

Taking an Integrated Approach to Farm Planning:

Module 4: Animal Welfare

Animal Welfare

Aotearoa New Zealand's reputation for strong animal welfare practices enhances our international reputation as an ethical food producer. Animal welfare can be described as when an animal is fit and healthy, and coping with its environment. The Animal Welfare Act 1999 and associated regulations and codes of welfare set the regulatory framework for the management and care of farm animals.

The Animal Welfare Act 1999 requires owners and people responsible for animals to ensure that animals' physical, health and behavioural needs are met. It also requires that appropriate treatment is provided for any sick or injured animals under their care. These duty of care obligations are written in general terms with more details being found in the codes of welfare.

Do you understand what the Good Farm Plan for Animal Welfare is?

1. Animal health is monitored and recorded
2. Animals have adequate nutrition and water
3. Animals have adequate shelter
4. Animal handling facilities are safe and fit for purpose
5. Animals are safely and confidently managed
6. Animal transport meets welfare expectations.

These principles are discussed in more detail in the *Good Farm Plan* [here](#).

This plan can be used in conjunction with other Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) modules to form a whole-of-farm plan, or you can use it to supplement your already existing farm plan (such as one you might have as part of your industry assurance programme).



Step 1: Know your farm, obligations, and goals

What are the key parts of your vision, values and goals regarding animal welfare that you want to set?

Values and goals:

Knowing your farm and writing down this knowledge can help identify any gaps and risks that might be present and can form a base for the rest of your farm plan. Here are some questions to get you started on writing down how you currently manage animal health and welfare on your farm. You might also want to work with your veterinarian to develop a preventative health plan for your animals and identify any areas for improving animal welfare.

Preventing poor animal health:

1. How do you support good animal health and welfare?
2. Are your animals' vaccines up to date?
3. What is your drenching programme?
4. Have all farm personnel received sufficient training to provide high levels of care?
5. Do you have a feed budget in place?
6. What is your winter management plan?
7. Do you have an emergency plan in place for inclement weather conditions that will affect your stock?
8. Are your animal handling facilities well maintained and regularly inspected?

Have a think about how you are preventing poor animal health on your farm and write it down here:

Photos can also be a great way to show information about your farm and to highlight any of the work you are already doing. Some of this information may also be easier to record on maps, making it easier to identify potential actions.

Identifying, treating, and recording animal health concerns:

1. Where do you monitor and record key indicators of animal health, such as weight changes, injury, diseases, birth rates and animal behaviour. Are these up records up to date?
2. Where do you record what treatments are administered and when? Are these records up to date?
3. Are your staff trained to identify lameness?
4. How often are animals checked?
5. How do you manage reproduction?
6. How do you care for your animals in adverse events?
7. Have you got suitable shade and shelter options available for stock?

Have a think about how you are managing animal health and welfare on your farm and write it down here:

Steps 2 & 3: Assess and Develop

Based on your vision, the values and goals you have identified and the description of your farm's animal welfare practices, what are the risks and opportunities for animal welfare on your farm? This risk assessment matrix helps set out how to highlight areas of your risks:

	Impact				
	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Significant	Severe
Very likely	Low-medium	Medium	Medium-high	High	High
Likely	Low	Low-medium	Medium	Medium-high	High
Possible	Low	Low-medium	Medium	Medium-high	Medium-high
Unlikely	Low	Low-medium	Low-medium	Medium	Medium-high
Very unlikely	Low	Low	Low-medium	Medium	Medium

Once you have identified the risk, identify any existing actions already in place to manage this risk and whether they are still appropriate. Do these existing measures do enough to mitigate the risk? If needed, identify new actions to supplement or replace the existing actions. It is also important to record who is responsible for managing these actions and the date these need to be reviewed or completed by.

This action plan will help manage your risks and maximise opportunities. Use any maps you might have (including any maps you may have pulled together in your basic farm plan) to record where you are implementing any actions. Take photos of the current state to use as a reference point and to highlight any improvement.

Note that you are likely to have more risks than this table provides space for. There is an actions table on page 8 that provides additional tables you can use to make sure all your risks and actions are identified.

For example:

Risk identified	Rating	Existing actions	New actions (if needed)	Due date	Responsible person	Evidence
Lambing season – heavily pregnant animals and newborns are more vulnerable.	Medium/ High	Set-stocking in lambing paddock with good shelter. Daily check-ups on ewe prior to lambing. Vaccination programme in place.		June Daily June	xxx xxx xxx	Site inspection, records. Condition score recorded, alongside any other notes. Vaccination programme, veterinary records.
All infrastructure needs to be kept safe and fit for purpose.	Low/ medium	Inspect sheds, loading ramps and yard safety.		Monthly	xxx	Site inspection
Adverse weather events (flood, drought etc) can present animal health and welfare risks.	High	All paddocks have adequate shelter available.	Develop and review emergency plan for adverse weather conditions.	6 monthly check to make sure shelter is still suitable. April 2023. Annual review.	xxx xxx	Site inspection Up-to-date emergency plan.

Risk identified	Rating	Existing actions	New actions (if needed)	Due date	Responsible person	Evidence

Step 4: Monitor

The use of performance measures to track and record progress helps with deciding actions and reporting progress. Record what worked well, what went wrong and why. Take photos to keep record and monitor progress.

Action	Notes
What did you achieve that you were proud of?	
Are all animal health records up to date?	

Step 5: Review

It is important to review and update your farm plan regularly. Reviews are a 'snapshot' of your operational issues and should be used to improve implementation. This is a good opportunity to involve farm staff to help identify challenges and find new solutions. What, if anything, would you change and why?

Question	Notes
Are we doing the right thing?	
Are there better ways to achieve the same results?	
Was there enough time, money, and people to get the job done?	

Notes

Useful links/information

Animal welfare codes that set out minimum standards for specific animals or situations (such as transport) can be found on MPI's website. They also contain recommended best practice for caring for your animals.

MPI also has further information about animal welfare in New Zealand, including links to the **Safeguarding our Animals**, Safeguarding our Reputation programme and **animal welfare emergency management**.

Beef+Lamb's Knowledge Hub has a wealth of knowledge relating to animal welfare, including learning modules. Its **animal health and welfare** page contains more information. They also have fact sheets for key animal welfare topics such as **shelter**.

Beef + Lamb New Zealand has a set of modules for caring for your working dogs.

DairyNZ has its own resources on its animal welfare page, including links through to 'Positive Welfare' workshops with free veterinary advice. Other pages include specific advice on assessing **heat stress in cattle**, and **dairy stockmanship**.

Deer NZ has a handling and welfare hub which provides information specific to deer welfare. It also has specific information for handling deer during **velvet removal**.