

Animal Welfare *Keys & Tips* in Organic Livestock Production



Presented by Jane Morrigan, M.Sc., P.Ag.

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The Five Freedoms

1. Freedom from thirst, hunger and malnutrition
2. Freedom from discomfort
3. Freedom from pain, injury and disease
4. Freedom from fear and distress
5. Freedom to express normal behaviour



Farm Animal Welfare Council, UK. 1993

Organic Livestock Management

- Highest priority : health & welfare of animals
 - Optimize quality of life
 - Comforts + Pleasure
 - Balance production & compassionate care
 - Make a “good living” for both
- No “one right way” to do things
- Maximize expression of natural behaviour,
 - Companionship; Foraging; Wallowing



Assessing Animal Welfare on the Farm

- Measure outcomes to the animal rather than size of stalls, etc. Examples:
 - % lameness
 - Body condition (Body Condition Scores)
 - % feather cover in laying hens
 - % tail-biting in piglets
 - Reproductive success
 - Occurrence of abnormal behaviours
 - Disease incidence
 - Mortality



Low-stress Handling

- Human attitude predicts behaviour
- Taming and training pays dividends
- Improved production, fertility
- Lower vet bills
- Superior quality meat, milk and eggs
- Less “shrinkage” in transport



Grabbing lamb by fleece causes bruising



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Tame dairy cows give more milk



Albright, Purdue Univ

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Courtesy of T. Grandin, 2006

KEY Natural Behaviours

- Prey species
- Anti-predator mechanisms hardwired
- Fear is strong motivator
- Herd/flock social structures
 - Dominance hierarchy
- Vision panoramic but low depth of field

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Cattle are herd animals and have anti-predator defence mechanisms



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Cows follow the leader so get to know who are leaders and who are followers



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Cows tend to graze, rest and move together...so design accordingly



Cows match each other's behaviour. They eat at the same time; they lie down at the same time.

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Pigs spend 75% of their daylight hours in activity – rooting, foraging and exploring



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3j5wypbrOY>

Laying hens are descended from Indian jungle fowl

- Need cover overhead
- Aggressive to each other when crowded
- 10,000 pecks per day in foraging for food
- Each chicken can recognize 100 individuals
- Omnivorous: eat carrion, small animals, insects, worms, seeds, grasses



Holding chickens upside down causes fear



Animal Welfare Task Force - Actions

- Goal: to make Organic Standard stronger
- Internet presence on OACC website at http://www.oacc.info/AnimalWelfare/aw_welcome.asp
- **Development of Factsheets ***
 - Heat stress in ruminants
 - Reducing feather-pecking in laying hens
 - Farm assessment checklist for laying hens
 - Lameness in dairy cattle
 - Lice control; Fly control
 - Pain management
 - Dairy calf housing



Heat Stress in Ruminants

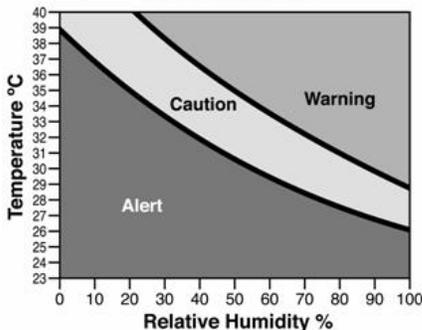


Diagram from: Beat the Heat- Widowski 1998

Cow showing signs of heat stress



A. Rogers, AgResearch New Zealand

Avoiding Heat Stress

- Provide shade
- Provide cool, clean water in shade
 - 1 watering station per 20 cows
- Avoid stressful handling
- Transport 8pm - 8am
- Reduce loading density
- Reduce biting fly populations
- High quality forage in shaded bunks
- Shear sheep in spring or early summer



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Heat stress and MIG

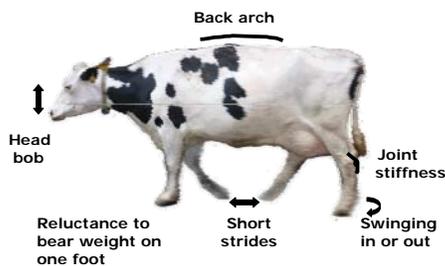
- Rotate through fields more quickly - taller grass is a cooler surface
- Rotate in evening rather than in the morning
- Graze paddocks that allow access to barn or trees during the heat of the day



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Photo credit Mike Main, OACC

Identifying Lameness in Dairy Cattle



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Management practices that can cause lameness

- Overstocking at the feed bunk or stalls
- Uncomfortable lying areas
- Muddy yards
- Long, rocky pathways between pasture and barn
- Spending too long on concrete flooring
- Feeding high-grain diet

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Prevention of Lice Infestations

- Exposure to sunlight
- Avoid close confinement
- Good quality feed
- Quarantine newcomer animals 3 weeks
- Maintain a closed herd policy
- Provide a cattle back scratcher
- Select for resistance
- Cull animals that are chronic sufferers

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Thank-you and please check out our website www.oacc.info

Questions ?

