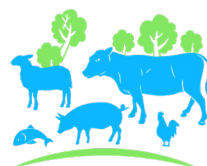


Farm Animal Welfare in the UK: What Does the British Public Want?

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Animal Welfare
Foundation**

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Executive Summary

What do we mean by “animal welfare”, and what does the British public want for farmed animals? These are fundamental questions for Government Ministers, MPs, and civil servants. Given that farmed animals are sentient beings, society has a duty to ensure their welfare in return for the meat, eggs, and milk they provide and Government has a guardianship role as protector of farmed animals.¹

What is a good life for farmed animals? Stakeholders all agree that farmed animals should be free from suffering. Beyond this, stakeholders can have different views on the meaning of welfare, as well as the conditions animals should be kept in.² The British public and welfare NGOs believe that farmed animals should be kept in more natural conditions. This generally means access to the outdoors and more extensive conditions, to permit farmed animals to perform more natural and normal behaviours. They oppose keeping farmed animals in cages and mutilations such as tail docking in piglets.

Public polls show the British public support high animal welfare standards and progressive Government policies. A 2015 Eurobarometer survey found that 98% of the UK public believed it to be important to protect farmed animal welfare.³ A 2022 poll found that 71% of the British public would like the UK Government to pass more laws to improve animal welfare. A 2018 YouGov poll found that 82% of UK respondents support UK farmers receiving government subsidies to improve animal welfare.⁴ In 2015, 72% of UK citizens were willing to pay (WTP) more for products sourced from animal-welfare friendly systems.⁵

The vast majority of modern British farming is out of sync with public support for high animal welfare standards. The British public support outdoor and more extensive farming systems. A 2020 YouGov poll found that majorities of British respondents associated “free range” (87%), “organic” (71%), “outdoor bred” (73%) and “outdoor reared” (78%) with higher welfare standards.⁶ Despite this, 70-80% of farmed animals in the UK are intensively reared indoors.⁷ For instance, around 95% of chickens reared for meat, around one billion birds, are kept in indoor sheds. Most are genetically selected for such rapid growth that over 25%, 200 million, suffer from painful lameness for one third of their short 6-7 week lives.⁸

¹ Farm Animal Welfare Council, “Farm Animal Welfare in Great Britain: Past, Present and Future,” (London: Farm Animal Welfare Council, 2009).

² D. Fraser et al., “A Scientific Conception of Animal Welfare That Reflects Ethical Concerns,” *Animal welfare* 6 (1997); David Fraser, “Understanding Animal Welfare,” *Acta Veterinaria Scandinavica* 50, no. 1 (2008); DM Weary and JA Robbins, “Understanding the Multiple Conceptions of Animal Welfare,” *Anim. Welf* 28 (2019).

³ European Commission, “Attitudes of Europeans Towards Animal Welfare: Special Eurobarometer 442,” (Brussels: European Commission, 2016).

⁴ RSPCA, “Into the Fold: Targeted Financial Support to Improve Farm Animal Welfare,” (Horsham, UK2018), 4.

⁵ European Commission, “Attitudes of Europeans Towards Animal Welfare: Special Eurobarometer 442.”

⁶ YouGov, “What Do Brits Think of UK Farming Practices?,” (YouGov, 2020).

⁷ Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) claim that 73% of farmed animals in the UK are kept on factory (intensive) farms. See Compassion in World Farming, “UK Factory Farming Map,” <https://www.ciwf.org.uk/factory-farm-map/>

⁸ RSPCA, “Eat. Sit. Suffer. Repeat: The Life of a Typical Meat Chicken,” (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, 2020); Toby G Knowles et al., “Leg Disorders in Broiler Chickens: Prevalence, Risk Factors and Prevention,” *PLoS one* 3, no. 2 (2008). TC Danbury et al., “Self-Selection of the Analgesic Drug Carprofen by Lame Broiler Chickens,” *Veterinary Record* 146, no. 11 (2000).

A 2020 YouGov poll found 88% of the British public believe cages for farmed animals to be cruel, and 77% support a complete ban on the use of cages for farmed animals.⁹ Despite this, approximately 60% of the UK's breeding sows (200,000) are kept in farrowing crates for 22% of their breeding lives.¹⁰ Around 30% of laying hens are kept in cages for most of their lives.¹¹ Around 77% of pigs are reared intensively indoors in barren environments and high stocking densities.¹² A growing figure, up to 20%, of the national dairy herd is kept indoors all year round.¹³

The farming industry often claims that physical health and productivity are sufficient for good welfare. The National Farmers Union (NFU) has criticised public opinion for conflating good welfare with natural conditions.¹⁴ Despite this, public opinion is consistent with scientific research on what constitutes good welfare for farmed animals. The outdoor environment, for instance, provides a complex of welfare opportunities including space, a richer and more diverse substrate to forage and explore, and variation related to diurnal and weather patterns. Such welfare opportunities are key for farmed animals to perform natural and normal behaviours, escape from aggressive conspecifics, and to prevent boredom.¹⁵

RSPCA Assured standards can be used to illustrate higher welfare conditions that are more akin to British public beliefs about how farmed animals should be reared. In RSPCA Assured schemes, animals are not genetically selected for rapid growth; cages and pig crates are banned; animals can perform natural behaviours; when appropriate, species can go outdoors; and animals must be humanely treated at transport and slaughter.¹⁶ The RSPCA Assured schemes prohibits the use of farrowing crates in pigs and modified cages in laying hens.¹⁷ Mutilations including tail amputation in pigs and beak trimming in chickens is generally prohibited. Cows must have access to pasture to graze for as much of the year as possible.¹⁸

⁹ Compassion in World Farming, "88% of UK Public Think Cages Are Cruel," CIWF, <https://www.ciwf.org.uk/news/2020/12/88-of-uk-public-think-cages-are-cruel>.

¹⁰ S. McCulloch, "Banning Farrowing Crates in the UK: Transitioning to Free Farrowing to Meet the Welfare Needs of Pigs," (UK: Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation, 2022).

¹¹ Gov.UK, "UK Egg Packing Station Throughput and Price Dataset," (DEFRA, 2023).

¹² 2021 RSPCA Assured market penetration for slaughtered pigs was 22.5%. David Bowles, RSPCA, pers. comm. Most of RSPCA Assured growing pigs are reared indoors to higher welfare standards. According to the RSPCA website, only 3% of pigs spend their entire lives outdoors. RSPCA, "Farming Pigs," <https://www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/farm/pigs/farming>

¹³ Compassion in World Farming, "The Grass Is Greener - the Plight of UK Dairy Cows," <https://www.ciwf.org.uk/news/2016/04/the-grass-is-greener-the-plight-of-uk-dairy-cows-f1>; Tom Levitt, "They Don't Belong in a Concrete Shed': Cows Still Happiest Outside," The Guardian, 3 April 2021.

¹⁴ Richard Vecqueray and Philip Hambling, "Farm Animal Welfare: Global Review Summary Report," (National Farmers Union, 2018).

¹⁵ E.g., see *Compassion in World Farming*, "Scientific Briefing on Caged Farming: Overview of Scientific Research on Caged Farming of Laying Hens, Sows, Rabbits, Ducks, Geese, Calves and Quail," (Godalming, Surrey: Compassion in World Farming, 2021); Louise Baldwin, "The Effects of Stocking Density on Fish Welfare," (2011); AL Hall, "The Effect of Stocking Density on the Welfare and Behaviour of Broiler Chickens Reared Commercially," *Animal Welfare* 10, no. 1 (2001); MA Erasmus, "A Review of the Effects of Stocking Density on Turkey Behavior, Welfare, and Productivity," *Poultry Science* 96, no. 8 (2017); Lingling Fu et al., "Stocking Density Affects Welfare Indicators of Growing Pigs of Different Group Sizes after Regrouping," *Applied Animal Behaviour Science* 174 (2016).

¹⁶ RSPCA Assured, "What Do 'High Standards' Really Mean?," <https://www.rspcaassured.org.uk/news-and-updates/posts/what-do-high-standards-really-mean/>.

¹⁷ "Pig Rearing Systems and Pork Labels," <https://www.rspcaassured.org.uk/farm-animal-welfare/pigs/pig-rearing-systems-and-pork-labels/>; "Egg-Laying Hens," <https://www.rspcaassured.org.uk/farm-animal-welfare/egg-laying-hens/>.

¹⁸ "Dairy Cows," <https://www.rspcaassured.org.uk/farm-animal-welfare/dairy-cows/>.



Despite some differences in conceptions of welfare and how farmed animals should be reared, there is an emerging consensus supporting more extensive, or less intensive farming systems. For instance, Henry Dimbleby, Chair of the National Food Strategy and non-executive board member of DEFRA, has criticised factory farming for confining animals in pens and cages, away from sunlight, and unable to express their natural behaviours.¹⁹ He suggested some practices within industrial livestock farming “veer into active cruelty”.

The British Veterinary Association (BVA) food procurement policy states that eggs, chicken meat, and pigmeat should be free range and RSPCA Assured wherever possible.²⁰ The Government’s Animal Health and Welfare Pathway includes the Better Chicken Commitment, which requires slower-growing breeds and lower stocking densities, and phasing out farrowing crates for pigs and cages for laying hens, in its priority areas.²¹

This report proposes a definition of animal welfare for policy makers as a “state of complete physical health and mental wellbeing, where the nature of the sentient animal is in harmony with its living and non-living environment and its bodily integrity is respected”.²² The definition refers to both physical and mental aspects of welfare, and refers to the state of welfare being the result of an animal’s adaptation to its environment. Policy making in the context of animal welfare relates to making decisions about the distribution of goods and harms to human society and sentient animals. The definition facilitates policy making because it is similar to the World Health Organization (WHO) definition of human health.²³

The report recommends that Government must act as guardian of animal welfare, rather than the wellbeing of farmed animals being left to the vagaries of the market. Related to this, Government policy should reflect progressive public opinion on farmed animal welfare. The consistent public support for higher farmed animal welfare standards should be implemented in policy, for instance through the public money for public goods principle of the Agriculture Act 2020 in England.²⁴ Finally, the Government should use RSPCA Assured standards as a blueprint for a future UK with animal welfare standards that broadly map onto majority public opinion. Such a vision prohibits cages and mutilations, and promotes more extensive systems that enable farmed animals to perform natural and normal behaviours.

¹⁹ RSPCA, “The Wilberforce Lecture 2022: Henry Dimbleby,”

²⁰ British Veterinary Association, “BVA Food Procurement Policy,” (2016).

²¹ Gov.UK, “Animal Health and Welfare Pathway,” (London2022).

²² S. P. McCulloch, “The British Animal Health and Welfare Policy Process: Accounting for the Interests of Sentient Species” (University of London, 2015).

²³ World Health Organization, “Health and Well-Being “ <https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/major-themes/health-and-well-being>.

²⁴ And Agriculture Acts in the devolved nations. See Gov.UK, “Animal Health and Welfare Pathway.”

Introduction

What do we mean by “animal welfare”, and what does the British public think is a good life for farmed animals? British public opinion has driven reforms in farmed animal welfare in the UK for some time. Ruth Harrison’s 1964 book “Animal Machines” documented how farm animals had been taken off the land and were being raised indoors in intensive conditions. The book, which was serialised in a national newspaper, caused widespread public disquiet.²⁵ The British public had been completely unaware that the methods by which its food was produced had changed so drastically.

Harrison’s book and the public disquiet led the British Government to commission a committee, led by Professor F. W. R. Brambell, to investigate the effects of intensive farming systems on animals.²⁶ The resultant Brambell report found there were problems with modern intensive farming methods. It recommended that Government establish a committee to advise on farmed animal welfare.²⁷ Significantly, the Brambell report also recommended that Government fund research to further investigate the impact of farming methods on animals.²⁸

The Government did fund research into animal welfare science. After some early research, the scientific community began to consider more critically what animal welfare was. David Fraser, a Canadian animal welfare scientist who had conducted research at Edinburgh, wrote on this issue. Fraser has also documented how animal welfare scientists had different conceptions of animal welfare to members of the public, farmers, and animal protection activists.²⁹

Since the Brambell report the British public has continued to be concerned about the welfare of farmed animals. These concerns have contributed to UK bans on veal crates for calves (1990), sow stalls for pigs (1999), and barren battery cages for laying hens (2012). Animal welfare scientists had provided evidence of the stress and suffering caused by such high confinement systems. The developments in animal welfare science, together with strong public opposition and significant media attention, led to these reforms.

But animal welfare science and public opinion did not converge in all cases. Prominent animal welfare scientists proposed the modified cage to replace the barren battery cage. Animal welfare science had demonstrated that hens require nest boxes, an area to scratch at, and substrate to perform dust bathing.³⁰

²⁵ R. Harrison, *Animal Machines* (Wallingford, UK: CAB, 2013).

²⁶ F. W. R. Brambell et al., “Report of the Technical Committee to Enquire into the Welfare of Animals Kept under Intensive Livestock Husbandry Systems,” (London, UK: HM Stationery Office, 1965).

²⁷ Initially the Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Committee. It later became the Farm Animal Welfare Council, which was abolished in 2011 and replaced by the newly established Farm Animal Welfare Committee. In 2019 the Farm Animal Welfare Committee was renamed the Animal Welfare Committee.

²⁸ S. P. McCulloch, “A Critique of FAWC’s Five Freedoms as a Framework for the Analysis of Animal Welfare,” *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 26, no. 5 (2013).

²⁹ Fraser, “Understanding Animal Welfare.” D. Fraser, “Science, Values and Animal Welfare: Exploring the ‘Inextricable Connection,’” *Animal Welfare* 4, no. 2 (1995).

³⁰ For a review, see [Compassion in World Farming](#), “Scientific Briefing on Caged Farming: Overview of Scientific Research on Caged Farming of Laying Hens, Sows, Rabbits, Ducks, Geese, Calves and Quail,” 8-16.

They also required a bigger cage to help prevent injurious behaviours such as feather pecking. Hence, barren battery cages were banned across the EU, including the UK, in 2012. Despite this, the British public continued to oppose eggs produced in modified cages. In 2022, 65% of eggs consumed were produced in cage free environments.³¹ Leading animal protection NGOs, such as the RSPCA and Compassion in World Farming (CIWF), continue to campaign against the use of cages for laying hens.³²

Recent animal welfare research has questioned the approach of animal welfare scientists and used the proposal for the modified cage as an example. Weary et al. (2016), for instance, have argued that animal welfare scientists and other stakeholders should first consider what the public, as citizens and consumers, value when considering animal welfare.³³ They call for a greater role of social sciences in animal welfare, in part to better understand the public's conception of animal welfare and attitudes to various farming methods.

Post-Brexit, the agricultural subsidy system is based on the public goods for public money principle.³⁴ This suggests that it is fundamental for policy makers, charged with the responsibility to distribute public money, to have a clear understanding of how the British public values farm animal welfare.



³¹ Grace Duncan, "Global Cage-Free Egg Progress Increasing, New Report Reveals," *The Grocer*, <https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/eggs-and-poultry/global-cage-free-egg-progress-increasing-new-report-reveals/673701.article>.

³² RSPCA, "Laying Hen Welfare," <https://www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/farm/layinghens>; *Compassion in World Farming*, "Scientific Briefing on Caged Farming: Overview of Scientific Research on Caged Farming of Laying Hens, Sows, Rabbits, Ducks, Geese, Calves and Quail."

³³ DM Weary, BA Ventura, and MAG Von Keyserlingk, "Societal Views and Animal Welfare Science: Understanding Why the Modified Cage May Fail and Other Stories," *Animal* 10, no. 2 (2016).

³⁴ Gov.UK, "Animal Health and Welfare Pathway."



