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Promotion of farm animal management based on the international standards
for animal welfare in the Terrestrial Animal Health Code of the World
Organisation for Animal Health

In recent years, in order to understand the sensitivity of farm animals and ensure that their behavior according to their ecology and habits is not hindered, farm animal management with consideration to animal welfare has been required. The World Organisation for Animal Health (hereinafter referred to as "WOAH"), which is an international organization for the improvement of animal health around the world and which our country is a member of, has successively formulated international standards for animal welfare related to each farm animal species such as beef cattle and broiler, and published them in the Terrestrial Animal Health Code (hereinafter referred to as the "WOAH Code"). In light of these international trends, to widely disseminate and establish animal management with consideration to animal welfare, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries has been supporting its dissemination by issuing the "Basic concept of farm animal management with consideration to animal welfare" (No. 29-Seichiku-794 Notification by the Director of Livestock Production Promotion Division dated November 15, 2017 and No.1-Seichiku-1897 Notification by the Director of Livestock Production Promotion Division dated March 16, 2020) in 2017 and 2020, and for management methods for each farm animal species, based on the Guidelines for Farm Animal Management Corresponding to the Concept of Animal Welfare prepared by the Japan Livestock Technology Association (Hereinafter referred to as "JLTA").

Since then, amid the international trends that call for farm animal management with consideration to animal welfare, the Basic Plan for Food, Agriculture and Rural Areas (hereinafter referred to as the "Basic Plan.") approved by the Cabinet in March 2020 set a target of 5 trillion yen for exports of agricultural, forestry and fishery products and food by 2030, of which 360 billion yen was set for beef exports. In addition, the Strategy for Sustainable Food Systems, MIDORI formulated in May 2021 calls for "the development and dissemination of technological measures to improve animal welfare based on scientific knowledge," and in order to achieve the export target set forth in the Basic Plan and to build a sustainable food system in the future, Japan needs to be strongly conscious of the production of livestock products in consideration of international trends.

For this reason, Japan will reiterate its basic philosophy of meeting the standards of animal welfare indicated by the international standards of animal welfare for each farm animal species, etc. (hereinafter referred to as "International Standards, etc.") as described below. In addition, in order to further strengthen efforts to disseminate management methods for each farm animal species based on the Guidelines for Farm Animal

Management Corresponding to the Concept of Animal Welfare prepared by the JLTA, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries will first publish technical guidelines for management methods for each farm animal species that summarize specific measures in light of the actual management situation in Japan, and promote their dissemination. Please inform the prefecture governments within the jurisdiction of your bureau (*2) of the above and ask them to inform the people involved in the livestock industry. At that time, prefecture governments are requested to cooperate with departments and others in charge of the welfare and management of animals within them to disseminate this notification.

It should be noted that the notification to the relevant Ministries, Agencies and Organizations has been issued as described in the Attachment.

(Note) WOAHA has developed international standards for the transport of animals, slaughter of animals, killing of animals for disease control purposes, and animal welfare for beef cattle, broilers, dairy cattle, working equids and pigs. Regarding the international standards for animal welfare concerning laying hens, although they were not adopted by the General Assembly in May 2021 owing to wide differences in opinions among the member countries, the draft international standards that were submitted for adoption recognized various management methods, and Japan supported them.

Details

1. Definition of animal welfare

(1) Definition of animal welfare and the Five Freedoms

In the introduction to the international standards for animal welfare in the WOAHA Code (Hereinafter referred to as "Introduction."), animal welfare is defined as "the physical and mental state of an animal in relation to the conditions in which it lives and dies."

In the Introduction, the Five Freedoms (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 behavior) are shown as useful indicators for considering animal welfare.

Based on the fact that the Five Freedoms are the basic philosophy of animal welfare for all animals, Article 2, Paragraph 2 of the "Act on the Welfare and Management of Animals" (Act No. 105 of 1973) stipulates the fundamental principle that when handling an animal, any person shall ensure appropriate feeding and water supply, necessary health management, and an environment for raising or keeping the animal with consideration for its kind, habits, etc., within the extent that does not impede the attainment of the purpose of raising or keeping it.

