

JERSEY CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE WELFARE OF

SHEEP

THE CODE

The Code of recommendations for the welfare of sheep is intended to encourage all those responsible for looking after these animals to adopt the highest standards of husbandry. It takes account of five basic animal needs, known as the "Five Freedoms".

The Five Freedoms are:

1. FREEDOM FROM HUNGER AND THIRST

- by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour;

2. FREEDOM FROM DISCOMFORT

- by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area;

3. FREEDOM FROM PAIN, INJURY OR DISEASE

- by prevention or by rapid diagnosis and treatment;

4. FREEDOM TO EXPRESS NORMAL BEHAVIOUR

- by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animals' own kind;

5. FREEDOM FROM FEAR AND DISTRESS

- by ensuring conditions and treatment to avoid mental suffering.

The Code identifies good stockmanship as a key factor in farm animal welfare and this code is an essential tool for every shepherd. All persons involved with sheep should read it carefully and bear its recommendations in mind at all times.

Stockmanship is a key factor because, no matter how acceptable a system may be in principle, without competent, diligent stockmanship the welfare of sheep cannot be adequately catered for. The recommendations which follow are designed to help shepherds, particularly those who are young or inexperienced, to attain the required standards.

STOCKMANSHIP

1. The number and type of sheep kept and the stocking rate should depend on the suitability of the environment and the skills of the shepherd. The qualities of stockmanship are of paramount importance in sheep husbandry, as badly managed and unhealthy sheep cannot thrive. The shepherd should know the signs which indicate good health in sheep. These include general alertness, free movement, active feeding, rumination and absence of lameness, visible wounds, abscesses or injuries.

2. The signs of ill-health in sheep include listlessness, abnormal posture and behaviour, scouring, absence of cudding, persistent coughing or panting, especially at

rest, scratching and frequent rubbing, rapid loss of bodily condition / poor body condition (which can best be assessed by handling), excessive wool loss, sudden fall in milk yield and, in some circumstances, being apart from the flock. Where the shepherd is able to identify the cause of ill-health he should take immediate remedial action. If the cause is not obvious, or if the shepherd's action is not effective, veterinary advice should be obtained promptly.

3. When changes are made to sheep husbandry systems - to involve installing more complex or elaborate equipment than has previously been used - consideration should be given to animal welfare. Systems involving a high degree of control over the environment should be installed only where conscientious staff skilled in both animal husbandry and the use of the equipment will always be available.

HOUSING

General

4. Advice should be sought on the construction or modification of buildings.

5. When first housed, sheep should be in a dry condition and if possible free from foot rot. Any foot problems should be treated immediately.

Ventilation and temperature

6. Effective ventilation of buildings is essential.

Buildings and equipment

7. Internal surfaces of housing and pens should be made of materials which can be cleansed and disinfected or be easily replaced when necessary.

8. Surfaces should not be treated with paints or wood preservatives which may cause illness or death.

9. All floors should be designed, constructed and maintained so as to avoid discomfort, distress or injury to the sheep. Regular maintenance is essential. Solid floors should be well-drained and provided with dry bedding. Newly-born and young lambs should not be put on slatted floors.

10. Water bowls and troughs should be constructed and sited so as to avoid fouling and to minimise the risk of water freezing in cold weather. They should be kept thoroughly clean and should be checked at least once daily and more frequently in extreme conditions, to ensure that they are in working order. They should be designed and installed in a way that will ensure small lambs cannot get into them and drown.

11. For sheep given concentrate feed, when all animals are fed together, it is important to have adequate trough space to avoid competition and aggression. In normal practice, approximately 30 cm of trough space is needed for small breed ewes and approximately 45 cm for the larger lowland ewes. Excessive competition is detrimental to sheep welfare.

12. When feeding hay and silage *ad lib.*, trough space should normally be provided within the range 10-12 cm per ewe, dependent upon size. Racks and troughs should be positioned and designed to avoid injury, discomfort and damage to sheep.

Lighting

13. Throughout the hours of daylight the level of indoor lighting, natural or artificial, should be such that all housed sheep can be seen clearly. In addition, adequate lighting for satisfactory inspection should be available at any time.

Space allowance

14. The space allowance and group size for housed sheep should be determined according to the age, size and class of stock.