What is Animal Welfare?

“Welfare” is synonymous with “wellbeing” and “quality of life” and refers to whether a life is faring well or badly.³⁵ The term “animal welfare” came into common usage after the Brambell report was published in 1965. Prior to Brambell, “cruelty” was far more commonly used.

Sentient beings, those with conscious subjective experiences, have a welfare.³⁶ Sentient animals have lives that can go well or badly. If their lives are going well, we say they have positive welfare and they are often experiencing pleasure; if their lives are going badly, they suffer and have negative welfare.

All vertebrates such as mammals and birds, and some invertebrates, such as octopus and lobsters, are sentient.³⁷ It is the sentience and welfare of farmed animals that means they have intrinsic value. The lives of sentient animals, such as chickens, pigs, sheep, cows, and fish, matters to them. It is this intrinsic value that grounds moral duties, of the UK Government and of the public as citizens and consumers, to protect the welfare of sentient animals.³⁸



³⁵ M. C. Appleby and P. Sandøe, “Philosophical Debate on the Nature of Well-Being: Implications for Animal Welfare,” *Animal Welfare* 11, no. 3 (2002).

³⁶ Donald M Broom, *Sentience and Animal Welfare* (CABI, 2014).

³⁷ Jonathan Birch et al., “Review of the Evidence of Sentience in Cephalopod Molluscs and Decapod Crustaceans,” (London: LSE, 2021). UK Parliament, “Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act,” (2022).

³⁸ S. P. McCulloch and M. J. Reiss, “A Proposal for a UK Ethics Council for Animal Policy: The Case for Putting Ethics Back into Policy Making,” *Animals* 8, no. 6 (2018).

Animal Welfare as Feelings, Naturalness, and Function

David Fraser has documented conceptions of animal welfare since Harrison's *Animal Machines* and the Brambell report were published in the 1960s.³⁹ Fraser was an early animal welfare scientist himself who worked at the University of Edinburgh. He describes three conceptions of animal welfare that were held by philosophers, authors, and social commentators. The conceptions he describes were feelings-based, naturalness-based, and function-based. Fraser next documented how these same conceptions were then held by scientists who investigated animal welfare after the publication of the Brambell report.⁴⁰

Animal Welfare as Feelings

Writers who focused on feelings were focused on the pain and mental suffering of farmed animals. Ruth Harrison, for instance, asked rhetorically if human society has the right to "rob them of all pleasure in life", simply to maximise profit.⁴¹ Peter Singer published his *Animal Liberation* in 1975, a decade after the Brambell report.⁴² Singer argued that farmed animals are sentient, and it is the capacity to experience pleasure, pain, and similar mental states that is morally relevant, rather than rationality or some other quality that is more restricted to humans.

Animal Welfare as Naturalness

The Brambell Committee was concerned about naturalness. The Committee disapproved of a degree of confinement which frustrates "most of the major activities which make up its natural behaviour".⁴³ Similarly, US philosopher and veterinary ethicist Bernard Rollin argued that farmed animals should be kept in conditions which ensure that they can carry out species-specific behaviours. Rollin was focused on the nature of the animal, for example respecting the "pigness of pig" means to keep pigs in environments where they can carry out behaviours such as digging, rooting, and interacting with other pigs.⁴⁴

Animal Welfare as Physical Health and Proper Functioning

Fraser documents how veterinary surgeons and farmers were more focused on physical health and proper functioning, compared to feelings and naturalness. The veterinary surgeon David Sainsbury, for instance, wrote that good health is the "birthright of every animal that we rear".⁴⁵

³⁹ D. Fraser, *Understanding Animal Welfare: The Science in Its Cultural Context*, UFAW Animal Welfare Series (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013); Fraser, "Understanding Animal Welfare."; Fraser et al., "A Scientific Conception of Animal Welfare That Reflects Ethical Concerns."

⁴⁰ The following is summarised from Fraser, *Understanding Animal Welfare: The Science in Its Cultural Context*, and similar material is found in Fraser et al., "A Scientific Conception of Animal Welfare That Reflects Ethical Concerns," 61-78.

⁴¹ Harrison, *Animal Machines*. Cited in Fraser, *Understanding Animal Welfare: The Science in Its Cultural Context*, 67.

⁴² P. Singer, *Animal Liberation* (London: Pimlico, 1995).

⁴³ Brambell et al., "Report of the Technical Committee to Enquire into the Welfare of Animals Kept under Intensive Livestock Husbandry Systems." Cited in Fraser, *Understanding Animal Welfare: The Science in Its Cultural Context*, 69.

⁴⁴ B. E. Rollin, "Cultural Variation, Animal Welfare and Telos," *Animal Welfare* 16, no. Supplement 1 (2007): 132.

⁴⁵ Fraser, *Understanding Animal Welfare: The Science in Its Cultural Context*, 70.

The Three Circles Conception of Welfare

Fraser describes how the three conceptions of animal welfare are not mutually exclusive. Fraser et al. (1997)⁴⁶ have illustrated the three conceptions of animal welfare as overlapping circles. In the case of a pig seeking thermal comfort by wallowing in mud on a hot day, for instance, the pig would be in a natural environment, functioning normally for the species, and likely experiencing pleasure from the performance of innately motivated behaviours and the cooling effect they felt.

In contrast, however, consider a scenario from egg production. The owner of a cage system may claim that the hens are free from parasites and predation, and that they are functioning normally by producing one egg a day. In contrast, a supporter of organic eggs might argue that hens require access to range freely to peck and scratch at the ground and perform natural exploratory behaviours, despite the additional risk of predation and parasitism.

Hence, in the case of egg production, and some other farm animal practices, the three conceptions of animal welfare can conflict. Fraser argued that these different conceptions of animal welfare—feelings-based, naturalness-based, and function-based—were ultimately based on the different “values” of the individuals that held them.⁴⁷

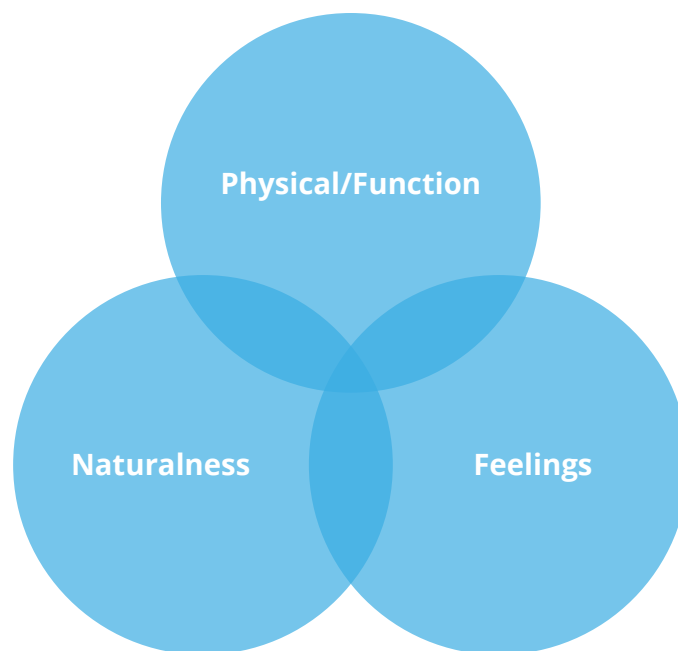


Figure 1: The three circles model of animal welfare (Fraser et al. 1997).⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Fraser et al., “A Scientific Conception of Animal Welfare That Reflects Ethical Concerns.”

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 189.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Animal Welfare Science and Definitions of Welfare

Since Brambell, animal welfare scientists have proposed various definitions of animal welfare. Fraser writes how welfare scientists were attempting to provide scientific definitions that were not based on values. Canadian animal welfare scientists Ian Duncan has written how early definitions were often general and holistic.⁴⁹ For instance, Barry Hughes, a veterinary surgeon and behaviourist, defined animal welfare as “a state of complete mental and physical health, where the animal is in harmony with its environment”.⁵⁰

Donald Broom, the world’s first Professor in Animal Welfare at the University of Cambridge, suggested that welfare was an animal’s “state as regards its attempts to cope with its environment”.⁵¹ Broom’s definition was a function-based definition, related to evolutionary theory; farmed animals have fitness-enhancing adaptations to survive in the environments in which they evolved. In contrast, Oxford-based Marian Stamp Dawkins claimed that animal welfare is concerned with the “subjective feelings of animals, particularly the unpleasant subjective feelings of suffering and pain”.⁵²

Some scientists argued against definitions of welfare focused on feelings. The agricultural scientist John McGlone, for instance, claimed that the suggestion that using behaviour to assess whether animals have poor welfare is “simplistic and inappropriate”.⁵³ He argued that animals experience poor welfare only when their physiological systems are disturbed such that the animals cannot survive or reproduce.

In 1993, the US philosopher and veterinary ethicist Bernie Rollin has stated the following on the need for an expanded conception of animal welfare from scientists:⁵⁴

“It is likely that the emerging social ethic for animals... will demand from scientists data relevant to a much increased concept of welfare. Not only will welfare mean control of pain and suffering. It will also entail nurturing and fulfilment of the animals’ natures, which I call telos.”

(Rollin, 1993)

⁴⁹ IJH Duncan, “Science-Based Assessment of Animal Welfare: Farm Animals,” *Revue scientifique et technique-Office international des epizooties* 24, no. 2 (2005).

⁵⁰ Barry Hughes, “Behaviour as an Index of Welfare,” in *Proceedings of the 5th European Poultry Conference, Malta* (1976).

⁵¹ Donald M Broom, “Animal Welfare: Concepts and Measurement,” *Journal of animal science* 69, no. 10 (1991): 4168. Cited in Fraser, *Understanding Animal Welfare: The Science in Its Cultural Context*, 72.

⁵² M. S. Dawkins, “Behavioural Deprivation: A Central Problem in Animal Welfare,” *Applied Animal Behaviour Science* 20, no. 3 (1988). Cited in Fraser et al., “A Scientific Conception of Animal Welfare That Reflects Ethical Concerns,” 192.

⁵³ J J McGlone, “What Is Animal Welfare?,” *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 6, no. Supplement 2 (1993). Cited in Fraser, *Understanding Animal Welfare: The Science in Its Cultural Context*.

⁵⁴ Bernard E Rollin, “Animal Welfare, Science, and Value,” *Journal of Agricultural and environmental ethics* 1993 (1993). Cited in Fraser, *Understanding Animal Welfare: The Science in Its Cultural Context*, 68.

Table 1: Selected scientific definitions of animal welfare. Informed by Fraser et al. (1997) and Fraser (2013).⁵⁵

Author	Welfare Definition
● <i>Brambell (1965)</i> ⁵⁶	"In principle we disapprove of a degree of confinement of an animal which necessarily frustrates most of the major activities which make up its natural behaviour"
● <i>Hughes (1976)</i> ⁵⁷	"A state of complete mental and physical health, where the animal is in harmony with its environment"
● <i>Dawkins (1988)</i> ⁵⁸	"To be concerned about animal welfare is to be concerned with the subjective feelings of animals, particularly the unpleasant subjective feelings of suffering and pain"
● <i>Broom (1991)</i> ⁵⁹	"State as regards its attempts to cope with its environment"
● <i>McGlone (1993)</i> ⁶⁰	"Recently, scientists have suggested that if an animal perceives that it feels poorly (as measured primarily by behaviour) then the animal is said to be in a poor state of welfare. I dismiss this view as simplistic and inappropriate. I suggest that an animal is in a poor state of welfare only when physiological systems are disturbed to the point that survival or reproduction are impaired."
● <i>Webster (1995)</i> ⁶¹	"Fit and feeling good"

⁵⁵ *Understanding Animal Welfare: The Science in Its Cultural Context*; Fraser et al., "A Scientific Conception of Animal Welfare That Reflects Ethical Concerns."

⁵⁶ Brambell et al., "Report of the Technical Committee to Enquire into the Welfare of Animals Kept under Intensive Livestock Husbandry Systems."

⁵⁷ Hughes, "Behaviour as an Index of Welfare," 1005. Cited in Fraser, *Understanding Animal Welfare: The Science in Its Cultural Context*, 73.

⁵⁸ Dawkins, "Behavioural Deprivation: A Central Problem in Animal Welfare." Cited in Fraser et al., "A Scientific Conception of Animal Welfare That Reflects Ethical Concerns," 192.

⁵⁹ Broom, "Animal Welfare: Concepts and Measurement," 4168. Cited in Fraser, *Understanding Animal Welfare: The Science in Its Cultural Context*, 72.

⁶⁰ McGlone, "What Is Animal Welfare?." Cited in Fraser, *Understanding Animal Welfare: The Science in Its Cultural Context*.

⁶¹ J. Webster, *Animal Welfare: Limping Towards Eden* (Wiley, 2008).

Author	Welfare Definition
● <i>Duncan (2004)</i> ⁶²	“Animal welfare is all to do with... subjective feelings, with the absence of negative feelings, particularly the strong negative feelings we call suffering and with the presence of positive feelings that we call pleasure.”
● <i>Rollin (2007)</i> ⁶³	“Any living thing... is a constellation of functions constitutive of its nature, and all living things are to be described in terms of how they fulfil these functions — locomotion, reproduction, nutrition, excretion, sensation, and so on. We characterise living things in terms of how they fulfil these functions. These functions, then, constitute the essence or telos of any type of animal — the pigness of the pig, the cowness of the cow, the dogness of the dog.”
● <i>World Organisation for Animal Health (2023)</i> ⁶⁴	“Animal welfare means the physical and mental state of an animal in relation to the conditions in which it lives and dies.”

Based on such various positions, David Fraser claimed that definitions of animal welfare are ultimately based on value-based beliefs about what is good for sentient animals:

“Thus, instead of the science replacing value-based positions with a single scientific definition of animal welfare to which all scientists agreed, value-based positions – about what is most important or most desirable for animals – actually underlie the different definitions of animal welfare proposed by the scientists.”

(Fraser, 2008)

⁶² Ian J. H. Duncan, “A Concept of Welfare Based on Feelings,” in *The Well-Being of Farm Animals: Challenges and Solutions*, ed. G. J. Benson and B. E. Rollin (Ames, IA, US: Blackwell, 2004). Cited in *Weary and Robbins*, “Understanding the Multiple Conceptions of Animal Welfare,” 33.

⁶³ Rollin, “Cultural Variation, Animal Welfare and Telos,” 132.

⁶⁴ The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) Code goes on to state that “An animal experiences good welfare if the animal is healthy, comfortable, well nourished, safe, is not suffering from unpleasant states such as pain, fear and distress, and is able to express behaviours that are important for its physical and mental state.” World Organisation for Animal Health, “Terrestrial Code: Introduction to the Recommendations for Animal Welfare,” https://www.woah.org/en/what-we-do/standards/codes-and-manuals/terrestrial-code-online-access/?id=169&L=1&htmlfile=chapitre_aw_introduction.htm.



Physical Health and Animal Welfare

Physical health is a key component of animal welfare. However, welfare is a broader concept than health. Physical health may be a necessary condition for good welfare, but health is not a sufficient condition for good welfare. To illustrate, consider a fast-growing chicken that is suffering through the mental experience of feeling pain due to lameness.⁶⁵ The subjective feeling of significant pain in such a chicken means that almost certainly the chicken would not be experiencing good welfare at that time.⁶⁶ Indeed, it is likely that rapidly growing broiler chickens who are lame, are not experiencing a life worth living due to the pain they consciously experience.

