

CHAPTER 7.1.

USA COMMENTS (TAHSC Sep 2011 Report)**INTRODUCTION TO THE
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ANIMAL WELFARE**

Article 7.1.1.

Animal welfare means how an *animal* is coping with the conditions in which it lives. An *animal* is in a good state of *welfare* if (as indicated by scientific evidence) it is healthy, comfortable, well nourished, safe, able to express innate behaviour, and if it is not suffering from unpleasant states such as pain, fear, and distress.

Good *animal welfare* requires *disease* prevention and veterinary treatment, appropriate shelter, management, nutrition, humane handling and humane *slaughter/killing*. *Animal welfare* refers to the state of the *animal*; the treatment that an *animal* receives is covered by other terms such as animal care, animal husbandry, and humane treatment.

Article 7.1.2.

Guiding principles for animal welfare

1. That there is a critical relationship between animal health and *animal welfare*.
2. That the internationally recognised ‘five freedoms’ (freedom from hunger, thirst and malnutrition; freedom from fear and distress; freedom from physical and thermal discomfort; freedom from pain, injury and *disease*; and freedom to express normal patterns of behaviour) provide valuable guidance in *animal welfare*.
3. That the internationally recognised ‘three Rs’ (reduction in numbers of *animals*, refinement of experimental methods and replacement of *animals* with non-animal techniques) provide valuable guidance for the use of *animals* in science.
4. That the scientific assessment of *animal welfare* involves diverse elements which need to be considered together, and that selecting and weighing these elements often involves value-based assumptions which should be made as explicit as possible.
5. That the use of *animals* in agriculture, education and science, and for companionship, recreation and entertainment, makes a major contribution to the wellbeing of people.
6. That the use of *animals* carries with it an ethical responsibility to ensure the *welfare* of such *animals* to the greatest extent practicable.
7. That improvements in farm *animal welfare* can often improve productivity and food safety, and hence lead to economic benefits.
8. That equivalent outcomes based on performance criteria, rather than identical systems based on design criteria, be the basis for comparison of *animal welfare* standards and recommendations.

Article 7.1.3.

Scientific basis for recommendations

1. *Welfare* is a broad term which includes the many elements that contribute to an *animal's* quality of life, including those referred to in the 'five freedoms' listed above.
2. The scientific assessment of *animal welfare* has progressed rapidly in recent years and forms the basis of these recommendations.
3. Some measures of *animal welfare* involve assessing the degree of impaired functioning associated with injury, *disease*, and malnutrition. Other measures provide information on *animals'* needs and affective states such as hunger, pain and fear, often by measuring the strength of *animals'* preferences, motivations and aversions. Others assess the physiological, behavioural and immunological changes or effects that *animals* show in response to various challenges.
4. Such measures can lead to criteria and indicators that help to evaluate how different methods of managing *animals* influence their *welfare*.

Article 7.1.4.**General principles for the welfare of animals in livestock production systems**

1. The health and welfare of animals should be taken into consideration when selecting for specific genetic traits. Genetic selection should promote the health and welfare of animals. Breeds of animals should be introduced only into environments to which they are genetically suited.

Rationale: The newest report from the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization (World Livestock 2011: Livestock in food security, 2011), projects that the total consumption of meat products will increase by 173% by 2050. While there is a need to increase livestock production to meet this increasing demand, the report also concludes the need to reduce environmental impacts, reduce grain and water inputs, and recycle agro-industrial waste in livestock production. Genetic selection is one technology used in livestock production systems that can help accomplish these objectives when used correctly. We recognize that genetic selection is a complex tool and plays a critical role in animal function (e.g. immunology, behaviour, and digestion), productivity (e.g. reproduction and feed efficiency) and performance (e.g. meat/milk/egg/wool quality). Historical data demonstrates that hyper selection for one specific trait can be detrimental to other aspects of the animal's biological functions. We agree that selecting genetics that promote the health and welfare of animals is an important principle for animal welfare; however, health and welfare should be only one of many criteria used when selecting for genetic traits.

In addition, not only do breeds result from genetic manipulation, so do types and strains. Deletion of 'breeds of' generalizes the statement to include other types of genetic classifications.

2. The physical environment, including the substrate (walking surface, resting surface, etc.), should be suited to the species so as ~~not to cause minimize the risk of injury or transmit diseases or parasites to animals.~~

Rationale: Management practices and herd health plans employed within a physical environment have a significantly higher impact on reducing the exposure of an animal to diseases and parasites than the physical environment itself. For example, livestock raised in extensive production systems are constantly exposed to pathogens and parasites from the physical environment and other wildlife. However, the vaccination, parasite control, biosecurity and wildlife management plans used by the producer/farmer can have a significant impact on reducing the potential for exposure or disease transmission. Additionally, the concept and importance of disease and parasite prevention is adequately described in principle 7, making the phrase “transmit diseases or parasites to animals” in principle 2 redundant.

