



ATTENTION KIDS ...

The interactive game Farmland can now be played in all EU languages. With the help of their parents or teachers, children throughout the EU now can play this animated game in their own language. Just go to www.farmland-thegame.eu and choose your own language for a fun, educational experience in the world of farm animals!



ANIMAL TRANSPORT

Conditions improving for transported farm animals, new report finds

Every year, more than 35 million cows, pigs, sheep and other farm animals are transported throughout Europe, as well as into or out of the EU.

Whether they are being bought and sold by farmers, being sent to other farms for fattening, or on their way to slaughter, farm animals can be moved long distances in trucks. En route, they are susceptible to thirst, injury and other health problems – even death.

Fortunately, for the sake of these animals, transport conditions are improving.

According to a report by the European Commission, since a new regulation took effect, slight improvements have been made in the number of injured, dehydrated and exhausted animals, as well as the number of animals that die during transport.

In a survey of farmers, slaughterhouses, transport companies, animal welfare groups and others, this finding was confirmed by 80 percent of respondents.



Notably, 90 percent of these improvements were in long-distance and international animal transport.

Conditions have improved mainly because of better vehicles and higher animal welfare awareness among transporters, farmers and others involved with the practice. For example, more trucks are now equipped with drinking water dispensers, insulated roofs and ventilation systems, according to the report.

While the common perception of animal welfare relates to living conditions on the farm, animal transport has received growing attention in recent years. For its part, the EU has regulated the practice since 1977. Among many rules in place are restrictions on the age of animals that can be transported, and the length of time an animal can travel before being permitted to drink and rest.

Areas of poor welfare still exist, and this is why the Commission continues to work with interested groups to build on the recent improvements. Specifically, the new report recommends that transport journal logs and journey times be checked, national inspections be comprehensive, and the use of navigation systems be expanded.

Read the full report at: http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/transport/docs/10112011_report_en.pdf

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TRAINING AND EDUCATION

European vets gather for animal welfare training

When it comes to ensuring the health and welfare of animals, veterinarians play an extremely important role. In the case of farm animals, working mainly at the local level, they have the task to make sure that animals have enough living space, food, water, air and light – and are generally being treated with care and respect.

Toward this aim, more than 120 veterinarians from 11 European countries participated in a two-day animal welfare workshop at the Budapest Veterinary School on 26–27 September. The workshop, organised by the European Commission, together with the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE), the Hungarian Ministry of Rural Development and the Hungarian Veterinary Chamber, covered four key topics: the welfare of cattle, pigs, poultry, as well as wild animals being kept in captivity. In addition to discussions about issues including farm inspections and the economic advantages of good animal welfare practices, vets toured local farms and the Budapest Zoo.

Among the satisfied participants was a vet from Romania, who remarked, “The knowledge and skills I acquired will help me assess animal welfare on the farm by using a methodological approach and scientific criteria.”

Next vet workshop: Barcelona, Spain

In the second animal welfare workshop, co-organised by the Commission, together with FVE and Spanish institutions, veterinarians from southern Europe will meet in Barcelona, 1–2 December. The goal will be to foster a deeper understanding of animal welfare, focus on laws that apply to specific species, and discuss welfare assessment methods. These workshops will continue in 2012, drawing in additional countries and reaching more veterinarians in order to update their animal welfare knowledge. For more information please visit:

<http://www.onetec.be/animalwelfare/index.html>

New master's degree seeks to fill demand for animal experts

Since the Treaty of Lisbon declared animals to be “sentient beings” in 2009, the need is growing for experts cross-trained in disciplines such as law, ethics, culture, nutrition, corporate social responsibility and animal welfare. On top of this, concerns about the treatment of animals continue to grow in Europe and throughout the world.

To meet this demand, the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) has established the first Europe-wide Master's Degree in Animal Law and Society. Launched in September 2011, the programme's goal is to provide both a theoretical and practical founda-



tion for professionals who work with animals. A wide range of career possibilities are open to graduates, including in law, state and local government, international organisations, academia, zoos, the veterinary industry, animal shelters and NGOs.

UAB's partners in the initiative include the Barcelona Municipal Government, Michigan State University's College of Law and the Vier-Pfoten-Stiftung (Four Paws Foundation).

For more information, including for prospective students, please visit:

<http://www.derechoanimal.info/eng/page/1667/introduction>

Toward international animal welfare standards

In an age of globalised food supply, the need for international cooperation in setting global standards for animal welfare and other food production practices is essential.

With this in mind, officials from Europe and Chile met in Santiago de Chile in June to discuss international animal welfare issues. In particular, they worked to achieve a common understanding of international standards and establish examples for other countries in the region to follow. As a guidepost, they discussed EU legislation regarding animal transport and slaughter.

More than 70 participants from 15 countries attended the event, which was organised by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Consumers, with support from Chile's Ministry of Agriculture. This was the second such event on animal welfare specifically intended for non-EU countries, organised in the framework of the Better Training for Safer Food initiative.