In contrast, consider a pregnant sow who has very recently been placed in a farrowing crate around a week prior to delivering her piglets. Pigs in farrowing crates are able to stand up and lie down, but they are unable to turn around.⁶⁷ At least within the few days after being crated, the pig may not have physical diseases or injuries. Despite this, the severe physical and behavioural restrictions that the crate cause will result in suffering and poor welfare. This is because the pig is unable to explore, root, and dig in her environment. Prior to farrowing, she would be unable to build a nest, and after farrowing she would be unable to interact with her piglets. These are all highly motivated natural behaviours, which cause stress and suffering when the performance of them is frustrated.⁶⁸

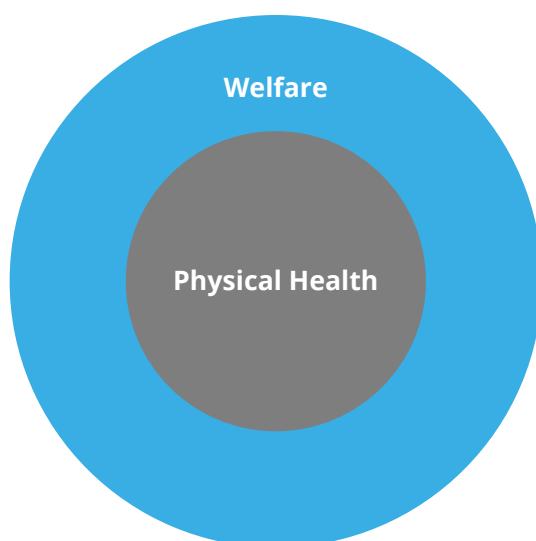


Figure 2: The relation between physical health and welfare. Health is a key component of the broader concept of welfare.

⁶⁵ RSPCA, "Eat. Sit. Suffer. Repeat: The Life of a Typical Meat Chicken."

⁶⁶ Not all diseases and injuries will cause suffering. For instance, pre-clinical mastitis or bovine tuberculosis in cows are not likely to cause mental suffering. Pre-clinical mastitis is increased somatic cell count in the milk, prior to the clinical manifestation of disease. Bovine tuberculosis is a slowly developing chronic disease of the lungs, and cows would generally need to be infected for some years prior to suffering from the disease.

⁶⁷ McCulloch, "Banning Farrowing Crates in the UK: Transitioning to Free Farrowing to Meet the Welfare Needs of Pigs."

⁶⁸ European Food Safety Authority, "Animal Health and Welfare Aspects of Different Housing and Husbandry Systems for Adult Breeding Boars, Pregnant, Farrowing Sows and Unweaned Piglets Scientific Opinion of the Panel on Animal Health and Welfare," *EFSA Journal* 5, no. 10 (2007); Emma M Baxter, Inger Lise Andersen, and Sandra A Edwards, "Sow Welfare in the Farrowing Crate and Alternatives," in *Advances in Pig Welfare* (Elsevier, 2018); McCulloch, "Banning Farrowing Crates in the UK: Transitioning to Free Farrowing to Meet the Welfare Needs of Pigs."



Contemporary Expert and Stakeholder Views of Animal Welfare

The Veterinary Profession

The British Veterinary Association (BVA) position is that animal welfare refers to an animal's "physical health and mental wellbeing".⁶⁹ Under its policy on animal welfare, the BVA states that to have a "good life" and at least a "life worth living", animals must have the opportunity for positive experiences, and that these positive experiences should outweigh negative experiences over time. Hence, the BVA definition is similar to the OIE definition of welfare,⁷⁰ it follows FAWC in suggesting that all animals should have a life worth living,⁷¹ and it refers to the historical focus on negative welfare, and the need for greater focus on positive welfare.⁷²

Animal Welfare Scientists

The Welfare Quality Project® criteria can be used to illustrate a conception of animal welfare constructed through consensus by leading animal welfare scientists. The Welfare Quality Project® was a large EU funded project that commenced in 2004.⁷³ The welfare criteria of the Welfare Quality® project are listed in Table 2.⁷⁴



⁶⁹ British Veterinary Association, "Animal Welfare," <https://www.bva.co.uk/take-action/our-policies/animal-welfare/>.

⁷⁰ World Organisation for Animal Health, "Terrestrial Code: Introduction to the Recommendations for Animal Welfare".

⁷¹ Farm Animal Welfare Council, "Farm Animal Welfare in Great Britain: Past, Present and Future."

⁷² J. Yeates and D. Main, "Assessment of Positive Welfare: A Review," *The Veterinary Journal* 175, no. 3 (2008); Belinda Vigors, "Citizens' and Farmers' Framing of 'Positive Animal Welfare' and the Implications for Framing Positive Welfare in Communication," *Animals* 9, no. 4 (2019).

⁷³ Welfare Quality Network, "Welcome," <http://www.welfarequality.net/en-us/home/>.

⁷⁴ M Miele et al., "Animal Welfare: Establishing a Dialogue between Science and Society," *Animal Welfare* 20, no. 1 (2011).



Table 2: Welfare criteria and measures proposed by animal welfare scientists at the start of the Welfare Quality® project. Table adapted from Miele et al. (2006).⁷⁵

Welfare Criteria	Measures on resource and management
Absence of prolonged hunger	Provision of food
Absence of prolonged thirst	Provision of water
Comfort around resting	Housing design (e.g. space, flooring, bedding and litter)
Thermal comfort	Air quality
Ease of movement	Duration of transport
Absence of injuries	Handling strategies, presence of sharp edges, records of injured, treatment procedures
Absence of disease	Records of diseases, detection and treatment, culls
Absence of pain induced by management procedures	Use of electric prod, stunning method, method of slaughter
Expression of social behaviours	Grouping and regrouping of animals, physical contact with members of the same species
Expression of other behaviours	Presence of key resources
Good human-animal relationship	Attitudes and skills of farmers, drivers and slaughterhouse staff
Negative emotions	Does the environment foster the ability to avoid aggressive interactions and to make choices?
Positive emotions	Environmental enrichment, does the environment foster the ability to groom, explore, play etc

⁷⁵ Ibid.

The welfare criteria are broadly based on the Five Freedoms, a framework for the assessment of animal welfare, which were constructed by the Farm Animal Welfare Committee (FAWC).⁷⁶ Note that the Welfare Quality® scientists are concerned with constructing criteria that include measurable indicators of welfare.⁷⁷

Similarly, David Mellor's Five Domains model has been constructed to improve upon the Five Freedoms.⁷⁸ The Five Domains model is also concerned with providing measurable welfare indicators within the five domains, which are also based on the original Five Freedoms. The Five Domains are divided into physical/functional domains (nutrition, environment, health, behaviour), and "affective experience" domains (mental state).

Animal Protection Groups

Animal protection organisations generally have broad definitions of animal welfare. They commonly conceive of animal welfare as relating to sentience, being free from suffering, and being free to perform natural behaviours. For instance, the RSPCA considers animal welfare in the following way:⁷⁹

"The RSPCA is opposed to all forms of farming that cause distress or suffering, or deprive animals of the opportunity to indulge in their natural behaviour, and believes that farming practices should provide natural or near-natural lifestyles for the animals concerned. The RSPCA supports the assertion of the Farm Animal Welfare Committee that all farm animals should enjoy a good life and at a minimum they must live a life worth living."

(RSPCA, 2014)⁸⁰

Compassion in World Farming has the following position on animal welfare.⁸¹

"We believe every farm animal deserves a life worth living, free from cages, confinement, and suffering: free to roam and express their natural behaviours."

(Compassion in World Farming, 2022)

⁷⁶ McCulloch, "A Critique of FAWC's Five Freedoms as a Framework for the Analysis of Animal Welfare."

⁷⁷ See the section in this report "What do the public believe good welfare to be?" for public views on these criteria and measures constructed by animal welfare scientists.

⁷⁸ David J Mellor, "Operational Details of the Five Domains Model and Its Key Applications to the Assessment and Management of Animal Welfare," *Animals* 7, no. 8 (2017).

⁷⁹ RSPCA, "RSPCA Policies on Animal Welfare," (2014).

⁸⁰ The RSPCA is updating its policy on animal welfare in 2023. David Bowles, pers. comm.

⁸¹ Compassion in World Farming, "Our Campaigns: Why Do We Do It?," <https://www.ciwf.org.uk/our-campaigns/>.



The British Farming Industry

In its “Global review of farm animal welfare” (2018), the National Farmers Union (NFU) states that animal welfare is a “real concern” to British citizens, and should be considered as a public good. The report is critical of the idea that decision makers and citizens conflate naturalness with high welfare:⁸²

“Farm animal welfare involves complicated issues. While several models for assessing welfare and other ethical issues of animal production exist and are utilised by industry, both decision-makers and citizens tend to simply conflate ‘naturalness’ with high welfare.”

(National Farmers Union, 2018)

The National Pig Association (NPA) 2017 briefing note on welfare in the pig industry does not define animal welfare.⁸³ Despite this, the opening paragraph of the briefing document claims that the British pig industry is a world leader in pig welfare, and states that the rest of the document outlines why. It then documents in the first point that in England, 40% of sows are kept outdoors “for the entirety of their lives”. It then states that most of the remaining 60% of sows are kept indoors on straw, with only 20% kept on fully slatted flooring. The briefing note goes on to cite the ban on sow stalls in the UK in 1999, compared to the continued use of stalls for four weeks in the EU. The document also cites how the 40% of sows that farrow outdoors farrow freely, i.e. without the use of gestation crates. Thus, the NPA appears to recognise that the welfare of outdoor sows free farrowing sows is higher than those kept inside in farrowing crates.⁸⁴

⁸² Vecqueray and Hambling, “Farm Animal Welfare: Global Review Summary Report,” 4.

⁸³ National Pig Association, “NPA Briefing Note on Welfare in the British Pig Industry,” (Warwickshire: National Pig Association, 2017).

⁸⁴ McCulloch (2021) has argued that farrowing crates should be prohibited, in part because they cannot meet the welfare needs of sows. In contrast, the NPA supports the use of farrowing crates and argues for their continued use. McCulloch, “Banning Farrowing Crates in the UK: Transitioning to Free Farrowing to Meet the Welfare Needs of Pigs.”; National Pig Association, “NPA Briefing on Farrowing Crates,” (Warwickshire: National Pig Association, 2021).

What Do the Public Believe Good Farm Animal Welfare to Be?

Social science research to investigate public opinion on animal welfare generally reveals concerns about the suffering of farmed animals, together with concerns that animals should be kept in natural conditions. Natural conditions are generally considered to mean farmed animals being kept outdoors, being free to perform normal or natural behaviours, and being free from painful procedures such as mutilations.⁸⁵

“Happy pigs are dirty!” (Lassen et al. 2006)

Lassen et al. (2006) conducted focus groups and interviews with farmers and the general public in Denmark.⁸⁶ Their article “Happy pigs are dirty – conflicting perspectives on animal welfare” is named after a quotation from one of the public participants in the research. The authors found “systematic disagreement” between lay and expert views about what a good life is for pigs. The lay public considered living a natural life to be an important part of an animal’s welfare. Lassen et al. argued that living a natural life should therefore be considered along with the absence of suffering and frustration, considerations with which the experts were also concerned with.

Welfare Quality® Project: Public Oppose Industrial Farming, Support Outdoor Farming, More Focus on Positive Welfare (Miele et al. 2011)

Miele et al. (2011) report how publics from various EU member states conceptualised animal welfare in focus groups and citizens juries, and how these compared to the views of animal welfare scientists.⁸⁷ In focus groups, UK citizens expressed spontaneous concerns about the following: outdoor access, free range, extensive production, choice between indoors and outdoors, space; natural feed, no artificial growth stimulants, long lifespan; humane slaughter; transport; respect, care, physical comfort and security; good quality of life; breeding, genetic modification; and no routine use of antibiotics.⁸⁸

The Miele et al. (2011) research was part of a large collaborative EU funded Welfare Quality® project. A major outcome of the project was 12 animal welfare criteria developed by animal welfare scientists across the EU who were part of the project.⁸⁹ During the focus groups, the lay participants found the criteria developed by the scientists to be important and appropriate. Despite this, Miele et al. (2011) report three key differences between the animal welfare scientists and participants from the public taking part in focus groups.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Belinda Vigers, David A Ewing, and Alistair B Lawrence, “Happy or Healthy? How Members of the Public Prioritise Farm Animal Health and Natural Behaviours,” *PloS one* 16, no. 3 (2021).

⁸⁶ J. Lassen, P. Sandøe, and B. Forkman, “Happy Pigs Are Dirty! Conflicting Perspectives on Animal Welfare,” *Livestock Science* 103, no. 3 (2006).

⁸⁷ Miele et al., “Animal Welfare: Establishing a Dialogue between Science and Society.”

⁸⁸ Focus groups of all EU member states in the study (France, Italy, the Netherlands, UK, Sweden, Norway, and Hungary), expressed spontaneous concern about these issues related to outdoor access, free range, extensive production, etc. Hence, the belief of public lay persons about the importance of outdoor access and free-range farming being good for welfare is at least common and may be universal at least across the EU.

⁸⁹ See “Contemporary expert and stakeholder views of animal welfare” and Table 2 of this report for the 12 welfare criteria and measures.

⁹⁰ Miele et al. (2011) report the differences between scientists and the focus group participants in the combined six EU nations investigated, including the UK.

First, focus groups believed that less intensive farming systems can provide better welfare than high intensity industrialised systems with confinement housing. The focus groups expressed concerns about space, freedom, difficulty for farmers to care for animals in such industrial farming contexts, the impact of breeding on welfare (specifically rapidly growing broiler chickens and high yielding dairy cows), and the overuse of medication, in particular antibiotics.

Secondly, Miele et al. (2011) report how the focus groups were consistently concerned about “the importance of providing natural environments for farmed animals”. Miele et al. (2011) elaborate on this public view:⁹¹

“Whilst certain elements of this naturalistic view appeared to show nostalgia for some idealised version of past farming practices (where farm animals are imagined as living happily in green fields, meadows and mountains), other elements reflected a more nuanced appreciation of the advantages and disadvantages of outdoor living, the importance of allowing animals to perform natural/instinctual behaviours, and the benefits of having animals that are ‘fit for their environments’.”

(Miele et al. 2011)

Thirdly, compared to animal welfare scientists, focus group participants emphasised positive elements of the lives of farmed animals, for example freedom of movement and contact with conspecifics. Miele et al. (2006) explain that the focus groups emphasised positive behaviour based on their belief that the suffering of farmed animals should not exist in a “civilised” EU, and that new European standards should focus on positive welfare as well as ensuring no suffering.



⁹¹ Miele et al., “Animal Welfare: Establishing a Dialogue between Science and Society,” 112.

