

1 Gloucestershire County Council's policy is to monitor and influence the treatment of animals in general, and in particular the standards of animal health and welfare on farms, in transport, at markets and at slaughter, within the guidelines set by legislation and codes of practice, to ensure that all animals are protected against cruelty and avoidable pain.

2 The welfare of farm animals, in transit, at markets or at place of slaughter should be considered in terms of five freedoms.

These are:

- ◆ **Freedom from hunger and thirst**
by access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour
- ◆ **Freedom from discomfort**
by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area
- ◆ **Freedom from pain, injury or disease**
by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment
- ◆ **Freedom to express normal behaviour**
by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animals own kind
- ◆ **Freedom from fear and distress**
by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering

These freedoms will be better provided for if those who have care of livestock practise:

- *caring and responsible planning and management*
- *skilled, knowledgeable and conscientious stockmanship*
- *appropriate environmental design*
- *considerate handling and transport*
- *humane slaughter*

3 The county council will look to these freedoms for guidance when exercising its statutory powers in relation to the health and welfare of farm animals.

4 The county council will use its best endeavours to promote and improve the animal welfare standards by taking a fair and balanced account of animal welfare issues in the council's day to day operations, its decision making process and through influence in association with district councils, voluntary welfare groups and government agencies.

5 Although the county council's role is primarily one of enforcement of its statutory powers, it supports the aim that all animals should be treated humanely and that in all processes involving farm animals, all practicable measures are taken to avoid unnecessary distress or suffering and that the five guiding freedoms are observed.

6 The statutory powers are contained mainly in the Animal Health Act 1981 which with associated legislation provides the council's officers with the necessary powers to ensure the control of notifiable diseases and the protection of animals whilst in transit and at markets. Whilst the proper welfare of animals is of increasing concern to the community the enforcement activity of the council is constrained by the limits of its statutory powers.

7 The influencing role of the county council derives from its status as a democratic organ of local government able to reflect the views of the Gloucestershire community which it serves.

8 The county council identifies that it has the ability to influence the animal health and welfare debate and to lead by example through the way in which it conducts its day to day business, by supporting and encouraging where appropriate other organisations with similar objectives.

9 The county council will continue to liaise with the livestock and farming community in general to seek to improve communication and education of farm and animal health and welfare whenever possible.

10 The county council is committed to maintaining the highest possible standards of farm animal health and welfare in Europe and will press for community action to ensure that other European Countries match our standards particularly in the area of animal transportation.

11 The county council will look to the trading standards service for the delivery of animal health and welfare issues and the development of the Charter.

12 The Charter is comprised of three areas of activity principally to provide the framework within which new policies can be derived and the Charter developed.

The county council will fully enforce the statutory powers it has in respect of animal health and welfare.

Statutory Responsibilities

We will:

- employ a core of trained and experienced personnel
- maintain a 24 hour emergency call out procedure where there is a risk of disease or ill treatment of animals
- assist the State Veterinary Service of DEFRA in dealing with outbreaks of notifiable diseases
- arrange for officers to attend every livestock market in the county to ensure that proper attention is paid to the health and welfare of farm animals
- apply a consistent set of enforcement principles described in the trading standards service's enforcement policy
- respond to emergency complaints immediately and other complaints within 3 working days
- wherever possible, ensure that all infringement reports are completed within 3 months
- monitor the movements of farm animals throughout the county by random checks at markets, farms and at occasional roadside weight checks carried out by the service

- seek to encourage good practice by maximising publicity where prosecutions are brought
- prepare and distribute guidance leaflets so as to promote a better understanding of the law
- increase awareness of the existence of the DEFRA codes of practice which provide the basis for compliance with legal requirements
- encourage and where possible provide appropriate training to persons working with farm animals
- liaise with the State Veterinary Service in the implementation of DEFRA policies for animal health and welfare
- liaise with district councils and other enforcing agencies to ensure a co-ordinated approach to farm animal health and welfare
- develop further links with organisations involved in the livestock trade with a view to improving welfare standards

The county council will use its best endeavours to promote improvements in animal health and welfare through its influencing role and in association with other organisations.

Liaison Role

We will use our influencing role by:

- Publicising the charter throughout the county and at county council and district council public information points
- Liaising with the State Veterinary Service, veterinary profession, representatives of the farming community and livestock industry and other organisations with an interest in animal health and welfare
- Lobbying government departments, and other influential organisations to promote improvements in animal health and welfare
- Lobbying Members of Parliament
- Provide a forum for discussion of matters of common interest with the following:

*South West Region Animal Health and Welfare Group
Avon and Gloucester Farm Animal Liaison Group
Representatives of the farming community
Livestock industry and other interested parties*

The county council will take full account where appropriate of animal health and welfare issues in its day to day operations and its decision making process.

Procurement

In its role as a major purchaser of both food and non food products the county council will take account of the principles of the Charter when determining the suitability of the source of supply and where necessary seek advice from the trading standards service.

Education Establishments

All farm animals which are kept by rural studies centres, schools, or other sites will be kept in accordance with the county council charter. The county council will promote the awareness of animal welfare in schools.

Fire & Rescue Services

The county council will support the continued use of the fire brigade for animal rescue.

Trading Standards Service

The county council will support the trading standards service in its enforcement and advisory role to promote the highest possible standards of animal health and welfare.

Gloucestershire County Council

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Animal Health & Welfare



Charter

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