

FARM ANIMAL Welfare Forum

Proposals for public goods payments for farm animal welfare



Compassion in World Farming
Food Animal Initiative
Global Coalition for Animal Welfare
Marks and Spencer
RSPCA
Soil Association
World Animal Protection

With scientific advice from **Royal Agricultural University** and **University of Bristol Animal Welfare and Behaviour Group**

Summary

The Farm Animal Welfare Forum (FAWF) brings together a group of influential organisations concerned with improving farm animal welfare. Our vision is for all farm animals to have a good life and a humane death.

After our departure from the European Union, the long-term success of UK farming will depend on being able to meet rising customer expectations on animal welfare and to compete at the top of the value chain.

In order to help farmers transition to a higher welfare, higher value market where British farming will be able to secure a distinctive market position, FAWF is calling for a fundamental restructuring of the system of subsidising farming. The current system does not incentivise farmers to move to higher welfare practices. Judicious application of government funding to counteract market failures can position the industry to be global market leaders at higher levels of welfare and at the same time reduce unnecessary animal suffering.

The principles of the proposed Defra-supported Animal Welfare Pathway create an ideal opportunity for investment to secure evidence of the UK's position as a world leader in profitable, high welfare farming. FAWF members have outlined a series of detailed, costed proposals to realign public subsidies for farming and to bring about sustainable change within a limited timeframe. These are:

Laying hens

1. Capital funding for cage free farming and reduced stocking densities
2. Outcome payments for ensuring intact beaks and good feather care.

With the aim of 8.5m laying hens having more space to live a better life and an end to beak trimming for 34m UK laying hens by 2025.

Meat chickens

3. Outcome funding for using higher welfare breeds
4. Capital funding for reduced stocking densities

With the aim of at least 30% of one billion meat chickens being produced per year from higher welfare breeds and at least 30% of meat chickens being reared at stocking densities of 30kg/m² by 2025.

Pigs

5. Capital investment in free farrowing systems
6. Outcome payments for intact tails

With the aim of an end to confinement for 220,000 pigs kept in farrowing crates at any one time and an end to tail docking for 7m pigs per year by 2025.

Dairy cattle

7. Investment to achieve higher welfare
8. Farmer-led action research and lameness improvement action.

With the aim of 1.8m dairy cows being reared in higher welfare systems and with greater access to pasture, as well as a significant reduction in lameness in dairy cattle by 2025.

FAWF broadly estimate that our plan would require a switch of current subsidies to these proposals of around £200m capital investments per year for five years and temporary annual subsidies growing to a peak of a little over £300m pa.

We envisage that the costs of establishing the UK as the world leader in standards would then taper off as new practices became accepted, standards in welfare schemes were raised and limited regulatory changes introduced.

Introduction

The Farm Animal Welfare Forum is calling for a fundamental restructuring of the system of subsidising farming. The UK now has a unique opportunity to bring together the interests of farmers, food businesses, retailers and consumers to establish a high welfare farming economy. The current system does not incentivise farmers to move to higher welfare practices. Judicious application of government funding to counteract market failures can position the industry to be global market leaders at higher levels of welfare and at the same time reduce unnecessary animal suffering.

The principles of the proposed Defra supported Animal Welfare Pathway create an ideal opportunity for investment to secure and evidence the UK's position as a world leader in farm animal welfare.

Over the coming years the food and farming industries will face many challenges:

1. The success of UK livestock production in a global market will depend on its ability to compete at the top of the value chain and not trying to win a race to the bottom.
2. UK livestock producers will need to respond to changing UK consumer expectations and demands, such as the eat less but better meat agenda.
3. The social licence for UK farmers to produce livestock products will be increasingly influenced by citizens' understanding of national animal welfare standards.
4. The prospect of increased exposure to international markets adds to the urgency of strengthening the high-quality, high-welfare position of the UK industry.

