

## ENSURING STANDARDS ARE COMPLEMENTARY

# Linking Food Safety & Animal Welfare

The OIE\* has released a scientific and technical review (Volume 24 (2), August 2005), *Animal Welfare: global issues, trends and challenges*. The publication provides a global overview on animal welfare perspectives. It aims to communicate the OIE's intended role as a leader in this area.

Drs. Anne Marie de Passillé and Jeffrey Rushen, with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada in Agassiz, BC, were invited to provide an article for the publication. It is entitled *Food Safety and environmental issues in animal welfare*.

While the public seems to believe that food safety and animal welfare are linked, consensus is not established amongst industry players. The researchers believe that it is important to develop animal welfare and food safety standards in a consistent manner to avoid potential conflicts.

"The link between animal welfare and animal health (and hence, by implication, food safety) is supported by scientific evidence ... improvements in animal welfare have the potential to reduce on-farm risks to food safety..." say de Passillé and Rushen.

There is considerable evidence showing that chronic stress and reduced animal welfare render animals more prone to infectious diseases, shedding bacteria and the increased use of antibiotics. "Many endemic health problems

*"Animal-based measures allow greater flexibility in designing the housing and management of animals."*

are among the most serious welfare problems, especially for high producing animals," say de Passillé and Rushen.

The researchers point to a report from the European Commission stressing the importance of having animal welfare standards within the EU's food safety policy. "The report argued that on-farm monitoring of animal welfare was essential to ensure food safety. The underlying reason given was the clear link between poor animal welfare and reduced animal health and **lower food safety.**" >>>



Drs. Anne Marie de Passillé & Jeffrey Rushen

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## LINKING FOOD SAFETY AND ANIMAL WELFARE con't ...

Ensuring food safety and animal welfare criteria are complementary, rather than conflicting, is another challenge. De Passillé and Rushen suggest that the criteria for assessing animal welfare should be **animal-based**, (i.e., the state of the animals — using behavioural, physiological, health and production measures). “Animal-based measures allow greater flexibility in designing the housing and management of animals. In this way, controls to ensure food safety ... can more easily be incorporated, while the effects on animal welfare are monitored.”

De Passillé and Rushen argue design-based measures — cage size, groups size, etc, while favoured because they are easier to audit, are inflexible and do not necessarily lead to improved animal welfare. Design criteria cannot account for different housing systems, production practices and the potentially different needs of different breeds of animals.

The researchers suggest another step towards reconciling food safety and animal welfare standards is to use a common approach, in particular a hazard analysis of critical control points (HACCP). “Sufficient research has now been done on animal welfare to begin the initial aspects of the HACCP procedure; assessment of risks to animal welfare and identification of the critical control points where risks are high and where some control is necessary.”

While the authors recognize a full-scale HACCP-based animal welfare program may not yet be feasible, continued work in this direction is likely to ensure a smoother integration between food safety and animal welfare standards for the future. ■



\***World Organizaon for Animal Health** = OIE – Scientific and Technical Review, Volume 24 (2), August 2005 overview: [www.oie.int](http://www.oie.int)

Sample HACCP-based animal welfare audits: [www.grandin.com](http://www.grandin.com)