British Public Opinion 1: Farm Animal Welfare Standards and Dietary Choice

Beliefs About Animal Welfare

Polls demonstrate that the UK public has very progressive views on farm animal welfare. A 2015 Eurobarometer survey (n=1,321), for instance, found that 98% of UK respondents believed it to be important to protect farmed animal welfare (very important, 78%; somewhat important, 20%). Only 1% believed it not important to protect farmed animal welfare.⁹²

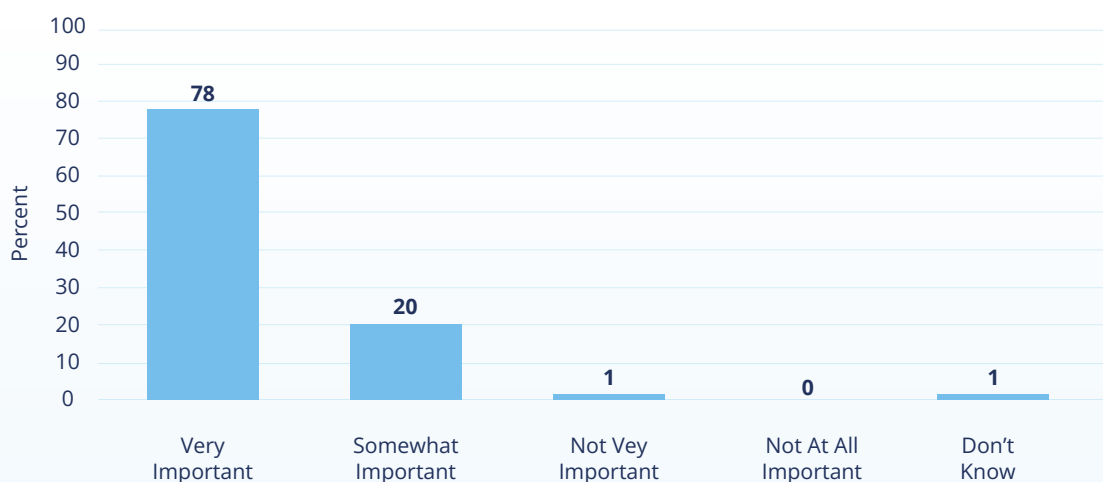


Figure 3: How important is it to protect the welfare of farmed animals for UK citizens?⁹³

In a RSPCA-commissioned 2022 YouGov poll (n=4,102) of the British public, 69% of respondents described themselves as animal lovers, 26% were neutral about animals, and 3% responded that they don't like animals.⁹⁴

In the 2022 YouGov/RSPCA poll, respondents were asked to choose up to three causes that are important to them.⁹⁵ The three top ranking responses were being an animal lover (37%), conservation and the environment (36%) and animal welfare (34%).⁹⁶ The British public's concern about animal welfare and conservation issues was higher than alternatives including poverty in the UK (31%), human rights (27%), children and young people (24%), and global poverty (15%).

⁹² European Commission, "Attitudes of Europeans Towards Animal Welfare: Special Eurobarometer 442."

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ RSPCA, "Animal Kindness Index," (RSPCA, 2022).

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

Beliefs About Farm Animal Welfare Standards on UK Farms

In a 2020 YouGov poll (n=1,653), respondents were asked their views on farm animal welfare standards on UK farms.⁹⁷ Nearly one fifth (17%) of respondents believed the UK has very high welfare standards. The majority (61%) believed the UK generally has high standards on farms, but there are still some bad cases. Nearly one in ten (8%) believed the UK to generally have low welfare standards on farms, and 1% believed the UK has very low standards on farms. These findings may also be related to the limited knowledge of certain farming practices in the UK, as summarised in the section below.⁹⁸

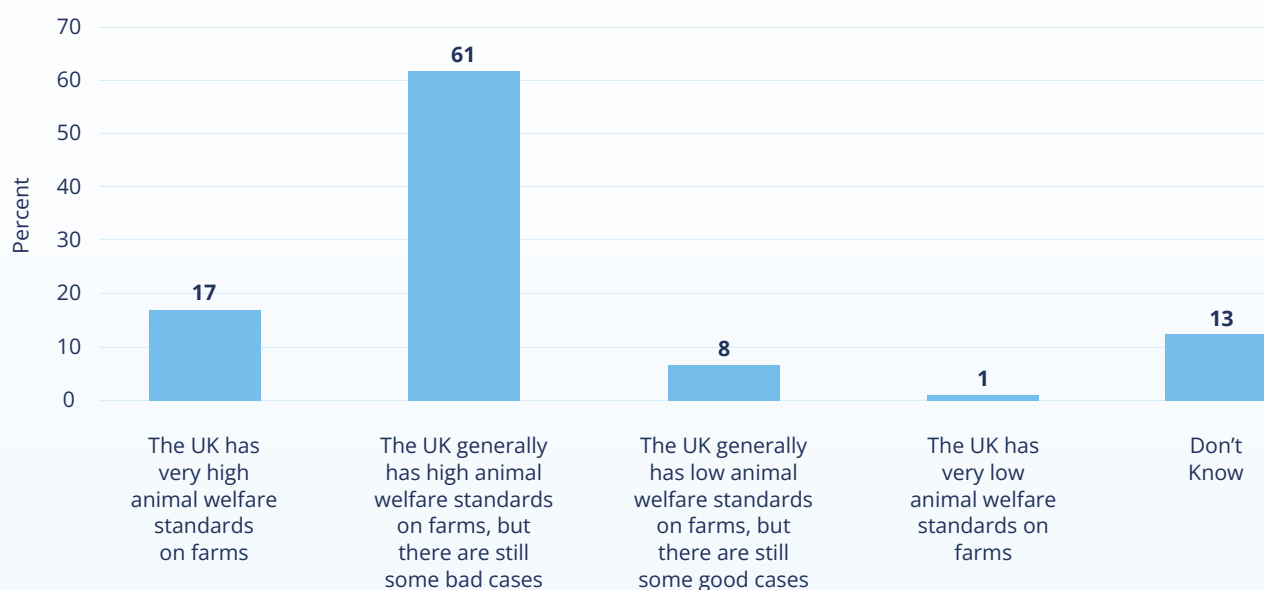


Figure 4: Does the UK have high animal welfare standards on farms? (YouGov, 2020)⁹⁹

Knowledge About Farm Animal Practices

A YouGov 2020 poll (n=1,652) asked British respondents whether they believed a range of practices happened on UK farms.¹⁰⁰ Over half of respondents (60%) were aware that farm animals are kept in cages either a lot (21%) or a fair amount (39%). However, 40% were not aware of this practice, with 16% believing that it happened rarely, 1% believing it doesn't happen at all, and nearly a quarter (23%) responding that they didn't know. To put this question in context, nearly all indoor breeding sows, 60% of the national herd, are crated for 22% of their adult breeding lives.¹⁰¹ Around 30% of the UK layer hen flock is kept in modified or colony cages.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ YouGov, "What Do Brits Think of UK Farming Practices?."

⁹⁸ These results are difficult to interpret as respondents could be answering either in an absolute or a relative sense. Globally, the UK has some of the most stringent welfare legislation, so has high standards in a relative sense. Despite this, the UK does not have high standards in an absolute sense. See section "Intensive Farming and Animal Welfare" later in this report: over 25% of fast-growing broilers suffer lameness; 60% of breeding sows are confined in farrowing crates for 22% of their adult breeding lives; 70-80% of growing pigs have their tails amputated; and 30% of laying hens are kept in modified cages. All of these are associated with poor welfare.

⁹⁹ YouGov, "What Do Brits Think of UK Farming Practices?."

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ McCulloch, "Banning Farrowing Crates in the UK: Transitioning to Free Farrowing to Meet the Welfare Needs of Pigs.;" Steven McCulloch, "The UK Must Ban Farrowing Crates," *Veterinary Record* 191, no. 6 (2022).

¹⁰² Gov.UK, "UK Egg Packing Station Throughput and Price Dataset."

Responses to further questions reveal that the British public has limited knowledge of the routine practice of cow calf separation, beak trimming of poultry, use of carbon dioxide when slaughtering animals, and live animal transport. For beak trimming of poultry, 62% did not know if this is a common practice or not, and 12% believed it is uncommon or doesn't happen at all.¹⁰³

Carbon dioxide stunning is used to stun almost all pigs in the UK prior to slaughter. Scientific research has found the use of carbon dioxide to be highly aversive, and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has recommended that the EU ban the practice.^{104 105} Despite this, 78% did not know if this happens often in the UK, and 8% believed that it happens rarely (5%) or not at all (3%).

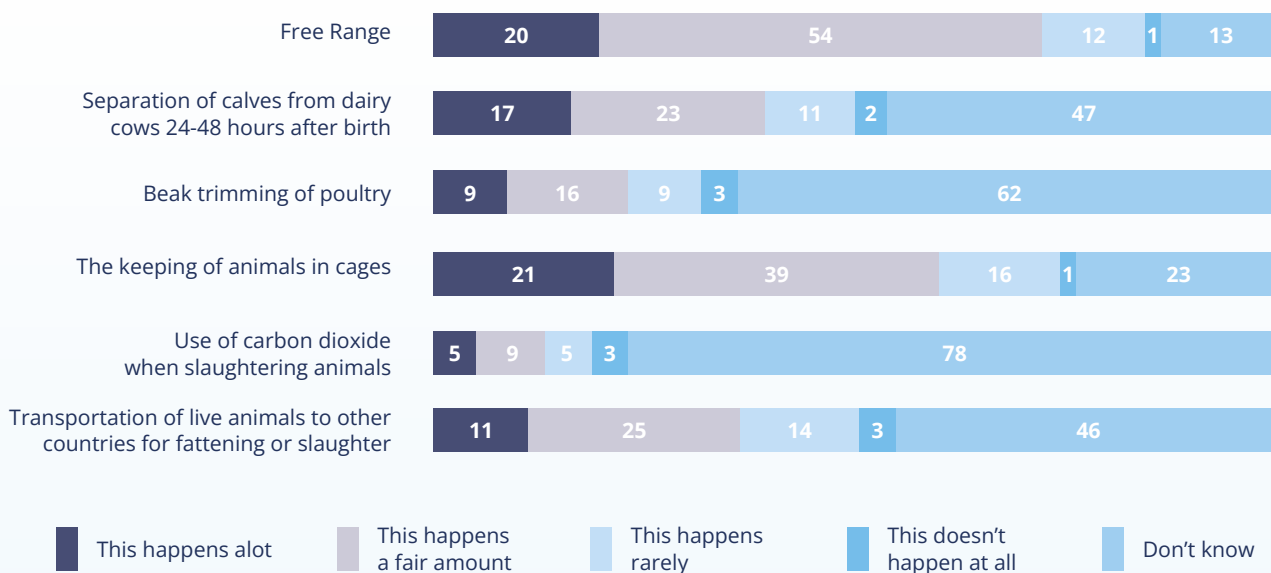


Figure 5: Do these practices happen often in the UK? (YouGov, 2020).¹⁰⁶

The above findings show that the British public has limited knowledge of some farming practices that affect animal welfare in the UK. Note though that the British public believe children should be educated more about animal welfare. In a 2022 YouGov/RSPCA poll (n=4,102), 84% of UK respondents believed that animal welfare should be part of the school curriculum, which was an increase from 78% support in 2018.¹⁰⁷ Education is a devolved responsibility in the UK; support for animal welfare education being part of the school curriculum was 83% in England, 88% in Scotland, 88% in Wales, and 77% in Northern Ireland.

¹⁰³ Beak trimming of poultry is a routine practice.

¹⁰⁴ Søren Saxmose Nielsen et al., "Welfare of Pigs at Slaughter," *EFSA Journal* 18, no. 6 (2020). Eurogroup for Animals, "EFSA (Finally) Affirms That CO2 Stunning Is Incompatible with Pig Welfare at Slaughter,"

¹⁰⁵ Carbon dioxide stunning has not been banned across the EU and within the UK because it is considered by authorities that there is currently no economic alternative to the practice, despite it causing widespread suffering to millions of pigs each year.

¹⁰⁶ YouGov, "What Do Brits Think of UK Farming Practices?."

¹⁰⁷ RSPCA, "Animal Kindness Index."

Beliefs About the Welfare of Free Range, Organic, and Outdoor Reared Farmed Animals

Earlier sections of this report have discussed how research on public opinion generally reveals strong support for outdoor, free range, and extensive farming practices. Empirical data from a 2020 YouGov poll (n=1,652) supports this position. Respondents were asked whether they associated “organic”, “free range”, “outdoor bred”, and “outdoor reared” with higher animal welfare standards.¹⁰⁸ Majorities of respondents associated these terms with higher animal welfare standards: “free range”, 87%; “organic”, 71%; “outdoor-reared”, 78%; and “outdoor-bred”, 73%.



Figure 6: Do you associate the following terms with higher animal welfare standards? (YouGov, 2020)¹⁰⁹

How Beliefs About Farm Animal Welfare Affect Dietary Choice

In a 2020 YouGov poll (n=1,652) exploring Britons’ views of UK farming, 13% were flexitarian (mostly vegetarian but occasionally eat meat/fish), 6% were vegetarian (no meat, poultry, game, fish, or shellfish), 3% were vegan (no animal products) and 2% were pescatarian (eat fish but not poultry/meat).¹¹⁰ In the poll, 55% supported labels on meat products indicating how the animal was raised and slaughtered, with 14% opposed.

In a 2022 YouGov/RSPCA poll (n=4,102), 31% of respondents had eaten less meat, and 23% had purchased products with higher animal welfare standards (e.g., RSPCA Assured) in the past 12 months.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ YouGov, “What Do Brits Think of UK Farming Practices?.”

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. Graph adapted from Prescott-Smith, “What Do Brits Think of UK Farming Practices?,” YouGov, <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/consumer/articles-reports/2020/09/29/what-do-brits-think-uk-farming-practices>.

¹¹⁰ YouGov, “What Do Brits Think of UK Farming Practices?.”

¹¹¹ RSPCA, “Animal Kindness Index.”

In a 2022 YouGov/RSPCA-commissioned poll, respondents were asked to what extent different factors influenced diet choices.¹¹² Animal welfare standards influenced 84% of respondents (23% to a great extent, 45% somewhat, 21% a little). Only 9% of respondents answered that they were not at all influenced by animal welfare standards, and 5% were unsure. For this question, animal welfare ranked fourth, above taste, price, and healthiness of the food. A fair price for farmers, locally produced, British produced, environment/climate change, and the pay/conditions of agricultural workers, all ranked lower. These results are significant to demonstrate the British public’s concern for animal welfare. Despite welfare being ranked behind taste, price, healthiness, and convenience, it ranks first amongst the ethical considerations related to food production.

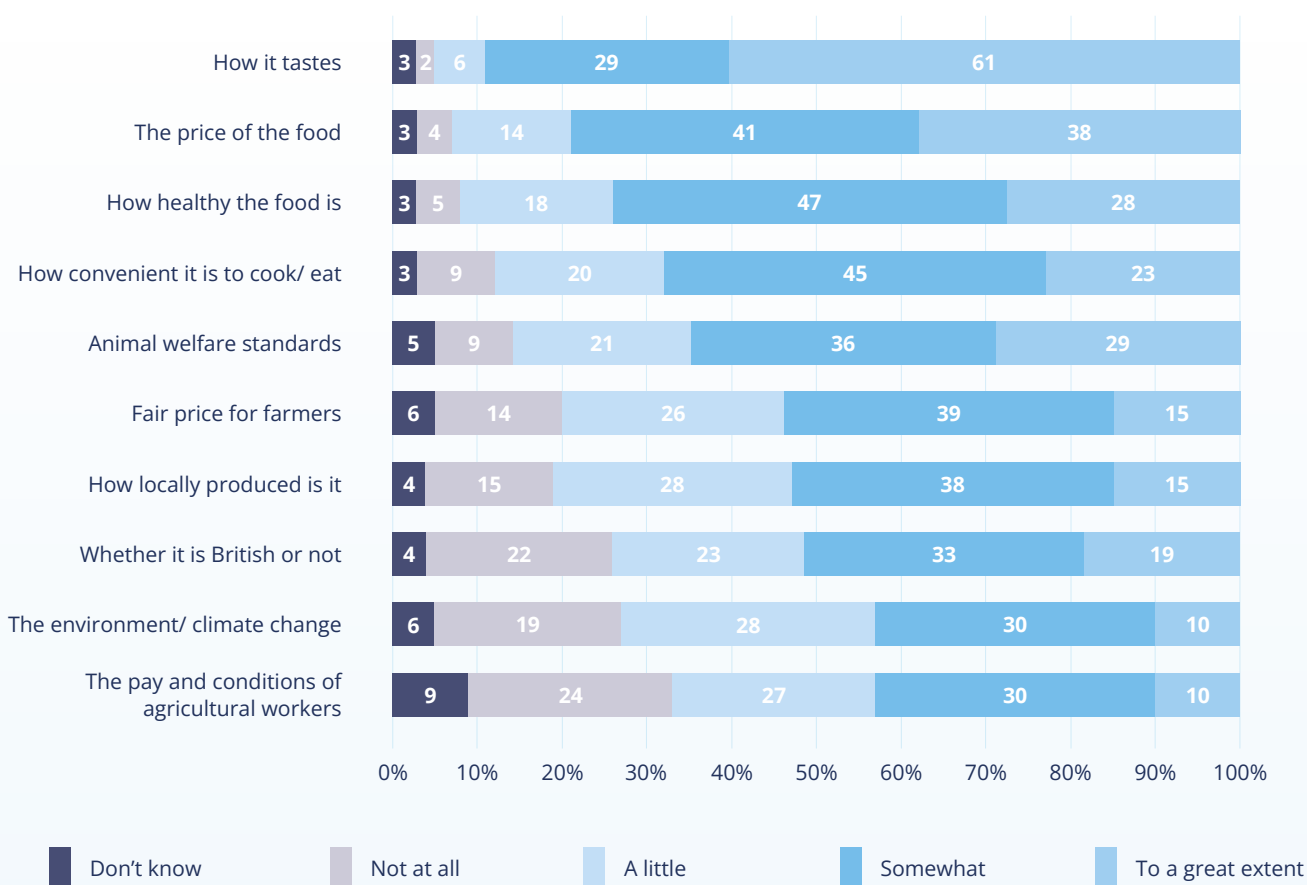


Figure 7: To what extent do the following factors affect your dietary choice? (RSPCA, 2022)¹¹³

¹¹²Ibid.
¹¹³Ibid.

