



Animal Welfare in Finland III



National Animal Welfare Report III

Cover photo: common frog, *Rana temporaria* / pikist.com

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Introduction

The Animal Welfare in Finland III report of the Finnish Centre for Animal Welfare (EHK) was published in 2021-2023 in parts on the elaintieto.fi website. Now you have an updated set of previously published parts in your hands. The previous Animal Welfare in Finland reports (I and II) were published in **2012** (in English) and **2016** (in Finnish).

As in previous reports, this report also deals with animal welfare research, education, politics and economics, regulations and the results of official controls, violations and convictions, as well as statistical data on different animal species.

As new entities, the report examines animal welfare trends, the welfare of wild animals, and the linkage of wicked problems climate change, biodiversity loss, antimicrobial resistance, and zoonoses to animal welfare.

The Animal Welfare in Finland III report brings together a wide range of independent, up-to-date information on the state of animal welfare in Finland. We hope that this information will help in the making of decisions on measures to promote animal welfare.

The principal authors of the Animal Welfare in Finland III report are Satu Raussi and Tiina Kauppinen from the Finnish Centre for Animal Welfare. Tarja Koistinen, a senior scientist at the Natural Resources Institute Finland, and Weera Walden, an intern at the Finnish Centre for Animal Welfare, have also contributed to the writing of the section on wild animal welfare. Walden has also been involved in the work on the section on animal welfare offences. Heta Rautiainen, an intern at the Finnish Centre for Animal Welfare, has participated in the writing of the section on the welfare of companion and hobby animals. Most of the photographs in the report are the excellent work of our interns Olli Leino and Heta Rautiainen, who has also prepared the graphic presentations of the report.

We thank Animal Welfare Ombudsman Saara Kupsala for the afterwords of the report. Visiting authors of the report are Elisa Aaltola, Leena Suojala, Salla Tuomivaara, Saara Kupsala, Sofia Väärikkälä, Tarja Toimela, Laura Saarimäki and Hanna Vuorenpää – thank you to them!

The animal's perspective and experience of its own welfare state arise as we aim to efficiently produce the raw materials needed by humans, reduce the environmental impact of food production, halt biodiversity loss or prevent infectious diseases. Equally, animal welfare must be taken into account when selecting a new pet for a family, or when exterminating rodents with traps or poison. Animal welfare is present in our daily lives, when we eat or exercise in nature. Biologically, we humans are equal to other animals. Human and animal welfare are closely linked to each other and to the state of the environment; this is illustrated by the concept of **one welfare**.

Animal welfare is an animal's experience of its own mental and physical state. The experience includes the feelings and biological activity of the animal individual. Sometimes it is thought that minimising negative emotions such as pain and fear is enough to ensure the welfare of an animal. However, the experience of welfare also includes a positive side, the feeling of pleasure. Pleasure to the animal just as to man comes from things that are considered important, such as attachments to species companions.

Severe, persistent or frequent stress is detrimental to the welfare of an animal. Animals are good at adapting, but adaptation requires too much of them if the animal's adaptability is exceeded or the animal does not have the opportunity to influence its own adaptation within the framework of its environment. In such situations, the welfare of the animal is impaired.

An animal has a need to behave in a certain way regardless of the outcome of that behaviour.

This is referred to as a behavioural need, which is often related to the animal's basic biological functions. Health is important for welfare, but a slight health hazard that does not disturb the animal's sensations is not necessarily detrimental to the welfare of the animal. On the other hand, a healthy animal may feel unwell if, for example, it becomes frustrated when it is unable to meet its behavioural needs.

The output or performance of an animal is a crude measure of welfare and too slow of an indicator if measures to correct poor welfare are not taken until the output or performance is declining. The breeding of farm animals has a strong focus on production, and a highly bred animal can produce so much that its welfare is

impaired. Breeding has resulted in new welfare problems, such as so-called production diseases or health problems related to the structure of an animal. The good thing is that these can also be corrected by breeding.

How an animal feels is crucial to its welfare. The emotions of animals are investigated through animal welfare research. The needs and interests of animals should be taken into account and the opportunity to implement them, for the sake of the animal itself, should be arranged in all keeping of the animals. We and other animals are all biological resources and intrinsically valuable individuals who should be respected as such.

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Animal welfare trends

Information about animal welfare is fragmented and available from many sources. Independent information from the public authorities is provided by the Regional State Administrative Agencies, the Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, the Finnish Food Authority, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. Other information providers include industry (e.g. slaughterhouses and dairies), associations run by industry (e.g. Animal Health ETT), advisory organisations (e.g. ProAgria), cooperatives (e.g. Faba), and commercial parties and associations (e.g. the Finnish Kennel Club and SEY

Animal Welfare Finland). The information presented in the Animal Welfare in Finland III report comes from different sources, but no single piece of information alone offers an overall idea of animal welfare. Independent public information and open data are produced by the public authorities. The other information providers are under no obligation to make their information publicly available. This section on animal welfare trends includes a compilation of the available information about and suggestions for indicators that can be used to monitor the state and development of animal welfare in Finland.

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Wicked problems

Climate change is challenging the adaptation capabilities of wild animals and threatening the existence of many species. Meanwhile, animals' lives are affected by biodiversity loss, pollution, diseases and invasive species. Some of Finland's wild species are adapting to the warming climate – and some may even temporarily benefit from it – but as a general rule, climate change causes stress for animals. The changing of wildlife habitats can be considered an indirect indicator of animal welfare that can be assessed through the achievement of Finland's climate and biodiversity targets.

Animal welfare is part of sustainable development, but the UN Sustainable Development Goals, for example, do not take into account the experiences of individual animals, instead aiming to protect animal species and habitats, as well as to maintain biodiversity. The one health approach is also inherently human-centred: other animals are valued primarily as determinants of human health. The integration of the interests, welfare and intrinsic value of individual animals into sustainable development goals, programmes and policies is one of the indicators to be monitored.

Actions to slow down biodiversity loss also contribute to animal welfare through the protection or improvement of wildlife habitats. Another indicator to be monitored can be the level at which Finland is able to meet its biodiversity loss mitigation targets: for example, how much traditional biotopes where cattle, sheep and horses graze are increasing and how much subsidies are allocated to them.

The volume of antibiotics used is not a direct indicator of animal welfare. The primary objective of the reduction in the use of antibiotics and the fight against antimicrobial resistance is an improvement of the welfare of humans. However, promotion of animal welfare is one of the means that can be used to reduce the use of antibiotics and combat antimicrobial resistance. In future, the EU will more closely monitor the use of antibiotics in animals and produce species-specific statistics. This indicator is monitored, but the volume of antibiotics used does not directly reflect the welfare of animals.

Human activities such as land use cause stress, especially for wild animals. When under stress, animals become sick and spread more pathogens than healthy animals, including zoonoses that spread from animals to humans and vice versa. The avian influenza epidemic that started in Finland in the summer of 2023 has caused deaths, especially of wild gulls. The disease has also spread to fur animals, some of which have died, and others have had to be put down based on an order by the Finnish Food Authority. The prevalence of zoonoses is also an indirect indicator of animal welfare.

Read more in the following section of the report:
Wicked problems and animal welfare

Politics and economy

In politics, government-level targets for the promotion of animal welfare vary from one Government to the next. For example, the Sipilä Government Programme contained few targets to promote animal welfare, while the Marin Government Programme had many. The Government Programme of the current Orpo Government contains only a few animal welfare targets. Even though the nature of Government Programmes varies, the entries on animal welfare can be monitored as an indicator of the development of animal welfare in society.

The number of national strategies and targets that consider (or do not consider) animal welfare can be monitored as an indicator of the importance of animal welfare in society. For example, the inclusion of animal welfare in sustainable development targets, nutrition recommendations, sustainable food systems and food policies, targets on the improvement of biodiversity, climate change mitigation targets, the climate-friendly food policy included in the Marin Government Programme, school meal recommendations and impact assessments in bill drafting indicate the importance of animal welfare.

Animal welfare is important to the European Union through the founding treaties, the Green Deal and the From Farm to Fork strategy. However, the big question is whether the interests of animals will actually be materialised without being overridden by economic or other human interests. An indicator to be monitored is the allocation of funding for the EU's common agricultural policy (CAP) and an assessment of the animal welfare impact of the past financial period, in particular with regard to animal welfare payments.

The significance of animal welfare payments as financial support for the keeping of farm animals is increasing every year. More and more money is being spent on the welfare payments: the amount spent on them increased by around €20 million between 2016 and 2021. However, the number of farms receiving animal welfare payments is decreasing every year

as the number of livestock farms decreases: in 2016, around 6,400 farms received animal welfare payments, compared to only some 5,700 farms in 2021. The number of animal welfare payment measures is also lower than in the past; for example, support for the outdoor grazing of poultry is no longer available.

Animal welfare payments are still available for farm animals kept in cages/crates. Farrowing sow farms using crate farrowing may be eligible for an animal welfare payment to prepare a welfare plan, as may egg-producing farms using enriched battery cages. Tie stall barn and dairy farms where cows are kept indoors all year round are eligible for an animal welfare payment to prepare a welfare plan. The annual appropriation for the animal welfare payment and investment aid specifically targeted at animal welfare can be monitored as indicators of the progress of animal welfare. However, the welfare impact of these subsidies must be critically examined. Aid to promote animal welfare could be increased by granting school milk subsidies only for milk from grazing cows, for example.

Finns consume somewhat less beef and pork than previously, while the consumption of broiler chicken has increased year by year. As a result, total meat consumption has scarcely decreased and remained instead at around 79 kg of meat on the bone per person per year in recent years. The maximum meat intake according to the dietary guideline is 39 kg of meat per person per year.

Read more: [Lihansyönti ja eläinten hyvinvointi – joko-tai vai sekä-että? \(in Finnish\)](#)

The number of broilers slaughtered has increased from around 57 million individuals in 2011 to 82 million in 2021. Indeed, the number of animals slaughtered annually in Finland has increased by a staggering 25 million individuals in ten years due to the large number of broilers. The share of organic products among products of animal origin produced in Finland has not increased in recent years despite expectations to the contrary. With the introduction of an independent, controlled animal welfare label on dairy products in 2023, consumers can now make their purchasing decisions based on the welfare of animals. The introduction of an animal welfare labelling system and the market share of organic products can be used as indicators of progress in animal welfare.

Finland has had an Animal Welfare Ombudsman during the term of office of two Governments. Animal welfare councils, the parliamentary Environment Committee and several animal-related organisations have called for the post of Animal Welfare Ombudsman to be made permanent. The making of the post of Animal Welfare Ombudsman permanent with adequate resources is one of the indicators to be monitored, as it depicts the growing importance of animal welfare in society.

The European Commission is currently preparing a proposal for a new EU animal welfare law. It has promised to publish the draft at the end of 2023. The legislative reform in the EU must be closely monitored to anticipate European trends in the promotion of animal welfare: for example, will a common EU animal welfare label or an EU-wide ban on keeping animals in cages be implemented, and what will happen to fur farming in the European Union?

Read more in the following section of the report: Politics and economy

Animal welfare regulations

The new Animal Welfare Act (**Eläinten hyvinvointilaki (in Finnish)**), which has been in preparation since 2010, will enter into force at the beginning of 2024. Key changes to the Animal Welfare Act (Eläinsuojelulaki) dating back to 1996 include new provisions on reducing the confinement of sows and gilts in crates, the sale of puppies and kittens, the breeding of animals, and continuous availability of drinking water. Despite the stricter minimum requirements, the new Act does not impose any time limits on the use of existing farrowing crates or tie stall barns. In addition, many of the transition periods to improve animal welfare through conditions or management practices are long.

With the introduction of the new Animal Welfare Act, several government decrees on the welfare of different animal species will also be amended. Completely new animal welfare-related regulations will also be introduced, such as decrees on procedures on animals and breeding. Regulations at a lower level than an act are important for the welfare of individual animals because they lay down more detailed requirements than an act.

Legislative amendments influencing companion and hobby animals

The Animal Welfare Act (693/2023) and the decrees issued based on it will further regulate the keeping, conditions, care and breeding of companion and hobby animals. The Act includes several new tools to promote the welfare of pets and new provisions on the breeding, import, sale and transfer of animals, as well as a ban on equipment and devices that cause pain to animals.

According to the Act, breeding must aim to produce viable and healthy animals that can function normally. In future, only physically and mentally healthy animals that can be expected to pass on these characteristics to their offspring must be used in breeding. The Act prohibits the use for breeding of an animal which, due to a hereditary trait or disease, is unable to reproduce naturally or whose welfare would probably be significantly impaired by reproduction. This provision will be further specified by a new government decree on breeding.

As a new requirement, the Act imposes an obligation for the owners or holders of mammals to prevent uncontrolled reproduction of the animals. The provision aims to make breeding more favourable to the welfare of animals. The ban on uncontrolled breeding aims to improve the welfare of cats in particular by making the owners of free-breeding cat populations responsible for their pets.

In the future, veterinarians will be obligated to report any diseases and defects they have diagnosed in cats and dogs that restrict the breeding use of the animal. Procedures to be reported include surgical procedures to open the airway and caesarean sections in dog breeds that are unable to give birth naturally. The Act will enter into force from the beginning of 2024 for dogs and from the beginning of 2027 for cats.

The new Act includes a list of species that may be kept as farm animals, circus animals or in travelling exhibitions. The purpose of these provisions is to

ensure that only animals which can in practice be kept in the manner required by law will be kept for these purposes. Species that may be kept as companion and hobby animals will be specified at a later point in time in a government decree.

One of the new provisions in the legislative proposal concerns the import of kittens and puppies. It prohibits the import into Finland of puppies and kittens under six months of age if the intention is to sell or otherwise hand over the puppy/kitten in Finland within four months of importation. The aim is to more effectively tackle the import and sale of puppies produced on puppy farms.

Another new provision sets minimum requirements for the information to be provided when marketing dogs and cats for the purpose of sales or transfer by other means. The notices must include the name of the seller or another transferor, information about any professional breeding activities and the associated identification, the animal's date of birth, age or estimated age, the country of birth, and the location of the animal. In addition to any illnesses or injuries of the animal, the purchaser or transferee must be given any other information relevant to the welfare of the animal. This provision is intended to improve the traceability of dogs and cats sold or otherwise transferred.

The Act will also restrict the transfer of animals at certain types of events or venues: for example, the transfer of animals as lottery or competition prizes will be prohibited, as well as the sale of animals at markets and fairs. The sale of dogs, cats, ferrets and large parrots in pet shops will be prohibited, and animals are not to be permanently transferred to a person under the age of 16 without the consent of the person who has custody of the child.

The Act will prohibit equipment and devices that cause unnecessary pain, suffering or risk of harm to animals. In addition to the manufacture, sale, supply

and use of such equipment, their import, marketing and possession will be prohibited to allow effective enforcement of the prohibition. This provision prohibits spiked collars, spiked bits and spiked spurs, as well as a new addition, electric shock collars and any other devices that can be attached to an animal to give it an electric shock.

The system of animal welfare control authorities will otherwise remain unchanged with the new Act, except that Customs will be given the power to enforce animal welfare rules at the EU's internal borders. The reform will help enforce the ban on the import of puppies and kittens included in the Act.

The Act also includes a new provision on a reporting obligation to designated persons who may have discovered an animal in need of aid during a customer visit, but who, due to confidentiality provisions, were previously unable to report the animal to the animal protection authority. The obligation to report animals in need to the authorities applies to parties such as providers of healthcare and social welfare services, healthcare professionals, fire and rescue services, the execution authority, and parishes and other religious communities. The change is important for the welfare of pet animals, as the plight of pets living within the walls of a home often remains hidden unless an outside party has the opportunity to report it to the animal protection authority.

The Act provides that drinking water must be available to the animals at all times in permanent enclosures for mammals and birds. The only exception are permanent enclosures at professional kennels for sled dogs in cases where the water would freeze due to the weather conditions. In such cases, the dogs must be given water at least three times a day. However, lactating female dogs and unweaned puppies must always have access to water in their permanent enclosure.

The Act on the Identification and Registration of Animals (Laki eläinten tunnistamisesta ja rekisteröinnistä 1069/2021) allows for laying down an identification and registration obligation for many species. The first was Decree 68/2022 of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry on the Identification and Registration of Dogs (Maa- ja metsätalousministeriön asetus koirien tunnistamisesta ja rekisteröinnistä), which entered into force in 2023. A decree on the identification and registration of cats, which is integral for the welfare of cats, has been promised for 2026.

Legislative amendments influencing the welfare of wild animals

Provisions that have a major impact on the welfare of wild animals can be found in legislation on hunting, fishing, animal welfare, nature conservation and the control of invasive alien species, among others. Some of these provisions, such as those on the hunting of certain species, are amended annually.

There is a large body of legislation on the welfare of wild animals, but managing the whole is challenging. Legislation on wild animals is not usually studied from the perspective of animal welfare (the experiences of individual animals). However, the issue of welfare has sometimes been discussed in connection with wild animals as well, especially when human activities cause suffering to wild animals, i.e. deteriorate their welfare.

The Animal Welfare Act (693/2023) includes some amendments concerning wild animals. According to the Act, wild animals must not be kept except in certain exceptional situations. An injured or helpless wild animal may be taken in for short-term emergency care or treatment, but it must be released back into the wild or delivered to a treatment facility as soon as possible. If the animal cannot be released, or its care arranged, it must be put down. The care of wild animals is an activity subject to notification, and the municipality must ensure that sick or injured wild animals brought to a veterinary clinic maintained by the municipality are put down.

The raccoon dog (an invasive species throughout the EU) and the mink (an invasive species in Finland), which were previously listed as game animals in the Hunting Act, were removed from the list in 2019 to facilitate and boost their hunting. The use of methods prohibited in the case of the hunting of game species, i.e. artificial light, electronic sighting devices and sound-producing mechanical devices, is now allowed when hunting raccoon dogs and mink. In addition, passing the hunting examination is no longer a requirement to kill raccoon dogs and mink.

The closed season under the Hunting Decree for female raccoon dogs, raccoons, nutrias and minks followed by their offspring of the same year previously covered the months of May, June and July. The above species are now classified as invasive alien species and thus unprotected animals with no closed season during the nesting season. This means that they can be caught and killed at any time of the year, including the breeding season. The same applies to the muskrat, whose closed season for nesting was abolished by the Hunting Decree. Killing the mother of dependent young causes undue distress to the young and can lead to starvation to death. In the case of the raccoon dog, killing the father can also be fatal for the pups, as the male raccoon dog is involved in the care of his pups.

The allowed withers height of a dog used to hunt cervids was increased from 28 to 39 cm by an amendment of the Hunting Decree. The risk to the welfare of a cervid is increased when the use of larger and faster dogs to drive deer is allowed. Hunting roe deer with a dog is now allowed also in February. There is no information on the effects of prolonged hunting with dogs, especially on the welfare of pregnant does.

Using a bow and arrow in the hunting of species such as the white-tailed deer, wild forest reindeer and wild boar was allowed in 2017, but a bow and arrow cannot be used to hunt elk. A follow-up study on hunting with a bow and arrow was launched in 2019.

The protection of does with fawns was weakened in 2016 to reduce the share of does in the deer population. The reasoning was that the protection of does with fawns would be maintained through hunting guidelines and ethical rules. However, the weaker protection may increase the risk of fawns being left without their mothers.

In 2020, the Hunting Act was temporarily amended due to the COVID-19 pandemic so that there was no need to renew shooting tests expiring in the same year, and the validity of the tests was extended by a year.

The hunting of waterfowl at dusk was banned in 2023. The aim of the ban is to ensure that the lighting conditions are sufficient for the identification of the bird species during hunting, which reduces the risk of accidentally shooting protected or declining species. The ban on hunting at dusk improves species identification and the shooting situation, and it is easier to find wounded animals during daylight hours so that they can be put down quickly to avoid unnecessary suffering.

The impact of legislation on the welfare of wild animals varies. Amendments to hunting legislation in recent years, such as those related to trapping methods, the use of dogs and closed seasons, may have an impact on the welfare of wild animals, but it will only be seen over time. *Changes to hunting*

legislation that influence the welfare of animals should be monitored as one indicator of the welfare of wild animals.

The EU's Deforestation Regulation, which entered into force in 2023, aims to minimise the EU's impact on global deforestation and forest degradation. It also aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and global biodiversity loss. *The Deforestation Regulation is a promising step towards the promotion of the welfare of wild animals, and its impact on habitats can be used as one indicator of animal welfare.*

Legislative amendments influencing farm animals

The reformation of animal welfare legislation to better promote animal welfare often requires changes in farming practices, new skills and investments. Some of the tightening animal welfare requirements demand a financial contribution from the livestock producer; on the other hand, other amendments benefit the livestock producer's economy through improved health and welfare of the animals. For investments required by legislation, such as the construction of a new barn, pig house or poultry building, the producer can receive **financial support (in Finnish)**.

The new Animal Welfare Act will prohibit the construction and commissioning of new tie stall cattle barns. Hardly any tie stall barns have been built in recent years anyway, as no investment aid is available for the construction of a new tie stall barn. Dairy cows and heifers may still be kept in tie stall barns for milk production, but the cows and heifers must be allowed to exercise for at least 90 days a year instead of the previously required 60 days. In new free-range barns, cows and heifers will be able to spend more time outdoors, as a promise has been made that investment support will only be available for free-range barns that include a paddock or pasture. However, this provision is not included in the Animal Welfare Act, but an upcoming decree of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry on subsidised construction for dairy cattle.

In terms of the conditions of pigs, the new Act takes a clear step forward for animal welfare: no new fixed farrowing crates will be allowed in new or old piggeries after the law enters into force. However, using existing farrowing crates until the end of their service life will be allowed, and there will be no transition period for their use.

Surgical castration of piglets will be abandoned after a transition period of 12 years. Once the Act enters into force, painkillers will be mandatory for surgical castration, and after a four-year transition period, in addition to painkillers, the testicles of boar piglets must be anaesthetised for surgical castration. The possibility to assess the welfare of pigs at the slaughterhouse is also included in the new Act. Many indicators, including ones on the welfare of pigs, are already used at slaughterhouses under the meat inspection regulations.

The new Animal Welfare Act includes a list of bird and mammal species that can be kept as farm animals, circus animals or in travelling exhibitions. The purpose is to ensure that only animals which can be practically kept in the manner required by law will be kept for these purposes. Virtually all species currently kept as farm animals, plus the water buffalo for meat production purposes, were included in the list.

Several positive amendments to the Animal Transport Act (**1429/2006**) were made in 2021. The Act now requires a route plan for long-distance transport of fur animals and reindeer outside Finland. The amendment gave Finnish Customs the power to control animal transport. Decrees of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry can now be used to lay down requirements on the fitness of animals for transport within Finland. On this basis, it was decreed that calves must be at least ten days old for transport of travels less than 100 km.

The Government Decree on the Protection of Sheep (Valtioneuvoston asetus lampaiden suojelusta 587/2010) was amended in 2020 to reduce the possibilities for the simultaneous feeding of lambs. The previous decree defined minimum feeding racks sizes for sheep of all ages. The amendment set lower minimum requirements for the feeding space of lambs under four months of age. Reducing the feeding space for lambs can deteriorate animal welfare, because as sheep are gregarious animals, they synchronise their behaviour with the rest of the flock. Sheep strive to rest, eat and drink at the same time. Growing lambs need space to eat with their flock, which means that reducing the minimum requirements for feeding table space for lambs under four months of age can deteriorate their welfare.

Amendments of the Government Decrees on the protection of chickens and fur animals, which have been a long time in the making, have yet to be completed.

Reforming animal welfare legislation in the EU

The EU's animal welfare policy and the enforcement of regulations are a duty of the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (**DG-SANTE**), currently headed by Stélla Kyriakídou.

The European Commission is currently reviewing EU animal welfare regulations to modernise the legislation. Drafts and proposals for new animal welfare legislation are expected by the end of 2023. The assessment of EU animal welfare law will first focus on five EU Directives and two EU Regulations that set minimum requirements for animal welfare at the farm level, during transport and upon killing.

EU legislation on animal welfare must be in line with the Green Deal and the Farm to Fork sustainability targets. It must also be consistent with food, environment and internal market rules. Furthermore, the new legislation should facilitate controls and ensure animal welfare in the EU.

Read more in the following section of the report:
[Animal welfare regulations](#)

Control of animal welfare

Animal welfare control measures by the authorities cover activities subject to authorisation and notification, animal transport, and the keeping of farm animals or companion and hobby animals in cases where there is reason to suspect non-compliance with animal welfare legislation. The keeping of farm animals is subject to control through sample checks, cross-compliance animal welfare inspections, and inspections based on the control of animal welfare payments and organic animal agriculture. Animal welfare inspections at slaughterhouses by veterinary inspectors are also controlled.

Finns trust the authorities, which means that animal welfare inspections by local authority veterinary officers and related communication have a major impact. Sufficient resources must be allocated for the animal welfare control measures by the authorities. The coverage of the official controls, as well as related reporting and the communication of results, should be maintained at least at the current level.

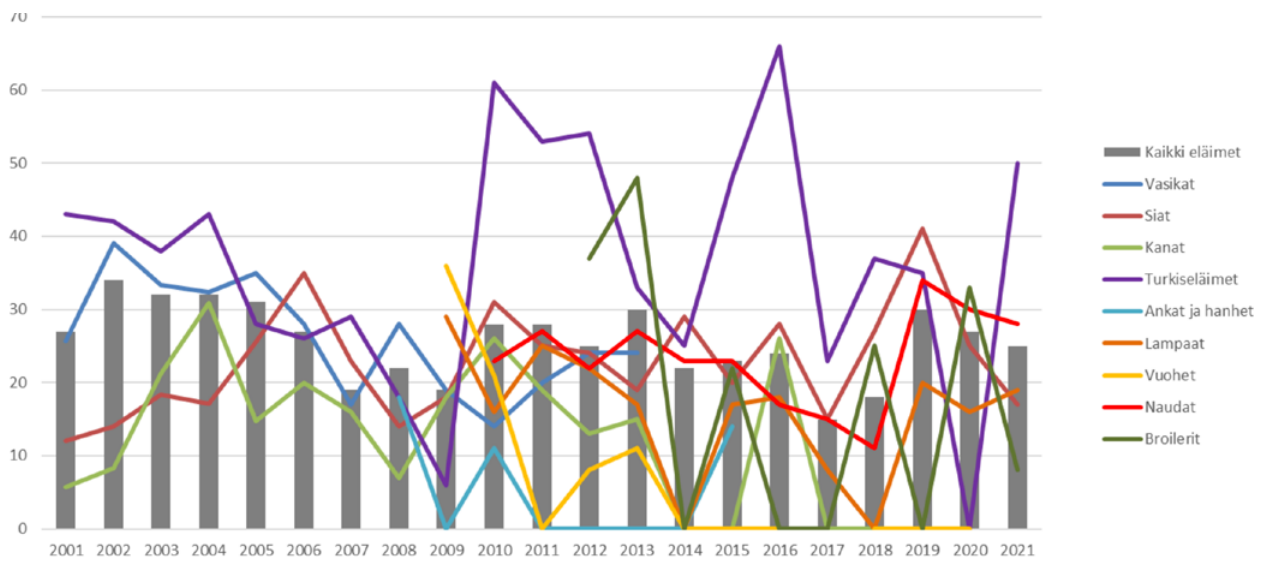
Read more in the following section of the report: [Control of animal welfare](#)

However, the results should be analysed in more detail, and more information about the analysis results communicated.

A number of inspections are performed to monitor compliance with the minimum requirements of animal welfare legislation. Non-compliances observed during sample checks of animal farms based on EU legislation (Fig. 1) have been quite similar and of a similar magnitude from one year to the next. In 2011–2014, issues were observed during sample checks in just over a quarter of the farms inspected, compared to a fifth in 2015–2018. The results of the sample checks in 2017 and 2018 were exceptional: only 15% and 17% of the inspections respectively revealed non-compliances. However, the number of non-compliances increased again to 30%, 27% and 25% in 2019, 2020 and 2021 respectively. The record number of non-compliances, at 66% of the farms inspected, was observed during inspections of fur farms in 2016.

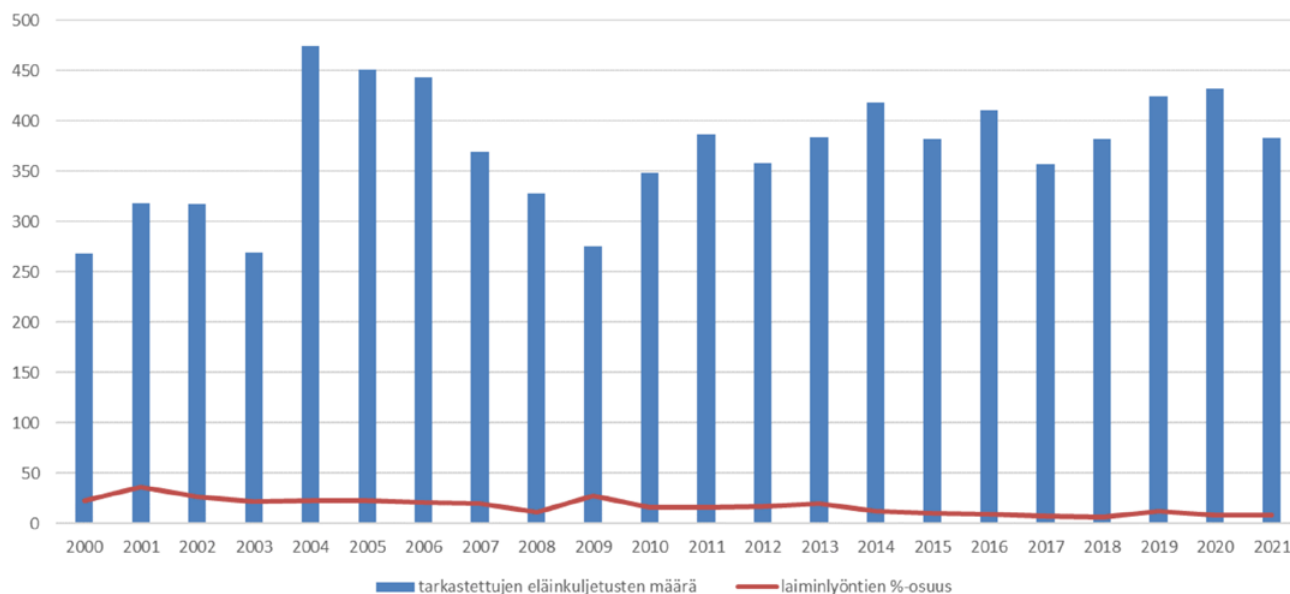
Fewer animal welfare issues than in the past have been observed in inspections of animal transport based on EU legislation, and the non-compliances are often related to documentation, certificates and licences/permits (Fig. 2).

Since 2015, there have been more than 6,000 animal welfare inspections based on suspicion of violation every year (Table 1). A large number of inspections are carried out, especially in pet facilities, due to an increase in the number of local veterinary enforcement officers in municipalities, as well as an increased number of reports by citizens. A quarter of the inspections in recent years have been follow-up inspections. The number of non-compliances in animal welfare inspections based on suspicion of violation has slightly decreased, but the proportion of serious non-compliances has increased. Over the past ten years, suspicion-based prohibitions or orders have been issued more frequently for farm animal facilities, while urgent measures to safeguard animal welfare have been taken more often at pet facilities. *The annual number of animal welfare inspections based on suspicion of violation is one of the few official indicators that provides information about the welfare of companion and hobby animals in Finland.*



Kaikki eläimet	All animals
Vasikat	Calves
Siat	Pigs
Kanat	Chickens
Turkiseläimet	Fur animals
Ankat ja hanhet	Ducks and geese
Lampaat	Sheep
Vuohet	Goats
Naudat	Cattle
Broilerit	Broilers

Image1. Animal welfare violations observed during farm animal facility sample checks, percentage of farms inspected (source: Finnish Food Authority).



Tarkastettujen eläinkuljetusten määrä	Number of animal transport operations inspected
Laiminlyöntien %-osuus	Percentage share of non-compliances

Image2. Number of animal transport operations inspected and number of non-compliances observed between 2000 and 2021 (source: Finnish Food Authority).

Table 1.
Animal welfare inspections based on suspicion of violation in 2010–2021
 (source: Finnish Food Authority).

		2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Inspections	total	3,439	3,638	5,106	4,911	5,091	6,018	6,368	6,448	6,508	6,358	6,046	5,828
Non-compliances*, % of inspections	total	40	40	36	34	34	31	30	32	33	30	31	31
	pet facilities	31	33	25	26	26	25	24	26	28	25	28	27
	farm animal facilities	45	45	45	42	43	38	38	41	42	39	38	38
	other animals or unspecified	31	37	36	25	25	27	29	22	25	28	29	38
Severe non-compliances**, % of inspections	total	6	7	8	8	9	8	7	9	9	9	10	9
	pet facilities	9	8	11	11	14	11	11	12	12	11	12	11
	farm animal facilities	4	5	4	4	3	3	3	4	4	4	5	4
	other animals or unspecified	10	13	19	10	10	17	9	8	11	8	24	14

**In the case of non-compliance, an order was issued to correct the animals' conditions (section 42 of the Animal Welfare Act)*

***In the case of severe non-compliance, urgent measures to safeguard animal welfare were taken (section 44 of the Animal Welfare Act)*

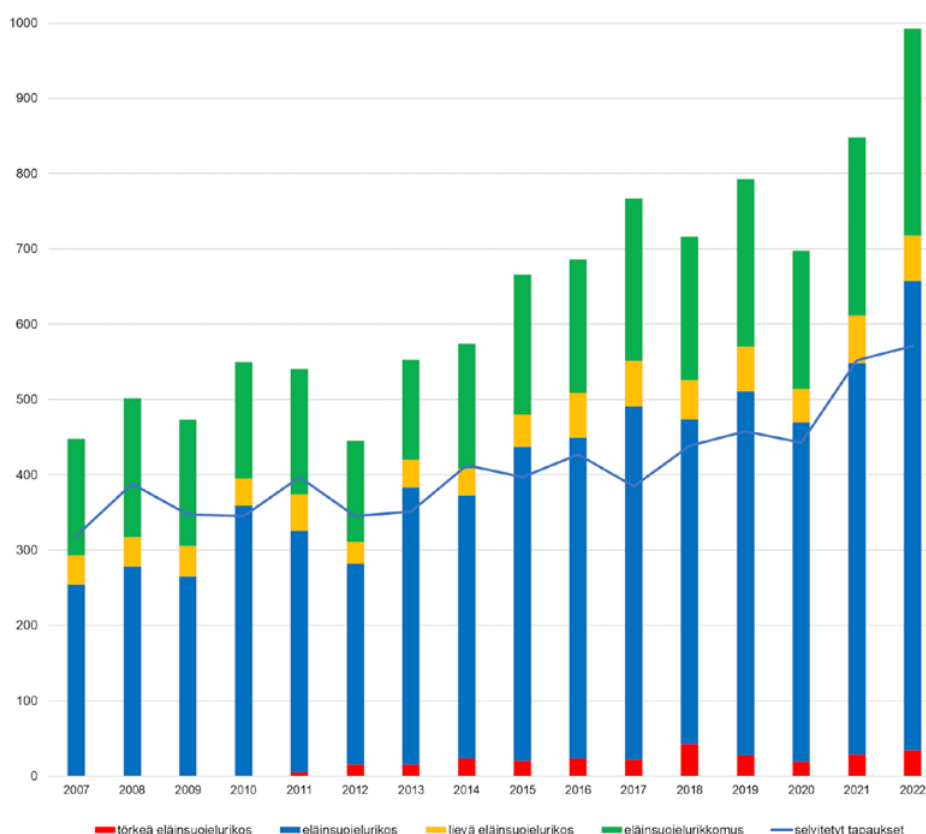
Animal welfare offences

Animal welfare offences are being reported to the police much more frequently than in the past: 550 reports were filed in 2010, compared to just under 1,000 in 2022. There has also been an increase in the number of animal welfare offences investigated by the police: some 350 suspected animal welfare offences in 2010, compared to 570 in 2022 (Fig. 3).

Prosecutors are also receiving more animal welfare offences to be processed: 822 were processed between 2011 and 2014, compared to 935 between 2015 and 2018, and 1,259 in between 2019 and 2022 (source: National Prosecution Authority).

The number of animal welfare offences reported to the police and the number of suspected animal welfare offences processed by the National Prosecution Authority can be considered indicators of the social status of animals that can be monitored. Furthermore, the human resources allocated by the police especially in solving animal welfare offences reflect the role of animals in society.

Read more in the following section of the report:
Animal welfare offences



Törkeä eläinsuojelurikos	Aggravated animal welfare offence
Eläinsuojelurikos	Animal welfare offence
Lievä eläinsuojelurikos	Petty animal welfare offence
Eläinsuojelurikkomus	Animal welfare infringement
Selvitetyt tapaukset	Cases solved

Image 3. Animal welfare offences reported to the police and solved by the police 2007–2022 (source: National Police Board of Finland).

Animal welfare education and training

Animal welfare is part of national curricula, but it has not been mentioned in any news about comprehensive schools. Teachers' knowledge of animal welfare issues may be lacking, and teaching on the subject may be left to the teachers' initiative. However, animal welfare is a theme that is touched by many subjects in pre-primary, primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education. Animal welfare is a crosscutting theme that can be used to study philosophy, ethics, natural sciences, environmental protection, home economics and religion. Educational materials on animal welfare are needed at all school levels.

There is still no master's study module in animal welfare in Finland. The closest master's programme is available at Uppsala University in Sweden.

The translation of entries on animal welfare education in the national core curricula for basic and upper secondary education into teaching materials and practical learning situations, as well as an increase in higher education on animal welfare, can be used as indicators of the promotion of animal welfare in the field of education and training.

Read more in the following section of the report:
Animal welfare education and training

Animal welfare research

In Finland, high-quality animal research takes place in the fields of human-animal studies, animal welfare and natural sciences. Animal welfare issues have become more institutionalised, and hobbies involving animals and the use of animals as therapists and assistants have increased. Relations between humans and animals have become politicised. In the polarised debate on the status and significance of animals, a perspective based on social sciences is required to study animals not only as biological but also as social constructs.

Attitudes towards animals, as well as changes and conflicts in human-animal relations are key research topics in human-animal studies. In recent years, human-animal studies have focused on issues such as the conceptualisation of animals in science and art, the theoretical basis of animal rights, and animals as silent actors in legislation.

Pig welfare research is active in Finland, and Finland is also active internationally in research and the practical prevention of tail biting. Recently, answers to calf health issues, the grazing of cows and maternal contact in cattle have been sought by means of research. Mouth lesions caused by bits in horses, how horses sleep and rest, and the measuring of horse welfare are also actively studied.

The number of bodies funding animal welfare research and human-animal studies, the amount of funding and the number of research projects funded reflect society's commitment to the promotion of animal welfare. Scientific societies (e.g. the Finnish Society for Human-Animal Studies **YKES**), associations and networks (e.g. **Helsinki One Health**) being active in animal welfare issues is an indicator of the activeness of scientists.

Read more in the following section of the report:
Animal welfare research

Welfare of wild animals

The interests of wild animals and humans often conflict. Human activities can deteriorate the habitats of animals and increase direct and indirect mortality. On the other hand, human activities contribute to the spread of many species and create favourable habitats for invasive species, for example.

