Animal Welfare: Key Concepts

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Abstract

Concern about animal welfare is nothing new; producers have always been concerned about the condition of animals in their care and have tried to ensure that they are healthy and well nourished. In this tradition of animal care, good welfare is seen largely as the absence of illness or injury. More recent concerns about animal welfare have focussed on the pain or distress that the animals might experience as a result of widely accepted management practices and the possibility that animals suffer as a result of being kept under apparently "unnatural" conditions. Disagreements about animal welfare can occur when different measures are used. For example, management systems that favour production may restrict natural behaviour or can even lead to higher rates of disease.

Key words*: animal welfare, disease, stress, natural life,OIE.*

Introduction

People's concerns about farm animal welfare focus on three broad questions:

1) Is the animal functioning well?

2) Is the animal feeling well?

3) Is the animal able to live a reasonably natural life (Fraser et al., 1997).

Those caring for the animals are naturally concerned about the first category, addressing issues such as disease, injury, poor growth rates, and reproductive problems that are bad for the animal and also for the viability of the farm. However, many people are also concerned with the affective (emotional) state of the animal and focus on whether the animals are suffering from unpleasant feelings, such as pain, fear, or hunger, or whether they are experiencing positive states, such as pleasure associated with play. For others (including many consumers of organic products), a key concern is whether the animal is able to live a relatively natural life and can express natural behaviour. These three aspects of animal welfare are usually included in official definitions; for example, the World Organization for Animal Health defines an animal as being in good animal welfare if it is "healthy, comfortable, well nourished, safe, able to express innate behaviour and is not suffering from unpleasant states such as pain, fear, and distress" (World Organization for Animal Health, 2008).

Furthermore, from an animal welfare perspective, much of the concern about disease arises from the suffering that the animal undergoes because of illness. In such cases, improvements in one aspect of animal welfare will probably result in improvements in the other aspects.

Scientists have reacted to the diversity of views on animal welfare by trying to develop a scientific concept that is most amenable to scientific investigation, but the relative weight given by different people to different aspects of animal welfare reflects their personal values, and science alone cannot impose a "correct" definition (Fraser, 2008). Indeed, most of the animal welfare legislation that has been enacted in the European Union and around the world has focused on painful procedures and on allowing animals a greater degree of behavioural expression (Veissier et al., 2008).

Health and Biological Functioning

That good health is central to good welfare is relatively uncontroversial. Measures of biological health used by veterinarians and producers generally focus on disease, injury, and reproductive problems. Problems in biological functioning are clearly a welfare concern in many cases. For example, high rates of mortality are almost always associated with a poor quality of life for the animals. Morbidity or mortality should be considered only as a crude indicator of health and welfare. Assessing animal health through the use of more sensitive indicators, which are suitable for use before animals are clinically ill or dying, should greatly reduce the risk of suffering

as a result of disease.

Affective States

How animals feel is a central issue in animal welfare. Although once thought to be beyond the scope of science, understanding mental states in animals is now an active area of research (Dawkins, 2008), and developing, validated measures of these states remains one of the most interesting problems in animal welfare science. Although the majority of the work to date has focused on negative affect (e.g., pain and suffering), some newer research is now examining positive mental states in animals (Bertenshaw et al., 2008). Boissy et al. (2007) provide an excellent review of positive affect in animals. Compared with other emotions such as fear and anxiety, considerable progress has been made in understanding and measuring animal pain, and a large and rapidly developing body of scientific literature on pain assessment and prevention in now available for farm animals (Weary et al., 2006).

Animal Breeding and Welfare Issues

Animal breeding was, until the beginning of the twentieth century, a relatively uncontrolled activity based mainly on the animal's physical appearance. The early animal breeders did not really have the knowledge and tools to predict and control what they were doing. This changed in the first half of the twentieth century, when Mendelian genetics was applied in farm animal breeding. Later, the second half of the twentieth century saw the development of new forms of animal biotechnology such as the freezing of semen, embryo transfer, in vitro fertilization, gene transfer and cloning – all of which allow scientists and breeders even greater control over future animals. With greater control comes greater responsibility and, in modern democratic societies at any rate, a higher degree of accountability. Certainly the new technologies prompt a range of ethical questions concerning animal welfare, biodiversity and human interference with nature.

The main goal of farm animal breeding has so far been to increase the productivity of farm animals. Pursuit of this goal may as a side-effect lead to a higher occurrence of health-related welfare problems in farm animals. The breeding of dairy cattle for higher milk yield and breeding of broiler chicken for faster growth serve to illustrate this. However, because of widespread negative correlations between health and productivity, no breeding goal will at the same time deliver maximum improvements in animal health and welfare and maximum increase in productivity. Thus in farm animal breeding it will always be necessary to balance human benefits and the costs to the animals involved. Breeding and biotechnology appear to give rise to the very same kinds of ethical dilemma that relate to other forms of animal use. In general, the dilemma is one in which there is, on the one hand, a human need, interest or preference, and yet, on the other hand, pursuit of the

relevant human aim comes at a cost – a cost carried principally by the animals in terms of welfare problems. (Sandøe and Christiansen 2008).

