



Animal Welfare and LEGS

Defining Animal Welfare



Photo Credit: Stevie Mann, 2010.

The World Animal Health Organisation has defined animal welfare as: “...how an animal is coping with the conditions in which it lives. An animal is in a good state of welfare if (as indicated by scientific evidence) it is healthy, comfortable, well nourished, safe, able to express innate behaviour, and if it is not suffering from unpleasant states such as pain, fear, and distress. Good animal welfare requires disease prevention and veterinary treatment, appropriate shelter, management, nutrition, humane handling and humane slaughter/killing. Animal welfare refers to the state of the animal; the treatment that an animal receives is covered by other terms such as animal care, animal husbandry, and humane treatment.”

Importance of Mainstreaming Animal Welfare in Emergencies

According to the 2012 paper on Opinion on Contingency Planning for Farm Animal Welfare in Disasters and Emergencies, which was commissioned by the UK Farm Animal Welfare Committee: “the welfare of farm animals is at risk during disasters and emergencies. Confinement means that farm animals rarely have the option to escape danger. Dependence upon humans for food and water, shelter and other interventions, ensures that when these are disrupted, animal harm may result. Unlike companion animals, farm animals rarely accompany humans to safety. Although they are often critical to the rural economy, they are usually invisible in disaster planning and management.”

Research shows that considering animal welfare at a time of crisis will directly and/or indirectly affect the wellbeing and livelihood of a people or community impacted by a disaster. Over the years, more and more countries in both the developed and developing worlds have started addressing animal welfare through strategic planning, the development of standards and guidelines, as well as legislative change.



The Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS) Project recognises the importance of animal welfare for human livelihoods and wellbeing.

Recommendations

In spite of the growing recognition that animal welfare is an important part of humanitarian response, there is still a need for more evidence-based research to support the linkages between animal welfare, livelihoods and disasters.

LEGS promotes the use of the 'five freedoms' as a useful tool for mainstreaming animal welfare in disaster response:

1. Freedom from hunger and thirst – by providing 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 preventing or rapidly diagnosing and treating the problem
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 that avoid mental suffering



Photo Credit: Kelley Lynch

Sources

Farm Animal Welfare Council (2012). Opinion on Contingency Planning for Farm Animal Welfare in Disasters and Emergencies <http://www.defra.gov.uk/fawc>

Farm Animal Welfare Council. Five Freedoms (n.d.). <http://www.fawc.org.uk/freedoms.htm>

Implementing the OIE standards - addressing regional expectations. (2012a). http://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Conferences_Events/docs/pdf

This Policy Brief is based on the following paper which was commissioned by the LEGS Project to contribute to the revision of the LEGS Handbook: Ian Dacre (2013) Animal Welfare and the Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS). Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards, Addis Ababa. The full paper is available on the LEGS website Resources page.

About LEGS

The Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS) are a set of international guidelines for improving the quality of livestock programmes in humanitarian crises. The LEGS Project, established in 2006, grew out of concerns that livestock responses in emergencies were frequently inappropriate, poorly designed and/or delivered to late. The LEGS Project provides standards and guidance based on good practice from around the world to help decision-makers and practitioners to improve their support to livestock keepers affected by crisis. The LEGS Project is overseen by an international Steering Group and is hosted by Vetwork UK.

Get Involved and Informed

How to become part of the LEGS community:

- Visit the website: www.livestock-emergency.net
- Contact us directly: admin@livestock-emergency.net