

STOP – LOOK – LISTEN RECOGNISING THE SENTIENCE OF FARM ANIMALS

SUMMARY REPORT BY COMPASSION IN WORLD FARMING

Photo: © Compassion in World Farming/Martin Osborne

**"The question is not, can they *reason*?
Nor, can they *talk*? But, can they *suffer*?"**

Jeremy Bentham, philosopher and social reformer, 1789



COMPASSION IN WORLD FARMING

Compassion in World Farming is the leading international non-governmental organisation specialising in the welfare of farm animals.

Founded by a farmer in 1967, Compassion in World Farming has been highly successful in lobbying for legal reform to protect the welfare of farm animals. Our campaign on animal sentience achieved success in 1997 when a Protocol was added to the European Treaty recognising animals as sentient beings. Our vision is a world where farm animals are treated with compassion and respect and where cruel factory farming practices end.

We believe that the welfare of farm animals will be best achieved in free-range or organic farming systems where their sentience is respected and where they have outdoor access and are kept in smaller groups. Such farms are likely to incorporate a range of environmental benefits, such as protection of biodiversity and reduced pollution.

Compassion in World Farming produces fully-referenced reports on a range of farm animal welfare issues and related topics, such as the environment and global trade. A complete list of our materials and downloadable versions is available at [ciwf.org/publications](https://www.ciwf.org/publications)

WHAT IS ANIMAL SENTIENCE?

Sentient animals are aware of their feelings and emotions. These could be negative feelings such as pain, frustration and fear. It is logical to suppose that sentient animals also enjoy feelings of comfort, enjoyment, contentment, and perhaps even great delight and joy.

Science shows us some interesting abilities in farm animals:

- Sheep can recognise up to 50 other sheep's faces and remember them for two years
- Cows show excitement when they discover how to open a gate leading to a food reward
- Mother hens teach their chicks which foods are good to eat
- Lame meat chickens choose to eat food which contains a painkiller

Scientists believe that sentience is necessary because it helps animals to survive by:

- learning more effectively from experience in order to cope with the world
- distinguishing and choosing between different objects, animals and situations such as working out who is helpful or who might cause them harm
- understanding social relationships and the behaviour of other individuals.



Photo: © Compassion in World Farming/Martin Usborne

Sheep have a good memory for faces

The growing scientific interest in animal sentience is showing what many people have long thought to be the case – that a wide range of animals are thinking, feeling beings. What happens to them matters to them.

“A sentient animal is one for whom feelings matter.”

John Webster, Professor Emeritus, University of Bristol

WHY ANIMAL SENTIENCE MATTERS

Animals have evolved to cope as successfully as possible with life in the wild. Thousands of years of domestication of farm animals have changed their basic motivations and behaviour patterns very little.

Industrial-type farming often fails to appreciate animals' needs and their capacity to suffer. This can mean that very large numbers of sentient animals are routinely subjected to pain and deprivation.

Globally each year we farm 60 billion farm animals for meat, milk or eggs.¹ The majority of commercially-farmed animals are confined in cages, narrow stalls or in over-crowded sheds. In such confinement, there is little or no opportunity to carry out the natural behaviours which are so important to them.

It is urgent that farming systems and practices adopt methods which recognise animal sentience and pay full regard to the animals' needs.

ATTITUDES TO ANIMAL SENTIENCE

The way that people think about animals is influenced by their education, and social and cultural factors of their time.

The French philosopher René Descartes (1596-1650) left a lasting influence with his view of animals as 'machines'. But as thought progressed in the following century, the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) asked: "The question is not, Can they *reason*? Nor, Can they *talk*? But, Can they *suffer*?"²

Charles Darwin (1809-1882), whose ideas underlie modern biology, believed there is continuity between humans and other animal species. He wrote: "We have seen that the senses and intuitions, the various emotions and faculties, such as love, memory, attention and curiosity, imitation, reason, etc, of which man boasts, may be found in an incipient, or even sometimes in a well-developed condition, in the lower animals."³



Photo: © Compassion in World Farming/Martin Usborne

Across the world, over 60% of hens are confined to cages

In contrast to Darwin's insights, the early twentieth-century Behaviourist school of psychology considered that behaviour alone should be studied, rather than any emotion or reasoning that might lie behind it. This has left a lasting and very damaging influence on the study of animals. Some scientists are still wary about drawing conclusions about the animals' feelings or intentions, lest they be accused of anthropomorphism (attributing human feelings to animals).

