

Position Paper - Farm animal welfare

1. Introduction: Definition and Scope of issue

1.1. This position paper is limited to a consideration of 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 Position Paper 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.

2. Biblical and Theological Background

2.1. The goodness of creation is a fundamental biblical and theological principle. It is repeatedly affirmed in the creation story of Genesis 1, and in other biblical creation material, such as the great psalm of creation Psalm 104, and the closing chapters of the Book of Job (38–41). Early Christian theologians such as Augustine defended the goodness of creation against their heretical opponents.

2.2. 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. Job 38–41 suggests that God delights in many creatures that have nothing to do with human wellbeing, and the psalms frequently picture all creatures giving praise back to God (e.g. Ps. 148:7, 10).

2.3. While Genesis 1:29–30 indicates a plant-based diet both for humans and other animals, after the flood in Genesis 9, God permits humans to kill animals for food. For most of the Old Testament, the killing of animals is permissible only under the tight edicts of the sacrificial system, and some prophetic texts suggest that animal sacrifices should be brought to an end (e.g. Is. 1:11; 66:3). Wild animals belong to God and are not generally available to Israel for food.

2.4. God's providential care for animals is affirmed in both the Old and New Testaments. God has compassion for every creature and satisfies the desires of every living thing (Ps. 145:9, 16). Jesus affirms that not a single sparrow is forgotten by God (Mt. 10:29 || Lk. 12:6).

2.5. 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). The Sabbath rest required by the Mosaic Law applies to domestic animals as well as humans (Exod. 20:8–10), and in the Sabbath year even wild animals should be allowed to feed on the fallow land (Lev. 25:4–7).

2.6. Isaiah, among other prophets in the Old Testament, looks forward to the time when the Messiah will come, when 'the wolf will lie down with the lamb' and peace will be re-established between all creatures (Is. 11:6–9). In the New Testament, Paul writes of the time when creation will be liberated from its bondage to decay (Rom. 8:19–23) and the opening chapters of the letters to the Ephesians and Colossians envisage the reconciling work of Christ as gathering up and making peace between all things in heaven and earth (Eph. 1:10; Col. 1:20).

2.7. Fish feature widely in the gospel stories: Jesus calls some of 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).

- 2.8.** Earlier in John's gospel, Jesus refers to himself as the good shepherd who protects his sheep, even to the point of laying down his life for them (Jn 10:11–15). He relates the parable of the prodigal son, in which the father kills the fattened calf in celebration (Lk 15:23). Jesus's own death is narrated in John's gospel in terms that recall animal sacrifices (Jn 19, see discussion in Clough, *On Animals* vol. I *Systematic Theology* (London: T&T Clark/Bloomsbury, 2012), pp. 127–8,) and his death is identified as a replacement for Israelite understandings of animal sacrifice in the letter to the Hebrews (Heb. 9:12).
- 2.9.** Peter's vision in Acts 10:9–16 of all animals being declared clean by God is often given as a reason Christians should not be concerned about eating animals. This seems a poor interpretation of the text, as the text itself twice says that the vision is not giving Peter instruction about food, but about the admission of the Gentiles into the church (Acts 10:28; 11:1–12). As a result of the vision, Peter changed his practice towards the Gentiles, rather than changing his diet. Both Peter and the author of Luke-Acts therefore interpret the vision metaphorically, so it would be strange instead to interpret the text literally at odds with both of them.
- 2.10.** Another often-cited verse in this context is Paul's question in 1 Corinthians 9:9. After citing the Israelite law that an ox should not be muzzled while treading out grain (Deut. 25:4), Paul asks rhetorically 'Is it for oxen that God is concerned?' Paul's question has often been interpreted as meaning that God cares nothing for animals, but since this contradicts a vast range of teaching in the Old and New Testaments (see 2.1–2.6 above) and contemporary Jewish understandings of God's care for animals, it is very unlikely that this is what Paul intended. In his sermon 'The General Deliverance', discussed below, John Wesley replies to Paul's question that without doubt God cares for oxen, and says we cannot deny it without flatly contradicting the Bible. Instead, it is likely that Paul meant that the text was written to instruct humans, rather than cattle (Instone-Brewer, D., '1 Corinthians 9:9–11: A Literal Interpretation of 'Do Not Muzzle the Ox'', *New Test. Stud.* 38:4 (1992), 554).
- 2.11.** 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.
- 2.12.** Some Christian theologians, such as Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, adopted the Greek and Roman idea that rationality separated humans from other animals, and argued that this meant that humans did not have direct moral obligations towards animals (e.g. Augustine, *City of God*, bk. I, ch. 20; Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* II-II, q. 64, a. 1).
- This does not mean they did not think there were other reasons to avoid cruelty towards animals, however. For example, Aquinas quotes Proverbs 12:10 'the righteous know the needs of their animals' with approval and recognises the connections between showing compassion for animals and showing compassion to fellow humans (*Summa theologiae* II-I, q. 102, a.6).
- 2.13.** From the 15th to the 19th centuries, the historian Keith Thomas argues that the Christian attitude towards animals was remarkably consistent: that it was permitted to make use of animals where necessary, but that animals should not be subjected to unnecessary cruelty (*Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500–1800* (London; New York: Penguin, 1984), p. 153).
- 2.14.** At the beginning of the 19th century, Christians, including the evangelical William Wilberforce, were prominent in lobbying for the first legislation against cruelty towards animals, and in establishing the organization that became the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA). At the end of the 19th century, Christians led the campaign against the cruelties of vivisection.
- 2.15.** The 2015 papal encyclical *Laudato Si* took up St Francis's attitude towards animals and stated that 'Every creature is thus the object of the Father's tenderness, who gives it its place in the world. Even the fleeting life of the least of beings is the object of his love, and in its few seconds of existence, God enfolds it with his affection' (§77).