Mitigation of biodiversity loss and climate change contributes to the welfare of wild animals

Climate change is challenging the adaptation capabilities of wild animals in particular, threatening the existence of many species. Highly visible and well-known animals such as the polar bear and the Saimaa ringed seal are in trouble because of the warming climate, as are countless less well-known species. Meanwhile, the lives of wild animals are affected by biodiversity loss and pollution, diseases and invasive species that speed up biodiversity loss. Some wild species are adapting to the warming climate, and others may even benefit from it for a while at the expense of other species.

The curbing of biodiversity contributes to animal welfare through the protection or improvement of wildlife habitats. *An increase in the number of endangered species and their removal from the list of endangered species can be considered a nature achievement and a welfare indicator. The recent EU Deforestation Regulation and its future impact on wildlife habitats are indicators of the welfare of wild animals at the EU level. Overall, the assessment of biodiversity requires science-based, long-term, continuous and legally regulated monitoring of the abundance and genetic diversity of wild animal species and populations.*

The extent to which Finland can meet its biodiversity loss mitigation targets can also be considered an indicator of the welfare of wild animals. Wildlife habitats and the welfare of wild animals can be improved, for example, by preventing the fragmentation of habitats into small, isolated islands with insufficient exchange of individuals and genes between them.

The surface area of traditional biotopes grazed by cattle, sheep and horses can be used as an indicator of nature achievements and the promotion of welfare, as well as to target agricultural subsidies towards the growth of traditional biotope pastures. For example, the prevention of pollution by phasing out the use of lead shot pellets also contributes to the welfare of wild animals.

In the fight against invasive species, the fact that they (e.g. raccoon dogs and mink) are also sentient individuals must be taken into account. *The development of legislation and practices for the control of invasive species to better take into account animal welfare can be considered one indicator of the welfare of wild animals.*

Small predator traps are mainly used to hunt mink and manage the mink population, but other animals can also be caught in them. Traps can cause distress, pain or suffering to animals if the trapped animal does not die immediately. The law does not require daily checking of immediately lethal traps, which means that a live animal caught in one can suffer for a long time. Traps must be regularly maintained and placed so that they will not pose a risk to humans or animals other than those to be caught. However, there is no legal requirement to test the functionality of traps, and there is a wide range of traps on the market that anyone can buy and set up. Untested traps can pose a major risk to animal welfare.

Lead shot pellet ban expanding

Using lead shot pellets to hunt waterfowl was prohibited in Finland in 1996. A ban approved by the European Commission on the use of lead shot pellets in wetlands will enter into force in 2023. The European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) has proposed to the Commission further limiting of the use of lead bullets, shot pellets and fishing sinkers. Plenty of **pellet materials to replace** lead are available on the market. Lead poisoning kills eagles and swans in particular every year, and it is the single most common cause of death for white-tailed eagles. Lead from hunting gun pellets or fishing tackle sinkers enters the bodies of birds of prey when they eat waterfowl wounded during a hunt or the remains of birds that contain lead shot pellets or pellet

fragments. Birds may also peck at lead pellets or sinkers to grind food in their gizzard. Lead causes anaemia, damages the nervous system and paralyzes bodily functions. An animal with lead poisoning often dies by slowly starving to death. According to a statistics publication of Natural Resources Institute Finland, approximately 2.6 million shotgun cartridges were fired during hunting in Finland in 2021, of which 37% were lead-free. The number of fired rifle cartridges was approximately 620,000, of which 27% were lead-free. *The replacement of cartridges containing lead with unleaded ones can be one of the indicators of the welfare of wild animals to be monitored.*

Fishing methods and practices influence the welfare of fish

Humans also influence the welfare of aquatic animals in many significant ways. The damming of rivers prevents the natural spawning migration of salmonids, thus deteriorating their reproduction opportunities and genetic diversity. Wastewater and runoff water from agriculture and forestry eutrophicate water systems, deteriorating the habitats of many animal species. Microplastics, litter and chemicals that end up in the water cause welfare problems for aquatic organisms. Pathogens are transferred from one body of water to another with undisinfecting fishing gear, which increases the risk of disease in animals. Water traffic causes noise pollution and emissions that affect the behaviour, communication, orientation, stress levels and health of animals.

The fishing method used has a major impact on the welfare of the fish being caught. The fishing method that is least damaging to fish should always be selected, and it should preferably be an active method. The amount of time the fish spends alive in a trap/net or exposed to air is significant in terms of the stress it experiences. Traps and nets should be checked sufficiently often to avoid fish being

caught in them for a prolonged period. The catch and release fishing method, which has become more popular in recent years, means releasing caught fish back into the water. Catch and release can harm fish and expose them to diseases such as saprolegniasis. The method inevitably causes stress to the fish, and depending on the conditions, it can significantly increase fish mortality.

Quickly stunning a caught fish and ensuring that it is dead are some of the most important actions in terms of fish welfare. A good practice is to stun a fish by striking it on the neck immediately after it is taken out of the water and ensure that it is dead by bleeding it immediately after stunning. This applies to all fishing, including fishing competitions.

The development of legislation on fishing and the status of waterways in a manner that promotes the welfare of fish can be monitored as an indicator of the welfare of wild fish. Statistics on catch and release fishing among recreational fishermen, which is becoming increasingly common, are also a rough indicator of the level of stress experienced by fish.

Traffic kills wild animals

A significant number of animals are injured or killed by road traffic. Globally, road traffic is the second most important cause of human-related deaths among vertebrates. Finland only compiles statistics on road traffic game accidents that pose a danger to humans. Three to four million birds, one million mammals, one million amphibians and around 200,000 reptiles die every year in Finnish road traffic. Insects are the largest group of animals to be killed by traffic, but there is not even an estimate of their number.

The negative effects of traffic on animals can be mitigated by building passageways under or over roads, for example. Dry routes under road bridges are effective in reducing the traffic mortality rate of small and medium-sized terrestrial animals. To prevent traffic deaths of animals, we not only need to build routes for animals to go over or under roads but also need to educate drivers. Anticipation, speed reduction and careful observation of the roadside are the keys to preventing accidents involving animals.

According to an estimate, traffic is responsible for up to 65% of the mortality rate of some bird species, 15% of the mortality rate of mammals and amphibians, and 5% of the mortality rate of reptiles. A collision usually kills a small animal. Depending on the species, around three out of four cervids are killed or must be put down at the scene of an accident.

Birds die in traffic especially in the early summer, while the mortality rate of mammals is at its highest in the autumn. The number of accidents involving cervids is at its highest in the autumn, and the number of cervid accidents is linked to the size of the elk population. The number of game-related accidents has increased over the years; in 2020, there were more than 14,000 game-related accidents.

The impact of road traffic on the welfare of Finland's wild animals should be studied. Known effective methods to allow animals to pass over and under roads must be put in place. *A plan for Finnish roads and road traffic to take into account the mobility needs of animals and to prevent deaths and injuries of animals in road traffic is necessary to promote the welfare of wild animals and to reduce unnecessary suffering.*

No accurate information about mortality rates of wild animals

There are no accurate statistics on wild animals' causes of death, as only a small proportion of dead animals are examined. Known causes of death include accidents, traffic accidents, being caught by a predator or a human, starvation and diseases. The Finnish Food Authority monitors diseases in wild animals in Finland and publishes an annual Animal Diseases in Finland report, which also contains information about the disease status of wild animals. In the summer of 2023, highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza was detected in several wild birds

in Finland. The avian influenza also spread to fur animals, and the authorities ordered hundreds of thousands of fur animals to be put down due to the disease. The mutated virus was found on several fur farms where the virus had also spread between fur animals.

Read more in the following section of the report:
Welfare of wild animals

Welfare of laboratory animals

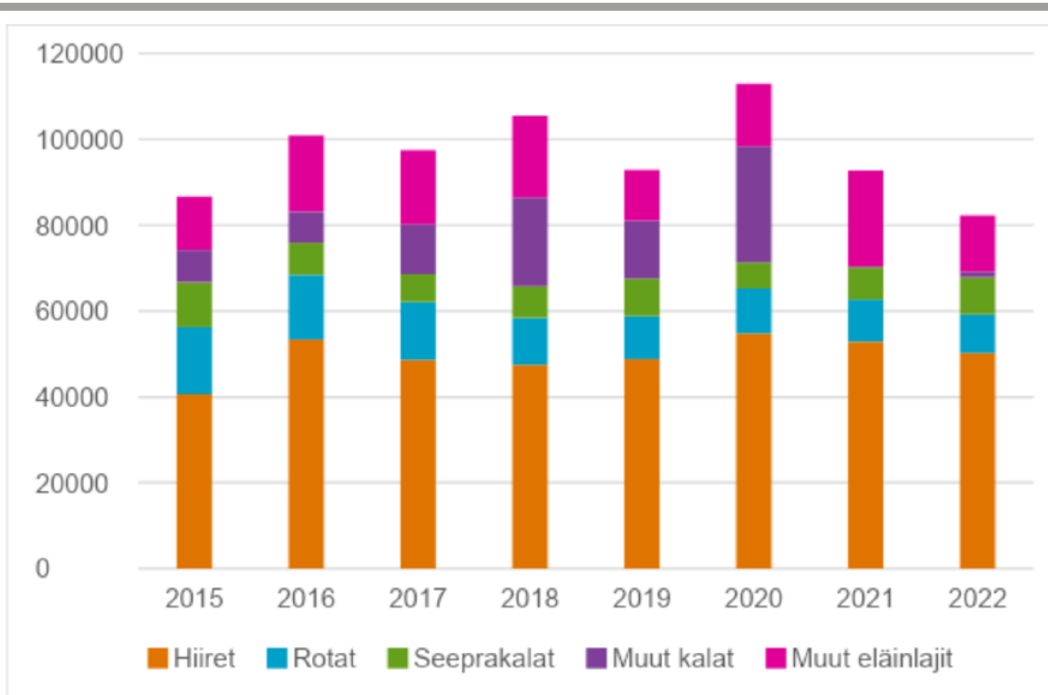
In Finland, animal testing is governed by the **Act on the Protection of Animals Used for Scientific or Educational Purposes**. The Act aims to protect laboratory animals from unnecessary suffering. Animals may be used for scientific or educational purposes for only necessary and important reasons, and even then, only a minimum number of animals is to be used and minimum pain, suffering, distress or other harm must be caused to them.

The use of laboratory animals in the EU is governed by the **EU Directive (2010/63/EU) on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes**. The Directive seeks full replacement of procedures on live animals for scientific and educational purposes as soon as it is scientifically possible. The Directive aims to facilitate and encourage the development of alternative methods and to ensure a high level of protection for the animals that still have to be used for scientific purposes. Ethical considerations are the key, and the criteria for the use of laboratory animals must be strong and logical.

Most of the laboratory animals **used in Finland** are mice (45–61% of all laboratory animals in 2015–2022). Rats (9–18%), zebrafish (5–12%) and other fish species (0.3–24%) are also often used. The volume of animal testing in Finland has not experienced any significant changes in the last eight years, with some 82,000–105,500 animals undergoing procedures each year (Fig. 4). In addition, genetically modified laboratory animal procedures are developed and maintained (some 4,200–11,200 individuals per year; Fig. 5).

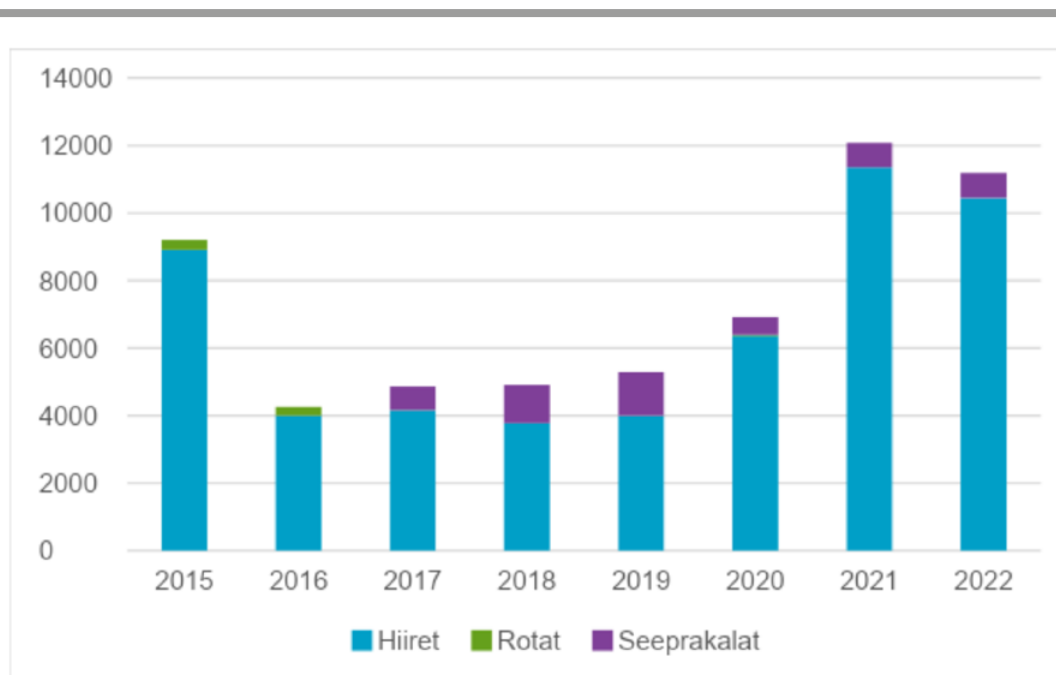
Most of the animal testing taking place in Finland is related to basic, applied and translational research aimed at increasing knowledge about diseases and their treatment. Laboratory animals are also bred and used for non-research purposes such as statutory safety testing, antibody production and the maintenance of professional competence (Fig. 6).

Animal testing is classified into four categories according to the severity of the suffering caused to the laboratory animal. In addition to experiments causing mild, moderate or severe suffering, there are experiments where the procedures are performed on an anaesthetised animal and the animal is put down at the end of the experiment, or where tissues and other necessary samples are collected from a dead animal. The severity class for such tests is 'non-recovery'. The severity of animal testing in Finland has not experienced any significant changes in the last eight years. Most procedures cause mild to moderate suffering. Tests in the severe and non-recovery categories are the least common. (Fig. 7)



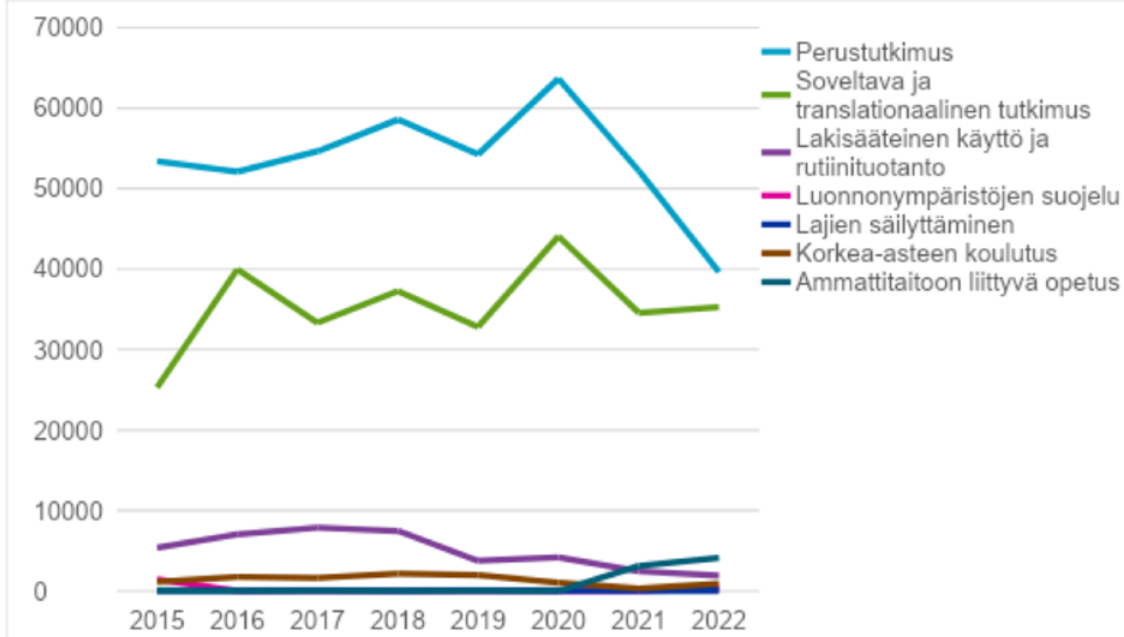
Hiiret	Mice
Rotat	Rats
Seeprakalat	Zebrafish
Muut kalat	Other fish species
Muut eläinlajit	Other animal species

Image 4. The animals most commonly used for animal testing by species and the number of animals used 2015–2022.



Hiiret	Mice
Rotat	Rats
Seeprakalat	Zebrafish

Image 5. The number of animals used to create new genetically modified populations 2015–2022.



Perustutkimus	Basic research
Soveltava ja translationaalinen tutkimus	Translational and applied research
Lakisääteinen käyttö ja rutiinituotanto	Statutory use and routine production
Luonnonympäristöjen suojelu	Protection of habitats
Lajien säilyttäminen	Protection of species
Korkea-asteen koulutus	Higher education
Ammattitaitoon liittyvä opetus	Teaching related to professional skills

Image 6. Number of animals used for scientific or educational purposes in 2015–2022.

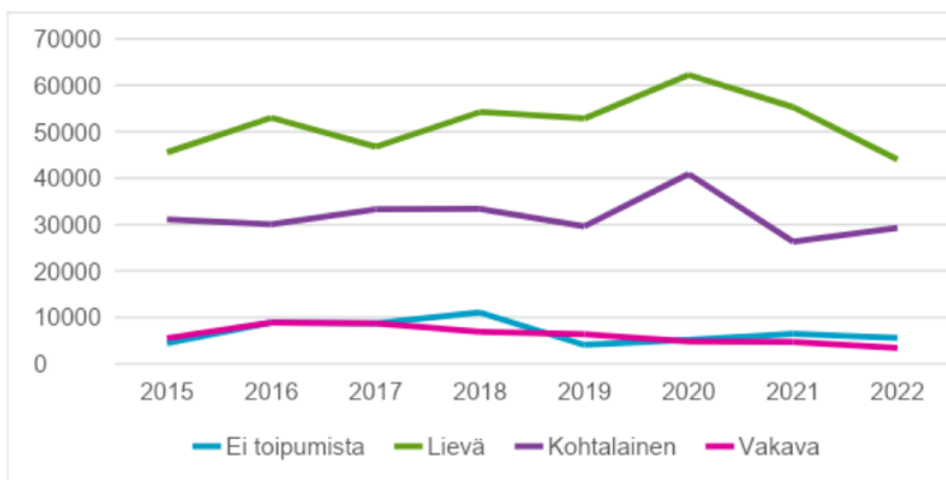


Image 7. Animal testing by severity category 2015–2022.

Ei toipumista	Non-recovery
Lievä	Mild
Kohtalainen	Moderate
Vakava	Severe

In addition to actual experiments, animals can also suffer due to their genetic makeup: some of the laboratory animal populations used have been genetically modified to have a congenital immunodeficiency or a genetic predisposition to a particular disease, for example. Depending on the severity of the genetic defect and how it manifests itself, the animal may experience considerable suffering during its lifetime even if it is not subjected to any experimental measures. On the other hand, not all characteristics produced through genetic modification cause suffering to the animals. (Fig. 8)

Under certain conditions, laboratory animals can be reused, i.e. the same animal can be used in several studies. Reuse is relatively rare: between 2015 and 2022, only 0.15–1.1% of all laboratory animals were reused in another experiment.

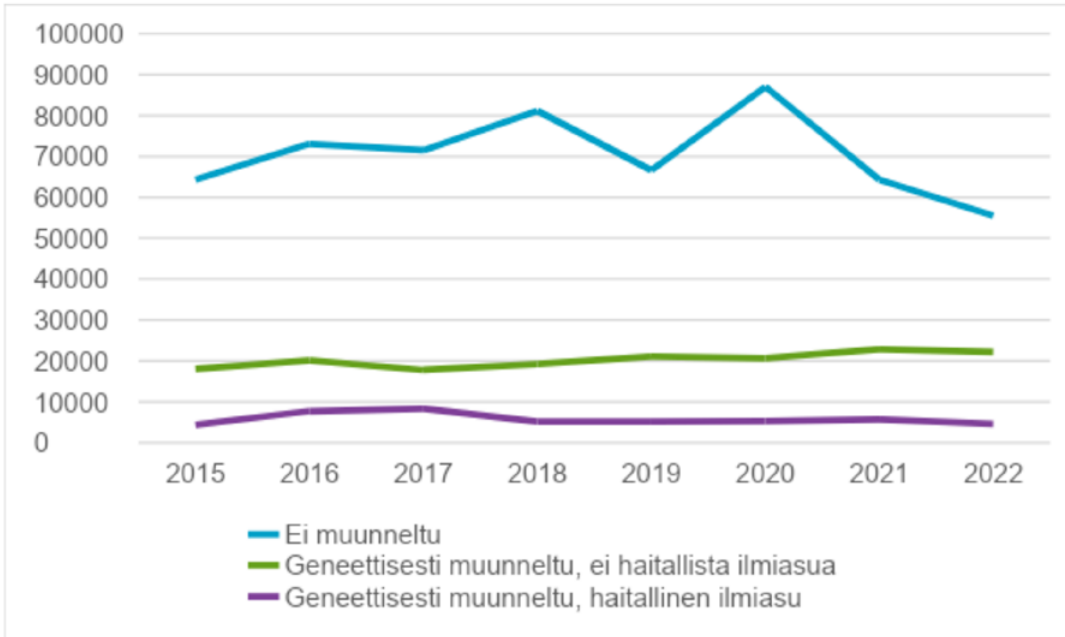
The use of experimental animals is subject to authorisation, and the benefits from the use of animals must be proportionate to the harm caused to them. The use of laboratory animals is controlled and supervised by the Regional State Administrative Agencies. The control of laboratory animal facilities is based on a risk assessment. The inspection frequency varies depending on the facility's risk level, which is determined based on the nature of experiments and previous control results, for example. Most non-compliances observed during inspections have been moderate or minor. Severe non-compliances or those leading to the consideration of charges have been rare. (Fig. 9)

According to the Regional State Administrative Agencies, the reduction in moderate non-compliances in recent years is a welcome change that can be attributed to regular control. In 2022, 98% of the facilities inspected were fine or only needed little guidance (88% in 2021). The reduction in the number of non-compliances affects the design of the risk-based control by reducing the inspection frequency, i.e. fewer operators and facilities need to be inspected each year. In 2020, only one facility was inspected due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to the number of animals used, progress in the welfare of laboratory animals can be monitored based on the diversity and success of the operations of laboratory animal operators. Of the national Finnish bodies, **3R Centre Finland (FIN3R)**, the council on the protection of animals used for scientific or educational purposes (**TOKES, in Finnish**), Tampere University Finnish Hub for Development and Validation of Integrated Approaches (**FHAIIVE**), the **project authorisation board**, which processes animal testing authorisation applications, and animal welfare bodies of laboratory animal facilities play an important role. Associations in the field such as **Fincopa** and **FinLAS (in Finnish)** also do important work to promote the welfare of laboratory animals.

The EU monitors the volume and severity of animal testing (the information is available in Commission reports and the ALURES database) and promotes the replacement and reduction of animal testing. Using animal testing for cosmetics is not allowed in the EU, and the Union is aiming to further strengthen the ban. The ban is not completely watertight, however, as cosmetic ingredients may also be used for purposes other than cosmetics, in which case they must be tested by law. The Commission plans to further support the objective of reducing animal testing in research, training and education.

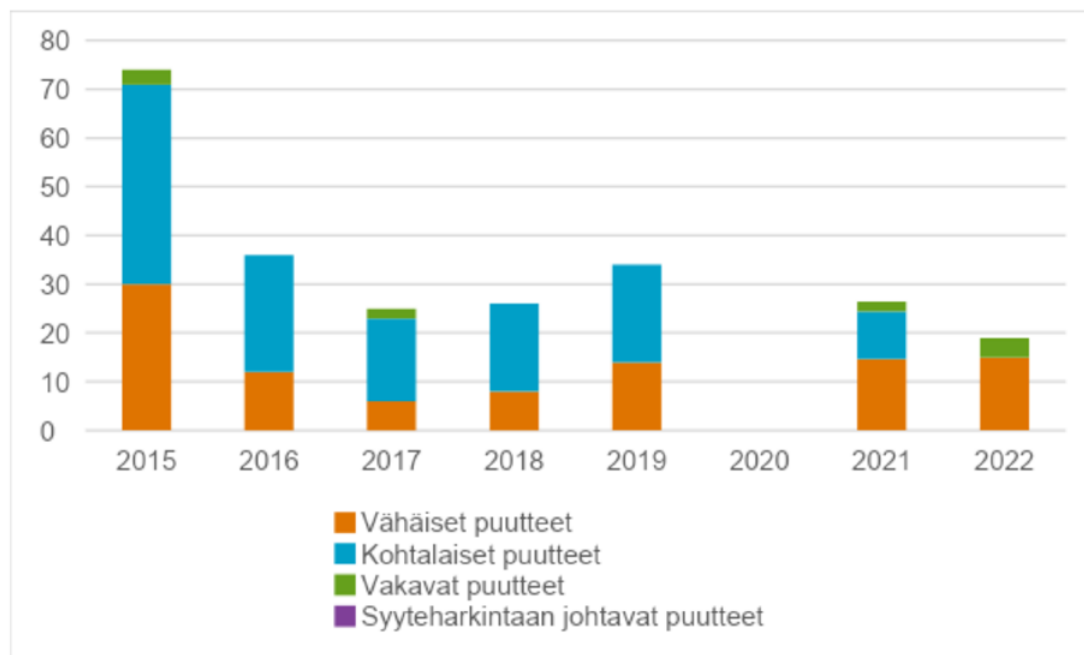
Read more in the following section of the report: [Welfare of laboratory animals](#)



Ei muunneltu	Unmodified
Geneettisesti muunneltu, ei haitallista ilmiä	Genetically modified, no harmful phenotype
Geneettisesti muunneltu, haitallinen ilmiä	Genetically modified, harmful phenotype

Image 8.

The use of animals for experimental purposes by genetic status 2015–2022
(the figures do not include animals used to maintain genetically modified populations).



Vähäiset puutteet	Minor non-compliances
Vakavat puutteet	Severe non-compliances
Kohtalaiset puutteet	Moderate non-compliances
Syyteharkintaan johtavat puutteet	Non-compliances leading to consideration of charges

Image 9.

Percentage shares of non-compliances of different classes in inspected facilities 2015–2022 (only one facility was inspected in 2020, which is why there are no percentages for that year).

Welfare of farm animals

Owning and keeping farm animals is a business activity supported by national public funds and EU funds. The use of public funds is monitored to verify compliance (or non-compliance) with the contractual terms. There are several indicators for the welfare of farm animals, such as health, production, the conditions in which they are kept, care and the possibility of species-specific behaviour.

Transport to slaughter, stunning and slaughter (or euthanising) are also essential parts of the life and welfare of farm animals. Several indicators are used to assess the welfare of farm animals, as a single indicator does not give an overall idea of an animal's welfare.

More open statistics on the welfare of Finnish farm animals needed

The Agricultural Census is one of the few official statistics that provides information about the conditions of farm animals. Realised every ten years, **the Agricultural Census (in Finnish)** is a global statistical survey, and participation is a legal obligation. In Finland, the survey covers all agricultural and horticultural entrepreneurs. There were some 46,000 of them at the start of the most recent census in 2021.

Statistics on meat inspection findings and condemned carcasses of slaughter animals at slaughterhouses are available in the annual **Food Safety in Finland** publications of the Finnish Food Authority. The Finnish Food Authority also publishes annual reports on **animal welfare control**.

Statistics from the Centralized Health Care Register for Finnish Cattle Herds, Naseva (health, mortality, care and conditions) and the health classification register for pig farms, Sikava, are available by request from **Animal Health ETT**. Information about the conditions on dairy farms can be requested from ProAgria, which maintains Tonkka, a database on the conditions of **cattle included in the scope of the output monitoring system (in Finnish)**.

Faba Coop assists livestock owners with the breeding and healthcare of their cattle, as well as in the development of their output. Faba produces open information about matters such as the **treatment (in Finnish)** of dairy cow diseases and **hoof health (in Finnish)**.

Finnish farms extensively involved in industry-run health systems

Companies such as slaughterhouses, dairies and egg-packing plants purchase animals and/or products of animal origin from producers. Ensuring good animal welfare is important for businesses from the perspective of quality, sustainability and ethics. Finnish slaughterhouses, dairies and egg-packing plants finance the activities of Animal Health ETT. ETT coordinates national animal healthcare and controls the import of production animals and feed. More than 95% of the milk, beef and pork produced in Finland is produced on farms that are members of Naseva, the Centralized Health Care Register for Finnish Cattle Herds, or Sikava, the health classification register for pig farms, both coordinated by ETT.

The health of farm animals has long been at a good level in Finland. Good animal health reduces the need to use medication and promotes animal welfare. *Statistics from Naseva (health, mortality, care and conditions) and Sikava can be used as one of the indicators for the welfare of cattle and pigs.* However, no annual open data compilations on the development of animal welfare based on Naseva or Sikava are automatically published, and the information must be separately requested from ETT.

Avian influenza a major threat to Finland's good animal disease situation

The spread of the **avian influenza epidemic** to fur animals in the summer of 2023 was a serious blow to the good animal disease situation in Finland. Avian influenza can cause suffering to fur animals and significantly reduce their welfare. There is an urgent need to improve the conditions for fur animals to meet the requirements of the new Animal Welfare Act in terms of issues such as the achievement of their species-specific behaviour.

Number of animals for slaughter has increased by more than twenty million individuals in ten years

Over the last ten years, the number of individual animals slaughtered in Finland has seen a significant increase. In 2011, around 60 million animals were slaughtered in Finnish slaughterhouses, compared to 84 million in 2021. The huge increase in the number of slaughtered individuals is due to an increase in the number of broilers slaughtered. Around 57 million heads of poultry were slaughtered in 2011, compared to 82 million in 2021. The number of individual rainbow trout slaughtered is also likely to have increased in the last ten years. Around 15 million kg of rainbow trout were slaughtered in 2022, compared to some 11 million kg in 2010. Unlike other animals for slaughter, the number of individual fish bred for slaughter is not counted. The number of heads of cattle and pigs slaughtered has declined to some extent over the last ten years, while the number of sheep and goats has increased slightly.

As welfare is the experience of an individual animal, it is important to monitor the number of individual animals for slaughter as a baseline for animal welfare in Finland. The number of farmed fish for slaughter should also be recorded at the level of individual animals. An animal may have had a good life on a farm, but loading, transport and unloading at the slaughterhouse is always stressful. A desirable development would be an animal being born on a farm, living a good life there and being slaughtered there without any need for transport to a slaughterhouse. Mobile slaughterhouses could enable this. **EU legislation** already allows farm slaughter of certain animals under certain conditions.

Keeping of laying hens switched from cages to aviaries

There has been a rapid switch in the keeping of laying hens from cages towards aviaries. Most eggs are already laid in aviary-type henhouses. In 2020, half the eggs laid in Finland still came from hens living in enriched cages. In 2022, only 28% of grade A eggs came from enriched cages, while the majority, 61%, were produced in conventional aviaries. In 2022, free-range hen houses (where the indoor premises are equivalent to a conventional aviary hen house) accounted for 4% and organic hen houses for 7% of egg production, according to the **Finnish poultry association Suomen Siipikarjaliitto (in Finnish)** (Fig. 10). *The development of egg production methods from conventional aviary-type henhouses to outdoor and organic hen houses can be monitored as an indicator of progress in the welfare of laying hens.*

Condition of broiler feet is good

The health of Finnish broiler chickens is good by international standards: for example, salmonella is virtually non-existent. According to the statutory foot condition scoring of broilers, the birds' feet are in excellent condition: in 2020, almost 99% of the broiler flocks slaughtered in Finland scored below the excellent score of 20 points (the lower the score, the better the result).

The foot index is based on the Council Directive setting minimum rules for the protection of chickens kept for meat production. Almost all broilers raised in Finland are fast-growing, which causes its own welfare risks. Sellers also offer *slower-growing broilers, the introduction of which in Finland would help reduce welfare problems.*

Laying hen production types in Finland



Resources in enriched cage

- Wire floor
- Nest
- Perch
- Nail trimming board
- Area with litter
- 750 cm²/hen, 10-60 hens/ cage

Resource: Siipikarjalitto, Tuotantotapa



Laying hen production types in Finland



Requirements

- No outdoor access
- Max 9 hens/m²
- Different levels
- Nests
- Min. 1/3 of floor is litter (bath, pawing)

Resources: Siipikarjalitto, Tuotantotapa



Laying hen production types in Finland



Requirements

- Indoor season max. 16 weeks, max. 9 hens/m²
- Outdoor pen on terrain, 4 m²/hen
- Nests
- Perches
- Litter areas (bath, pawing)

Resource: Siipikarjalitto, Tuotantotapa



Laying hen production types in Finland



Requirements

- Outdoor access mandatory
- Outdoor pen on terrain, 4 m²/hen
- Indoors max. 6 hens/ m²
- Nests
- Litter (bath, pawing)
- Perches

Resource: Siipikarjalitto, Tuotantotapa



Image10.
Hen house types in Finland. Infographics: Heta Rautiainen.

Increased possibilities for cows to move around the barn, grazing reduced

The share of cows kept in tie stall and free-stall barns can be monitored as an indicator of cow welfare in terms of mobility. The share of cows living in free-stall barns has increased in Finland: around 70% of cows on farms covered by the **ProAgria output monitoring system (in Finnish)** now live in free-stall barns, while more than half of cows were living in tie stall barns in 2013.

According to the **Agricultural Census**, the share of dairy cows allowed to go out to pasture decreased from 2010 to 2020 (Fig. 11). In 2010, 87% of dairy cows had access to pasture, compared to 72% in 2020. However, the share of grazing non-dairy cattle has increased: 58% of cattle other than dairy cows were let out to pasture in 2010, compared to 68% in 2020 (Fig. 12). A considerable number of dairy cows, heifers, bulls and calves are still kept indoors without outdoor access to walk or graze. *The share of cattle allowed to walk and graze can be considered a welfare indicator.*

There are minimum space requirements for adult cattle only in organic production. This situation should be corrected by the new EU animal welfare legislation and at the national level, by an amendment of the Government Decree on the Protection of Cattle (Valtionuuvoston asetus nautojen suojelusta 592/2010).

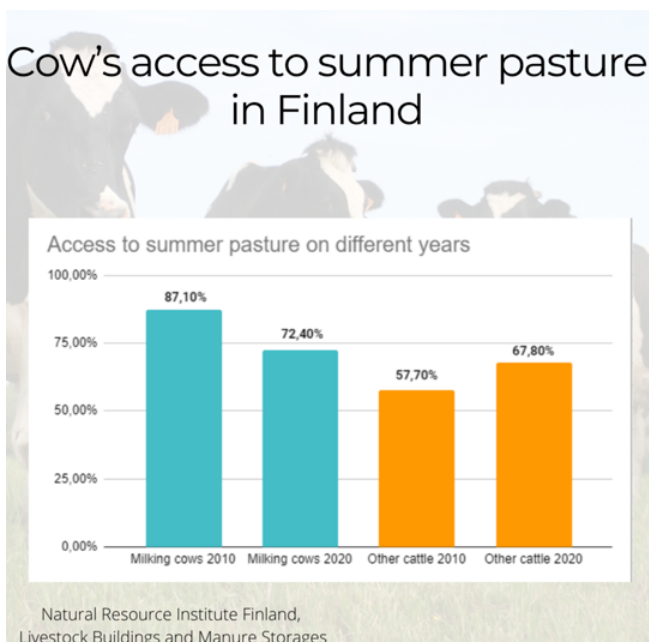
According to **statistics by Faba (in Finnish)**, in 2022, dairy cows were treated most often for fertility disorders (25 veterinary treatment records per 100 cows) and udder diseases (20 veterinary treatment records per 100 cows). There was a total of 81 **treatment records (in Finnish)** per hundred cows in 2022.

Dehorning of calves by a veterinarian, using pain relief and sedation, has become more common on farms covered by the Naseva Centralized Health Care Register for Finnish Cattle Herds. Only a couple of per cent of dehorning is currently done by the producer without any pain relief. The corresponding share in 2012 was 24%.

The calf mortality rate has not decreased. The median calf mortality rate on the output monitoring farms in 2020 was 6.7%, compared to 6.3% in 2015. The calf mortality rate refers to the proportion of stillborn calves and calves that die before reaching the age of three months of all calves born.

On dairy farms, diarrhoea is common in small calves, and respiratory infections spread in calf rearing units. Investing in the conditions, feeding and care of calves improves their resistance and welfare. Drinking colostrum soon after birth is crucial for the development of immunity. The colostrum produced by dairy cows does not always contain enough antibodies, whereas this problem does not occur in beef cattle. *The health and mortality of calves are monitored as welfare indicators.*

On dairy farms included in the scope of the ProAgria **output monitoring system**, 96% of calves get their milk by suckling on a teat bucket or bottle, or from an automatic milk feeder. Feeding with a teat bucket or automatic milk feeder (where is a teat-feeding facility) provides a natural way for the calf to suckle and is therefore better for the calf's welfare than drinking directly from an open bucket.



The number of cattle farms offering access to summer pasture 2010 and 2020

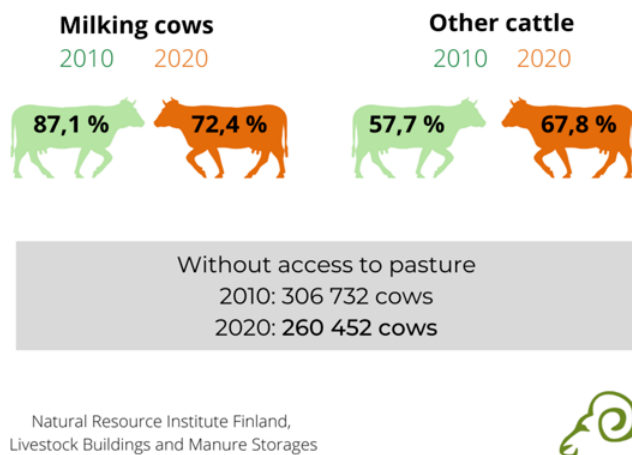
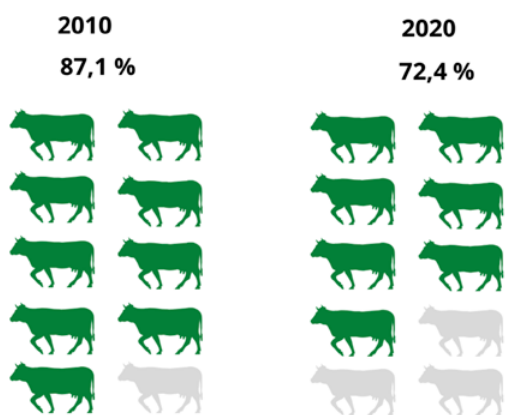


Image11.
Cattle grazing in Finland in 2010 and 2020. Infographics: Heta Rautiainen.

