

Cost-Benefit Analysis of Pain Relief

By Allison Guy

Cost-Benefit Analysis of Pain Relief for Farm Animals was presented at the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy Science Summit on Pain and Pain Management in May 2007 by Professor David Mellor of Massey University, New Zealand. In the article¹, Mellor et al. examined both the harms and benefits of painful husbandry procedures and of using pain-relief for these procedures on the farm.

They argue that it is never acceptable to deliberately set out to cause an animal pain. However, performing certain husbandry procedures that have pain as a side effect may be acceptable so long as there is a critical need to perform the procedure and every practical means to minimize pain has been taken.

To help farmers analyse the cost and the benefits of specific husbandry procedures, the authors include a list of questions in the article, such as:

- Do the act and the anatomical modification cause greater harms to the animals than they prevent?; and
- Are there sufficient indirect benefits (e.g. commercial, educational, recreational, scientific, social) to offset the harms done by the procedure itself?

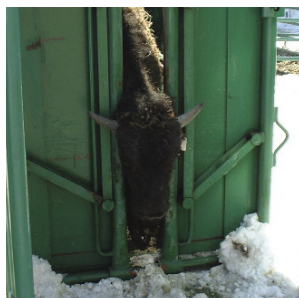
The authors also discuss the tension between the ethical obligation to provide pain relief and the costs of pain management programs (Table 1). Although the authors argue that the cost-benefit analysis of performing painful husbandry procedure is strictly an ethical one, economic costs figure prominently in analysing the costs and benefits of pain management programs.

The authors also suggest that in addition to the immediate dollar cost of providing pain relief, there may be a future economic cost of not providing it due to an evolution of public attitudes. *i*

Table 1: The Benefits and Costs of Providing Pain Relief for Husbandry Procedures

Benefits	Harms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alleviation of pain and distress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain and distress caused by inexpert administration and management of drugs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential to gain access to premium priced markets serviced by welfare-sensitive food distribution enterprises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased operating costs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - purchasing analgesics and the equipment to administer them - training staff - increased time of stockhandlers with each animal - modification of the environment to conduct the procedures

¹ Mellor, DJ et al. (2007) Cost-Benefit Analysis of Pain Relief for Farm Animals. Australian Animal Welfare Strategy Science Summit on Pain and Pain Management, May 2007 – Proceedings. Available at: www.daff.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/299102/david-mellor.pdf



Putting Farm Animal Welfare on the Agenda.

Public concern and interest in farm animal welfare continue to grow. There is some excellent work being done to improve farm animal care. Our challenge is to communicate that information to where it's needed, from farmers to consumers and everyone in between.

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