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An Update on EUWelNet



The EUWelNet project investigated the feasibility of developing a coordinated European Network for Animal Protection and Welfare. The project was supported by a grant from the European Commission (SANCO 2012/10293) and its main objectives were to:

- establish and coordinate a network of experts;
- identify bottlenecks or difficulties in implementing some key examples of EU legislation on animal welfare;
- develop and test knowledge transfer strategies to overcome selected bottlenecks;
- analyse and make recommendations on the feasibility and conditions for setting up a coordinated network.

For the project we established a particularly strong and experienced consortium of 26 widely respected partners in 16 countries. The consortium built on two existing knowledge networks: the Welfare Quality Network (www.welfarequalitynetwork.net) and the AWARE project (www.aware-welfare.eu); as such many of the project partners had already worked fruitfully together and the project was able to 'hit the ground running'.

A strong and wide-ranging Advisory Board was established to ensure two-way dialogue with

important stakeholders, including; competent authorities (CAs), EU institutions, international organisations, industry groups, NGOs etc. The Advisory Board was also tasked with ensuring the highest standards of transparency, relevance, quality and reach, and an increased likelihood of knowledge transfer. Over the course of the project, research focused on identifying relevant public and private actors; examining difficulties in the implementation of certain selected legislation; and exploring measures taken to address non-compliance. Alternative strategies for transferring knowledge to CAs and other stakeholders (e.g. training, e-learning, educational material, improved SOPs) were also developed and tested.

EUWelNet clearly demonstrated that a coordinated network of knowledge providers can work successfully together and deliver extremely useful support for the implementation of European legislation on animal welfare. It proved possible to effectively identify difficulties and bottlenecks and to create innovative knowledge strategies to overcome them. In short, the results of this brief pilot project provided firm proof of principle for a functional Coordinated European Animal Welfare Network.

A future Network based on this concept would support knowledge exchange and common investment in knowledge production among key actors and agencies across the European food-chain (e.g. knowledge providers, governmental authorities, industry, NGOs etc.). It could also become a think tank and facilitator of collaboration where the inclusion of cutting edge technical and scientific expertise functions as a catalyst for innovation. This will not only improve animal welfare but also enhance performance and product quality (e.g. through lowering stress and strengthening immune competence), thereby increasing the competitiveness of European animal producers.

In view of the outcomes of the EUWelNet project and the additional advantages outlined here, the consortium and its Advisory Board strongly

recommended that such a Network should be established with a mission to contribute to safeguarding and improving the welfare of animals in Europe by supporting Competent Authorities and other stakeholders in the implementation of EU legislation.



Harry Blokhuis
Coordinator EUWelNet

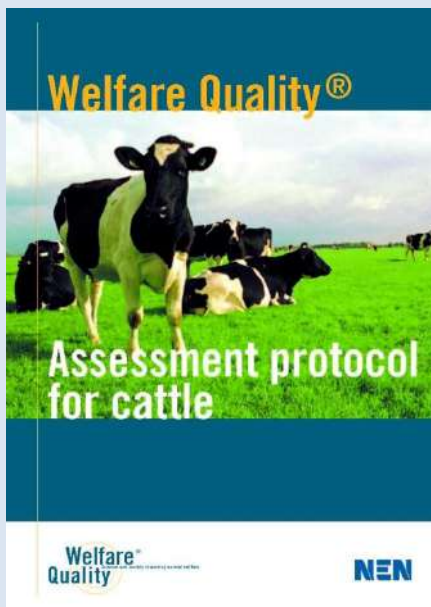
protocols by proposing measures for Welfare Quality® criteria that present a better compromise between validity and feasibility. Each proposal will be reviewed by the WelfareQualityNetwork Working Group for upgrading protocols. Please feel free to make any constructive proposal and post it on the website, using the pre-designed template (available at www.welfarequalitynetwork.net).