British Public Opinion 2: Government's Role, Subsidies, and Willingness to Pay

Government Role in Farmed Animal Welfare

In a 2015 Eurobarometer survey (n=1,321), 88% of UK citizens believed animal welfare to be a matter for public authorities, i.e., the UK Government.¹¹⁴ In contrast, only 11% of citizens believed the welfare of farmed animals is primarily a matter for consumers, to be handled by businesses.

In a 2022 YouGov/RSPCA poll (n=4,102), respondents were asked who is responsible for animal welfare and could choose multiple options.¹¹⁵ Nearly two thirds (65%) believed national Government is responsible for animal welfare.¹¹⁶ This was in addition to 78% of respondents believing individuals, and 49% believing NGOs and charities are responsible for animal welfare. This view of the British public is therefore consistent with FAWC's (2009) recommendation that Government act as "guardian" for the welfare of farmed animals.¹¹⁷

Government Subsidies to Improve Animal Welfare

In 2017 the RSPCA commissioned YouGov to ask the following question: "Generally speaking, do you support or oppose farmers in the UK receiving government subsidies designed to improve animal welfare?".¹¹⁸ A large majority (82%) supported the statement, with 34% strongly supporting and 48% tending to support. 5% tended to oppose, and 2% strongly opposed the statement.

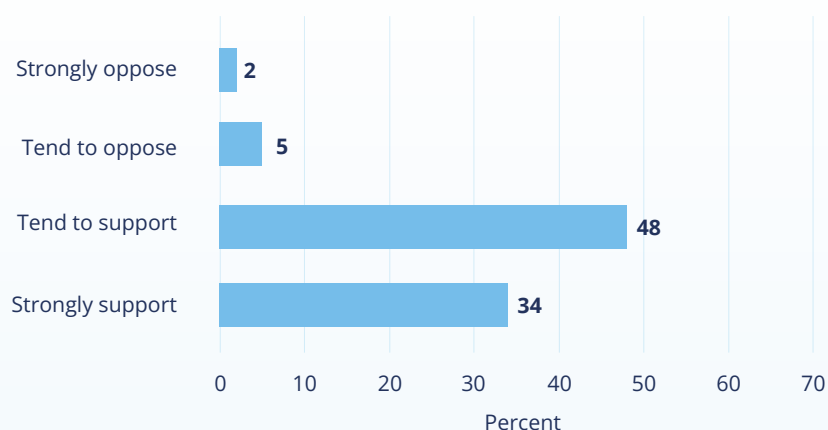


Figure 8: Do you support or oppose UK farmers receiving Government subsidies to improve animal welfare? (YouGov, 2017)¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ European Commission, "Attitudes of Europeans Towards Animal Welfare: Special Eurobarometer 442."

¹¹⁵ RSPCA, "Animal Kindness Index."

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Farm Animal Welfare Council, "Farm Animal Welfare in Great Britain: Past, Present and Future."

¹¹⁸ YouGov/RSPCA, "Do You Support or Oppose Farmers in the UK Receiving Government Subsidies Designed to Improve Animal Welfare?." Poll results supplied by David Bowles, RSPCA, pers. comm. In 2018 a further YouGov poll also found that 82% of the public supported government subsidies for farmers to improve animal welfare. Cited in RSPCA, "Into the Fold: Targeted Financial Support to Improve Farm Animal Welfare."

¹¹⁹ YouGov/RSPCA, "Do You Support or Oppose Farmers in the UK Receiving Government Subsidies Designed to Improve Animal Welfare?." Poll results supplied by David Bowles, RSPCA, pers. comm.

More Legislation to Improve Animal Welfare

In a 2022 YouGov/RSPCA poll (n=4,102), UK respondents were asked if they agreed with the statement that animal welfare should be protected by Government through legislation.¹²⁰ A large majority (80%) believe that animal welfare should be protected by Government through legislation. In contrast, only 6% disagreed that animal welfare should be protected by the Government through legislation, 10% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 4% did not know. Animal health and welfare is a devolved responsibility; the figures for devolved publics agreeing that animal welfare should be protected by Government were 80% in England, 82% in Scotland, 90% in Wales, and 78% in Northern Ireland.

In a 2022 Focldata poll (n=10,018) commissioned by a coalition of British animal protection organisations, 71% of respondents would like to see the UK Government pass more laws to improve animal welfare and protect animals from cruelty. Around one in ten (11%) would not like to see the UK Government pass more laws, and 17% were unsure.¹²¹

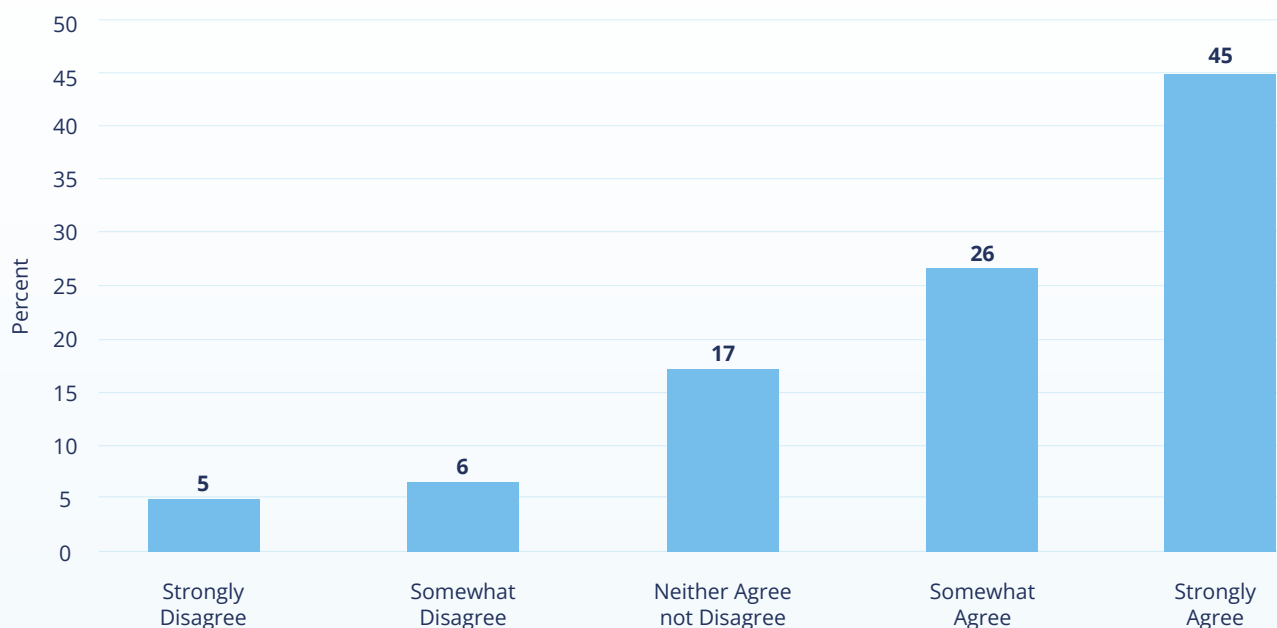


Figure 9: I would like to see the UK Government pass more laws designed to improve animal welfare and protect animals from cruelty. (Focldata, 2022)¹²²

¹²⁰ RSPCA, "Animal Kindness Index."

¹²¹ Focldata, "Animal Welfare Standards," (2022).

¹²² Ibid.

Public Opinion on Cages and Fast-Growing Chickens

A 2020 Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) -commissioned YouGov poll (n=2,038) found that 88% of the British public believe the use of cages for farmed animals is cruel.¹²³ In the same survey, 77% of respondents supported a complete ban on the use of cages for farmed animals. In the UK, 60% of breeding sows are confined in farrowing crates for five weeks each litter, for 2.3 litters per year. Around 30% of the national layer flock is housed in modified cages.

In a 2019 YouGov poll of the British public (n=2,049) commissioned by Open Cages, 72% of respondents believed consumers should know if the chicken being purchased had a healthy life.¹²⁴ In the same poll, only 19% of respondents believed that supermarkets were honest about the welfare of chickens they sell. Hence, the majority of respondents effectively did not trust supermarkets claims about the welfare of chickens that they sold on their shelves.

Public Opinion on Farrowing Crates

A 2023 Survation poll (n=1074) asked UK respondents five questions about farrowing crates.¹²⁵ The UK public have very limited awareness of the use of farrowing crates in the British pig industry. Nearly two thirds (63%) had not heard of farrowing crates. A further 14% of respondents had heard of farrowing crates but didn't know much, if anything, about them; and 16% had heard about farrowing crates, and knew a bit about them. Only 6% of respondents had heard of crates and knew a lot about them.



¹²³ Compassion in World Farming, "88% of UK Public Think Cages Are Cruel".

¹²⁴ Open Cages, "#Tescotruth - Support the Billboard Fundraiser," <https://opencages.org/blog/tescotruth-support-the-billboard-fundraiser>.

¹²⁵ Survation, "Topical Poll March 2023: Conducted by Survation on Behalf of Humane Society International," (Survation, 2023).

Given the lack of knowledge about the use of farrowing crates, the second question provided relevant information about crates.¹²⁶ The question then asked to what extent, if at all, respondents supported or opposed crates. In response, 48% of the public opposed the use of crates, 20% supported the use of crates, 22% neither supported nor opposed, and 10% did not know.

Respondents were then asked whether they would support or oppose a ban on farrowing crates in pig farming in the UK. In response, 51% supported a ban, 16% opposed a ban, 25% neither supported nor opposed a ban, and 9% did not know.

The Government has listed reducing sow confinement during farrowing as a priority area for pigs in its Animal Health and Welfare Pathway.¹²⁷ The Survation poll asked respondents whether they supported the Government to provide financial assistance to support farmers to move from using farrowing crates to cage-free farming methods. In response, 68% supported, 7% opposed, 19% neither supported nor opposed, and 6% did not know.¹²⁸



¹²⁶ "A farrowing crate is a metal enclosure that is used in pig farming to hold a pregnant pig for up to 5 weeks at a time, from just before she gives birth to up to 4 weeks after her piglets are born. The crate does not permit the mother pig to turn around and is used as a method by some farmers to reduce the risk of mother pigs from accidentally crushing her newborn piglets. Other farmers use farrowing pens that allow freedom of movement and nesting for the pig while still protecting piglets from being crushed. To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose the use of farrowing crates?" *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ Gov.UK, "Animal Health and Welfare Pathway."

¹²⁸ As discussed later in this report, the farming industry, veterinary profession, and animal welfare science community has sometimes accused public opinion on animal welfare as being simplistic. Arguably, the responses to this Survation poll on farrowing crates provide evidence that the public reserves judgement when less aware of farming methods. In this poll, a high proportion, 63%, had not heard of farrowing crates. This likely influenced relatively high proportions of respondents to be non-committal on the justifiability of farrowing crates, whether morally (question 2), or legally (question 3).

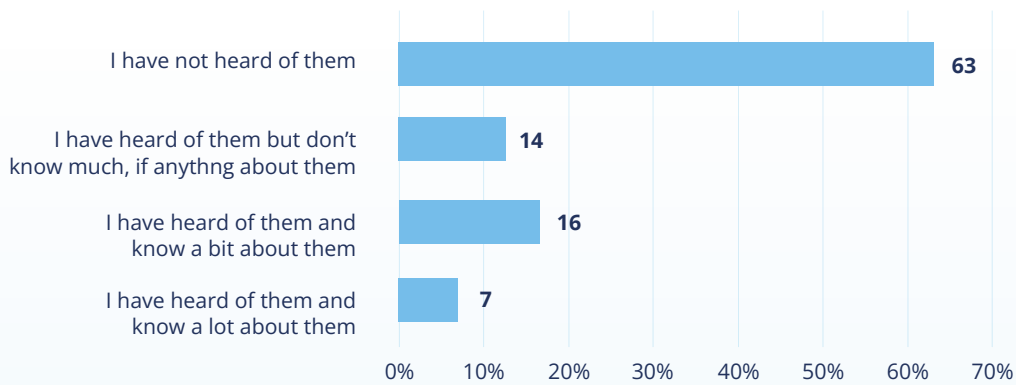


Figure 10: Have you heard of 'farrowing crates' used in pig farming? (Survation, 2023)¹²⁹

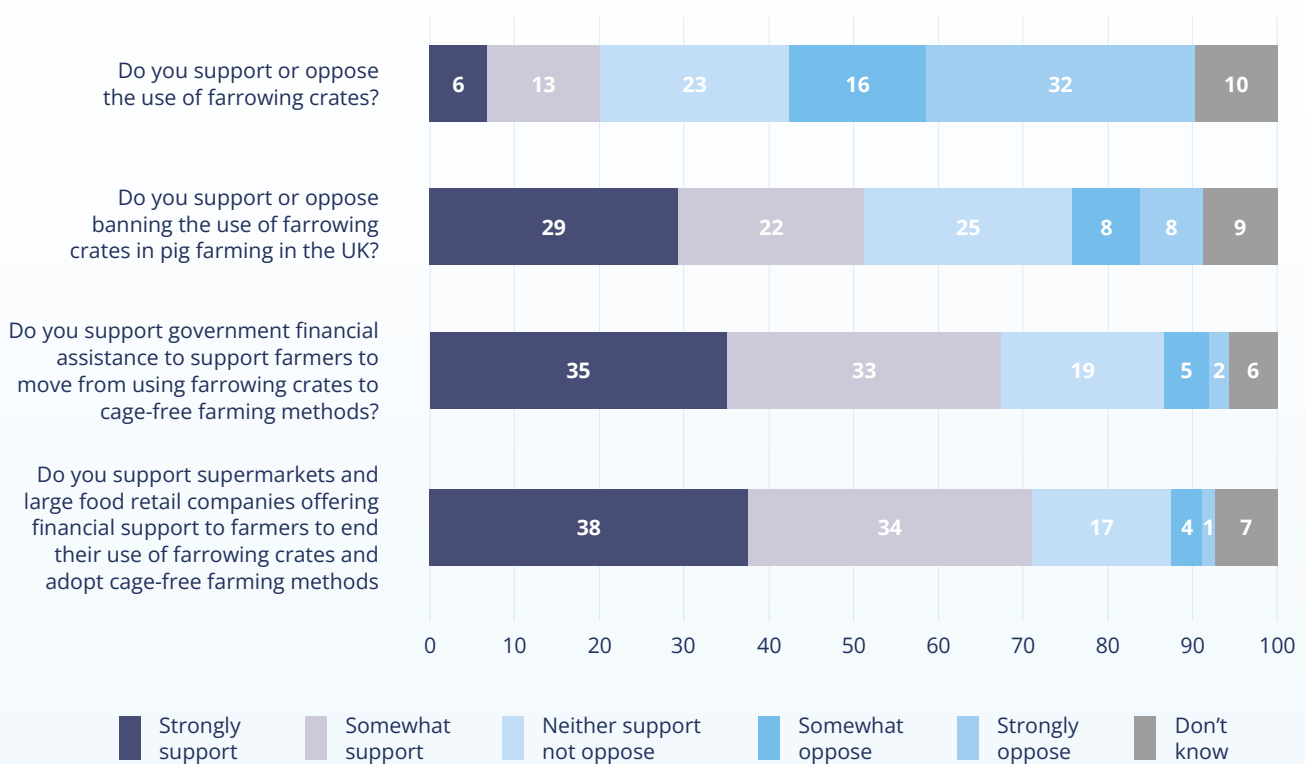


Figure 11: UK public views on farrowing crates (Survation, 2023).^{130 131}

¹²⁹ Survation, "Topical Poll March 2023: Conducted by Survation on Behalf of Humane Society International."