ONGOING ACTIVITIES

A sustainable pork industry: from science to practice

Animal welfare cannot be seen in isolation. The treatment of farm animals is inseparable from the many other factors involved in running a farm: financial, environmental, working conditions, food safety and meat quality.

To help farmers and meat producers adequately consider animal welfare, the European Commission has funded a project called Q-Pork Chains¹. The project works to develop pork products that will satisfy the future demands of European consumers, who are growing increasingly concerned not only about animal welfare, but also food quality and the environmental impact of meat and animal operations.

At a two-day gathering at the University of Palma de Mallorca in October, representatives from industry, research institutes and NGOs met to share the results of the Q-Pork Chains project. The findings show that factors such as animal welfare, food safety and meat quality can be used to adapt pork production to emerging consumer and society demands. As the next step, participants discussed how to put these findings into practice.



Alternatives to surgically castrating pigs – working out welfare solutions through consensus

Practiced for centuries to remove an unpleasant odour from pork known as “boar taint”, castrating young pigs is still commonly practised in the EU. Surgical castration is considered to be painful to pigs and out of step with prevailing social values.

Working closely with farmers, retailers, veterinarians, animal welfare organisations and the meat industry, the European Commission is supporting voluntary ending of the surgical castration of pigs by January 2018. Though still six years off, such a change could significantly change how many farmers in Europe do business.

To discuss the challenges and opportunities of producing meat from non-castrated pigs, a wide range of groups met in Amsterdam for the conference, “Boars Heading for 2018,” held 30 November – 2 December. At this important gathering, delegates assessed the challenges posed by the plan to phase out castration and how farmers can prepare for the change.

Alternatives that have been explored include non-surgical castration, changes in breeding and nutrition techniques, and vaccination – all of which are perceived to be less harmful to pigs.



¹ <http://www.q-porkchains.org>

INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Linking animal welfare to sustainable food production

Cows in modern dairy operations are bred and kept to produce up to 30 litres of milk per day, or even more. With such high demands, animal welfare concerns sometimes arise.

With this issue in mind, participants at the World Dairy Summit in Italy discussed ways to better integrate animal welfare with sustainable food production practices. In particular, they sought to establish this link in the EU Strategy for Protection and Welfare of Animals, scheduled to be adopted in December 2011.

Held 17–19 October in Parma, the event was organised by the International Dairy Federation, the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization and the European Commission. With an overall theme of "sustainable food security", the event focused on how science and technology can contribute to environmentally sustainable, socially responsible dairy production.



Concerns for the welfare of working animals

In dozens of developing countries around the world, animals are used for work – helping to plow croplands, transport cargo and move earth. Like farm ani-

mals, the welfare of working animals is becoming more prominent on the global agenda.



© UN's Food and Agriculture Organization

At an international meeting held in Rome, delegates discussed ways to improve conditions for working animals, and raise their profile in agriculture and rural development programmes. Development experts, veterinarians, researchers, and government and NGO representatives from Africa, Latin America, Asia and Europe gathered at the Expert Meeting on Role, Impact and Welfare of Working Animals, 13–17 June 2011 at the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. The FAO organised the event with the UK-based NGO, The Brooke.

Participants called on the EU and international organisations to include the welfare of working animals in food security and rural development programmes, and urged the World Organisation for Animal Health to develop international standards for their welfare. Also highlighted was the FAO's leading role in awareness raising, education and capacity-building efforts regarding working animals.

For more information about the meeting, including presentations and the full report, visit: <http://www.fao.org/ag/againfo/themes/animal-welfare/fao-e-consultations-and-expert-meetings/en/> Or, send an e-mail to Farm-Animal-Welfare@fao.org

INTERVIEW WITH JOACHIM NILSSEN

Mr. Nilssen graduated from the University of Oslo as a Candidate of Law in 2004 and has worked for the Norwegian Food Safety Authority. Currently he works as a legal advisor in the Department of Public Health at the Norwegian Ministry of Health and Care Services.

Why did you choose to train in the animal welfare unit, without having any concrete experience in the field? Was your previous work experience in Norway useful during your time at the Commission?

I did not really choose to work in the welfare unit myself. It was the unit that chose me. But I am happy that the animal welfare people were interested in somebody with my kind of experience, even though it related mostly to food safety. In spite of its different character, the knowledge came to be very useful to me during my stay at the Commission.

Was it difficult for you to understand the issues and adapt to the Commission's working environment?

It was challenging to work with animal welfare issues, and I think I learned a lot during my stay. It was interesting to see how clearly the frontlines between different points of view are set in the field of animal welfare. I quickly realised that those frontlines could also be pretty tough, even within the Commission itself.

What did you bring back to Norway from your Brussels experience?

I think what was most important for me is to have had the opportunity to experience life within the Commission. Being a legal advisor in the field of food law in Norway means that much of my work is related to EU legislation. Norway is not a member of the EU, but it is closely linked to EU regulations by being a part of the Single Market through the Agreement on the European Economic Area.

Finally, I also got to know a lot of very nice people. I hope that my work will bring me to Brussels quite often, so that I can stop by and say hello.



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