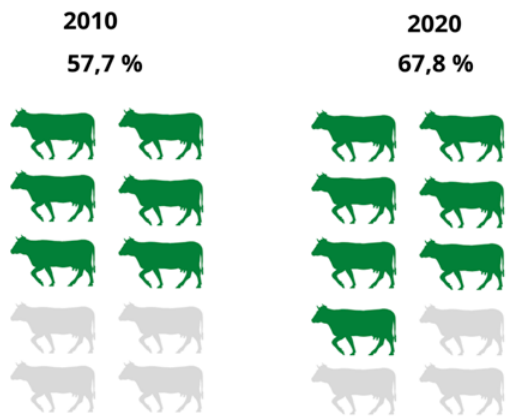
Number of milking cow farms offering access to summer pasture



Without access to summer pasture
2020 ca. 71 760 milking cows

Natural Resource Institute Finland,
Livestock Buildings and Manure Storages

Number of other cattle farms offering access to summer pasture



Without access to summer pasture
2020 ca. 188 692 cows

Natural Resource Institute Finland,
Livestock Buildings and Manure Storages

Image 12.
Share of dairy and other cattle farms allowing grazing in Finland in 2010 and 2020.
Infographics: Heta Rautiainen.

Crate-free farrowing has become more common

Free farrowing and suckling of sows have become more common in Finland. The switch to free farrowing has been facilitated by the various subsidies paid to farmers such as the animal welfare payment and increased investment aid. However, a large proportion of Finnish sows are still farrowing in immobilising crates. *The share of free farrowing can be monitored as an indicator of the welfare of sows.*

Surgical castration of boar piglets to end

A decision has been made to abolish surgical castration of boar piglets by 2035. Mandatory pain relief and anaesthesia during surgical castration will be introduced before that. The transition period is long, but the *realisation of the ban on surgical castration can be considered an indicator of pig welfare.*

Partly perforated floor most common in pig pens

Most Finnish pigs stand on a partly perforated floor (the share was 83% of pig houses in 2010 and 85% in 2020). The share of pig houses with completely perforated floors has increased slightly, from 4.2% in 2010 to 5.1% in 2020. Most Finnish pigs are not allowed to go outdoors: only 0.1% of Finnish pig farms allowed the pigs to go outside in 2020. This information is available in the results of **the Agricultural Census**.

Floor types in piggeries



Requirements

- holes max 10 % of slatted floor (also in farrowing pen)
- Bedding if needed
- Exploratory and digging material mandatory
- Minimum space allowance by weight (0,15-1,20 m²/pig)
- Outdoor access voluntary

Natural Resource Institute Finland,
Livestock Buildings and Manure Storages



Floor types in piggeries



Requirements

- Bedding if needed
- Exploratory and digging material mandatory
- Minimum space allowance by weight (0,15-1,20 m²/pig)
- Outdoor access voluntary

Natural Resource Institute Finland,
Livestock Buildings and Manure Storages



Floor types in piggeries



Requirements

- holes max 10 % of slatted floor (also in farrowing pen)
- Bedding if needed
- Exploratory and digging material mandatory
- Minimum space allowance by weight (0,15-1,20 m²/pig)
- Outdoor access voluntary

Natural Resource Institute Finland,
Livestock Buildings and Manure Storages



Floor types in piggeries



Requirements

- Cut straw, whole straw, wood shavings or peat as bedding
- Exploratory and digging material mandatory
- Minimum space allowance by weight (0,15-1,20 m²/pig)
- Outdoor access voluntary

Natural Resource Institute Finland,
Livestock Buildings and Manure Storages



Image13.
Pig house floor types. Infographics: Heta Rautiainen.

Long transport distances cause stress to animals

Farm animals must be transported at the latest on the way to slaughter. Some farm animals are also transported for other reasons, such as bull calves born on dairy farms to meat beef farms and broiler chicks from hatcheries to rearing farms. Transport always causes stress to the farm animal and is therefore detrimental to the animal's welfare. Average transport times per species can be considered a welfare indicator as far as times are available nationally.

The transport of broiler chicks after hatching could be avoided by taking the eggs to the breeding farm before hatching.

Distances in Finland are long, which means that transport times for certain groups of animals can be long, particularly when cattle are transported for slaughter from certain areas. **Calves (in Finnish)** must be at least ten days old for transports of less than 100 km within Finland.

Stunning by carbon dioxide deteriorates welfare towards the end of animals' lives

The most common way to stun pigs, broilers and rainbow trout at slaughterhouses is carbon dioxide gas, which reduces the welfare of the animals at the end of their lives. Carbon dioxide is an acidic gas, and breathing it in causes pain and a feeling of suffocation. *The abandoning of stunning with carbon dioxide in favour of more animal-friendly methods can be monitored as an indicator of farm animal welfare.*

Open statistics on meat inspection findings and condemned carcasses of slaughter animals at slaughterhouses are available from the **Finnish Food Authority**. Farm animal carcasses may be rejected in part or in whole at slaughterhouses. A decision on the condemnation of a carcass is made by the veterinary inspector working at the slaughterhouse. Condemnation may also be indicative of deficiencies in the welfare of the animal. An animal whose carcass is rejected in part or in whole has probably fared badly at some point in its life. *Meat inspection data serves as an indicator of farm animal welfare.*

Amended EU legislation on animal welfare must be monitored carefully

The development of EU animal welfare legislation to better meet animal welfare requirements contributes to the welfare of European farm animals. The development of EU legislation can also contribute to the promotion of animal welfare globally through trade agreements. Trade agreements between the EU and third countries already include conditions to improve the welfare of animals.

It is worthwhile for Finland to anticipate the development of EU-level legislation by comparing draft Union acts with the national Animal Welfare Act and the species-specific regulations to be amended.

Read more in the following section of the report: **Welfare of farm animals**

Welfare of companion and hobby animals

No precise data on the number of pets

There is a pet in nearly every third Finnish home: according to **the most recent data** from Statistics Finland, there were 700,000 dogs and 590,000 cats in Finland in 2016. There are some 72,200 horses in Finland (**in 2022 (in Finnish)**). The actual number of cats in Finland is higher, as Statistics Finland's estimate does not include feral cat populations. Between 2,000 and 4,000 pedigree cats are registered every year, but the vast majority of Finnish cats are unregistered 'domestic cats' (mixed-breed). Other pets include rabbits, rodents, birds, reptiles, amphibians and aquarium fish. No reliable statistics on the numbers of these animals are available.

Identification and registration obligation to cover dogs and cats in addition to horses

There has traditionally been no mandatory identification and registration of pets other than horses in Finland, but an official national register for all dogs was opened in 2023, and a similar register for all cats is planned for 2026. Other pets are not registered.

The aim of the mandatory identification and registration is to improve the welfare, health and safety of pets, as well as to prevent the spread of animal diseases. A tag allows the identification of an animal and the finding of its owner, making it easier to find lost or abandoned animals, for example. *In future, the share of found animals returned home can be used as an indicator of the welfare of dogs and cats.*

Amount of money used to care for pets increases year by year

The role of pets has changed in recent years, and people invest more money in them than before. Not all species are treated equally, though, as considerably more money is being spent on dog supplies, food and vet visits than corresponding supplies and services for cats.

In **2016**, Finnish households spent just over €925 million on pets. This was already a significant increase compared to 2012, when around €700 million was spent on pets. The figures include the purchase of new pets, food, accessories, medicines, insurance, veterinary services and other pet-related services.

In **2016**, households with pets used an average of €1,000 on products and services for pets and for purchasing new pets. This was €330 more than

in 2012. The increase in consumption was mainly due to the amount spent on veterinary and other pet services, which increased from €130 to €300 per pet household.

There are many costs involved in the keeping of pets, and the costs vary depending on the type of animal. According to an **estimate (in Finnish)** by the Companion and Hobby Animal Welfare Council, owning a dog costs €670–1,960 per year, and a horse €3,600–14,400 per year. The appropriate upkeep of a cat costs more than €1,000 per year, and even a rabbit racks up some €1,000 per year. These figures are only average costs, not including the purchase price of the animal and unexpected costs such as veterinary expenses due to an illness or injury.

Breeding of pets still causes welfare issues

The welfare of pets is deteriorated by breeding based on the animals' appearance, which causes health and behavioural issues. Breeding problems affect many pet species such as pedigree dogs and cats, rabbits and aquarium fish.

Breeding pets solely and excessively based on their appearance can also cause hereditary diseases and long-term suffering. For example, brachycephalism or a short face exposes an animal to many hereditary diseases and defects. Brachycephalic animals can have respiratory, dental, reproductive, eye, skin and digestive system issues. Breeding to achieve an exaggerated short skull shape violates the Animal Welfare Act, as the Act prohibits breeding that may cause suffering or significant harm to the health or welfare of an animal. According to recent surveys by Natural Resources Institute Finland, the Finnish Food Authority and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (**2020, 2023**) (**in Finnish**), dog breeding that is detrimental to

the welfare of the animals must be stopped, and control criteria set as a tool for the authorities.

The Animal Welfare Act, which will enter into force at the beginning of 2024, and the regulations issued under it will substantially improve the welfare of pets. The Act states that only physically and mentally healthy animals that can be expected to pass on these characteristics to their offspring must be used in breeding (for more information about the impact of the new legislation on the welfare of pets, click **here**). In future, compliance with the breeding criteria and information about obstacles to breeding in the official cat and dog registers can be monitored as indicators of the welfare of cats and dogs.

Read more in the following section of the report: Welfare of companion and hobby animals

WICKED PROBLEMS AND ANIMAL WELFARE



Image 14: Mikko Hakanen

Wicked problems and animal welfare

(Published on 19 December 2022)

Animal welfare is linked to some of the wicked problems of the present and the future such as climate change, loss of biodiversity, antimicrobial resistance and zoonoses. At present, climate change and loss of biodiversity are among the greatest threats to the welfare and future of both humans and other animals.

Antimicrobial resistance kills millions of people worldwide every year, and zoonoses (diseases spreading from animals to humans and vice versa) threaten our collective health. This section of Animal Welfare in Finland III discusses the worst wicked problems threatening our common welfare – climate change, loss of biodiversity, antimicrobial resistance and zoonoses – in relation to animal welfare.

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Introduction

Animal welfare is linked to some of the wicked problems of the present and the future such as climate change, loss of biodiversity, antimicrobial resistance and zoonoses. Climate change is reducing the habitats of animal species and accelerating the loss of biodiversity by causing a decline in animal welfare, problems at the population level, extinctions of entire species and collapses in the carrying capacity of ecosystems. Increasing antimicrobial resistance threatens the health and welfare of both humans and other animals, as well as paves the way for zoonoses, i.e. diseases that spread from animals to humans and vice versa, which can turn into global pandemics. In addition to the wicked problems threatening welfare mentioned above, there are a number of other complex issues such as environmental pollution.

The term ‘wicked problems’ refers to a complex web of multiple global biological and social problems, those caused by human activity in particular, which are particularly difficult to unravel. They involve different values and perspectives, which may be contradictory and therefore impossible to place in any order of importance. The nature of wicked problems also means that it is impossible to determine any solution in advance, and even after a potential solution has been found, there is no way to be sure that it was the best possible solution.

Outsourcing wicked problems is often a zero-sum game: our current Western standard of living and consumption habits require actions that accelerate climate change and the loss of biodiversity elsewhere in the world. To enable consumption and drive down prices, many large agricultural countries have resorted in practices such as the use of antimicrobial agents to prevent diseases in farm animals instead of arranging preventive care for the animals and supporting animal welfare.

Climate change and the loss of biodiversity are currently among the greatest threats to the human race and the welfare of domesticated and wild animals. Climate change is reducing areas suitable for living, housing and food production, impoverishing habitats and reducing the ability of humans and animals alike to survive. Climate change and habitat fragmentation are accelerating the loss of biodiversity that threatens not only animal and plant species, but also humans: food security, the economy, health and the quality of life are at risk. Combined with the impact of other human activity and climate change, the loss of biodiversity is causing extinctions: at this very moment, countless species are threatened by both human activity and rapid warming, which is also due to human activity.

Antimicrobial resistance **kills** millions of people every year, more than HIV or malaria, for example. It also affects animals, as some antimicrobial agents are used on both humans and animals, which makes them particularly problematic in terms of increased resistance. An even more concrete killer than antimicrobial resistance has been the coronavirus (COVID-19), which presumably spread from animals to humans and back to animals. It’s just a zoonosis among many others, however, and it won’t be the last.

A common feature of all the wicked problems is **the significance of one welfare**: welfare of the environment, humans and other animals are inextricably linked. Regardless of species, the biological basis for welfare and health is the same for both humans and other animals. **Applying the concepts of one welfare, health and biology** to the daily decisions we make in all our activities, from the individual to the global level, can mitigate the current negative impact of human activity.

Humans affect the welfare of both domesticated and wild animals, either directly or indirectly, by modifying their habitats and living conditions. In turn, caring for the environment and promoting the one welfare of animals and humans reduces morbidity and mortality, reduces the need to use antimicrobials, as well as contributes to global food security and adaptation to the changing conditions. Animal welfare must therefore be taken seriously in both our direct and indirect relationships with other animals.

This section of Animal Welfare in Finland III report discusses the worst wicked problems threatening our common welfare – climate change, loss of biodiversity, antimicrobial resistance and zoonoses – in relation to animal welfare.

The authors of this section are Satu Raussi, Principal Specialist, and Tiina Kauppinen, Senior Specialist, from the Finnish Centre for Animal Welfare.



Image 15. Climate change threatens the ability of animal species to adapt to the prevailing new conditions.
Photo by Olli Leino

Climate change

Global warming threatens life

Climate change refers to an increase caused by human activity in the concentration of carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. The Earth's atmosphere is warming as a result of climate change, and this warming poses a serious threat to the environment, humans and other animals. To mitigate the climate change impact, the EU Member States are committed to working towards making the EU climate neutral by 2050.

Climate change affects the behaviour of animals and their physiology in general, usually adversely, which deteriorates the welfare of the animals. Heat causes animals stress, droughts cause drinking water shortages and floods also affect the lives of animals. Heat is detrimental to the welfare of domesticated farm animals and pets, and arranging cooling for animal enclosures may be necessary. Climate change is difficult for wild animals, partially through different means: some species may temporarily benefit from new habitats, for example, but the vast majority of species will be stretched to the limits of their adaptive capacity. If the capacity is exceeded, it will result in population collapses and even the extinction of entire species.

According to Natural Resources Institute Finland (2017) (in Finnish), in a habitat shaped by climate change, Finland's wildlife species will become depleted in the south and spread further to the north. New species will take over more space, which will reduce the size of the habitats of native species. The invasive species will reproduce, contributing to increased competition for food. The prevalence of diseases and the odds ratio will increase.

Human activity poses many challenges to the welfare of other animals, and the impact of climate change on animal welfare does not occur in isolation from other environmental effects. The welfare of wild animals is threatened by human-induced changes in land use. For example, urbanisation destroys or changes habitats. The impact of invasive species introduced by humans on the welfare of wild animals is also high in some places. The harm caused by climate change is difficult to separate from other factors that are changing the behaviour and physiology of animals. Changes in habitats and their impact on animals are taking place in a world where the resilience of wild animals, in particular, is already very limited due to challenges involving their habitats.

Changing winters in Finland pose challenges to animal species adapted to snow

Climate change may mean better living conditions for some **wild animal species (in Finnish)**, but the warming climate is detrimental to most. The mild winters with light snowfall brought about by climate change benefit the wild boar, for example. Other species benefiting from the lack of snow are the roe deer, white-tailed deer, European hare and European rabbit. The thinning snow cover causes elk to spread out more widely, and the increased number of deer in Southern Finland means more food for the Eurasian lynx.

Small predators can also spread further north and become more abundant. Bodies of water will not freeze over during mild winters, allowing waterfowl to spend the winter in Finland. Changes in the breeding schedules of birds may affect their reproductive output.



Image 16. The white-tailed deer benefits from winters with light snowfall. Photo by Olli Leino.

The lack of snow is harmful to the mountain hare, willow ptarmigan and stoat because of their white protective winter colour.

The Saimaa ringed seal, grey seal, Baltic ringed seal and grouses, which have adapted to wintry conditions, may suffer from the lack of snow. Grey seals may give birth on ice and on land, but the average weaning weight of a pup born on land is lower than one born on ice. Large predators are also affected by global warming. The nesting of wolverines may become more difficult, and the shorter winters may change the duration of bears' hibernation. The wolf benefits from snowy winters, as snow makes it easier to hunt.

The Baltic Sea has warmed by more than two degrees Celsius in some places due to climate change. At the same time, the increased rainfall caused by climate change is reducing salinity, especially in surface waters. The warming of water increases eutrophication. These changes are reflected in the success of fish species: for example, the Atlantic cod was still reproducing in Finnish territorial waters in the 1980s, but that is no longer the case. **The Baltic herring may also disappear from Finnish territorial waters (in Finnish)**, as the rising water temperature, decreasing salinity and eutrophication of the Baltic Sea are hampering the breeding of the Baltic herring.

Fish (in Finnish) mainly benefiting from the warmer water include cyprinids, perch and pike-perch. The warmer water is particularly harmful to fish that thrive in cool waters such as the Arctic char, salmon, trout, European whitefish, burbot and European grayling. For example, the growth of salmon slows down when the temperature of the water rises above +18°C.

In Finland, climate change is **pushing species further north** and bringing forward the arrival of migratory birds in spring, for example. The focus of Finland's bird populations is shifting northwards by approximately 15 kilometres per decade. Some bird species adapt to the warmer climate and increase their distribution, while others are being forced to retreat further north, which makes their habitat all the smaller.



Image 17.
Shorter winters make it harder for wolverines to breed in Finland.
Photo by Olli Leino

Birds are laying eggs earlier

In addition to Finland, changes in bird populations due to climate change have been monitored in the UK and the Netherlands, where **research on changes** has been carried out on 60 bird species since the 1960s. Combined with other environmental factors, climate change has changed and continues to change the behaviour and physiology of birds. As a result of climate change, nearly all of the bird species monitored in the study now lay eggs significantly earlier than in the 1960s. As a result, more nests of birds nesting on farmland may be destroyed during activities such as spring field work. For example, the laying of the common chiffchaff has been brought forward by 12 days over a period of 50 years with six days of this being due to climate change and the other six days to other changes in the habitat.

The common chaffinch, great tit and common redstart have **benefited** from the warming climate when measured by an increase in the number of chicks. The effects of climate change and other environmental factors appear to be driving the change in the same direction. Global warming could therefore be a double ordeal for species struggling to adapt to non-climatic environmental changes such as urbanisation, the loss of natural habitats, other land use changes or the increase of invasive alien species.

The number of overwintering birds has **increased** in Finland. In winters with a thick snow cover, when the snow prevents birds from feeding in fields, there are fewer birds in fields, as the birds migrate to winter near built-up areas. At such times, feeding areas close to settlements are an important source of food for the wintering birds. However, the overall number of birds wintering in built-up areas has decreased while the number of birds in field habitats has increased. Wintering species may also switch habitats. For example, whooper swans and common gulls spend much of their winters in fields during winters without snow, and during snowy winters they move slightly further south to the sea area.



Image 18. The common gull changes its wintering area depending on the situation: it prefers fields in winters without snow, and moves to sea areas for snowy winters.
Photo by Olli Leino.

Animal welfare can be improved by eating environmentally friendly food

A sustainable food system cannot be built without taking into account the keeping, treatment and welfare of animals. The European Union's **Farm to Fork Strategy** aims to promote the welfare of farm animals. According to the strategy, animal welfare improves animal health and the quality of food of animal origin, reduces the need to medicate animals and can help preserve biodiversity.

The production of animal-based food is responsible for approximately a third of anthropogenic carbon dioxide emissions globally. It also produces high levels of the potent greenhouse gases methane and nitrogen oxides. The consumption of animal-based food must be reduced to mitigate the effects of the wicked problems of climate change, loss of biodiversity, antimicrobial resistance and zoonoses.

If animal agriculture were phased out globally by the end of the century (without any other emission reductions), there would be a **calculated** reduction of 25 gigatonnes per year in anthropogenic CO₂ emissions. This would be half of the net emission reductions required to limit global warming to 2°C (Eisen and Brown 2022). One means to feed the world's population in the future without traditional animal agriculture could be **cellular agriculture, (in Finnish)** which uses cell culture techniques to produce products similar to conventional farm animal products.

Micro- and nanoplastics are everywhere

A Finnish study found that nanoparticles were transferred from the substrate through the root system of a lettuce to the leaves and further into black soldier fly larvae that fed on the lettuce. The black soldier fly larvae were fed to common roaches, and nanoplastics were subsequently found in the livers, gills and intestines of the roaches. They did not reach the brains of the

An environmentally friendly diet is based on vegetables. **The Climate Guide** urges meat eaters to choose meat produced in a manner that contributes to increasing soil organic carbon, nutrient recycling and the efficient use of nutrients, as well as the grazing of animals. Contributing to animal welfare is possible by eating meat infrequently and choosing meat from grazing animals.

Animals are also important for sustainable development, and sustainable development influences animals and their welfare. The UN **Sustainable Development Goals** aim to protect animal species and habitats, and to maintain biodiversity. The welfare of specific animals, i.e. the animal's experience of its own mental and physical state, is less well addressed in sustainable development programmes. **The One Health** approach is also inherently human-centred: other animals are valued primarily as determinants of human health. If the welfare and intrinsic value of individual animals is not taken into account in political objectives, opportunities to improve the shared welfare of humans and other animals will be lost. **Researchers** therefore urge governments to include animal welfare in their sustainable development programmes and to take into account the intrinsic value and interests of animals when making political decisions affecting them.

roaches, however, possibly due to the blood-brain barrier. The potential harm caused by nanoplastics in the body of an animal is not clear. Microplastics have also been found in human blood and placentas, for example.

Read more about climate change:

Climate Guide (sivuston ylläpitäjät Ilmatieteen laitos, Suomen ympäristökeskus ja Luonnonvarakeskus)

The Finnish Climate Panel dialogue between science and politics on climate issues, issues recommendations for climate policy decision-making of the government and strengthens the multidisciplinary approach to climatology.

European Commission: **Farm to Fork Strategy**

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Luonnonvarakeskus 2017. **Ilmasto muuttuu – miten se vaikuttaa luonnonvaroihin ja elinkeinoin?**

Lumiolot vaikuttavat talvehtivien lintujen elinympäristön valintaan. Helsingin yliopiston uutinen 16.3.2022.

Loss of biodiversity



Image 19. Three quarters of all arable crops and a third of all food produced require a pollinator. People will run out of food if pollinating insects become scarce. Photo by Olli Leino

Loss of biodiversity

Loss of biodiversity means less diversity in nature – not only a reduction in the number of individuals in a species, at worst to the point of extinction, but also an impoverishment of the genetic diversity of species and ecosystems. Loss of biodiversity threatens food security, the economy, health, the quality of life and ultimately all life on Earth. It deteriorates animal welfare. At worst, it can lead to the extinction of a species. Serious threats to animal welfare are caused by the less diverse genome and the deterioration of habitats. Globally, human land use is the main cause of biodiversity loss.

In December 2022, the world's governments renegotiated their biodiversity loss reduction targets. Parties to the United Nations Biodiversity Conference agreed on a target of protecting 30% of the world's land, inland water, coastal and marine areas. An additional target is to restore at least 30% of deteriorated terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems by 2030. None of the targets negotiated and agreed the last time, in 2010, were fully met. The target that was the closest was the share of protected areas. The plan was to protect at least 17% of the world's land and inland water areas, as well as 10% of coastal and marine areas, through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas. Around 15% of the world's land areas were actually protected by 2020. This was a major and rapid change in human land use.

A protected area that is effective in terms of the control of biodiversity loss is in the right place and large enough to keep populations alive. Small, isolated protected areas can help achieve the protected area target in terms of the surface area, but will not necessarily halt the loss of biodiversity. The issue with many populations living in small areas is that below a certain size, they are vulnerable to diseases, inbreeding, fire, poaching or sporadic fluctuations in conditions.

The ecological sustainability crisis threatens to collapse the carrying capacity of nature. According to the Finnish Innovation Fund **Sitra**, the ecological sustainability crisis is a **megatrend**, i.e. one of the most powerful trends affecting our future. Human action is putting organic and inorganic nature under pressure beyond its carrying capacity and compromising one welfare.

According to the **Finnish Nature Panel**, the deterioration of natural ecosystems threatens the production of our vital ecosystem services and the health, welfare and safety of humans. The World Economic Forum has listed biodiversity loss as one of the five most serious risks to humankind. The status of habitats and species is also alarming in Finland. The Finnish Nature Panel lists the following as key measures to halt the loss of biodiversity: increasing the budget for nature conservation, maintaining the current state of ecosystems, introducing mandatory overcompensation for damage to nature, introducing simultaneous support for biodiversity and employment, increasing environmental education and transitioning to a low carbon society.

Sixth wave of extinction is underway

Globally, 58% of vertebrates have disappeared in the last fifty years. A total of 40% of frog species and 10% of insect species are endangered. One million animal and plant species are at risk of extinction in the coming decades, because species are failing to adapt to the pace of advancing climate change. **An assessment** of 4,000 mammal species populations in the world's protected areas has revealed that thousands of species are underprotected, with only ten or fewer populations. The most important factor in terms of the long-term survival of species may not be the relative proportion of protected areas in the world, but whether the protected areas that curb habitat loss are in the right places and of sufficient size or sufficiently well connected to other areas.

Insects are fast breeders and efficient adaptors, but the climate crisis is challenging their adaptive capacity too. According to the unscientific “windscreen index”, which uses citizen participation, insect populations may also be on the decline, as fewer insects appear to be accumulating on the windscreens of cars. According to **a study** in Denmark, the number of insects stuck to people's windscreens fell by 80% between 1997 and 2017. The number of swallows in the area decreased accordingly.

Genetic diversity of Finnish wolf population fails to reach favourable levels

The loss of genetic diversity (in Finnish) is usually irreversible. The smaller the number of individuals, the faster the loss of genetic diversity as individuals die, according to a determination of a favourable reference value for the conservation of the Finnish wolf population (**Natural Resources Institute Finland 2022 (in Finnish)**). Genetic diversity can be partially restored through migration, but the current level of migration of wolves into Finland is not sufficient to compensate for the loss of population diversity. According to Natural Resources Institute Finland, the Finnish wolf population is too small to maintain its current level of genetic diversity in the long and short term, i.e. over the next five wolf generations (17 years).

An additional challenge is that the Finnish wolf population is split in two: the western sub-population has become separated from the eastern one, and the western wolves are mainly breeding amongst themselves, which has reduced the genetic diversity of the sub-population. As the western sub-population is larger than the eastern one, its reduced genetic diversity has a detrimental effect on the diversity of the Finnish population as a whole.



Image 20. According to a population estimate by Natural Resources Institute Finland, there are 295 wolves in Finland (2022). Photo by Olli Leino

Grazing contributes to animal welfare and prevents loss of biodiversity

In terms of the preservation of biodiversity, **the most effective** of the supported agricultural climate actions is support for organic livestock farming. Of the examined subsidies, only that given to organic livestock farming increased the number of bird species that thrive in agricultural and farmland environments. The effect was the strongest on insectivorous birds.

Traditional cattle farming is based on grazing and a limitation of external input. These are part of the requirements laid for organic production. The requirements for organic production restrict the use of pesticides and insecticides, for example. Cattle farming based on grazing, ideally while maintaining traditional biotopes, can be an effective environmental management tool to restore or maintain landscapes, endangered species and ecosystems in rural areas.

Grazing not only helps to increase biodiversity, but also contributes to the selection and survival of plant species in challenging conditions. A study in the US with a follow-up period of more than 30 years **found** that the reintroduction of bison that had previously grazed on a tallgrass prairie doubled plant diversity. The diverse plant communities grazed by the bison also withstood extreme drought.

According to **Suomen Luonnon Villiinntysyhdistys (in Finnish)** (the Finnish Association of Rewilding), ‘rewilding’ means the reintroduction and protection of large wild nature areas and various large wild animal species. The association aims to restore nature’s own processes by, for example, reviving endangered species. Large animals are often key species in their ecosystem, and their loss will lead to the transformation of the entire ecosystem. For example, Europe is not doing enough to protect the continent’s largest living terrestrial animal, the European bison. The species is now found only in small areas across Europe.



Image 21. Grazing, especially in traditional biotopes, contributes to biodiversity. Photo by Olli Leino

Eläintieto.fi:

Visaisten ongelmien seuraukset uhkaavat yhteistä hyvinvointia – muiden lajien toimijuuden huomioiminen on avain parempaan

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Antimicrobial resistance

Bacteria resistant to antibiotics are a deadly threat

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) refers to the ability of bacteria to resist one or more antibiotics. Because of the resistance of a bacterium, an antibiotic is not effective in treating a disease caused by that bacterium. **It has been estimated (in Finnish)** that more than 35,000 people die each year in Europe due to antimicrobial resistance.

AMR is a serious problem, and promoting animal welfare is one of the means to prevent it. Coordinated by the European Commission, **AMR One Health Network** recommends that the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) should support farmers in promoting animal welfare to effectively and rapidly prevent AMR.

Use of antibiotics in animals has decreased in Finland and the EU

Statistics on the use of antibiotics in animals are collected in Finland and throughout Europe, and European statistics are regularly published. The statistical unit used is milligrams of active substance per population correction unit (PCU). Compared to the number of farm animals, the sales figures for antibiotics in Finland are moderate, according to the FinResVet report of 2020. At 16.3 mg/PCU, the sales of antibiotics in 2020 were the lowest ever recorded in Finland, decreasing by 15% from 2019. The decrease was mainly due to the fact that less antibiotics were used in medicated feed for fur animals. The sales volumes of antibiotics of critical importance for humans remained extremely low.

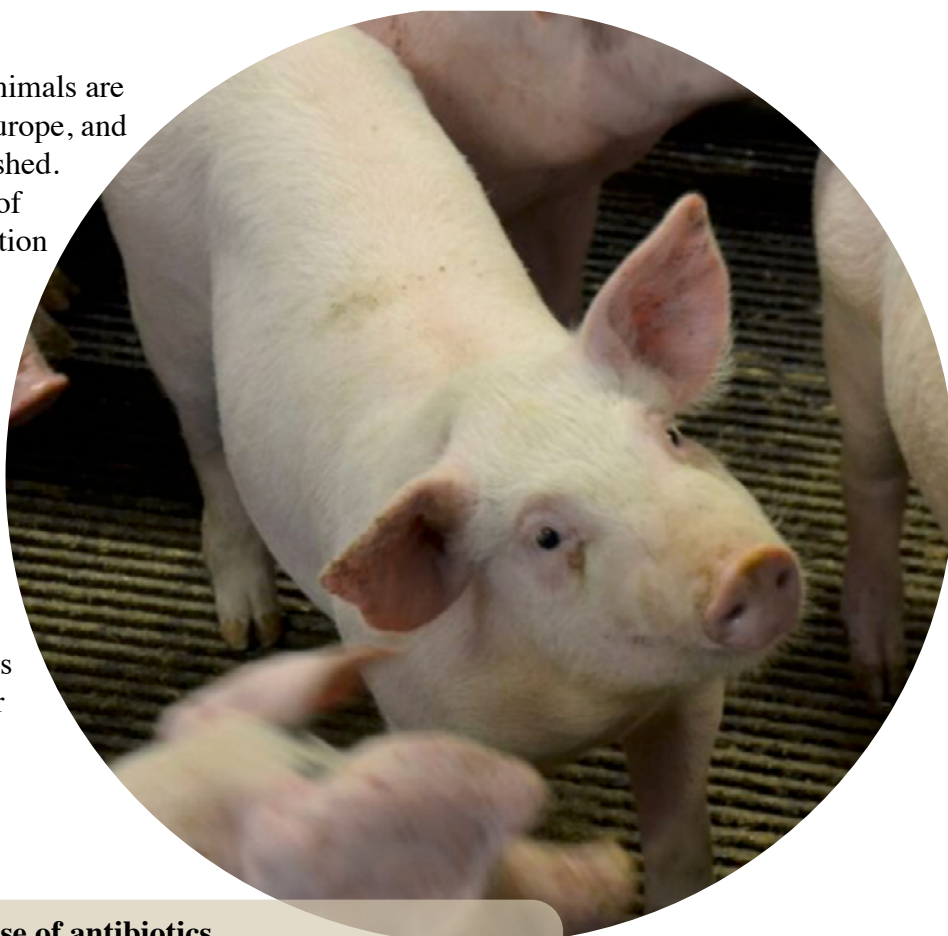


Image 22. The use of antibiotics in farm animals is very low in Finland compared to most EU Member States. Photo by Tiina Kauppinen

Most of the antibiotics used in farm animals in Finland are administered to animals on an individual basis. Penicillin is the most widely used antibiotic for farm animals. For the time being, only the volume of antibiotic tablets for pets can be monitored. The sales volumes of antibiotic tablets for pets have been cut in half in ten years. The sales of first-generation cephalosporins have decreased the most. Over the last decade, the sales of veterinary antibiotics have decreased by more than 40%. The new EU Regulation on veterinary medicinal products, which entered into force in January 2022, reformed the legislative framework and ensured that veterinary medicines are used in a better, safer and more responsible manner.

Measures to combat AMR include a ban on the prophylactic use of antibiotics in groups of animals, an extended ban on the use of antibiotics for the promotion of growth or crops, conditions for the prescription of antibiotics and an obligation for Member States to collect data on the sales and use of antibiotics by animal species. These measures aim to halve the total sales of antibiotics for farm animals and in aquaculture in the EU by 2030.

Antimicrobial resistance knows no state borders, which is why animals and products of animal origin intended for human consumption that are imported into the EU must comply with requirements stating that they have not been treated with antibiotics that promote animal growth or increase yield, or with antibiotics reserved by the EU for human use only.

To combat AMR, it is important to develop guidelines, biosafety measures and tools to prevent the development and spread of communicable diseases in animals. Farmers must be supported in the improvement of animal welfare, and access to diagnostic tools must be improved through the agricultural policy of the EU.

Antibiotics for animals only when necessary, not as prophylaxis

The volume of antibiotics used is not usually a direct indicator of animal welfare. For example, in Finnish broiler production, antibiotics are not used for broilers raised for meat. This is great from the human point of view, but from an animal's point of view, there may still be a need for medication from time to time, as even an animal with proper welfare can get sick. An animal in human care has the right to be treated when it falls ill, and sometimes when an animal falls ill, the correct treatment prescribed by a veterinarian to help it recover and ensure its welfare is an antibiotic.

Prophylactic use of antibiotics – i.e. administering antibiotics in feed or drinking water to groups of animals without any need for antibiotics diagnosed by a veterinarian – is inappropriate use of medicines. Prophylaxis may be an attempt to correct deficiencies in the conditions or care of the animals, such as problems caused by overcrowding or defective hygiene of the animal enclosures. Even in such cases, it is always necessary to address the root causes of the issue first to reduce the stress experienced by the animals and improve their conditions and care before resorting to medical intervention.

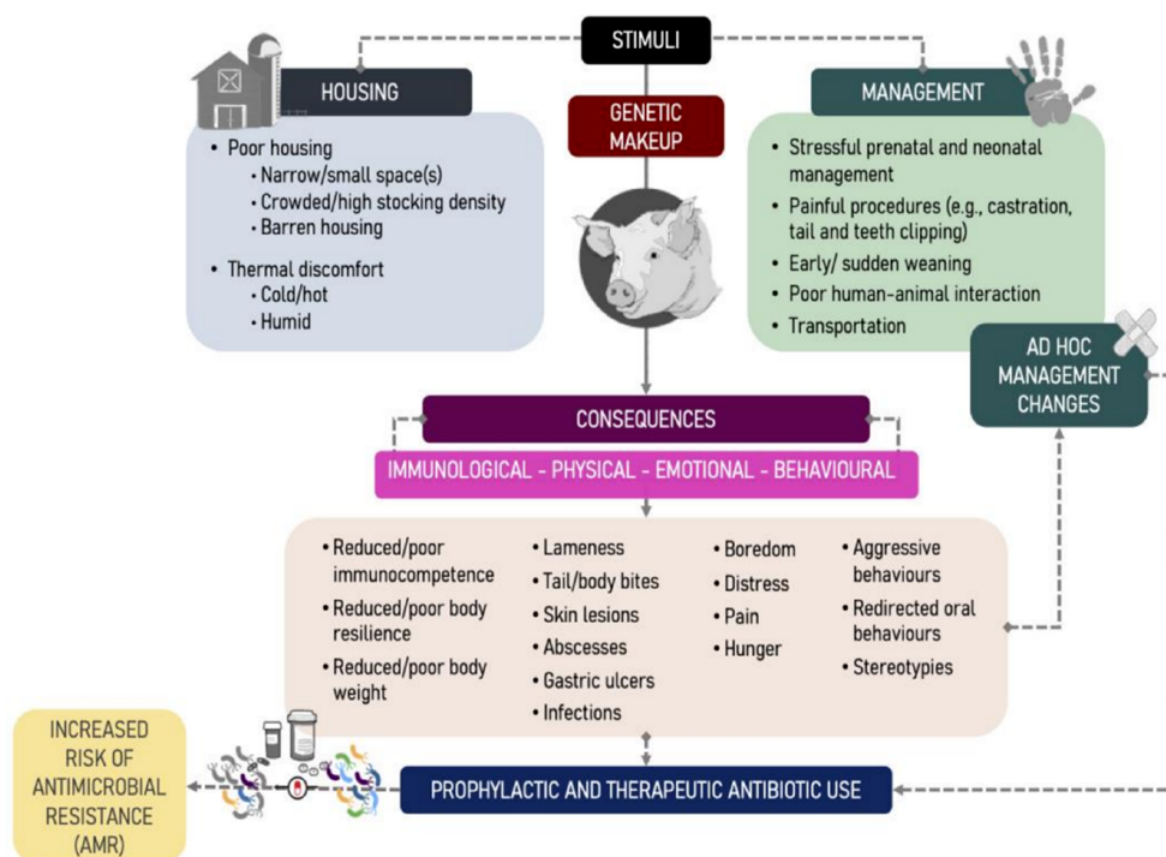


Image 23 : The biological pathway on how human-modulated stressors that challenge pigs' immunological, physical, emotional, and behavioural status act as risk factors (direct/indirect) for antibiotic use (AMU) and antibiotic resistance (AMR) on farms. Lines indicate direct/indirect association, not the strength of association or causation. The observed AMU by the pig industry will be the sum of stressors and related management decision-making to proactively or reactively (e.g., ad hoc solutions) deal with such stressors.

Literature and practical knowledge indicate that ad hoc management changes (e.g., cross-fostering or prophylactic antibiotic treatments) are quick fixes rather than rooted modifications. Thus, these management practices are equally risk factors of AMU/AMR in pigs. Source: Albernaz-Goncalves, R. et al. Linking Animal Welfare and Antibiotic Use in Pig Farming – A Review. *Animals* 2022 12(216).