Future policy should be underpinned by input standards and be outcome-focused, with the aim of achieving a good life for all farm animals as defined by FAWC. It should directly reward farmers who implement higher welfare standards and deliver desired animal welfare outcomes. The central aim is to incentivise farmers to implement continuous improvements in animal welfare that cannot be achieved by market forces alone.

Our proposals are designed to help farmers move into the higher-value high-welfare end of the market where British farming will be able to secure a distinctive market position.

Our proposals will lead to permanent change by combining temporary subsidies to raise standards with regulatory action when a high proportion of farmers achieve these standards.

Our intention is that funding catalyses changes that help deliver better welfare.

All our proposals aim to achieve sustainable change within a limited timeframe.

Our vision

Our vision is for all farm animals to have a good life and a humane death.

The purpose of our proposals is to ensure Britain leads the world in farm animal welfare and provides robust evidence to support this claim.

Our proposals aim to ensure that the most egregious practices are eliminated by 2025.

Criteria for success

In our view a payment system must:

- Aim to achieve our vision.
- Promote continuous improvement of animal welfare.
- Enable producers to run a profitable business, which includes not being undermined by imported products of lower welfare standards.
- Provide affordable high quality food at a range of price points.
- Cover the whole of the animal's life: from birth/hatching to slaughter.
- Result in improved animal welfare above current standard industry practice.
- Ensure payments are achieving their intended purpose with effective enforcement.
- Demonstrate payments are achieving their intended purpose with transparency and evidence.
- Offer protection to the environment.
- Satisfy the demands of future generations for high animal welfare standards.

Market forces are failing to deliver better welfare

For a market to work well there must be effective price transmission through all the actors in the supply chain. For some animal-derived food products there is currently little relationship between displayed welfare provenance and product price for consumers. There is market failure in welfare differentiation. This failed market is unfair for consumers, often over-charging those who currently do pay the premium, and pricing others out of the high-welfare market unnecessarily.

The failed market is also unfair for farmers. Higher prices for higher welfare are not passed on to farmers. This reduces their market access and suppresses their uptake of higher welfare systems. Government intervention to address this failed market would kick start the changes that are required to position UK agriculture as higher welfare and high added value.

Securing long term sustainability would be greatly assisted by method of production labelling systems. This would allow consumers to make informed choices and encourage the growth of markets for higher welfare products.

Building on farm assurance schemes

We are convinced that higher welfare farm assurance schemes are an essential part of a delivery mechanism. We want to ensure that the credibility and value of a scheme cannot be undermined by farms with generally low welfare standards benefiting from assistance for improving a single issue. This could lead to exposure of farms with generally poor practices that benefit from financial support.

For farmers that are not members of a scheme we propose that funding should be made available to help them to make the improvements needed to meet scheme requirements.

Our recommendation may require delegation of some elements of the policy design and implementation to private farm assurance schemes which may in turn be required to apply for recognition as a criterion for public payment.

Our proposals build on the RSPCA's recommendations for a two tier payments system. All our proposals require recipients to be members of a farm assurance scheme and some require them to be members of a higher welfare scheme, to ensure that high standards are met across a range of welfare criteria.

Our proposals

We have rigorously considered a wide range of options to identify the most cost effective mechanisms for improving farm animal welfare through public good payments that deliver our vision. Our attention has focussed on the four species with the potential for making the greatest improvement to the lives of the largest number of animals.

We advise that our proposals be subjected to pilot studies to confirm their feasibility and cost-effectiveness and to address the detail of implementation.

We have prioritised two proposals for each species underpinned by the necessary infrastructure support.

Infrastructure support

To evidence that the UK is world-leading in farm animal welfare, many stakeholders are likely to support a co-ordinated evidence-based national level claim. This would build upon the UK's existing strengths of more extensive animal welfare legislation, sophisticated farm assurance, world-leading welfare outcome assessment and differentiated markets.

The Animal Welfare Pathway should support the infrastructure and governance of an evidence-based national framework for positive welfare and a national outcomes database that recognises farmers delivering higher welfare. This should include funding for expert groups to review evidence, pilot testing with assurance schemes, ongoing collection of data by assurance schemes and communication of results to the industry and the public.