However, the renowned primatologist, Frans de Waal, writes: "I attribute opposition to [anthropomorphism] to a desire to keep animals at arms' length, rather than concerns about scientific objectivity."⁴ Modern biology and psychological science includes the study of animal minds, their needs and wellbeing.

EVIDENCE ABOUT FARM ANIMAL SENTIENCE

Pain

Psychologists usually define the pain that humans feel as a deeply unpleasant experience affecting the senses and the emotions.

The bodies of vertebrates have most of the features which are involved in awareness of pain and therefore it would seem that conditions which cause pain to humans will also cause pain to animals. The great majority of scientists accept that animals feel pain and should be protected from it.

Some animals who are at risk from predators, such as sheep and cattle, may try to hide pain and distress, because showing weakness puts them at greater risk - so they may feel pain but not act as though they are suffering.

Animal behaviour experts use a range of indicators to judge whether an animal is in pain. They look at how the animals behave, whether they try to avoid using an injured limb, their cries, changes of mood, unresponsiveness, and their reaction to pain relieving drugs.



Lame chickens choose feed laced with a painkiller

Confined and crowded animals often display disturbed behaviour and can injure each other. Rather than address the root causes, producers may routinely mutilate their animals, often without anaesthetic. This includes the debeaking of poultry, castration and tail docking of piglets. The screams of a castrated piglet suggest he is experiencing 'considerable pain.'⁵

Lame meat chickens who have difficulty walking choose feed that contains a pain-killing drug.⁶ A study of a commercial strain of chickens found that nearly 30 per cent of chickens had difficulty walking, and over three per cent could barely walk.⁷

Fear, anxiety and stress

Repeated and/or prolonged stressful situations can cause illness and suffering in farm animals. The result can be stomach ulcers, reduced fertility, heart disease, reduced immunity to infection and increased death rates.

In farming, animals are often put in situations which cause fear, anxiety and distress. These emotions are unpleasant and can cause suffering. The challenge now is to put our modern knowledge of animal sentience into practice, by protecting the physical and psychological welfare of the billions of animals we farm worldwide through better farming systems which meet their needs.

Frustration of natural behaviour

Farm animals feel and show frustration when they are prevented from carrying out natural behaviour. Animals' responses to frustration show that they are aware of what they want to do and how they expect the world to be.

Animals in confinement may react to long-term frustration and stress by carrying out apparently pointless, repetitive behaviours, or 'stereotypies'. Many stereotypies look like the original behaviour that the animal was strongly motivated to perform – such as escaping from being confined, getting food or exercising over a large range, but in the captive setting they appear useless and abnormal.

Stereotypies include the pacing of confined zoo animals, and the bar-biting, head-weaving and tongue rolling of sows confined to narrow sow stalls. Confined farmed fish are affected by stereotypies too.⁸

Maternal deprivation, which affects very large numbers of farm animals, may be a factor in stereotypic behaviour.⁹ Piglets and calves are abruptly removed from their mothers at a very young age. Commercially farmed poultry are artificially incubated and never see their parents or other adults of their species while growing.

The family lives of farm animals

There is a significant amount of research on the social and emotional bonds of animals such as elephants and apes.

It seems logical to assume that social bonds are similarly important to domesticated animals. However, many modern farming methods fail to recognise these bonds in their day-to-day practices. For example, in the dairy industry, calves are removed from their mothers at a day old, instead of the natural weaning process which would take place when the calves are several months old.

Pleasure and play

Animals also enjoy positive emotions from carrying out natural behaviour. Many of the skills that animals need in their adult lives in nature are partly learned by play activities when young. The fact that young farm animals clearly enjoy playing is a hallmark of their complex mental life.