Read more about antimicrobial resistance:

Euroopan komissio:

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[EU Action on Antimicrobial Resistance](#)

[AMR One Health Network: Top suggestions for AMR actions](#)

Finnish Food Authority:

[Antimicrobial resistance](#)

[Multiresistant bacteria](#)

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Zoonoses

Wicked problems increase the risk of zoonoses spreading

Zoonoses are infectious diseases with pathogens that can be transmitted from other animals to humans and vice versa. Zoonoses are caused by bacteria, viruses, protozoa, parasites and other pathogens such as prions.

Zoonoses can be transmitted directly or indirectly between other animals and humans. Indirectly, zoonoses can be transmitted through food, water or insects, for example. Many of the most important communicable diseases affecting humans worldwide are zoonoses. Some are mild, but others – such as HIV, SARS, Ebola, Zika and SARS-CoV-2 – are life-threatening. Global supply chains, habitat fragmentation, deforestation, land use changes, climate change and increased human mobility **increase the risk** of zoonotic outbreaks and transmission to humans.

In Finland, the zoonosis situation is reported by **the Zoonosis Centre**. The Centre's **expert reports (in Finnish)** provide up-to-date information on the zoonosis situation in Finland. They investigate the prevalence of pathogens in animals in Finland and the role of other animals in human zoonosis outbreaks.

The rate at which new diseases borne by wild animals are infecting humans has steadily increased over the past three decades. However, the prevention of biodiversity loss and ecological restoration are rarely discussed in connection with pandemics. Viruses such as the global COVID-19 pandemic and the recent outbreak of monkeypox have increased the need to predict when and where outbreaks are likely to occur.

Table 2. (1/4)

Main zoonoses in the world (in alphabetical order) according to the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH, founded as OIE). Source: Tarazona et al. Human Relationships with Domestic and Other Animals: One Health, One Welfare, One Biology. *Animals* 2019 10(1).

Zoonotic Disease	Organism	Main Reservoirs
Animal influenza	Influenza A viruses	Pigs, poultry, humans
Anthrax	<i>Bacillus anthracis</i>	Livestock, environment, wild animals
Avian influenza	Influenza A viruses	Poultry, ducks
Bovine tuberculosis	<i>Mycobacterium bovis</i>	Cattle
Brucellosis	<i>Brucella</i> spp.	Cattle, goats, sheep, pigs
Campylobacteriosis	<i>Campylobacter</i> spp.	Poultry, other farm animals
Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever (CCHF)	CCHF virus	Livestock, ticks
Cryptosporidiosis	<i>Cryptosporidium</i> spp.	Cattle, sheep, pets
Cysticercosis/Taeniasis	<i>Taenia</i> spp.	Cattle, pigs
Erysipeloid	<i>Erysipelothrix rhusiopathiae</i>	Pigs, fish, environment
Fish tank/swimming pool granuloma	<i>Mycobacterium marinum</i>	Fish
Glanders	<i>Burkholderia mallei</i>	Horse, donkey, mule
Haemorrhagic colitis and haemolytic uraemic syndrome (HUS)	Shiga toxin-producing <i>E. coli</i>	Ruminants

Table 2. (2/4)

Main zoonoses in the world (in alphabetical order) according to the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH, founded as OIE). Source: Tarazona et al. Human Relationships with Domestic and Other Animals: One Health, One Welfare, One Biology. *Animals* 2019 10(1).

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Avian influenza	Influenza A viruses	Poultry, ducks
Bovine tuberculosis	<i>Mycobacterium bovis</i>	Cattle
Brucellosis	<i>Brucella</i> spp.	Cattle, goats, sheep, pigs
Campylobacteriosis	<i>Campylobacter</i> spp.	Poultry, other farm animals
Hendra virus infection	Hendra virus	Horses, bats
Hepatitis E	Hepatitis E virus	Pigs, wild boar, deer
Hydatid disease	<i>Echinococcus granulosus</i>	Dogs, sheep
Leptospirosis	<i>Leptospira</i> spp.	Ruminants
Listeriosis	<i>Listeria</i> spp.	Cattle, sheep
<u>Louping ill</u>	<u>Louping ill virus</u>	Sheep, grouse
Lyme disease	<i>Borrelia burgdorferi</i>	Sheep, ticks, rodents, deer, small mammals
Lymphocytic choriomeningitis	Lymphocytic choriomeningitis virus (LCMV)	Rodents
Orf	Orf virus	Sheep, goats

Table 2. (3/4)

Main zoonoses in the world (in alphabetical order) according to the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH, founded as OIE). Source: Tarazona et al. Human Relationships with Domestic and Other Animals: One Health, One Welfare, One Biology. *Animals* 2019 10(1).

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Avian influenza	Influenza A viruses	Poultry, ducks
Bovine tuberculosis	<i>Mycobacterium bovis</i>	Cattle
Brucellosis	<i>Brucella</i> spp.	Cattle, goats, sheep, pigs
Campylobacteriosis	<i>Campylobacter</i> spp.	Poultry, other farm animals
Ovine chlamydiosis	<i>Chlamydia abortus</i>	Sheep, farm animals
Pasteurellosis	<i>Pasteurella</i> spp.	Dogs, cats, many mammals
Psittacosis	<i>Chlamydia psittaci</i>	Psittacine birds, poultry, ducks
Q fever	<i>Coxiella burnetii</i>	Cattle, sheep, goats, cats
Rabies	Rabies virus and other lyssaviruses	Cattle, horses, dogs, foxes, haematophagous bats, cats
Rat bite fever	<i>Streptobacillus moniliformis</i>	Rats
Rift Valley fever	Rift Valley fever virus	Cattle, goats, sheep
Ringworm	Dermatophyte fungi	Many animal species

Table 2. (4/4)

Main zoonoses in the world (in alphabetical order) according to the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH, founded as OIE). Source: Tarazona et al. Human Relationships with Domestic and Other Animals: One Health, One Welfare, One Biology. *Animals* 2019 10(1).

Zoonotic Disease	Organism	Main Reservoirs
Animal influenza	Influenza A viruses	Pigs, poultry, humans
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Avian influenza	Influenza A viruses	Poultry, ducks
Bovine tuberculosis	<i>Mycobacterium bovis</i>	Cattle
Brucellosis	<i>Brucella</i> spp.	Cattle, goats, sheep, pigs
Campylobacteriosis	<i>Campylobacter</i> spp.	Poultry, other farm animals
Salmonellosis	<i>Salmonella</i> spp.	Poultry, farm animals
Streptococcal sepsis	<i>Streptococcus suis</i>	Pigs
Streptococcal sepsis	<i>Streptococcus zooepidemicus</i>	Horses
Tickborne encephalitis	Tickborne encephalitis virus	Rodents, small mammals, livestock
Toxocariasis	<i>Toxocara canis/catis</i>	Dogs, cats
Toxoplasmosis	<i>Toxoplasma gondii</i>	Cats, ruminants
Trichinellosis	<i>Trichinella spiralis</i>	Pigs, wild boar
Zoonotic diphtheria	<i>Corynebacterium ulcerans</i>	Cattle, farm animals, dogs

Stressed animals produce plenty of pathogens

A healthy animal is more resistant to the pathogens that we all carry with us all the time. Prolonged, chronic, intense or overwhelming stress lowers immunity and triggers disease outbreaks. Eustress, or beneficial stress, helps to cope with difficult situations, but negative stress, or distress, overburdens and hinders recovery.

In an animal, chronic stress means not only that the animal is not feeling well, but also that its immune system may fail, which would make it sick and cause it to spread pathogens. It's our job as humans to look after the welfare of other animals for their own sake, but also in order to safeguard our own health and wellbeing.

If exposure to stress is avoided, the immune system will more likely stay functional and resist pathogens, allowing us to stay healthier. When not stressed, we are also less likely to spread pathogens.

Preservation and restoration of the natural habitats of wild animals can prevent the spread of pathogens from wild animals to domesticated animals and humans. Certain bat species host viruses that are dangerous to humans, including the rabies, Nipah and Hendra viruses. Bats themselves do not get very sick from the viruses they carry, and have lived with coronaviruses for thousands of years, for example. On the other hand, it has been **proven** that the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has been transmitted to humans from farmed minks and pet hamsters, for example. According to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), farmed mink is the most likely farm animal species to be infected by humans or other animals and to spread SARS-CoV-2. **EFSA has reported** 44 outbreaks of COVID-19 on European mink farms in 2021, and six in 2022.

An Australian study provides an example of the need to conserve the natural habitats of species. For 25 years, researchers monitored flying foxes and their natural hibernation habitats, flowering eucalyptus forests. The main finding of the study was that it is essential to preserve the natural hibernation habitats of flying foxes with their flowering eucalyptus forests to prevent the spread of the Hendra virus, which is deadly also to humans. When eucalyptus forests, i.e. the hibernation habitats of flying foxes, are cleared to make way for agriculture or towns, bat populations become splintered and bats move closer to humans to forage in urban and agricultural areas. Bats become stressed by the loss of their natural habitat and, when stressed, produce more of the virus than they do when living in their natural habitat.



Image 24. The flying fox is a host species of the Hendra virus, which can also affect humans. Photo by Flickr.com

The researchers speculated that the bats have to conserve their energy due to the scarcity of food, and therefore do not have enough energy for functions such as the maintenance of their normal immunity. Stressed bats spread viruses, and Hendra viruses are sometimes known to have spread via the urine and faeces of flying foxes to horses and from horses to humans. It was also observed that El Niño played a role in this, as the drought caused by El Niño events dried up the flower buds of eucalyptus trees, which meant that the trees did not flower normally.

The bats did not have any nectar to feed on and had to go elsewhere to forage. When the eucalyptus trees bloomed, the spread of the pathogen stopped completely. The message from the researchers is that to prevent pandemics, we need to preserve the natural habitats of wild animals, which will also prevent biodiversity loss.

Pets give substance to lives upended by COVID-19 pandemic

A study in Argentina found that pet owners were of the opinion that pets brought meaning and significance to their lives, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Pets offered joy and something to do, especially to those living alone. According to a Canadian study, cat owners with a low income often had difficulty taking their cat to the vet because of the high costs. On the other hand, some cat owners cut their own costs and preferred to take their cat to the vet at the expense of their own finances. Friends and relatives provided financial and emotional support, which was seen as important during the pandemic.

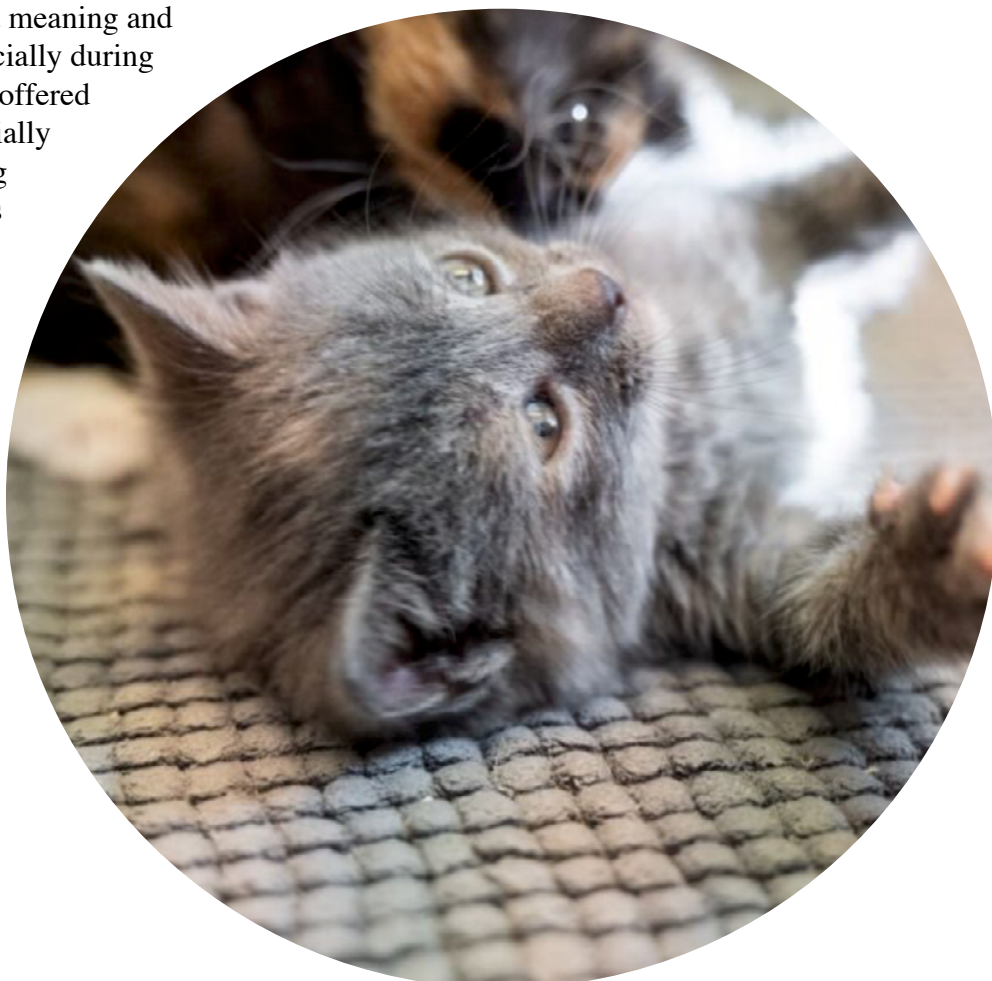


Image 25.
Photo by Olli Leino

Read more about zoonoses:

Finnish Food Authority: [Zoonosis Centre](#)

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[One Health Finland](#) is a community of professionals from different fields that organises cross-disciplinary encounters centred around welfare (of humans, other animals and the environment).

[Studies in planetary wellbeing](#) can be completed free of charge at the Open University of the University of Jyväskylä.

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What can we do in the face of these wicked problems?

There are ways to improve a challenging situation.

We can work to reduce the stress levels of farm animals and thus to promote animal welfare and reduce the need to use antibiotics.

We can increase animal welfare by offering animals positive experiences.

We can breed and utilise fewer animals, give them more living space and offer them the opportunity for species-specific behaviours and habitats.

The vitality and welfare of wild animals are threatened above all by climate change and human-induced biodiversity loss, and we all need to do our part to mitigate these threats and to safeguard our own existence.

POLITICS AND ECONOMY



Image 26. Photo by Tiina Kauppinen

Politics and economy

(Published on 30 April 2021)

Animal welfare is intertwined with the economy and politics, especially in the case of farm animals. For example, there are numerous subsidies for farmers engaging in animal agriculture, and financial support is crucial for the profitability of Finnish animal agriculture.

*Several reforms affecting animal welfare were added to the action plan of the Finnish Government, **the Government Programme**, in 2019. Some of them were implemented during the term of government. This section of the Animal Welfare in Finland III report delves in more detail into the links between politics, the economy and animal welfare.*

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Introduction

The requirements laid down for the animal welfare payment, certain types of investment aid and organic production aid go beyond the minimum requirements of animal welfare legislation to promote the welfare of animals. The financial aid makes it possible to improve the welfare of farm animals in Finland. The animal welfare payment is popular among producers. Just over €61 million in animal welfare payments was paid to Finnish farmers in 2019 and €68 million in 2021. Organic production aids (for both animal and crop production) totalled just under €56 million in 2019. The sum earmarked for animal welfare payments in the 2023 budget is €74 million. The EU contribution to the animal welfare payment in 2022 was 42%.

A little less than half of Finnish food expenditure is spent on products of animal origin. The average Finn consumed around 80 kg of meat in 2019 and around 79 kg in 2021. Meat consumption has decreased slightly. Depending on their starting point, consumers have the opportunity to make their own decisions and assess the adequacy of animal welfare measures. However, consumers may not have enough information to make choices that contribute to better animal welfare at the grocery store.

In the case of eggs, consumers can choose between four production methods depending on the conditions in which the chickens live: enriched cage, aviary-type hen house, free-range or organic. The production methods reflect not only the price of the egg, but also the living conditions of the chickens. In the case of dairy products, dairy companies and retailers have developed brands that reflect the conditions and resources of the cows. The words ‘vapaan lehmän maito’ (free cow’s milk) on a milk carton indicate that the cow lives in a free-range cowshed; in the case of some brands, this also includes the freedom to go outdoors and graze. There are

no meat labels that specifically indicate animal welfare, although by buying organic meat it’s possible to ensure that the animals lived in more spacious and enriched conditions, and were allowed to go outside at some point in their lives.

Interest in the use of insects as human food has waned somewhat since the initial buzz. Issues affecting the welfare of insects must be addressed before large-scale production for human and animal consumption.

Unlike the previous Government Programme, the Government Programme of Prime Minister Sanna Marin’s Government for 2019 included a number of measures to promote animal welfare, some of which have been implemented. Animal welfare and animal rights are also increasingly discussed in the media. A wish has been expressed to add fundamental animal rights to the Constitution of Finland.

This section of the report describes politics and economic measures linked to animal welfare. The list of operators in the field of animal welfare has been updated where there have been changes; otherwise, reference is made to the previous Animal Welfare in Finland reports (2012 and 2016 **(in Finnish)**).

The authors of this section are Satu Raussi, Principal Specialist, and Tiina Kauppinen, Senior Specialist, from the Finnish Centre for Animal Welfare. The visiting author for this section of the report is Leena Suojala, an expert in farm animal health and welfare from the Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners (MTK).

Government Programmes

The Government Programme of Prime Minister Juha Sipilä's Government in 2015 did not include any targets to promote animal welfare. The Sipilä Government Programme included measures to refrain from additional national regulation in the implementation of EU legislation and to remove statutes that hinder agriculture. No statutes directly affecting the welfare of farm animals were addressed during the term of office of the Sipilä Government. However, animal welfare controls were relaxed in the control of cross-compliance by limiting them to the minimum requirements of EU legislation. In other words, no sanctions were imposed on producers for breaches of national welfare requirements that were stricter than EU legislation, provided that the EU requirements were met. Furthermore, regulatory control no longer focused solely on the animal welfare requirements laid down in national legislation. During the term of the Sipilä

Government, the competitiveness, sustainability, market and consumer orientation, and sufficiency of domestic food production were assessed from the perspective of the security of supply in **the government report on food policy (Ruoka2030) (in Finnish)**. The report contains several entries related to animal welfare.

The ninth objective in the **Government Programme of Prime Minister Sanna Marin's Government** from 19 December 2019, Carbon neutral Finland that protects biodiversity (Section 3.1), was improving the welfare of animals. The twelve measures to improve animal welfare included in the Government Programme are separately mentioned here if there was progress in the specific issue during the government term.

Measures and actions taken to promote animal welfare in the 2019 Government Programme

1. The proposal for an Act on the Welfare of Animals that was under consideration during the previous parliamentary term will be elaborated so that the rationale for the Act recognises the inherent value of animals and allows for the expression of their natural behaviours.

The detailed rationale for the government proposal **154/2018 (in Finnish)** already included in the previous parliamentary term the recognition of the intrinsic value of animals as follows: “Respect for animals is based on the idea that an animal has intrinsic value that is independent of its value to humans. The intrinsic value of an animal means that the animal itself is valuable. The opposite of intrinsic value is instrumental value. An animal has instrumental value to humans if humans benefit from it in some way: for example, farm animals, companion and hobby animals, laboratory animals and circus animals have instrumental value. However, the intrinsic value of an animal is independent of whether humans benefit from the animal: animals that are of no use to humans and harmful pests also have intrinsic value. It could be said that the intrinsic value of an animal refers to the animal’s moral status.”

Government proposal **154/2018** stated the following on enabling the expression of animals’ natural behaviours: “The welfare of an animal is also significantly affected by the possibility for the animal to express its natural behaviour. Satisfying all the needs of an animal’s natural typical behaviour when keeping animals is difficult or undesirable. Such behaviours include the need to reproduce and defend one’s territory. However, an animal should be able to adequately express its innate behaviours, the repression of which will cause stress and frustration. It is therefore proposed that a requirement that animals should have the possibility to express certain natural behaviours be added to the Act. The satisfaction of essential behavioural needs should be taken into account in the care and treatment of animals, and in the design of animal enclosures.”

The Constitutional Law Committee (in Finnish) and **the Environment Committee (in Finnish)** submitted their opinions on the government proposal to the Agriculture and Forestry Committee, which prepared a **committee report (in Finnish)** on the government proposal. The Animal Welfare Act (Laki eläinten hyvinvoinnista 693/2023) was adopted by Parliament at the end of the term of the Marin Government in March 2023.

2. We will establish an expert working group to determine how we can support the pig husbandry industry’s goal of discontinuing the use of farrowing crates. We will discontinue the construction of new tie stall cattle barns.

An expert working group to support the pig husbandry industry in investigating the discontinuation of the use of farrowing crates was established. The **work (in Finnish)** of the free farrowing working group was completed during 2020. In addition, a research project on **a free farrowing future of pig farms (in Finnish)** has been launched at the University of Helsinki with funding from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

The new Animal Welfare Act **prohibits the construction of new tie stall cattle barns (in Finnish)**. As of 16 October 2018, it has no longer been possible to apply for investment aid for the construction of a new **tie stall cattle barn (in Finnish)** or the expansion of an old one. However, it is still possible to receive public aid for the renovation of an old tie stall cattle barn without increasing the number of tie stalls and expanding the barn.

3. In connection with work to assess the profitability of agriculture, we will also look into the possibilities to strengthen the transition through incentives.

The objectives for improving the profitability of agriculture are set out in point 3.4.2 Agriculture of the Government Programme.

4. We will look into the possibility of discontinuing the castration of pigs and will ensure sufficient pain relief in painful procedures.

Surgical castration is still widely used in pork production in Finland. However, alternatives to allow for discontinuation of the castration of boar piglets have been **investigated (in Finnish)**, and a working group set up by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry has continued its work with a broad composition. According to the policy of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, upon the entry into force of the new Animal Welfare Act, painkillers must be administered to piglets during surgical castration. After a transition period of four years from the entry into force of the Act, anaesthesia will also be required in addition to analgesia in surgical castration.

Surgical castration will be completely banned with a transition period of 12 years.

The government proposal for the **Animal Welfare Act (in Finnish)** requires the use of analgesia for painful procedures. However, analgesia would not be necessary if the pain caused by the procedure is mild and transient, or if an emergency procedure cannot be delayed, for example. Analgesia would be defined as the use of pain killers, a local anaesthetic or a general anaesthetic. The requirements for analgesia in connection with specific procedures will be further regulated by decrees.

5. We will develop an aid scheme for investments that improve the welfare of animals beyond the requirements of the Act or that implement the requirements of the Act before the statutory transition period.

The level of support for investments to promote animal welfare was already increased from 30% to 35% in 2016 under the previous Government. Free farrowing requires more space, and the costs are therefore higher than for crate farrowing. The eligible area for financial aid for free farrowing pens was increased by 20% in 2019 by Decree **262/2019 (in Finnish)** of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, which also fixed the eligible unit cost at €1,800 per farrowing crate when farrowing crates are converted into free farrowing pens.

Support for the construction of farrowing crates will also continue, but at a lower investment aid rate than for free farrowing. The working group under the Government Programme proposed as the definition of free farrowing that the sow or gilt be kept free before farrowing, throughout the farrowing period and also throughout the suckling period. The working group also proposed that in future aid would only be granted for extension and new construction investments to realise free farrowing pens compliant with the definition. This would steer production towards the objective of a transition to free farrowing. Investment aid is also available for the conversion of battery farms into aviary-type hen houses. The maximum eligible cost in the above case is €15 per laying hen.

6. We will look into the possibility of adopting an antibiotic tax for animal products, for instance, with the goal of advancing sustainable production methods and reducing the overuse of antibiotics.

No further information on this is available. Compared to the number of farm animals, the sales figures for antibiotics in Finland are moderate. According to statistics from 2020, the sales volumes of antibiotics were lower than ever before in Finland.

7. We will advance the criteria for animal welfare in Nordic and EU standards and legislation.

Animal-based indicators have been developed and tested in Nordic cooperation for use in regulatory farm animal welfare inspections. Animal-based indicators are intended to complement resource-based ones (such as the space, feed and water available to an animal) in the assessment of animal welfare. The condition of cattle hair and ease of movement are examples of welfare indicators involving the animal itself.

In December 2019, the EU Agriculture Council adopted **conclusions** on animal welfare as an integral part of sustainable animal agriculture, prepared under the leadership of Finland. The conclusions recognise the need to further update the current legislation to adapt it to the most recent scientific knowledge and technical developments. In particular, this applies to areas such as animal transport over long distances, the welfare of cattle over the age of six months, dogs and cats kept in the context of economic activity and animal slaughter. The EU Commission has promised a proposal for new EU animal welfare legislation by the end of 2023.

8. We will develop regulations for trade in animals, particularly as concerns online trade, and will look into the identification and registration of dogs and cats.

At the request of the Ministry, **the advisory council for the welfare of companion and hobby animals (in Finnish)** has prepared **a proposal (in Finnish)** on minimum standards for online trade platforms registered in Finland for the trade of companion and hobby animals. There is no new information on any other measures to improve the regulation of animal trade. This matter will probably be clarified along with the progress of the Animal Welfare Act.

The identification and registration of dogs was regulated by Decree **1/2021 (in Finnish)** of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. The Decree entered into force at the beginning of 2023. The Act on the Identification and Registration of Animals (Laki eläinten tunnistamisesta ja rekisteröinnistä **1069/2021 (in Finnish)**) allows for the extension of the identification and registration obligation beyond dogs to other pet species. The schedule for the progress of a statute on the identification and registration of cats was set at 2027 in connection with the processing of the Animal Welfare Act.

9. We will lay down provisions on veterinarians' duty to report procedures carried out on pets due to hereditary defects.

The obligation for veterinarians to report procedures carried out on dogs and cats due to hereditary defects will be enacted by an amendment to the Act on Access to and Pursuit of the Profession of Veterinary Surgeon. The report would be made in a register of dogs and cats to be established, and would enter into force from the beginning of 2024 for dogs and from the beginning of 2027 for cats.

10. We will increase the amount of funding for adopting methods to replace animal testing.

A new state subsidy of €200,000 per year has been introduced to promote **the use of methods to replace animal testing.**

11. We will improve the control of compliance with legislation on animal welfare and enhance the effectiveness of video surveillance of slaughterhouses.

The Government Proposal for the Animal Welfare Act (in Finnish) contains several entries to improve animal welfare control. In the section on the main content of the government proposal, it is stated: "The regulation on control of animal welfare would be clarified and increased to make the control more effective. In particular, the means for the control authority to address cases of animal welfare issues would be increased and clarified.

In slaughterhouses, control could be performed by means of a camera system installed in the slaughterhouse facilities." According to **section 79 of the government proposal, (in Finnish)** the Finnish Food Authority may use CCTV systems to monitor compliance with the animal welfare regulations in slaughterhouses.

12. We will establish the post of Animal Welfare Ombudsman in Seinäjoki.

The post of Animal Welfare Ombudsman for the promotion of animal welfare was established at the Finnish Food Authority in Seinäjoki. Saara Kupsala, Ph.D. (Soc. Sc.), started her work as the Animal Welfare Ombudsman on 1 September 2020. The temporary post will extend until 31 December 2023.

National agriculture, fisheries, reindeer husbandry and game management are required to ensure a sustainable food system, according to Section 3.4.2 Agriculture of the Marin Government Programme. The section also includes several entries affecting animal welfare, such as an objective of increasing the supply and use of domestic fish, an objective to increase recreational hunting, and an objective to develop reindeer husbandry. An additional objective is to redirect the focus of agricultural support towards improving animal welfare: "In the future programming period the focus of support payments will be on active production and on improving animal welfare and the state of the environment."

Measures and actions taken to promote animal welfare in the 2023 Government Programme

The following objectives for the promotion of animal welfare have been recorded in the **Government Programme** 'A Strong and committed Finland' of Prime Minister Petteri Orpo 20 June 2023.

1. Access to veterinary services, reasonable client fees and on-call services will be ensured in all parts of the country.
2. The Government will take action to prevent animal and plant diseases and explore the possibility of setting up disease funds.
3. Finland will influence the EU processes in such a way that the practices followed in livestock production will support the wellbeing of animals in other Member States as well.
4. Package labelling indicating the origin and method of production of products will be improved.

National animal welfare strategies

A **strategy on farm animal welfare (in Finnish)** published by a working group set up by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in 2006 has not been updated. In 2011, the Finnish farm animal welfare council **assessed (in Finnish)** the implementation of the proposed measures in the strategy.

The purpose of the **National Strategy on Invasive Alien Species (2012) (in Finnish)** is to prevent the harm and risks posed by invasive species to Finland's nature, the sustainable use of natural resources, livelihoods and the welfare of society and people. The aim is to minimise the threat and harm posed by invasive species present in Finland and those potentially arriving in the country. Animals classified as invasive species at EU level include the common raccoon dog and the muskrat. The mink has been classified as a national invasive alien species in Finland. In 2019, Finland was authorised by the European Commission to continue fur farming of raccoon dogs for an additional 30 years despite the raccoon dog being an invasive alien species throughout the EU that may not be imported, sold, bred and especially released into the wild. An animal included in a species classified as invasive is also a sentient individual whose welfare must be taken into account when controlling and culling the species. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has prepared a **manual** for the management of vertebrate invasive species of Union concern, incorporating animal welfare.

The **National Forest Strategy** (updated in 2022) does not address the welfare of wild animals or forests as wildlife habitats. The animal issues included in the strategy address the harm and benefits of wild animals and promise to develop and implement methods to effectively manage cervid populations.

In the **Finnish Food Research and Innovation Strategy 2021–2035 (in Finnish)**, research organisations highlight Finland's priorities and actions to achieve a food system that increases welfare of society, supports economic growth and provides growth opportunities based on scientific knowledge and food innovation for Finnish food producers and the food industry. The strategy's food research missions for Finland in 2035 are:

- 1. Healthy, safe and sustainable food for all in Finland.**
- 2. Sustainable, adaptable and competitive food and feed production in Finland.**
- 3. A resource-efficient and waste-free food system.**
- 4. Finland is a trailblazer in research and innovation and new approaches to a sustainable food system.**

The 2019 **Marin Government Programme (in Finnish)** included the preparation of a cross-sectoral national strategy on an economically, socially and ecologically sustainable food system by 2030. However, the most recent **food policy report (in Finnish)** was presented to Parliament in spring 2017, and no new national strategy for a sustainable food system has been presented since then. Instead of being cross-sectoral, **the Finnish food policy (in Finnish)** seems to be strongly governed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. **According to the JustFood** research project, the Finnish food system suffers from a number of intertwined sustainability issues that can only be resolved by a fundamental change of the whole food system, a food revolution. The research project argues that Finland needs a collaborative, forward-looking, sustainable and fair food strategy. .

Animal agriculture subsidies

The new EU agricultural policy period started at the beginning of 2023 with the introduction of the new CAP (Common Agricultural Policy). The reform is huge in financial terms, as around one third of the EU's common budget is spent on agriculture. In 2017, around €57 billion was spent on the Common Agricultural Policy, which is around 37% of the EU's total common budget. In the new CAP period, the plan is to channel more money towards environmental and climate measures. However, according to **an agricultural policy researcher (in Finnish)**, the reform will not bring any radical changes compared to the previous policy, and the effectiveness of the environmental and climate measures will remain largely the responsibility of the individual Member States.

Agricultural subsidies (in Finnish) are meant to ensure the profitability and continuity of agricultural production. They are paid from the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF), the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and Finland's national funds. **The subsidies (in Finnish)** can be divided into direct aid financed entirely by the EU, rural development aid financed partly by the EU and wholly nationally financed aid.

Public funding for the **Rural Development Programme for Mainland Finland 2014–2020 (in Finnish)** amounted to €8.365 billion. The implementation of the programme was extended to 2021 and 2022. By the end of 2021, **the Rural Development Programme (in Finnish)** had paid a total of €6.08 billion, of which the EU contribution was €2.55 billion. By the end of 2021, a total of €2.06 billion in national

compensatory allowances and €200.6 million in agricultural investments had been paid in full, partly from the EAFRD and partly from central and local government funds. Some private funding was also used. The Rural Development Programme aimed to maintain the vitality of rural areas, improve the state of the environment, ensure sustainable use of renewable natural resources, improve animal welfare and develop competence. The Rural Development Programme included the following forms of support, among others: environmental compensation payments, organic production compensation, natural damage compensation, animal welfare payment, farm investment aid, advice aid and **business start-up support for young farmers (in Finnish)**. The annual reports of the Rural Development Programme for Mainland Finland 2015–2021 are available **here (in Finnish)**.

Implementation of the new **EU agricultural policy (in Finnish)** started from the beginning of 2023, and the support policy was also reformed. Animal agriculture subsidies include the **cattle premium, Nordic stockfarming aid for cattle, Nordic milk production aid, sheep and goat premiums, Nordic livestock aid for ewes and she-goats, decoupled payment for the pig and poultry sector** and **native breed agreement. Reindeer husbandry (all links in Finnish)** and **beekeeping** are also supported. **Organic farming payment (in Finnish)** is a form of aid for organic crop or livestock production based on a commitment to organic farming.

Investment support

Investment support (in Finnish) is divided into productive and non-productive support. Non-productive investment support is available for the initial clearing and fencing of **traditional biotopes and natural pastureland (in Finnish)** as well as for **wetland investments (in Finnish)**.

A stock farmer may receive productive **investment support (in Finnish)** for building a new livestock building or renovating an old one, for example. Agricultural investment support and the related conditions will be renewed in 2023.

Before 2023, an animal keeper was eligible for investment support for the following:

- The construction of a barn for dairy and cattle farming. As of 2019, investment aid for tie-stall cattle barns has only been granted for renovations, not for extensions.
- The construction of a piggery. The adding of new farrowing crates will be banned under the new Animal Welfare Act.
- The construction of buildings required for poultry production (in practice, buildings for broiler and turkey production).
- The construction of buildings required for sheep and goat farming.
- The construction of buildings required to breed horses. No support has been available for investments in services related to horse farming.
- Construction and the purchase of machinery and equipment required in the beekeeping sector. A condition for the support has been the recipient having at least 80 hives.
- The construction of open shelters, uninsulated animal sheds, processing buildings, manure storages and production warehouses for fur production, and the enclosing of a fur farm with fencing to prevent the animals from escaping the farm.

For investments in construction, the support has always been more than €7,000, and the maximum amount of support that can be granted over a period of three tax years is €1,500,000 per farm.

A central government guarantee has been available for barns, piggeries, production buildings for fattening poultry, sheep and goat sheds, production buildings for horse breeding, production and processing buildings for fur farming, as well as manure storages and fencing. The maximum government guarantee has been €500,000 per investment.

To safeguard the competitiveness of agriculture and investments, **support** has been provided, in addition to other types of investment, for investments in construction and the purchase of machinery or equipment to improve animal welfare. Support has been granted only if the investment would improve an existing production building instead of increasing the existing production capacity. The support level has been 35% of the costs. The support has been entirely national.

Animal welfare payment

The animal welfare payment (in Finnish) is partly funded by the EU and partly by national funds. Cattle, pig, poultry, sheep and goat farmers are eligible for the animal welfare payment. Depending on the species, the producer can choose measures that will improve the welfare of animals that go beyond the minimum requirements of animal welfare legislation. The payment will not be granted for physical investments such as the construction of a new piggery or barn. A commitment to the payment is made for a period of one year at a time.

The animal welfare payment compensates for the additional costs and loss of income incurred by farmers from the promotion of animal welfare. In the 2021 state budget, €65 million was earmarked for the animal welfare payment, of which the EU contribution was 42%. According to the government proposal for the 2022 state budget (HE 146/2021), the budget for the animal welfare payment was €85.0 million, of which the EU contribution was €47.3 million and the national contribution €37.7 million. In 2021, a total of €68 million was paid to approximately 5,900 farms. In 2021, 53% of cattle farms, 70% of pig farms, 54% of sheep and goat farms, and 71% of poultry farms were committed to animal welfare payments. The sum earmarked for animal welfare payments in the 2023 state budget is €74 million.

The animal welfare payment is available for various **measures (in Finnish)** to improve welfare such as for preparing welfare plans for cattle, pigs, sheep, goats and poultry, and for improving the conditions of calves, male cattle, sheep, goats, sows, gilts, weaned piglets, fattening pigs and poultry. Grazing is supported for sheep, goats, young stock, suckler cows and dairy cows. Support is also provided for the outdoor recreation area of cattle. Support is available for pens for calving, and for sick and nursed cattle. Aid is available for the improvement of the farrowing conditions and free farrowing of sows and gilts.

In 2018, the Government decided (in Finnish) to increase the welfare payment for free farrowing from €349 per pig livestock unit to €436 per pig livestock unit, and to allow free farrowing in only part of the farm's production. In 2023, the welfare payment for free farrowing is €555 per pig livestock unit and for improved farrowing conditions €445 per pig livestock unit. The aim is that these measures would lower the threshold for switching from cage to free farrowing. The measure on improved farrowing conditions does not require completely crate-free farrowing, and sows and gilts may be put in a crate at most two days before expected farrowing and kept in the crate up to three days after farrowing. In exceptional cases, the period in the crate may be up to seven days. The conditions for the **2023 welfare payment (in Finnish)** still include the above-mentioned improved farrowing conditions measure. In addition, the producer may opt for the free farrowing measure, where the sow must be kept free before farrowing, throughout the farrowing period and also throughout the suckling period. In addition, the free farrowing pen must have a minimum surface area of 7 m². Free farrowing as described above has been shown to improve the welfare of the sow.

Farm advice system Neuvo 2020

The Rural Development Programme for Mainland Finland 2014–2020 included the farm advice system **Neuvo 2020 (in Finnish)**, which provided farmers with advice on animal health and welfare issues. With the Neuvo2020 support, a producer could commission a farm animal health plan for their farm, for example. Health plans were prepared by veterinarians approved as advisors. **The application period for advice support for the new CAP funding period 2023–2027 (in Finnish)** has not started yet. Neuvo 2020 has been affordable for the producers, as they have only paid the VAT part of the total cost of the advice service. One farm could receive advice worth €15,000 between 2015 and 2022.

Table 3.

Number of animal welfare payment measures, number of farms and payments for 2016–2022 (source: Finnish Food Authority).

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Measures total	20,391	20,435	20,448	20,696	20,902	20,826	20,473
Measures per farm	3.18	3.29	3.36	3.43	3.52	3.55	3.60
Number of farms	6,412	6,205	6,088	6,038	5,981	5,864	5,684
Payments total, € million	52.1	56.6	58.1	61.4	65.5	71.0	Estimate 75.0

Organic production compensation

A compensation for organic production was part of the Rural Development Programme for Mainland Finland 2014–2020. In the new CAP funding period 2023–2027, **compensation for organic livestock production (in Finnish)** will be available at a rate of €160/ha + €130/0.5 livestock units/ha per year. To qualify for the compensation, the producer must make a five-year organic production commitment and the farm must be included in the scope of the organic production control system.

The conditions for organic livestock production (in Finnish) are somewhat stricter than the minimum requirements in animal welfare legislation. For example, more space and exercise are required for organically produced animals

than animals in conventional production. In 2018, compensation for organic production amounted to around €53 million. The share of compensation for organic livestock production in the above amount is not known, as the organic livestock compensation is linked to organic arable farming. Other forms of agricultural support may also be paid to organic producers in accordance with the conditions of each aid scheme.

