

STRESS AND ANIMAL WELFARE: AN UNEASY RELATIONSHIP

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ABSTRACT

Stress and its detrimental effects on animal welfare has been examined in this paper. Stress refers to a state of threatened homeostasis. Animal welfare refers to well-being and care in its biological sense. The highly dynamic patterns of the homeostatic mechanisms activated during stress make it difficult to deduce any simple relationship between stress and welfare. Thus, the closely associated concepts of stress and welfare may be considered as opposites since welfare cannot be achieved under stress and vice versa. Thus, attending to welfare is an issue of biology. Recently, interest in and concern about animal well-being has been increasing because of changing views towards non-human animals, societal attitudes, legislation and conduct of quality scientific research and testing. One way of determining practices that promote the best welfare of livestock is defining and measuring physiological welfare. Physiological measurements and other measures may help measure an animal's state of care and stress or distress, as good production does not prevent an animal from being subjected to distress or stress. Therefore, animal agriculturists usually take the position that they are practicing Animal Welfarist because of their continuous concern about the well-being and care of livestock (good husbandry) and a well-cared-for animal performs better and thus is more profitable. Then, producers would be compensated for providing improvements in the welfare of their livestock, consumers would absorb the costs and production would continue. Moreover, improving animal welfare is necessary to reduce sufferings in line with the requirements of Government, NGOs and consumers, who are becoming concerned about welfare of food animals.

Keywords: Stress, animal, welfare, uneasy, relationship.