



Drawing a Transparent Line between Acceptable and Unacceptable Welfare in Livestock Production

Karsten Klint Jensen

Danish Centre for Bioethics
and Risk Assessment

Place, date, unit, occasion etc.
Slide 1



Agenda

- To present the hypotheses of a recent Danish research project
- To present a sketch of a recent development in the regulation of animal welfare
 - In particular: A change of focus from the individual to the population



3 Hypotheses

1. It is possible to make a valid and accurate risk-based identification of farms with a high level of welfare problems based on limited information (most from central data registers)
2. It is possible, by combining reflection on animal ethics, economics, legal requirements and measurement theory, to set up transparent models of how to draw the line between acceptable and unacceptable welfare; and
3. It is possible to design training courses for farmers with unacceptable welfare leading to increased understanding and more far-reaching and lasting improvements than legal orders from the authorities.



Danish Regulation of Animal Welfare

Prescribes a set of rights:

- Positive rights: An animal has right to care
 - Animals should be kept, such that their "physiological, behavioral and health care needs" are fulfilled
- Negative rights: Animals should be protected against
 - "pain, suffering, anxiety, durable injuries and serious harm"
- The key word is that every individual animal should be kept *properly*



Acceptable vs. Unacceptable

- The problem of distinguishing between acceptable and unacceptable welfare is a problem of determining when the keeping of an animal is *improper*.
- Proper keeping of animals is defined in terms of a number of minimal requirements, e.g. concerning
 - Housing
 - Transport
 - Handling of diseases
 - Etc.



Sanctions

- Veterinarians have the duty to report serious cases of improper handling to the police
- The authorities perform on-farm control on selected samples
- In serious cases, the farmer can be punished with fine, or in case of grave mistreatment, prison
- In less serious cases, the authorities can erect a decree ordering the farmer to correct his handling



Perceived Insufficiencies of the Standard Regulation

- A number of welfare problems seem to persist in industrialized farming
- Minimal requirements to physical conditions of housing etc. are by themselves not sufficient to ensure an acceptable level of welfare
 - There is great variation between the handling skills of farmers
- A number of cases escape the regulation
 - Insufficient reporting
 - Strong requirements of evidence



New Policy Instruments

- Better surveillance of actual herd welfare
- Means to involve the farmer
 - Own control
 - Health care courses and plans
- Risk-based control by the authorities



Adaption of a goal

- In some cases, initiatives have been taken to minimize specific problems
 - (*Salmonella*)
 - The burning with ammonia of chicken feet
 - Shoulder wounds in sows
- These goals are concerned with the total population of a farm
- The problem of distinguishing between acceptable and unacceptable welfare here becomes a problem of determining a line between acceptable and unacceptable prevalence of the problem in question.
 - There is often a trade-off between seriousness of the problem vs. the frequency



Underlying Values

- It is considered more cost-effective to concentrate resources on farms with problems
- It is considered important to involve and motivate the farmer
- The surveillance and control is aimed at making action plans rather than prosecuting the farmer



Value Conflicts

- The new policy instruments are considered to be an addition to existing regulation
- However, in theory there might be a conflict between the concern for the individual and the concern for the population
 - The goal-directed initiatives seem to accept some prevalence of welfare problems



Preliminary Conclusions

- Goal-directed initiatives seem to be increasing in numbers all over Europe
- There are good reasons behind looking at farm-level of welfare, involving the farmers etc.
- The change in underlying value focus (from protecting the individual to minimizing certain problems) should be better analyzed and understood.

