

Policy Statement - Farm animal welfare

1. Preamble

- 1.1.** The CFB published a position paper on Farm Animal Welfare in 2017, which considers ethical issues as they affect farm animal welfare. Other areas in which animals can be used or exploited such as testing, entertainment, clothing, or as pets, may be covered by other areas of CFB work. This policy statement therefore concerns farm animal welfare issues as they affect cattle (dairy, beef and veal), pigs, sheep, poultry (including broiler and laying hens, ducks, turkeys and geese) and farmed and wild fish.
- 1.2.** The position paper considers the biblical and theological background to farm animal welfare, ethical issues related to farm animal welfare and seeks to determine the appropriate response from the CFB.

2. Biblical and Theological Background

- 2.1.** Genesis 1 declares the creatures made on each day good without reference to other creatures. While legitimate human use of animals seems widely assumed in the Bible, the Bible does not state that God made animals merely for human use. Genesis 1 gives humans dominion over other creatures and distinguishes them as bearing the image of God (Gen. 1:26–28), but this is understood to be a relationship of care on behalf of God, to whom the animals belong (Ps. 50:10–11).
- 2.2.** Fish feature widely in the gospel stories: Jesus calls the disciples away from their work as fishermen to fish for people instead (Mk 1:17 || Mt 4:19), miraculously feeds vast crowds with bread and fish (Mk 6:35–44 || Mt 14:15–21), and miraculously increases the catch of the disciples and cooks fish for them in one of his resurrection appearances (Jn 21:4–9).
- 2.3.** Many Christian stories of the saints associate Christian holiness with compassion towards animals, such as St Jerome removing a thorn from a lion who came to seek his help, St Macarius healing the blind pup of a hyena, St Godric hiding a stag from the Bishop of Durham's hunt, or St Werburgh of Chester resurrecting a goose her steward had killed. St Francis was renowned for seeing animals as sisters and brothers. In one story he asked a boy taking trapped doves to the market to give them to him, after which he freed them, spoke sweetly to them as his sisters, and made a dovecote for them.
- 2.4.** John Wesley was concerned about animals throughout his adult life. He wrote an undergraduate essay on the question of whether animals had souls, copied into his journal a long letter he received about the Christian duty of caring for animals, and published two different books affirming God's care for animal creatures. In his famous sermon on Romans 8, 'The General Deliverance', preached in 1781, he states that Paul could not be clearer in affirming that animals will be part of God's redeemed creation, and that this knowledge should make Christians concerned about the many cruelties inflicted on them.
- 2.5.** The Methodist Statement on 'The Treatment of Animals' was adopted by Conference in 1980. It rejects unnecessary experimentation, intensive factory farming practices that do not consider the welfare of animals, and cruel blood sports.

3. Current issues around Farm Animal Welfare

- 3.1.** Farm Animal Welfare is concerned with the livelihood of animals being reared, transported and slaughtered for human consumption. Animals are sentient beings, with the ability to feel both positive and negative emotions. Due to an increase in the demand for meat for an ever growing population, the farming structure has changed from rural small holdings to large concentrated feeding operations (CAFO). A CAFO is a system of rearing livestock by which animals are kept confined under strictly controlled conditions, generally for monetary gain. With the increase in factory farming and therefore yield, farm animal welfare has suffered, with confinement, mutilation, and conscious slaughter all commonplace.
- 3.2.** Within the global farming industry the majority of animals, including fish, are kept in systems which are highly intensive. Within these systems animals are routinely kept in confined spaces where movement is severely restricted. Many animals in intensive farming systems are routinely mutilated, often without any pain relief, in ways which cause immediate and long term pain and distress. Animals are transported often during their lifetimes, and most are transported to slaughter. This can take place by rail, road, sea or air, and can often be over very long distances and durations in poor conditions.
- 3.3.** Humane slaughter requires that animals are rendered unconscious before they are slaughtered through pre-slaughter stunning. This ensures that the animals are not exposed to stress, pain or discomfort in the slaughter process. Well designed animal facilities and equipment that is in good working condition can reduce the likelihood of poor animal welfare. The correct positioning of equipment for pre stunning is imperative to ensure pain elimination for animals prior to slaughter.
- 3.4.** Farmed fish are reared in an intensive environment. Many farmed fish are often subjected to starvation before slaughter and in many cases are left to suffocate or are gutted and left to die causing much pain and distress. Wild fishing practices can also have negative welfare implications. Many fishing practices involve using nets to catch fish which also trap non-target organisms such as turtles and other air-breathing mammals which quickly drown. Fish and by-catch organisms caught in trawler nets can be dragged along the seabed for many miles causing pain, distress and death.
- 3.5.** The use of growth promoting hormones or low dose antibiotics to stimulate growth has become common practice in the intensive farming industry. These are used to increase the amount of muscle or milk produced by animals but has serious implications for their welfare. The non-therapeutic use of antibiotics happens throughout the intensive farming industry. Poor conditions increase the likelihood of factors compromising the animals' immune system, such as stress, selective breeding, and disease. The industry therefore relies on the non-therapeutic use of antibiotics to compensate for the low welfare environment. The prolonged overuse of antibiotics is said to be among the main cause of growing antibiotic resistance in humans.

4. Policy: Farm Animal Welfare

- 4.1.** The CFB invests in food producers, processors, hospitality and food retail companies that use animal related goods and therefore animal welfare is an issue that the CFB will seek to respond to, through engagement with companies. The CFB recognises the complex issues surrounding the production of fish, meat and dairy products for consumption and the increased demand placed on farmers. The CFB also recognises animals as sentient beings. In terms of investment, the CFB views Farm Animal Welfare as predominately a matter for engagement.
- 4.2.** Higher welfare farming, in which the welfare of the animal is considered first, is preferred. This aims to allow animals to live in surroundings similar to their natural habitats, while ensuring they are protected from thirst, hunger, fear and extreme weather. However, this style of farming cannot emulate the production capacity of factory farming and is generally more expensive due to the lower yield.
- 4.3.** The CFB will favour companies with exposure to farm animals where there is a formal policy on animal welfare and a clear position on more specific farm animal welfare-related issues such as the use of antibiotics, animal mutilations, slaughter, close confinement, and live transportation.
- 4.4.** At a governance level, the CFB will look at:
 - Whether the company assigns senior management responsibility and accountability for farm animal welfare.
 - Whether it sets farm animal welfare-related objectives and targets, and ensures that these are included in employee bonus/reward schemes.
 - The resilience of the company's management systems and processes in place to audit and monitor animal welfare standards in its supply chain, ensuring transparent reporting to consumers.

- Whether the company has product lines assured to higher farm animal welfare standards.
- The company's attitude towards engaging with key stakeholders (e.g. animal welfare NGOs such as Compassion in World Farming and World Animal Protection, the Business Benchmark on Farm Animal Welfare) to understand current practice and industry expectations.
- Company investment in projects dedicated to advancing farm animal welfare practices and the promotion of farm animal welfare to consumers through education or awareness raising activities.

4.5. The CFB will also look at other issues such as health and safety and climate change issues as well as farm animal welfare whilst assessing companies. However, in the case where a company persistently resists engagement due to unacceptably poor standards of animal welfare, the CFB may choose ultimately to divest.

November 2017