



FVE comments on the Community Action Plan on the Protection and Welfare of Animals 2006-2010

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FVE welcomes the drafting of a first Community Action plan on the Protection and Welfare of animals 2006-2010. FVE very much applauds the work done so far by the Community in the field of Animal Welfare and believes that this has led to a significant improvement of the welfare of farming animals in Europe.

FVE believes that the Community Action plan on the Protection and Welfare of animals provides a statement as to the importance of animal welfare considerations within the EU as expressed by its citizen's during the Eurobarometer survey. In addition, it will allow a consistent and integrated approach for future Community policies concerning the welfare of animals.

Intensification of animal production industries over the last fifty years, in an effort to achieve the economies of scale required to feed a growing population, has led to spectacular improvements advances in animal health and production, but have been accompanied in some cases by a decline in animal welfare standards. At present, regardless of the purpose for which they are kept – whereas whether for breeding, production, research, recreation or companionship – the welfare of animals is rarely optimal. The time has come to correct this by treating each individual animal again as a “sentient” being.

Societal views on animal welfare have also changed drastically over the last 50 years and there has been increasing awareness of the value accorded to animals. Amongst the "ideals and principles which are the common heritage of the European Union," respect for animals is beyond any doubt one of the foundations on which the dignity of the European citizen is based.

Animal Welfare is still seen too much as an economical disadvantage in the competition in animal production on the international market, while it should also be seen as expressed by Commissioner Kyrianiou as a business opportunity for the industry to ensure animal-welfare friendly products in the international market.

Some further detailed comments on the five main action points are outlined below:

- FVE endorses the Commission's view that new legislation regarding animal welfare standards must be based on scientific knowledge, expertise and practical experience. The lack of specific animal welfare standards for most some currently farmed species at the EU level is difficult to justify given the scientific evidence now available and therefore FVE would strongly encourage and support appropriate standards that improve welfare for those farmed species currently not adequately covered by EU legislation such as fish. FVE also hopes for an early review of the stocking densities and travelling times in the new transport Regulation 1/2005 as promised.

- Under the EU feed and food control regulation Member States must prepare action plans for the control of farm animal welfare standards, which will apply from 1st January 2007. Under the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP), the cross-compliance principle of farmers achieving

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EU legal animal welfare standards to receive CAP payments was agreed by the 2003 reform and will apply from 2007. However new CAP requirements should be further detailed to improve animal welfare. Tools are needed to assist Member States in defining and evaluating high welfare products.

- Lack of availability of certain essential medicines leads to animal suffering. It is essential that the health and welfare of our flocks are not adversely affected by limiting the availability of vaccines or therapeutic medicines which are known to be effective and do not pose a food safety hazard. Ways must therefore be found to achieve rapid availability of vaccines and medicines to deal with emergencies such as major outbreaks of disease, and also to increase the range of vaccines and medicines approved for use. A clear example is Histomoniasis (Blackhead) in Turkeys, a deadly disease for which currently no authorised treatments are available to prevent the disease.

- Community work clearly does not end when introducing adequate legislation. A higher priority must be put on enforcement. FVE applauds the work so far done by the FVO in controlling animal welfare standards both in the Member States and third countries, but has held the opinion for many years that more resources, in terms of finances and staff, need to be given to the FVO to monitor animal welfare standards. FVE also sees the possible benefit of not having just a controlling/auditing role but also an advisory role on how to best correct shortcomings. Additionally it only controls the application of farm animal welfare legislation, but not the legislation covering the welfare of other categories of animals (laboratory or wild animals).