

Wageningen UR Livestock Research

Partner in livestock innovations



Report 325

**State of the Animal;
monitoring animal welfare and health
in The Netherlands (0-measurement)**

Summary, full report is available in Dutch (report 323)

March 2010



LIVESTOCK RESEARCH

WAGENINGEN UR

Colophon

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Abstract

25 measuring points summarise the results of policy measures for animal welfare and health in The Netherlands

Keywords

Animal welfare, animal health, monitoring, policy measures

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Introduction and objective

The Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality stated in her letter TRCDL/2009/1394 of 30 June 2009 to the Dutch House of Representatives to annually publish a 'State of the Animal'. The State of the Animal aims at describing the level of animal welfare and animal health of animals kept for production, hobby or as pets in the Netherlands on the basis of various measuring points. With repeated measurements the direction and speed of change can be shown, so that the effect of policy on animal welfare and health can be derived. The eventual aim of the 'State of the Animal' is to collect information with which can be checked to what extent the objectives in the Memorandum on Animal Welfare and the National Agenda for Animal Health are attained. On the basis of the conclusions, it can be decided to revise the policy.

Although there are also historical data available for a number of measuring points, the Ministry has decided to use this first State of the Animal as a zero measurement.

Procedure

The State of the Animal is linked to the animal welfare and animal health targets as formulated in:

- the Coalition Agreement 'Work Together, Live Together' (February 2007)
- the Policy Programme 'Work Together, Live Together' (June 2007)
- the Memorandum on Animal Welfare (October 2007)
- the National Agenda for Animal Health (October 2007).

From these policy targets the Ministry has derived measuring points that can give insight into the current situation. Twenty-five measuring points have been selected, which provide primarily insight into the concrete products or performance of the policy (output) and for which data are available, for example for monitoring various other policy targets or via private data bases, which are publicly accessible. For measuring the outcome (improvement of animal welfare and health, measured directly at the animal), not many data are available at the moment.

The implementation of the policy formulated in the Memorandum on Animal Welfare and the National Agenda for Animal Health is a common responsibility of the government and social parties. For many measuring points, the outcomes are the results of efforts of the private industry, non-governmental organisations and the government together. In this report the results of these joint efforts, among which those of the private industry and non-governmental organisations, are pictured, but the input of industry and NGO's (money, manpower) is not quantified. The 2009 data are used if available, but otherwise the most recent data are used (mostly of 2008).

Conclusions and recommendations for continuation of measurements

- *Measuring points give an impression of the situation in animal welfare and animal health in the Netherlands*
For all policy targets as to animal welfare and health an impression of the situation can be given by means of the measuring points. It gives a picture where we are in the year 2009. These data are more widely available for production animals than for hobby and pet animals.
- *Moment of publishing in the second quarter of the year*
Publishing the State of the Animal in the second quarter of each calendar year makes it possible to have the complete dataset on the previous year available for most measuring points.
- *Aim at more outcome measuring points*
In formulating the following versions of the State of the Animal it is sensible to see whether measuring points come available which go more directly towards actually measuring animal welfare and health at the animal (outcome). At the moment many measuring points concern the animal's environment (output). A better environment increases the possibility of improved welfare or health, but is no guarantee.
Actually measuring animal welfare or animal health at the animal itself (outcome) is possible by means of the Welfare Quality® method, which became available in 2009. This method, however, is not used in practice yet. The protocols developed for the Welfare Quality® method are perfectly suitable for building in into the (private) quality systems. Not only is a measuring point realised, but also a system for farmers to visualise improvement points.

For a number of animal species (animal categories) experience has been gathered with discomfort analyses on the basis of experts' opinions. A method is available for this, which can be repeated in the time. Neither the Welfare Quality® method, nor the discomfort analyses are available for absolute target values yet. With repeated measurements, however, it can be determined whether changes go towards more welfare and health and towards less discomfort.

- *Denominate the target values for measuring points, if possible in consultation with the private industry and/or social factions*

One precondition for adequate monitoring of the progress per measuring point is that concrete (quantified) targets are formulated: what has to be attained and when. For many targets this has not been realised yet. For four targets the target values have been determined in the form of percentages. For being able to judge whether policy targets are attained (evaluation), target values per measuring point are required. With repeated measurements at the same measuring points, progression can be discussed. It is recommended to denominate target values per measuring point prior to the publication of the subsequent State of the Animal and to define the target values in consultation with the private industry and/or non-governmental organisations at measuring points which concern them.

Summary of the results per measuring point for the different policy targets.

Below the measuring points are presented per policy target and the results directly linked to it. The results can be qualitative as well as quantitative.

