

Animal Welfare



The Scottish Government has set out its ambition that Scotland becomes a Good Food Nation, a country where people from every walk of life take pride and pleasure in, and benefit from, the food they buy, serve, and eat day by day. To deliver this vision the government will launch a consultation on a Good Food Nation Bill during 2017. As part of this process, it has committed to drawing on the expertise of civic society to develop and implement its good food policy.

This discussion paper has been produced by Nourish Scotland and Compassion in World Farming as part of our work with the Scottish Food Coalition. We believe the Good Food Nation Bill has the potential to deliver real change in the food system; one that delivers high levels of well-being, social justice and environmental stewardship now and for future generations. This discussion paper focuses on **ensuring animals are treated fairly in our food system, and the impact animal welfare has on human health and our environment**. Following on from the Scottish Food Coalition's publication, [Plenty: Food Farming and Health in a New Scotland](#), this is one of a series of discussion papers which explores cross-cutting issues relating to food, forming part of the Scottish Food Coalition's contribution to a national Good Food Conversation.

Where are we now?

In Scotland, we have plenty of land and plenty of sea to feed our population. We have arable land sufficient for horticulture and crops to nourish everyone, if we focus on growing for human consumption and reducing waste.

53% of Scottish agricultural land is only suitable for grazing animals (Scottish Government, 2015). Despite this, dairy cows are being moved off pasture, kept indoors in zero-grazing systems and fed on cereals. Pressure on dairy farmers, with prices for outputs sometimes falling below the costs of production, has led to this process of intensification. Many pigs and poultry in Scotland are also housed and reared intensively, in ways that are detrimental to the wellbeing of the animals.

Rather than being fed on cereals (which is the case with intensively farmed animals), the role of livestock should be to use resources that cannot otherwise be used for food production, such as grasslands, food waste and by-products. In this way, livestock and dairy farming in Scotland could produce food as part of a healthy, sustainable diet in ways that support animal welfare, food security, environmental sustainability and public health. Reforming the way that we treat animals is necessary to address the following main issues:

Food insecurity:

- Long-term food insecurity is inhibited by both the amount of meat we consume, and the way we produce it (Tara Garnett, 2010).
- 45% of UK cereals are used as animal feed (Defra *et al.*, 2015)¹. For every 100 calories fed to animals in the form of human-edible crops, we receive on average just 17-30 calories as meat.

¹Author's calculation based on Tables 7.2-7.4

- Using the cereals that we grow primarily for human consumption and consuming less meat, would ensure that we are using our natural resources, such as land, more efficiently and placing less strain on the long-term viability of food production in this country.

Environment:

- Industrial livestock's huge demand for cereals as feed has fuelled the intensification of crop production, which, with its monocultures and agro-chemicals, has led to water pollution, soil degradation (Tsiafouli *et al*, 2015), and biodiversity loss (Defra, 2015).
- In addition, there are environmental benefits of extensive grazing systems. Appropriate husbandry techniques can make grasslands more wildlife friendly, while ensuring profitable livestock production continues (RSPB, 2016).

Public health:

- Antibiotics are used routinely in factory farming to prevent illness, because conditions are not conducive to healthy animals. It is estimated that 45% of all antibiotics used in the UK are given to farm animals (Alliance to Save our Antibiotics, 2015).
- The use of antibiotics in farming contributes to the transfer of resistant bacteria to people. The WHO has consistently warned of the dangers of rising antibiotics resistance, outlining the possibility of a post-antibiotic era in the 21st century (WHO, 2016).
- A 'less and better' approach, eating small quantities of meat that had been produced fairly, would also have health benefits. High consumption of red and processed meat is linked to increased risk of heart disease and bowel cancer (SPICe, 2015).

We already have a legislative framework for animal welfare, regulated in Scotland by a combination of domestic legislation and EU law:

- *Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006* provides minimum standards for all protected animals, including farm animals;
- The *Welfare of Farmed Animals (Scotland) Regulations 2010* regulates the welfare of farmed livestock on-farm;
- The *Welfare of Animals (Transport) (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended)* regulates the welfare of animals during transport for commercial purposes (and implements EU Council Regulation EC 1/2005 on the protection of animals during transport and related operations); and
- The *Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (Scotland) Regulations 2012* and some remaining parts of the *Welfare of Animals (Slaughter or Killing) Regulations 1995* regulate the welfare of animals at slaughter (and implement EU Regulation – No 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing).
- The EU has banned some aspects of concentrated animal feeding operations, including veal crates, sow stalls and barren battery cages.
- The *Scottish Government Public Procurement Reform Act (2014)* includes provisions for public procurement to play a key role in the promotion of the highest standards of animal welfare (Scottish Government, 2014).

However, a lot of work remains to be done to ensure that good welfare standards are met in Scotland.

What are others doing well?

