

“SCIENCE AND SOCIETY IMPROVING ANIMAL WELFARE” The EU’s Welfare Quality® Project

The Welfare Quality® (WQ) Project held its second stakeholder conference, *Assuring animal welfare: from societal concerns to implementation*, May 3 – 4, 2007 in Berlin, Germany. The European project aims to integrate animal welfare in the food quality chain, “from public concern to improved welfare and transparent quality.”¹

Project results were presented at the conference, including the identification of animal welfare principles that should be addressed within assessment processes.

WQ project researchers recognize animal welfare as a multi-dimensional concept, comprised of both physical and mental health. They also note that the importance attributed to different aspects of animal welfare will vary between people. Following from this, 12 welfare principles have been identified within four main criteria groups (Table 1).

The 12 principles were reviewed by the Welfare Quality Advisory Committee and by 55 consumer-citizen focus groups to assess support, which was reported as being high.

Draft monitoring schemes that incorporate the 12 principles, are being developed and tested. Animal-based measures are preferred and viewed as appropriate to assess welfare from the animals’ point of view. However, the project will also look at environment-based measures, “which will help

diagnose the causes of poor welfare and advise farmers on ways to improve the welfare of their animals.”

There is recognition that to increase the acceptability of any monitoring system, farmers must be involved in the development process. The draft monitoring schemes are currently being tested on pilot farms and abattoirs around Europe. ■



Conference venue in Berlin

EU Welfare Quality® Project:
www.welfarequality.net/everyone/36059

Table 1: Welfare principles and criteria identified in Welfare Quality®

CRITERIA	WELFARE PRINCIPLES	MEANINGS
Good feeding	1. Absence of prolonged hunger	Animals should not suffer from prolonged hunger
	2. Absence of prolonged thirst	Animals should not suffer from prolonged thirst
Good housing	3. Comfort around resting	Animals should be comfortable, especially within their lying areas
	4. Thermal comfort	Animals should be in good thermal environment
	5. Ease of movement	Animals should be able to move around freely
Good health	6. Absence of injuries	Animals should not be physically injured
	7. Absence of disease	Animals should be free of disease
	8. Absence of pain induced by management procedures	Animals should not suffer from pain induced by inappropriate management
Appropriate behaviour	9. Expression of social behaviours	Animals should be allowed to express natural, non-harmful, social behaviours
	10. Expression of other behaviours	Animals should have the possibility of expressing other intuitively desirable natural behaviours, such as exploration and play
	11. Good human-animal relationship	Good human-animal relationships are beneficial to the welfare of animals
	12. Absence of general fear	Animals should not experience negative emotions such as fear, distress, frustration or apathy

1. Proceedings of the Second Welfare Quality® Stakeholder Conference, May 3-4, 2007, Berlin, Germany.