

Animal Husbandry and Welfare: Part 2 of 4

July 2012

☀ Widespread Engagement

The handling, health, safety and welfare of animals involved in food production – both marine and terrestrial – has become a concern of citizens of many different descriptions and positions in society. Levels of government - from municipal to global - issue policy updates or new legislation; consumers - either acting individually or collectively as a group member with likeminded others - lobby governments, boards of directors, or vote at the cash register; industry takes proactive action on two fronts - through either voluntary sector guidelines, which are becoming prevalent amongst producers, or, as individual companies establish criteria for animals used to source the food they procure; academia release study results which either support or refute claims made by animal rights activists and/or livestock producers.

☀ The Net Extends to Beasts of Burden...

For the most part, technology has spared the mule. Yet, animals still contribute as adjuncts to food production and recreational pastimes as well. Pig manure is a valuable component of organic farming; the retention of swine solely for this purpose does not exempt the handler from adequate animal care and comfort. Venison is a delicacy. The care and welfare of beagles - purportedly the best breed for deer hunting - by some private recreational clubs (not all) during and between hunts, leaves some stakeholders seeking re-assurance. The afterthought of raising foxes solely as targets for fox hunting has caused more than one individual to eventually leave the cage door open and exit the business.

☀ ... And Beyond the Western World

[Vafa](#) - Iran's first and only animal shelter opened in 2005 by a now Canadian resident. [PETAIndia](#), an organization supported by high-profile celebrities, concerns itself with animals used in entertainment (zoos, circuses), as personal pets, and in food production. [Care for Chinese Animals](#), which celebrates its first anniversary this month, has, in addition to several programs, set up a task force to address animal-based cosmetic testing in China.

☀ A Glimpse at One Sector – Eggs

In the UK in 1953, eggs were removed from post-war rationing. A '50's iconic TV advertising campaign followed "[Go to Work on an Egg](#)" (true to British humour, too), to promote the high-quality protein food as an excellent way to start the day. Intake peaked at 5 eggs/person/week during the '60's. Sales nosedived with the cholesterol fears of the '70's and salmonella contamination of the late '90's (since rectified). Into the 21stC, UK egg consumption has increased as positive attributes are promoted by nutritionists and celebrity chefs alike.

Today, the supply side of eggs in the UK is affected by the [EU-wide ban on laying cages](#), legislation banning the use of non-enriched cages as of January 2012. Since January 2003, it has been unlawful to build non-enriched cages and utilize them for the first time. Yet, as of March 2012, egg industries in at least 13 EU MS were not prepared to comply. While the tightening supply of legal eggs in the EU is expected to increase prices, a few EU egg farmers using enriched cages report (with surprise) higher productivity – an egg per chicken...every day.



The Directive specifies provisions that must be supplied by enriched cages, such as number of drinking spouts, length of feed trough and claw shortening devices.

☀ This Side of the Pond

Neither the USA nor Canada has such legislation. A US egg producer paid US\$25mm to settle claims that [used animal welfare as a ruse](#) to illegally fix egg prices. In Canada, as [restaurant chains](#) impel suppliers to "clean up or disclose their practices", amidst a raging global debate on caging egg-laying hens, the Egg Farmers of Canada have launched the first [academic chair of poultry welfare](#). **FF**