



Veterinary Ireland Position statement

Welfare of Poultry held in Intensive conditions

Background

The Veterinary Profession has traditionally defended the welfare interests of farm animals by persuasion and education and a vets primary interest is always that of the animal under his care.

The profession has sought to influence the production climate and the development of Welfare Legislation in the interest of animals, while insisting on routine involvement on the farm in a special relationship based on trust and respect with his farming client.

Vets have the individual animal, traditional surgical skills and the ability to define and solve problems. These skills allow the development of trust by both the farmer and the public that animals are produced in an acceptable system and that treatments and medications have been recorded and properly withdrawn. The veterinary profession is at the forefront of the development of Food Quality Assurance and good animal welfare systems. Which are increasingly transparent and auditable.

Position

Veterinary Ireland believe that the intensive keeping of poultry per se does not constitute a welfare issue and that poultry kept with due regard to the 5 freedoms can live productive stress free lives.

The basic requirements for the welfare of Poultry are a husbandry system appropriate to the health and as far as practicable the behavioural needs of the animals and a high standard of stockman-ship.

Stockman-ship is a key factor because no matter how otherwise acceptable a system may be in principle, without competent, CARING and diligent stockman-ship the welfare of animals cannot be adequately provided for.

Quality Schemes

In addition to standard good husbandry the provision of Quality schemes which are consumer driven have large components of animals welfare included in the breeding and production standards. They also include a requirement to provide training to operatives.

The adoption of these schemes should be encouraged as they provide an incentive for producers to apply excellent standards of welfare and to monitor the application of the required codes of practice. An example of these is the Bord Bia Egg quality scheme

THE 5 FREEDOMS

- 1) Freedom from hunger and thirst.
Easy access to fresh clean water and a balanced ration which maintains Full health and vigour.
- 2) Freedom from discomfort
Provision of a suitable environment and a comfortable resting area.
- 3) Freedom from pain, injury and disease.
Prevention where possible and prompt diagnosis and proper treatment.
- 4) Freedom to express normal behaviour
Provision of sufficient and appropriate space, interest and the company of other pigs.
- 5) Freedom from fear and distress.
Caring stockman-ship, constant comfortable environment and freedom from aggression by other pigs.

Many diseases result directly from welfare failures.

References Intensive Poultry Policy Background *welfare doc 003*

Adopted by Veterinary Ireland National Council, 9th September 2004.