Other programmes and projects

Food chain projects (in Finnish) boost the competence of food chain operators, responsible consumer choices and the traceability of food. Businesses and organisations can apply for aid for the development of the food chain for large-

scale national projects for the public good. The project may comprise data transfer, the provision of information, promotion or development. The target groups may include food business operators, farmers or consumers. The Finnish Food Authority is responsible for the management of the projects. The projects are funded by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. Food chain projects have also promoted animal welfare, such as the University of Helsinki **SAPARO project in 2020–2022 (in Finnish), which realised an app for pig farms (in Finnish)** for the systematic prevention of tail biting in pigs.

Information and promotion programmes for agricultural products (in Finnish) are campaigns aimed at the internal market of the EU and third countries that are eligible for EU support. The objectives are to increase product knowledge and sales, as well as to open up markets for agricultural products outside Europe.

In addition to fruit and vegetables, the products covered by these programmes may include milk and meat, as well as some products manufactured from these ingredients.

School milk schemes (in Finnish) are EU support schemes aimed at children in day care, primary education and secondary education. The support is available not only for milk and buttermilk, but also for other cultured dairy products and cheeses.

Consumption and promotion of products of animal origin

Consumption of products of animal origin

Around 45% of Finnish food expenditure in 2017 was spent on products of animal origin, i.e. meat and meat products, fish and fish products, milk, cheese and eggs (**Tietohaarukka 2018**). The corresponding share in 2021 was 36% (**Tietohaarukka 2022**). Per person, Finns consumed 79.6 kg, 79.3 kg and 79.1 kg of meat on the bone in **2019 (in Finnish), 2020 (in Finnish) and 2021** respectively (Table 4). Pork was the most popular meat: in 2019–2021, the per capita consumption of pork was 30.8 kg, 29.7 kg and 28.9 kg respectively. The consumption of poultry is increasing year by year: in 2019–2021, poultry consumption per capita was 26.4 kg, 27.5 kg and 28.4 kg, while the consumption of beef was decreasing (18.8 kg, 18.7 kg and 18.4 kg).

The consumption of other meats per capita was less than 1 kg per year. Between 2019 and 2021, total meat consumption decreased by about 0.5 kg per person. The consumption of poultry increased by 3% from 2020 to 2021, while the consumption of pork decreased by the same percentage. In 2019–2021, 15.2 kg, 15.2 kg and 14.9 kg of fish and 11.9 kg, 12.4 kg and 11.9 kg of eggs were consumed per person. Cheese consumption per person in 2019–2021 was 24.9 kg, 25.3 kg and 25.5 kg. (Natural Resources Institute Finland, Balance Sheet for Food Commodities 2021)

Table 4. Meat consumption in Finland (million kg) in 2007–2021.
Source: Natural Resources Institute Finland, Balance Sheet for Food Commodities.

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Beef	99	97	95	100	100	102	100	102	105	105	107	106
Pork	185	187	184	187	196	195	194	189	193	191	184	179
Poultry	87	92	93	97	98	103	106	110	118	129	137	141

In total, some 402, 412 and 413 million kilograms of beef, pork, poultry, sheep, reindeer and horse meat (excluding game and edible offal) were produced in Finland in 2019–2021, with pork accounting for the largest share (171, 176 and 176 million kilograms in 2019–2021). In 2021, production as a percentage of consumption, or self-sufficiency, was 110% for pork, 85% for beef, 93% for poultry, 116% for eggs and 96% for milk and liquid dairy products (**Tietohaarukka 2022**).

Plant-based products to substitute animal-based ones are increasingly entering the food market, and people are increasingly interested in reducing the amount of meat they eat or stopping eating meat altogether. The reason for the desire to stop eating meat may be personal health, the environment or animal rights. The promotion of a vegetarian diet is an important objective also at the EU level, which is being pursued through the EU's promotion policy, for example.

Dietary guidelines recommend avoiding excessive consumption of red meat (beef, pork, lamb).

According to the FinRavinto 2017 survey (in Finnish), almost 80% of Finnish men and 26% of women eat more red and processed meat than recommended, and far too few eat enough vegetables in terms of the dietary guidelines and their own health. **School meal recommendations (in Finnish)** dating back to 2017 encourage adding more vegetarian meals, fish and white meat to the school menu.

Emissions from animal agriculture and the reduction of meat consumption have become key issues in the climate debate. Changes in the dietary habits of humans affect animal welfare. Reduced meat consumption means that Finland needs fewer pigs, broilers and cattle for domestic consumption.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry has prepared a draft Climate-friendly Food Programme, which is also included in the Government Programme. The aim of the programme is to support society's transition towards a climate-sustainable food system. The Climate-friendly Food Programme was launched at the beginning of 2020, **but the political discussion on the programme is still ongoing (in Finnish)**. There is political disagreement as to the extent to which meat consumption should be reduced in Finland.

One of the objectives for the Climate-friendly Food Programme in the **Marin Government Programme (in Finnish)** is to increase the share of plant-based food in public procurement and food services. The Government Programme also aims to encourage municipalities to favour local and organic Finnish production of meat, eggs and milk. **UniCafe (in Finnish)** restaurants in Helsinki have completely stopped using beef to reduce the company's carbon footprint. The amount of vegetarian food served by the Finnish Defence Forces has also been increased.

Organic meat (in Finnish) accounted for 1% of all the meat produced in Finland in 2019–2021, and most of this was organic beef. In **2021 (in Finnish)**, organic milk accounted for 3.7% of total milk production and organic eggs for 6.8% of egg production. There were three organic broiler farms in 2019–2021. Organic fish is still not farmed in Finland, but farmed organic salmon is imported from Norway.

Marketing claims and quality management systems for products of animal origin

Animal welfare is increasingly invoked in the marketing of foods of animal origin. **The Finnish Food Authority (in Finnish)** provides guidance on how animal health and welfare claims can be used in marketing. The Food Authority has the power to prohibit a food business operator from continuing to market food products in a manner that violates food legislation. Information on animal agriculture must not be misleading, and must be truthful and understandable to the average consumer. According to the Food Authority, claims relating to animal health, welfare and farming must be factual claims that can be proven.

The general basic requirement in all keeping of animals is that the animals must be treated well and the minimum requirements of animal welfare legislation must always be met. Marketing may include information on production methods and characteristics that distinguish the product from other similar products. The Food Authority recommends that any welfare requirements that go beyond the legal requirements and are used in marketing should be based on quality management systems, as this allows for verification of compliance with the requirements. Examples of quality systems include certified quality management systems for the specific industry and national quality systems for the food chain.

National animal welfare labeling

Finland started the **development** of national animal welfare labelling in 2017, when Natural Resources Institute Finland, Pellervo economic research PTT and operators in the industry prepared a proposal for animal welfare labelling criteria for products of animal origin. To be included in food packaging, the welfare label would describe the production method and the quality of the product from an animal welfare perspective. The label would improve the lives of farm animals and offer consumers information on animal welfare to support their choices. It would give the producer the opportunity to improve the production and to receive equitable remuneration for their efforts. To qualify for the label, an animal agriculture farm would have to meet certain criteria.

The plan was to base the welfare labelling on a number of criteria including preventive health care, good conditions and good treatment and handling of animals. The animals would need to be able to move freely without any confinement and, in some cases, also to graze or otherwise spend time outdoors. The planned three-tier labelling system would allow the gradual development of the farm and the achievement of a sufficiently large volume on the market. An independent audit and systematic improvement of welfare would be emphasised. The proposed scheme could be used by the meat processing and dairy industries, egg packing plants, the food trade, authorities, non-governmental organisations and farmers, among others.

The introduction of the label requires transparency and proactivity from the industry. Companies must have an incentive to sign up for the labelling, while consumers must be prepared to pay for the better welfare of animals in the price of the product. Driven by the market, the premium would have to be used to cover the costs incurred by the various parties. According to a survey, 76% of Finns felt positive about the opportunity to buy products with an animal welfare label, and some consumers were also willing to pay more for the increased welfare. In a **product trial (in Finnish)** in autumn 2020, many consumers gave positive feedback on the animal welfare label.

The national animal welfare label **ELVI (in Finnish)** was published in spring 2023. The overall welfare of animals on farms producing ELVI-labelled products is regularly verified by an independent third party using the international **WelfareQuality® (in Finnish)** system. ELVI will first be introduced for dairy products. ELVI is managed by **Finwelfare Oy (in Finnish)**.

EU animal welfare labelling

As a result of stricter requirements, animal welfare is also becoming an EU priority. The Commission is planning **EU-wide animal welfare labelling**. The objective is to prepare a legislative proposal for EU animal welfare labelling for food produced in accordance with animal welfare standards that are stricter than the EU minimum legislation. The Commission has published a **study** on animal welfare labelling. Among other things, the study collected information on existing labelling schemes in the EU that include animal welfare claims, as well as analysed consumers' awareness of animal welfare standards.

The purpose with common animal welfare labelling in the EU is to improve the welfare of as many farm animals as possible. It has been estimated that labelling would increase market credibility and transparency and allow consumers to make more informed choices. It would also help reward producers who comply with the labelling requirements.

It would be important for the labelling to go beyond the current requirements of the EU on animal welfare, to progressively include all species of livestock at all stages of their lives (including transport and slaughter) and to ensure seamless interaction with existing labels, says the Council of the European Union in its **conclusions**.

Operators in the field of animal welfare

Finland's second **Animal Welfare Ombudsman** started her work on the promotion of animal welfare on 1 September 2020. The establishment of the post was included in the 2019 Government Programme. The Animal Welfare Ombudsman operates under the Finnish Food Authority, but as an independent and autonomous body. The post will be temporary until the end of 2023.

Established in 2009 under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, **the Finnish farm animal welfare council (in Finnish)** will continue in its fifth three-year term from 2022 to 2025. In recent years, the council has commented on **the draft Animal Welfare Act (in Finnish)** and given a joint statement with other animal advisory councils **on the breeding and use of insects (in Finnish)** in Finland. The advisory council has published opinions on matters such as **the surgical castration of male piglets, the safeguarding of basic veterinary services (in Finnish)**, and **the availability of bedding and the welfare of beef cattle (in Finnish)**.

The Finnish companion and hobby animal welfare council (in Finnish) was established under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in 2010. The council is currently in its fourth three-year term from 2021 to 2024. During its current term, the advisory council has given its opinion on **the draft Animal Welfare Act and Acts amending certain related Acts (in Finnish)** as well as **the Government Proposal on the Veterinary Services Act (Eläinlääkintähuoltolaki 285/2023) and related Acts (in Finnish)**. The council for the welfare of companion and hobby animals has given a joint statement with other animal advisory councils **on the breeding and use of insects in (in Finnish)** Finland and also commented on **the harm of the use of fireworks (in Finnish)**, **making the post of Animal Welfare Ombudsman permanent (in Finnish)** and **on the use of live target animals in field tests for cave dogs (in Finnish)**.

The Finnish council for the protection of animals used for scientific or educational purposes (in Finnish) started its work in 2013 and is in its second five-year term. The council's objective is to promote the principles of avoiding animal experiments altogether (Replacement) and of limiting the number of animals (Reduction) and their suffering (Refinement) in tests to an absolute minimum (the 3R principle). The council operates under the Regional State Administrative Agency for Southern Finland. The council was the initiator of the joint statement by the animal welfare councils **on the breeding and use of insects in Finland (in Finnish)**.

The Finnish Centre for Animal Welfare (EHK) operated from 2009 to 2016 in connection with the University of Helsinki Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and was transferred to Natural Resources Institute Finland at the beginning of 2017. EHK is an independent national network of experts for the dissemination of research information on animal welfare and the promotion of animal welfare with its own communication system and website elaintieto.fi. EHK acts as secretary to the councils for the welfare of farm animals and the welfare of companion and hobby animals. In addition, EHK is the scientific contact point designated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in accordance with Article 20 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing.

During the term of the Marin Government, the chair of the parliamentary group on animal welfare was Jenni Pitko (The Green League) and the vice chair was Mia Laiho (National Coalition Party). Ongoing animal welfare matters in Parliament can be followed by searching for the keywords of your choice on the **Parliament website**.

Suomen eläinoikeusjuristit ry (the Finnish Animal Lawyers' Association) is a non-profit organisation working for the recognition of fundamental animal rights and the inclusion of animal rights in the Constitution of Finland alongside human rights.

Promotion of human welfare through animals

The promotion of human welfare through assistance animals is a growing industry. There are assistance animals of many species, the most popular being dogs, cats and horses. Animals can be used in a variety of ways. Animal-assisted activities include therapeutic riding and equine-assisted social education. The welfare of the assistance animal must always be ensured; for example, the animal must be given sufficient time to recover from its work. Not all species and individuals are well suited for assistance animals.

Green Care refers to professional activity related to nature and the rural environment that promotes human welfare and people's quality of life. **Green Care Finland** is an association that works to coordinate, develop and promote the use of nature and animal assisted methods in combination with welfare and health services in Finland. The association's website lists **publications related to methods of animal assisted care.**

EU animal welfare policy

The starting point of the EU animal welfare policy is Article 13 of the Lisbon Treaty, which recognises animals as sentient beings. As a result, animals must be treated in a way that does not cause them unnecessary suffering. This approach applies to animals in human care, such as farm animals, animals in transport and animals taken for slaughter.

The European Commission is due to present **a proposal on a revision of the animal welfare legislation** by the end of 2023. The aim is to modernise the EU's animal welfare regulations based on research knowledge on animal welfare, broaden the scope of the regulations, facilitate their implementation and thus ensure a higher level of animal welfare. The revision of EU's animal welfare legislation will be preceded by a number of studies, including **a fitness check**. The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) will provide the European Commission with research-based reports on animal welfare to support the legislative reform.

The European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE) is responsible **animal welfare issues**, except for laboratory animals. The welfare of laboratory animals is the responsibility of the Directorate-General for Environment (DG ENV).

The EU Platform on Animal Welfare that brings these bodies together was established in 2017. The European Union also has three **Reference Centres for animal welfare.**

The 2017 report **Animal Welfare in the European Union**, commissioned by the European Parliament, concludes that EU animal welfare policy and legislation have had much positive influence on the image of the EU and global animal welfare. However, most kinds of animals kept in the EU are not covered by legislation, which means that a general animal welfare law and specific laws on several species are needed.

Measures by the **European Parliament** in the field of animal welfare can be followed on its website. One of the oldest internal groups in the European Parliament is **the European Parliament's Intergroup on the Welfare and Conservation of Animals**. The group was formerly chaired for a long time by Sirpa Pietikäinen (EPP), a Finnish MEP who has been active in the group for many years and is Honorary President of the European Parliament Intergroup on Animal Welfare.

As part of the **European Green Deal**, the **From Farm to Fork** strategy to increase the sustainability of food chains and the **Biodiversity Strategy** to protect biodiversity

have been published. The strategies combine the perspectives of nature, agricultural producers, businesses and consumers.

The From Farm to Fork strategy aims to change the manner in which food is produced, distributed and consumed. It is the EU's first comprehensive food policy strategy that covers both producers and consumers of food. The strategy aims to increase environmentally sustainable farming practices and organic production, reduce the use of pesticides, fertilisers and antibiotics, improve consumer awareness of sustainable food choices and reduce food waste at the EU level. These objectives are pursued through 27 concrete measures.

For example, an increase of at least 25% in the area used for organic farming and a significant increase in the share of organic fish farming are planned. The use of antibiotics in livestock and fish farming is to be cut in half.

In 2012–2015, the EU had the second animal welfare strategy in its history to improve animal welfare. At the request of the European Court of Auditors, the Commission has evaluated the strategy and **published** its evaluation. The Commission investigated the effectiveness of the strategy, the achievement of the objectives and whether the objectives are still relevant.

Abandoning cage farming

The European Commission and Parliament have backed the European citizens' initiative **End the Cage Age** to ban the cage farming of laying hens, layer breeders, breeding hens, broiler breeders, quail, ducks, geese, rabbits, sows and calves by 2027. The initiative did not take a position on the cage farming of fur animals, as there is no EU legislation on this issue. However, the EU citizens' initiative **Fur Free Europe** has called for an end to fur farming, and signatures for this initiative were collected until the end of February 2023.

The think tank **Institute for European Environmental Policy** has produced the report **Financing the cage-free farming transition in Europe**.

Conclusions of the European Council on animal welfare

In December 2019, the EU Agriculture Council adopted **conclusions on animal welfare** by the Council of the European Union, prepared under the leadership of Finland, as an integral part of sustainable animal agriculture. The conclusions state that existing EU legislation must be updated to take into account the latest research, in particular on the long-distance transport of animals, the welfare of adult cattle, the sale of dogs and cats, and the slaughter of animals. The unanimously signed conclusions have political weight even though they are not legally binding.

Most Member States were of the opinion that the animal welfare legislation at the EU level is not comprehensive enough and that it needs to be improved. For example, there is currently no common EU legislation on the keeping and farming of adult cattle, broiler breeders, sheep, goats, dogs and cats.

An update of the legislation was requested as regards the transport and slaughter of live animals in particular. Long-distance transport of animals from the EU to third countries has been an especial cause for concern. Instead of transporting live animals, it would be better to slaughter the animals in the country of origin and transport the meat.

In addition to the development of common legislation, the conclusions call on the Commission to take action to promote animal welfare on a voluntary basis. Animal welfare quality management systems, such as a welfare labelling system visible for product packages, would be one way to voluntarily improve animal welfare.

There is still work to be done on the harmonisation of compliance with the current legislation, as the Member States interpret the community laws in different ways. To harmonise the interpretations and share good practices between the Member States, three Reference Centres for animal welfare have been established, one to promote the welfare of pigs, one for poultry and other small farm animals and one for ruminants and equines. In the Council conclusions, the Member States express their support for the operation of the existing and future reference centres.

The conclusions call on the Commission to do everything possible to contribute to animal welfare outside the EU as well. The Member States want the EU to keep animal welfare at the forefront of its international trade negotiations. The Commission is also expected to prepare a new EU strategy on animal welfare.

International animal welfare policy

The World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH, formerly OIE) has made animal welfare part of its work since the early 2000s. In 2017, the organisation published its own **Global Animal Welfare Strategy**. The WOAH Working Group on Animal Welfare meets annually. The Working Group's meeting reports and other animal welfare publications are available on the **WOAH website**.

World Animal Protection has ranked 50 countries in the world according to how each country addresses animal welfare in its policies and regulations. Countries can be compared on the **Animal Protection Index** website. Finland is not included in the index.

Business Benchmark on Farm Animal Welfare

Created by two major animal welfare organisations (**Compassion in World Farming** and **World Animal Protection**), **Business Benchmark on Farm Animal Welfare (BBFAW)** is a tool to assess corporate responsibility and performance in the field of farm animal welfare. The aim is to promote the welfare of animals raised for food. BBFAW measures and compares companies' performance in the field of animal welfare, as well as their commitment and practices to promote and communicate information on animal welfare. It is a tool for investors, companies, non-governmental organisations and other stakeholders to better understand corporate practice and accountability of companies in animal agriculture and animal welfare issues.

The most recent **report** from 2020 analyses the performance of 150 of the world's largest food companies with a set of objective criteria. The report indicates that animal welfare is a business priority and area for improvement in the food industry, and that progress is being made all the time, but the impact on animal welfare is often poorly understood and under-reported. The animal agriculture and processing sectors are performing better than the trade sector and the restaurant industry due to their better animal welfare management and reporting. Sustainability reporting is currently needed particularly in South America and the Far East where major players in international meat production operate.



Visiting author

Image 27:
Luke/Eetu Ahonen

Visiting author: Leena Suojala

Role of animal welfare in agricultural policy is growing.

Policies and economic constraints affect animal welfare in many ways. Animal welfare is increasingly important in the complex system of agricultural policy in both Finland and the EU. The formulation of policies on animal welfare is of great importance when assessing the operating conditions for livestock farming and the guidance and support measures required by the industry, writes the visiting author Leena Suojala, an expert from the Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners (MTK).

Animal welfare policy plays an increasingly important role

For a livestock farmer, the choice of farming method is both a value judgment – a conscious choice to work with animals – and a business choice. The livestock farming must be profitable enough to leave the producer with enough money to run the business. This basic principle is not always mentioned in the social debate on the improvement of animal welfare, the giving up of meat and the questioning of the utilisation of animals. Domestic and global production are often

considered the same.

Finnish livestock production is not intensive by global standards, even though it is efficient.

When it comes to the economy, it's easy to count euros together with the other EU Member States in the name of free trade and the free movement of goods. For politics, on the other hand, there are no such hard indicators. Politics is all about impressions, opinions, values, influence and compromise. However, the broad political lines that are drawn in society matter when assessing the operating conditions and profitability of livestock farming, and what kind of policy or support measures could be used in the industry.

Entries on animals in the Government Programme and their implementation

There were a few concrete objectives for livestock farming in the 2019 Government Programme: The rationale for the Animal Welfare Act, which has already been at the final stages of processing in Parliament once, would be supplemented with the intrinsic value of animals, and the expression of animals' natural behaviours would be better allowed.

In addition, implementation of animal welfare legislation would be improved and video surveillance in slaughterhouses would be stepped up.

The post of Animal Welfare Ombudsman would be established in Seinäjoki. The programme also included the establishment of an expert working group to determine how the goal of the pig husbandry industry discontinuing the use of farrowing crates could be supported. Another entry concerned surgical castration of pigs and the possibility of abolishing it or ensuring adequate pain relief in connection with surgical castration.

Another entry on animal health and welfare was about continuing to keep the use of antibiotics at a low level and to keep Finland salmonella-free. To promote sustainable production methods and reduce the overuse of antibiotics, the Government promised to look into the possibility of adopting an antibiotic tax for animal products. Measures would be taken to combat serious animal diseases and the animal disease insurance premium tax would be abolished. In addition, the Government promised to establish a national animal disease fund with farmers and the food industry. Legislation on veterinary services would also be amended to ensure that the responsibility for organising 24-hour on-call duty in veterinary services would continue to rest with the public sector.

Assessing the implementation of the Government Programme now, in spring 2021, it's quite clear that nearly all of these measures have been or are being implemented. Circulation of the draft Animal Welfare Act for comments is about to start: the Ministry has promised that the process will start in spring 2021. Animal Welfare Ombudsman Saara Kupsala has started her work. The working group on free farrowing has issued its final report, and measures for the animal welfare payment scheme are being prepared on the basis of the report. Options for surgical castration are being discussed by the Finnish farm animal welfare council. Controlled use of antibiotics and a reduction in the need to use medication will be priorities in the preparation of animal welfare payment measures for the coming programme period. The objective of the working group on the animal disease fund is to submit a presentation to the Ministry before the summer.

The Veterinary Services Act (Eläinlääkintähuoltolaki 765/2009) will be reformed with the aim of ensuring continued access to emergency and basic veterinary services for all domesticated animals. Managed by Natural Resources Institute Finland, the animal welfare labelling project has progressed as planned, and the final report is about to be published.

Are there any new means to promote animal welfare?

Animal welfare is one aspect of sustainability and quality. Finnish livestock farming has chosen high quality as its production strategy and, according to studies, enjoys the trust of consumers. However, politics is always about compromise. The pandemic taught us a lesson about the importance of security of supply and domestic food production.

It's up to the producer to decide what kind of investments they will make in the short or long term. Will they renovate buildings, invest in technology, abandon farrowing crates or tie stall cattle barns, or completely change the direction of production or the farming method? These are huge questions for the producer and for the future of the farm, and they are not to be made lightly: there must be a vision for the future. The promotion of animal welfare is one of the forward-looking choices to which the industry is already strongly committed and which society has been willing to support through various measures. The same trend can be seen in the rest of Europe, although the other countries are lagging behind Finland.

Text by Leena Suojala, Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners (MTK)

Leena Suojala's interview on YouTube.

REGULATION OF ANIMAL WELFARE



Image 28. Photo by Olli Leino

REGULATION OF ANIMAL WELFARE

(Published on 26 November 2021)

The new Animal Welfare Act, which has been in preparation since 2010, will enter into force at the beginning of 2024. Key changes to the Animal Welfare Act dating back to 1996 include new provisions on reducing the confinement of sows and gilts in crates, the sale of puppies and kittens and the breeding of animals, as well as a requirement on continuous availability of drinking water. In addition to the long preparation of

the Animal Welfare Act, a number of national laws and regulations affecting animal welfare have been enacted in recent years. EU animal welfare regulations are also being amended. The Commission has promised a proposal for new EU animal welfare legislation by the end of 2023. This section of Animal Welfare in Finland III examines the changes in animal welfare legislation since 2016.

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Introduction

Preparation of the new Animal Welfare Act started in 2010, and Finnish Parliament passed the Act just before the pre-election break in early March 2023. The new Animal Welfare Act will enter into force at the beginning of 2024. It includes new provisions on matters such as reducing the confinement of sows and gilts in crates, the sale of puppies and kittens and the breeding of animals, as well as a requirement on continuous availability of drinking water to birds and mammals.

Not many new regulations affecting animal welfare were enacted during the preparation of the Animal Welfare Act, i.e. in 2017–2022. Some national animal welfare regulations are renewed every year, such as the animal welfare payment provisions and the provisions on the hunting of certain animal species. The limited amount of new or renewed animal welfare legislation during this period concerns Finland and also the European Union, where a comprehensive reform of the EU animal welfare legislation is currently under preparation.

The reformation of animal welfare legislation to better promote animal welfare often requires changes in farming practices, new skills and investments. Some of the tightening animal welfare requirements demand a financial contribution from the livestock producer; on the other hand, other reforms benefit the livestock producer's economy through improved health and welfare of the animals. For investments required by legislation, such as the construction of a new barn, pig or poultry building, the producer can receive financial support.

This section of the report reviews changes in animal welfare legislation from 2017 onwards. For unchanged data, reference is made to the sections on legislation in the previous Animal Welfare in Finland reports, **I** and **II**.

Directory F (in Finnish) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry on animals, food and health includes links to up-to-date animal welfare regulations. All up-to-date Finnish Acts can be found by searching with the name or number of the Act in the **FINLEX**[®] data bank. Legal texts and other public documents of the European Union are published in all 23 official languages in **EUR-Lex**. In Finland, the implementation of the old and new Animal Welfare Act, as well as the oversight of animal welfare control by the authorities, are the responsibility of the **food department** of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

The authors of this section are Satu Raussi, Principal Specialist, and Tiina Kauppinen, Senior Specialist, from the Finnish Centre for Animal Welfare.

New Animal Welfare Act to enter into force from the beginning of 2024

The preparation of the comprehensive reform of the Animal Welfare Act was started by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in 2009. In autumn 2012, the Ministry established a steering committee and a working group to prepare a proposal for the new Animal Welfare Act. The objectives were to ensure compliance of the partly obsolete Animal Welfare Act (247/1996) (in Finnish) with the requirements of the current Constitution of Finland and to clarify animal welfare legislation.

Such a major reform project will influence many areas of society. Throughout the reform project, citizens have had the opportunity to provide feedback to the legislators via the Ministry's website. The term of the working group on the legislative reform ended at the end of 2014, but the term of the steering committee was extended until the end of 2015. After that, the preparation of the Act continued as part of the regular duties of the authorities until Parliament adopted the Act on 1 March 2023. The new Animal Welfare Act will enter into force at the beginning of 2024.

Intent of the Animal Welfare Act

The purposes of the Animal Welfare Act are to promote the welfare of animals and to protect animals from any harm in the best possible way. It also aims to promote respect and good treatment of animals. The general principle of the Act is that animals must be treated well and with respect. Animals must not be subjected to any undue pain and suffering, and their welfare must not be unnecessarily compromised. The Act applies to all animals.

The general principles of the new Act include that animals must be kept and cared for in a manner that allows them to fulfil their essential behavioural needs regarding exercise, rest, comfort, foraging or similar activities and social relationships. An animal in human care must not be neglected or abandoned. Preventive measures to prevent disease and injury to animals must be taken, and appropriate treatment must be provided in the event of any disease or injury.

The new Animal Welfare Act (Laki eläinten hyvinvoinnista) will therefore replace the current Animal Welfare Act (Eläinsuojelulaki) and Animal Welfare Decree (Eläinsuojeluasetus). **The Government Proposal on the Animal Welfare Act (in Finnish)** was circulated for comments on two occasions, for the first time in 2018 and again at the turn of 2021–2022. Completion of the Act was part of the Government Programme of Prime Minister Sanna Marin's Government.

Current Animal Welfare Act obliges to take into account the needs of animals

The purpose of the currently valid Animal Welfare Act (247/1996) is to protect animals from distress, pain and suffering in the best possible way. The Act also aims to promote the welfare and good treatment of animals. The health of animals must be maintained when keeping them, and their physiological and behavioural needs must be taken into account.

In the rationale for the Animal Welfare Act:

- Suffering refers to any mental or physical sensations experienced by an animal that adversely affect its welfare or health.
- Pain refers to physical pain felt by an animal and distress to mental distress, anxiety, fear or any similar unpleasant feeling experienced by an animal.
- Physiological needs of an animal refer to the needs based on the animal's body and its proper functioning such as the need to obtain adequate and appropriate nutrition and exercise.
- Behavioural needs of an animal refer to the ability of the animal to behave in a manner typical of the species or breed to a sufficient degree.

Future changes to the new Animal Welfare Act

Keeping cattle in tie stalls still allowed – 30 extra days added to exercise requirement

The new Act will affect the habitat of cattle by prohibiting the construction and use of new tie stall cattle barns. Hardly any tie stall cattle barns have been built in recent years anyway, as no investment aid is available for the construction of a new tie stall cattle barn. Dairy cows and heifers may still be kept in tie stall cattle barns for milk production, but the cows and heifers must be allowed to exercise for at least 90 days a year instead of the previously required 60 days.

In new free-range barns, cows and heifers will be able to smell outdoor air more often, as a promise has been made that investment support will only be available for free-range barns including a paddock or pasture. This provision is not included in the Animal Welfare Act, however, but an upcoming decree of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry on subsidised dairy cattle construction.

Image 29. The construction of new tie stall cattle barns will be banned, and investment aid for the construction of free-stall barns will be conditional on the cows and heifers being allowed to go outside.
Photo by Olli Leino.



Ban on new farrowing crates

In terms of the habitat of pigs, the draft law clearly takes a step forward for animal welfare: no fixed farrowing crates will be allowed in new or old piggeries after the law enters into force. However, using existing farrowing crates until the end of their service life will be allowed, and there will be no transition period for their use.

Surgical castration of pigs will be abandoned after a transition period of 12 years. Once the Act enters into force, painkillers will be mandatory for surgical castration, and after a four-year transition period, in addition to painkillers, male piglets must be anaesthetised for surgical castration.

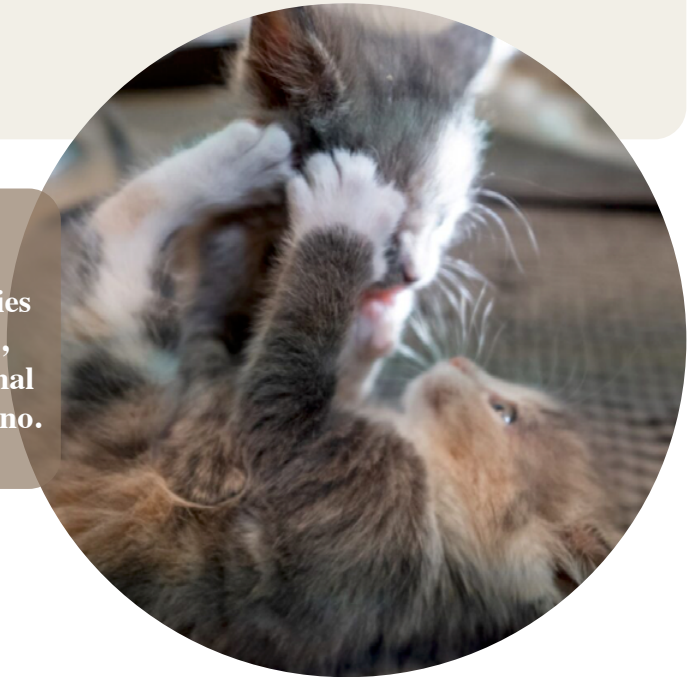
The possibility to assess the welfare of pigs at the slaughterhouse is also included in the new Act. Many indicators, including ones on the welfare of pigs, are already used at slaughterhouses under the meat inspection regulations.

Stricter requirements for trade of kittens and puppies

The Act will offer new tools for the improvement of the welfare of cats and dogs. Importing kittens and puppies under the age of six months to be sold within four months of their importation will not be allowed. In the future, a sales ad for cats and dogs will have to include the animal's country of birth, age and location, as well as the registration number of the professional seller.

Veterinarians will have to report procedures on dogs and cats performed because of hereditary defects. The reporting obligation is linked to stricter animal breeding regulations, and the report must be submitted to a new dog and cat register.

Image 30. The aim of the regulation restricting the trade in kittens and puppies is to prevent puppy farms, which are a threat to animal welfare. Photo by Olli Leino.



Water buffalo as meat-producing animal in positive list

The new draft law will be accompanied by a list of bird and mammal species that can be kept as farm animals, circus animals or in travelling exhibitions. The purpose of these provisions is to ensure that only animals which can be practically kept in the manner required by law will be kept for these purposes. Virtually all species currently kept as farm animals were included in the list.

Compared to the previous 2018 government proposal, the water buffalo was added to the list of permitted farm animals, but only for meat production purposes, not for milk production. Provisions on permitted species of companion and hobby animals will probably be enacted at a later stage with separate decrees.

New and reformed welfare regulations on the horizon

With the introduction of the new Animal Welfare Act, there will be a need to reform a number of government decrees on the welfare of different animal species. New animal welfare-related regulations will also be introduced, such as a decree on procedures on animals and animal breeding.

A reform of the **Government Decree on the Protection of Fur Animals (Valtioneuvoston asetus turkiseläinten suojelusta 1084/2011) (in Finnish)** has been a long time in the making. A reform was already promised during the processing on the rejected Turkistarhaton Suomi (Fur Free Finland) citizens' initiative in Parliament in 2013. Almost ten years have passed since this, the first citizens' initiative processed in Parliament, but the Government Decree on the Protection of Fur Animals has yet to be reformed.

No provisions on liability for transport of found animals

The previous government proposal for the Animal Welfare Act included the transport of found animals to a place of recovery at the expense of the county. The planned regional government reform fell through, however, and the new Act does not make the transport of found animals

the duty of any entity. The desire was not to cause municipalities to incur any costs from the transport of found animals. The obligation to keep found animals was nevertheless restored from the 10 days envisaged in the draft law to the current 15 days.

Regulatory control of animal welfare may be transferred to wellbeing services counties

In the future, regulatory control of animal welfare may be handled by wellbeing services counties instead of municipalities. In 2021, the transfer of environmental healthcare duties from municipalities to wellbeing services counties was proposed in a parliamentary study on regional government and multisectoral counties.

Read more about the new Animal Welfare Act:

- [On the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry website](#)
- [On the Library of Parliament website](#)
- [In the blog of the Finnish Centre for Animal Welfare](#)

New animal welfare regulations since 2016

Identification and registration of dogs and cats

The identification and registration of dogs was regulated by decree **1/2021 (in Finnish)** of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, which will enter into force at the beginning of 2023. The Act on the Identification and Registration of Animals (Laki eläinten tunnistamisesta ja rekisteröinnistä 1069/2021) allows for the extension of the identification and registration obligation to other species after dogs. A decree on compulsory identification and registration of cats is promised for 2026.

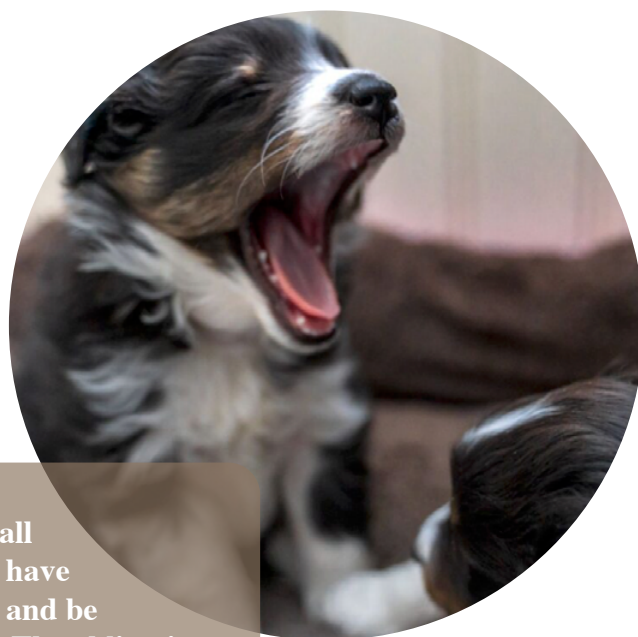


Image 31.
In future, all dogs must have microchip and be registered. The obligation will be later expanded to cats.
Photo by Olli Leino.

Amendment to the Animal Transport Act

Several positive amendments to the Animal Transport Act (**1429/2006 (in Finnish)**) were made in 2021. The Act now requires a route plan for long-distance transport of fur animals and reindeer outside Finland. The route plan ensures that the planned transport is feasible from the animal welfare perspective.

The amendment gave Finnish Customs the power to control animal transport. Previously, the role of Customs in the control of animal transport was to provide official assistance. It is hoped that Customs control will help to reduce the illegal trade of puppies.

The Animal Transport Act also provides for the possibility of issuing a decree by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry on the requirements for the fitness of transported animals in transport within Finland. Decree **850/2022** of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry on the fitness for transport of calves in commercial transport was prepared on this basis. According to the decree, calves must be at least ten days old for transport of less than 100 km.

Amendment of legislation on laboratory animals

The Act on the Protection of Animals Used for Scientific or Educational Purposes (497/2013) (in Finnish) is meant to ensure that animals are kept and used for scientific or educational purposes only for necessary and important reasons. Further, the purpose of the Act is to ensure that only a minimum number of animals are used and that minimum pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm is caused to them. The Act applies when using or breeding live cephalopods or vertebrates for scientific or educational purposes and when breeding such animals for the supply of their organs or tissues for scientific or educational purposes.

Government Decree on the Protection of Animals Used for Scientific or Educational Purposes (564/2013) (in Finnish), was adopted in 2013. Together with the Act, it implements the EU Directive on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes. A key purpose of the Directive is to improve the care and use of live animals for scientific purposes based on the established principles of replacement, reduction and refinement (3R).

In spring 2020, the Government submitted a proposal to Parliament on an amendment of the Act and Government Decree on the Protection of Animals Used for Scientific or Educational Purposes. The proposal was based on the EU Commission's formal notice to Finland in 2019 about inadequate implementation of the Directive on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes. In its response to the Commission, the Finnish Government committed to amending the national legislation largely as requested by the Commission.

Foetuses of birds and reptiles covered by legislation on animals used for scientific or educational purposes

Other amendments to the national legislation were simultaneously implemented. According to current research, the foetuses of at least some species of birds and reptiles have the ability to experience pain during the last trimester. The scope of the Act was therefore extended to also cover such foetuses during the last trimester.

Taking into account the species-specific needs of animals and the promotion of their health and welfare are of paramount importance not only in scientific experiments, but also during the breeding of animals (e.g. in the maintenance of populations). That is why the principle of improving animal welfare was extended to cover not only scientific and educational purposes but also the breeding, keeping and care of animals.

