

Finnish Farm Animal Welfare Council, April 5th, 2011

Statement on teaching of animal welfare at school

To: Finnish National Board of Education

For information: Minister of Education and Minister of Agriculture and Forestry

The Finnish Farm Animal Welfare Council has in its meetings discussed the teaching, training and providing information on animal welfare. The position of the Council is that pupils in Finnish schools should receive more teaching on animal welfare.

Production animal husbandry in Finland is undergoing change. The number of farms is in decline, but at the same time the number of animals per farm is increasing. Few children have the opportunity to get acquainted with the keeping of production animals. The children cannot see by themselves what our production animals are like and what conditions they live in. Schools thus have an increasing influence on the animal awareness of the children.

Researched information on animal welfare, experiences, characteristics and needs has increased considerably of late. Citizens' interest in animal husbandry and its circumstances has increased as well. The issue of animal husbandry teaching and training is considered important even on the EU level, as noted in the animal welfare training conference held in Brussels in the fall of 2010.

It is the position of the Council that teaching on animal issues should be increased in elementary school and gymnasium level, and that the teaching material and teacher knowledge on animal husbandry should be updated. Elementary school pupils are at an especially suitable age for learning on animal welfare issues.

The Council feels that education, training and providing information on animal welfare should be balanced, based on researched information, and more comprehensive than at present. Citizens should from an early age possess knowledge that allows them to formulate opinions on animals and their keeping, as well as on their own use of animal products. Increased information allows e.g. the making of educated purchasing decisions for improved animal welfare, better care of companion animals, and better conditions for animals in those animal-related professions where training on animal welfare is not provided. Basic information on animals and their needs, but also skill and enthusiasm in ethical discourse, is needed for reaching this goal.

The Finnish Farm Animal Welfare Council and Finnish Centre for Animal Welfare (EHK) are pleased to offer their expertise for designing the content for animal welfare teaching, with the pedagogical responsibility resting with the school and the teachers. The EHK is funded by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. A broad network of production animal experts and organizations, such as researchers, authorities, industry representatives, and production and animal protection organizations, is involved in its work.

Helsinki, April 5th, 2011

With kind regards

On behalf of the Finnish Farm Animal Welfare Council

Hannu Saloniemi, Professor emeritus
Chairman, Finnish Farm Animal Welfare Council

Satu Raussi, Director of Finnish Centre for Animal Welfare
Secretary, Finnish Farm Animal Welfare Council

Additional information on the Finnish Farm Animal Welfare Council

Government decree on the Finnish Farm Animal Welfare Council, May 13th, 2009
<http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/alkup/2009/20090330>

Tasks and composition of the Finnish Farm Animal Welfare Council
http://www.mmm.fi/fi/index/etusivu/tiedotteet/091119_tuotantoelainten_neuvottelukunta.html

Minutiae and statements of the Finnish Farm Animal Welfare Council
<http://www.mmm.fi/fi/index/etusivu/elaimet/tehvnk.html>

Material on the international conference on animal welfare education
<http://www.animalwelfare-education.eu/conference/conference-agenda.html>

Finnish Centre for Animal Welfare EHK
<http://elaintenhyvintikeskus.edublogs.org/>

Composition of the Finnish Farm Animal Welfare Council

Chairman

Professor emeritus Hannu Saloniemi

Vice Chairman

Executive director Pirjo Kortensniemi

Association for Animal Disease Prevention / Eläintautien torjuntayhdistys ETT ry

Secretary

Director Satu Raussi

Finnish Centre for Animal Welfare / Eläinten hyvinvointikeskus EHK

Other members of the Council represent the following interests and organizations:

Agricultural production

Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners / Maa- ja metsätaloustuottajain Keskusliitto MTK ry.

Central Union of Swedish Agricultural Producers / Svenska lantbruksproducenternas centralförbund - SLC rf.

Societal research

University of Eastern Finland / Itä-Suomen yliopisto

Åbo Akademi University / Åbo Akademi

Economic research

MTT Agrifood Research Finland / Maa- ja elintarviketalouden tutkimuskeskus MTT

University of Helsinki / Helsingin yliopisto

Production animal welfare research

University of Helsinki / Helsingin yliopisto

University of Eastern Finland / Itä-Suomen yliopisto

Production animal husbandry ethics

University of Helsinki / Helsingin yliopisto

University of Turku / Turun yliopisto

Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

Finnish Food Safety Authority Evira

Practical animal protection authority

Regional State Administrative Agency of Northern Finland / Pohjois-Suomen aluehallintovirasto

Joint authority of Kainuu region / Kainuun maakunta -kuntayhtymä

Voluntary animal protection work

Finnish Federation for Animal Welfare Associations / Suomen Eläinsuojeluyhdistysten liitto SEY ry.

Federation for the Protection of Animals Animalia / Eläinsuojeluliitto Animalia ry.

Consultation for agricultural producers

ProAgria Keskusten Liitto ry.

Consumers

Consumers' Association of Finland / Suomen Kuluttajaliitto ry.

Food industry

HK Agri Oy

Finnish Food and Drink Industries' Federation / Elintarviketeollisuusliitto ry.

Retailers

Finnish Grocery Trade Association / Päivittäistavarakauppa ry.