



94 Research report

Projecting Social Science into Defra's Animal Welfare Evidence Base A Review of current research and evidence base on the issue of farmer behaviour by Escobar, M.P. and H. Buller
2013 Final Report to the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs : 94p.

in **Significant Impact Group(s)**: Housing and welfare

Species targeted: Dairy; Sheep;
Age: Not stated;

Summary: This report reviews Defra's social science evidence base on the issue of farmer behaviour, particularly with regards to animal welfare. The report recommends that the Department would benefit from understanding and interacting with social science beyond the fields of psychology and behavioural economics.

Rather than attempting to address the "perfect farmer" by aiming to influence their psychology, interventions could seek to impact the social interactions and the cultural context within which farmers take actions and decisions. Four specific farmer practices around animal welfare are reviewed in the report, presenting suggestions that could help coordinate social science research with farmers' actions and decisions around animal welfare. Three main areas for further research are highlighted in this report: the importance of farmer – vet relationships, the dynamics of auditing and inspection, the role of cultural ideas about farming and "good" farming practices in farmers' actions and decisions.

Three main areas for further research emerge from the selected case studies:

1. farmer – vet relationships
2. the dynamics of audit and inspection regimes
3. the complex role of cultural ideas about farming and "good" farming practices in farmers' actions and decisions.

Besides these three main areas we also point to five other specific themes to integrate a social science research agenda:

- a better understanding of society's interpretations of animal welfare as a social issue;
- an evaluation of the literature and lessons emerging from participatory, collective and dialogue-based experiences of behaviour change;
- a better understanding of the influence of issues of affect, care and empathy within human-animal relations on farmers' actions and decisions;
- the effect of information demands and information flows on farmers' practices of record-keeping and record-usage;
- the lessons to be learnt from other areas where voluntary and non-regulatory approaches have been implemented in order to generate changes in actions and decisions, such as agri-environment schemes and climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies.

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Where to find the original material:

[https://research-information.bris.ac.uk/en/publications/projecting-social-science-into-defras-animal-welfare-evidence-base\(29b27372-4f93-4c7d-b193-454287d09100\).html](https://research-information.bris.ac.uk/en/publications/projecting-social-science-into-defras-animal-welfare-evidence-base(29b27372-4f93-4c7d-b193-454287d09100).html);

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