

Animal Welfare in Poultry Meat Production

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Animals are sentient beings! Animal welfare refers to both physical and mental health states that is summed up by a set of principles or "Five Freedoms" (Freedom from hunger and thirst; Freedom from discomfort; Freedom from pain, injury and disease; Freedom to express normal behavior; and Freedom from fear and distress). In other words, an animal with good state of welfare is healthy, comfortable, well nourished, safe, able to express innate behavior, without suffering from unpleasant states such as pain, fear, and distress. Farm animal welfare also includes best fitness, disease prevention and appropriate veterinary treatment, appropriate shelter and environmental control, skilled management, balanced nutrition, emergency planning, as well as humane handling, euthanasia and slaughter.

Farm animal welfare programs are a global concern, but their implementation vary greatly. Some are based on international guidelines, some on mandated national standards, and others based on commodity, NGO or customer imposed welfare codes. Regardless, they all include a range of physical (i.e., mortality and morbidity; vigor; presence of disease, injury or stress) and mental indicators (i.e., positive and negative behavioral states) of health and wellbeing.

Welfare indicators (metrics) are typically categorized either as input-based (i.e., housing, nutrition, biosecurity, health programs, husbandry, handling, transportation and slaughter) or outcome-based (morbidity and mortality; culling; gait and contact dermatitis scores, feather condition, disease signs, feed and water consumption, injury rates, vocalization and behavior), all of which must be assessed and independently verified (audited). Animal welfare is essential for sustainability and global harmonization and it has become a key component of modern animal production.