

"PEW COMMISSION REPORT
INDUSTRIAL FARM ANIMAL WELFARE"

IFAP methods for raising food animals have produced concern and debate over just what constitutes a decent life for animals and what kind of life we owe the animals in our care. Physical health as measured by absence of some diseases or predation, for example, may be enhanced through confinement since the animals may not be exposed to certain infectious diseases or sources of injury that would be encountered if the animals were raised outside of confinement. It is clear, however, that good animal welfare can no longer be assumed based only on productivity or the absence of disease. The Commission looked at the issue of animal welfare from both a scientific and an ethical point of view.

The intensive confinement practices that are common in IFAP so severely restrict movement and natural behaviors that the animal may not be able to turn around or walk at all. Gestation and restrictive farrowing crates for sows and battery cages for laying hens are examples of this type of intensive confinement. The stress that results from these situations can result in animals that are more susceptible to disease and more likely to spread disease (Barham et al., 2002; Jones et al., 2001; Kanitz et al., 2002; Losinger and Heinrichs, 1997; Silbergeld et al., 2008). In addition, extremely large group size in an extremely confined area, such as may be seen in broiler houses, can cause the same types of problems. There are alternatives to these types of production systems, including "cage-free" systems for laying hens, and hoop barns, pens and several less restrictive farrowing systems for hogs. These alternatives can also attenuate many of the health and environmental problems caused by IFAP by naturally spreading the manure over the land in manageable amounts and lessening the animal's susceptibility to disease (and therefore the need for much antibiotic use).

Increasing public awareness of the conditions prevalent in confinement agriculture has led to increased consumer demand for changes in treatment. In anticipation of potentially stronger measures imposed through the regulatory process, the food animal industry has begun to adopt minimum standards of animal treatment codified in voluntary standards that are widely published. In some cases, a third party certifies them. Such standards, however, rarely address the larger concerns for animal well-being relating to freedom of movement and humane treatment in confinement systems and slaughter.

Confinement animals are generally raised indoors and, in some cases (e.g., poultry, laying hens, hogs), the group size when raised indoors is larger than the group size when raised outdoors. In other cases (e.g., veal crates or gestation crates for sows), animals are separated and confined to spaces that provide for only minimal movement. The fundamental welfare concern is the ability of the animal to express natural behaviors: rooting and social behavior for hogs, walking or lying on natural materials, and enough

floor space to move around with some freedom at the minimum. Gestation crates, the most restrictive farrowing crates, battery cages, and other intensive confinement systems fail to allow for even these minimal natural behaviors.

Recently, animal scientists in Europe published a set of standards to define basic animal welfare measures. These include five major categories, which must be taken in their entirety: feeding regimens that ensure that animals do not experience prolonged hunger or thirst; housing that ensures resting comfort, a good thermal environment, and freedom of movement; health management that prevents physical injury, disease, and pain; and appropriate means to allow animals to express non-harmful social behaviors, and other, species-specific natural behaviors (European Union Animal Welfare Quality Program: <http://www.welfarequality.net/everyone/36059>) (PAWQC, 2007). The animal industry has resisted codifying these standards as common practice for fear of adding new costs to animal production processes.

The Commission believes that ethical treatment of animals raised for food is essential to, and consistent with, achieving a safe and sustainable system for producing food animals. Practices that restrict natural motion, such as sow gestation crates, induce high levels of stress in the animals and threaten their health, which in turn may threaten human health. There is growing public concern for ethical treatment of farm animals that will lead to new laws and regulations governing farm animal treatment unless the industry voluntarily adopts third-party, consensus-based standards for animal well-being. The recommendations made by the Commission are intended to define ethical treatment of animals and what constitutes a decent life for food animals.

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Federal agency oversight of all aspects of this tracking system with stringent protections from lawsuits for producers is needed. Special funding allocated to small farms to facilitate their participation in the national tracing system is vital.

Improve IFAP Regulation

Waste from IFAP operations contains both desirable and undesirable byproducts. Farm waste can be a soil-enriching nutrient when applied in the correct amount and with the right method. But undesirable components of animal waste include pathogenic organisms, antibiotic-resistant bacteria, viruses, industrial chemicals, and heavy metals.

As IFAP facilities have become more concentrated in specific geographic areas around the country, dealing with waste issues has become critical. New regulations must address zoning and siting of IFAP facilities with particular consideration of topography, climate, and population density of a proposed region. New IFAP laws and regulations must mandate development of sustainable waste handling and treatment systems that can utilize the beneficial components, but render the less desirable components benign.

The Commission recommends that IFAP be regulated as rigorously as other industrial operations, and that a new system of laws and regulations for dealing with farm waste replace the inflexible, patchwork, and broken systems that exist today. Congress and the federal government should work together to formulate laws and regulations outlining baseline waste handling standards for IFAP facilities. These standards would address the minimum level of mandatory IFAP facility regulation and would outline what IFAP regulations states must carry out to prevent pollution and to protect public health and the environment.

Phase Out Intensive Confinement

Animals that are raised for human consumption, even under the best of circumstances, are subject to treatment at some point during their lives that causes them pain. Over the past 50 years, there has been a gradual movement away from raising animals in extensive, pasture-based

systems to more intensive, confined systems. Not all of the systems that employ such practices are classified as "CAFO"s, as intensive confinement can occur in facilities that are not big enough to be classified in that manner. Although the result of this change has been improved speed of production, conditions in many facilities are particularly harsh and stressful, and in many cases may cause undue suffering throughout much of an animal's entire life.

Unbeknownst to most Americans, no federal regulations protect animals while on the farm. The Humane Methods of Slaughter Act was enacted to ensure that animals are rendered "insensible to pain" before slaughter, but poultry are not included under its protection despite the fact that more than 95 percent of the land animals killed for food in this country are birds.

Industry standards for production systems and animal care are generally guided by economics. Welfare issues, such as animal stress and suffering, might be considered in rearing, but only in the context of how they impact performance, efficiency, or profitability. Industrial livestock production systems have often deleteriously affected the welfare of virtually every species of farm animal in the United States, [including all forms of poultry (chickens, turkeys, ducks, and geese), dairy cows, veal calves, swine, sheep, and lambs], and raise serious ethical questions regarding the way in which these animals are treated.

The Commission recommends the phase-out, within ten years, of all intensive confinement systems that restrict natural movement and normal behaviors, including swine gestation crates, restrictive swine farrowing crates, cages used to house multiple egg-laying chickens, commonly referred to as battery cages, and the tethering or individual housing of calves for the production of white veal. In addition, the Commission recommends the end to force-feeding of fowl to produce foie gras, tail docking of dairy cattle, and forced molting of laying hens by feed removal. Due to the capital investment in these intensive confinement systems by many contract producers, particularly in swine production, the Commission recommends targeted assistance be made available to contract producers to facilitate the conversion from intensive confinement systems, either through accelerated depreciation or some other mechanism.