An obligation to the operator of scientific experiments on animals to prepare a plan of action in the event of an incident compromising animal welfare was enacted, because experimental animal establishments breed and maintain large numbers of animals, which means that incidents can influence the welfare of a large numbers of individuals. The possibility to temporarily interrupt the experiments on animals if there is reason to suspect that the welfare of the animals has been compromised and the situation cannot be remedied sufficiently quickly or with sufficient certainty by any other measures was also added. Additional legislative amendments of an indirect or technical nature affecting animal welfare were made in the same connection.

Legislative amendments concerning wild animals

The purpose of the Animal Welfare Act – to protect animals from distress, pain and suffering in the best possible way – also applies to wild animals. Provisions that have a major impact on the welfare of wild animals can be found in legislation on hunting, fishing, animal welfare, nature conservation and invasive alien species. There is a large body of legislation on the welfare of wild animals, but managing the whole is challenging.

Invasive alien species must also be protected from avoidable pain

Regulation **1143/2014 (in Finnish)** of the European Parliament and of the Council on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species sets out the rules on invasive alien species at the EU level. The Regulation lays down measures for Member States to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species within the EU. Several subordinate **regulations (in Finnish)** have been adopted under the Regulation.

Article 19 of the Regulation states the following on the prevention and control of the introduction and spread of harmful invasive species: *When applying management measures and selecting methods to be used, Member States shall have due regard to human health and the environment, especially non-targeted species and their habitats, and shall ensure that, when animals are targeted, they are spared any avoidable pain, distress or suffering, without compromising the effectiveness of the management measures.*

According to paragraph (25) of the Regulation, *“management measures should avoid any adverse impact on the environment as well as on human health. Eradicating and managing some animal invasive alien species, while necessary in some cases, may induce pain, distress, fear or other forms of suffering to the animals, even when using the best available technical means. For that reason, Member States and any operator involved in the eradication, control or containment of*

invasive alien species should take the necessary measures to spare avoidable pain, distress and suffering of animals during the process, taking into account as far as possible the best practices in the field, for example the Guiding Principles on Animal Welfare developed by the World Organisation for Animal Health.”



Image 32. The mink is an invasive alien species in Finland. It is not protected, and passing of the hunting examination is not a requirement to hunt it. Photo by flickr.com/Eli Braker.

Room for improvement in regulations on hunting of invasive species

Regulations on the capturing and killing of invasive alien species are complex and unclear, and pose welfare risks to both invasive and other species, which can become by-catch, for example. Raccoon dogs cause damage to avifauna, particularly in wetlands.

For this reason, hunting raccoon dogs, especially in archipelago areas, in late winter before the birth of their young is advisable, according to **Ehdotus haitallisten vieraslajien hallintasuunnitelmaksi ja leviämistäylyä koskevaksi toimintasuunnitelmaksi (in Finnish)** (Proposal for an action plan on the management of invasive alien species and their spreading routes). According to the proposal, intensive hunting of raccoon dogs will attract more raccoon dogs to the area, which will make the raccoon dog population increase its reproduction rate.

The risk posed by raccoon dogs as potential spreaders of rabies and parasites, the fox tapeworm in particular, is also significant. The only effective way to control rabies is to use **vaccine baits (in Finnish)**. The use of vaccine baits is in line with the **Regulation on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species (in Finnish)**, as they do not cause the animals any pain, suffering or distress.

In recent years, amendments concerning invasive alien species have also been made in the Hunting Act and the Hunting Decree. Previously, the Hunting Act (**611/1993 (in Finnish)**) listed the raccoon dog (an invasive species throughout the EU) and the mink (an invasive species in Finland) as game animals, but they were removed from the list in the 2019 Hunting Act to facilitate and boost their hunting.

The raccoon dog and mink are now subject to the regulations on the capturing and killing of unprotected animals. This is provided for in the Act on Managing the Risks Caused by Alien Species (**1709/2015 (in Finnish)**). When hunting raccoon dogs and minks, the use of methods prohibited in the case of the hunting of game species, artificial light, electronic sighting devices and sound-producing mechanical devices is allowed.

Immediately lethal traps pose serious welfare risks

Immediately lethal traps set on the ground may also be used to catch minks. The use of traps is not regulated in terms of time or location, and their

user is not required to have the skills obtained by passing the hunting examination. There is no prior approval for traps in Finland and they can be purchased at a low price. There is no certainty about the quality and effectiveness of traps as an instantly lethal trapping method. It is also possible to trap raccoon dogs without having passed the hunting examination, but catching raccoon dogs and larger invasive species with traps is prohibited by Government Decree on Managing the Risk Caused by Alien Species (**704/2019 (in Finnish)**).

According to the Hunting Decree (**666/1993 (in Finnish)**), a trap for the capture of animals live must be checked on at least a daily basis. However, an instantly lethal trap does not have to be checked daily; the checking interval may be as long as two weeks. An instantly lethal trap may not kill the animal immediately, which may cause the caught animal undue pain, suffering and distress. According to a New Zealand **study**, there are major differences in the effectiveness and lethality of traps meant to kill instantly.

Prolonged death of an animal caught in a trap which, contrary to expectations, does not kill the animal immediately, is not acceptable in terms of animal welfare or from an ethical point of view. A trap that has been set in the wild need not include any marking indicating the person who set it. However, the landowner's permission to set traps must be obtained. An improperly set trap poses a high risk of animals for which the trap is not intended falling victim to it. The use of potentially inadequately fitted mink traps has become a subject of debate following media reports in recent years of a number of bears that have been caught in a trap and had to be killed as a result.

Concerns about the deterioration of animal welfare are also raised by the fact that anyone can catch invasive species. When passing of the hunting examination is not a requirement, there is a risk that the catcher's ineptitude will cause undue pain or suffering to the target animal. Passing of the hunting examination involves identifying species of animals, learning how to kill them and familiarising oneself with the ethical rules of hunting.

Invasive species have no nesting peace – the muskrat’s nesting peace was also abolished

In general, game animals are subject to a temporary closed season as laid down in the Hunting Decree (666/1993) (in Finnish), which is timed to coincide with the breeding and nesting season. The closed season under the Hunting Decree for female raccoon dogs, raccoons, nutrias and minks, followed by their offspring of the same year, previously covered the months of May, June and July.

The abovementioned species are now classified as invasive alien species and thus unprotected animals with no closed season during the nesting season. This means that they can be caught and killed at any time of the year, including the breeding season. The same applies to the muskrat, whose nesting restrictions were abolished by the Hunting Decree. **The proposal for an action plan on the management of invasive alien species and their spreading routes states that there is a lack of accurate information (in Finnish)** on the size of the muskrat population in Finland. However, the population appears to be rather fragmented and small in terms of the number of individuals, and the hunting catch of muskrats in 2017 was fairly low. Therefore, the removal of the closed season for the nesting of the muskrat from the Hunting Decree cannot be considered appropriate from an animal welfare perspective.

Killing the mother of dependent nestlings causes undue distress to the young and can lead to starvation to death. In the case of the raccoon dog, killing the father can also be fatal for the pups, as the male raccoon dog is involved in the care of his pups.

Making bow and arrow permitted hunting method

A bow and arrow is currently a permitted hunting method pursuant to the Hunting Decree for shooting rabbit, mountain hare, brown hare, red squirrel, European beaver, Canadian beaver, farmed Arctic fox, red fox, European badger, ermine, polecat, pine marten, roe deer, fallow deer, red deer, sika deer, white-tailed deer, forest reindeer, mouflon and wild boar, as well as birds belonging to game animals and unprotected animals.

If a bow and arrow is used for hunting cervids, the hunter must pass a shooting test with a bow and arrow. A **study (in Finnish)** on archery hunting is currently underway to determine the effects of the hunting on the welfare of the animals being hunted.



Image 33. The roe deer can be hunted with a bow and arrow, among other weapons, and a dog may still be used as an aid in hunting until February. Photo by flickr.com/Matti Suopajarvi.

Hunting regulation amendment allows use of larger driving dogs and early cervid hunting with dogs

An amendment of the Hunting Decree (666/1993) (in Finnish) increased the allowed withers height of a dog used to hunt cervids from 28 to 39 cm. The risk to the welfare of a cervid will be increased if the use of larger and faster dogs to drive deer to starvation is allowed. Battue and hunting with a dog are generally a more stressful experience for the cervid being hunted than hunting by stalking, according to a study measuring stress hormone levels in prey animals when different hunting methods were used.

Hunting roe deer with a dog is now also allowed also in February. There is no information on the effects of prolonged hunting with dogs, especially on the welfare of pregnant does.

Nature Conservation Act reformed

As a result of a nature conservation legislation reform project (in Finnish), the amended Nature Conservation Act will enter into force on 1 June 2023. The new Act will strengthen the protection of strictly protected biotopes, allow voluntary ecological compensation and set out the tasks of the Finnish Nature Panel, for example. The new Act on Compensation and Prevention of Damage Caused by Protected Species (Laki rauhoitettujen eläinten aiheuttamien vahinkojen ennalta ehkäisemisestä ja korvaamisesta 15/2022) (in Finnish) entered into force on 1 February 2023.

Read more:

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Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing

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Rådet for Dyreetikk 2011. Dyreetisk vurdering av buejakt

Stokke, S., Arnemo, J.M., Brainerd, S., Söderberg, A., Kraabøl, M. & Ytrehus, B. 2018. Defining animal welfare standards in hunting: body mass determines thresholds for incapacitation time and flight distance. *Scientific Reports* 8: 13786

Supikoiran kannanhoitosuunnitelma 2011

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Amendment to Government Decree on the Protection of Pigs

The Government Decree on the Protection of Pigs (Valtioneuvoston asetus sikojen suojelusta **629/2012**) was amended in 2017. The following was regulated on the grouping of pigs in connection with weaning: “Grouping of pigs that are not known to each other shall be attempted when the pigs are as young as possible, before or at most one week after weaning.”

This good practice is likely to reduce fighting between pigs and thus promote their welfare. Another provision added to the government decree requires that pregnant sows and gilts be medicated against ectoparasites and endoparasites where necessary, which also helps to promote the welfare of the pigs. A step backwards in terms of the welfare of pigs was taken when a requirement on increasing the floor area of group pens was postponed by three years.

Amendment to Government Decree on the Protection of Sheep

The protection of sheep is regulated by the Government Decree on the Protection of Sheep (Valtioneuvoston asetus lampaiden suojelusta **587/2010**) (in Finnish), which was amended in 2020 to reduce the possibility of the simultaneous feeding of lambs. The previous decree defined the minimum size of feeding racks for sheep of all ages. The amendment did not change the requirements for sheep over four months old and pregnant ewes, but set lower minimum requirements for the feeding space of lambs.

There are no requirements at all regarding the feeding space for lambs under two months of age, and the minimum length of the edge of a feeding rack for lambs aged 2–4 months is now set at half the length of that for adult sheep (17.5 cm per animal in case of a straight rack, 10 cm per animal in case of a round rack). The feeding space for lambs between 2–4 month of age, also on a continuous feed regime, was cut in half (8.5 cm per animal in case of a straight rack, 5 cm per animal in case of a round rack). These minimum requirements were also added to the Decree of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry amending the Annex to the Decree of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry laying down structural and functional requirements for subsidised construction of sheep and goat farm buildings (Maa- ja metsätalousministeriön asetus tuettavaa rakentamista koskevista lammas- ja vuohitalousrakennusten rakennusteknisistä ja toiminnallisista vaatimuksista annetun maa- ja metsätalousministeriön asetuksen liitteen muuttamisesta 838/2020), as amended in 2020.

Reducing the feeding space for lambs can deteriorate animal welfare, because as sheep are gregarious animals, they synchronise their behaviour with the rest of the flock. Sheep strive to rest, eat and drink at the same time, and if there is insufficient space and opportunity to do so, welfare issues can occur. All sheep in a flock eating coarse feed should be able to eat simultaneously, regardless of whether feed is continuously available. If there are not enough feeding places or space for all the sheep in the flock, there may be too little space and time to eat, especially for individuals with a lower social ranking. Growing lambs need space to eat with their flock, which means that reducing the minimum requirements for feeding table space for lambs under four months of age does not contribute to their welfare.



Image 34. The feeding space for lambs was reduced by the amendment to the sheep protection decree. Photo by Satu Raussi.

Amendment to the Government Decree on Protection of Chickens is under way

The protection of chickens is regulated by the Government Decree on the Protection of Chickens (Valtioneuvoston asetus kanojen suojelusta [673/2010](#)) (in Finnish). In early 2021, it was proposed that the section on the mother hens of laying hens were to be amended to reduce the nesting space requirement for hens. In accordance with the original government decree, there must be at least one nest for every four or five mother hens in a poultry building and, if communal nests are used, there must be at least one square metre of nesting space for each starting group of 100 hens. In accordance with the proposed amendment, there would have to be at least one nest for every starting group of seven hens and, in case of communal nests, at least one square metre of nesting space for every starting group of 120 hens.

The grounds given for the reduction in space were that mother hens do not need any more nesting space than laying hens. However, the regulations would not provide the same resources for mother hens as for laying hens. Chickens have their behavioural needs regardless of whether they are mother hens or laying hens. The welfare of mother hens would be improved if the laying hen requirements for aviary poultry buildings were extended to mother hens, i.e. mother hens would also have access to bedding and roosts.

Reform of Government Decree on the Protection of Fur Animals ongoing

The protection of fur animals is regulated by the Government Decree on the Protection of Fur Animals (Valtioneuvoston asetus turkiseläinten suojelusta [1084/2011](#)) (in Finnish), and a reform of the government decree has been pending since 2013. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry set up a working group to amend the government decree for the period 1 March 2013 to 31 December 2014. However, the reform of the Government Decree on the Protection of Fur Animals was suspended in the autumn of 2015, and a new decree is still to be adopted.

It was proposed that the section on chicks be amended to allow a higher stocking density for chicks. In the original government decree, the maximum density for floor breeding is 15 birds/m² for birds over six weeks of age and 10 birds/m² for birds between 12 and 18 weeks of age. The proposed amendment would allow a maximum density of 21 kilograms/m² for chicks over six weeks of age in an aviary poultry building, a maximum density of 20 birds/m² for chicks over six weeks of age in floor breeding and a maximum density of 30 birds/m² for chicks over six weeks of age in multi-layer aviary breeding. Increasing the maximum density may deteriorate the welfare of the chickens, as [studies have shown](#) that space is an advantage: at a stocking density of 10 chickens/m², the chickens peck their feathers less and the condition of their plumage is improved.

In accordance with the proposed amendment, when raising chicks, the poultry building would have to include roosts for the whole brood, and at least one quarter of the floor in an aviary poultry building would have to be covered with bedding. These more specific requirements would help to promote the welfare of chicks. However, the abovementioned amendments to the government decree have not been adopted yet.



Image 35. Promotion of fur animals' welfare would require an urgent reform of the government decree. Photo by Tiina Kauppinen.

Read more:

[Statements by the Finnish Centre for Animal Welfare on legislative amendments and proposed amendments \(in Finnish\)](#)

Reforming animal welfare legislation in the EU

The European Union's animal welfare policy and the implementation of regulations fall under the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety, also known as **DG-SANTE**, currently headed by Stélla Kyriakídou from Cyprus.

Guidelines for regulatory reforms to be clarified by end of 2023

The European Commission is currently reviewing the modernisation of the EU animal welfare legislation. Drafts and proposals for new animal welfare legislation are expected by the end of 2023. The need for a legislative reform is obvious and stems from the EU's **Farm to Fork** strategy (**COM/2020/381**), which in turn stems from **the European Green Deal**. The objectives of Farm to Fork are to make the EU food chain more sustainable and to develop a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system.

EU legislation on animal welfare must be in line with the Green Deal and the Farm to Fork sustainability targets. It must also be consistent with food, environment and internal market rules. Furthermore, the new legislation should facilitate controls and ensure animal welfare in the EU.

Fitness check to verify effectiveness of EU legislation

In the EU, legislative reforms are prepared through an assessment procedure or **fitness check**. The fitness check assesses the effectiveness, efficiency and relevance of existing rules and takes into account the latest animal welfare research in relation to the existing legislation. The evolution of public opinion regarding animals in European societies is also assessed.

The aim is to improve and, where possible, simplify the rules. The fitness check has identified a number of areas that need to be updated. Issues with European animal welfare legislation include a lack of clarity and an imbalance of the rules regarding different animal species. Inadequate implementation and insufficient and unequal access to information are also considered problematic. The **fitness check** of the animal welfare legislation was completed in 2022. The effects of the proposals will be assessed after the welfare legislation fitness check.

Feedback from general public to improve legislation

The assessment of the EU animal welfare legislation will first focus on five EU Directives and two EU Regulations that set minimum requirements for animal welfare at the farm level, during transport and upon killing. In 2022–2030, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) will, at the request of the Commission, prepare a series of scientific opinions and assessments on animal welfare (**EFSA scientific opinions on animal welfare**), the draft versions of which will be published for public consultation. EFSA will also collect feedback from citizens and stakeholders to help develop the legislation. EFSA has prepared scientific opinions on the welfare of **pigs, laying hens, broilers, calves, dairy cows and ducks, geese and quail**.

The Commission has prepared and is currently preparing a number of impact assessments on the legislative reforms, which stakeholders and citizens have been able to comment. The first impact assessment **roadmap** was published in 2021. **Feedback** from stakeholders and citizens is also public.

Animal Health Law aims to prevent and control infectious animal diseases

Regulation (EU) **2016/429** of the European Parliament and of the Council on transmissible animal diseases and amending and repealing certain acts in the area of animal health, or the ‘Animal Health Law’, entered into force in 2021. The Animal Health Law recognises the link between animal health and welfare, but does not include any animal welfare rules. Nationally in Finland, the Animal Health Law is implemented by the Animal Diseases Act (**76/2021**) (**in Finnish**), which entered into force on 21 April 2021 and lays down provisions on the implementation of legal acts of the European Union on combating animal diseases.

National ban on slaughter without stunning could be possible

The Court of Justice of the European Union has ruled on the possibility for Member States to prohibit in their national legislation the slaughter of an animal without or prior to stunning. According to the Court’s ruling, in order to promote animal welfare in the context of ritual slaughter, Member States may, without infringing the fundamental rights enshrined in the Charter, require a reversible stunning procedure which cannot result in the animal’s death. It was proposed that the provisions of the Finnish **draft Animal Welfare Act (in Finnish)** on the slaughter of animals be amended so that an animal for slaughter should always be stunned before slaughter. The Constitutional Law Committee examined the Animal Welfare Act before it was put to a vote in Parliament. According to the Constitutional Law Committee, a ban on slaughter without stunning would have restricted the free exercise of religion. A provision from the old Animal Welfare Act that allows for the continued possibility of slaughter for religious reasons where bleeding is started simultaneously with the stunning of the animal was therefore left in the new Animal Welfare Act.

However, the Animal Welfare Act will require in future that poultry slaughtered for domestic consumption be stunned before bleeding. Research has shown that the best way to avoid the pain and suffering of the animal during slaughter is to stun it before bleeding.

End the Cage Age citizens' initiative calls for end to cage farming

The European Commission and the Parliament have backed the European **End the Cage Age** citizens' initiative calling for a ban on the cage farming of laying hens, layer breeders, breeding hens, broiler breeders, quail, ducks, geese, rabbits, sows and calves. Cages restrict the movement of animals and their ability to fulfil their behavioural needs. According to the EU Commission, cages could potentially be abandoned after a transition period by 2027. The Commission has promised a legislative proposal on the cage ban together with the other animal welfare legislation proposals by the end of 2023. EFSA is preparing a scientific opinion on the welfare effects of cage farming for ducks, geese and quail.

Read more about End the Cage Age:

KMVET 12 August 2021: **Komissio siivittää siirtymää kohti häkitöntä tuotantoa (in Finnish)**.
A column by Animal Welfare Ombudsman Saara Kupsala

Fur Free Europe citizens' initiative received large number of signatures from Finland

The EU citizens' initiative **Fur Free Europe**, calling for an end to fur farming and a ban on fur products on the market, has gathered around 1,700,000 signatures and is currently at the signature verification phase. The initiative received considerable support from Finland. Relative to population, only Latvians provided more signatures.

Declaration by five EU Member States to support more ambitious EU animal welfare legislation

In their **Position paper on a new EU legislative frame for animal welfare**, the agricultural ministers of Denmark, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium call for more ambitious animal welfare legislation in the EU. The paper emphasises that the new legislative framework for animal welfare should include an update of the existing legislation in line with new scientific knowledge and a clarification and correction of overly general and imprecise rules.

For these reasons, there are issues with the implementation of the current legislation in many Member States; for example, the EU Pig Directive bans the routine tail docking of piglets, but in practice only Finland and Sweden implement the ban. The paper also calls for more detailed rules regarding animals used for economic activities for which there are no rules or for which the rules are too general.

Conclusions of Council of European Union on animal welfare

In December 2019, the EU Agriculture Council **adopted** conclusions prepared under the Finnish Presidency on animal welfare as an integral part of sustainable animal agriculture. The conclusions state that existing EU legislation must be updated to take into account the latest research, in particular on the long-distance transport of animals, the welfare of adult cattle, the sale of dogs and cats, and the slaughter of animals. The unanimously signed conclusions have political weight even though they are not legally binding. The full text of the conclusions is available **here**.

Animal rights in the Constitution of Finland?

Suomen eläinoikeusjuristit ry (the Finnish Animal Lawyers' Association) works for a stronger and fairer social status for animals. The association is proposing an amendment of the Constitution of Finland to safeguard the fundamental rights of animals – read more on the **Suomen eläinoikeusjuristit ry website**.

ANIMAL WELFARE CONTROL



Image 36 by Unsplash/42 North

ANIMAL WELFARE CONTROL

(Published on 30 June 2021)

Improving animal welfare through control requires the detection of issues in the keeping and care of animals, effective intervention and changing the behaviour of the animal owner. The most recent section of Animal Welfare in Finland III looks at the results and effectiveness of animal welfare control over the last ten years.

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Introduction

Effective animal welfare control requires the detection of issues in the keeping and care of animals, effective intervention and changing the behaviour of the animal owner. Non-compliances – issues involving the keeping, care or treatment of animals in breach of animal welfare legislation – are detected during inspections by the authorities.

Effective intervention by the authorities will help to change the behaviour of the animal owner. By inducing behavioural changes, the aim is to encourage the person who has the animal in their possession to act in accordance with the animal welfare legislation. This requires from the animal owner motivation, knowledge of the law and the ability to act in accordance with the law.

Effective animal welfare control has many benefits, the most obvious of them being the promotion of animal welfare, which is at the core of all control measures. Effective control reduces the burden on veterinarians and increases equality between producers and public confidence in the system. It is also important to ensure that veterinarians carrying out the control measures are able to cope with their work and interact well with animal owners.

A number of controls are performed to monitor compliance with the minimum animal welfare requirements. Non-compliances observed during sample checks of animal farms on the basis of EU legislation are quite similar and of a similar magnitude from one year to the next. In 2011–2014, issues were observed during sample checks in just over a quarter of the farms inspected, compared to a fifth in 2015–2018. The results of the sample checks in 2017 and 2018 were exceptional: only 15% and 17% of the inspections, respectively, revealed non-compliances. However, the number of non-compliances increased again to 30%, 27% and 25% in 2019, 2020 and 2021 respectively. The record number of non-compliances, at 66% of the farms inspected, was observed during inspections of fur farms in 2016.

Fewer animal welfare issues than in the past have been observed in controls of animal transport, also based on EU legislation, and the non-compliances are often related to documentation, certificates and licences/permits.

Since 2015, there have been more than 6,000 animal welfare inspections based on suspicion of violation every year. Pet facilities, in particular, are subject to a high number of inspections. This is due to an increase in the number of local veterinary enforcement officers in municipalities, but also to an increased number of reports by citizens. Around a quarter of the inspections in recent years have been follow-up inspections. The number of non-compliances in animal welfare inspections based on suspicion of violation has slightly decreased since the previous reporting period, but the proportion of serious non-compliances has slightly increased. Over the last ten years, suspicion-based prohibitions or orders have been issued more frequently for farm animal facilities, while urgent measures to safeguard animal welfare have been taken more often at pet facilities.

This section of the report presents the results of the control of animal welfare by the authorities for 2015–2021 and compares them with the results from previous years. Activities subject to control include activities subject to authorisation and notification, animal transport and the keeping of farm animals or companion and hobby animals in cases where there is reason to suspect non-compliance with animal welfare legislation. The keeping of farm animals is subject to control through sample checks, cross-compliance animal welfare inspections, and inspections based on the control of the animal welfare payment and organic animal agriculture. As new results, the implementation of animal welfare inspections of slaughterhouses performed by veterinary inspectors are reported.

The authors of this section are Satu Raussi, Principal Specialist, and Tiina Kauppinen, Senior Specialist, from the Finnish Centre for Animal Welfare.

Control authorities

Citizens can contact **the animal welfare authority** and file an animal welfare report if they suspect activities that violate animal welfare legislation. The best way to submit an animal welfare report is to contact the local authority veterinary officer or the local veterinary enforcement officer in one's own municipality. Submitting a report to the municipal animal health inspector, the Regional Veterinary Officer at the local Regional State Administrative Agency or the police is also possible. Local authority veterinary officers and animal health inspectors usually work during office hours. At other times, the report should be submitted to the police.

Animal welfare authorities carry out animal welfare inspections to ensure compliance with the laws and regulations on the protection of animals. The inspector has the right to inspect an animal, the facility where it is kept or a means of transport. The inspector also has the right to inspect the food and drink intended for the animal and the equipment and supplies used in its care.

The role of the Finnish Food Authority is to manage, develop and guide the enforcement of animal welfare and animal transport legislation. The Food Authority also publishes annual **reports on animal welfare control**. The Food Authority does not have a right under the Animal Welfare Act or the Animal Transport Act to carry out inspections on farms or during transport; this power has been conferred by law on other authorities.

The animal welfare authorities in the Regional State Administrative Agencies (AVI) are the **Regional Veterinary Officers** who specialise in control measures. They offer guidance to local authority veterinary officers in their local control work, carry out sample checks of farms and cross-compliance inspections on animal welfare, as well as assist the local authority veterinary officers in the most difficult animal welfare cases.

In their own areas of responsibility, animal welfare control measures are performed by **local authority veterinary officers** who specialise in control measures, **animal health inspectors** and **police officers**. For example, local authority veterinary officers carry out the majority of animal welfare inspections based on suspicion of violation. The control of animal transport and slaughter at slaughterhouses is performed by **veterinary inspectors**, and at national borders by **veterinary border control officers**. Finnish Customs became the new animal welfare control authority under the Animal Welfare Act. Customs supervises compliance with animal welfare legislation when animals are transported between Member States of the European Union or from Finland to a third country. The police is the only animal welfare authority working around the clock.

Animal welfare officers authorised by the Regional State Administrative Agencies may also carry out animal welfare inspections at animal facilities that are not places covered by the right to domestic privacy. An animal welfare officer must complete an animal welfare officer course arranged by the Finnish Food Authority on how to carry out animal welfare inspections. The animal welfare officer authorised by the AVI must contact the animal welfare authorities if they detect during the inspection any activity that is in violation of the animal welfare legislation. In 2021, there were 11 animal welfare officers authorised by the Regional State Administrative Agencies throughout the country.

In connection with the reform of the Animal Welfare Act, options for the organisation and implementation of animal welfare control were examined. **The reports (in Finnish)** are available on the Animal Welfare Reform website.

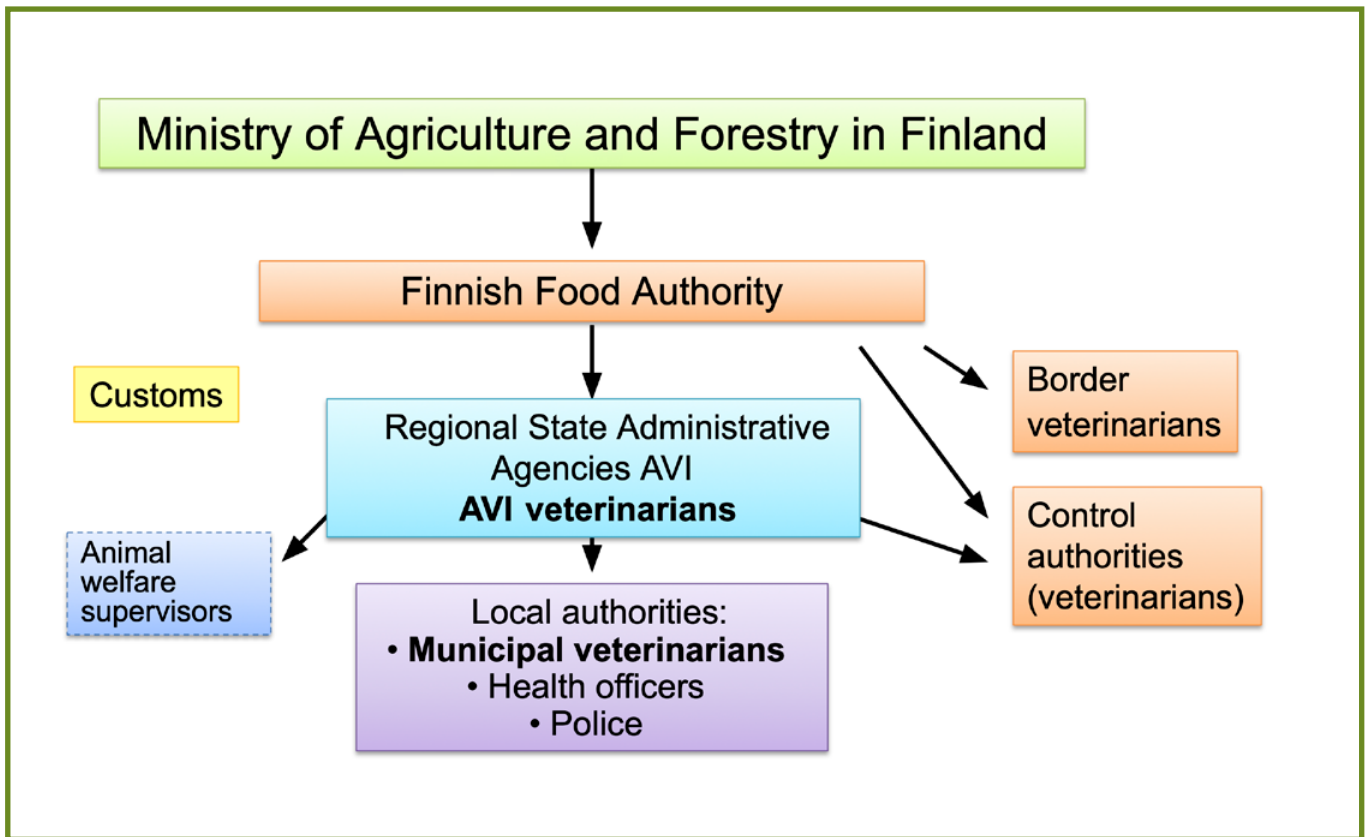


Image 37.
Animal welfare control and control authorities (source: Finnish Food Authority)

Inspections of activities subject to authorisation and notification

A licence must be applied from the Regional State Administrative Agency (AVI) for animal husbandry subject to authorisation and a notification on the animal must be submitted to the AVI.

Activities subject to authorisation include but are not limited to the transport of animals in connection with commercial activities, the use of animals for scientific purposes, as well as the use of animals in circuses, permanent and temporary animal exhibitions and zoos. Once an AVI veterinary surgeon has checked the prerequisites for the activity, the AVI will issue a licence to the operator. Ongoing activities are inspected by AVI veterinary surgeons or local authority veterinary officers.

Activities subject to notification include professional or otherwise large-scale keeping of companion and hobby animals (e.g. kennels, trotting and riding stables, pet boarding facilities and pet shops), farming of wild mammals and birds, and farming for game management purposes. Regular inspections of facilities where activities subject to notification are carried out are performed whenever possible. These inspections are the responsibility of the Regional State Administrative Agencies.

The Agency may order a local authority veterinary officer to carry out an inspection in their municipality. For example, inspections of horse stables are normally performed by local authority veterinary officers. Inspections may also take place at animal competitions, shows and exhibitions involving animals.

In 2021, there were 3,934 animal facilities subject to authorisation and notification, compared to 4,561 in 2014. In 2021, a total of 336 animal facilities subject to authorisation and notification were inspected, compared to 727 in 2014. In 2021, 57 facilities were found to be non-compliant with the requirements, representing 17% of the facilities inspected. Urgent measures under the Animal Welfare Act were taken at four inspected facilities.

Sample checks at animal farms

EU Member States monitor compliance with the minimum requirements on the protection of farm animals by inspecting a representative number of randomly selected farms each year. Since 2010, these inspections in Finland have been performed by Regional Veterinary Officers of the Regional State Administrative Agencies. The sample checks and their results are reported annually to the EU Commission.

Inspected sites are selected at random (20–100%) and on a targeted basis (0–80%) without any suspicion of non-compliance with animal welfare regulations. In 2015 and 2016, the control was targeted at organic farms and farms that had not been subject to control measures in the past. From 2017 onwards, the sampling has been targeted at a specific animal species each year. In 2017, control measures were targeted at cattle, in 2018 at fur animals, and in 2019 at sheep.

In 2020 and 2021, the number of control measures and the implementation of the measures were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and no species targeting was carried out. The weighted sample takes into account factors such as the control history of the facility, ear tag orders, non-compliance in identification, registration and animal notifications, the number of animals at the facility, lost animals, and application for the animal welfare payment.

Between 2008 and 2010, 85–87% of the quantitative inspection targets were achieved, compared to 80–84% 2011 and 2014, and 83–100% between 2015 and 2021. The annual sample sizes vary. For example, around 7% of sheep and 4% of goat farms with 20 or more animals, 7% of all fur farms, 3% of pig farms, 3% of broiler farms and 3% of cattle farms with 10 or more heads of cattle were selected for inspection in 2020. Table 5 and Figure 38 compare the results of the sample checks of farm animal facilities by animal species in 2006–2021. The annual results are also available in the animal welfare monitoring **reports** of the Finnish Food Authority.

Image 38. Animal welfare violations observed during production animal facility sample checks, percentage of farms inspected (source: Finnish Food Authority).

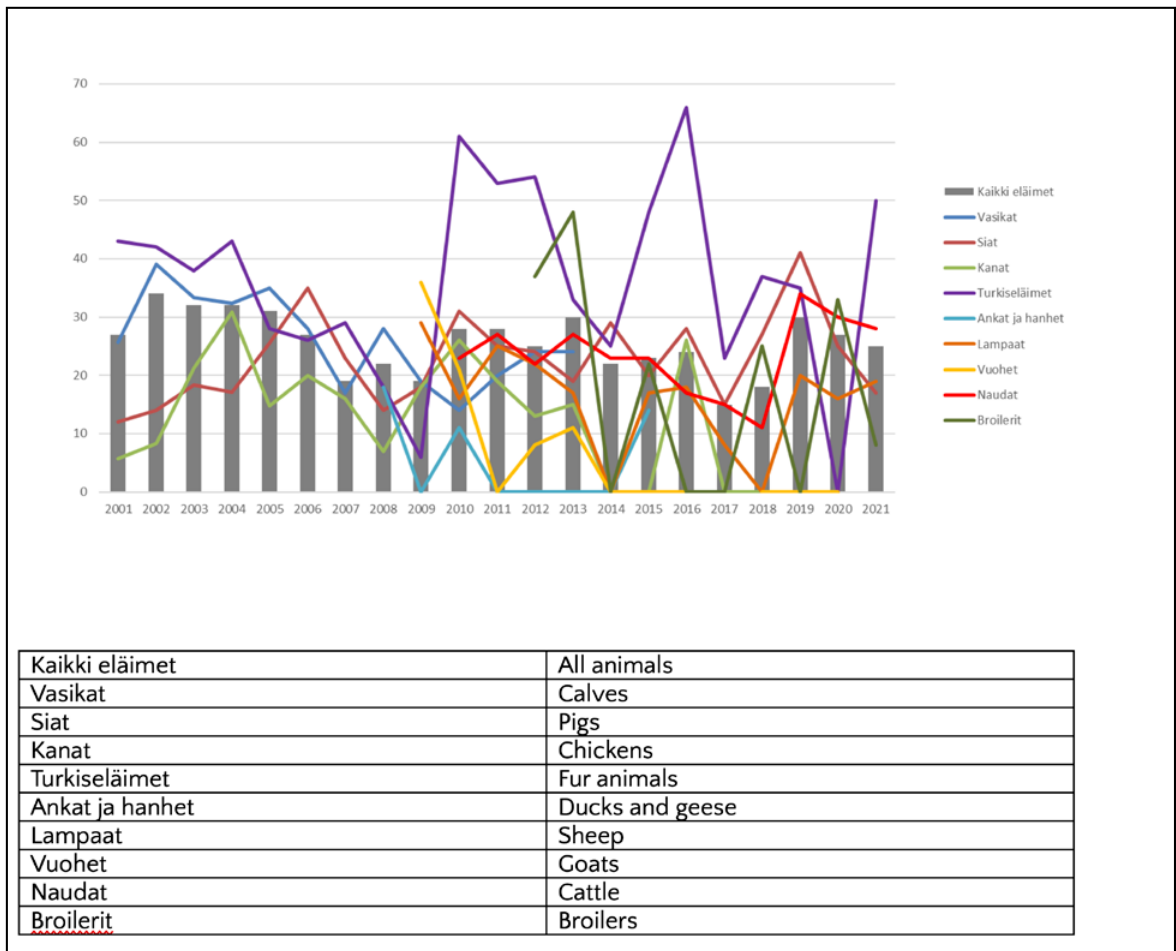


Table 5. Sample checks of farm animal facilities and percentages of animal welfare violations observed (source: Finnish Food Authority).

	Calves	Pigs	Laying hens	Fur animals	Ducks and geese	Sheep	Goats	Cattle	Broilers	All animals
2001	26	12	6	43						27
2002	39	14	8	42						34
2003	33	18	21	38						32
2004	32	17	31	43						32
2005	35	26	15	28						31
2006	28	35	20	26						27
2007	17	23	16	29						19
2008	28	14	7	18	18					22
2009	19	18	18	6	0	29	36			19
2010	14	31	26	61	11	16	21	23		28
2011	20	25	19	53	0	25	0	27		28
2012	24	24	13	54	0	22	8	22	37	25
2013	24	19	15	33	0	17	11	27	48	30
2014		29	0	25	0	0	0	23	0	22
2015		20	0	48	14	17	0	23	22	23
2016		28	26	66		18	0	17	0	24
2017		15	0	23		8		15	0	15
2018		27	*	37		0	0	11	25	18
2019		41		35		20	0	34	0	30
2020		25		0		16	0	30	33	27
2021		17	33	50		19		28	8	25
*Chicken 2018, only one farm checked, violations observed										

Cattle

On calf farms, the percentage of non-compliances during inspections varied between 20% and 24% in 2011–2013. Common problems included lack of space in group pens, calves being kept in individual pens for longer than allowed, dirty and wet bedding, deficiencies in the hygiene and safety of facilities and equipment, and insufficient daily water supply. These issues have remained the same year after year.

