRY	EQUINE	OTHER
Approx. No:							

CATEGORY	ITEMS EVALUATED	SCORING (0 – 5)
Transport (To & From)	vehicle floors: _____ sides: _____ over- or under-loading: _____ different livestock categories separate: _____ restraint: _____ ventilation: length and time of journey: _____	
Loading (Off & On)	Speed _____; Ramps: available _____, used _____, adjustable _____, slope _____, surface _____, sides _____. Condition: _____, loading gaps _____; management _____	
Facilities available	Shelter _____, water _____, pen floors _____, pen sizes _____, fencing _____, obstacles _____, crowding _____, separation of livestock categories _____, overnighting _____	
Management of animals	Handling _____, overcrowding _____, Training of handlers _____, supervision of handlers _____, tethering _____, use of prodders _____, unacceptable practices _____, weather conditions _____	
Animals	Pregnant / sick / unweaned _____, condition _____, horns _____, disease _____	
Bio Security	AHT inspections _____, Vendor declarations _____, Identification of livestock _____	

Comments:

TEN TESTS TO EVALUATE PAINFUL PROCEDURES IN FARM LIVESTOCK

- A standard methodology

Examples of potentially painful procedures

<u>PROCEDURE</u>	<u>CATTLE</u>	<u>SHEEP/GOATS</u>	<u>PIGS</u>
Electro-immobilisation	✓	✓	✓
Electric prodders	✓	✓	✓
Ear tags	✓	✓	✓
Ear notching	✓	✓	✓
Nose rings	✓	X	X
Branding	✓	X	X
Tattooing	?	✓	✓
Dehorning	✓	✓	X
Castration	✓	✓	✓
Hoof trimming	✓	✓	✓
Teeth cutting	X	✓	✓
Mules operation	X	✓	X
Pizzle dropping	X	✓	X
Tail docking	✓	✓	✓
Teat amputation	✓	✓	X
Shearing	X	✓	X
Artificial insemination	✓	✓	✓
Semen collection	✓	✓	✓
Milking	✓	✓	X
Preputial flushing	✓	X	✓
Dystocia relief	✓	✓	✓
Dipping	✓	✓	✓
Drenching	✓	✓	✓
Injection (im & sc)	✓	✓	✓

PROBLEMS IN EVALUATION

- Inconsistent approaches lead to controversy
- Subjective judgements are open to challenge
- This means that any rules are difficult to enforce
- Thus we need a standardised, consistent and recognised system of evaluation

TO PROMOTE LIVESTOCK WELFARE:

- Consultation, then consensus, not coercion is the best approach
- Industry Codes of Best Practice – livestock (sheep, goat, cattle etc.) are used as the basis
- Independent Codes of Procedures – Livestock Welfare Coordinating Committee
- National Standards – South African Bureau of Standards, in future Regulations
- Legislation for Enforcement – Department of Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries
- Enforcement and monitoring – NGO Animal Welfare Organisations (NSPCA, LAWA)

TEST ONE: REASON

Purpose acceptable (right reasons), sufficient justification, no realistic alternatives, benefit to animals, benefit to farmers, analysis of risks to benefits, first and most important test.

TEST TWO: ANIMAL

Right class of animal, right age, right breed(s), condition, wool length, type of farming.

TEST THREE: TIMING

Season, weather, time of day, reproductive cycle, stage of production.

TEST FOUR: METHOD(s)

Comparisons essential, ranking, clear description, may be alternatives, clarify preferences.

TEST FIVE: EQUIPMENT

Correct design, applicable to animal class, proper maintenance, cleaning and sterilisation, replacement.

TEST SIX: TRAINING

Structured programme, evaluation of proficiency, acceptable standards, checking system, only trained people allowed.

TEST SEVEN: FOLLOW-UP

Post-procedural requirement, time period needed, observations to be done, measurements or records if needed, action required.

TEST EIGHT: RISK

Knowledge of risks involved, knowledge of how to circumvent these, and action to be taken.

TEST NINE: OFFICIAL APPROVAL

Independent assessment needed, with incorporation into codes or standards, official standing (legal acceptance), and international harmonisation.

TEST TEN: MONITORING

Periodic reviews are required, independent assessments (by veterinarians, NGO's), self-assessment, certification.

LEGISLATION AFFECTING ANIMAL WELFARE

Cruelty to Animals Act, No. 31 of 1874 (!)

Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, No. 8 of 1914

Performing Animals Protection Act, No. 24 of 1935

Animals Protection Act, No. 71 of 1962

Animal Identification Act, No. 6 of 2002

Stock Theft Act, No. 57 of 1959

Animal Diseases Act, No. 35 of 1984

Meat Safety Act, No. 40 of 2000

SABS STANDARDS

1488 - Road transportation

1469 - Shows, Auctions, Sales and Pounds

1694 - Dairy Cattle

1478 - Pigs

Also Standards for wildlife, poultry, ratites, crocodiles, draught animals, fish, pet shops.

THE "FIVE FREEDOMS"

In 1979 The Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC) to the European Union, determined that farm animals have a right to the following 5 "freedoms".

- 1. Freedom from hunger and thirst**
By ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.
- 2. Freedom from discomfort**
By providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
- 3. Freedom from pain, injury or disease**
By prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
- 4. Freedom to express normal behaviour**
By providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind.
- 5. Freedom from fear and distress**
By ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.

While the 'five freedoms' ascribed to animals in many countries is a possible yardstick by which we may measure our progress, or a laudable idea to which we aspire, it needs to be remembered that for the vast majority of countries and peoples in the world, such 'freedoms' cannot even be guaranteed to people, let alone animals. Some form of pain in all living creatures is virtually unavoidable. We

have to seek ways of minimizing unavoidable pain and eliminating avoidable pain. In the final analysis we cannot really be certain of what animals feel and want. We have to avoid arrogant assumptions that we know what animals feel and need, and rather adopt a more humble attitude of being custodians of the reasonable requirements of animals in our care. This does not mean we should not try to reduce suffering whenever and however we can. We have to use the best current assessment of the status of animal welfare within the context of the situation in which it arises, even though we concede that our assessment remains partly subjective. Our approach must be that whenever there is reasonable doubt, the benefit of the doubt should be in favour of the animal.

The Five Freedoms were first mentioned in the Brambell Report of 1965. More recently the Welfare Quality Project has expanded them to 12 Criteria.

CRITERIA FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF ANIMAL WELFARE

1. Animals should not suffer from prolonged hunger, i.e. they should have a sufficient and appropriate diet.
2. Animals should not suffer from prolonged thirst, i.e. they should have a sufficient and accessible water supply.
3. Animals should have comfort around resting.
4. Animals should have thermal comfort, i.e. They should be neither too hot or too cold.
5. Animals should have enough space to move around freely.
6. Animals should be free of physical injuries.
7. Animals should be free of disease, i.e. farmers should maintain high standards of hygiene and care
8. Animals should not suffer pain induced by inappropriate management, handling, slaughter or surgical procedures e.g. castration, dehorning.
9. Animals should be able to express normal, non-harmful social behaviours, e.g. grooming.
10. Animals should be able to express other normal behaviours, i.e. they should be able to express species-specific natural behaviours such as foraging.
11. Animals should be handled well in all situations, i.e. handlers should promote good human-animal relationships.
12. Negative emotions such as fear, distress, frustration or apathy should be avoided, whereas positive emotions such as security and contentment should be promoted.