3. Methodist Tradition

- 3.1.** 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 stated 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.

- 3.2.** Methodists followed Wesley's concern for animals. In 1760 Horace Walpole is said to have remarked that a man was 'turning Methodist; for, in the middle of conversation, he rose, and opened the window to let out a moth'. Sermons against animal cruelty featured regularly in The Methodist Magazine and The Wesleyan Methodist Magazine in the early 19th century, discussing and rejecting hunting, other blood sports, and cruelties towards animals used for food and labour.
- 3.3.** The Methodist Statement on 'The Treatment of Animals' was adopted by Conference in 1980. It states that the 'theological basis for an attitude to the animal creation must rest on the concept of stewardship rather than lordship, must accept the implications of the reality of the interdependence of life on our planet, and must express the conviction that creation is good'. It rejects unnecessary experimentation, intensive factory farming practices that do not consider the welfare of animals, and cruel blood sports.
- 3.4.** The 2009 Methodist Statement 'Hope in God's Future: Christian Discipleship in the Context of Climate Change' includes a section on responsibilities towards 'other-than-human neighbours', concluding that 'biblical texts testifying to God's concern for creatures beyond the human, together with Israelite law defending them, demand that we should be motivated by love and justice to protect non-human neighbours threatened by climate change alongside the human ones' (§2.5).

4. Current issues around Farm Animal Welfare

- 4.1.** 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 animal feeding operations (CAFOs). 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 CAFOs and therefore yield, farm animal welfare has suffered, with confinement, mutilation, and conscious slaughter all commonplace. According to Compassion in World Farming, two in every three animals are currently factory raised, or over 50 billion a year.
- 4.2.** 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. Such conditions cause stress and discomfort for the animals and increase the risk of illness and disease. Confinement of this type is common in caged systems, and also where animals are kept in pens or sheds, including intensive chicken and pig farming facilities. Sow-stalls are particularly inhumane and have been banned in the EU since 2013.
- 4.3.** 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. Examples are beak-trimming, castration, de-horning and fin-clipping. Some mutilation is intended to prevent animals injuring themselves out of boredom or distress, and could be avoided if measures were taken such as improving conditions and administering appropriate vaccinations.
- 4.4.** 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. Transporting animals, particularly over long distances, can have a serious impact on their welfare in terms of stress, discomfort, hunger and thirst, and can lead to injury, sickness and sometimes death.
- 4.5.** 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. Whilst pre-slaughter stunning is now a legal requirement in most countries, exemptions exist for authorised religious slaughter such as for Halal and Kosher meat, including in the EU. Halal preparation allows for pre-slaughter stunning as long as the animal is still alive to be blessed and killed in a specific way, but Kosher preparation prohibits pre-slaughter stunning.
- 4.6.** Farmed fish are reared in an intensive environment. Many fish suffer from overcrowding – limiting swimming space and decreasing available oxygen in the water. 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.
- 4.7.** 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.