Coalition Agreement: Animal welfare improves

- Measuring point: Measurements at the animal itself, for example with the monitor, developed within the EU-programme Welfare Quality®
- Measuring point: Discomfort analyses or estimations by experts

Welfare Quality® measurements are not available. Discomfort analyses in accordance with the classification of Welfare Quality® are available for cattle, pigs, poultry, mink and horses (ASG report 71, 2007) and for rabbits, duck, turkey, sheep and goats (ASG report 160, 2009). Data on pets become available in 2010.

Policy programme: In 2011 production animals and pets are treated better

- Measuring point: in accordance with measuring points under Coalition Agreement
 - Measuring point: Number of reports and findings of neglect and maltreatment of animals
- Number of reports and findings of neglect and maltreatment are portrayed with data from LID [National Inspection Service Animal Protection] and AID [General Inspection Service]. It concerns the number of reports and the part that was justified. The number of reports is connected to the alertness of the public and to their familiarity with telephone numbers and to the actual level of neglect or maltreatment. In 2009 there were 9904 reports which were attended to. The proportion of justified reports was 44%, which was indicative of neglect and maltreatment. Besides the judicially followed findings, there may be justified reports, for which action had already been taken, or there may be justified reports, for which there is no judicially sound burden of proof. These categories are not recorded separately.
- Measuring point: Number of animals in asylums and shelters

The total number of animals that was administered to asylums and other shelters in 2009 is not known. The Society for Protection of Animals has data on affiliated asylums (approximately 50% of the total number), but particularly on dogs and cats. In 2009 24,274 dogs and 54,135 cats were presented to affiliated asylums, 45% of the dogs and 10% of the cats being returned the owner. 54% of the dogs and 81% of the cats were placed with new owners.

Policy programme: In 2011 5% of the housing facilities are integrally sustainable and animal-friendly, where animal welfare demands are met, which go beyond the current legal requirements

- Measuring point: Percentage of integrally sustainable housing facilities

The percentage of integrally sustainable housing facilities on January 1 2010 will be reported separately in the spring of 2010.

Long-term objectives Memorandum on Animal Welfare

1. The animal's perspective is leading in designing facilities and farm management, without losing track of other aspects such as economics, environment, animal health, food safety and working circumstances.
 2. The animals can express natural behaviour, enjoy daylight, have sufficient room and do not undergo physical interventions resulting from keeping animals. Long-distance transport of slaughter animals does not take place any longer.
- Both targets are closely connected. The following measuring points are used to determine progress as to these two targets together.

- Measuring point: Development in national law and regulations and the extent to which the Netherlands is leading in the EU

The Netherlands does not have regulations for all animal species. However, it has issued regulations for more animal species than the EU has (for example, Cats and Dogs Decree, commodity board regulations for housing of commercially kept rabbits and minks, Veal calves Decree). The Netherlands is stricter as to pig housing than the EU prescribes.

The Netherlands applies a number of private quality marks with stronger demands as to animal welfare than the legal requirements or regulations enforced by the government.

- Measuring point: The proportion of farms that satisfies all legal requirements as to animal welfare

In the Netherlands control takes place risk-consciously, if possible, which is why no data are available on complying with the law on all fronts. The General Inspection Service is going to collect these data in 2010.

➤ Measuring point: The number of farms that take supra-legal, welfare-improving measures
Approximately 4% of all farms participate in a certified quality system, which screens whether businesses take supra-legal measures (organic, free-range, green label).

➤ Measuring point: Transport of live animals from and to the Netherlands
Particularly long-distance transport of live animals involves risks for animal welfare and health. That is why cross-border transport has been portrayed. Approximately 70% of cross-border animal transport is to the neighbouring countries Belgium (Luxembourg) and Germany, so transport distances are usually not that far. 338,000 calves, 584,000 finishing pigs and 2,018,000 piglets were transported to countries further away over long distances.

➤ Measuring point: Progress in reducing mutilations
In 2009 anaesthetising piglets when castrating was standard procedure thanks to a private set of agreements. For the other mutilations no changes in law or regulations were realised in 2009. The number of animals with mutilations is not recorded separately. For a number of farm animal species it has been laid down in quality systems that particular mutilations are not carried out (for example, in organic farming pigtail docking is not carried out, nor is bill treatment in hens). Because of participating in these quality systems the minimum number of animals without mutilation can be derived.

➤ Measuring point: Progress in improving stunning methods
In 2009 much research was done on stunning methods prior to slaughtering. The different methods have pros and cons, which are not easy to compare. From 2010 onwards registration and continually monitoring of anaesthetising conditions in poultry slaughterhouses are compulsory. According to EU-regulations, each slaughterhouse has to employ one trained person who is in charge of supervising animal welfare in the near future.

➤ Measuring point: Investments by the government in research on animal welfare
In 2009 the government invested € 7.1 m in research on welfare of production animals and € 457,000 in research on pet animal welfare.