INTENSIVE ANIMAL FARMING

Intensive, or industrial, animal agriculture was developed to produce cheap and plentiful meat, milk and eggs. It is how the vast majority of farm animals are reared in developed countries and is rapidly spreading throughout the world. Many of its features fail to recognise the sentience of each individual animal:

- Animals may be confined in cages or crowded together
- Indoor dairy herds of hundreds of cows, and chicken sheds of 20,000 or more birds are common
- Globally, over 60 percent of laying hens are kept in battery cages, unable to spread their wings
- Selective breeding for fast growth and high productivity results in severe health problems, such as lameness in chickens, pigs and dairy cows.



Photo: © Compassion in World Farming/Martin Osborne

Farm animals have strong emotional bonds



Photo: © Compassion in World Farming/Martin Osborne

Chickens are commonly crammed in sheds of 20,000 or more birds



Young animals enjoy playing

ANIMAL SENTIENCE AND FARMING

CATTLE

Natural behaviour of cattle

Cattle would naturally live in herds with a dominance hierarchy, and with specific home ranges. Young males sometimes form small groups and older males are often solitary except for the mating season. Cattle can recognise 50-70 individual herd-mates.

A cow would move away from the group before giving birth to her calf. The bond between cow and calf is quickly established. The calf would suckle for at least eight months and would learn essential living skills from the cow and other group members. Mothers and daughters may retain a close relationship for years.¹⁰

One farmer tells us: "Dairy cows go wild on the morning in spring when they are let out into the fields for the first time since their long winter confinement. ... They seem, quite literally, to be full of the joy of spring."¹¹

Life on the farm

Commercial dairy farming depends on the separation of the mother cow and her calf. A dairy cow in commercial farming is usually required to produce a calf once a year so that she will produce milk for the following 10 months. Usually the calf will be removed after 24 hours, which causes distress to both the cow and her calf. The cow can carry on calling out for her calf for days after separation. Research has shown that loss of maternal care leads to abnormal behaviour in the young animals and a lower ability to cope with their environment.¹²

In some instances male calves of the dairy herd are shot soon after birth or they may be transported long distances for rearing in barren conditions for the veal market. Although these calves are capable of a rich quality of life, they appear to be viewed as byproducts of milk production rather than as sentient animals. Many dairy cows, bred to produce high yields of milk, suffer long-term pain from mastitis (infection of the udder) and lameness.

Cattle raised for beef may be reared on grass and mother and calf may stay together longer. Globally, however, nearly half are reared either indoors or are fattened in large barren feedlots. Males may suffer painful castration. Cattle can be subjected to stressful long-distance transport, merely for slaughter.

CHICKENS AND HENS

Natural behaviour of chickens and hens

The chickens we farm were domesticated from the Red Junglefowl of South East Asia, who live in small hierarchical groups. Their natural habitats are forested areas with cover and areas for roosting at night. Junglefowl and domestic chickens are believed to have over 30 different calls and also use body language to convey messages.

A broody hen may walk a considerable distance to carefully choose a suitable, secure nest site. She lays several eggs and then incubates them. The chicks start communicating with the hen by peeping calls even before they are hatched. The mother hen cares for the chicks, providing warmth and protection and teaches them about food, safety, perching, and other activities of daily life.

Chickens like to dustbathe to clean their feathers and, in natural conditions, would spend up to 90 per cent of their time foraging for food. Like cows, sheep and pigs, hens can tell individual humans apart and can learn from each other.

Life on the farm

We have selectively bred chickens into two separate types, known commercially as 'laying hens' and 'broiler' chickens (chickens reared for meat).

Caged laying hens, each having less space than an A4 sheet of paper, are unable to carry out nearly all their natural behaviours. Lack of exercise plus the high level of egg production can make the hens prone to brittle and broken bones.

Feather pecking (harmful pecking of other hens) is often a problem on commercial farms but has not been seen in the wild.¹³ To prevent feather pecking, many hens have part of their beaks removed, which can cause lasting pain.

Meat chickens have been bred to grow at an incredibly fast rate so they reach slaughter weight at just a few weeks old. The birds put on weight so quickly that many suffer from painful lameness. They are kept in sheds so crowded that movement and resting can be difficult and the filthy litter on the floor can cause skin sores.



Dustbathing is important for cleaning feathers

Photo: © Compassion in World Farming/Martin Osborne

PIGS

Natural behaviour of pigs

In nature female pigs (sows) live in small groups with their young. The pigs' home range would have different areas for wallowing, dunging, feeding and nests for sleeping. Pigs may recognise 20-30 individuals and greet their friends by nose to nose contact, grunting and grooming. The boar has a special 'mating song'.

