



more than meat

**Kepak Group Lamb Animal Welfare Policy**

The background of the slide is a lush green landscape. In the foreground, a calm river flows through a grassy field. Two sheep are visible on the grassy bank near the water. In the background, rolling green hills and mountains are visible under a cloudy sky. The title 'HIGHEST LEVELS OF ANIMAL WELFARE' is overlaid on the top part of the image, with the words 'HIGHEST' and 'LEVELS OF' in a white box and 'ANIMAL WELFARE' in a green box.

# HIGHEST LEVELS OF ANIMAL WELFARE

## INTRODUCTION

Kepak Group is committed to providing the highest levels of quality and animal welfare. At Kepak Group, we work with many Sheep farmers across Ireland to source the highest quality, best tasting Lamb and Sheep meat for our customer base. Animal welfare on our supplier farms is paramount and better management and care for livestock can improve livestock productivity and food quality, which benefits all parties in the supply chain.

Irish Sheep production systems are grass based and extensive by nature.

# IT IS OUR POLICY



To insist that high standards of farm animal welfare are met and maintained at all stages of the animals life – on the farm, during transportation and in our lairages and abattoirs, to encourage best practice amongst our farmer suppliers and Kepak employees.



To only work with dedicated suppliers who share our commitments on animal welfare.



Day to day management of the animal welfare policy and its implementation is the responsibility of our animal welfare working group and our procurement team.





# OUR ANIMAL WELFARE STANDARD

- All Sheep sourced by Kepak will be produced according to the Kepak Group livestock specifications and Codes of Practice that include specific animal welfare requirements.
- We do not permit the use of animal welfare or husbandry systems that are illegal
- We ensure all live animal transportation is kept to a minimum and long distances are avoided. Maximum transport time from farm to abattoir is 8 hours.
- No Sheep will be supplied to Kepak from cloned animals or 1st generation progeny of cloned animals.
- There must be a trained welfare officer on duty in abattoirs when animals are on site or being killed who is responsible for ensuring good animal welfare and an effective slaughter process.

## LIVESTOCK STANDARDS

### Five Freedoms

All farms should follow the 5 freedoms concept that underpins animal welfare practices at farm level:

- 1 Freedom from thirst, hunger and malnutrition
- 2 Freedom from discomfort
- 3 Freedom from pain, injury and disease
- 4 Freedom to express normal patterns of behaviour
- 5 Freedom from fear & distress

## Good Stockmanship

Good stockmanship is a key factor in animal welfare. A competent stockman should be able to:

- Recognise whether or not the animals are in good health (signs of ill health include: loss of appetite, listlessness, cessation of cudding, discharge from eyes or nostrils, dribbling, persistent coughing, lameness, swollen joints, scouring, rapid loss of condition or emaciation, excessive scratching, abnormal skin conditions or other unusual conditions)
- Understand the significance of a change in the behaviour of the animals
- Know when veterinary treatment is required
- Implement a planned herd health programme (e.g. preventative treatments, vaccination programmes if necessary)
- Implement appropriate animal feeding and grassland management programmes
- Recognise if the general environment (indoors or outdoors) is adequate for the promotion of good health and welfare
- Have management skills appropriate to the scale and technical requirements of the production system
- Handle animals with care, avoiding undue stress

## Herding management

Sheep farmers should know the signs of good health in sheep. These include general alertness, free movement, active feeding and rumination and absence of lameness, visible wounds, abscesses or injuries. Sheep farmers should also know the signs which indicate ill-health in sheep. These include listlessness, abnormal posture and behaviour, lameness, scouring, absence of cudding, persistent coughing or panting, scratching and frequent rubbing, rapid loss of body condition, excessive wool loss, and, in some circumstances, being apart from the flock.

## Health & Vet. Procedures

Husbandry practices should minimise stress to the animal. All farms should have proper animal handling facilities including pens and a crush where an animal can be restrained with minimum risk of injury or stress. Good handling facilities also benefit the safety of the personnel involved in handling the animals.

Only authorized animal remedies must be sourced through the legal routes of supply. The number and type of sheep kept and the stocking rate and/or housing density should depend on the suitability of the environment, the capacity of the farm, the competence of the sheep farmer and the time available to carry out his or her duties. If any change in breed or type is contemplated, particularly if farming in difficult, extensive conditions, replacement should only be with a breed or type of sheep that is suitable for the location.

For example, on hill farms sheep should be sufficiently hardy and not prone to suffer as a result of extremes of climate. All animals which appear to be ill or injured should be cared for appropriately without delay; and where they do not respond to care, veterinary advice must be obtained as soon as possible.

Common veterinary type activities must always be carried out in a manner that minimises stress. Sheep farmers should be experienced or trained and be competent across the range of health and welfare skills which should include vaccination; drenching to control internal parasites; prevention of foot rot and treatment of lame sheep; prevention and treatment of internal and external parasites including scab and fly strike; tail docking and castration. It is particularly important that sheep farmers have competence in the skills required at lambing time.