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Questions have been abbreviated to fit the graph.

A 2021 YouGov poll commissioned by More for Scotland's Animals found that 67% of Scottish adults supported a ban on the use of farrowing crates for sows.¹³²

Banning the Import of Animal Products When Production Methods are Banned in the UK

The UK Government has banned some farming practices, such as fur farming. Furthermore, foie gras is not produced in the UK because it is considered to not be compliant with the Animal Welfare Act 2006 in England and Wales, and similar legislation in Scotland and Northern Ireland. In a 2022 Focaldata poll (n>10,000), 76% of the British public believe the UK Government should ban the import of animal products, such as fur, where farming and production methods are banned in the UK.¹³³

Public opinion on this issue has significance for reforms under the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway, since the Government is considering legislating on farrowing crates and cages for laying hens.¹³⁴

Willingness to Pay for Higher Farm Animal Welfare

In a 2015 Eurobarometer survey (n=1,321), 72% of UK citizens were willing to pay (WTP) more for products sourced from animal welfare-friendly production systems. Nearly half (47%) were WTP up to 5% more, 16% were WTP 6-10% more, 6% were WTP 11-20% more, and 3% were WTP over 20% more. Nearly a quarter (23%) of citizens were not WTP more for more animal welfare-friendly products, and 4% responded that it depends on the price of the product.

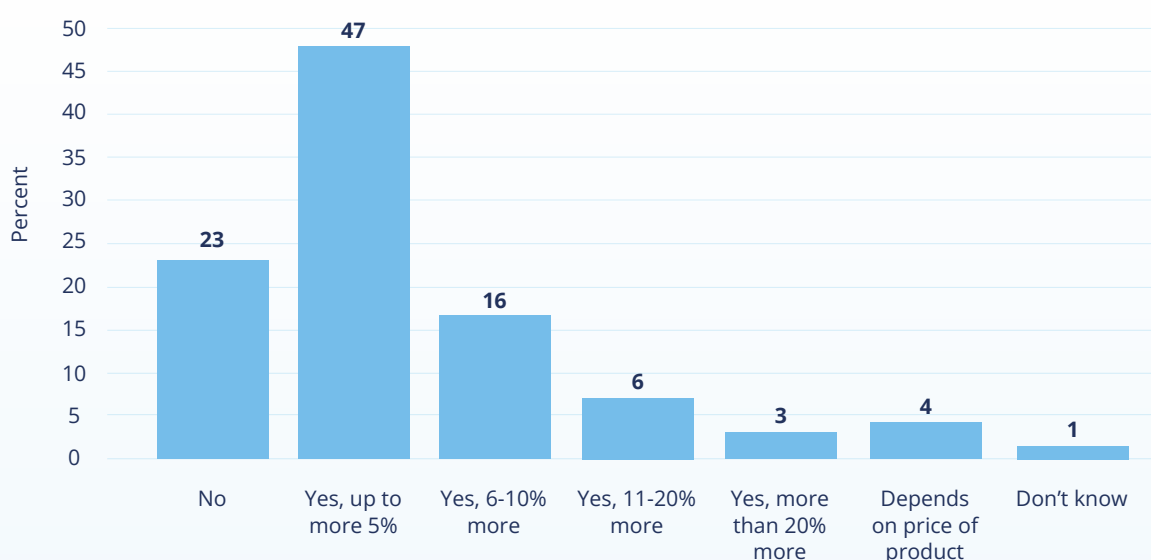


Figure 12: Would you be willing to pay more for products sourced from animal welfare-friendly production systems?¹³⁵

¹³² Gareth Jones, "Scots Want More Protection for Animals," *TNF* 2021. Caitlin Hutchison, "Scottish Animal Welfare: Majority of Scots Want Stronger Laws According to Survey," *The Herald* 2021.

¹³³ Focaldata, "Animal Welfare Standards," (2022).

¹³⁴ Gov.UK, "Animal Health and Welfare Pathway."

¹³⁵ European Commission, "Attitudes of Europeans Towards Animal Welfare: Special Eurobarometer 442."

Consumer Information Provision and Choice for Animal Welfare Friendly Products

In a 2015 Eurobarometer survey (n=1,321), 48% of UK citizens would like to have more information about the conditions under which farmed animals are treated, which is a figure up 7% from 2006. In contrast, 50% would not like more information about the conditions farmed animals are treated, a figure down 7% from 2015. Therefore, one half of UK citizens would prefer more information about how farmed animals are treated, and based on 2006 to 2016 figures, this figure is increasing.

In the 2015 Eurobarometer survey, 43% of UK citizens believed there was not sufficient choice in animal-welfare friendly products in supermarkets, an increase from 34% in 2005. In contrast, 43% of respondents believed there was sufficient choice in animal-welfare friendly products. Therefore, based on this poll, almost half of UK citizens believe there is not sufficient choice in welfare friendly products, and the figures from 2005 and 2016 suggest that the proportion is increasing.

Summary

The data above clearly demonstrates that the British public value and desire higher welfare for farmed animals in the UK. The British public demonstrates knowledge of some farming practices in the UK, with limitations in certain cases. Despite this, the public desires to know more. How does British public opinion correlate with the reality of farming in the UK, and is there a gap between the beliefs and attitudes of British citizens and consumers, and the reality of farming in the UK? The following sections move on to discuss this issue.



Intensive Farming in the UK

Around 70-80% of farmed animals in the UK are reared intensively, with over 95% of these chickens raised for meat.¹³⁶ Figure 11 shows approximate proportions of animals by sector farmed intensively in the UK. Intensive farming is characterised by genetically selecting for rapid growth and high productivity, keeping animals indoors, and higher stocking densities.¹³⁷

Despite the widespread nature of intensive farming is in the UK, and indeed it being the most common form of farming, the British public is generally opposed to it. As discussed in this report, the British public tends to support rearing farmed animals in more extensive, outdoor environments, where animals can perform natural and normal behaviours.

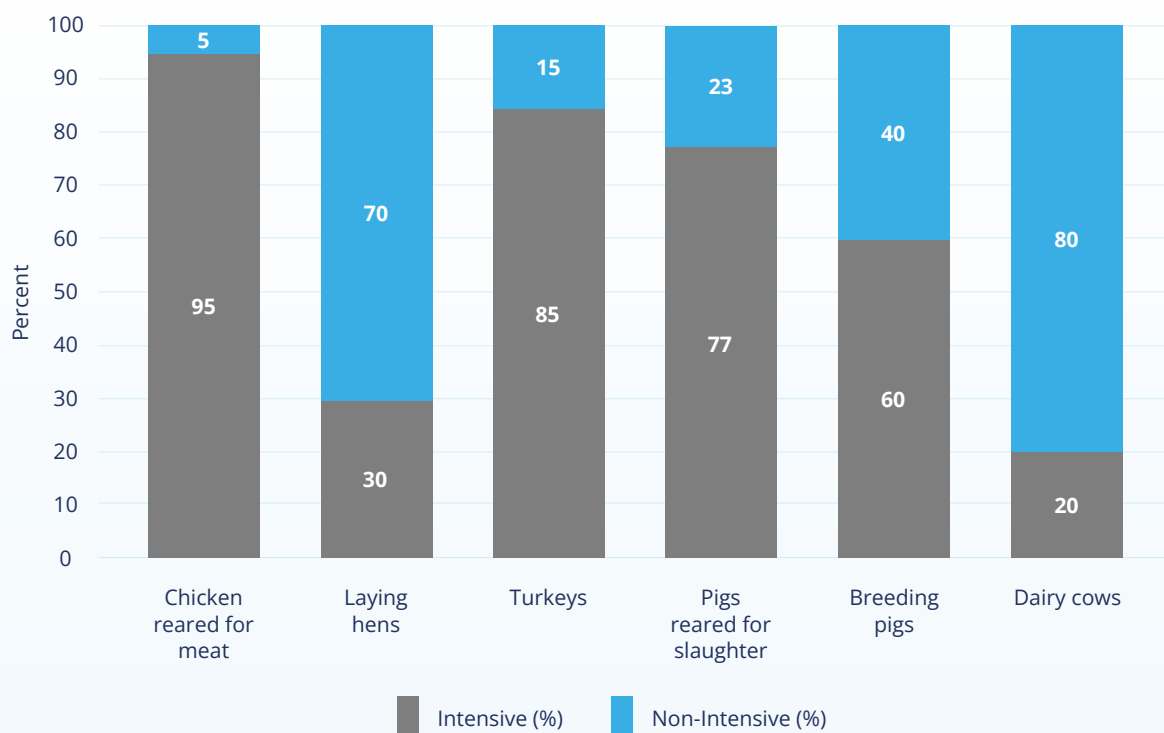


Figure 13: Approximate percentages of animals intensively farmed in each sector.^{138 139 140 141 142 143}

¹³⁶ Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) claim that 73% of farmed animals in the UK are kept on factory (intensive) farms. See [Compassion in World Farming, "UK Factory Farming Map"](#).

¹³⁷ E.g., see [Compassion in World Farming, "Intensive Farming and the Welfare of Farm Animals,"](#) (undated).

¹³⁸ Chickens reared for meat: [Elena Salazar, Simon Billing, and Mark Breen, "We Need to Talk About Chicken,"](#) (Eating Better, 2020), 8. (Figure based on e-mail from British Poultry Council.)

¹³⁹ Laying hens: Gov.UK, "UK Egg Packing Station Throughput and Price Dataset."

¹⁴⁰ Turkeys: 2021 RSPCA Assured market penetration for turkeys was 14.9%. David Bowles, RSPCA, pers. comm. See also [Compassion in World Farming, "Turkeys,"](#) <https://www.ciwf.org.uk/farm-animals/turkeys/>; RSPCA, "Farming Turkeys," <https://www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/farm/turkeys/farming>.

¹⁴¹ Pigs reared for slaughter: 2021 RSPCA Assured market penetration for slaughtered pigs was 22.5%. David Bowles, RSPCA, pers. comm. Most RSPCA Assured growing pigs are reared indoors to higher welfare standards. According to the RSPCA website, only 3% of pigs spend their entire lives outdoors. [RSPCA, "Farming Pigs"](#).

¹⁴² Breeding pigs: [McCulloch, "Banning Farrowing Crates in the UK: Transitioning to Free Farrowing to Meet the Welfare Needs of Pigs.,"](#); [National Pig Association, "NPA Briefing on Farrowing Crates."](#)

¹⁴³ Dairy cows: E.g., see [Compassion in World Farming, "The Grass Is Greener - the Plight of UK Dairy Cows";](#) [Levitt, "They Don't Belong in a Concrete Shed: Cows Still Happiest Outside."](#)

Intensive Farming and Animal Welfare

Intensive farming is associated with significant and widespread welfare problems. For example, the genetic selection for rapid growth of chickens reared for meat has led to painful lameness in around 25% of birds reared.¹⁴⁴ Selection for high yielding dairy cattle has led to higher incidence of painful mastitis and lameness conditions.¹⁴⁵

Nearly all meat chickens are reared indoors for their six-seven week lives. Around 30% of laying hens are kept in modified cages, which cause behavioural restrictions leading to stress and suffering. Around 60% of the UK breeding pig herd is kept indoors, and almost all breeding sows are kept in farrowing crates for five weeks more than two times each year.¹⁴⁶ Up to 20% of the UK dairy herd is kept indoors year-round, so they do not have access to pasture in summer months.

Table 3: Intensive farming and illustrative animal welfare issues.

System	Welfare Problems
Fish farming ¹⁴⁷	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overcrowding and aggression • Poor water quality due to high stocking density • Parasites • Handling e.g., for vaccination or grading causes stress • Inhumane slaughter methods including carbon dioxide, suffocation, or bleeding
Chickens reared for meat ¹⁴⁸	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection for rapid growth leads to painful lameness and other disorders e.g., heart disease • Chickens kept in bare overcrowded sheds • Frustration and boredom due to bare sheds and lack of environmental enrichment • Up to 30% chickens shackled upside down prior to slaughter, with ineffective pre-stunning using electrical waterbath
Broiler breeders ¹⁴⁹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chronic hunger due to genetic selection for appetite • Beak trimming to reduce feather pecking
Laying hens ¹⁵⁰	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modified cages restrict normal and natural behaviours • Beak trimming a mutilation to prevent feather pecking • Bone fractures especially during depopulation, transport, and slaughter • Shackling upside down prior to slaughter and ineffective pre-stunning using electrical waterbath

¹⁴⁴ RSPCA, "Eat. Sit. Suffer. Repeat: The Life of a Typical Meat Chicken."

¹⁴⁵ Animal Welfare Committee, "Opinion on the Welfare of Cattle Kept in Different Production Systems," (London 2021).

¹⁴⁶ McCulloch, "Banning Farrowing Crates in the UK: Transitioning to Free Farrowing to Meet the Welfare Needs of Pigs."

¹⁴⁷ E Santurtun, DM Broom, and CJC Phillips, "A Review of Factors Affecting the Welfare of Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo salar*)," *Animal Welfare* 27, no. 3 (2018); European Food Safety Authority, "Animal Welfare Aspects of Husbandry Systems for Farmed Atlantic Salmon-Scientific Opinion of the Panel on Animal Health and Welfare," *EFSA Journal* 6, no. 7 (2008). Farm Animal Welfare Council, "Opinion on the Welfare of Farmed Fish," (London 2014).

¹⁴⁸ Ingrid De Jong et al., "Scientific Report Updating the EFSA Opinions on the Welfare of Broilers and Broiler Breeders," *EFSA Supporting Publications* 9, no. 6 (2012). RSPCA, "Eat. Sit. Suffer. Repeat: The Life of a Typical Meat Chicken."

¹⁴⁹ Farm Animal Welfare Council, "Report on the Welfare of Broiler Breeders," (1998). De Jong et al., "Scientific Report Updating the EFSA Opinions on the Welfare of Broilers and Broiler Breeders."

¹⁵⁰ Compassion in World Farming, "Scientific Briefing on Caged Farming: Overview of Scientific Research on Caged Farming of Laying Hens, Sows, Rabbits, Ducks, Geese, Calves and Quail."