Isabelle Veissier
INRA

The WQ Network meeting in Lille, December 2013



Welfare Quality® protocols as living documents



The Welfare Quality® assessment protocols were designed in such a way that they could be modified and upgraded in response to developments in technical and scientific knowledge. Any scientist can contribute to improvements in the assessment

On the 11th and 12th December 2013, the annual meeting of the Welfare Quality Network took place in Lille (France) at the ISA Group – Institute of Life Sciences. The first day of the meeting was dedicated to a scientific workshop and was attended by 26 people from 13 different partner organizations. The aim of the workshop was to provide a forum for contributors to present ongoing work related to Welfare Quality topics. The workshop was open to members of the WQ Network and to any other potentially interested groups who had been working on WQ related topics. After a brief welcome by Joop Lensink, dean of education and responsible for the CASE (animal welfare and livestock systems) research team, and after further brief introductions by Harry Blokhuis and Mara Miele from the WQ management team, the workshop began with a session exploring various aspects of the use of WQ protocols in the assessment of the welfare of poultry.



In total the workshop consisted of 15 oral presentations, each of which lasted approximately 20 minutes. The workshop addressed a large variety of topics, ranging from the assessment of animal welfare in control posts to consumer attitudes to injurious pecking in free range egg production. Other topics included; the development of a new welfare protocol for assessing dogs housed in shelters; a proposal for improving the WQ assessment protocol for dairy farms; an investigation of the potential of welfare assessment and risk factor analysis to contribute to welfare improvements in veal calves; an assessment of the use of the WQ protocol for assessing welfare during long distance transport; and an assessment of the welfare of sheep on pasture. The full agenda for the workshop and a book of abstracts is available at www.welfarequalitynetwork.net. The workshop was appreciated by all participants and we plan to host similar events at future meetings.

After dinner in an estimanet (a typical restaurant in the north of France), the following day was dedicated to the official WQN annual general meeting. Topics such as the composition of the management team; the budget for the functioning of the network; and communication and training aspects were discussed. At the end of proceedings the decision was taken to replicate the current format in future meetings (i.e. a 1-day workshop followed by a half-day AGM).

Joop Lensink
ISA Group

WQ protocols in action

Since their initial development the WQ protocols have been tested, used and adapted by numerous animal welfare scientists and professionals for a range of different purposes. An inventory of work carried out by the partners of the Welfare Quality Network at the end of 2012 found that there were 46 current or planned projects that were based on the WQ project. The projects focused on several different species, including cattle, pigs, laying hens, horses, broilers, rabbits and mice. Many of the projects also involved close collaboration with industry partners. In the next section we showcase some of the recent work being carried out in research institutes in Spain and Belgium. This work aims to develop and improve the WQ protocols or to assess their potential in novel contexts.

Welfare Quality Work at IRTA in Spain



Researchers in IRTA are participating in several projects on the adaptation of the Welfare Quality® protocols for other species and purposes. The DG SANCO funded project ‘Renovation to promote High Quality control posts in the European Union’ is developing protocols to assess cattle and pig welfare at Control Posts (CPs). Welfare Quality® protocols for fattening cattle and pigs on farm and at slaughter were adapted to assess the effects of the renovation of CPs and to explore the possibilities for including animal based parameters in a certification scheme. Animals were assessed on arrival at the CP after long transport journeys, during unloading, one hour after arrival, one hour before departure and during reloading. Information on a range of resource-based indicators was also collected as part of the overall assessment of welfare. A total of 84 cattle and 23 pig transports were assessed in CPs in five countries (France, Germany, Italy, Poland and Spain). Assessments were performed by researchers and official veterinarians. All assessors undertook a two-day training course in both theoretical and practical aspects of the animal welfare protocols prior to performing the assessments. The animal welfare assessments were shown to be feasible and both protocols were effective in the detection of the effects of CP renovations on animal welfare.

IRTA has also participated in a project funded by the Italian national research programme, and coordinated by IZSAM that aims to develop and test a new protocol to assess the welfare of dogs housed in long-term shelters. Currently, no standard tool is available to evaluate the welfare state of dogs housed in shelter facilities. The project draws on Welfare Quality® principles and criteria to suggest a welfare assessment protocol for long-term resident dogs in shelters. More specifically, the project employs animal-based measures to assess the dogs’ welfare in terms of their behaviour, health or physical condition; together with resource and management measures. The protocol was tested in 29 shelters (1667 dogs) in six different European countries. Preliminary results are encouraging and suggest that systematic data collection will help to identify the types of welfare problems that are likely to arise with certain design features of shelters and to suggest potential remedial measures.