In 2015–2021, there were still non-compliances regarding the space requirements for calves, as well as regarding hygiene, safety and the provision of dry and clean bedding for calves. In some cases, calves are still being kept in individual pens for longer than allowed. Safety of outdoor calf yards and keeping the outdoor areas dry have also been common issues in recent years. The general welfare, health and hygiene of calves has sometimes been found to be lacking. There have been issues with the drinking and feeding of calves, such as dirty feed and drinking water. Hygiene and disinfection of the facilities and equipment have not always been properly maintained.

For facilities with cattle over 6 months of age, the percentage of non-compliances detected between 2011 and 2013 varied from 20% to 27%. The issues in 2011–2013 were the same as in the first inspection year of 2010: defective sanitation of the facility, lack of dry and clean bedding, lack of adequate weather shelter in the pasture or yard area, inadequate hoof care, problems with adequate daily water supply and deficiencies in safety of the facility. In addition, tethered cows and heifers did not always have access to a pasture or paddock.

Non-compliances were observed in 11–34% of the farms inspected in 2015–2021. The abovementioned issues still persisted. Other detected issues included inadequate and inappropriate feed, as well as issues with drinking water, in keeping outdoor areas safe and dry, and in caring for sick and injured cattle. Other non-compliances included dirty cattle, inadequate staffing, condition of equipment and the facility,

safety, lighting and sanitation. The welfare of outdoor cattle, wet lying areas and freezing of drinking water containers have also been common causes of non-compliances in recent inspections of cattle facilities. During the 2021 inspections, it was observed that the difference in results between cattle types (suckler, dairy and other) was statistically almost significant. In relative terms, the highest number of non-compliances (38%) was observed with suckler cows.

Pigs

The percentage of non-compliances observed on pig farms between 2011 and 2014 varied from 19% to 29%. As in the previous reporting period, the most common issue in 2011 was the absence or shortage of exploration and rooting materials and nest building materials. In 2012, only one of the inspected farms had issues with the provision of these materials to pigs. In 2013, the same issue was observed on five of the inspected farms and in 2015 on three farms. Non-compliances were also observed with adequate water supply, adequacy of the feeding area, routine cutting of the teeth of piglets, castration of boar piglets at an age older than allowed and, in particular in 2014, with the space requirements. The same issues were also observed in the previous reporting period.

Non-compliances were observed in 15–41% of the pig farms inspected in 2015–2021. There was a continued lack of enrichment materials, feeding and other space, lighting and nesting materials for sows. There were issues with hygiene, temperature and safety. There was room for improvement in maintenance of the farms, sanitation, bedding, animal shelter conditions, animal welfare and the provision of adequate and sufficient feed. There was insufficient staff or issues with the qualifications of the workers and the qualifications of the owner-inseminator. In 2021, an average of 1.5 non-compliances per farm were observed, which was significantly less than a year earlier.

Laying hens

The percentage of non-compliances observed in poultry buildings for laying hens between 2011 and 2013 varied from 13% to 19%. The most common issue in 2011 was the lack of equipment for hens to grind their nails in battery farms at a time when laying hens could still be kept in unequipped cages. In 2012 and 2013, non-compliances were observed on three farms. These were related to lack of space, inadequate feeding and roost space, and lack of bedding or nesting and roost space in an aviary poultry building.

In 2014–2015, 11 farms were inspected and no non-compliances were observed. In 2016, non-compliances were observed on 19 of a total of 26 farms inspected. This time, the issues involved roosts, nests, bedding and space requirements. In 2017, three farms were inspected and no non-compliances were observed. In 2018, one farm was inspected, where non-compliances were observed. No facilities for laying hens were inspected in 2019–2020. In 2021, three facilities were inspected, including one farm without bedding for pecking and scratching.

Fur animals

In 2010, non-compliances were observed on as many as 60% of the 57 inspected fur farms. In 2011–2014, non-compliances were observed on 25–54% of the inspected fur farms. Only four farms were inspected in 2014, one of which had issues with the system used to prevent animals from escaping the farm. The issues in 2011–2014 were mostly the same as during the previous inspection period.

The space requirements were not always respected – issues were observed especially in the case of weaned fox cubs. Lack of chewing and enrichment materials was common. Protective plastic in the bottom of the cages was missing or worn at several farms, and proper care for sick and injured animals had not always been arranged.

In 2015–2021, a record-breaking number of non-compliances were observed during inspections of fur farms (issues were observed on 66% of the 38 farms inspected in 2016). On the other hand, 2020 was a year without any non-compliances on the seven fur farms inspected. In recent years (2015–2019), recurring issues have involved the wire-mesh bottom of the cages, the plastic coating on top of the wire-mesh, enrichment materials, chewing materials, the buildings of the facility, the space requirements, and the condition and safety of the floor.

Issues involving the killing of the animals, proper treatment of sick animals and the record-keeping on medical treatment have also been observed. Excessively small nesting boxes and poor bedding have also been observed, as well as inadequate fencing and failures to prevent the animals from escaping. In 2021, the control measures were targeted at fox and raccoon dog farms due to the COVID-19 risk on mink farms.

Ducks and geese

No non-compliances were observed on duck and goose farms during the inspections in 2011–2014. Seven farms were inspected in 2015, including one duck farm where issues with the water supply, sanitation of the facilities and record-keeping were observed. Only a small number of non-compliances have been observed at duck and goose facilities. The number of such facilities is low, and therefore the number of inspections is also low. No duck and goose farms were inspected between 2016 and 2021.

Sheep

The percentage of non-compliances observed on sheep farms between 2011 and 2014 varied from 0% to 25%. The most issues were observed during the 2011 inspections. In 2014, 13 farms were inspected and no non-compliances were observed. For sheep farms, the issues in 2011–2014 were largely the same as in the previous inspection period and related to the hygiene and safety of the facility, in particular the lack of clean and dry bedding. Some issues involving the provision of adequate water and feeding space were also observed. At some sheep farms, the space requirements were not met, there was no suitable weather protection for outdoor pens or the soil in the outdoor pen did not remain sufficiently dry.

The percentage of non-compliances observed on sheep farms between 2011 and 2021 varied from 0% to 20%. No non-compliances were observed in 2018, but in 2019, issues were observed on 20% of the 99 inspected sheep farms. The issues in the 2015–2021 inspections involved record-keeping on medicines, the care of sick animals, the surface area of pens, the requirements on outdoor pens, the hygiene of the facility, shearing, hoof inspections, and lack of water and suitable feed. The condition and safety of the equipment and buildings and the maintenance of animal health, general welfare and hygiene were defective at some farms.

Goats

Inspections of goat farms in 2011–2014 revealed few non-compliances, ranging between 0% and 11% of the farms inspected. The control results improved from 2009 and 2010, when issues were observed on 36% and 22% of the inspected farms respectively. At that time, the most common non-compliances were issues with hygiene of the facility and space requirements. No non-compliances were observed during inspections of goat farms in 2015–2021, but no goat farms were inspected in 2017 and 2021. The number of goat farms inspected per year remains low. A total of 23 goat farms were inspected in 2015–2021.

Broilers

Broiler farms were included in the scope of the inspections in 2012, at which time non-compliances were observed on 37% of the inspected farms. The percentage of non-compliances increased to 48% in 2013. The high number of issues in the 2013 inspections was due to deficient conditions in the breeding department and inadequate lighting. Issues with dry and loose bedding, air quality and proper killing methods were also observed. In 2014, three farms were inspected and no non-compliances were observed. In the 2015 inspections, issues involving the allowed stocking density, lighting and the killing of birds were observed.

At that time, non-compliances were observed on 22 of the inspected farms. No non-compliances were observed during the inspections in 2016 and 2017 when a total of seven broiler farms were inspected. Four broiler farms were inspected in 2018, of which issues were found on one. No issues were observed on the seven farms inspected in 2019. In 2020, issues were observed on two of the six inspected farms, and in 2021 excessive stocking density was observed on one of the inspected twelve farms.

Animal welfare inspections under cross-compliance

Animal welfare has been monitored since 2007 in connection with the cross-compliance control of agricultural support. Cross-compliance is based on the existing animal welfare legislation, and does not therefore impose any additional requirements on the keeping of farm animals. As far as welfare is concerned, certain requirements concerning the facilities, conditions and care, determined for each animal species in legislation, are checked. The objective is to monitor compliance with the animal welfare legislation of the European Union. Cross-compliance of animal welfare is monitored by the Regional Veterinary Officers of the Regional State Administrative Agencies. A failure to comply may result in a warning or the recovery of agricultural support (1%, 3% or 5%). The normal consequence is a 3% reduction in the support for the year in question. If the animal welfare non-compliance observed on a farm is judged to be intentional, several of the farm's subsidies may be reduced. From 2023, cross-compliance is replaced by **conditionality (in Finnish)**.

Cross-compliance is normally monitored on farms randomly selected for a sample check. The control may also be extended to other farms where non-compliances have been observed during other control measures or where animal welfare legislation non-compliances have come to the attention of the control authority. The sample checks of farms under cross-compliance are usually carried out on farms with cattle, pigs, sheep, goats and laying hens. If other farm animals are present at the time of the inspection, they will also be inspected.

Farms included in the scope of the sample checks

In 2015–2018, 194, 175, 184 and 181 sample checks, respectively, were performed. In the 2011–2017 cross-compliance sample checks, non-compliance with animal welfare legislation was observed on 9–18% of the inspected farms (2009: 17%, 2010: 15%, 2011: 18%, 2012: 17%, 2013: 12%, 2014: 14%, 2015: 14%, 2016: 11% and 2017: 9%). Control results after 2017 are not available. Typical issues included lack of dry bedding for cattle and excessively small pens or facilities for calves. Issues involving feeding and drinking water have also been observed.

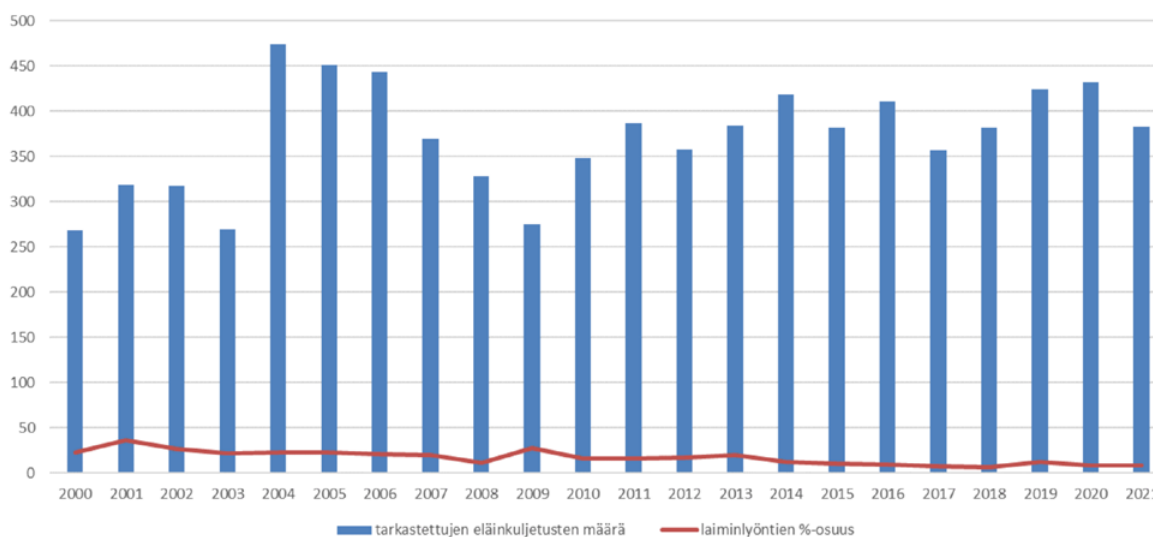
Facilities not included in the scope of the sample checks (extended control)

In 2009, cross-compliance was extended to farms suspicions of non-compliance with animal welfare legislation had been raised in connection with other control measures. Such control measures from outside the scope of the sample checks were called 'extended control'. A large proportion of the farms subject to extended control were found to be non-compliant with the legislation. Issues were observed on 52, 165, 142, 280, 220, 274, 300, 230 and 112 farms, respectively, between 2009 and 2017. More serious non-compliances than in the previous years were observed in 2015, and a full removal of all subsidies was proposed for nine animal farms in 2015.

Animal welfare control during animal transport

The animal welfare authorities have inspected 1,547 animal transport operations in 2011–2014, 1,532 animal transport operations in 2015–2018, and 1,239 animal transport operations in 2019–2021. In 2011–2014, issues were observed with an average of 16% of the inspected transport operations, compared to an average of 8% in 2015–2018. In 2019–2021, issues were observed with some 10% of the inspected transport operations.

In 2015–2018, the authority took administrative action in case of 39% of the transport operations where non-compliance was observed, while administrative action was taken in 28% of the non-compliant transport operations in 2019–2020. In 2021, administrative action was taken in 13% of the inspected transport operations.



Tarkastettujen eläinkuljetusten määrä	Number of animal transport operations inspected
Laiminlyöntien %-osuus	Percentage share of non-compliances

Image 39. Number of animal transport operations inspected and number of non-compliances observed between 2000 and 2021 (source: Finnish Food Authority).

EU inspections of animal transport are mainly performed by veterinary inspectors at slaughterhouses at the time of unloading. In addition, Regional Veterinary Officers and local authority veterinary officers inspect transport operations on the road and at the place of departure. Cattle, pigs and poultry transport operations are the most commonly inspected ones, but horse, sheep and reindeer transport operations are also inspected.

Table 6.
Inspections of commercial animal transport and percentages of non-compliances observed between 2000 and 2021 (source: Finnish Food Authority).

Year	Number of commercial animal transports inspected	Non-compliances, % of inspected
2000	268	23
2001	318	36
2002	317	26
2003	269	22
2004	474	23
2005	451	23
2006	443	21
2007	369	20
2008	328	11
2009	275	27
2010	348	16
2011	387	16
2012	358	17
2013	384	20
2014	418	12
2015	382	10
2016	411	9
2017	357	7
2018	382	6
2019	424	12
2020	432	8
2021	383	8

Transport times

The average time taken to transport animals in connection with the inspections in 2011–2017 ranged from three and a half to four hours. The longest transport operations inspected were a 28-hour transport operation inspected in 2014, a 26.5-hour horse transport operation inspected in 2015 and an 18-hour pig transport operation inspected in 2016. Of the 1,547 transport operations inspected between 2011 and 2014, 99 exceeded eight hours. In 2015–2018, 136 animal transport operations of more than eight hours and 51 in 2019–2020 were inspected. The 2021 inspection reports do not provide any information on transport times.

Animal transport inspections and their results are reported to the EU Commission annually. Reports **by the EU Member States** on the results of animal transport inspections in 2007–2018 are available on the Commission's website.

Animal trade

The number of animal trade transport operations – in most cases to transport calves from the farm in which they were born to the farm in which they will be bred – inspected in 2011–2014 was 52, compared to 55 in 2015–2018. Non-compliances were observed in a total of 12 transport operations in 2011–2014 and ten transport operations in 2015–2018. In 2019, 27 animal trade transport operations were inspected and issues were observed in two cases, while in 2020, nine transport operations were inspected with no issues observed.

In 2021, 22 animal trade transport operations were inspected, one of which did not have any water in the watering system. The most common issues observed in animal trade transport operations involved inadequate documentation and certificates of competence, but issues involving bedding, the watering equipment, condition of the vehicle and the temperature alarm system were also detected.

Non-compliance during transport

The issues observed in animal transport have remained largely the same year after year. In 2011–2014 and 2015–2018, most observed non-compliances involved drivers' certificates of competence, transport documents and animal transport authorisations. Other issues repeated throughout the years are issues with the condition and safety of the means of transport and non-compliance with additional requirements for long journeys. Issues involving animal space requirements and transport practices are also occasionally observed. In 2011–2013, animals not fit for transport were observed in a total of 11 transport operations, or just under 1% of all the transport operations inspected, while in 2016–2018, animals not fit for transport were observed two times (three turkeys not fit for transport in all). In 2021, birds not fit for transport were observed in one poultry transport operation.

Horses

A total of 118 horse transport operations were inspected in 2011–2014 and 114 in 2015–2018, while 79 horse transport operations were inspected in 2019–2021. Issues were observed in 51 of the inspected horse transport operations in 2011–2014, in 21 operations in 2015–2018, and in 38 operations in 2019–2021.

Issues in horse transport mostly involve deficiencies in permits, certificates of competence or transport documents, but during the 2021 inspections, one transport was found to contain loose goods in the horse transport compartment and the marking on animal transport was defective.

Reindeer

A total of 47 reindeer transport operations were inspected in 2011–2014 and 41 in 2015–2018, while 55 reindeer transport operations were inspected in 2019–2021. The inspections took place either at the place of departure or at a slaughterhouse. Non-compliances were observed in 56% (2012), 23% (2013), 29% (2014), 0% (2015), 31% (2016), 17% (2017), 20% (2018), 61% (2019), 28% (2020) and 7% (2021) of the inspected transport operations.

In the previous years, 2009 and 2010, a total of 19 reindeer transport operations were inspected, and non-compliances were observed in as many as 15 (79%) of them. The observed issues included animal transport markings missing from the vehicle, inadequate lighting, poor condition of the vehicle and safety defects, missing animal transport authorisation in one case and deficiencies in the killing equipment. Equipment used for loading and unloading, such as ramps, was not always appropriate. In two transport operations in 2012, the animals were not fit for transport.

Animal welfare control at slaughterhouses

Since 2016, the aim has been that the slaughterhouse's veterinary inspector carries out a comprehensive documented animal welfare inspection of each slaughterhouse at least once a year. The objectives with these inspections are to ensure compliance with the legislation and to gather information on animal welfare controls in slaughterhouses.

Animal welfare inspections in slaughterhouses started in 2015–2016, at which time all large slaughterhouses were inspected by veterinary inspectors from the Finnish Food Authority and Regional Veterinary Officers from the Regional State Administrative Agencies. Inspections of small slaughterhouses (establishments where slaughter takes place only part of the working day or the whole working day, but not every working day of the week) were started in 2016.

In 96% of the slaughterhouses in operation between 2016 and 2021, an animal welfare inspection covering all activities involving live animals was performed at least once. In 18% of the slaughterhouses, an animal welfare inspection was performed in all the six years. Two small slaughterhouses did not have any recorded inspections during the six years. These slaughterhouses are also being controlled by the local auth

Annual slaughterhouse inspection data 2016–2020

In **2016 (in Finnish)**, non-compliances were observed in approximately 60% of the inspected slaughterhouses. Some of the issues involved instructions and record-keeping. The slaughterhouses corrected most of the non-compliances after the inspection.

In **2017 (in Finnish)**, all large broiler slaughterhouses and 80% of large ‘red meat slaughterhouses’ had at least one documented animal welfare inspection. A total of 27 small slaughterhouse inspections were performed in 24 different slaughterhouses. Not all small slaughterhouses were inspected. Most of the issues observed during the 2017 inspections involved pen markings, insufficient bedding for animals kept overnight or failures to milk cows, or deficiencies in written operating instructions or self-monitoring procedures.

In **2018 (in Finnish)**, at least one documented animal welfare inspection was performed in nine out of the fourteen large slaughterhouses. In addition, 27 small slaughterhouses were inspected, some of them more than once. A total of 38 documented animal welfare inspections in 36 different slaughterhouses were performed. The majority of the issues observed during the inspections involved inadequate self-monitoring procedures and related record-keeping. In some of the small slaughterhouses, drinking water was not available to the animals immediately upon arrival at the slaughterhouse, and was only provided if the slaughter was delayed by several hours.

At least one documented animal welfare inspection was performed in all the fifteen large slaughterhouses in **2019 (in Finnish)**. Of the small slaughterhouses, 24 were inspected, but nearly half of the small slaughterhouses were not inspected. A total of 40 documented animal welfare inspections in 39 different slaughterhouses were performed.

The majority of the issues observed involved inadequate self-monitoring procedures and related record-keeping. In particular, there were issues with the maintenance records for stunning equipment. In some slaughterhouses, there was room for improvement in animal facilities in terms of matters such as pen markings, ventilation and bedding for animals kept overnight. The size of individual cattle pens in some slaughterhouses was insufficient to properly house larger cattle; for example, animals kept overnight did not have sufficient space to lie down.

In **2020 (in Finnish)**, twelve of the fifteen large slaughterhouses were inspected at least once. Of the small slaughterhouses, 25 out of 43 were inspected. Issues were observed in ten slaughterhouses, two of which were ordered to comply with their obligations within a specified time limit pursuant to the Animal Welfare Act. For the others, measures were already under way or the issue was being addressed through advisory procedures. Most of the observed non-compliances involved inadequate self-monitoring procedures. The most common issue was a failure to keep appropriate maintenance records for stunning equipment. The required markings on the time of arrival of the animals and the maximum number of animals per pen were not always visible in the lairage facilities. Problems directly affecting animal welfare involved outdated animal facilities in large slaughterhouses. The size of individual animal pens in cattle slaughterhouses does not always take into account the size of the animals, leaving insufficient space for bulls or large cows to lie down or stand up in the pen. The welfare problem is exacerbated if animals are kept in the slaughterhouse for long periods. The structural solutions in the lairage facilities did not always take into account additional requirements for animals kept for more than 12 hours, such as proper bedding in the pen, tie stall mats or the milking of dairy cows.

At least one documented animal welfare inspection was performed in all the fifteen large slaughterhouses in **2021 (in Finnish)**. Of the small slaughterhouses, 21 out of 44 were inspected. Issues were observed in eight slaughterhouses, two of which were ordered to correct the deficiencies within a specified time limit pursuant to the Animal Welfare Act. For the others, measures were already under way or the issue was being addressed through advisory procedures.

Most of the non-compliances involved inadequate self-monitoring procedures. The most common issues were a failure to keep appropriate maintenance records for stunning equipment and defective pen markings in the lairage facilities. A few slaughterhouses still had inadequate procedures for checking incoming slaughtered animals or for arranging the bedding, feeding or milking of animals kept overnight. Two slaughterhouses employed one person each who did not have a valid certificate of competence. Individual non-compliances were also observed in sampling checks on the success of stunning carried out by the slaughterhouses.

Animal welfare inspections based on suspicion of violation

The number of animal welfare inspections based on suspicion of violation stabilised at more than 6,000 per year between 2015 and 2020, falling slightly below 6,000 in 2021 (Table 7). The most inspections, around 6,500, were performed in 2018. Since 2013, the majority of animal welfare inspections based on suspicion of violation have been performed on pet facilities. Inspections of pet facilities mainly involve dogs, cats, rabbits, various rodents, fish and reptiles. In the case of inspections based on suspicion of violation at animal farms, the target species are most often cattle, horses, sheep, pigs, goats and chickens. The relative proportion of these measures and their targeting to pet or farm animal facilities has remained relatively stable in recent years.

In animal welfare inspections based on suspicion of violation, prohibitions or orders under the Animal Welfare Act were issued for 34–40% of the inspected facilities in 2011–2014 and for 30–33% of the inspected facilities in 2015–2018. In 2019–2021, prohibitions or orders were issued for 29.5–31% of the inspected facilities. The number of inspections requiring urgent measures under the Animal Welfare Act to safeguard animal welfare was between 7% and 9% of the facilities in 2011–2019. In 2020 and 2021, respectively, 10% and 9% of the inspected facilities were subject to urgent measures.

Table 7.
Animal welfare inspections based on suspicion of violation in 2010–2021
(source: Finnish Food Authority).

		2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Inspections	total	3,439	3,638	5,106	4,911	5,091	6,018	6,368	6,448	6,508	6,358	6,046	5,828
Non-compliances*, % of inspections	total	40	40	36	34	34	31	30	32	33	30	31	31
	pet facilities	31	33	25	26	26	25	24	26	28	25	28	27
	farm animal facilities	45	45	45	42	43	38	38	41	42	39	38	38
	other animals or unspecified	31	37	36	25	25	27	29	22	25	28	29	38
Severe non-compliances**, % of inspections	total	6	7	8	8	9	8	7	9	9	9	10	9
	pet facilities	9	8	11	11	14	11	11	12	12	11	12	11
	farm animal facilities	4	5	4	4	3	3	3	4	4	4	5	4
	other animals or unspecified	10	13	19	10	10	17	9	8	11	8	24	14

**In the case of non-compliance, an order was issued to correct the animals' conditions (section 42 of the Animal Welfare Act)*

***In the case of severe non-compliance, urgent measures to safeguard animal welfare were taken (section 44 of the Animal Welfare Act)*

Farm animals

In 2011–2014, prohibitions or orders were issued to 42–54% of the inspected farm animal facilities, and in 2015–2018 to 38–42% of the inspected farm animal facilities. The corresponding shares in 2019–2021 were 39%, 38% and 38% respectively. Urgent action was taken in the case of 3–5% of the farm animal facilities in 2011–2014 and in the case of 3–4% of the farm animal facilities in 2015–2018. In 2019, 2020 and 2021, 4%, 5% and 4% of inspections, respectively, led to urgent measures..

Pets

As regards inspections of pet facilities, in 2011–2014, prohibitions or orders were issued for 25–33% of the inspected facilities, and in 2015–2018, for 24–28% of facilities. The corresponding shares in 2019, 2020 and 2021 were 25%, 28% and 27% respectively. Urgent action was taken in the case of 8–14% of the pet facilities inspected in 2011–2014 and in the case of 11–12% of the pet facilities in 2015–2018. In 2019, 2020 and 2021, 11%, 12% and 11% of inspections, respectively, led to urgent measures.

Urgent measures and fines

According to the animal welfare monitoring report for 2019 of the Finnish Food Authority, the share of urgent measures in all measures taken by the authorities has increased. In 2010, 14% of measures were urgent, while in 2021 the share of urgent measures was 23%. The share of prohibitions and orders has decreased over the same period. The share of prohibitions and orders was 86% in 2010 and 77% in 2021.

The increase in the number of inspections of pet facilities is likely to have contributed to this change.

Five conditional fines have been imposed or initiated as a result of inspections based on suspicion of violation in 2015, four in 2016 and ten in 2017.

Follow-up inspections

A follow-up inspection is a new visit to a previously inspected facility to ensure that the orders given are being followed. Facilities that have been given a prohibition and order should be inspected again to ensure that the animal owner is treating the animal in accordance with the law. The Regional State Administrative Agencies have estimated that in 2010 about half of the facilities that were given a prohibition or order were inspected again even though the target was 90%. The completion of animal welfare inspections based on suspicion of violation was therefore not effective, at least in 2010.

The number of follow-up inspections in 2011–2014 is not known. In 2018 and 2021, 25% and 23% of the inspections based on suspicion of violation were follow-up inspections. In 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021, animal welfare inspections based on suspicion of violation resulted in prohibitions or orders in the case of 1,944, 1,833, 1,725 and 1,721 facilities respectively. The number of prohibitions or orders issued in connection with a follow-up inspection was more than 600 in 2018, just under 600 in 2019, and just under 500 in 2021. This means that prohibitions or orders issued during a previous inspection had not been complied with or new non-compliances were discovered during the follow-up inspection. In 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021, a total of 150, 133, 158 and 98 follow-up inspections, respectively, resulted in urgent measures to safeguard animal welfare.

Control of animal welfare payment measures

The animal welfare payment is a voluntary form of support for livestock producers, partly funded by the EU. The producer can choose one or more of the support measures, and commits to them for a year at a time.

Read more about the animal welfare payment in the [Politics and economy](#) section of this report.

The commitment to the animal welfare payment measures is monitored by Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY Centres), authorised by Regional State Administrative Agencies. The Finnish Food Authority provides guidelines on the monitoring and reports the results.

The number of farms committed to the payment, the number of farms monitored, the number of farms where subsidies were cut and sanction rates for 2017–2020 are shown in Table 8. In 2017–2020, sanctions were imposed on 17–21% of the monitored farms, compared to 29–37% in 2010–2013. According to the Finnish Food Authority, the most common issues observed during the monitoring of sheep farms that received animal welfare payment sanctions in 2020 involved documentation.

For cattle farms sanctioned in 2020, the most common issues involved documentation, conditions in lying areas and surface areas of pens. Issues observed in pig farms involved conditions in lying areas and surface areas of group pens for sows. Issues observed in poultry farms in 2020 involved enrichment materials, platforms, ramps and roosts; the sanctioned farms had too few of these and the areas were too small.

In 2017–2019, around 7% of the farms receiving animal welfare payments were monitored each year. In 2020, 4% of farms were monitored. The selection of farms for animal welfare payment monitoring is based in particular on risks, but farms are also chosen at random.

Table 8.

The number of farms committed to the animal welfare payment, the number of farms monitored, the number of farms where subsidies were cut and sanction rates for 2010–2013 and 2017–2020 (source: Finnish Food Authority).

Year	Number of farms committed to the animal welfare payment	Number of farms monitored	Number of farms where subsidies cut	Sanction rate, %
2010	4806	291	96	33
2011	4983	290	98	34
2012	6210	339	124	37
2013	5634	340	99	29
...
2017	6202	450	85	19
2018	6142	486	85	17
2019	6092	434	72	17
2020	5971	233	49	21
2021	5 873	260	64	25
2022	5 518	292	36	12

Control of animal welfare at organic livestock farms

The control of organically produced agricultural products, feed and food is planned and managed by the Finnish Food Authority. The control results are published in organic production control reports (on the Food Authority website under the annual **sector-specific control reports**) (in Finnish).

Each organic livestock farm is visited at least once a year to check compliance with the **conditions for organic livestock production** (in Finnish).

The total number of organic animal farms subject to control in 2020 and 2021 was 1,126 and 1,148 respectively.

In 2020, non-compliance with the organic production conditions was observed on 10.7% of the organic livestock farms, compared to 11.8% in 2021. The most common issues in 2020 and 2021 involved outdoor exercise, outdoor exercise facilities, feeding and record-keeping of the farm. Marketing bans were imposed on 17 organic livestock farms in 2020 and 18 farms in 2021.

Control of operations with laboratory animals

The keeping and use of animals used for scientific or educational purposes, i.e. laboratory animals, is supervised by the Regional State Administrative Agencies of Southern and Eastern Finland. Inspections are performed by the Regional Veterinary Officers of the Regional State Administrative Agencies. The frequency of inspection visits is determined based on the risks. High-risk institutes are visited at least twice a year and institutes with a lower risk at least once every three years. The risk assessment takes into account, among others, the nature of the tests carried out in the research institute, the species and numbers of animals kept, and the institute's previous control results. In addition, inspections are carried out to monitor the implementation of specified measures and whenever the control authority is informed of a suspected violation of the legislation.

In 2022, there were 98 research institutes using animals for scientific or educational purposes in Finland, of which 46 were inspected during the year (this figure includes follow-up inspections). Thirteen of the inspections were unannounced.

The non-compliances observed during the inspections are classified in order of severity (Categories A, B, C and D) and into withdrawals of operating licences or project authorisations. In 2022, eight issues classified as least serious (Category A; in seven different institutes) and one more serious (Category C) issue were observed. No Category B or D issues were observed during the inspections, and no operating licences or project authorisations were withdrawn in 2022. Guidance and advice was provided when issuing operating licences, in connection with the inspections, when contacting the research institutes and at training events.

In recent years, the number of non-compliances observed during inspections has stabilised at 10–15% in the case of minor issues and 20% in the case of moderate issues. Serious non-compliances have been observed only occasionally over the years.

Read more about the welfare of laboratory animals in the section on [Laboratory animals](#)

Planning and development of control by the authorities

The multiannual national control plan for the Finnish food supply chain (**Elintarvikeketjun monivuotinen kansallinen valvontasuunnitelma VASU**) (in Finnish) is prepared by the Finnish Food Authority. The VASU report brings together information on performed control, the non-compliances observed during the control measures and the sanctions imposed. A report on the implementation of the VASU is submitted annually to the EU Commission.

The VASU for 2021–2024 includes **an animal health and welfare control plan** (in Finnish). The control of animal health and welfare aims to prevent and control contagious animal diseases and maintain a high level of animal health, improve animal welfare and protect humans from diseases transmissible from animals to humans, antimicrobial resistance and hazardous substances.

The national veterinary programme (in Finnish) (Eläinlääkintähuollon valtakunnallinen ohjelma, EHO) was part of the VASU in 2015–2021. It aimed at improving and harmonising the control of animal health and welfare, guiding the organisation of veterinary services, harmonising the control practices and ensuring equal status of operators in relation to the control measures. An additional aim was to increase the planning, efficiency and quality of the control measures by allowing guidance of the preparation of control plans by the Regional State Administrative Agencies and municipalities.

The EHO also included multiannual control projects in which the veterinary control authorities were involved. The aim of the projects included in the programme was to support the implementation of new and, in some cases, long-standing legislation and key national objectives in these areas. The EHO aimed to ensure that the responsible authorities allocate sufficient human and other resources to the control duties and veterinary services throughout the country.

The Commission **audits and analyses** the implementation and enforcement of animal welfare legislation in the Member States. It also audits compliance with EU import regulations in third countries. The **audit reports** are available on the Commission's website.

Training for control authorities

The Finnish Food Authority regularly arranges training for authorities responsible for animal welfare, such the Regional Veterinary Officers of the Regional State Administrative Agencies and the veterinary inspectors in charge of slaughterhouses, while the Regional State Administrative Agencies regularly train the animal welfare authorities in their own regions. To strengthen cooperation between authorities, the Finnish Food Authority arranges Animal Welfare Days for the authorities, with the participants including local authority veterinary officers, animal health inspectors, police officers, rescue authorities and prosecutors.

Number of veterinary control officers

One of the aims with the Veterinary Services Act (Eläinlääkintähuoltolaki 765/2009) has been to ensure the separation of animal welfare control from the other tasks of local authority veterinary officers, mainly veterinary practice. The objective has been to encourage municipalities to recruit local authority veterinary officers in their area using state funds from the veterinary appropriation included in the budget of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, to focus exclusively on control measures.

In 2011, 2014, 2020 and 2021, respectively, 39, 63, 76 and 81 local authority veterinary officers were employed by municipalities, whom allocated 44, 57 and 60 person-years to animal welfare control alone in 2014, 2020 and 2021. In 2014, 2019, 2020 and 2021, the Regional Veterinary Officers of the Regional State Administrative Agencies performed a total of some 22, 25, 18 and 21 person-years of animal welfare control measures: sample checks of animal farms, cross-compliance animal welfare control measures and the provision of assistance to local authority veterinary officers in difficult animal welfare cases. The decrease in the above figure from 2019 to 2020 may be explained by a decrease in the number of sample checks of animal farms and an increase in regional animal disease control measures.

Separate projects

In the **Nordic Working Group for Microbiology & Animal Health and Welfare (NMDD)**, the Finnish Food Authority is working with other Nordic authorities to develop animal welfare indicators for control purposes. In 2020, criteria on the hygiene of pigs were added to the control guideline, and corresponding criteria for sheep were added in 2021. The Finnish Food Authority also participated in the Working Group on Animal Welfare of the World Organisation for Animal Health (**WOAH**, formerly OIE).

To improve the enforcement of animal welfare legislation related to the breeding of animals, a report on limit values for dog breeding, **Alustava selvitys koirien jalostukseen liittyvistä ongelmista ja puuttumiskeinoista (in Finnish)**, was prepared in cooperation by the Finnish Food Safety Authority, Natural Resources Institute Finland and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, followed by the 2023 follow-up report, **Koiranjalostuksen ongelmat ja valvontakriteerit (in Finnish)**.

The Finnish Food Safety Authority published a report on the welfare of cats, **Kissojen hyvinvointi Suomessa (in Finnish)**, in 2019. The report is based on a survey of veterinarians on the main issues in cat welfare.

Read more on the website of the Finnish Food Authority:

- **Animal welfare control, annual monitoring reports**
- **Monitoring of animal transport (in Finnish)**
- **Conditionality guides (in Finnish)**
- **Commercial animal transport by road (2019; in Finnish)**

ANIMAL WELFARE OFFENCES

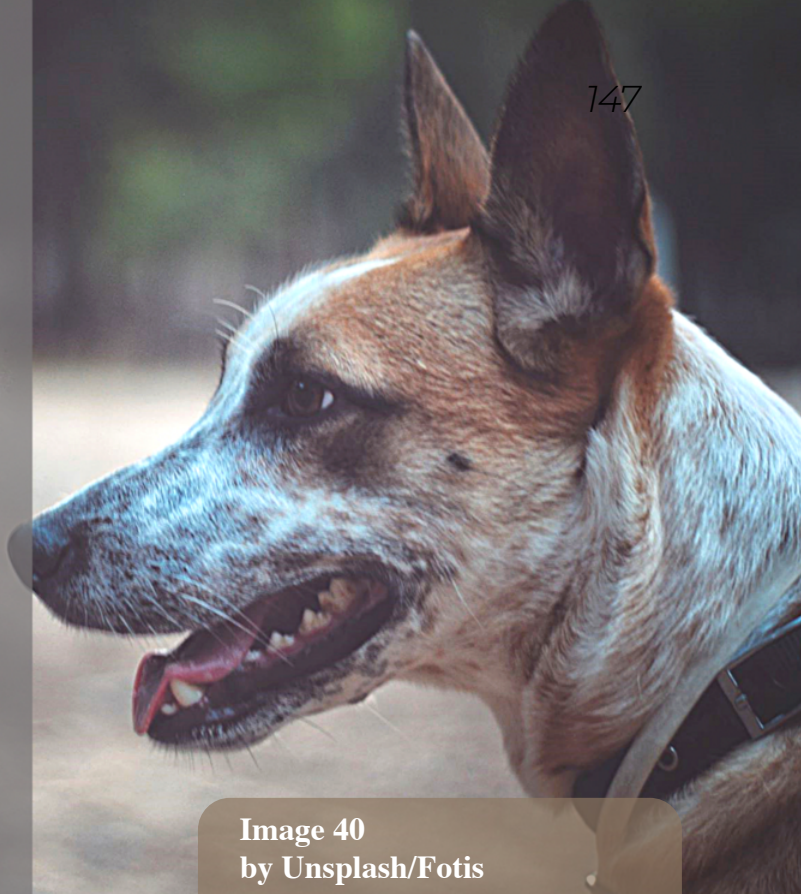


Image 40
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ANIMAL WELFARE OFFENCES

(Published on 10 June 2021)

In recent years, more animal welfare violation reports have been filed with the police, which is also reflected as an increase in the number of cases investigated by the police. There have also been more convictions for animal welfare offences and infringements than in previous years, with harsher sentences. This section of Animal Welfare in Finland III examines the state and development of animal welfare in light of the number of animal welfare violation reports filed with the police, animal welfare cases received by the prosecution, and imposed sentences on animal welfare offences and animal welfare infringements. The data is mainly from 2015–2022, and it is compared with the corresponding data from previous years.

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Introduction

In sentences for animal welfare offences, the penalties and sanctions do not always seem to correspond to the reprehensibility of the acts, and the standard of proof is high. In previous years, sentences for animal welfare offences in Finland have mostly been lenient. However, according to the most recent data, the penalties and sanctions are getting tougher: more cases are being tried, more sentences are being issued and the sentences are harsher than in the past.