System	Welfare Problems
Turkeys ¹⁵¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restrictions of normal behaviours such as perching and foraging • Beak trimming • Turkeys often kept in dark environment to reduce aggression • Feather pecking
Pigs reared for slaughter ¹⁵²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mutilations – tail docking and teeth clipping • Boredom due to lack of environmental stimulation • Tail biting and fighting • Stunning using carbon dioxide causes suffering
Breeding pigs ¹⁵³	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Severe physical and behavioural restriction in sows kept in farrowing crates • Physical lesions on legs and shoulders due to lying on bare floor
Cattle and calves reared for slaughter ¹⁵⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calf mortality related to pneumonia and diarrhoea • Calves unable to perform natural social behaviours when housed individually • Older housing with poor ventilation and drainage increases risk of disease • Many cows finish indoors often on unbedded slatted flooring • Mutilations and surgical procedures including disbudding, dehorning, and castration
Dairy cows ¹⁵⁵	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High risk of lameness and mastitis in high yielding dairy cows • Behavioural restriction in cows with no access to pasture • Housing including cubicles often inadequate for comfort of dairy cows

Mutilations and Bodily Integrity

Mutilations such as tail docking in piglets and beak trimming in chickens are problematic for three reasons. First, the mutilations cause acute (short term) and chronic (longer term) pain. Second, they reduce the capacity for farmed animals to perform normal and natural behaviours (for instance, foraging behaviours in chickens). Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, mutilations are carried out to prevent aggression, which itself is a symptom of the underlying substandard conditions that farmed animals are kept in. For this reason, any farming system that requires mutilations should, *prima facie*, be considered as substandard for welfare and society and government should consider it unacceptable from a moral and legal point of view.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵¹ Marisa A Erasmus, "Welfare Issues in Turkey Production," *Advances in Poultry Welfare* (2018).

¹⁵² EFSA Panel on Animal Health Welfare et al., "Welfare of Pigs on Farm," *EFSA Journal* 20, no. 8 (2022).

¹⁵³ McCulloch, "Banning Farrowing Crates in the UK: Transitioning to Free Farrowing to Meet the Welfare Needs of Pigs." Baxter, Andersen, and Edwards, "Sow Welfare in the Farrowing Crate and Alternatives."

¹⁵⁴ Animal Welfare Committee, "Opinion on the Welfare of Cattle Kept in Different Production Systems."

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ Such decisions should be the results of deliberation using established moral frameworks. E.g., see McCulloch and Reiss, "A Proposal for a UK Ethics Council for Animal Policy: The Case for Putting Ethics Back into Policy Making."



Higher Welfare Schemes: RSPCA Assured

There are a variety of voluntary standards/accreditation schemes that producers can sign up to which will give them accreditation and thus inform consumers that their meat is produced to higher welfare standards. RSPCA Assured is perhaps the most well-known and used, and is a higher welfare accreditation scheme in the UK. The standards are based on scientific research and developed to be commercially viable in consultation with veterinary surgeons and the farming industry.¹⁵⁷

The RSPCA Assured website states that animals have better lives because:¹⁵⁸

- They are not genetically selected for excessive rapid growth
- Good access to food and water
- Cages and crates are banned
- Access to litter and bedding
- Animals can perform natural behaviours
- When appropriate for species, animals can go outdoors
- Stockperson training
- Humane treatment at transport and slaughter (all animals are pre-stunned)

Table 4 illustrates some key differences between RSPCA Assured and UK minimum legal standards. RSPCA Assured farms provide more space for farmed animals to move around and perform natural and normal behaviours.

However, production under the RSPCA Assured scheme represents just a small proportion of the total number of animals farmed. According to the RSPCA this is under 1% for beef and sheep, just 1-2% of chickens reared for meat, 15% of turkeys and 23% of pigs.¹⁵⁹ So, whilst these schemes exist, they represent a small share of the total meat, eggs, and dairy products produced. At the same time, 70-80% of UK farmed animals are reared within intensive conditions.

¹⁵⁷ RSPCA, "RSPCA Welfare Standards," <https://science.rspca.org.uk/sciencegroup/farmanimals/standards>

¹⁵⁸ RSPCA Assured, "What Do 'High Standards' Really Mean?"

¹⁵⁹ David Bowles, RSPCA, pers. comm. Figures are based on RSPCA Assured 2021 data.

Table 4: RSPCA Assured standards to illustrate higher welfare conditions.

Sector	RSPCA Assured
Farmed fish ¹⁶⁰	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower stocking density reduces aggression • Water quality including oxygenation and temperature • Training of staff related to handling of fish e.g., for vaccination or size grading • Pre-stunning prior to slaughter and slaughter by carbon dioxide, suffocation or bleeding out prohibited
Pigs ¹⁶¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free farrowing required and farrowing crates prohibited • Lower stocking densities • Bedding and materials to root and manipulate • Routine use of mutilations including tail docking, teeth clipping, and nose-ringing outdoor sows is prohibited
Chickens reared for meat ¹⁶²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slower growing breeds to reduce lameness • More space/lower stocking density • Enrichment such as perches and hay bales • Shade and shelter for free range chickens • Shackling of chickens upside down prior to slaughter is prohibited
Turkeys ¹⁶³	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More space/lower stocking density • Enrichment such as perches, straw bales, and objects to peck • Indoor housed turkeys must be provided with natural daylight • Free range turkeys must have shade and shelter • Routine beak trimming is not permitted • Trained persons to catch turkeys prior to transport • Shackling upside down is not permitted
Egg laying hens ¹⁶⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modified or colony cages are prohibited • Free range and barn systems promote natural behaviours including nesting, perching, and dust bathing • Enrichment materials including nest boxes, perches, straw bales, and objects to peck provided

¹⁶⁰ RSPCA Assured, "Salmon & Trout," <https://www.rspcaassured.org.uk/farm-animal-welfare/salmon-trout/>

¹⁶¹ "Pigs," <https://www.rspcaassured.org.uk/farm-animal-welfare/pigs/>

¹⁶² "Meat Chickens," <https://www.rspcaassured.org.uk/farm-animal-welfare/chickens/>

¹⁶³ "Turkeys," <https://www.rspcaassured.org.uk/farm-animal-welfare/turkeys/>

¹⁶⁴ "Egg-Laying Hens," <https://www.rspcaassured.org.uk/farm-animal-welfare/egg-laying-hens/>



Sector**RSPCA Assured****Cows reared for beef¹⁶⁵**

- Calves must be fed at least 6 litres of milk daily for the first 8 weeks of life
- Barns and hutches must be well ventilated and well bedded
- Individually hatched calves must be grouped at least one week before weaning at 8 weeks
- Farms must have veterinary health and welfare plan
- Fully slatted systems for finishing cattle are prohibited
- Environmental enrichment such as cow brushes to groom and scratch
- Disbudding and castration to be conducted only by a trained person. Disbudding must take place before five weeks and castration under two months. Long-acting pain relief must be provided.

Dairy cows¹⁶⁶

- Access to pasture for as much of the year as possible
- Measures to reduce lameness and mastitis include foot bathing facilities and herd health plans
- Farmers must treat any lameness and mastitis rapidly and effectively
- Environmental enrichment such as cow brushes to groom and scratch
- Standards related to minimising stress at calving



¹⁶⁵“Beef Cattle,” <https://www.rspcaassured.org.uk/farm-animal-welfare/beef-cattle/>.

¹⁶⁶“Dairy Cows,” <https://www.rspcaassured.org.uk/farm-animal-welfare/dairy-cows/>.

What the British Public Wants for Farm Animal Welfare, Science, and Higher Welfare Schemes

Industry Criticism of Public Opinion

It is not uncommon for elements within the farming industry, the veterinary profession, and the animal welfare science community, to describe, either implicitly or explicitly, public opinion on farm animal welfare as simplistic. For instance, this report has quoted an NFU report as stating that “citizens tend to simply conflate ‘naturalness’ with high welfare.”¹⁶⁷

The NFU criticism of public opinion on animal welfare, especially as it relates to naturalness, is understandable. The NFU is a member organisation that serves to represent and further the interests of its members.¹⁶⁸ Figure 11 of this report illustrates the proportions of farmed animals kept in intensive and extensive systems in the UK. Overall, 70-80% of UK farmed animals are kept in intensive conditions. Given this, large numbers of NFU members, especially within the pig and poultry sectors, farm animals intensively.

Putting Public Opinion on Farm Animal Welfare in Perspective

Table 3 of this report illustrates welfare problems associated with intensive farming systems in the UK. These welfare problems are not confined to small proportions of the animals kept in them. In the UK we raise and slaughter over one billion chickens for meat consumption, which is over 95% of the total number of land farmed animals we raise. Research has shown that over 25% of fast-growing chickens suffer from lameness during the final two weeks of their six week lives.¹⁶⁹

In the pig industry, almost all indoor housed sows are confined in farrowing crates for five weeks each litter. Farrowing crates constitute the most severe form of confinement of farmed animals in the UK and EU.¹⁷⁰ Sows are able to stand up and lie down, but they are unable to turn around. They are unable to interact with their piglets or other sows. Sows produce 2.3 litters per year, so spend around 80 days, or 22% of their adult breeding lives kept in the severe confinement of a crate.

¹⁶⁷ Vecqueray and Hambling, “Farm Animal Welfare: Global Review Summary Report,” 4.

¹⁶⁸ National Farmer’s Union, “About Us,” <https://www.nfuonline.com/about-us/>.

¹⁶⁹ RSPCA, “Eat. Sit. Suffer. Repeat: The Life of a Typical Meat Chicken.”; Danbury et al., “Self-Selection of the Analgesic Drug Carprofen by Lamé Broiler Chickens.”

¹⁷⁰ McCulloch, “Banning Farrowing Crates in the UK: Transitioning to Free Farrowing to Meet the Welfare Needs of Pigs.”



Breeding sows produce piglets which are reared for slaughter to be consumed as pork and bacon. Most growing pigs are reared indoors, either on slatted flooring or on straw. Prior to weaning, the majority of piglets have their tail amputated and teeth clipped.

According to World Animal Protection, 70-80% of pigs reared on UK farms have their tails amputated.¹⁷¹ On indoor units, growing pigs are generally kept in high stocking densities in relatively barren environments. This contributes to aggression between pigs, including tail biting.¹⁷² Tail amputation and teeth clipping are mutilations to mitigate harms pigs commit to each other due to the substandard environments they are kept in.

Around one third of laying hens in the UK are kept in modified or colony cages. These are cages that are slightly larger than the battery cage, which was prohibited throughout the EU in 2012. The modified cages have a nest box, perch, and scratching area, which are requirements so that chickens can carry out some of their normal and natural behaviours. Despite this, research shows that modified cages do not adequately permit hens to perform these behaviours. The cages are too small for laying hens to wing flap, dust bathe, and for hens to properly use the perches.¹⁷³ Feather pecking is common in modified cages, and almost all laying hens have their beaks trimmed. Like pigs, this is a mutilation carried out to mitigate harms due to the substandard conditions hens are kept in.



¹⁷¹ Charlotte Regan, 14 February, 2020, <https://www.worldanimalprotection.org.uk/blogs/why-little-pig-lost-his-tail-cruel-practice-tail-docking>.

¹⁷² MLV Larsen, HM-L Andersen, and LJ Pedersen, "Which Is the Most Preventive Measure against Tail Damage in Finisher Pigs: Tail Docking, Straw Provision or Lowered Stocking Density?," *Animal* 12, no. 6 (2018).

¹⁷³ For a review see *Compassion in World Farming*, "Scientific Briefing on Caged Farming: Overview of Scientific Research on Caged Farming of Laying Hens, Sows, Rabbits, Ducks, Geese, Calves and Quail," 8-16.

The Developing Consensus Against Intensive Farming

Arguably, the British public, rather than holding a simplistic position, has been ahead of the curve.¹⁷⁴ Stakeholders including animal welfare scientists, independent bodies, and the veterinary profession are increasingly coming to the same view. Consider, for instance, these words by Henry Dimbleby, Chair of the National Food Strategy. In his 2022 Wilberforce Lecture, Dimbleby said the following of the state of farming:¹⁷⁵

“But what kind of existence have we created for them? Most of the animals reared for food globally are factory-farmed: confined in pens, cages, and even multi-storey tower blocks, far from sunlight or greenery, unable to express their natural instincts. This is before we even consider some of the practices within industrial livestock farming that veer into active cruelty.”

(Henry Dimbleby, 2022)

The veterinary profession has a role to safeguard animal welfare but also provides a service to the farming industry. Despite not always being explicit, over recent years the BVA's position has significantly shifted toward support for less intensive/more extensive systems, and more support for outdoor farming. The BVA's 2016 food procurement policy is a good example of this.¹⁷⁶ The policy states that the veterinary profession's first responsibility is to “advocate for the best interests of animals”. It then states that eggs should be free range and RSPCA Assured whenever possible, chicken should be free range and/or RSPCA Assured; pigmeat should be either free range, outdoor reared, or outdoor bred (all free range whenever possible); farmed fish should be RSPCA Assured; and milk and dairy products should be RSPCA Assured when available.

The Government's Animal Health and Welfare Pathway provides a further example. The policy paper for the Pathway states that health and welfare priorities will focus on “providing a clear set of priorities that reflect some of the very best opportunities for improving animal health and welfare.”¹⁷⁷ For meat chickens, the Pathway will implement the Better Chicken Commitment, which requires slower growing breeds and lower stocking densities. For laying hens, the Pathway priority areas include transitioning out of cages, and addressing the root causes of feather pecking, to reduce beak trimming. For pigs, priority areas include reducing sow confinement by shifting away from the farrowing crate. A Pathway priority area for growing pigs is to reduce underlying stressors, such as poor environmental enrichment, to avoid the need for tail docking. For dairy cattle, a Pathway priority area is to reduce lameness and mastitis, both of which are associated with high yielding cows.

¹⁷⁴ As have organisations such as CIWF and the RSPCA, which have similarly supported less intensive, more extensive, often outdoor environments for farmed animals.

¹⁷⁵ RSPCA, “The Wilberforce Lecture 2022: Henry Dimbleby”.

¹⁷⁶ The policy remains in place at the time of writing in February 2023. [British Veterinary Association](#), “BVA Food Procurement Policy.”

¹⁷⁷ [Gov.UK](#), “Animal Health and Welfare Pathway.”

Finally, even NPA documents at least implicitly suggest that cage-free and outdoor farming is better for pig welfare.¹⁷⁸ As described earlier in this report, the NPA's 2017 briefing note on welfare in the pig industry states that the British pig industry is a world leader in pig welfare. The document then goes on to state how 40% of the national breeding herd are kept outside "for the entirety of their lives". The briefing cites the UK ban on sow stalls in 1999, and states that 40% of UK sows farrow freely. Given that 40% of the UK breeding herd is kept outdoors, and these sows farrow freely, the NPA is again referring to pigs kept outdoors.

Outdoors – A Gateway to a Variety of Increased Welfare Opportunities

The British public appear to understand that the outdoors offers a variety of welfare opportunities for farmed animals. Space is the most obvious and perhaps most fundamental good in this respect. Farmed animals with outdoors access generally have access to far more space.¹⁷⁹ Space is necessary to perform natural and normal behaviours for which all farmed animal species are highly motivated to perform. Farmed animals also require space to move away or escape from more dominant animals, who when closely packed together will become aggressive toward them.¹⁸⁰



¹⁷⁸ National Pig Association, "NPA Briefing Note on Welfare in the British Pig Industry."

¹⁷⁹ E.g., see RSPCA Assured, "What Do 'High Standards' Really Mean?"