The NZ Dairy industry is using this approach to support their intended claim to be 'world-leading in on-farm animal care'.

Pilot data and practical, on-farm welfare assessment protocols are already available for laying hens, dairy cattle, pigs and sheep.

Laying Hens



There are 34 million hens in the UK, the vast majority of which have their beaks trimmed.

Approximately half of eggs produced in the UK are from hens kept in cages.

Transition to cage-free farming needs to be expedited along with a requirement for lower stocking densities for birds kept in non-cage systems.

Proposal 1 Capital funding for cage free farming and reduced stocking densities

Our vision is that all hens have sufficient space to live a better life. We propose investment to enable a quarter of the UK flock to live a better life by 2025.

A survey of over 6,000 UK consumers showed that after outside access, overall space allowance was the second most important factor thought to influence free-range hen welfare, rated as 'very important, 5/5 by 79% of respondents, and the priority of 25% of respondents¹.

Grants should be made to cover capital costs of replacing cages with non-cage systems. Funding should be based on a commitment to continue producing eggs and sliding scale related to the age of current cages. There should be more funding for farmers with newer cages to compensate them for the value of their unrealised investment.

Payments should also be made to farmers with barn and free range units who are members of a higher welfare scheme to compensate them for the capital cost of buildings needed to reduce stocking densities from 9 birds per m² to 6 birds per m² or less.

We expect the increase in the cost of providing greater space will be partially offset by a reduction in mortality and therefore lower costs.

To be effective in achieving a genuine overall market change, this proposal should be associated with the announcement of a ban on the use of cages by 2025. This will minimise the moral hazard of the resale of cages to other farmers. When a high percentage of the UK flock are reared at low stocking densities, we propose sustainability be ensured by including low densities as a requirement of welfare schemes.

Maintenance of stocking densities should be verified from farm records checked by assurance scheme assessors or government inspectors.

¹ Pettersson, I, Weeks, C, Wilson, L & Nicol, C 2016, 'Consumer perceptions of free range laying hen welfare', British Food Journal, vol. 118, no. 8, pp. 1999-2013. <https://doi.org/10.1108/BFJ-02-2016-0065>
https://research-information.bristol.ac.uk/files/69361998/whole_document_for_pure_.pdf

Proposal 2 Outcome payments for ensuring intact beaks and good feather cover

Our vision is to end beak trimming by 2025 and help ensure hens can live a better life.

AssureWel has demonstrated that farms which provide behavioural opportunities are also able to achieve low levels of injurious feather pecking without the need for beak trimming. We propose that farmers should be incentivised to invest in a wide range of proven measures that make beak trimming unnecessary. Measures would include environmental enrichment, good litter management and reduced stocking densities. Farmers should be free to decide which are required to achieve agreed animal welfare outcomes.

Beak trimming is banned, or there are voluntary industry agreements not to trim beaks, either in all or in regions of Austria, Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Germany and the Netherlands.

Public payments should be made to farmers who are members of a higher welfare scheme for achieving the outcome of hens with intact beaks and good feather cover at slaughter. This can be measured by observing a sample of birds with intact beaks on-farm and an agreed level of feather cover. In time, an automated system could achieve the observations at slaughter.

The threshold for payments could be determined by the level of feather cover that a high percentage of farmers that are members of higher welfare farm assurance schemes currently achieve using the AssureWel assessment approach on birds with intact beaks .

This would be a highly cost effective measure. The average cost of implementing additional management strategies to improve feather loss in one study was 5p per bird². This equates to £1.7m per year for 34 million birds. We think payments should be more than this to include insurance against cannibalism and cover all other associated costs.

Once the skills and techniques of keeping hens with intact beaks and good feather cover have become widely established then higher welfare scheme standards could be changed to ban beak trimming.

There is evidence that consumers will be willing to pay for higher welfare. One study suggested that 'there may be an additional price premium that producers could command, and that consumers would be willing to pay, for demonstrating the high welfare provenance of their eggs (e.g. birds with intact beaks and no, or limited, injurious pecking amongst other welfare attributes)³.

