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Animal welfare management — General requirements and guidance for organizations in the food supply chain

National foreword

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**Animal welfare management —
General requirements and guidance for
organizations in the food supply chain**

*Gestion du bien-être animal — Exigences générales et orientations
pour les organisations des filières alimentaires*



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Contents

Page

Foreword	iv
Introduction	v
1 Scope	1
2 Normative references	1
3 Terms and definitions	1
4 Main principles in developing an animal welfare plan	3
5 Developing an animal welfare plan	4
5.1 General.....	4
5.2 Step 1 — Identification of gaps.....	4
5.2.1 General.....	4
5.2.2 Identification of relevant documents.....	5
5.2.3 Methodology for the identification of gaps.....	5
5.3 Step 2 — Drafting of the animal welfare plan.....	5
5.4 Step 3 — Implementation of the animal welfare plan.....	6
5.5 Step 4 — Evaluation and review.....	7
Annex A (informative) Animal welfare thresholds for animal-based measures	8

Foreword

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The committee responsible for this document is ISO/TC 34, *Food products*.

Introduction

There is a growing focus in society on animal welfare. Perception of animal welfare is complex and multifaceted, being influenced by scientific, ethical, historical, cultural, religious, economic and political dimensions. When addressing animal welfare, it has to be done in a scientifically credible manner. The Terrestrial Animal Health Code (TAHC) published by the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) sets animal welfare standards to be used to establish national regulations and other relevant animal welfare documents.

Animal welfare management, as described in this document, has been developed to be adapted to various situations, including:

- different production systems and different organizations in the supply chain for products of animal origin, regardless of size and country;
- different geographical, cultural and religious contexts; and
- developed as well as developing countries.

The purpose of this document is to ensure the welfare of animals raised for food or feed production around the world through the following objectives:

- to provide a management tool for the implementation of the animal welfare principles of the OIE TAHC (Section 7);
- to provide guidance for the implementation of public or private animal welfare standards and relevant legislation that meet at least the OIE TAHC (Section 7);
- to facilitate the integration of animal welfare principles in business-to-business relations.

The concept of the five freedoms, as mentioned in Chapter 7.1 of the OIE TAHC (freedom from hunger, thirst and malnutrition; freedom from fear and distress; freedom from physical and thermal discomfort; freedom from pain, injury and disease; and freedom to express normal patterns of behaviour), provides guidance on the understanding of animal welfare, on identifying the relevant aspects to be considered and on implementing relevant practices. The general principles for the welfare of animals in livestock production systems (Article 7.1.4 of the OIE TAHC) provide a basis for practical requirements to ensure that the five freedoms are met.

Animal welfare management can be addressed in different ways, such as legislation, codes of good practice, private specifications or client/supplier requirements.

This document is intended to support the implementation of relevant practices to ensure animal welfare in livestock production systems.

Animal welfare management — General requirements and guidance for organizations in the food supply chain

1 Scope

This document provides requirements and guidance for the implementation of the animal welfare principles as described in the introduction to the recommendations for animal welfare of the OIE TAHC (Chapter 7.1).

This document applies to terrestrial animals bred or kept for the production of food or feed. The following areas are excluded: animals used for research and educational activities, animals in animal shelters and zoos, companion animals, stray and wild animals, aquatic animals, killing for public or animal health purposes under the direction of the competent authority, humane killing traps for nuisance and fur species.

Application of this document is limited to aspects for which process or species-specific chapters are available in the OIE TAHC. At the time of publication of this document, they are:

- Chapter 7.2: Transport of animals by sea;
- Chapter 7.3: Transport of animals by land;
- Chapter 7.4: Transport of animals by air;
- Chapter 7.5: Slaughter of animals;
- Chapter 7.9: Animal welfare and beef cattle production systems;
- Chapter 7.10: Animal welfare and broiler chicken production systems; and
- Chapter 7.11: Animal welfare and dairy cattle production systems.

This document is designed to guide users in conducting a gap analysis and developing an animal welfare plan that is aligned with the OIE TAHC. It can also be used to facilitate the implementation of any public or private sector animal welfare standards that meet at least the OIE TAHC.

The scope of this document is intended to be revised as the animal welfare provisions of the OIE TAHC are supplemented or amended.

