

Compliance with the Environmental Protection (Restriction on Use of Lead Shot) (England) Regulations 1999 (July 2010). Report to Defra from the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust with contribution from the British Association of Shooting and Conservation. A4, 100 pages. Available at: <http://www.wwt.org.uk/files/HQ-PR/Lead/LeadShotRegulationsComplianceReport.pdf>

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The Farm Animal Welfare Forum consults on a means of labelling food from farm animals within the European Union

The Farm Animal Welfare Forum (FAWF) is a collaboration of seven organisations concerned with improving the welfare of farmed animals. Supported by the Tubney Charitable Trust, the FAWF hopes to encourage all parties within the foodchain, including farmers, policy-makers, retailers, manufacturers and consumers, to work together in delivering higher welfare standards for animals reared for food.

Three areas have been prioritised by the FAWF for action within Europe: confidence for consumers about animal welfare and food quality; a positive future for farmers based on high welfare, high quality and sustainability; and a substantial overall improvement in animal welfare standards.

In June 2010, FAWF published a paper for consultation in which they laid out their proposals on how a mandatory labelling system for food from farmed animals within the European Union may be implemented. Labelling has increasingly been an area of focus as various surveys have indicated that consumers would like more information about on-farm animal welfare at the point of purchase to enable them to make informed decisions.

The FAWF paper concentrates on fresh and frozen meat from pigs and chickens since FAWF believe that chicken and pig farming systems are the most readily categorised and that these farm animals are most likely to be kept in barren, highly stocked indoor conditions. Additionally, pig meat is consumed in the greatest quantity in the EU.

The FAWF would like the European Union to work strategically towards:

- All fresh and frozen chicken and pig meat sold through retail outlets across the EU labelled by method of production by 2015;
- The establishment of 3–5 categories of livestock production system;
- Minimum criteria for each category of production system for each livestock species being defined by EU law;
- Labelling terms or descriptors being agreed for each production system and species based on consumer and market testing;
- The introduction of welfare outcome assessment to provide further information and evidence about the welfare credentials of each category of production system, within 5 years.

Labelling Food from Farm Animals: Method of Production Labels for the European Union (June 2010). A paper for consultation with Stakeholders produced by the Farm Animal Welfare Forum. A4, 20 pages. For further information, please visit the FAWF website, available at: www.fawf.org.uk, or contact: Farm Animal Welfare Forum, PO Box 762, Godalming, GU7 9EQ, UK

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Defra puts forward new regulation to allow beak trimming of laying hens

Under The Mutilations (Permitted Procedures) (England) Regulations 2007, laying hens within England may be beak trimmed if the procedure is carried out by a qualified member of staff and on birds that are less than 10-days old. The aim of beak trimming is to reduce feather pecking and cannibalism and involves cutting off up to one-third of a hen's beak using either a hot blade or infra-red technology. Beak trimming is considered by many to be an insult to a bird's welfare since it involves the loss of a sensory organ and trimming may result in acute and chronic pain.

A ban on routine beak trimming of laying hens was due to come into force from 31st December 2010. However, following a Defra consultation, carried out in January 2010, the ban on beak trimming has been removed and a new regulation, 'The Mutilations (Permitted Procedures) (Amendment) Regulations 2010', laid before Parliament. The new Regulation would allow beak trimming of day-old chicks intended for laying using infra-red treatment only. Infra-red beak-trimming techniques are relatively new but have become the routine means of trimming the beaks of day-old chicks at hatcheries and are considered to be less of an insult to welfare than hot-blade trimming. Excluding parent stock, in 2008, approximately 90% of the 19.6 million laying hens in England were beak trimmed using infra-red.

Although the government's long-term aim is to ban all beak trimming, a viable alternative to prevent feather pecking and cannibalism is yet to be found. The Beak Trimming Action Group (a body set up by the government in 2002 and consisting of scientists, welfare groups, and industry) has been tasked with creating an action plan to work towards a beak-trimming ban in 2016, although progress will be reviewed in 2015.

The Mutilations (Permitted Procedures) (England) (Amendment) Regulations (2010). Draft regulation laid before Parliament under section 61(2) of the Animal Welfare Act 2006, for approval by resolution of each House of Parliament. Available at: http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2010/draft/pdf/ukdsi_9780111503553_en.pdf

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