Verification of intact beaks and good feather cover should be through existing farm assurance assessments before payments are made.

² Lambton SL, Nicol CJ, Friel M, Main DCJ, McKinstry JL, Sherwin CM, Walton J and Weeks CA 2013 A bespoke management package can reduce levels on injurious pecking in loose-housed laying hen flocks. *Veterinary Record* 172: 423

³ Bennett, R. M., Jones, P. J., Nicol, C. J., Tranter, R. B. and Weeks, C. A. (2016) Consumer attitudes to injurious pecking in free range egg production. *Animal Welfare*, 25 (1). pp. 91-100. ISSN 0962-7286
http://centaur.reading.ac.uk/41574/3/Injurious%20Pecking%20AW%20paper%2012%20Feb%202015_RB_RBT_rev18June15.pdf

Meat chickens



The UK produces almost 1 billion meat chickens per year, the overwhelming majority of which live in conventional indoor systems. Over 97% are fast growing breeds.

Market forces currently drive farmers to adopt lower welfare breeds and high stocking densities. The greatest welfare gains will come from incentivising farmers to use higher welfare breeds and reduced stocking densities.

The welfare of meat chickens is important to consumers: in a 2018 poll⁴ commissioned by the RSPCA, 77% of people who bought chicken meat reported they were appalled that chickens farmed for their meat are suffering because of fast growth rates. Similarly, in a poll commissioned by Eurogroup for Animals in 2019⁵, 85% of respondents in the UK said it is important for chickens to enjoy their lives without suffering.

Proposal 3 Outcome funding for using higher welfare breeds

Our vision is for transition from lower welfare, fast growing to higher welfare breeds. We propose a target of a quarter of UK production from these breeds by 2025.

Meat chickens have been genetically selected to grow very quickly and, whilst health parameters do feature in genetic breeding programmes, these are not at a level sufficient to adequately safeguard bird welfare. Fast growth rates have been reported to be responsible for contributing to not only the most, but the most severe, welfare problems seen in chickens today. For example, rapid growth can contribute to chronic leg disorders, ascites and sudden death syndrome⁶. Further, recent research by SRUC⁷ has demonstrated conclusively that slower growing breeds have significantly better welfare outcomes. The severity of the welfare problems, the large number of animals involved and the fact that this has not been adequately addressed to date means this long-standing issue requires attention.

Payments should be made to farmers to compensate them for the additional costs of using higher welfare breeds, as accepted under the RSPCA Welfare Standards for Meat Chickens. Payments should be based on the number of birds that are of a higher welfare breed.

This could be verified from farm records checked by assurance scheme assessors or government inspectors.

⁴ Opinion Poll carried out by Kantar TNS between 4th and 8th January 2018. Unweighted base of 1223 GB aged +16 adults and 1058 GB +16 chicken meat buyers.

⁵ Research carried out by ComRes on behalf of Eurogroup for Animals between 9th January and 22nd February 2019 using an inline quantitative survey. 7090 adults across the UK, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Poland and Belgium were interviewed. Data were weighted to be representative of adults 18+ by age, gender and region in each of the seven countries.

⁶ European Commission – Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare, 2000. *The Welfare of Chickens Kept for Meat Production (Broilers)*. European Commission, Brussels, Belgium.

⁷ Slow and steady wins the race: The behaviour and welfare of standard commercial broiler breeds compared to a commercial slower growing breed, L.M. Dixon, Animal Behaviour and Welfare, SRUC, Edinburgh, 2019

Proposal 4 Capital funding for reduced stocking densities

Our vision is that chickens are provided with sufficient space to help promote a good life.