In addition, the statement regarding injury may be taken to imply that associated risks should be reduced to zero (ie, “...so as not to cause...”), which is not practicable.

3. The physical environment should allow sufficient space for individual *animals* to rest and perform comfortable resting, safe and comfortable movement including normal postural changes, and the opportunity to perform types of ~~natural~~ behaviour that ~~animals are motivated to perform~~ contributes to an *animal's* well-being.

Rationale: The term “comfortable” used in this principle is a subjective term that is not well defined and is difficult to measure and quantify and should be removed. It is not entirely clear what is intended by the phrase “safe and comfortable movement”. If the intent is that the physical environment should be designed to prevent physical injury during movement, this concept is fully addressed in principle 2 and therefore should be deleted here. To have good animal welfare, it is not necessary that an animal’s behaviour be the same when housed in different environments (Stolba and Wood-Gush, 1989; Curtis et al., 2001) therefore making “natural behaviour” difficult to define. Additionally, animals are motivated to perform behaviours for several reasons. Understanding the source of the motivation and the results that occur if the performance of the behaviour is prevented are necessary to determine whether or not the behaviour is essential to the animal’s well-being (Hughes, 1980). Although it is important to provide opportunities for expression of natural behaviours, consideration must be given to whether those behaviours contribute to an animal’s well-being within a given environment.

4. ~~Social grouping of *animals* should allow positive social behaviour and not cause injury or chronic fear.~~

Rationale: This is an unrealistic expectation for certain species. Using swine as an example, the formation of a group initially results in aggression as the pigs work to establish a social hierarchy. This is an innate behaviour that occurs anytime new groups of pigs are formed and is even observed in neonatal piglets as they fight to establish teat order on the sow (Welch and Baxter, 1986; Morrow-Tesch and McGlone, 1990; Rohde Parfet et al., 2009; D. Fraser, 1995). The agonistic behaviours help the group to establish the order of dominance and may be intense up to 24 hours resulting in physical injury and stress (McGlone, 1986; Gonyou et al., 1988; Stookey and Gonyou, 1994). Once the social hierarchy is formed, pigs resume normal social behaviours with limited agonistic behaviours. While there are management techniques that can be utilized when forming groups to reduce aggressive behaviours, it is not possible to eliminate them. For these reasons, we request that this principle be deleted.

5. Air quality in confined spaces should support good animal health and not be aversive to *animals*. The temperature and humidity of the environment should be within the *animals'* ability to adapt. Where

extreme conditions occur, *animals* should not be prevented from using their natural methods of thermo-regulation.

6. *Animals* should have access to sufficient food and water, suited to the *animals'* age and needs, to maintain normal health and vigour and to prevent ~~serious or prolonged hunger, thirst,~~ malnutrition or dehydration.

Rationale: Having access to a sufficient amount of quality food and water is critical to the well-being of an animal. However, the terms “serious” and “prolonged” used in this principle are time points that are not well defined and will be interpreted differently by different audiences. Additionally, the sensations of hunger and thirst increase in intensity over time making it is difficult to quantify at what point the animal is unable to cope with these sensations resulting in distress and negative effects on the welfare of individual animals. The states of “malnutrition” and “dehydration” are much better defined and easier to identify and quantify. The suggested revision still conveys the importance of quality and quantity of food and water to animal welfare, reduces ambiguity and supports the emphasis of outcome based criteria in Article 7.1.2.8.

7. *Diseases* and parasites should be prevented as much as possible through good management practices. *Animals* with serious health problems should be isolated and treated promptly or killed humanely if treatment is not feasible or recovery is unlikely.

8. Where painful procedures cannot be avoided, the resulting pain should be managed as ~~much well~~ as available methods ~~and economic constraints~~ allow.

Rationale: The United States recognizes that economics may impact what techniques are used to manage pain. However, there are other factors that also impact what techniques are used and, therefore, it seems inappropriate to single out economics in this point.

9. The handling of *animals* should foster a positive human-animal relationship and ~~should not cause~~ strive to minimize injury, panic, lasting fear or avoidable stress.

Rationale: The absolute as indicated in this statement (ie, “should not cause”) may not be possible, given some practices currently necessary to manage animals in production systems. Hyphenation of ‘human-animal’ is an editorial suggestion that is consistent with current use of the term.

10. Owners and handlers should have sufficient skill and knowledge to ensure that *animals* are treated in accordance with these principles.
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