A pregnant sow may walk 5-10 kilometers to find a safe site where she will build a nest of leaves and branches, in which she will give birth and protect her piglets. The piglets are gradually weaned by around 17 weeks but may stay with their mother till sexual maturity at 8-10 months. Pigs use their sensitive and versatile snouts for digging and foraging and they have an acute sense of smell.



Free-range sows can nurture their piglets

Experiments show that pigs understand what is going on in other pigs' minds. For example, a wily pig will keep a good food source hidden from other nearby pigs.¹⁴ This type of action, which recognises what is going on in the minds of others, had previously been assumed to be unique to apes and humans.

Life on the farm

In intensive farming, piglets are normally taken from their mother after 3-4 weeks. When separated, they often call for their mother with frequent, distinctive squeals and in some cases appear to 'give up on life'.¹⁵ Most pigs have only bare concrete or slats on the floor and cannot carry out their natural foraging and exploring behaviour. Piglets kept on straw are more active and less prone to 'aggression' than those kept on bare concrete.

Many breeding sows are kept in sow stalls – bare, individual pens in which they cannot even turn around. Many countries have now recognised that this system causes so much suffering and ill-health that they are phasing it out.

Before they give birth, sows are moved to farrowing crates, which are also narrow and barren. It feels so important to a sow to build a nest for her piglets that sows kept in crates will still go through the motions of nest-building, although they have no opportunity or materials to make their nests.

In industrial farming, piglets reared for meat are kept crowded together indoors on concrete or slatted floors. Because the environment is so barren, the piglets may bite each others' tails and cause infections and pain. Although this could be prevented by providing comfortable bedding and a stimulating environment, most producers resort to docking the piglets' tails. In most countries males are castrated. Both these painful mutilations are routinely performed without any pain relief.



These sows in farrowing crates were unable to make nests for their piglets and cannot nurture them as they may want to

Photo: © Compassion in World Farming/Martin Osborne

ANIMAL SENTIENCE AND FARMING

SHEEP

Natural behaviour of sheep

In wild environments sheep would range in same-sex groups. Sheep are very social and they become stressed if isolated from their group. Experts have shown that sheep can recognise 50 sheep faces and remember them for two years. They can also recognise other sheep from their profiles after they have learned to recognise them from the front view. Researchers concluded that sheep have “a highly developed requirement for social interaction and therefore a sophisticated sense of social awareness”.¹⁶

Life on the farm and beyond

Many sheep are kept in free-range conditions on grass. However, others kept on hillsides or in huge flocks may suffer from neglect and failure to treat conditions like lameness.

Lambs are routinely tail-docked and castrated without pain-relieving drugs. Sheep and lambs may be transported very long distances. For example, millions sheep are sent by sea from Australia to the Middle East. Thousands of sheep die on the ships.



These panting sheep have been transported in hot weather which stresses them severely

FISH

Natural behaviour of fish

In the wild, fish have a complex and interesting environment. Some species make elaborate nests; they can learn from other fish, make decisions¹⁷, and can recognise others in their shoal.

Modern scientific interest in the physiology and nervous system of fishes is also showing that they are very likely to suffer pain, fear and psychological stress. Their welfare needs are unlikely to be met in intensive, high density fish farms.

Life on the fish farm

Crowding and competition among the fish at feeding times can lead to injuries to their fins, eyes, and tails. In these conditions they can be prone to disease and parasite infestations. Fish farms produce about 40 per cent of the fish eaten by humans worldwide.¹⁸



Photo: © Compassion in World Farming/Xiao Shibai

Free-range hen with her chicks (China)

PROGRESS AND ALTERNATIVES

Alternatives to intensive farming

High-welfare free range, pasture-based and organic farming systems can pay more regard to the sentience of farm animals and are proving to be commercially viable.

Organic farms may use slower-growing breeds of animals who suffer less physiological stress. Organic standards differ throughout the world; those of the Soil Association in the UK are considered to be among the best.

Progress

Globally, there are signs that an increasing number of scientists, policy makers and the general public are acknowledging the sentience of animals and taking action to protect the welfare of farm animals.