In 2017 more than 95% of birds were reared at a stocking density greater than 30kg/m². It has been shown that when the stocking density exceeds 30kg/m² there is a steep rise in the frequency of serious welfare problems, regardless of the quality of management or the environment in the house. The Scientific Committee for Animal Health and Animal Welfare's report on The Welfare of Chickens Kept for Meat Production (2000) concluded that: *'It is clear from behaviour and leg disorder studies that the stocking density must be 25kg/m² or lower for major welfare problems to be largely avoided and that above 30kg/m², even with very good environmental control systems, there is a steep rise in the frequency of serious problems... . The greatest threat to broiler welfare due to behavioural restriction would appear to be likely constraints on locomotor and litter directed activities caused by high stocking densities, and consequences for leg weakness, poor litter quality and contact dermatitis'*.

Reducing stocking density to 30kg/m² will have a beneficial effect on leg and foot health, and provide more opportunities for the expression of natural behaviours, such as stretching, wing spreading and walking, whilst also allowing more opportunities for birds to lie and rest without being disturbed by other birds.

Payments should be made to compensate farmers for the cost of reducing stocking densities to 30kg/m² or less.

This could be verified from farm records checked by assurance scheme assessors or government inspectors.

The use of higher welfare breeds and a maximum stocking density of 30kg/m² (for indoor reared chickens) are both requirements of the RSPCA welfare standards for meat chickens and have been implemented in the UK via RSPCA Assured.

Other countries have delivered the same through farm assurance or retailer-led initiatives. In The Netherlands, the Beter Leven scheme requires the use of slower growing, higher welfare breeds and a maximum stocking density of 25kg/m² for its lowest (one star) tier. In 2015, the three largest supermarkets in The Netherlands (Albert Heijn, Jumbo and Lidl) led the way by committing to sourcing only slower growing breeds of chicken, following the 'plofkip' ('exploding chicken') campaign against the fastest growing breeds.

Both proposals could be administered and verified by higher welfare schemes that deliver these requirements.

Funding is needed to catalyse the initial transition. When the majority of the industry has adopted these requirements, regulation via amendments to the current legislation for breed and stocking density would sustain long-term change.

Pigs



Seven million pigs currently have their tails docked every year and at any time around 220,000 sows are confined in farrowing crates.

Pigs with intact tails and free farrowing sows with low piglet mortality are good indicators of higher welfare.

Proposal 5 Capital investment in free farrowing systems

Our vision is an end to confinement farrowing systems for pigs by 2025.

In the UK 47% of sows are reared in free farrowing systems, some of which are indoors and some outdoors, the latter being the cheapest option, so long as land makes it practicable.

Routine use of farrowing crates is banned in Sweden, Norway and Switzerland. The Danish Ministry has an animal welfare label, all three levels of which require free farrowing (the highest level requiring free range farrowing).

We propose that farmers that are members of a farm assurance scheme should be incentivised with grant funding for the capital cost of changing from a crate-based system to indoor or outdoor free farrowing systems. Funding should be based on a sliding scale related to the age of current farrowing systems. There should be more funding for farmers with newer systems to compensate them for the value of their unrealised investment.

Defra-funded research shows that free-range outdoor farrowing systems are more profitable than systems with farrowing crates⁸ so no further funding would be required to make this sustainable.

The same research suggested that indoor free farrowing systems are slightly more expensive than crates. The cost of producing piglets was 1.7-3.5% higher according to the free-farrowing system used, contributing to an overall cost of pig production up to 1.6% higher. However, there is potential to reduce these costs and even to change them to negative, for example through breeding sows for better mothering abilities and because piglets grow better out of crates. With the right design of alternative systems and good consistent management, piglet mortalities can be at least as low as in crated systems.

We propose that welfare assurance schemes should require free farrowing from 2025 to secure the continued higher welfare achieved from this proposal.

Payments should be based on the number of sow places converted and verified by invoices showing the costs of conversion.

⁸ Guy, J.H., Cain, P.J., Seddon, Y.M., Baxter, E.M. and Edwards, S.A., 2012. Economic evaluation of high welfare indoor farrowing systems for pigs. *Animal Welfare-The UFAW Journal*, 21(1), p.19.

Proposal 6 Outcome payments for intact tails

Our vision is to end tail docking by 2025 and help ensure pigs can live a better life.