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

*Terrestrial Animal Health Code, World Organization for Animal Health (OIE TAHC)*¹⁾

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

1) <http://www.oie.int/en/international-standard-setting/terrestrial-code/access-online> (and specifically Section 7 dedicated to animal welfare).

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- IEC Electropedia: available at <http://www.electropedia.org/>
- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <http://www.iso.org/obp>

3.1

animal

mammal or bird

[SOURCE: OIE TAHC, modified — bees have been removed as they are not included in the scope of this document]

3.2

animal-based measure

response of an animal or effect on an animal used to assess its welfare, which can be taken directly on the animal or indirectly and includes amongst others the use of animal records

Note 1 to entry: It can result from a specific event (e.g. an injury) or be the cumulative outcome of many days, weeks or months (e.g. body condition).

Note 2 to entry: Animal-based measures are referred to as outcome-based measurables in the OIE TAHC. Outcome-based measurables involve assessing the degree (incidence, severity and duration) of impaired functioning associated with injury, disease and malnutrition, or the physiological, behavioural and immunological changes or effects that animals show in response to various challenges. They provide information on animals' needs and affective states such as hunger, thirst, pain and fear, often by measuring the strength of animals' preferences, motivations and aversions. These are distinguished from *resource-based measures* (3.9).

3.3

animal handler

person with knowledge of the behaviour and needs of animals who, with appropriate experience and a professional and positive response to an animal's needs, can achieve effective management and good welfare

[SOURCE: OIE TAHC, modified — the sentence "Competence should be gained through formal training and/or practical experience." has been deleted]

3.4

animal welfare

how an animal is coping with the conditions in which it lives

Note 1 to entry: The OIE TAHC defines 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".

[SOURCE: OIE TAHC, modified — a part of the definition has been moved to Note 1 to entry]

3.5

animal welfare management

activities required to ensure animal welfare

Note 1 to entry: This term includes activities involving the animals (the treatment that an animal receives, also called animal care, animal husbandry and humane treatment in OIE TAHC), activities involving staff, and the status and use of facilities for this purpose.

3.6

animal welfare plan

document describing the principles, policies and actions necessary for animal welfare management

3.7

competent authority

veterinary authority or other governmental authority of a country having the responsibility and competence for ensuring or supervising the implementation of animal health and welfare measures, international veterinary certification and other standards and recommendations in the OIE TAHC

[SOURCE: OIE TAHC, modified]

3.8

organization

person or group of people that has its own functions with responsibilities, authorities and relationships to achieve its objectives

Note 1 to entry: For the purposes of this document, the term refers to a single business operator or a group of business operators of the whole or a part of the food supply chain, including primary breeding companies, animal farmers, livestock transport companies and slaughterhouses. An organization can be public or private and includes, but is not limited to, sole-trader, company, corporation, firm, enterprise, authority, partnership, association, charity or institution, or part of combination thereof, whether incorporated or not, public or private.

3.9

resource-based measure

factor or combination of factors that may be linked to a change in the likelihood of good or poor animal welfare

Note 1 to entry: These factors include resources (e.g. housing, space allowance per animal, handling and restraint facilities, air temperature and quality, stunning equipment parameters) or management (e.g. personnel, financial, process).

Note 2 to entry: These are distinguished from *animal-based measures* (3.2).

4 Main principles in developing an animal welfare plan

4.1 The organization developing an animal welfare plan shall ensure the plan:

- a) enables the implementation of OIE animal welfare principles and guidelines or other provisions from private or public standards that meet, at least, the OIE TAHC; the general principles for the welfare of animals in livestock production systems (Article 7.1.4) and other relevant Section 7 chapters of OIE TAHC provide valuable guidance to develop an animal welfare plan, which complies with at least the OIE TAHC;
- b) ensures a commitment to maintaining good animal welfare that begins with management and is instilled in all staff; this may include identification of an animal welfare manager, or other means appropriate for the organization, to ensure accountability for animal welfare;
- c) covers all stages of the lives of the animals under the responsibility of the organization and verifies, as far as possible, the continuity of animal welfare during transfer of responsibility from or to its organization;
- d) facilitates implementation and communication of the plan within the organization; and
- e) encourages continual improvement through implementing small or large-scale changes to prevent non-conformances or to ensure conformance to the plan as outlined in 4.1 a) to 4.1 d), as well as incorporating other relevant changes to better ensure animal welfare as needed; this encouragement of continual improvement is not intended to imply that changes need to be made if not necessary to maintain good animal welfare.