➤ Measuring point: Investments by the government in education on animal welfare
The extent of education, specifically aimed at animal welfare, cannot exactly be pictured.

3. Animals kept on farms can in principle be seen by citizens, either on the farm or in the countryside. Social transparency is the standard in keeping animals, so that citizens and consumers can take responsibility when buying animal products or a pet.

➤ Measuring point: Number of 'sight barns', number of farms with grazing animals, number of farms with a public branch

75 animal farms have a 'sight barn' (have a kind of skybox, open to the public); 85% of the dairy farms apply grazing and 25% of the laying hen farms are free range; 2636 cattle farms have a public branch. Double-counting in this category cannot be ruled out nor can it be prevented with the current data bases.

➤ Measuring point: Availability of and participation in quality and certification systems
In the veal calf, pig, poultry, dairy goat and dairy cow sectors, almost all farms participate in a certified quality system. The farms are inspected annually, for example, as to complying with regulations concerning animal welfare and animal health. There is a quality system for riding schools in the horse sector, but not yet in the pet animal sector. As of 1 January 2010 the Measuring rod Sustainable Aquaculture applies for aquaculture.

4. Hobby and pet animal keepers have sufficient knowledge of buying, housing and taking care of animals and act accordingly

➤ Measuring point: Investments by the government in improving knowledge for keepers of hobby and pet animals

The government supports organisations that aim at informing (potential) keepers of hobby and/or pet animals. In 2009 the National Information Centre for Pet Animals (LICG) received € 940,000, the Platform Responsible Pet Animal Ownership (PVH) € 66,000, the National Knowledge Network Livestock (LKLH) € 20,000, the Dutch Equestrian Knowledge Centre € 150,000 and the Society of Rare Animal Breeds (aims primarily at agrobiodiversity) € 200,000.

➤ Measuring point: Number of hits on the websites LICG, PVH and LKLH
The number of unique visitors of the website LICG was 160,990 in 2009 and 192,709 of the website LKLH. The website of PVH had 43,757 visitors.

5. Consumers have sufficient knowledge, information and support at their disposal to be able to make a sound decision with respect to animal welfare when buying animal products.
 - Measuring point: Percentage of the Dutch population that realises that, by selecting particular products, they affect animal welfare

In 2009 66% of the Dutch population realised that they affected welfare of animals in the livestock industry by selecting particular products.

In 2008 consumers attached a moderate value to animal welfare when choosing meat (6th place of the 12 food quality values measured).

- Measuring point: Percentage of consumers that consider animal welfare when buying animal products

According to a poll by Motivaction by order of Voedingscentrum [Netherlands Nutrition Centre] 25 % of the consumers in 2009 considered animal welfare when buying meat. According to a study by Wageningen UR LEI 25% of the Dutch people in 2008 paid attention to whether the animal had had sufficient living space when they bought their meat.

The turnover (measured) of products with a sustainability quality mark (among which animal welfare, but also, for example, Fair Trade) was 8% in 2008.

National Agenda for Animal Health

Animal keepers generally deal with their animals sensibly and competently and can also turn to adequate veterinary care, not only for contagious animal diseases, but also for wide preventive health care

- Measuring point: Quality and availability of animal health care

Veterinarians and para-veterinarians are available throughout the country for all animal categories. A recent census by the KNMvD [Royal Dutch Society of Veterinarians] yielded 3,075 practicing veterinarians and 6,709 para-veterinarians. A study by the KNMvD learned that 97% of the clients of animal health were satisfied with the quality of the animal health care provided.

Approximately 60 volunteer groups with animal ambulances are active in the Netherlands.

- Measuring point: Investments by the government in research on animal diseases and animal health

In 2009 the government invested almost € 28 m in research on animal disease and health. This research cannot be seen separately from animal welfare research, or from education in this field with the Veterinary Faculty.

- Measuring point: Investments by the government in animal disease and animal health education

As a measurement for education in the area of animal disease and health the budget of 2009 of the Veterinary Faculty of the Utrecht University is used (€58.3 m).

- Measuring point: Presence of notifiable and endogenous animal diseases

In 2008 the Netherlands counted 1763 suspected cases of notifiable animal diseases, 104 of which were found to be positive (85 Blue Tongue, 1 NCD, 11 rabies, 6 Tuberculosis and 1 Leucosis).

- Measuring point: Use of veterinary medicines

The results for this measuring point concern use of antibiotics in the livestock industry, for different animal categories and specific materials. For use in the hobby and pet animal sector, no data are available, nor are there for use of other medicines than antibiotics.

- Measuring point: Level of complying with prevention policy

The General Inspection Service and the Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority inspect as to complying with prevention policy concerning animal diseases. It includes rules for cleaning and disinfecting transport means and mustering animals. Because these inspections are based on risk-conscious policy, the results of the inspections are not representative of the entire sector.



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