Type of stock	Space allowance
Lowland ewes (60-90 kg live weight)	1.2-1.4 sq. M floor space per ewe during pregnancy
Lowland ewes after lambing with lambs at foot up to 6 weeks of age	2.0-2.2 sq. M floor space per ewe and lambs
Small breed ewes (45-65 kg live weight)	1.0-1.2 sq. M floor space per ewe during pregnancy
Small breed ewes after lambing with lambs at foot up to 6 weeks of age	1.8-2.0 sq. M floor space per ewe and lambs
Lambs up to 12 weeks old	0.5-0.6 sq. M floor space per lamb
Lambs and sheep 12 weeks to 12 months old	0.75-0.9 sq. M floor space per lamb/sheep
Rams	1.5-2.0 sq. M

MANAGEMENT

General

15. All fields and buildings should be kept clear of debris such as wire or plastic, which could be harmful to sheep.

16. When sheep are outdoors in winter, and particularly when fed on root crops, they should be allowed either to run back to pasture or to a straw bedded area, which gives a more comfortable lying area as well as limiting the build-up of mud or dung on the fleece. Where there is no natural shelter for the sheep, artificial shelter, such as the placement of straw bales, should be provided.

Marking

17. Permanent marking of sheep by, for example, ear tattooing or tagging, should be carried out by a skilled shepherd using properly maintained instruments. Ear tags should be suitable for use in sheep. Wherever possible, marking should not be undertaken during the fly season. If marking does have to be carried out during the fly season, farmers should take measures which will prevent or reduce the threat of fly strike. Where, for flock management purposes, ear marking is by notching or

punching, this should be done using proprietary equipment. If horned breeds of sheep are to be marked for flock management purposes, horn branding is preferred.

18. Aerosols or paints used for temporary marking should be non-toxic.

Handling

19. Adequate and safe holding and handling facilities should be available and these should not have sharp edges, projections or other features likely to cause injury to the sheep.

20. Sheep should not be caught by the fleece alone. They should be handled or restrained by the means of a hand or arm under the neck (holding the neck wool if necessary) with the other arm placed on or around the rear. Lifting or dragging sheep by the fleece, tail, ears, horns or legs is unacceptable. Care should be taken with the horns, which may be broken off if sheep are roughly handled.

21. Devices such as raddles, harnesses, hobbles, tethers and yokes should be of suitable material and should be properly fitted and adjusted to avoid causing injury or discomfort. They should not be used for longer than necessary. Tethering by the horns is unacceptable.

Fencing and hedges

22. Fences and hedges should be well maintained so as to avoid injury to the sheep and prevent entanglement. Where any type of mesh fencing is used, particularly for horned sheep, and around lambing fields, it should be checked frequently so that any animals which are caught can be released.

23. Electric fences should be designed, installed, used and maintained so that contact with them does not cause more than momentary discomfort to the sheep. Electric mesh fencing should not be used for horned sheep.

Shearing

24. Every mature sheep should have its fleece removed at least once a year.

25. Shearers should be experienced, competent and have received adequate training in shearing techniques. Inexperienced shearers should be supervised by suitably competent staff. When shearing, care should be taken not to cut the skin of the sheep. Where a wound does occur, immediate treatment should be given.

26. Shearers should clean and disinfect their equipment between flocks to minimise the spreading of disease.

27. Care should be taken when turning out sheep which were sheared while they were housed. In winter ewes should not be turned out within two months of shearing and even then only in suitable weather conditions and with adequate shelter arrangements. If an effective natural windbreak is not available, other methods of shelter such as straw bales should be provided.

28. Winter shearing should not be carried out, unless the sheep are housed.

Tail docking *(see notes at the end)

29. The anal and vulva regions of sheep are sensitive areas and care must be taken to ensure that sufficient tail is retained to cover the vulva in the case of female sheep and the anus in the case of male sheep. Tail docking must be carried out only in strict accordance with the law by a competent trained operator and after careful consideration whether it is necessary.

Castration *(see notes at the end)

30. Farmers and shepherds should consider carefully if castration is necessary or if lambs can be finished and sent to slaughter before reaching sexual maturity. It should only be carried out when lambs are likely to be retained after puberty and where it is necessary to avoid welfare problems associated with the management of entire males. Castration must be carried out only in strict accordance with the law by a competent trained operator.

31. When tail docking and castration are both deemed necessary, carrying out both procedures at the same handling should be considered to minimise disruption and the likelihood of mis-mothering.

Dehorning or disbudding *(see notes at the end)

32. Dehorning or disbudding of a sheep by a lay person is against the law, except for the trimming of ingrowing insensitive tip of an ingrowing horn which, if left untreated, could cause pain and distress.

Foot Care

33. Regular inspection to assess the condition of the feet should be carried out. A foot care programme may include careful foot paring and use of a footbath. Foot paring is a skilled procedure and can damage feet if carried out incorrectly or excessively, therefore, must only be carried out by a competent operator.

Fencing

34. Electric mesh fencing should not be used for horned sheep. Electric fences should be so designed, installed, used and maintained that contact with them does not cause more than momentary discomfort to the sheep. Where any type of mesh fencing is used and in particular for horned sheep and around lambing fields it should be inspected frequently.