4.8. Selective breeding in order to produce breeds which are particularly fast growing or high yielding is becoming an increasingly common practice in the intensive farming industry. Engineering in this sense to serve the purpose of increasing yield often has adverse effects which are detrimental to the welfare of the animal, including causing deformities. One example of this is broiler chicken production, where intensively reared chickens are chosen for their very fast growth rate. This can cause leg deformities and lameness as their bodies grow faster than their legs and they cannot support themselves.

4.9. 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 use of hormones or antibiotics for growth promotion is not permitted in the EU and the import of products treated with hormones for growth promotion is also not permitted. However, products treated with antibiotics for growth promotion are still permitted for import into the EU.

4.10. 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 causes of growing antibiotic resistance in humans. Since it's estimated that almost half of all antibiotics produced globally are used for farm animals, this presents a significant threat to human health. As the antibiotics used for animals can be the same class as those used for humans, this can render disease untreatable for both animals and humans.

4.11. Correct labelling of goods can increase consumer choice to promote farm animal welfare, such as the introduction of categories for eggs in 2004 into 'free-range', 'eggs from caged hens', and 'barn eggs'. Labelling systems such as the Soil Association Organic Standard, the Red Tractor, RSPCA assured, and Lion Quality assure consumers that certain animal welfare and food safety standards have been adhered to. According to Compassion in World Farming (CiWF), the Soil Association ensure organic guidelines and standards

that are much higher than standard industrial practice, specifically on key areas such as pre-slaughter stunning and confinement systems. RSPCA Assured labelling scheme covers both indoor and outdoor rearing systems, as well as health and welfare monitoring for animals. CiWF reports that the Red Tractor label assures that the food was produced in Britain although it does not go above the expectations of the law in regard to confinement of sows during farrowing among other things. Lion Quality labels are only present on eggs and only assure consumers the eggs were laid in Britain.

4.12. There is a growing concern that the increased demand for meat driving CAFO usage is not sustainable, with some organisations calling for protein diversification, in response to the complexity of sourcing food for seven billion people. Farm Animal Investment Risk and Return (FAIRR) are calling for a change in diet by diversifying the protein sources on offer. Forum for the Future, an organisation that looks for solutions to long term sustainability problems, launched The Protein Challenge 2040. It advocates plant based proteins as an alternative to meat, a greater awareness of livestock feed to ensure protein that humans can eat are not being used for feed, and to reduce wasted protein.

Although cattle usually graze on grasses they are being bred to graze on soya and cereal feeds as well, meaning that grains and nutrient rich foods that humans can eat are being fed to animals. According to the United Nations Environment Programme, for 100 calories worth of grain feed that a cow consumes, only 17 calories are returned through cattle and dairy products.

There is also published research that the current consumption of meat is not healthy for humans and can cause a variety of health issues. According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, cattle are the most GHG intensive animal to rear, representing 65% of sector emissions.

5. Relevant CFB and JACEI discussions

5.1. The CFB has previously written a food policy statement that highlights particular areas of concern that overlap with farm animal welfare including:

- Animal welfare in the meat products industry.
- Improper use of pesticides, antibiotics, and other chemicals.
- Misuse of water resources and the consequent impact on local farmers.

- Soil degradation and other environmental damage to the land.
- The sale of imported agricultural products that involves high transport costs and therefore unnecessary carbon emissions.
- Growing genetically modified crops.

5.2. CFB is a supporting investor of Business Benchmark on Farm Animal Welfare (BBFAW), a global measure of company performance of farm animal welfare. It was set up in 2012 to index companies on their animal welfare policies and practices, in order to promote change. It assesses company management in four core areas: management commitment policy, governance and management, leadership and innovation, and performance management. In the 2016 report, 99 companies were rated by BBFAW across the three subsectors of food retailers and wholesalers; restaurants and bars; and food producers. Since 2015, 12 new companies have been added, continuing the trend of increased scope since the benchmark was created in 2012 with 68 companies reporting. Since the benchmark began, it can be seen that there have been improvements across every tier, with six companies considered leaders in this area. BBFAW presented to JACEI in 2014 on the work that it does, and regularly updates CFB with its engagements with other companies.

