

Farm Animal Welfare Council

Five Freedoms

The welfare of an animal includes its physical and mental state and we consider that good animal welfare implies both fitness and a sense of well-being. Any animal kept by man, must at least, be protected from unnecessary suffering.

We believe that an animal's welfare, whether on farm, in transit, at market or at a place of slaughter should be considered in terms of '**five freedoms**'. These freedoms define ideal states rather than standards for acceptable welfare. They form a logical and comprehensive framework for analysis of welfare within any system together with the steps and compromises necessary to safeguard and improve welfare within the proper constraints of an effective livestock industry.

- 1. Freedom from Hunger and Thirst** - by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.
- 2. Freedom from Discomfort** - by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
- 3. Freedom from Pain, Injury or Disease** - by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
- 4. Freedom to Express Normal Behaviour** - by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind.
- 5. Freedom from Fear and Distress** - by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.

Stockmanship - The Key to Welfare

Stockmanship, plus the training and supervision necessary to achieve required standards, are key factors in the handling and care of livestock. A management system may be acceptable in principle but without competent, diligent stockmanship the welfare of animals cannot be adequately safeguarded. We lay great stress on the need for better awareness of welfare needs, for better training and supervision.

The origins of the Five Freedoms

The concept of Five Freedoms originated with the Report of the Technical Committee to Enquire into the Welfare of Animals kept under Intensive Livestock Husbandry Systems, the Brambell Report, December 1965 (HMSO London, ISBN 0 10 850286 4). This stated that farm animals should have freedom "to stand up, lie down, turn around, groom themselves and stretch their limbs," a list that is still sometimes referred to as Brambell's Five Freedoms.

As a direct result of the Brambell Report, the Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (FAWAC) was set up. This was disbanded at the same time that the Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC) was established by the British Government in July 1979, with some common membership. One of these bodies started to list the provisions that should be made for farm animals in five categories, which also became known as the Five Freedoms (despite the fact that not all the categories were actually freedoms). Records from FAWAC are not readily available so the exact origin is not clear, and the earliest written reference we can find is the enclosed [press notice](#) (PDF 550KB) released by FAWC in December 1979.

The concept was subsequently refined by FAWC so that it actually took the form of five freedoms. It has since been further updated and is now the most visited page on the Council's Website."

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