

cating that there is a problem. However, the FCN state that: “It is the experience of FCN and those working in the mental health profession that these fears are unfounded. On the contrary, expressing concern for the individual most often has a very positive impact, demonstrating to the person that someone cares about their predicament”.

Various scenarios, based on real-life situations, are used throughout the Report and they give the reader an insight into how farm animal welfare may be adversely affected when the farmer caring for them is, themselves, suffering.

At the end of the Opinion, FAWC makes a number of recommendations, such as the need of Government, and other supporting agencies, to “strengthen mechanisms for early warning, on a national basis, of poor or deteriorating farmer well-being and the associated possible impacts on farm animal welfare”. Additionally, FAWC recommends that Government and existing agencies and support networks work more closely together “sharing information and best practice where possible and making joint decisions on which agency (or agencies) will take responsibility for each case”.

Other areas highlighted for change include: greater publicity of support networks to ensure that those in need are aware of them; and that more training is provided, both to young farmers about the future health problems that they may face, and to those interacting with farmers, such as veterinarians, on how to recognise risk factors for client health.

**Opinion on the Links Between the Health and Well-Being of Farmers and Farm Animal Welfare** (February 2017). A4, 31 pages. Farm Animal Welfare Committee. Available for download from the FAWC website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fawc-advice-to-government> or by contacting the FAWC at the following address: Area 5B, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London SW1P 3JR, UK.

**FAWC Report on Stockmanship and Farm Animal Welfare** (June 2017). A4, 40 pages. Farm Animal Welfare Council. Available for download from the FAWC website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fawc-advice-to-government>.

### **FAWC Opinion on sustainable agriculture and farm animal welfare**

Sustainable agriculture is described by FAWC as “agriculture carried out in a way that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability to meet the needs of the future”. A number of factors that are commonly discussed when considering sustainable agriculture are mentioned, including: sustainable resource use; reduction of waste; reducing impact on environment; mitigation/adaptation for climate change; and protecting rural communities.

Sustainable intensification is also referred to and linked specifically with increasing agricultural productivity and a farm’s financial performance. There is a need for increased agricultural production to feed a growing population (there

are 7.4 billion people alive in the world today and this is projected to reach 11.2 billion in 2100) and to cater for a change in dietary preference to one in which greater quantities of meat and dairy products are consumed. However, although increasing agricultural livestock production may be necessary, there is a concern that this may be achieved at a cost to animal welfare. FAWC state that a “significant amount of work on sustainability of food production did not reference farm animal welfare in any detail”. Additionally, FAWC makes the point that it is important to not focus on increasing production solely, but to also address food consumption, as well as waste and losses that occur during production, sale and consumption.

When considering how sustainable livestock agriculture may positively or negatively affect farm animal welfare the following topics are discussed: herd/flock size; indoor housing; intensification; imported animal management systems; economics; consumers; stockmanship; precision livestock farming; animal health; whole farm management; breeding; and climate change.

For example, FAWC observes that larger farms may positively affect animal welfare due to the “professionalism of management, specialisation of staff, the ability to employ a full-time veterinarian and opportunity to invest in infrastructure and facilities, particularly when handling animals safely”. However, the disadvantages of larger farms may include larger group sizes and increased stocking density which, in turn, can negatively affect behaviour and make assessing animal welfare at an individual level more difficult.

The Opinion closes with a number of conclusions and recommendations. FAWC believes that animal welfare must be included when discussing sustainable agricultural policy and that where production and efficiency in farm animal agriculture is increased, that this should not be at a cost to animal welfare. Fundamentally, FAWC state that animal welfare is integral to sustainable agriculture and the following key principles are put forward:

- Agriculture cannot be considered sustainable if it is achieved at an unacceptable cost to animal welfare;
- Sustainable agriculture must take account of the fact that farmed animals are sentient individuals; and
- Sustainable agriculture must include a duty of care for the physical and mental needs and natures of farmed animals, and should not depend on prolonged or routine use of pharmaceuticals, or on mutilations.

**Opinion on Sustainable Agriculture and Farm Animal Welfare** (February 2017). A4, 18 pages. Farm Animal Welfare Committee. Available for download from the FAWC website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/farm-animal-welfare-committee-fawc> or by contacting the FAWC at the following address: Area 5B, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London SW1P 3JR, UK.

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