4.2 The organization shall establish and maintain the appropriate documentation and records related to the plan, such as:

- a) the externally developed animal welfare guidelines, standards or codes of good practice from which the animal welfare plan has been developed, and
- b) any documents or records developed by the organization related to carrying out or managing the plan, including the results of previous evaluations and reviews, as well as data used to establish and reach thresholds for animal-based measures, as per 5.3 c) and 5.3 d).

5 Developing an animal welfare plan

5.1 General

See Figure 1.

The development of an animal welfare plan shall be based on the following steps: assessing the current management of animal welfare within the organization (step 1, see 5.2), drafting the animal welfare plan (step 2, see 5.3), implementing the defined plan (step 3, see 5.4), and evaluating and reviewing the animal welfare plan (step 4, see 5.5). Next steps would include feedback on the first assessment and review of the gap analysis as part of the continual improvement process.

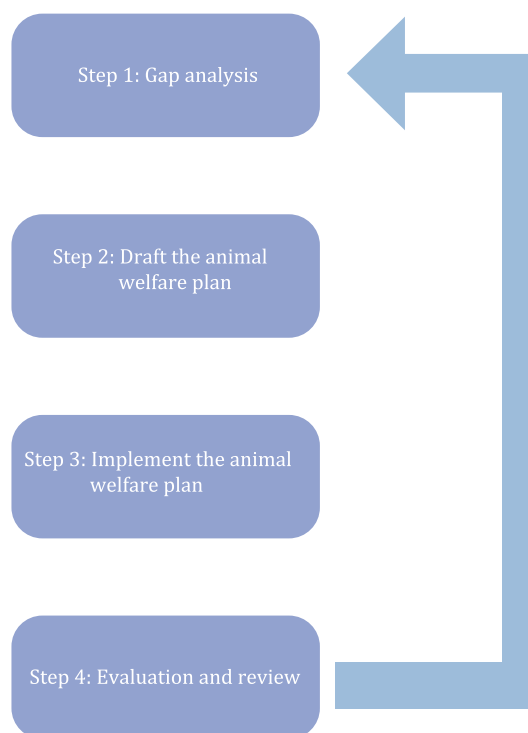


Figure 1 — The different steps to develop an animal welfare plan

5.2 Step 1 — Identification of gaps

5.2.1 General

This step describes how to identify the gaps between the organizations' current animal welfare management, including resource-based and animal-based measures (as documented and implemented), and the OIE principles and other relevant documentary materials that meet at least the OIE TAHC.

Persons undertaking the development of an animal welfare plan shall have adequate knowledge of for example practices, behaviour and needs of animals, effective management and animal care practices, local conditions, national or regional legislation.

5.2.2 Identification of relevant documents

Prior to conducting the gap analysis, the relevant documents to be used as reference for the gap analysis shall be identified, and shall include at least the OIE TAHC, especially the general principles of the animal welfare in Article 7.1.4 and specific chapters of the OIE TAHC that are relevant for the organization. National or regional legislation may exist.

Documents may also include animal welfare manuals, codes of practice or protocols from competent authorities and from the private sector as well as scientific and technical literature, as long as they meet at least the OIE TAHC.

5.2.3 Methodology for the identification of gaps

Local conditions of the organization can vary and should be taken into consideration when performing the gap analysis (e.g. region, climate and production system). The gap analysis shall be based on an evaluation of the level of implementation of each of the general principles of animal welfare (Article 7.1.4 of the OIE TAHC), taking into account both resource-based measures and animal-based measures (see [Annex A](#)). The gap analysis shall take into account the different animal species and their needs in accordance with the life stage of the animals that are under the responsibility of the organization, and according to the available OIE TAHC specific technical chapters.