Sweden has taken a number of bold steps on animal welfare across livestock systems, including:

- That pigs may not be kept confined, prohibiting the use of farrowing crates (Sveriges Riksdag, 1988a); and prohibiting tail docking of pigs (Sveriges Riksdag, 1988b).
- Requiring dairy cows to have access to pasture during the grass growing season (Sveriges Riksdag, 1988a).
- Break trimming of hens is not allowed (Sveriges Riksdag, 1988a) nor is slaughter without stunning (Jordbruksverket, 2012)
- It is also among the leaders in the use of mobile abattoirs that visit the animals' home farm, entirely removing any live transport from the food chain.

Scotland should follow these and other best practices when it comes to animal welfare, ensuring dignity in life and at slaughter for all farm animals, and ensuring that the Scottish brand is associated with compassionate farming.

What do we want?

Our vision is for a food system, which recognises animals as sentient beings deserving of fair treatment. We believe reconsidering how we treat animals has the potential to address critical health and environmental challenges, and is a necessary step to bring our food system up to twenty first century ethical standards.

How do we get there?

We can do more to further promote and ensure the wellbeing of animals in Scotland, reduce unnecessary antibiotic use, and ensure our farming system is fit for the 21st century.

Promoting pasture fed livestock and halting move to zero-grazing

- Resource-intensive zero-grazing systems should not be favoured when grassland is abundant in Scotland.
- A recent review of the literature shows that pasture based dairy cows have lower levels of lameness, mastitis, uterine disease and mortality than zero-grazed cows (Arnott *et al*, 2016).
- Legislation should include **requiring cows to be kept on pasture** during the grass-growing season, as has been done in Sweden.

Mandatory labeling of farming method in meat and dairy products

- The mandatory labeling of eggs and egg packs as to farming method (which is a requirement of EU law) has played a major role in driving the market for non-cage eggs. This requirement should now be extended to meat and dairy products.

- The Scottish Government should work with industry to explore ways in which pasture-based milk and dairy products can be labeled as such rather than being mixed with milk and dairy products from intensive herds. This would enable consumers to drive the market for higher welfare milk and dairy products.

Ban the use of farrowing crates

- The farrowing crate is a small metal cage in which pregnant sows are kept usually from a few days before giving birth until their piglets are weaned three to four weeks later.
- The Scottish Government should encourage a move to free farrowing systems, and ultimately ban the use of farrowing crates, giving farmers a reasonable phase out period. A free farrowing system has been developed by Scotland's Rural College and Newcastle University, known as PigSAFE, (Baxter et al., 2012).

Ban the use of enriched cages for egg-laying hens

- In 2012 battery cages were banned in the European Union, but 'enriched cages', have continued to be allowed. Enriched cages provide only minor welfare improvements compared with barren cages (Compassion in World Farming, 2015).
- Germany has banned the use of enriched cages by 2025; Scotland should do the same.

Welfare at slaughter

- Recent reports have revealed a number of severe breaches of welfare legislation in British slaughterhouses, (The Guardian, 2016).
- Improved enforcement, including mandatory use of CCTV, is necessary in order to reduce the unnecessary suffering of animals.

A more ambitious approach to animal welfare

- Welfare science and Government thinking about welfare tend to focus on preventing poor welfare rather than on promoting positively good outcomes.
- Scottish Government policies should look to engage with the growing recognition among researchers (Mellor, 2016) and by the Farm Animal Welfare Council, (2009), an independent body that advises government, that minimising negative impacts is insufficient and look to promote farming where animals have a 'life worth living', with positive experiences as a result of stimulus-rich and spacious environments which provide opportunities for them to engage in behaviours they find rewarding.

More information, advice and training for farmers

- There is a need for greater provision of information, advice and training to improve animal welfare standards and promote best practice in Scotland.

How do we measure progress?

A number of measurable targets exist and should be adopted to ensure that Scotland adopts an ethical and world-leading approach to animal welfare:

- By 2025 legislation should have phased out enriched cages for hens and farrowing crates for sows.
- Legislation should also require cows to be kept on pasture during the grass-growing sea-

son.

An overarching high standard of animal welfare is set by the *RSPCA Assured* scheme. The standards are high but achievable, so much so that 70% of Scottish farmed salmon production is carried out to *RSPCA Assured* standards.

- By 2025 a similar proportion of Scottish farms for all terrestrial and fish species should meet *RSPCA Assured* standards.

The Soil Association organic scheme also sets high animal welfare standards.

- By 2025 an increased number of Scottish farms are Soil Association certified.

About the Scottish Food Coalition

We are a civil society coalition working on food in Scotland. We are made up of established organisations working on the environment, poverty, health, workers' rights, food production and animal welfare. We have come together in recognition that the problems in our current food system are interconnected and cannot be changed by focusing on a single issue.

We are calling for a just transition to a better food system.

This coalition wants to see a vibrant and thriving food sector and food culture that puts people and the natural environment at its heart. We believe a successful food system is one that delivers high levels of well-being, social justice and environmental stewardship now and for future generations, in Scotland and abroad.

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