Farmers should be incentivised to produce pigs with intact tails. Rearing pigs with intact tails requires taking care of pig health and welfare, minimising stress caused by competition for feed and water resources and introducing correct management measures, such as ensuring appropriate environmental conditions, supplying appropriate enrichment materials, maintaining good health status and a balanced diet.

Tail docking is banned in Finland and Sweden and only permitted with anaesthesia and analgesia in Norway and Switzerland.

Farmers who are members of a higher welfare scheme should be paid an agreed amount per pig (for example the grants made in Lower Saxony are €16.50 per intact tail).

The funding would assist farmers to employ a range of farm specific measures in which tail-docking is no longer seen to be needed and tail-biting is rare.

Whilst change of this kind needs planning and considerable effort from farmers, once they have been made, it is unlikely that farms will wish to convert back again (which would involve further substantial planning and effort). This subsidy could therefore be time limited. When the great majority of farms have converted, tail-docking should be legally prohibited as has already happened in Norway and Switzerland.

The desired outcome should be measured by records of pigs with no docked tails. This could be verified by slaughterhouse staff as part of general welfare outcome measurement or measured on farm as part of current farm assurance audits.

Dairy Cattle



There are 1.8m dairy cattle in the UK. Approximately half a million do not have access to pasture.

Various reports of prevalence of lameness indicate that around a quarter of all dairy cows are experiencing some degree of lameness at any one time.

Our vision is that all dairy cattle are reared to higher welfare standards and do not suffer from lameness.

The aims of funding are to promote transition to farms in higher welfare schemes and significantly reduce the national prevalence of lameness.

Evidence that the public values high welfare in dairy cattle comes from a survey of 2,054 consumers. Initial findings presented at the British Cattle Breeders Conference (Jan 2019) and reported in *Farmers Weekly*⁹ suggest that “Grazing most of the year” was one of the attributes valued by consumers. Health and welfare and cow comfort were also highly valued by consumers.

Transition payments to organic farming systems have been available in the past in the UK and other EU countries.

The New Zealand DairyNZ industry strategy is focussed on delivering a commitment to be “world leading in on-farm animal care” which includes elements of positive welfare. Fonterra, the New Zealand co-operative that exports 95% of New Zealand dairy production, has a quality assurance process that ensures cows in their supply chain have access to pasture.¹⁰

Whilst such reliance on grass-fed systems may not be possible in the short term in the UK the primary lesson to be learnt from NZ is that we need a co-ordinated strategy that focuses on citizen social licence. Clearly this strategy would also need to align as much as possible with Net Zero ambitions for UK Agriculture.

The sustainability of transition to higher welfare standards and lameness reduction would be maximised by links with the market and industry initiatives. At present the dairy sector has moderate uptake of organic standards (>300 farms) and relative minimal uptake of RSPCA Assured standards (approximately 50 farms). A sustainable increase in higher welfare requires groups of farms supplying certain retailers to move to higher standards (e.g. M&S commitment to RSPCA assured).

⁹ <https://www.fwi.co.uk/livestock/dairy/survey-reveals-whats-important-to-dairy-consumers>

¹⁰ <https://www.fonterra.com/nz/en/what-we-stand-for/trusted-goodness/grass-fed.html>

In addition to farm assurance FAWF has advocated a method of production labelling with outcome safeguards as would be provided by UK farm assurance schemes. The government could facilitate further discussions on the optimum labelling mechanism for UK dairy that would encourage market differentiation.

DairyCo Milkbench¹¹ (latest figures available are 2013) show that cows at grass system (low yield, grass based) has the highest net margin per litre (3.6ppl) compared to both high output farms (1.8ppl) and composite farms (-1.8ppl). It is therefore not possible to define a generic cost for providing access to pasture as required by higher welfare assurance schemes. In this proposal we therefore advocate a farm specific justification for public good capital payments.

Better lameness management has consistently been shown to be financially justified at a farm level¹². However, the primary barrier for investment appears the uncertainty of a positive outcome resulting from an investment in a husbandry change¹³. Public payments as proposed would significantly reduce this risk.