The CFB have engaged with multiple companies consistently over the last three years based on the work of the BBFAW, particularly targeting laggards in order to improve standards at the company and therefore improve their ranking in the benchmark.

5.3. Farm Animal Investment Risk and Return (FAIRR) is an organisation that works to raise awareness of poor animal welfare and the impact – through both risk and opportunity – that it can have on investors. It states that through shareholder resolutions and joint letters and briefings it aims to encourage companies with exposure to farm animals to improve their practice and policies.

It is currently in partnership with ShareAction (see 6.2).

In collaboration with FAIRR, the CFB has engaged with over nine companies around the use of antibiotics as a preventative method against disease in animals, and has received encouraging responses from most of these prohibiting the use of non-therapeutic antibiotics in their supply chains.

6. Other Government, NGO and Faith Reports

6.1. No other faith investors have a policy on Farm Animal Welfare as yet, however many denominations have a statement on the treatment of animals, including farm animal welfare:

1. The Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals (ASWA) is a Church of England organisation that is concerned with the need to care for all creation. It states that intensive farming, the food chain, experimentation, diseases associated with animals, the ill treatment of pets and the killing of animals for pleasure all raise ethical questions. It adds that animal issues are theological issues and should be on the agenda of the church. It encourages churches to pray for the welfare of animals and to hold animal blessing services. Through these tools, it aims to raise the profile of animal welfare.
2. One catechism of the Catholic Church (number 2416) relates to animal welfare, though does not mention farming – “Animals are God’s creatures. By their mere existence they bless Him and give Him glory. Thus men owe them kindness.” The Catholic Concern for Animals works to raise awareness, through research and publication, of animal welfare and the call of humans to care for the world that God created.

6.2. ShareAction is a responsible investment organisation. It works to enable engagement between investors and investees on a variety of issues, through research and policy recommendations. ShareAction are currently researching the area of ‘developing sustainable food systems’ through greater scrutiny of CAFOs and ESG impacts of farm animal welfare, focusing on antibiotic usage and sustainable food systems.

6.3. Compassion in World Farming (CiWF) has a mission to end CAFOs. CiWF peacefully campaign for ethical and sustainable farming, through undercover investigations, political lobbying and campaigning, and incentivises large companies with its Good Farm Animal Welfare Awards.

6.4. World Animal Protection works to raise awareness of animal welfare worldwide. It works with wild animals, animals in the community, animals in disaster and farm animals.

For farm animals, the organisation works to increase awareness of conditions, influence international trade agreements and lobbying national governments.

6.5. Defra – the Departments for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs – publishes information for those involved in farming and provides regulations to follow. It has legislation relating to the five freedoms that should be allowed to animals:

- 'Freedom from hunger and thirst, by ready access to water and a diet to maintain health and vigour.'
- Freedom from discomfort, by providing an appropriate environment.
- Freedom from pain, injury and disease, by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
- Freedom to express normal behaviour, by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and appropriate company of the animal's own kind.
- Freedom from fear and distress, by ensuring conditions and treatment, which avoid mental suffering.'

6.6. The Farm Animal Welfare Committee (FAWC) is in place to advice Defra on farm animal welfare issues, improvements to be made and changes it would recommend to current policy. It provides scientific advice on the welfare of animals near the time of slaughter and publishes its advice.

7. Considerations for a future policy framework

7.1. 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.

7.2. On the basis of a Christian concern for the wellbeing of farm animals, it is clearly desirable that moves are made towards higher welfare methods of raising farm animals, which allow them to live in surroundings more similar to their natural habitats and express species-typical behaviours, while ensuring they are protected from thirst, hunger, fear and extreme weather. Such higher welfare farming places a higher priority on the health and wellbeing of the animals, and reduces the number of antibiotics used. Such systems would have lower production capacities and the animal products derived from them would be generally more expensive in comparison with industrial systems for raising farm animals. Companies sourcing animal products from higher welfare sources or planning to do so are therefore preferred by the CFB.

7.3. 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.

7.4. 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.

7.5.

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.