Measuring of animal welfare

To talk about animal welfare, it is crucial to see it from perspectives such as biological, affective and natural state point of view. Even though currently it is not able to develop a unified definition of the desirable welfare state adapted, the above three points of perspectives can be used as a base. According to Mellor et al. [2009], the above three perspectives are clarified as follows: The biological state describes the animal's health growing and reproduction situation as a parameter of welfare; the affective state describes stresses potential for animals to suffer or to have positive experiences When one observes injuries signs, such as self-mutilation, or chronic stimulation of the autonomic nervous system indicates clearly as there is a lowered animal welfare. In another approach, welfare of an animal said in good conditions when stress responses not chronically activated and when the individual can cope with them successfully. (Blokhuis1998) . The natural state, compares the differences between captive animals and the wild state where they origin from, and to what extent they are able to express natural behaviours.

Maintaining Animals Welfare

Other fundamental bases for maintaining animals welfare sustainability are the five freedoms outlined in the 1970s in England and have since then been the central basis for animal welfare all over the world according to FAWC [2011]. These five freedoms includes:

• Freedom from hunger and thirst by providing constant access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.

• Freedom from discomfort – by the provision of an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.

• Freedom from pain, injury, or disease: by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.

• Freedom to express normal behaviour: by providing sufficient space, proper facilities, and company of the animal's own kind; and

• Freedom from fear and distress: by ensuring conditions and treatment, that avoids mental suffering.

It is true that ranges of animal's behaviours and animal's expressions are good indicators of how the animal copes with certain situations. If one observes behavioural changes as when the animal refuses to move or vocalize in a high extent or different sound, these may indicate the extent of the problem, where the situation can be improved, or in need of better condition [Blokhuis1998].

The World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) implemented the first international guidelines for animal welfare in earlier in 2005 and about a total, 167 countries accepted these OIE (Bahari et al 2006). Nevertheless, there is still a lack of guidelines and regulations for animal welfare in India.

Animal Welfare in Developing Countries

Farm animal welfare concern is limited in developing countries compared to developed nations. The farm animal welfare concerns can be seen from viewpoints they are kept and management practices, mainly in systems where animals are kept in confinement for most of their lives, feeding methods, health care situations, and expression of their normal behaviours

The use of an ethical basis for animal welfare standards requires some generally accepted principles on how animals should be treated and used by humans .In general, animals have enormous capacity to feel a huge range of emotions, to learn from their experiences, to adapt to challenges, and to suffer when their needs are either ignored or disrespected. It is now time, in the evolution of the relationship between humans and animals, to move forward with this knowledge and take real action to improve the lives of farm animals. The use of behavioural principles should improve efficiency of livestock handling and reduce stress on animals. Changing public opinion about the importance of good animal welfare and applying legislative actions will be important in animal production systems especially in developing countries where the poor animal welfare is immense and production management is below sub standards.

In developing world, it is common to see poor handling and welfare status of farm animals, which is below the standards (FAO 2011) because of misconception and resource scarcity in the nations (FAWC2011). The concern of animal welfare is showing improvement and obtaining a better attention in farm animal welfare, which probably linked to the increased production costs and reduced productivity production (Fraser and Ducan1998).

Conclusions

The issue of farm animal welfare in developed world has a great attention nowadays. The concern normally based on the animals natural freedoms and respecting their right focussing on how animals are kept and managed. Regarding the five freedoms of animals, it is the primary concern and is an essential minimum standard in practicing welfare. The place where animal welfare frequently violated such as market places, transporting methods, abattoir, houses and the like should get a serious focus primarily. Giving legal support and facilitating for non-governmental organizations to engage in animal welfare works should continue at large scale in holistic approach to include all species of farm animals. More research in the identification of the welfare problems in the country should continue by including all farm animals and pets. There are less concern about animal welfare in India in general, in which no compressive legislation, rules or regulations formulated to protect animals' rights are implemented. Farm animals will give the maximum product only

when their rights and wellbeing is respected. In addition, education and enforcement of premier management practices associated with livestock handling for concerned groups are inevitable. Developing nations like India need to develop systems to inspect animal facilities and review research practices to ensure that animal welfare issues are addressed well in all institutions and facilities dealing with animals remain basic concern. Frequent updating the current public thoughts and believes about the importance of practicing good animal welfare management and applying legislative actions will be important in animal production systems.

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