Proposal 7 Investment to achieve higher welfare

We propose that grant funding should be available for **farm specific** investments that would enable the farm to be compliant with higher welfare standards. This could include costs for access to pasture or improvements to cubicles. Using this approach farmers would put forward proposals and be awarded grants for making agreed improvements. The investments and achievement of higher welfare standards could be verified by farm assurance scheme assessors or government inspectors.

However, we recognise that the complex nature of this farm specific approach may not be possible at this stage. The potential danger here is that capital investments may not be well targeted i.e. justified from a welfare perspective on that particular farm. If Defra intends to use a free choice menu of capital items then we suggest that it should **trial methods to ensure appropriate justification** for welfare investments. For example, this could include reports from certification schemes highlighting areas on a farm that are not compliant with higher welfare standards or areas identified by a farms vet as part of a mobility action plan or health and welfare review.

This investment could be supported with payments for giving cows access to pasture as set out in the RSPCA report 'Into the Fold'¹⁴. Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania gave funding to improve 264 dairy farms and in North Rhine- Westphalia funding was given to graze cattle between 1 June and 1 October with at least 0.2 hectares per livestock unit. Twenty-eight percent of grazing cattle and 19 percent of dairy cows were funded to have access to outdoor grazing. This funding has now been offered again in the 2014–2020 period at around €40/livestock unit and has been taken up in 2016 by 2,216 farms.

¹¹ <https://dairy.ahdb.org.uk/resources-library/technical-information/milkbenchplus/milkbenchplus-report-2013/#.XFr6y6r7TIU>

¹² <https://www.cattle-lameness.org.uk/types-of-lameness-problem/cost-of-lameness/>

¹³ <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tvjl.2013.09.068>

¹⁴ Into the fold: Targeted financial support to improve farm animal welfare, RSPCA, 2018.

Proposal 8 Farmer-led action research and lameness improvement action

We propose grant funding for:

- Accredited foot care training for all herdsmen.
- Annual mobility scoring of the whole milking herd by a registered mobility scorer (e.g. vet or paraprofessional).
- Pain relief treatment for any foot treatment.
- Proven, effective interventions that improve lameness, e.g. improved farm tracks.

Alternatively, public payments could be made for achieving the outcome of non-lame cows. This could be verified via the annual mobility scoring and paid on a per cow basis. Verification could be through existing farm assurance assessors or through registered mobility scorers before payments are made.

We recognise again that the complexity of lameness management may not fit with the proposed Defra policy initiatives. However, lameness is a major welfare concern. We suggest that Defra works closely with AHDB and others that are currently reviewing the industry initiatives in this area including a recently commissioned group led by Nick Bell and Owen Atkinson that has been tasked with reviewing the Healthy Feet Programme.

Costs and benefits

We have appended some very preliminary calculations of the costs and benefits of our proposals. We recognise that further work is required to establish more robust estimates.

The three lowest cost proposals would end beak trimming for laying hens, reduce stocking densities for meat chickens and end tail docking of pigs.

The estimates also suggest that the greatest gain to animal welfare would come from investing in improving the lives of one billion meat chickens by using higher welfare breeds and reducing stocking densities.

The estimates show that the relatively modest investment of public funding could transform the welfare of farm animals and secure the UK's position as the world leader in higher welfare farming.

11th November 2019

V7.0

Picture credits RSPCA, CIWF and FAI

Value for money estimates

Indicative figures used by FAWF to gauge scale of costs. We recognise that more work is required to establish more accurate estimates.

