

Reports and Comments

New Zealand Code of Welfare for llamas and alpacas

The Report accompanying the publication of the latest of the New Zealand government's Codes of Welfare, which addresses camelids (see details below), indicates that these animals are kept in New Zealand for farming, for trekking and as companions. It describes how, because of concerns about the husbandry of the large number sold as pets, the llama and alpaca industries wish to be seen as responsible and forward thinking and have been proactive in pursuing the development of a Code of Welfare.

The Code provides clear, concise information on husbandry of these animals. It goes through various aspects (eg stockmanship, food and water, housing and facilities, and handling) and for each gives an introduction, sets out the points that constitute the minimum standard, lists indicators relevant to assessing that the standard is met, makes recommendations about best practice, and includes a section providing general information. There are brief appendices on condition scoring, humane slaughter, and on legislative requirements.

Animal Welfare (Llamas and Alpacas) Code of Welfare (2013). A4, 49 pages. National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, C/- Animal Welfare Standards, Ministry for Primary Industries, PO Box 2526, Wellington 6140, New Zealand. Available at: <http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/animal-welfare/codes/llamas-and-alpacas>.

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Animal welfare in Finland

This Report, published by the Finnish Centre for Animal Welfare (EHK) with participation also from the Finnish Food Standards Agency and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, has been collated to bring together up-to-date information on animal welfare in Finland (based on statistics collected 2007–2010). Its purpose is to offer independent advice and information on the subject for Finnish citizens. However, it is available in English and it will interest many others who like to observe international progress in animal welfare and to compare philosophies, approaches and standards between nations and to see how they tackle difficult issues like the slaughter of livestock without stunning for religious reasons. The intention is that the Report will be updated every three years so that progress can be judged in relation to the present situation and the indicators outlined in this, first, edition.

Welfare has been defined many different ways. EHK says: "Welfare is the experience of an individual animal varying from good to bad". 'Animal' seems not to have been defined in the Report but the focus is on vertebrates. It states: "A wide range of animals, from fish and birds to mammals, can feel pain and highly probably also positive sensations". Farm, companion, laboratory and other animals are addressed.

The Report provides a brief introduction to the subject of welfare (including mention of the five freedoms, the three Rs and the four principles and 12 criteria of the Welfare Quality® project) and discusses the present state of education about animal welfare in Finland (from school to university level), the need for research, sources of research funding, and lists key organisations in animal welfare science at national and EU level. In addition to the Centre for Animal Welfare (EHK), Finland has a Farm Animal Welfare Council, a Companion and Hobby Animal Welfare Council and an Animal Experiment Board, which regulates the use of animals in testing. Current legislation relating to animal welfare is described (work has begun to comprehensively update the main piece of legislation, the Animal Welfare Act of 1996), and there is a section on the systems for control of animal welfare. In addition to the more formal content, the Report "gives the stage to various parties promoting the welfare of animals" and includes essays by a range of guest writers, addressing topics including: 'Animal welfare stems from producer welfare' by Tiina Kauppinen, a researcher at the University of Helsinki, and 'Use and welfare of laboratory animals and the alternative methods' by Marianna Norring, Director of the Juliana von Wendt Foundation.

Approaches to promoting farm animal welfare are outlined. In the chapter on 'Animal welfare in politics and economy' the use of subsidies, totalling €12.7 million in 2010, to compensate pig and dairy farmers for welfare actions that exceed the minimum requirements of the Animal Welfare Act (for: "additional expenses and loss of income that stemming from promoting animal welfare") is described. As regards the issue of slaughter without pre-stunning mentioned above, and about which many countries have been struggling to decide their positions, in Finland, animals slaughtered for religious reasons must be stunned "simultaneously with blood letting at the latest".

Animal Welfare in Finland: A National Report on Animal Welfare (2013). A4, 116 pages. Finnish Centre for Animal Welfare (EHK), PO Box 57, FI-00014, University of Helsinki, Finland. ISSN 2323-6841. Available at: <http://elaintenhyyvointikeskus.edublogs.org/files/2012/02/Animal-Welfare-Report-11z5o7w.pdf>.

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World Organisation for Animal Health calls for destruction of rinderpest virus stocks

It was announced in May 2011 that, following a long, international campaign, the disease of rinderpest had been eradicated. This historically widespread virus disease of cattle and other artiodactyls had caused major outbreaks of severe disease with high mortality in naïve populations of domesticated and wild animals for decades, but it was eventually brought under control and eventually eliminated through