¹⁸⁰ E.g., see Baldwin, "The Effects of Stocking Density on Fish Welfare.;" Erasmus, "A Review of the Effects of Stocking Density on Turkey Behavior, Welfare, and Productivity.;" Fu et al., "Stocking Density Affects Welfare Indicators of Growing Pigs of Different Group Sizes after Regrouping."

A second key environmental outdoor welfare good is the earth. Pigs naturally root and dig at the earth.¹⁸¹ Chickens scratch and peck at the earth.¹⁸² Pigs use their snouts and chickens use their beaks to forage and explore their environment. Compared to outdoor environments, indoor farms are far more barren. Pigs are group reared on straw, or worse on slatted flooring. Caged laying hens are kept in metal enclosures and chickens reared for meat are kept on straw. Such barren environments in many cases at least do not meet the welfare needs of pigs and chickens. In such barren environments, and being unable to perform highly motivated natural and normal behaviours, farmed animals can redirect their behaviours in the form of aggression to the other animals around them.¹⁸³

If space and resources are fundamental welfare resources, the outdoors also provides variation to stimulate animals and prevent boredom. Research has demonstrated that farmed animals such as pigs, chickens and cows are intelligent species.¹⁸⁴ Farmed animals become bored in barren indoor environments. Diurnal rhythms, weather patterns, and varying local conditions provide variation in the outdoor environment. Boredom in indoor housed farmed animals contributes to frustration and aggression toward conspecifics.¹⁸⁵



¹⁸¹ Alex Stolba and David Granger Marcus Wood-Gush, "The Behaviour of Pigs in a Semi-Natural Environment," *Animal Science* 48, no. 2 (1989).

¹⁸² Christine Calder and Julia Albright, "Chicken Behavior," *Backyard Poultry Medicine and Surgery: A Guide for Veterinary Practitioners* (2021).

¹⁸³ E.g., VE Beattie, N Walker, and IA Sneddon, "Effects of Environmental Enrichment on Behaviour and Productivity of Growing Pigs," *Animal Welfare* 4, no. 3 (1995).

¹⁸⁴ E.g., Candace C. Croney and Sarah T. Boysen, "Acquisition of a Joystick-Operated Video Task by Pigs (*Sus Scrofa*)," *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (2021). CL Smith and SL Zielinski, "The Startling Intelligence of the Common Chicken," *Scientific American* 310, no. 2 (2014).

¹⁸⁵ E.g., ES Paul et al., "Farmers' Attitudes to Methods for Controlling Tail Biting in Pigs," *Veterinary record* 160, no. 23 (2007).

Finally, we should remember that pigs, chickens, and cows have evolved to be adapted to an outdoor environment.¹⁸⁶ The farming industry has moved chickens and pigs, and more recently some cows, indoors for economic reasons. But, as a generalisation, these species are in many cases poorly adapted to a life indoors. Within the animal welfare world there is an interesting debate about indoor versus outdoor farming. Again, some accuse those who support indoor farming as holding in some sense simplistic views.

What is interesting in such discussions is that there is a general consensus that choice is generally always good for animal welfare. And when discussing the merits of indoor and outdoor housing, those who defend indoor systems, in the author's experience, generally concede that the best systems for welfare are those that provide a choice of indoors and outdoors.¹⁸⁷ But to have choice means to have access to the outdoors. Indeed, the paradigmatic "free range" system, for laying hens, is both an indoor and outdoor system. The hens are housed in a large shed with perches and nest boxes, but also have access to the outdoor environment during the day for more space, and to scratch, peck, and explore.

For these reasons, the farming industry, and elements within the veterinary profession and animal welfare science world, should further consider the merits of the public view on animal welfare. The British public are absolutely right to believe there are very major problems within contemporary intensive farming, including but not restricted to cages and mutilations. Similarly, the general public appear to understand that farmed animals are in many cases better adapted to have access to an outdoors environment.



¹⁸⁶ Higher welfare accreditation schemes, such as RSPCA Assured, which permit indoor rearing of pigs, in part emulate elements of the outdoor environment. Greater space/lower stocking densities, straw, and other environmental enrichments are key welfare inputs in the scheme

¹⁸⁷ The animal welfare scientist John Webster has taken this position in conversation with the author. More recently, a dairy vet colleague defended indoor dairy systems but conceded that if they were a cow, they would prefer access to pasture during the summer months.

A Definition of Animal Welfare for Policy Makers

David Fraser et al's (1997) three circles conception of welfare was described earlier in this report. The model has become dominant in animal welfare policy, practice, and education. Fraser et al. have written how various commentators, and later animal welfare scientists, tend to emphasise either physical health/functioning, feelings, or naturalness more. They then write how this is ultimately based on the "values" of the individual concerned.¹⁸⁸

Whilst Fraser et al's three circles model has been of great use, but it has two significant drawbacks. First, the model has insufficient explanatory adequacy in relation to the cause of animal welfare. To illustrate, there is a broad consensus that animal welfare relates to how well animals are adapted to their environments.¹⁸⁹ The Fraser et al. three circles model does not convey the reality that welfare is a product of how well animals are adapted to their environments.

Secondly, if conceptions of animal welfare are ultimately based simply on values, this will lead to a relativism both about what welfare is, and what systems and husbandry methods are acceptable for farmed animals. Given the capacity for suffering of species that we farm, and the fact that we rear and slaughter them in their billions, this is a very unsatisfactory situation. Simply put, the stakes are far too high to leave policy and practice that impacts the lives of billions of sentient farmed animals to claimed differences in values between stakeholders.

What is Animal Welfare?

In place of the three circles conception of welfare, this report proposes the following definition of animal welfare for policy makers and stakeholders:

"Animal welfare describes a state of complete physical health and mental wellbeing, where the nature of the sentient animal is in harmony with its living and non-living environment and its bodily integrity is respected."

(McCulloch, 2015)¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ Fraser et al., "A Scientific Conception of Animal Welfare That Reflects Ethical Concerns," 189.

¹⁸⁹ For example Broom defines an animal's welfare as its state in relation to coping with its environment. Broom, "Animal Welfare: Concepts and Measurement." As discussed earlier in this report, it is important to note that Fraser et al. (1997) also proposed an alternative definition of animal welfare to their three conceptions model, which was based on an animal's adaptation to its environment. Despite this, the three circles conception that they described in the same paper became dominant. Fraser et al., "A Scientific Conception of Animal Welfare That Reflects Ethical Concerns."

¹⁹⁰ McCulloch, "The British Animal Health and Welfare Policy Process: Accounting for the Interests of Sentient Species."

An adequate definition of animal welfare will include the relation between the animal and its environment as the ultimate cause of welfare. It should include reference to both physical and mental aspects of welfare. The conception of welfare should be consistent with other leading definitions of welfare.¹⁹¹ Furthermore, given that policy makers make decisions about the distribution of goods and harms between human society and nonhuman farmed animals, a definition of animal welfare for policy makers should be informed by leading definitions of human wellbeing.^{192 193} Finally, given the prevalence of mutilations in modern farming, a satisfactory conception of welfare should include reference to bodily integrity.¹⁹⁴



¹⁹¹ The definition is based on an earlier one by veterinarian Barry Hughes: “a state of complete mental and physical health, where the animal is in harmony with its environment”. Hughes, “Behaviour as an Index of Welfare,” 1005. Cited in Fraser, *Understanding Animal Welfare: The Science in Its Cultural Context*, 73.

¹⁹² So that policy makers are comparing “apples with apples” (i.e., human wellbeing with animal wellbeing/welfare). Policy making based on economic cost-benefit analysis type methods, for instance, exclude animals, simply because they are not economic agents.

¹⁹³ The definition provided is in part based on the World Health Organization (WHO) definition of human health: “Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” World Health Organization, “Health and Well-Being”.

¹⁹⁴ See “Mutilations and Bodily Integrity” section earlier in this report.

Summary and Recommendations

It is clear from this report that there exists in the UK an animal welfare gap, and that this gap is vast. The wants, needs and perceptions of British consumers when it comes to eating and purchasing meat, eggs, and dairy products, simply do not align with the realities of the farming industry when it comes to methods of production and everyday farming practices.

The data shows that the British public not only want higher welfare standards, but that they expect higher standards from Government. But despite this, 70-80% of farmed animals in the UK are reared within intensive conditions. In effect, the British public is either not aware of some realities of modern farming, feels that they have no choice in purchasing products produced in this way, or lack systems to support behaviours that lead to the purchase and consumption of higher animal welfare products.

The report concludes with the following summary and recommendations:

1. The British public supports high standards of farmed animal welfare. For instance, in 2015 98% of the UK public believed it important to protect farmed animal welfare.¹⁹⁵ A 2022 Focaldata poll found that 71% of the British public would like to see the UK Government pass more laws to improve animal welfare.¹⁹⁶ A 2020 YouGov poll found 88% of the British public believe cages for farmed animals to be cruel, and 77% support a complete ban on the use of cages for farmed animals.¹⁹⁷
2. The British public generally supports more extensive, outdoor systems, and it is opposed to cages and mutilations. This position is consistent with a science-based understanding of what is good for farmed animals. For instance, pigs root and dig and chickens peck and scratch the earth to forage and explore their environments. Indoor environments generally prevent pigs and chickens from performing such natural and normal behaviours.
3. Tail docking of piglets and beak trimming of laying hens are routine in the pig and egg industries respectively. These are mutilations that can cause acute and chronic pain and restrict natural behaviours. Most importantly, these procedures are conducted to prevent aggression that is caused by keeping farmed animals in substandard conditions. Farming systems that require mutilations are unacceptable and should be prohibited by Government.

¹⁹⁵ European Commission, "Attitudes of Europeans Towards Animal Welfare: Special Eurobarometer 442."

¹⁹⁶ Focaldata, "Animal Welfare Standards." 2022

¹⁹⁷ Compassion in World Farming, "88% of UK Public Think Cages Are Cruel".

4. Despite the British public's longstanding support for high welfare standards, 70-80% of farmed animals are reared intensively.¹⁹⁸ Intensive farming systems are associated with widespread welfare problems. For instance, over 25% of chickens reared for meat consumption suffer from lameness.¹⁹⁹ Around 60% of breeding sows in the UK are kept indoors, and almost all of these are kept in farrowing crates for five weeks each litter, for 2.3 litters per year, so for 22% of their breeding lives.²⁰⁰ Around 30% of the national laying flock are kept in modified cages throughout their laying period.²⁰¹ Farrowing crates and modified cages prevent pigs and hens from performing natural and normal behaviours, which leads to poor welfare.²⁰² Approximately 77% of growing pigs are reared intensively indoors, and at least 70-80% of these have their tails amputated to prevent tail biting.²⁰³ Up to 20% of dairy cows are housed indoors with no access to pasture throughout the year.²⁰⁴
5. Policy makers should adopt a broad conception of animal welfare. The report proposes a definition of animal welfare as a "state of complete physical health and mental wellbeing, where the nature of the sentient animal is in harmony with its living and non-living environment and its bodily integrity is respected".²⁰⁵ This conception of welfare builds on Fraser's three circles model by describing welfare as the outcome of the animal's adaptation to its environment. It also facilitates policy making in part because it is similar to the WHO definition of human health.



¹⁹⁸ Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) claim that 73% of farmed animals in the UK are kept on factory (intensive) farms. See [Compassion in World Farming](#), "UK Factory Farming Map".

¹⁹⁹ RSPCA, "Eat. Sit. Suffer. Repeat: The Life of a Typical Meat Chicken."

²⁰⁰ McCulloch, "Banning Farrowing Crates in the UK: Transitioning to Free Farrowing to Meet the Welfare Needs of Pigs."

²⁰¹ Gov.UK, "UK Egg Packing Station Throughput and Price Dataset."

²⁰² McCulloch, "Banning Farrowing Crates in the UK: Transitioning to Free Farrowing to Meet the Welfare Needs of Pigs."; [Compassion in World Farming](#), "Scientific Briefing on Caged Farming: Overview of Scientific Research on Caged Farming of Laying Hens, Sows, Rabbits, Ducks, Geese, Calves and Quail."

²⁰³ 2021 RSPCA Assured market penetration for slaughtered pigs was 22.5%. David Bowles, RSPCA, pers. comm. Most of RSPCA Assured growing pigs are reared indoors to higher welfare standards. According to the RSPCA website, only 3% of pigs spend their entire lives outdoors. RSPCA, "Farming Pigs". [Regan](#) Why the Little Pig Lost His Tail - the Cruel Practice of "Tail Docking".

²⁰⁴ [Compassion in World Farming](#), "The Grass Is Greener - the Plight of UK Dairy Cows"; [Levitt](#), "They Don't Belong in a Concrete Shed: Cows Still Happiest Outside."

²⁰⁵ McCulloch, "The British Animal Health and Welfare Policy Process: Accounting for the Interests of Sentient Species."



6. Based on the above definition of welfare, it should be evident why much intensive farming is inconsistent with good welfare. Rapidly growing chickens reared for meat have a nature based on their genetics that means they have a 25% risk of suffering lameness. Crated breeding sows and caged laying hens are kept in environments that cause severe physical and behavioural restrictions, and for which they are poorly adapted for. There is very significant overlap between indoor farms and intensive systems, which do not meet the welfare needs of animals. Given this, the British public are largely right to consider that keeping farmed animals in more outdoor, extensive, or natural environments, so that they can perform behaviours which are natural for their species, is better for their welfare.
7. The RSPCA Assured food standards is the leading accreditation scheme for animal welfare in the UK. The standards are based on scientific research and developed to be commercially viable in consultation with veterinary surgeons and the farming industry.²⁰⁶ In RSPCA Assured schemes, animals are not genetically selected for rapid growth; cages and crates are banned; animals can perform natural behaviours; when appropriate, species can go outdoors; and animals must be humanely treated at transport and slaughter. The schemes prohibit the use of farrowing crates in pigs and modified cages in laying hens. Mutilations including tail amputation in pigs and beak trimming in chickens is generally prohibited. Cows must have access to pasture to graze for as much of the year as possible.



²⁰⁶ RSPCA Assured, "What Do 'High Standards' Really Mean?".

8. The RSPCA Assured food standards scheme can serve as a useful blueprint for Government policy to aim for. The standards are based on scientific research and designed to be commercially viable. Furthermore, given the prohibition of cages and mutilations, and the promotion of more extensive and outdoor conditions in many cases, the standards broadly overlap with British public opinion.
9. There is a growing consensus about the harms of intensive livestock farming. Henry Dimbleby, Chair of the National Food Strategy, has publicly criticised “factory farms” for their confinement practices and restricting farmed animals from performing natural behaviours.²⁰⁷ The British Veterinary Association food procurement policy states that eggs, chicken meat, and pigmeat should be free range and RSPCA Assured wherever possible.²⁰⁸ The Government’s Animal Health and Welfare Pathway includes the Better Chicken Commitment, and phasing out farrowing crates for pigs and cages for laying hens in its priority areas.²⁰⁹
10. The UK Government and devolved administrations should use legislation and other policy tools to promote higher welfare standards for farmed animals both in the UK and abroad. Broadly, this involves prohibiting extremes of intensive farming, such as farrowing crates for pigs and modified cages for laying hens. It means that the widespread practice of mutilating farmed animals to mitigate aggression in substandard conditions must end. Government should use policy levers to affect a transition to more extensive farming systems, which is both more consistent with public opinion, and better for the billions of farmed animals kept in them.



²⁰⁷ RSPCA, “The Wilberforce Lecture 2022: Henry Dimbleby”.

²⁰⁸ British Veterinary Association, “BVA Food Procurement Policy.”

²⁰⁹ Gov.UK, “Animal Health and Welfare Pathway.”

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