Feed and water

35. Sheep should have access to sufficient food and fresh, clean water at all times. They should not be deprived of food or water for management purposes, for example to dry off ewes or to reduce condition of over-finished sheep.

36. Care should be taken to ensure that the diet is always adequate to maintain full health and vigour.

37. Any stale or contaminated food should be removed from troughs and boxes before further food is added. Stored foods, such as hay and silage, should be palatable and of good quality.

38. Care should be taken that compound feeds do not contain unsuitable additives. Compound feeds prepared for other species should be avoided as certain substances contained within these, such as copper, can be toxic to sheep at levels which are safe for other species.

39. Sheep with poor teeth (e.g. broken-mouthed) should be provided with food which they can eat without difficulty.

40. Arrangements should be made in advance to ensure that adequate supplies of suitable food can be made available to sheep in emergencies.

HEALTH

41. Sheep should be regularly inspected for signs of injury, fly strike, illness or distress. Frequent inspection is required in intensive systems, during lambing, and in the period before and after clipping and dipping.

42. Any injured, ailing or distressed sheep should be treated without delay and veterinary advice sought when necessary. Provision should be made for the segregation and care of seriously sick and injured animals.

43. Shepherds should be experienced and competent in the prevention and treatment of foot rot, the techniques of lambing, injecting, oral dosing, tail docking and castration of lambs.

44. The health of flocks can best be safeguarded by the use of vaccination, foot care and worming programmes based on veterinary advice.

45. Special care should be taken to ensure that all equipment used in worming, vaccination and other treatment is maintained to a satisfactory standard. Equipment used for any injections should be frequently cleansed and sterilised to avoid infections. Disposable needles should be used whenever possible. Dosing gun nozzles should be of a suitable size for the age of the sheep.

46. It is essential that all practical measures be taken to prevent or control external and internal parasitic infestations. Where infestations such as fly strike are likely to occur, sheep should be protected by preventive treatment such as dipping, or other effective method.

PREGNANCY AND LAMBING

47. Heavily pregnant ewes should be handled with care to avoid distress and injury which may result in premature lambing.

48. Pregnant and nursing ewes should receive sufficient food to ensure the development of healthy lambs and to maintain the health and bodily condition of the ewe. Scanning, to enable appropriate grouping and feeding is a very useful management aid.

49. Stockmen should pay particular attention to cleanliness and hygiene of equipment and pens. Personal cleanliness is also essential when assisting ewes to lamb. Every effort should be made to prevent the build up and spread of infection by ensuring that lambing pens are provided with adequate clean bedding and are regularly cleansed and disinfected. It is particularly important to ensure that dead lambs and afterbirth are removed and disposed of without delay, preferably by incineration.

50. Any ewe with a prolapse should be treated immediately using an appropriate technique and where necessary veterinary advice should be sought.

51. It is vital that every newly-born lamb receives colostrums from its dam, or from another source, as soon as possible and in any case within 6 hours of birth. Adequate supplies of colostrums should always be stored for emergencies or adequate stocks of proprietary colostrums replacer are available.

52. Shepherds should be trained in resuscitation such as feeding by stomach tube. Some form of heating e.g. warmer box, should be available to revive weakly lambs. Where lambing takes place out of doors some form of shelter or windbreak should be available.

ARTIFICIAL REARING

53. Artificial rearing can give rise to problems and requires close attention to detail and high standards of supervision and stockmanship to be successful. It is essential that the lambs should be allowed to suck the ewe for at least the first 12 hours of life.

54. All lambs should receive an adequate amount of suitable liquid food at regular intervals each day during their first four weeks of life. From the end of the second week of life, lambs should also have access to palatable and nutritious solid food (which may be grass) and fresh clean water.

55. Troughs should be kept clean and any stale food removed. Equipment and utensils used for liquid feeding should be thoroughly cleansed at regular and frequent intervals and should be effectively sterilised.

56. A dry bed and adequate ventilation should be provided at all times. Where necessary, arrangements should be made to provide safe supplementary heating for very young lambs.

57. For at least the first 3 weeks of life housed lambs should be kept in small groups.

58. Where young lambs are being reared at pasture, care should be taken to ensure that they have adequate shelter.

HAZARDS

59. To minimise the risk of sheep being unable to gain shelter, great care should be taken in siting shelters, shelter belts and fences. All sheep should be removed from areas which are in danger of being flooded.

60. Young lambs should be protected as far as possible from hazards such as open drains and predators.

61. Any dog is a potential hazard to sheep and should be kept under control on agricultural land. Sheep dogs should be properly trained so that they do not grip sheep.