(2) General principles of farm animal management corresponding to the concept of animal welfare

Livestock are kept by humans as part of economic activities. It is assumed that they will not be kept for the rest of their lives like companion animals and will eventually be used as meat. For this reason, it is important to try to keep those animals in a better environment based on scientific evidence until they are used. Therefore, management corresponding to the concept of animal welfare is that animal handlers understand the Five Freedoms of animal welfare principles and make continuous efforts and

improvements through proper management such as daily observation, recording, careful handling, and provision of quality feed and water in order to prepare a comfortable environment for farm animals and maintain the health of farm animals while conforming to Japan's hot and humid climate and the characteristics of indigenous farm animals such as Japanese Black (Wagyu) and Jidori. It is necessary for those concerned to fully understand that this is not achieved only by the development of specific facilities and equipment.

2. Responsibilities of farm animal managers, handlers, etc.

(1) Ensuring good animal welfare

The Introduction states that "an animal experiences good welfare if the animal is healthy, comfortable, well nourished, safe, is not suffering from unpleasant states such as pain, fear and distress, and is able to express behaviors that are important for its physical and mental state" and "good animal welfare requires disease prevention and appropriate veterinary care, shelter, management and nutrition, a stimulating and safe environment, humane handling and humane slaughter or killing."

Therefore, it is necessary to recognize that ensuring good animal welfare involves the management of farm animals, such as the design of management systems, management of farm environments, responsible farm animal management, and proper care, and that serious problems may arise if these factors are compromised.

(2) Acquisition of knowledge and skills by managers, handlers, etc.

The manager shall ensure a sufficient number of handlers, etc. to ensure the health of farm animals and good animal welfare. In addition, managers, handlers, etc. shall gain appropriate experience or receive training to acquire practical knowledge and skills on the ecology, habits, behavior, handling, health, biosecurity, physiological requirements and animal welfare of farm animals so as to obtain knowledge and skills on these animal welfare indicators and ways to improve them. In particular, they shall acquire the knowledge and skills to identify and properly manage farm animals suspected of suffering from chronic diseases and injuries, as well as the knowledge to evaluate the suitability of transport and the proper body condition. In such cases, if it is difficult to receive guidance from veterinarians, etc., refer to the materials published by the JLTA.

In addition, measurement indicators and other indicators were presented in the technical guidelines on animal management for each species separately specified by the Director-General of the Livestock Industry Bureau (hereinafter referred to as the "Guidelines."). It is hoped that these indicators will be used in daily observation of farm animals to improve animal welfare on a daily basis.

3. Securing the Five Freedoms

The main measures to ensure the Five Freedoms for animal welfare in farm animal management are as follows.

If animal welfare is impaired, abnormal behavior resulting from stress such as stereotyped behavior, increased morbidity and mortality, changes in appearance, changes in production results, etc. may occur. Therefore, farm animals should be observed at least once a day, and if these signs are observed, efforts should be made to identify the cause and improve the situation.

(1) Freedom from hunger, thirst and malnutrition

Ensure all farm animals can obtain sufficient potable water that meets the appropriate nutritional and physiological needs in a balance of quantity and quality by considering the nutritional needs of each farm animal species according to the developmental stage of farm animals. Any change in body weight outside of the standard development of the animal species, particularly an extreme and rapid decrease, may indicate disease or damage to animal welfare.

Fresh water suitable for drinking shall be supplied daily in sufficient quantities.

Feed shall be inspected as necessary for adverse effects on farm animal health, and stored and fed with minimal contamination or deterioration.

When transporting farm animals, rest, feed and water should be provided at appropriate intervals depending on the animal species, age, condition, transport time, weather, etc.

(2) Freedom from fear and distress

Improper handling of farm animals, such as placing them in environments where excessive or sudden noise occurs, or sudden or rough handling, can cause fear and distress in farm animals. Therefore, farm animal management facilities such as animal barns shall be maintained and managed to minimize noise.

In addition, when approaching or catching farm animals, consideration shall be given to the distance and position of farm animals so that they are not surprised.

(3) Freedom from physical and thermal discomfort

The comfortable temperature range for farm animals varies depending on the species, developmental stage, etc. Therefore, heat and cold countermeasures should be taken in accordance with the farm animals to be raised or transported.

In addition, excessive retention of harmful substances such as ammonia in farm animal management facilities such as animal barns may cause damage to the respiratory organs of farm animals and animal handlers, thereby adversely affecting their health. Therefore, appropriate ventilation should be implemented to reduce such retention.