For example, the World Organisation for Animal Health (the OIE), originally founded to deal with animal disease, now includes animal welfare in its brief, and in 2005, it adopted the first ever global standards for animal welfare in transport and at slaughter.

In 2009, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) launched the Gateway to Farm Animal Welfare - dedicated webpages giving online access to the latest information on farm animal welfare and the opportunity to contribute information and participate in online thematic discussions, at www.fao.org/ag/againfo/programmes/animal-welfare/en/.

The countries of the European Union (EU)

European Union law recognises that animals are sentient beings and requires member states to “pay full regard to the welfare requirements of animals.”¹⁹

The European Union Council Directive 98/58/EC declares that an animal must not be kept for farming purposes unless “it can be kept without detrimental effect on its health or welfare.” (Annex, para 21).

Veal crates

The barren, narrow veal crate was banned across the European Union from January 2007 and has been illegal in the UK since 1990.

Laying hens

The barren battery cage will be prohibited in Europe in 2012. So-called ‘enriched’ cages, which fail to meet many of the physical and psychological needs of hens, will still be permitted. However, there is increasing consumer demand for eggs from higher welfare systems, such as free-range.

Broiler chickens

In 2007 the first European Union Directive on the welfare of broiler chickens was introduced. Although it fails to address two major welfare problems, the fast-growing breeds and overcrowding, it does mean closer attention will be paid to the welfare of broiler chickens, with future opportunities to strengthen the law.



The Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare seeks a United Nations Declaration recognising animals as sentient beings

Global Initiatives

The Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare (UDAW)

This initiative is led by the World Society for the Protection of Animals and is supported by Compassion in World Farming and other organisations.

The goal is the adoption by the United Nations of a Universal Declaration recognising animals as sentient beings capable of feeling pain and therefore in need of protection from cruelty. Several governments and veterinary organisations have declared their support for a Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare, and more support for the UDAW is being generated all the time.

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Mutilations

In Europe, the routine docking of piglets' tails is illegal (although monitoring is essential to ensure the law is being upheld).

Long distance transport of live animals

From 2007, tighter rules on training, certification and enforcement, together with requirements for some improvements to the transport vehicles, were introduced. However, journey times are still unacceptably long.

Pigs

In the EU, pigs should by law now be given manipulable materials such as straw, woodchips or mushroom compost to provide a more interesting environment in which they can root and forage. However this law is often not followed by farmers. Compassion in World Farming believes that pigs should also be provided with sufficient bedding material for warmth and comfort.

Sow stalls (gestation crates) for breeding sows.

From 2013, confinement of pregnant sows in these stalls will be prohibited after the first four weeks of pregnancy. Sow stalls are already illegal in Sweden and the UK.

Progress outside the European Union

In the US gestation crates and narrow veal crates are being banned in some individual states. Agriculture and food industry companies are beginning to respond to consumer pressure for more humane systems. New Zealand and Australia will ban sow stalls over the next decade.

Many countries have some basic animal welfare legislation, but this does not always include farm animals. India's Constitution includes animal welfare.

FURTHER INFORMATION FROM COMPASSION IN WORLD FARMING

This booklet is a summary of the fully-referenced report, **Stop – Look – Listen: Recognising the Sentience of Farm Animals**, which explains in detail about animal sentience, including farm animal pain, fear, frustration and other emotions, natural behaviour, communication and social life.

Website: animalsentience.com

Dedicated pages for scientists and policy-makers on animal sentience. Visit animalsentience.com for the latest scientific findings, news, film, images and guest articles.

Sentience blog: www.livesofanimals.org

Popular sentience blog with news stories, photos and videos from around the world, which highlight the sentience of animals.

From Darwin to Dawkins: the Science and Implications of Animal Sentience (DVD)

In 2005 Compassion in World Farming organised a major international conference on animal sentience. This DVD has clips from all speakers. Available free of charge from Compassion in World Farming. Selected clips online at animalsentience.com

J Turner and J D'Silva, 2006 (eds). *Animals, Ethics and Trade: The Challenge of Animal Sentience*. (Earthscan Publishing)

Our modern scientific knowledge is reinforcing the popular view that animals are complex, sentient beings. This book looks at the implications for policy, industry and society. It forms part of the proceedings of the international conference on animal sentience, organised by Compassion in World Farming.