62. When sheep are near built-up areas, greater care, supervision and more frequent inspections will be necessary.

MILK SHEEP

Management

63. Milk sheep flocks will require especially vigilant stockmanship to ensure that the health and welfare of the flock is maintained. The shepherd should be aware of the specific problems relevant to the system and the ways in which these may be avoided.

64. Milk sheep are naturally prolific and it is important that care is taken to provide an adequate level of nutrition during pregnancy.

65. The entrances and exits to buildings and fields should be maintained in a dry condition and routine methods of foot rot prevention, for example foot baths and / or vaccination should be used.

66. Where lambs are artificially reared there should be adequate provision for housing and feeding.

67. The welfare of unwanted lambs should not be neglected. This should include the use of suitable rearing systems. Unwanted lambs should be euthanased in an expeditious and humane manner.

Milking practices

68. Special attention should be paid to milking techniques, the adjustment of milking equipment and dairy hygiene.

69. Hygiene measures should be adopted to reduce the spread of disease.

Milking parlours and equipment

70. Pens, ramps, milking parlours and milking equipment should be properly designed, constructed and maintained.

71. It is essential to ensure that milking machines are functioning correctly by proper maintenance and adjustment of vacuum levels, pulsation rates and ratios, taking account of manufacturers' recommendations.

Mechanical equipment and services

72. All equipment and services including drinkers, milking machines, ventilating fans, heating and lighting units, fire extinguishers and alarm systems, should be cleaned and inspected regularly and kept clean and in good working order. Any automated equipment should incorporate a fail-safe device maintained in good working order and, where the sheep's welfare is dependent upon such equipment, an alarm system should also be installed to warn the shepherd of failure. These should be regularly tested. Defects should be rectified immediately or alternative measures taken to safeguard the health and welfare of the sheep.

73. All electrical installations at mains voltage should be inaccessible to sheep, well insulated, safeguarded from rodents and properly earthed.

EMERGENCIES/FIRE PREVENTION

74. Farmers should make advance plans for dealing with emergencies such as fire, flood or disruption of supplies, and should ensure that all staff are familiar with the appropriate emergency action. At least one responsible member of staff should always be available to take the necessary action.

75. In the design of new buildings or alterations of existing ones, there should be provision for livestock to be released and evacuated quickly in case of emergency. Materials used in construction should have sufficient fire resistance to enable safe evacuation to take place. Adequate doors and other escape routes should be provided to enable emergency procedures to be followed in the event of a fire. Expert advice on all fire precautions (including advice on the installation of fire fighting equipment) is obtainable from the Fire Safety Officer.

76. All electrical, gas and oil services should be planned and fitted so that if there is overheating, or flame is generated, the risk of flame spreading to equipment, bedding or the fabric of the building is minimal. Consideration should be given to installing fire alarm systems which can be heard and acted upon at any time of the day or night.

77. In case a 999 call has to be made, notice should be prominently displayed in all livestock buildings stating where the nearest telephone is located, each telephone

should have fixed by it a notice giving instructions for the Fire Brigade on the best route to the farm.

TRANSPORT

Sheep should only be transported in accordance with the provisions of The Diseases of Animals (Welfare in Transit) (Jersey) Order 2001.

78. Sheep should be transported in a way that does not or is not likely to cause suffering.

79. Sheep should only be transported if they are fit for the intended journey. An animal is not considered fit for its intended journey if it is ill, injured, infirm or fatigued and the intended journey is likely to cause it unnecessary suffering

80. An unfit sheep may be transported **only** if it is being taken for veterinary treatment/diagnosis and then only provided that it is transported in a way which is not going to cause it further suffering. It is advisable to consult a veterinary surgeon before undertaking such transport.

LEGISLATION

81. The following legislation is of relevance:

- Animal Welfare (Jersey) Law 2004
- Diseases of Animals (Jersey) Law 1958
- Veterinary Surgeons (Jersey) Law 1999
- Diseases of Animals (Welfare in Transit) (Jersey) Order 2001

82. *Notes:

1. Under the Animal Welfare (Jersey) Law 2004 the tail docking of lambs, by the use of a rubber ring or other device to restrict the flow of blood to the tail, without anaesthetic, is only allowed if the device is applied during the first week of life.

2. It is not permitted to castrate a lamb, without an anaesthetic, other than:

- by the use of a rubber ring or other device to restrict the flow of blood to the scrotum, if the device is applied during the first week of life.
- by using Burdizzo pliers or by using a scalpel blade if the operation is performed before the animal reaches the age of 2 months

3. It is not permitted to dehorn or disbud a sheep, without anaesthetic, except the trimming of the insensitive tip of an ingrowing horn which, if left untreated, could cause pain or distress.

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