



Animal Welfare Committee Workplan

Updated: September 2025

This document sets out the Animal Welfare Committee Work Plan. It outlines:

- projects which are ongoing
- projects which will be undertaken in the year ahead*
- projects completed over the past year

*The workplan may be subject to change and some projects may move into the following year.

Ongoing Projects

Review of livestock breeding and breeding technologies

This is a follow up to the Farm Animal Welfare Committee's (FAWC's) 2012 report on the welfare implications of breeding and breeding technologies in commercial livestock agriculture. This project involves a systematic review of evidence to support AWC in taking forward this project and to provide the Government with a sound, up-to-date evidence base on livestock breeding and animal welfare.

Fur – responsible sourcing

This review considers how much fur is imported in relation to which species, where this fur is sourced from, and where it is destined; what welfare standards or other safeguards apply to that fur, and how well they provide for welfare needs; what systems, schemes and other processes apply to imported fur to ensure that these standards and safeguards are complied with, and how well do they work, and; what traceability mechanisms and arrangements apply to imported fur, and how well do these mechanisms work.

How to safeguard the welfare of farmed animals from the effect of climate change – Part 1 poultry

This project will consider how best to safeguard poultry welfare (meat chickens, laying hens, ducks, turkeys, quail, geese) from the effects of climate change.

Non-cage systems for laying hens

This project will look at the welfare standards for keeping laying hens in non-cage systems.

Projects to be undertaken in the year ahead

Welfare of decapod crustaceans across the supply chain in the UK

This project will deliver a review of the welfare of decapod crustaceans in the UK. It will focus on animals that are caught, landed and handled (therefore under the protection of humans).

Welfare at Killing: On-farm slaughter of animals to improve welfare

This project will review the suitability of on-farm slaughter for various species and classes of animals that will enter the human food chain and assess the potential welfare benefits and risks of on-farm slaughter.

Welfare at Killing: Poultry Stunning

Improve the welfare of poultry at killing by updating the 2009 [FAWC report on the welfare of farmed animals at slaughter or killing, part two, white meat animals - GOV.UK](#) in specific areas.

Farmed fish welfare

This project will review the welfare of farmed fish and include an assessment of Recirculating Aquaculture Systems (RAS).

How to safeguard the welfare of farmed animals from the effect of climate change – Part 2 ruminants and pigs

This project will consider how best to safeguard pig and ruminant welfare (sheep, goats, beef and dairy cows) from the effects of climate change.

Review of Defra funded research and development projects.

Provision of members to sit on steering groups, or to peer review research proposals or reports.

Projects completed over the past year

International rehoming

This project is to improve understanding of international rehoming of pet dogs by assessing the impact on dog welfare (both for dogs rehomed from abroad and the domestic population) as well as understanding the roles of key stakeholders. The research project was conducted by University of Liverpool with an AWC working group providing advice on the research project.

This project has concluded, and the report has been submitted for formal peer review.

Developing further evidence requirements for precision bred animals (Precision Breeding Part 2)

Defra have commissioned Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) to carry out a second project to continue developing the evidence base for secondary legislation under the Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Act 2023. An AWC working group has been maintained and refreshed to provide advice on precision breeding and the same group sits on the Steering Group for the research project.

This project has concluded.

Welfare implications of feline breeding practices

This project reviewed the welfare implications associated with the breeding of felines. It considered the health and welfare impacts on the breeding cats and their offspring, the extent to which the breeding of hybrids and cats with genetic conditions is undertaken in GB, and whether these cats can have their welfare needs adequately met as pets.

The AWC report was submitted to government on 9 September 2024 and has been published on GOV.UK.

Welfare implications of specialised canine reproductive practices

This project reviewed the welfare impacts associated with specialised canine breeding practices. It considered canine fertility businesses, whelping services, and the welfare of popular 'designer' or 'status' dogs that are often the focus of such businesses, amongst other issues.

The AWC report was submitted to government on 21 March 2024 and has been published on GOV.UK.

Welfare at Killing: Review of approval process for novel stunning methods

A review of Defra's proposed process for approval of novel stunning methods.

This project has concluded.

Welfare at Killing: High concentration CO2 stunning of pigs and alternatives

This project will review the evidence on the welfare impacts of high concentration CO2 gas stunning of pigs and of potential alternative methods.

The AWC report was submitted to government on 18 July 2025.

Changes from the previous work plan

Following a review, the following previously planned projects – which had not yet started - will not be taken forward at this time.

- Interaction between animal welfare standards and sustainability
- Cat and dog welfare in transport
- Comparison between current UK animal welfare standards, and the standards used/applied by other countries
- Welfare at Killing: Animal welfare impacts and effectiveness of the WATOK licence system in regulating the killing of animals outside of approved slaughterhouses