Al-Hafiz Basheer Ahmad Masri, 2007. *Animal Welfare in Islam* (Kube Publishing)

An explanation of Islamic teachings on animal welfare.

£9.95 + p&p from Compassion in World Farming.

Global Warning: The impact of meat production and consumption on climate change (2008)

Major presentation by Dr R.K Pachauri, Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, at Compassion in World Farming's 2008 Peter Roberts Memorial Lecture. Presentation (in English and Chinese) and film (English) available at ciwf.org/lecture08

Sustainable Agriculture (2008)

Referenced short report discussing the criteria necessary for global agriculture to be truly sustainable for animals, people and the planet.

Global Warning: Climate change & farm animal welfare

This fully-referenced report presents the scientific evidence showing the impact of high-income countries' unsustainable overproduction and overconsumption of animal products on the environment, on the welfare of farm animals and on human health. Further useful information, Executive Summary and film at ciwf.org/globalwarning

Executive Summary also available in Arabic and Chinese.

Eat Less Meat: It's costing the Earth (Film, 17 min)

Film which shows the impact of high-income countries' unsustainable overproduction and overconsumption of animal products on the environment, on the welfare of farm animals and on human health. Referenced report.

The Global Benefits of Eating Less Meat (2004)

Comprehensive referenced report on the unsustainability of our increasing meat consumption and current intensive animal farming methods for human health and the economy, the environment and farmed animals. Available with the above film at ciwf.org. Report also available in Chinese and summary report in Spanish and Portuguese.

M Appleby et al (eds), 2008. *Long Distance Transport and the Welfare of Farm Animals*. CABI Publishing

A thorough review of the welfare problems of farm animals in transit around the world.

Handle with Care: Stop the long distance transport of farm animals

Joint investigation and campaign by WSPA, Compassion in World Farming, RSPCA, HSUS and affiliated groups. Film and extensive information at www.handlewithcare.tv/ciwf/

Alternatives to the Barren Battery Cage for the Housing of Laying Hens in the European Union

This fully-referenced report looks at the scientific evidence in order to assess the ability of 'enriched' cages and non-cage systems to meet the welfare requirements of laying hens.

The Welfare of Broiler (Meat) Chickens in the European Union

This fully-referenced report details the health and welfare issues caused by breeding for fast growth and problems associated with high stocking densities, lameness, heart disease, catching, transport and slaughter. Also available in French.

Closed Waters: The Welfare of Farmed Atlantic Salmon, Rainbow Trout, Atlantic Cod & Atlantic Halibut

Referenced report by Compassion in World Farming and the World Society for the Protection of Animals.

Industrial Animal Agriculture – an illustrated summary

Four-page booklet with essential facts and figures. Also in French, Spanish and Portuguese.

These and many other reports, fact sheets and leaflets are available at ciwf.org or contact Compassion in World Farming for printed copies.



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RESOURCES FOR SCHOOLS & COLLEGES

Animal Welfare Aspects of Good Agricultural Practice: Pig Production

Vital resource for courses in agriculture, veterinary medicine, animal science and animal welfare. Book, presentation and film available free of charge at gapanimalwelfare.org or from Compassion in World Farming. Also available in Chinese. Film with Mandarin commentary. Also in preparation: **Good Agricultural Practice: Broiler Chickens** and further translations. See ciwf.org/gap

Educational films and teachers' packs available on one DVD and at ciwf.org;

Farm Animals & Us (for ages 10-15, 19 mins);

Farm Animals & Us 2 (for ages 14+, 21 mins). Also available in Chinese.

These thought-provoking films are guaranteed to promote interest and discussion about farm animal welfare. Suitable for Biology, Citizenship, Environmental Studies and Geography. Teachers' pack and worksheets included.

Intensive Farming and the Welfare of Farm Animals

24-page booklet giving facts, figures and scientific detail about intensive animal farming and its alternatives. Also in Chinese. See ciwf.org/education

The Ethical Matrix, at ethicalmatrix.net

A systematic approach to ethical decision-making, for advanced school biology and introductory courses at university level. Accompanying teacher and student guides available online.