

importance of protecting the welfare of farmed animals and the need to improve the welfare protection in the respondent's country is also given for each theme.

A majority of the respondents questioned answered that the protection of the welfare of farmed animals was important to them, with the average rating across all countries being 7.8 out of 10 where 10 is 'very important'. Indeed, over a third of respondents indicated it was the highest importance to them (10/10). The Scandinavian countries – Sweden, Finland and Denmark – all gave above average ratings as did the respondents from Cyprus, Malta and Greece. Lithuania and Spain gave the lowest (6.9/10). The importance of this subject appeared unrelated to social or demographic factors, such as rural living over large towns or political stance. Those who felt most strongly on the issues were those who reported that they knew 'a lot' about farming conditions.

With respect to level of knowledge, 12% of all respondents indicated that they felt they knew 'a lot', while the majority of respondents indicated that they knew 'a little' (57%). Countries which had the highest levels of respondents claiming knowledge were the Nordic, with 9 out of 10 Danes indicating that they possessed at least some knowledge. The country with the lowest level of reported knowledge was Spain, with 49% of those surveyed indicating they knew 'nothing at all' about farming conditions in their country. Malta was the next lowest (45%). The report makes a link between this level of knowledge and the proportion of individuals in these countries who had never visited a farm; respondents from the Nordic countries were more likely than other EU citizens to have done so (90%). In Spain, over 40% indicated that they had not and the figure was as high as 50% in Cyprus and 66% in Greece.

Other findings were as follows: The majority of EU citizens (58%) indicated that they would like to receive more information about farming conditions in their country. Citizens of the Mediterranean States were particularly keen to receive such information, with 85% of Greeks saying they would 'probably' or 'certainly' like to receive such information. Over three quarters of citizens in Portugal, Italy and Cyprus indicated similarly. The Dutch were the least likely to want information, with 69% saying they would 'probably' or 'certainly' not. From the responses the survey characterises countries into four groups, based upon variations from the average: uninformed but interested (Italy, Cyprus, Luxembourg and Malta); informed but desiring more (Greece, France, Austria, Romania and Croatia); disinterested (Czech Republic, Estonia and Hungary) and those that have reached information saturation point (Denmark, Netherlands, Finland, UK).

Across the EU, the most commonly held perception is that over the past 10 years the protection of farmed animal welfare has improved within the respondents' country (60%). The greatest perceived improvements are in Sweden (79%), Cyprus (77%), Malta (73%) and the Netherlands (71%). Spaniards, Bulgarians and the Irish were most likely

to report that they did not know if there had been an improvement. Demographically, those who reported the most knowledge of farming conditions were also those most likely to indicate that there had been an improvement; a belief the survey attributes to being based on a real knowledge of farming conditions. Nonetheless, 77% of respondents believe that there is a need for further improvements – with over 9 out of 10 Greeks, Cypriots and Portuguese holding this view. Swedes and Finns are least likely to hold this view, with a third believing there is no need for improvement. Farmers (40%) were perceived as being best placed to ensure food products were produced in welfare-friendly ways, with vets (26%), national governments (25%) and animal protection organisations (24%) next highlighted. Given this, it is perhaps unsurprising that 72% of EU citizens agreed that farmers should be financially compensated for any higher production costs linked to farming animals under more welfare-friendly conditions and that 89% of EU citizens believe that food produced outside the EU but imported into it should respect the same conditions of animal-welfare protection as those applied in the EU; a position that may significantly inform and influence future EU regulation in this area.

**Attitudes of EU citizens towards Animal Welfare. Special Eurobarometer 270/Wave 66.1: TNS Opinion & Social. European Commission.** Available as a pdf download from: [http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/survey/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/survey/index_en.htm)

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### **Equine Health and Welfare Strategy for Great Britain**

This report details the ten year Equine Health and Welfare strategy for the horse industry in England and Wales. Backed by the UK Government bodies and leading equine organisations, this strategy seeks to achieve high standards of health and welfare for all horses in Britain, whatever their breed, type or usage and to ensure that everyone responsible for equine health and welfare understands and fulfils their duty of care, as is required by the recently enacted 2006 Animal Welfare Act. The strategy has eight broad aims, including 'Review of health and welfare standards', 'Horse welfare observation arrangements' and 'Research requirements' and a list of action points for each. Tasked with ensuring these are achieved are so-called 'champions', national organisations or bodies who have agreed to take responsibility for delivering each. For example, championing Aim 1, the 'Review of health and welfare standards' is the National Equine Welfare Council who will oversee and report on the achievement of the aim's three action points. Specific details about current position, desired outcome and action in progress against each of the aims' action points are listed in Annexe A of the report. The report states that it "firmly believes" the Strategy will only succeed if everyone involved with equine needs engages with it and works together to achieve its aims, and thus the report

would seem to be required reading for anyone with an interest in equines.

**Equine Health and Welfare Strategy for Great Britain**  
March 2007, pp 48 A4. Developed and supported by Defra, the Scottish Executive and Welsh Assembly, the British Equine Veterinary Association, the British Horse Industry Confederation and the National Equine Welfare Council. A dedicated website, <http://www.equinehealthandwelfarestrategy.co.uk> has been set up for those who wish to find out further details about the strategy, sign up to a newsletter, download an electronic copy or order a hard copy.

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