- a) First, the gap analysis shall define the life stages of the animals under the responsibility of the organization, in all units handling animals.
- b) Second, the gap analysis shall identify the animal welfare objectives of the organization. This step shall identify the practices and resources that need to be implemented and particularly animal-based measures that can be used to monitor these objectives and the level of their implementation.
- c) Third, the gap analysis shall step-by-step identify differences between usual practices implemented/utilized by the organization, including monitoring systems and the resulting animal welfare conditions in units handling animals, and the requirements from OIE TAHC and other relevant documents identified.
- d) Finally, “gaps” will result from a synthesis of b) and c) by identifying missing items in animal welfare management. The identified gaps and necessary continual improvements shall be prioritized based on frequency and severity for animal welfare and also the ability to easily remedy identified gaps and undertake improvements which will have the greatest impact on animal welfare.

If an animal welfare plan already exists for the organization, the gap analysis shall assess the implementation of and compliance with that plan and also with the OIE TAHC requirements.

The gap analysis shall assess the need for a contingency plan in case of, for instance, failure of power, water and feed supply systems, and natural disaster when they could compromise animal welfare.

At the end of step 1, the gaps between the organization’s usual practices and the OIE principles and other relevant documentary materials that meet at least the OIE TAHC shall be identified.

5.3 Step 2 — Drafting of the animal welfare plan

This step is designed to assist the organization in developing a plan to address the gaps identified in step 1 (see [5.2](#)) and to ensure animal welfare, with a written program that can be implemented in all units handling animals under the responsibility of the organization. This shall include consideration of the main principles described in [Clause 4](#).

- a) To ensure its feasibility, the animal welfare plan shall be based on the assessment of the relevant resources and practices necessary to meet the animal welfare objectives in compliance at least with the OIE TAHC, taking into account the local geographical and climatic conditions. This should include human (including competencies), financial and environmental aspects. The animal welfare plan shall take into account animal health and disease management based on, for example, the local epidemiologic context and the regulatory animal health programs. The level of detail of the

assessment should be commensurate with the size and nature of the operations linked to animals to which the plan is to be applied. If needed, emergency measures within a contingency plan should be defined.

- b) The animal welfare plan shall identify competencies for animal handlers to ensure appropriate animal welfare conditions.
- c) The animal welfare plan shall identify relevant monitoring of animal care and measureable indicators as per the OIE TAHC, for example animal-based and resource-based measures.
- d) Where there is scientific evidence that specific practices would have benefit or drawback on animal welfare, emphasis should be on monitoring the corresponding resource-based measures.
- e) Where there is scientific evidence that a possible welfare issue is of multi-factorial origin, emphasis should be put on the monitoring of animal-based measures. The acceptable thresholds for these indicators shall be determined on a scientific basis, using guidance from [Annex A](#).
- f) The response to gaps in the animal welfare plan should define a scheme and a timeline to improve animal care, taking into account the prioritization of the gaps in step 1 [see [5.2.3 d](#)]).
- g) The animal welfare plan shall identify or describe methods for evaluation and review.
- h) The animal welfare plan shall be reviewed by experienced farmers and operators, or other experienced experts, to ensure practical and achievable outcomes.

At the end of step 2, the written animal welfare plan shall be available for the organization.

5.4 Step 3 — Implementation of the animal welfare plan

The implementation step sets out what needs to be done to execute the animal welfare plan described in step 2 (see [5.3](#)), to maintain and improve animal welfare. It covers both the human and other resources required as well as supervision of how the provisions of the plan are being followed. It takes into account the size and nature of the operations to which the plan is to be applied. It emphasizes that remedial actions should attempt to address root causes of non-compliances with the defined animal welfare plan.

- a) According to the plan developed in step 2 (see [5.3](#)), the required resources, (e.g. equipment, material, systems, housing, facilities, human resources) shall be available to implement the animal welfare plan. The gaps identified in step 1 (see [5.2](#)) shall be addressed.
- b) Persons undertaking animal management practices shall be competent to undertake these tasks, and, where necessary, appropriate mentoring or training shall be provided to assist those needing to learn new or refresh skills.
- c) Relevant coordination and management procedures shall be defined to ensure the efficient implementation of the animal welfare plan where necessary, depending on the size and nature of the operations.
- d) Key requirements described in the animal welfare plan (including animal care skills) shall be explained to all relevant staff of the organization according to their tasks and responsibilities, through appropriate communication means.
- e) The implementation of the plan shall be monitored and supervised. The monitoring shall be based on the resource-based measures and animal-based measures defined in step 2 [see [5.3 c](#)) and [5.3 d](#)]). The organization shall evaluate the level of implementation of the plan, with appropriate indicators.
- f) If monitoring and supervision show that understanding is unclear or incomplete, appropriate communication shall be ensured and corrective action follow-up shall be provided.