Payment for	Type of funding	Welfare scheme required	Basis for calculating national cost	Capital cost £m	Estimated peak annual cost £m ¹	Number of lives improved per year	Cost per life improved per year
Laying hens							
1. Cage free hens	Capital	Approved	Number of cages needing upgrade	£75m-£100m pa over 5 yrs ²		16 million	£1.15-£1.50 ³
Reducing stocking density for 25% of UK flock	Capital	Higher	Number of barn and free range hens x cost of extra space	£60m ⁴ pa over 5 years		8.5 million	£1.75 ⁵
2. Intact beaks and good feather cover	Outcome	Higher	Number of birds with beaks intact		Growing to £68m pa for all UK production	34 million ⁶	£2.00 ⁷
Meat chickens							
3. Higher welfare breeds	Outcome	Approved	Additional cost of higher welfare breeds x number of birds		Growing to £30m ⁸ pa for 1/3 rd UK production	1 billion	£0.36
4. Reducing stocking density	Outcome	Higher	Number of birds at lower densities x agreed amount		Growing to £120m ⁹ pa for 1/3 rd UK production	1 billion ¹⁰	£0.09
Pigs							
5. Free-farrowing	Capital	Higher	Number of free-farrowing places required x cost of each place ¹¹ .	£56m ¹² pa over 5 years		220,000 ¹³	£85.00 ¹⁴
6. Intact tails	Outcome	Higher	Number of pigs without intact tails x £ per pig		Growing to £105m pa ¹⁵ for all UK production	7 million ¹⁶	£15.00
Dairy							
7. Farm specific transition plans	Input	Approved	Payment for farm specific transition plans		¹⁷	500,000 (c 25% of dairy herd)	-
8. Farmer led action research	Input	Approved	Reduced risk factors x number of cows		£2m ¹⁸	100,000 (c 5% of dairy herd)	£20.00

Footnotes overleaf

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- ¹ All costs estimated to grow with uptake, to peak and then fall as higher standards are introduced
- ² Based on cost of a cage-free unit in the region of £23-30/bird with transition taking five years
<https://www.fginsight.com/vip/vip/is-the-poultry-sector-for-you--16003>
- ³ Assuming a shed life of 20 years
- ⁴ Reduced stocking density to 6 hens/m² for 25% of the UK flock (ie 8.5 million hens) at £35 per hen for extra space and new barns
- ⁵ Assuming 20 year life of the additional buildings
- ⁶ 34 million hens in UK. The vast majority currently beak trimmed
- ⁷ To include cost of insurance against cannibalism / catastrophic injurious pecking and facilitated groups for feather cover and environmental improvements
- ⁸ Economic Broiler Data for FAWF Public Payment Proposals, RSPCA, Feb 2019
- ⁹ Economic Broiler Data for FAWF Public Payment Proposals, RSPCA, Feb 2019
- ¹⁰ Based on a year's data from Oct 2017 to Nov 2018 (the most recent): the UK slaughters 992.4 million chickens a year, 95% of which comes from conventional indoor systems, and we'd expect the uplift in productivity to be about 5% year on year (as a general trend), so somewhere in the region of 1 billion animals.
- ¹¹ Assumes £3,750 per place lasting 15 years (SAC report for Midland Pigs 360 which is the cheapest; add £150 per place for Danish free farrower); 75,000 farrowing places required for the 220,000 or so sows currently caged in farrowing crates (assumes in one cycle you get three batches of sows in a farrowing place and that slightly over half UK sows get crated; that there are 410,000 breeding sows and gilts - Ag in the UK 2018 -
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/806616/AUK-2018-05jun19.pdf
Eurostat quotes 490 thousand breeding sows for the UK in 2018. Assuming about 53% of sows are crated.
- ¹² If all farms currently using farrowing crates applied
- ¹³ Around 75,000 at any one time
- ¹⁴ Assumes 15 year life-span as in SAC report
- ¹⁵ Based on the Lower Saxony grant of €16.50 per intact tail
- ¹⁶ <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/pay-farmers-for-not-cutting-off-pig-tails-7wzd0fg>
- ¹⁷ To be determined but could be estimated from farms that have recently converted to higher welfare schemes
- ¹⁸ Based on the costs of EU H2020 funded Hennovation and the AHDB funded Farmer Action group models. Assume 2,000 dairy farms participate, i.e. 20 % farms and affecting 25% of their cows i.e. total 100,000 cows