(4) Freedom from pain, injury and disease

When performing potentially painful procedures (e.g., castration, hoof care, dehorning), select a time and method that causes as little pain as possible under the guidance of a veterinarian, such as performing a procedure at an early age or under the administration of anesthetics or analgesics by a veterinarian. Alternative methods that are less painful for farm animals shall also be considered.

In the case of using tools when handling farm animals, use panels (boards), flags, or other equipment, and avoid using tools that may cause injury or unnecessary pain to farm animals.

If it is unavoidable to euthanize farm animals on the farm, such as when there is no chance of recovery after treatment or when an animal is severely stunted or frail and unlikely to recover to have a normal growth, the animal should be euthanized in the least painful way possible, such as by immediately making it lose consciousness.

(5) Freedom to express normal patterns of behavior

It is important to make farm animals comfortable and safe, such as being able to rest comfortably and adjust their posture normally, and to provide them with opportunities to behave naturally in accordance with their intrinsic ecology and habits.

Specifically, it should be noted that (i) an animal barn has a structure that does not cause injury to farm animals such as having no protrusions, (ii) the floor surface is made of non-slip material to improve drainage and ensure hygienic conditions, (iii) the barn has a structure that provides sufficient space for farm animals to rest and allows them to behave normally such as standing up, and (iv) natural light and lighting should be used appropriately to ensure sufficient light levels according to the habits of each animal species. Vehicles used for transportation shall also have a similar environment.

When group feeding farm animals, pay attention to the composition of the herd in order to prevent hostility between livestock within the group and increase tension, since many farm animal species have a habit of fighting each other to establish social rank. It should also be noted that keeping farm animals at high densities may increase the incidence of injury and adversely affect behaviors such as feeding, drinking water, exercise, and resting.

4. Technical guidelines on management for each farm animal species

(1) Initiatives for dissemination and promotion of Guidelines

With regard to management for each farm animal species, based on the International Standards, etc., technical considerations were compiled in such a way that "actions recommended for implementation" and "actions recommended for future implementation" were clarified by the Guidelines, while referring to the Guidelines for Farm Animal Management Corresponding to the Concept of Animal Welfare prepared by the JLTA. The specific date for implementation of each items in the "actions recommended for implementation" will be set in the future based on the recommendations of the Report of the Verification Committee on the Administration of Poultry and Eggs published in June 2021, and by listening to the opinions of the parties concerned at the meeting described in the improvement measures published in the Improvement Measures of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Based on the Report of the Verification Committee on the Administration of Poultry and Eggs published by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. In addition, it is a policy to disseminate and promote farm animal management in accordance with the concept of animal welfare by monitoring the implementation status and making possible items subject to cross-compliance of subsidy projects.

(2) Matters not included in the Guidelines

For matters not stated in the Guidelines, refer to the International Standards, etc.

In addition, see the Japanese Feeding Standard for each farm animal species and the Standard Tables of Feed Composition in Japan compiled by the National Agriculture and Food Research Organization, and the various manuals published by each prefectural farm animal experiment station as they contain useful information for farm animal management corresponding to animal welfare.

5. Others

(1) Compliance with relevant laws and regulations

With regard to the legal standards concerning the farm animal management, in

addition to the Act on the Welfare and Management of Animals, Standards relating to the Care and Keeping of Industrial Animals (Notice of the Prime Minister's Office No. 22 of October 9, 1987), and Standards relating to the Methods of Destruction of Animals (Notice of the Prime Minister's Office No.40 of July 4, 1995), the "Act on the Prevention of Infectious Diseases in Livestock" (Act No. 166 of 1951), the "Biosecurity Standards" and the "Guidelines for Specific Infectious Diseases of Domestic Animals" based on the above Act, and the "Act on Special Measures Concerning the Management and Transmission of Information for Individual Identification of Cattle" (Act No. 72 of 2003) have been established. In the dissemination and promotion of farm animal management corresponding to the concept of animal welfare, it is requested that these relevant laws and regulations be observed.

(2) Farm animals other than the species mentioned in the Guidelines

For farm animal management other than those mentioned in the Guidelines (e.g., goats and lambs), it is desirable to carry out management in accordance with the description in the Guidelines.

- *1) For the address to the Okinawa General Bureau, Cabinet Office, write "the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries" as the addressee.
- *2) For the address to the Hokkaido District Agriculture Office, write "To Agriculture Office" as the addressee.