Antonio Velarde
IRTA

Welfare Quality Work at the Animal Sciences Unit in Belgium

Researchers at the Animal Science Unit in Melle, Belgium, together with colleagues from Ghent University and the Federal University of Paraná in Brazil have been working to improve the assessment of the absence of thirst in broiler chickens. In the Welfare Quality® protocol the absence of thirst is measured by the percentage compliance with a recommended number of birds per drinker. The reliability and validity of this resource-based measure has not been tested, however, and there is growing consensus that animal-based measures are preferred as they allow a more direct assessment of animal welfare. In order to assess the potential for a novel animal-based test, research was carried out on 10 Belgian and 10 Brazilian broiler farms. In each flock 4 groups of 5 chickens from 4 locations (2 near walls, 2 central) were enclosed and the amount of water consumed from an unfamiliar open drinker during 90 min was measured. The results indicated that Welfare Quality® scores for the criterion ‘absence of thirst’ were not correlated with the amount of water either Belgium or Brazilian birds consumed during the animal-based test. Furthermore, the drinker ratio was not identified as a risk factor for the water consumption test outcome. These results suggest that the thirst-measure used in Welfare Quality® could be significantly improved. In particular, they suggest that an animal-based measure based on voluntary water consumption from an open drinker could be a superior alternative, provided that there is further testing of sensitivity and confounding factors.

Frank Tuytens,
Institute for Agricultural and Fisheries Research

Developing a accreditation system for WQ Assessors



Work is in progress to develop a training and examination program for WQ assessors. This will help to ensure the high reliability and continued

quality of animal welfare assessment using the WQ protocols. The program of accreditation will consist of an initial assessment, followed by an 18 month reappraisal and ongoing 3 yearly assessments. The initial assessment will consist of a multi-choice examination, covering issues such as welfare definitions, sampling strategies, scoring scales and thresholds and assessment techniques. There will also be a practical assessment carried out on farm or at a slaughterhouse. As part of the practical assessment candidates will be required to explain how they would conduct their assessment in a real world situation, they will also need to demonstrate that they can interact effectively with producers to gain the information required. The 18 month reappraisal and the ongoing 3 yearly assessments will consist of a witnessed inter assessor comparison. This will involve two assessors meeting on site, at a farm or slaughterhouse, to carry out their assessments independently, they will then be required to compare and discuss their results.

Antonio Velarde
IRTA

WAFI conference, Clermont-Ferrand, France, 3-5 September 2014

The next WAFI conference (for the assessment of animal welfare at group or farm level) will be organised by INRA and VetAgro Sup and will take place in Clermont-Ferrand, France, 3-5th September 2014.

WAFI addresses issues such as:

- Welfare criteria,
- Welfare indicators and methods to analyse them,
- Automation of welfare measurements,
- Statistical methods to deal with large amounts of data from various welfare measures,
- Rationales underlying epidemiological studies and risk models for animal welfare,
- Ethical issues in relation to animal welfare assessment,
- Consultation processes,
- Implementation of animal welfare assessment, to certify farms or for other purposes,
- Training assessors,

- Cost-benefit analyses of implementation of welfare assessment systems,
- Communication of animal welfare assessment results,

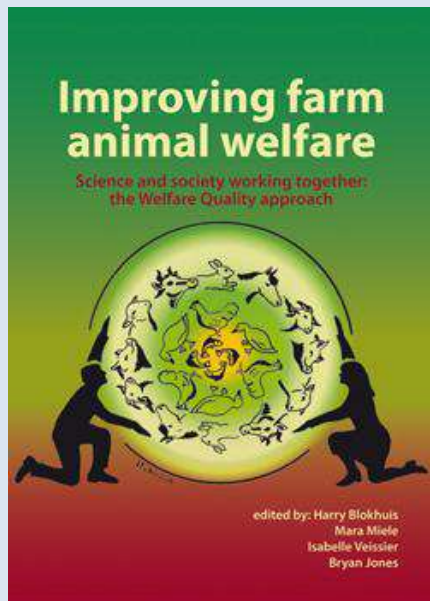
Five speakers have been invited to give keynote speeches:

- **Nathalie Bareille**, DVM, PhD, Professor in Cattle Health Management in the French Vet School Oniris in Nantes, will give a talk on *“How epidemiology can help research in animal welfare”*
- **Marian Stamp Dawkins**, Professor of Animal Behaviour at the University of Oxford, will give a talk on *“Much still to do: Ruth Harrison, ‘Animal Machines’ and the state of animal welfare science”*.
- **Carmen Gallo St.**, Veterinarian at Universidad Austral de Chile, will talk on *“Main animal welfare problems encountered during the transport, handling and stunning of livestock in South American countries and strategies to improve and overcome these problems.”*
- **Suzanne Held**, Lecturer at the Animal Welfare and Behaviour Research Group of Bristol University, will give a talk on *“Play as an indicator of good welfare: why, why not and how.”*
- **Daniel M. Weary**, Professor and NSERC Industrial Research Chair at The University of British Columbia, will give a talk on *“Producer and public attitudes to animal welfare.”*

Please visit <https://colloque.inra.fr/wafi2014> to book for September 3-5, 2014, from now!

Welfare Quality Book Now in Print

A new book outlining the Welfare Quality approach to monitoring and assessing farm animal welfare is now in print. The book, which is entitled “Improving Farm Animal Welfare: Science and Society Working Together: The Welfare Quality Approach” is edited by Harry Blokhuis, Mara Miele, Isabelle Veissier and Bryan Jones. The book synthesises a huge body of work carried out by an international network of scientists and stakeholders who worked together on the Welfare Quality project and it addresses the complex and often controversial issues surrounding the assessment and improvement of farm animal welfare. It also



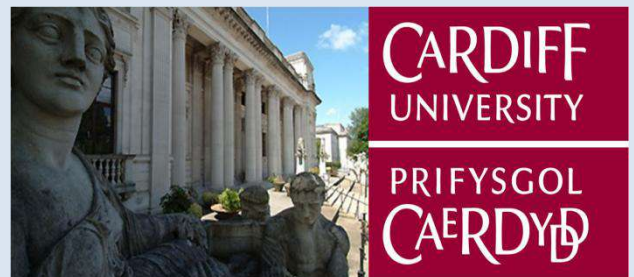
discusses the relevance of science based welfare assessments and the importance of establishing a fruitful dialogue between science and society. The book provides a valuable source of knowledge on farm animal welfare for social and animal scientists, students, teachers, policy makers, lobby groups and the animal industry.

ISBN: 978-90-8686-770-7 DOI: 10.3920/978-90-8686-770-7.

<<http://www.wageningenacademic.com/Default.aspx?pageid=58&docid=16&artdetail=welfarequality-e&webgroupfilter=&>>

New MSc in 'Food, Space and Society' to start at Cardiff University

The new MSc Programme 'Food, Space and Society' will start at Cardiff University in September 2014. This is a research-led programme taught by leading academics with a long-standing interest in food. Many of the lecturers on the course have also produced world-renowned research on food related issues. The MSc in Food, Space and Society particularly targets people wishing to gain expertise in the contemporary geography and politics of food. Specific attention is dedicated to the environmental, ethical and economic implications of the production and consumption of animal foods. Applications can be submitted on-line using the following link <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/cplan/study/postgraduate/online-application>. For more information please contact the course director: Dr. Roberta Sonnino (Email: SonninoR@cardiff.ac.uk).



Colophon

WQNews is the electronic newsletter of the Welfare Quality Network project.

This is a European network of researchers focusing on the updating, implementation and communication about the Welfare Quality® project's results. Twenty-six institutes and universities, representing thirteen European countries and four Latin American countries, participate in this network. Welfare Quality Network has been endorsed by the European Commission (DG Sanco), and has received financial support from the Swedish Government and the Dutch Government.

Project Coordinator Prof. Harry J. Blokhuis
 Department of Animal Environment and Health
 Section Ethology and Animal Welfare, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
 Box 7068
 75007 Uppsala
 Sweden
 Tel.: +46 (0) 18 671 627
 Mob.: +46 (0) 702 464 255
 Fax: +46 (0) 18 673 588
 <harry.blokhuis@slu.se>

Project Communication Dr. Mara Miele
 Cardiff University
 United Kingdom
 <mielem@cardiff.ac.uk>

Website <<http://www.welarequalitynetwork.net>>