- g) A process shall be available for the definition and implementation of corrective actions in case of unacceptable results. Animal abuse shall be immediately remedied.
- h) Key information shall be recorded, including records of resource-based measures, animal-based measures and corrective actions.

At the end of step 3, implementation of the animal welfare plan is intended to result in a demonstrable standard of animal welfare, that is at least compliant with the requirements of the OIE TAHC or other defined animal welfare standards as identified in step 1 (see [5.2](#)).

5.5 Step 4 — Evaluation and review

This step is designed to assist in determining if the animal welfare plan has been properly implemented within the organization in order to meet the OIE TAHC. It provides some guidelines for an organization to evaluate the effectiveness of its written plan and to review if and where improvements are needed.

- a) The organization shall define the frequency of review for the animal welfare plan based on updates of the relevant documentary materials, especially the routinely reviewed OIE TAHC, relevant changes within the organization and the overall performance of the animal welfare plan.
- b) The evaluation shall be undertaken by the animal welfare manager, or the person responsible for developing the animal welfare plan or any person with relevant skills regarding management of animal welfare as appointed by the organization. The evaluation shall assess the animal welfare achieved and the conformity of the organization's practices with its animal welfare plan.

The evaluation shall include:

- an assessment of the implementation of the animal welfare plan;
 - an assessment of the effectiveness of the animal welfare plan through an evaluation of appropriate indicators used in step 3 [see [5.4 e](#)];
 - feedback from the organization with a combination of input from persons doing the relevant tasks and discussion of key animal welfare areas on which to focus;
 - a combination of observations and document/record reviews;
 - an assessment of the relevance of the animal welfare plan to the organization's current activity and context of its operations.
- c) The review is an assessment of the capacity of the animal welfare plan to fill the gaps from step 1 (see [5.2](#)) and to ensure animal welfare according to the OIE TAHC and other identified documents. The review shall be conducted by the management of the organization, including the animal welfare manager or the person responsible for developing the animal welfare plan or any person with relevant skills regarding management of animal welfare as appointed by the organization.

The review shall take into account:

- all results from the implementation (see [5.4](#)), and evaluation [see [5.5 b](#)] of the animal welfare plan;
- any new knowledge, practice or technology relevant to the improvement of welfare of animals within the organization;
- any update or changes of the relevant documents (e.g. OIE TAHC, legislation) to verify that these changes have been taken into account in the animal welfare plan.

The review shall demonstrate that the relevant persons within the organization have contributed to the plan evaluation, have provided some input to the animal welfare plan review and have ensured its practicality.

Annex A **(informative)**

Animal welfare thresholds for animal-based measures

This annex provides guidance to determine thresholds for animal-based measures, as long as there is no explicit outcome-based threshold or principle to determine the threshold established by the OIE TAHC.

Animal-based measures can be useful indicators of animal welfare and are a way to assess key areas where welfare could be compromised and should be enhanced or maintained. Animal-based measures assist animal handlers (e.g. producers, transporters and slaughter personnel) in monitoring the effectiveness of their practices on animal welfare.

Establishing thresholds for animal-based measures can be used both for transparency and to assess the conformity with the organization's objectives and/or acceptable levels of animal welfare.

The animal-based measures are not necessarily used to set an overall grade for animal welfare.

The following approach can be considered for the use of animal-based measures.

- a) These animal-based measures are based on the articles on "Criteria or measurables for the welfare [of each species]" in the relevant OIE TAHC technical chapters and on peer reviewed scientific publications. These animal-based measures should be valid, reliable and usable by animals' handlers. Where relevant, the organization should monitor selected animal-based measures and keep verifiable records on them.
- b) Thresholds may include an absolute value or an acceptable range of values.
- c) When determining relevant and significant thresholds for animal-based measures, the organization should primarily refer to peer reviewed scientific publications. In the absence of such reference, the organization should consider relevant databases with comparable information for the given context.
- d) If deviation from the thresholds occurs, the organization should consider the deviation at the organization level and at its applicable operating locations. When looking at deviation from the thresholds, corrective actions should take into account possible impact of particular events (e.g. local conditions, climatic conditions and unexpected disease outbreaks).

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