# FEED & WATER

- The diet of sheep should always be adequate to maintain full health and vigour. Feed and water should never be totally withheld for management purposes such as drying off ewes.
- Sudden changes in the type and quantity of feed should be avoided.
- Sheep should be provided with fresh feed, and any which is stale or contaminated should be removed from troughs before more is added.
- Feed should be palatable and of good quality.
- Systems involving the use of high intakes of cereal-based diets require a gradual introductory feeding period, during which sufficient roughage or a suitable high fibre concentrate should also be fed.
- Care should be taken to prevent individual sheep from gorging by ensuring that there is plenty of trough space available to the flock. In such systems mineral mixtures should be specifically designed to avoid urinary problems in male animals.
- In normal practice, approximately 30 cm of trough space is needed for hill ewes and approximately 45 cm for the larger lowland ewes. Excessive competition is detrimental to sheep welfare.
- Racks and troughs should be positioned and designed to avoid injury, discomfort and damage to sheep.
- Certain substances, in particular copper, can be harmful to sheep.
- Compound feeds or mineral preparations which have been prepared for other species should be avoided unless the composition can be assessed as suitable for sheep.
- Sheep farmers should be aware of breed variations in susceptibility to copper poisoning.
- 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.
- Troughs should be designed and installed in such a way as to ensure small lambs cannot get into them and drown.
- Arrangements should be made in advance to ensure that adequate supplies of suitable feed and water can be made available to sheep in emergencies, such as severe winter storms or summer drought.
- Sheep farmers should consider the state of the flock's dentition when planning a culling programme. Sheep with poor teeth should preferably be culled. If the sheep are to be retained they should be provided with food which they can eat without difficulty and their body condition should be carefully monitored.

## CASTRATION

Sheep farmers should consider carefully whether castration is necessary within any particular flock. Castration is unlikely to be necessary if lambs will be finished and sent to slaughter before reaching sexual maturity. The procedure 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. In any case castration should be carried out before seven days of age.

## TAIL DOCKING

Sheep's tails should not be docked routinely, only if there is a real threat of fly strike. Sheep farmers should consider carefully whether tail docking within a particular flock is necessary. Tail docking may be carried out only if failure to do so would lead to subsequent welfare problems because of dirty tails and potential fly strike. If it is considered that both tail docking and castration are necessary, thought should be given to performing both operations simultaneously so as to minimise disruption through repeated handling and the potential for mis-mothering and distress. In any case the use of tail docking should be carried out before seven days of age.



# HOUSING FACILITIES

Winter housing of sheep can improve welfare but problems of both disease and welfare can arise when large numbers are kept together and advice should be sought on the design, construction or modification of buildings.

Adequate ventilation without draughts is of particular importance, as also is the provision of sufficient trough space and lying area.

All floors should be designed, constructed and maintained so as to avoid discomfort, stress or injury to the sheep. Regular maintenance is essential. Solid floors should be well-drained and the sheep provided with dry bedding. Newly born and young lambs should not be put on slatted floors unless suitable bedding is also provided. Regarding slatted floors part of the floor area should be solid and suitable bedding material should be provided.

Where sheep are kept in a building, adequate lighting (whether fixed or portable) should be available to enable them to be thoroughly inspected at any time. Animals kept in buildings must not be kept in permanent darkness. Where the natural light available in a building is insufficient to meet the physiological and ethological needs of any animals being kept in it then appropriate artificial lighting should be provided.

Throughout the hours of daylight the level of indoor lighting, natural or artificial, should be such that all housed sheep can be seen clearly by the sheep farmer. Animals kept in buildings must not be kept without an appropriate period of rest from artificial lighting.

# FLOOR TYPES

The choice of floor, either concrete or slatted, depends on the management and straw availability. Unless straw is readily available, slats may be installed.

The dry straw requirement to absorb urine produced is as follows:

Type of animal	Feed	Dry Straw Requirement
Average Ewe	Silage	72 kg (4 std square bales)/100 days
	Hay	45 kg (2.5 std square bales)/100 days
Store Lamb	Hay	24 kg (1.5 std square bales)/70 days

## SPACE REQUIREMENTS

Type of Ewe	Slats m <sup>2</sup>	Bedded m <sup>2</sup>
Large (body weight 90kg)	1.2	1.4
Medium (body weight 70kg)	1.1	1.2
Small (body weight 50 kg)	1.0	1.1

Where sheep are shorn, 20% less space is required.

## FEEDING SPACE REQUIREMENTS

Type of Ewe	*Meal feeding	Roughage (hay rack)	Easy Feed Silage
Large (body weight 90kg)	600	200	200
Medium (body weight 70kg)	500	200	200
Small (body weight 50 kg)	400	175	175

# TRANSPORTING LAMB

Sheep should be transported in a manner that ensures their safety and welfare at all times.

## Transport: Space Requirements Ovines

Shorn Sheep or Lambs	< 55 kg	0.2-0.3 m2/head
	> 55kg	0.3-0.4 m2/head
Ewes	< 55 kg	0.4-0.5 m2/head
Ewes	> 55 kg	0.5+ m2/head



# OUTCOME MEASURES

- Tracking outcome measures enables Kepak Group to track performance. Outcome measures and metrics which are tracked by our technical team at each of our abattoirs. These outcome measures drive continuous improvement and ensure that we remain committed to improving the health and welfare of each animal in our supply chain.

# COMMUNICATION

We communicate our animal welfare policies and Code of Practice for our farmer suppliers through our procurement team, our farming newsletter and through knowledge transfer events.

At a corporate level, our policies and plans are communicated to the senior management team and will form part of Kepak Core, our blue print for achieving growth in sustainable way.