In 2015–2022, the number of animal welfare violation reports to the police increased compared to the previous reporting period. The number of suspected animal welfare offences referred to the National Prosecution Authority increased compared to the previous reporting period. The number of sentences for animal welfare offences was also higher, and the sentences were harsher than in the previous reporting period. In addition, more prohibitions to keep animals were issued than before.

In 2018, the Helsinki Police Department established Finland's first animal-related investigative team. In December 2019, a patrol consisting of a police officer and a game and fisheries warden from Metsähallitus was established in Eastern Finland to focus on reducing the illegal killing of wolves and assist locals in resolving problems caused by wolves. Furthermore, the Eastern Finland Police Department will hire a full-time **hunting offence investigator (in Finnish)** in 2023.

In Finland, violations of the animal welfare legislation are criminalised as animal welfare offences, aggravated animal welfare offences, petty animal welfare offences, animal welfare infringements and animal transport infringements. The sanction for an animal welfare infringement or a petty animal welfare offence is a fine. An animal welfare offence is punishable by a fine or at most two years of imprisonment. An aggravated animal welfare offence is punishable by a least four months and at most four years of imprisonment.

The authors of this section are Satu Raussi, Principal Specialist, Tiina Kauppinen, Senior Specialist, and Weera Walden, intern, from the Finnish Centre for Animal Welfare. The visiting author is Sofia Väärikkälä, veterinarian and doctoral candidate (PhD in 2021).

Animal welfare offences take several forms

An animal welfare offence requires active action, wilful or gross negligence, cruelty and brutality. In addition to the provisions on the basic animal welfare offence, the Criminal Code of Finland includes provisions on the aggravated and the petty animal welfare offence and the prohibition to keep animals. The Animal Welfare Act includes provisions on the animal welfare infringement. There are provisions on the animal welfare offence also in section 109 of the Animal Welfare Act that will enter into force at the beginning of 2024.

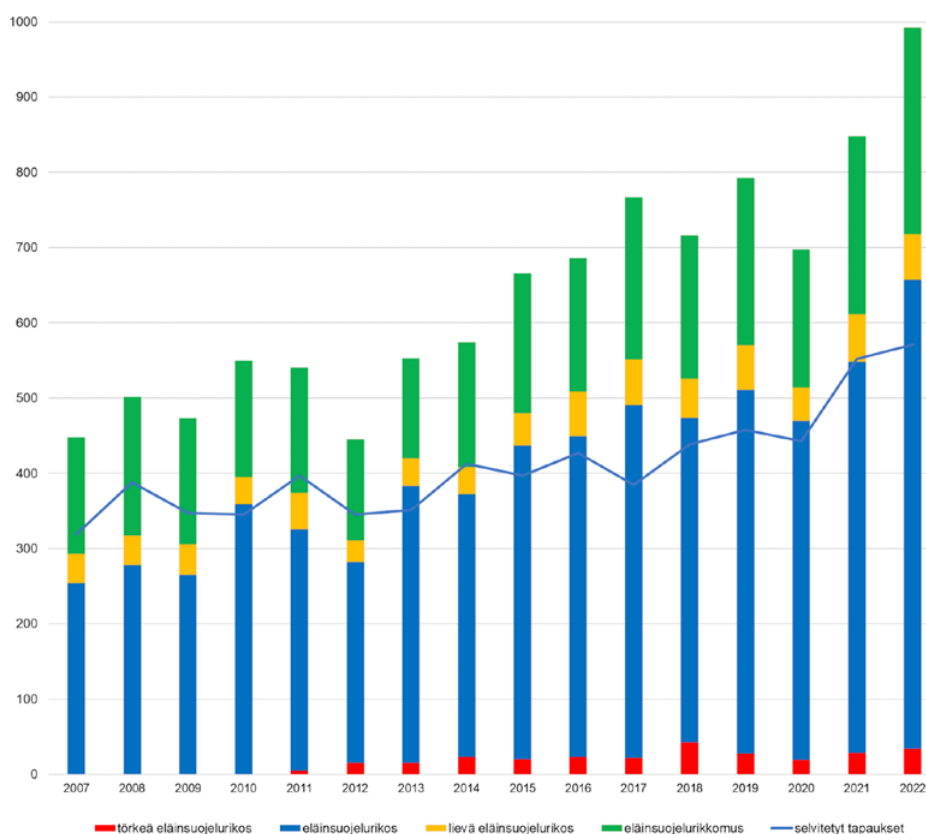
If an offence is committed in a particularly brutal or cruel manner, if it is directed at a considerably large number of animals or if considerable economic benefit is sought, and the offence is also aggravated when assessed as a whole, the perpetrator will be sentenced for an aggravated animal welfare offence to imprisonment. If the act is of minor significance when assessed as a whole, it is considered a petty animal welfare offence for which the perpetrator will be sentenced to a fine. An animal welfare infringement is the least serious of the offences, but it also requires intent or negligence.

A prohibition to keep animals is not a punishment, but a safeguard to prevent the animal from being the victim of repeated offences. A prohibition to keep animals may be imposed as a result of an offence, but it does not require that the person be convicted of the offence; the prohibition to keep animals may therefore be the only sanction. A person with a prohibition to keep animals is not allowed to own, keep or care for animals, or be responsible for their welfare.

Animal welfare violation reports to the police

The number of animal welfare violation reports filed with the police has increased significantly since 2011. In 2011–2014, a total of 2,407 animal welfare violation reports were filed with the police, compared to 2,835 in 2015–2018 and 3,331 in 2019–2022. The vast majority of the reports received by the police identify activities in violation of animal welfare legislation.

In 2015–2018, the constituent elements of an offence were met in 2,637 cases (93%), compared to 2,127 cases (88%) in the previous four-year period. The number of animal welfare offences reported to the police and solved by the police in 2007–2022 is shown in Image 41.



Törkeä eläinsuojelurikos	Aggravated animal welfare offence
Eläinsuojelurikos	Animal welfare offence
Lievä eläinsuojelurikos	Petty animal welfare offence
Eläinsuojelurikkomus	Animal welfare infringement
Selvitetyt tapaukset	Cases solved

Image 41.

Animal welfare offences reported to the police and solved by the police in 2007–2022 (source: National Police Board of Finland)

Animal welfare offence cases before prosecutors

In 2015–2018, prosecutors received 935 suspected animal welfare offences for processing (822 in the previous four-year period). In 2019–2022, prosecutors received 1,259 suspected animal welfare offence for processing. A decision not to prosecute was made in the case of a total of 120 suspected animal welfare offences in 2015–2018 and 167 suspected animal welfare offences in 2019–2022 (source: National Prosecution Authority).

Table 9 shows the number of cases received by prosecutors from the authority responsible for the pre-trial investigation and the number of cases solved by prosecutors in 2018–2022, broken down into animal welfare offences, petty animal welfare offences, animal welfare infringements and aggravated animal welfare offences. In Table 9, the decisions on the cases are broken down into prosecutions, decisions not to prosecute, restrictions of the pre-trial investigation and other decisions. The ‘other decisions’ are usually

Table 9. Suspected animal welfare offences submitted to prosecutors, cases solved by prosecutors, indictments, decisions not to prosecute, restrictions of the pre-trial investigation and other decisions in 2018–2022.
Source: National Prosecution Authority.

Animal welfare infringement, number of cases

Year	Received by prosecutors	Decided by prosecutors	Indictment	Decision not to prosecute	Restriction of the pre-trial investigation	Other decision
2018	37	38	13	9	14	2
2019	34	33	8	6	17	2
2020	33	33	16	8	6	3
2021	26	25	14	3	8	0
2022	26	27	8	4	14	1

Petty animal welfare offence, number of cases

Year	Received by prosecutors	Decided by prosecutors	Indictment	Decision not to prosecute	Restriction of the pre-trial investigation
2018	8	9	2	4	3
2019	8	8	2	1	5
2020	9	8	2	1	5
2021	11	9	3	1	5
2022	7	9	3	4	2

Animal welfare offence, number of cases

Year	Received by prosecutors	Decided by prosecutors	Indictment	Decision not to prosecute	Restriction of the pre-trial investigation	Other decision
2018	235	239	184	26	21	8
2019	216	208	148	30	26	4
2020	213	201	131	35	32	3
2021	277	243	187	23	27	6
2022	303	296	208	49	35	4

Aggravated animal welfare offence, number of cases

Year	Received by prosecutors	Decided by prosecutors	Indictment	Decision not to prosecute	Restriction of the pre-trial investigation	Other decision
2018	26	22	17	3	2	0
2019	16	18	15	0	1	2
2020	25	19	17	0	2	0
2021	26	27	24	2	0	1
2022	30	26	23	2	0	1

Convictions for animal welfare offences

The number of convictions on animal welfare offences (aggravated animal welfare offence, animal welfare offence, petty animal welfare offence and animal welfare infringement) in 2015–2018 was higher than in the previous reporting period (2011–2014). The total number of sentences was 173 in 2015 and the same in 2017, slightly more than 190 in both 2016 and 2018, and slightly more than 200 in both 2019 and 2021 (Table 10).

Sentences for animal transport infringements are not given every year; in the previous reporting period (2011–2014), a total of four sentences were imposed, and in 2015–2018 a total of three. One sentence for an animal transport infringement was imposed in 2019, and none in 2020–2021.

10a

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Aggravated animal welfare offence (Chapter 17, section 14a of the Criminal Code)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	3	6	6
Animal welfare offence (Chapter 17, section 14 of the Criminal Code)	93	92	100	98	115	98	145	130
Petty animal welfare offence (Chapter 17, section 15 of the Criminal Code)	5	5	4	11	12	11	11	13
Animal welfare infringement (section 54 of the Animal Welfare Act)	22	33	35	28	23	12	22	16
Total	120	130	139	137	151	124	184	165

10b

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Aggravated animal welfare offence (Chapter 17, section 14a of the Criminal Code)	6	9	10	16	11	12	12	14
Animal welfare offence (Chapter 17, section 14 of the Criminal Code)	130	139	154	135	156	178	134	167
Petty animal welfare offence (Chapter 17, section 15 of the Criminal Code)	13	8	12	7	10	15	6	6
Animal welfare infringement (section 54 of the Animal Welfare Act)	16	17	16	15	14	12	13	15
Total	165	173	192	173	191	217	165	202

Table 10 a and b.

Number of persons convicted in court for an aggravated animal welfare offence, an animal welfare offence, a petty animal welfare offence and an animal welfare infringement in 2007–2021 (source: Statistics Finland)

Prohibitions to keep animals

In 2015–2018, 399 prohibitions to keep animals were imposed, compared to 301 in the previous four-year period 2011–2014. In 2019–2021, a total of 299 prohibitions were imposed. The highest number of prohibitions was in 2018, 120 in total. The number of temporary prohibitions was significantly higher than the number of permanent ones.

A temporary prohibition to keep animals is imposed for at least one year. The number of permanent prohibitions increased in 2015–2018 compared to the previous four-year period. The number of prohibitions in 2007–2021 is shown in Table 11.

11a

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Number of temporary prohibitions	33	55	44	36	61	57	86
Average duration of a temporary prohibition, years	4	3,8	4,4	4	5,1	3,9	3,4
Number of permanent prohibitions	5	9	11	14	6	5	4
Total number of prohibitions to keep animals	38	64	55	50	67	62	90

11b

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Number of temporary prohibitions	76	89	93	68	112	96	80	101
Average duration of a temporary prohibition, years	3,5	3,1	3,2	3,8	3,4	3,4	3,5	4,1
Number of permanent prohibitions	6	6	9	14	8	10	8	4
Total number of prohibitions to keep animals	82	95	102	82	120	106	88	105

Table 11 a and b.

Prohibitions to keep animals in 2007–2021 (source: Statistics Finland)

Read more:

Eläimen kärsimys arvioidaan tuomioistuimissa vaihtelevasti

Sofia Väärikkälä, Tarja Koskela, Laura Hänninen & Mari Nevas.

Evaluation of criminal sanctions concerning violations of cattle and pig welfare, *Animals* 2020, 10(4): 715.

Helsingin yliopisto, Eläinten hyvinvoinnin tutkimuskeskus 21.4.2020: Nautoihin ja sikoihin kohdistuneista eläinsuojelurikoksista selvittiin pääosin sakoilla

Eläimiksi – kriittisen eläintutkimuksen näkökulmia, Tarja Koskela 20.2.2020:

Syyttämättäjättämispäätös – viesti eläinten kaltoinkohtelun hyväksyttävyydestä?

Koskela Tarja: Optimaalinen eläinsuojelu rikosprosessissa ja julkishallinnossa.

Dissertations in Social Sciences and Business Studies. University of Eastern Finland 2017.

Pets suffer neglect and outright abuse

In Finland, a pet owner is most often **convicted (in Finnish)** of neglecting an animal's basic needs. Around 73% of sentences in 2018 were for the neglect of pets, while 27% of sentences were for the abuse of pets. In a typical case, a person had a couple of dogs or several cats which they did not properly care for.

In practice, this means that the animal was not given enough water and food, proper exercise or treatment for its illnesses. The animal may also have been living in its own filth and faeces.

The punishment for the neglect or violent abuse of a pet is usually lenient. The most typical penalty is unit fines. In 2018, only ten persons were sentenced to conditional imprisonment, and only one person was sentenced for an aggravated offence.

In order to impose a permanent prohibition to keep animals, the offence must be aggravated, the offender must have had previous temporary prohibitions to keep animals or the offender's state of health must be such that it prevents them from caring for animals. At present, hardly any permanent prohibitions to keep animals are imposed. However, the main problem with the prohibitions is that it is virtually impossible to enforce them. Even those who are not allowed to keep animals are protected by the right to domestic privacy, and the control authority can only perform inspections on grounds of suspected non-compliance.



Image 42 by Unsplash/Chris Arthur Collins



Image 43 by iStock

Unit fines most common penalty for non-compliance with farm animal regulations

In 2018, more than 3,000 **animal welfare inspections (in Finnish)** based on suspicion of violation were performed on animal farms in Finland. Some of the farms were in direct breach of the law, and some kind of issues were observed in almost half of the inspections. Although more than 3,000 inspections are performed each year and issues are observed in very large number of them, only around 60–80 convictions for animal welfare offences against farm animals are issued in Finland each year, and most of the sentences are lenient.

The judgments and studies suggest that animal welfare offences are not considered serious, at least not everywhere in Finland. This is partly due to a lack of resources, courage, skills and expertise.

In 2018, 61 final judgments for animal welfare offences against farm animals were issued in Finland. In most cases, the offence resulted in unit fines. An animal welfare offence is punishable by a fine or at most two years of imprisonment. The assumption is that the judge is able to assess the harm caused to the animals when imposing the sentence. However, animal welfare issues and understanding the suffering of animals are not part of a lawyer's training.

The court has comprehensive discretionary powers in assessing the seriousness of the act. This is largely why sentences vary widely across Finland. This disparity applies not only to penalties, but also to prosecutors, control and the police. The sentencing practices could be harmonised by concentrating animal welfare offences in some courts, for example.

Pirkanmaa District Court has been at the forefront both in the number and severity of animal welfare offences in the 2000s. For example, in Pirkanmaa an animal welfare offence is considered aggravated much more often than elsewhere in Finland. However, it is unlikely that this means that animals are treated significantly worse in Pirkanmaa than elsewhere, but rather that there is a functioning chain of control consisting of the local veterinary enforcement officers, the police, the prosecutors and the court.

An animal welfare offence is considered aggravated if it is committed in a particularly brutal or cruel manner. Furthermore, an animal welfare offence is aggravated if it is directed at a considerably large number of animals, or if considerable economic benefit is sought. For an animal welfare offence to be considered aggravated, it must also be aggravated when assessed as a whole.

Dozens of prohibitions to keep animals are imposed in Finland every year. A prohibition is usually temporary, such as for a couple of years, and permanent prohibitions are rarely imposed. There is little possibility to enforce the prohibition: a control officer can only inspect a farm if they suspect a new violation.

The prosecutor and the court often rely on the expert opinions of local veterinary enforcement officers when making decisions. However, it should be noted that matters other than the opinions of the local veterinary enforcement officers also influence the judgments. For example, even if the animal abuse has been going on for years, any personal challenges faced by the livestock producer such as financial problems, illness or a family tragedy are often taken into account as mitigating factors.

Lack of food, water and proper hygiene most common causes on pig and cattle farms

Researchers from the University of Helsinki and the University of Eastern Finland **studied (in Finnish)** animal welfare non-compliances involving pigs and cattle and the penalties imposed for them as criminal convictions in 2011–2016. Over the six-year period, there were 196 cases in total, and defendants were convicted in 96% of cases. More than 90% of the convictions concerned offences against cattle. Most of the offences took place on small farms.

In 2011–2016, the most common causes of animal welfare offences against pigs and cattle that ended up in court were lack of food, water and proper hygiene. The offences typically resulted in lenient sentences such as small fines or short conditional imprisonment. The offences were therefore not considered very serious and the penalties were not in line with the duration of the offences or the number of animal welfare inspections.

Fate of animals often unclear in cases of prohibition to keep animals

In half of these cases, a prohibition to keep animals was imposed to make the sentence more effective. A prohibition to keep animals is more important than a fine or conditional imprisonment in terms of the continuation of the producer's business. When imposing a prohibition to keep animals, the prosecutor should apply for government confiscation of the animals.

However, there was no mention of government confiscation in half of the cases where a prohibition to keep animals was imposed, which means that the fate of the animals remained unclear in half of the cases.

Many of the offences had been going on for quite some time before legal action was taken. The median duration of the offences was seven months, and a veterinary officer had visited the farm on average four times before the case went to court.

Prolonged animal welfare cases serious threat to animal welfare

A failure to make lasting improvements despite recurring inspections is not in the best interest of the animals, the veterinary officers or even the livestock producers. Prolonged animal welfare issues often have other underlying problems, such as challenges involving personal finances or health problems. Improving the cooperation between the animal welfare authorities and other authorities is the key. In the case of a prolonged animal welfare case, the views of the producer and the veterinary officer tend to differ, so investing in communication and interaction is also important.

If animal welfare is repeatedly compromised and no lasting improvement is in sight, the veterinarian must have the courage to say enough is enough. If animal welfare inspections were carried out in pairs, the responsibility for decision-making would be shared between two veterinarians, which could make it easier to tackle problems.

Long way to go to achieve optimal animal welfare

In her doctoral thesis, Tarja Koskela, LL.D., studied the optimal protection of animals in the criminal procedure and the public administration. The thesis was primarily focused on whether the purpose of the Animal Welfare Act and the objectives prescribed in the Act are achievable in the criminal procedure. Koskela went through the animal welfare process that begins with a suspicion of an animal welfare offence and ends with a judgement for the animal welfare offence and the control of any prohibition to keep animals imposed as a part of the sentence.

The achievement of optimal animal welfare would require changes to both the proceedings of public authorities and legislation. The authorities exercising the powers they currently have by law would alone improve optimal animal welfare. To rectify passiveness, a prohibition of passivity should be included in the Animal Welfare Act together with procedural provisions specifying how to address the passivity. To clarify the roles of the authorities, the duties of local animal welfare authorities should be centralised to one authority, such as the local authority veterinary officer.

Animal welfare control should be systematic and based on risks, not just on suspicions. Furthermore, the regulation of control should cover the control of the prohibition to keep animals.

Having some police officers and prosecutors specialise in animal welfare matters would also be important in terms of optimal animal welfare. Animal welfare cases should be centralised to certain courts, and a veterinary expert should be added to the composition of the court. During the judicial proceedings, expert witnesses should be heard concerning the rule of experience and its application to the case at hand.

In nine out of ten animal welfare offences, the sentence is a fine, the amount of which is 39 unit fines on average. The punishments and the other consequences should more closely correspond to the reprehensibility of the act and the standard of proof should not be set too high, Koskela sums up in her thesis.

A close-up photograph of two dogs. On the left is a black dog with thick, wavy fur, looking towards the right. On the right is a white dog with long, shaggy fur, looking towards the black dog with its mouth open and tongue out. The background is a soft-focus green field.

Visiting author

Image 44
by Unsplash/Caleb Woods.
Increasing research data has highlighted the significance of an animal's own experiences to its welfare.

Visiting author: Sofia Väärikkälä

Animal welfare control must tackle animal abuse

The primary role of animal welfare authorities is to ensure that animal owners comply with animal welfare legislation and that animals are not subjected to undue pain, suffering and distress. Animal welfare legislation sets a minimum legal standard for animal welfare, but the actual level of protection and welfare is determined by the implementation and enforcement of the provisions. It is therefore of utmost importance that animal welfare authorities address animal abuse quickly, effectively and consistently, writes the visiting author Sofia Väärikkälä, a veterinarian with a long track record in animal welfare.

Owner is responsible for welfare of their animals

The primary responsibility for the welfare of an animal always lies with the owner. Before acquiring a pet or setting up an animal farm, the needs of the prospective animal and the species, as well as the animal welfare legislation applicable to the animal, should be carefully considered.

However, for one reason or another, animal owners are not always able or willing to care for the welfare of their animals. If this is due to a lack of knowledge, advice often leads to good results. If the animal has clearly been abused, however, advice will rarely improve the situation. Animal abuse can be active, i.e. deliberate harming of the animal, or passive, i.e. leaving the animal unattended. Roughly speaking, pets are subjected to both active and passive abuse, while farm animals are most often subjected to passive abuse. The Animal Welfare Act (247/1996) provides a clear framework for the keeping, care and treatment of animals and gives animal welfare authorities extensive powers to intervene with cases of animal abuse.

Animal welfare control is necessary

Animal welfare control has long traditions in Finland. The first national Animal Welfare Act (163/1934), which entered into force in 1934, conferred the duty of supervising the law to the police, while county governors were given the right to appoint a veterinary surgeon or other reliable person to act as the animal welfare officer on behalf of the police.

Still, almost a century later, the police and veterinary surgeons play a key role as the local animal welfare authorities. The resources available for animal welfare control dramatically increased in the 2010s with the creation of posts of local authority veterinary officers (local veterinary enforcement officers) by the environmental health services, and the recruitment of Regional Veterinary Officers focusing on animal welfare control by the Regional State Administrative Agencies. The number of inspection visits considerably increased as a result of the improved resources. The annual inspection results show that there is indeed a need for control.

Control of animal welfare or animal welfare provisions?

Most of the provisions in animal welfare legislation involve the provision of adequate resources such as appropriate facilities and care. Control of such 'external factors' is often easy, but can we call it the control of the welfare of animals? Increasing research evidence highlights the importance of the animal's own experiences, positive and negative, for its welfare. In addition to observing the environmental factors and physical changes, the veterinarians performing the control measures should assess the impact of their observations to animal welfare.

Penalties for animal welfare offences are lenient; this may be partly due to a lack of understanding of the significance of neglect or abuse to the welfare of an animal. Terms used by veterinarians such as 'manure armour' or 'untreated parodontitis', are unlikely to mean anything to the police officer, prosecutor or judge handling the case.

The veterinarian plays a key role in assessing whether undue pain, suffering or distress has been caused to an animal, and if so, for how long and how severe the suffering is. Assessing the experiences of an animal is not always an easy task, even for someone with veterinary training. As research knowledge on animal welfare continues to increase, the veterinarians performing control measures should also update their skills.

Multidisciplinary approach to serious animal welfare cases

Serious animal welfare offences are often linked to the animal owner's other issues, such as health problems, social or financial difficulties. The veterinarian is unlikely to have – and need not have – the ability to deal with someone else's personal issues. The role of a veterinarian is to focus on the animal and its welfare. What is essential is that there is functional cooperation between the veterinarian and other authorities to ensure that an exhausted animal owner or an animal owner with a substance abuse problem receives appropriate help. By tackling the underlying problems of the animal welfare issue, the veterinarian is in a better position to promote the welfare of the animal.

The One Welfare approach emphasises the link between animal and human welfare. Cooperation between the animal welfare authorities and other authorities is essential in the promotion of the welfare of both animals and humans. Cooperation is required at all levels of the chain of authorities, starting from ministries. However, cooperation between the authorities working at the local level, i.e. those who meet the animals and people in need, is the key.

Text by Sofia Väärikkälä, doctoral candidate (PhD in 2021), University of Helsinki

ANIMAL WELFARE EDUCATION AND TRAINING



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Fotopoulos

ANIMAL WELFARE EDUCATION AND TRAINING

(Published on 20 May 2021)

In Finland, animal welfare can be studied from comprehensive school all the way to a vocational qualification or university degree. However, there is no Finnish academic degree focusing exclusively on animal welfare. This section of Animal Welfare in Finland III discusses animal welfare education and training in Finland, shedding light on the role of animal welfare in national curricula, presenting higher education institutions providing education in this field and listing examples of other providers of animal welfare education and training materials.

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Introduction

Animal welfare is part of the curriculum taught in Finnish basic education, both in primary and lower secondary school. In the general upper secondary curriculum, animals and their rights are included in the teaching of biology and philosophy. New teaching materials on animal welfare issues are needed. Updating this information will also benefit teachers.

In Finland, there is no higher education dedicated exclusively to animal welfare. Courses on animal welfare are offered by various universities in their programmes in applied biology, animal science and veterinary medicine, as well as by universities of applied sciences in their Bachelor of Natural Resources programmes. Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) offers a bachelor programme in ethology and animal welfare. In vocational education and training, several further vocational qualifications related to animal welfare are available.

Most recent EU animal welfare legislation includes a requirement on animal welfare training for persons working with animals. The content, objectives and achievement of qualification are set out in the EU education recommendations. The requirement for training and familiarisation in animal welfare is included in the legislation on the protection of broilers, the killing and transport of animals, and the scientific or educational use of animals.

In addition to basic, upper secondary and tertiary education, animal welfare education is provided by private operators, organisations and public authorities. Some examples of animal welfare education and education providers are listed at the end of this section of the report.

The authors of this section are Satu Raussi, Principal Specialist, and Tiina Kauppinen, Senior Specialist, from the Finnish Centre for Animal Welfare.

Animal welfare in national curricula – pre–primary, basic and general upper secondary education

Animal welfare is not mentioned **the National Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education (in Finnish)**, but the pre-primary environmental education is promised to provide children with experiences of nature and the opportunity to explore and learn about plants, animals and natural phenomena.

In the **National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (in Finnish)**, animal welfare has been taken into account for grades 3–6, where environmental studies include reflection on the impact of one’s own actions on oneself, other people, animal welfare, nature and society.

The biology curriculum for grades 7–9 includes reflection on the ecological, social, economic and ethical principles of sustainable use of natural resources, sustainable food production and animal welfare. In Evangelical Lutheran religion for the same grades, ethical issues related to the fundamental questions of life, Finnish society, global sustainability, the environment and animals may be selected. In grades 7 to 9, ethics explores the possibilities for a sustainable future for nature and society, as well as environmental ethics issues such as animal rights.

The **National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Education in Finnish** was adopted in 2019 and implemented in the autumn semester of 2021. The biology curriculum in upper secondary school includes the teaching of animal evolution, key evolutionary adaptations and animal breeding. The upper secondary school philosophy curriculum includes the study of ethical issues related to the environment and nature, e.g. climate change and animal rights.

In pre-primary, basic and general upper secondary education, it is possible to raise animal welfare and animal rights issues. As the practical organisers of education, municipalities prepare curricula based on the national core curricula to be followed by local schools. In basic and general upper secondary education, teachers’ opportunities to address animal welfare issues may be limited by incomplete or outdated information on animal welfare issues in teaching materials. In addition to the lack of updated teaching materials, teachers should be equipped with the knowledge and skills required to teach animal welfare already in teacher training and later in continuing education.

Vocational upper secondary education and training in animal welfare

Vocational qualifications include initial vocational upper secondary qualifications, further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications. The vocational education institutions of the Finnish National Agency for Education that provide animal-related vocational education and training implement the National Core Curriculum for Vocational Education and Training. Qualifications such as the **Further Vocational Qualification in Horse Care and Management**, **Vocational Qualification in Agriculture**, **Further Vocational Qualification in Agriculture** and **Specialist Vocational Qualification in Agriculture** include animal welfare education.

The Further Vocational Qualification in Animal Care, 150 credit units, consists of compulsory and optional modules. The title of a qualification holder is, depending on the field, animal trainer, animal groomer, animal attendant at clinics, laboratory animal attendant or dog massage therapist. The vocational qualification

competence area may also be animal care facility or pet sales. Scope of the **Specialist vocational qualification in Animal Care** is 180 credit units. The qualification holder may choose as their competence area animal training, care of animals at clinics or care of laboratory animals.

Adult education centres, folk high schools, summer universities and study centres can also provide animal welfare education. The purpose of **liberal adult education** is to promote social cohesion, equality, active citizenship and the development and welfare of people in all aspects of life.

Tertiary education in animal welfare research

Natural sciences education

There is still no bachelor's or master's study module in animal welfare in Finland. In the field of applied natural sciences, separate university courses in animal welfare can be taken at the University of Helsinki under animal welfare and behaviour research at the **Department of Production Animal Medicine** in the University of Helsinki Faculty of Veterinary Medicine.

Under animal science in the **bachelor's and master's degree programmes** of the University of Helsinki **Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry**, it is possible to study animal welfare and nutrition, physiology, genomics and selective breeding.

The University of Helsinki Faculty of Veterinary Medicine has a professorship in animal welfare science and the vacancy of clinical lecturer in animal welfare.

Under the guidance of the above-mentioned lecturer, a veterinarian can complete the European specialisation in animal welfare, ethics and law, Dip ECAWBM (WSEL). **The Research Centre for Animal Welfare** is a multidisciplinary community of animal behaviour and welfare researchers and postgraduate students at the University of Helsinki Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. The contact person for the Centre is Professor Anna Valros.

The University of Helsinki has a **Doctoral Programme in Clinical Veterinary Medicine (CVM)**. In addition to clinical veterinary medicine, the programme covers animal welfare. The doctoral programme enables animal-related doctoral studies in translational medicine, clinical pathology, humanities and social sciences. The programme offers mentoring and courses for postgraduate studies in the field. There are more than 90 students and more than 50 mentors.

It is possible to complete a bachelor's or master's degree in life sciences in the Faculty of Science of several universities. Life sciences include zoology and fishery biology, for example. University education in the field of biology is available at **the University of Helsinki** Faculty of Biological and Environmental Sciences, **at the University of Eastern Finland** in Joensuu, **the University of Jyväskylä** Department of Biological and Environmental Science, the University of Oulu Department of Biology, **the University of Turku** Department of Biology and **Åbo Akademi**.

At universities of applied sciences in different parts of Finland, it is possible to become a **Bachelor of Natural Resources**. The average time to achieve the bachelor's degree is four years. The studies consist of core, professional and specialisation studies, practical training and a thesis. The studies include teaching in animal welfare. Universities of applied sciences decide independently on the content of the education they provide.

Education in social sciences

Education in human-animal studies and the teaching of other social and cultural animal issues has increased in Finnish universities as the body of research in the field has grown. Courses specialising in human-animal studies are offered at least at the University of Turku, the University of Eastern Finland, Tampere University and Åbo Akademi, the latter of which, in addition to the University of Eastern Finland, offers courses on animal rights. Tampere University offers a one-year **behavioural analysis-based course for animal trainers**.

It is also possible to learn about animals and animal welfare at open universities. For example, the Open University of the University of Helsinki offers a course worth five credit units on **animal law**.

Qualification for work with laboratory animals

Those working with animals used for scientific or educational purposes, i.e. laboratory animals, must have sufficient knowledge and skills before they are allowed to start the work. The content of the training, the objectives and the achievement of the qualification are set out in the EU education recommendations, which include specific content for each function group.

Universities offer education specifically for those carrying out procedures and killing animals, students, researchers and laboratory personnel (Groups A and D) and for researchers planning projects (Group B). The courses include training modules which are also part of the training programme for animal technicians (Group C). The courses provide the required basic skills, but actual qualification to work with animals can only be achieved after practical training, usually in a research team. Animal welfare and compliance **with the 3R principle** are an essential part of the course content.

Species specificity is an important principle in practical training. To qualify to work with a particular species, one needs knowledge of species-specific theory and practical training with that species. As the majority of animals used for scientific purposes in Finland are small rodents, the university courses focus on mice and rats. Several universities offer species-specific education in the use of pigs and sheep, for example, and help to arrange training and qualification for those working with fish or wild animals.

Legislation requires the maintenance of knowledge and skills. University student welfare teams arrange themed 3Rs days for those working with laboratory animals. Associations in the field, such as the Finnish Laboratory Animal Science Association (**FinLAS**) (in Finnish), the Finnish Association for Laboratory Animal Veterinarians (**FALAV**) (in Finnish), Koe-eläintenhoitohenkilökunnan yhdistys (the Finnish Laboratory Animal Attendants' Association) and the Finnish National Consensus Platform for Alternatives to Animal Testing (**Fincopa**), arrange annual seminars suitable for continuing education with a focus on the improvement of animal welfare.

3R Centre Finland (FIN3R) promotes the development and use of methods and strategies based on the 3Rs in education and scientific research as well in animal breeding and keeping. FIN3R improves education and training of researchers on the 3R methods, promotes the development of these methods and communicates information on best practices. FIN3R consists of representatives of universities, research institutes, authorities and industry.

Examples of animal welfare education and training materials

Education and training by organisations and associations

Ruokavisa (in Finnish) is a skills competition for lower secondary school pupils that introduces young people to the food chain from farm to fork. It teaches the pupils about the dimensions of food sustainability such as the environment, animal welfare, product safety, nutrition, wellbeing at work, economic responsibility and the local approach. Different sustainability themes are emphasised each year. Ruokavisa is produced by Finnish Food Information (Finfood), the Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners (MTK) and Kotitalousopettajien liitto (the Finnish Federation of Home Economics Teachers). **MTK's farm guides** provide more information the care and conditions of animals at dairy, pig and sheep farms.

The agricultural advisory organisation **ProAgria** offers farmers training and advice on issues such as animal welfare. ProAgria also realises projects to promote the welfare of farm animals. For example, the **Vahvat vasikat (in Finnish)** project aims to improve the health and growth of calves and reduce calf mortality on dairy farms in South Ostrobothnia. ProAgria has **published (in Finnish)** guidebooks on the feeding and care of cattle, pigs, horses and sheep.

Representatives of various organisations will visit schools on request to speak about animal rights, animal welfare and the protection of animals. At least **Animalia (in Finnish)**, Animal Welfare Finland (**SEY**) (in Finnish) and **MTK (in Finnish)** offer such school ambassadors.

SEY regularly organises a call for applications and arranges training for volunteers to become **animal protection counsellors (in Finnish)**. The next call for applications will be in 2023 or 2024. Animal protection counsellor training is provided,

and SEY selects new volunteers from among those who complete the training course. The animal protection counsellor training covers animal welfare issues, different animal species and animal welfare legislation.

Every year for Animal Welfare Week (4–10 October), SEY produces a free package of materials. In 2016–2022, the materials covered horses, wild animals, responsible pet ownership, welfare issues in cage farming, the value of cats as pets, the learning and training of animals, and exciting animals. Schools, day-care centres and clubs place orders for the Animal Week **education materials (in Finnish)** for approximately 140,000 children and young people every year.

Eläintaito.fi (in Finnish) is SEY's open online course for young people on the needs, welfare and protection of animals, and responsible pet ownership.

The Finnish Equine Information Centre focuses on the welfare of horses. The Centre advises, educates and develops the equine industry. The Centre's website offers information on the care, training, shoeing, health, feeding and safety of horses, the stable environment and finances. The Centre has also published several **videos (in Finnish)** on the health and welfare of horses. **The horse feeding school (in Finnish)** offers advice on how to feed your horse. The Equine Information Centre also shares information on its **YouTube channel (in Finnish)**.

Industry training

Suomen Sikayrittäjät (the Finnish Pig Entrepreneurs' Association) trains its members through project activities. One of its current projects, Suojaa SiKana, develops disease risk management for pig and poultry farms.

Suomen siipikarjaliitto (the Finnish Poultry Federation) arranges training days for its members. Its publications include good practices for **egg production** and **organic broiler production**.

Maitoyrittäjät ry (the Finnish Dairy Farmers' Association) guides and advises its members in matters related to their occupation by, for instance, organising meetings, advisory events and training in Finland and abroad.

Paliskuntain yhdistys (the Finnish Reindeer Owners' Association) offers training to those working with reindeer as necessary. The association has produced various instructions and **guides** on good practices in the feeding, care, handling, slaughtering and transport of reindeer, among other topics.

Training and events offered by universities

HOH Helsinki One Health is a network organisation established to coordinate research on the mutual health of humans, animals and the environment (One Health) at the University of Helsinki. HOH focuses on the interaction between the health of animal and human populations in the rapidly changing environment. HOH arranges **training events** on One Health.

The University of Helsinki Research Centre for Animal Welfare produces **guides** and has arranged **animal welfare forums (in Finnish)** open to all since 2008.

The forums popularise the results of Finnish animal welfare research. In recent years, the animal welfare forums have focused on the mind of dogs and dog lovers, the past, present and future of animal welfare, pain in different animal species, pain in the mouth of horses and the improvement of animal welfare through control and volunteer work.

Animal welfare training provided by public authorities

The authorities arrange annual animal welfare training sessions. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry arranges training and information sessions on animal welfare legislation and its implementation. The Finnish Food Authority, the body responsible for the use of the aid from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development in Finland, arranges training on subsidies and **publishes guides (in Finnish)** for farmers on how to apply for subsidies.

For example, training courses on the animal welfare payment for both farmers and the authorities are available. The Food Authority also publishes **guides and instructions (in Finnish)** on animal welfare legislation, animal transport and legislative control. Regional State Administrative Agencies arrange animal welfare training for local veterinary enforcement officers.

ANIMAL WELFARE RESEARCH

Image 46 by Pixabay/
kostiolavi



ANIMAL WELFARE RESEARCH

(Published on 09 April 2021)

The need for research data on animal welfare information is growing, and communicating results is increasingly important. National and international animal welfare research teams, scientific societies and networks are at the heart of scientific research. Welfare research is largely carried out by professional researchers. In Finland, high-quality animal studies take place in areas such as human-animal studies, animal welfare and natural sciences. This section of Animal Welfare in Finland III describes animal welfare research in Finland in more detail.

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Introduction

Animal welfare research has grown strongly in Finland and around the world in recent decades and is now delightfully multidisciplinary and polyphonic. Animals are studied not only from the perspective of natural sciences, but also from perspectives such as social sciences, law and the humanities.

Different disciplines can have very dissimilar approaches to the role, experiences and welfare of animals. Even though scientific research does not have an agenda, it is always conducted from a specific position and based on specific values. Animal welfare research based on the natural sciences (biology, veterinary medicine, ethology in animal behaviour) is usually based on the improvement of the welfare of animals during their lifetime at the individual, group or population level.

Meanwhile, the study of the social status of animals is all about understanding matter such as the historical or cultural origins of the way we value animals, talk about animals or draw the line between humans and other animals, and the basis for these customs and practices. This can be based on highly dissimilar views on whether the keeping of animals (as pets, for example) or their use (as farm animals, game or otherwise) is justified.

*The authors of this section are Satu Raussi, Principal Specialist, Tiina Kauppinen, Senior Specialist, and Weera Walden, intern, from the Finnish Centre for Animal Welfare. **The visiting author (in Finnish)** in this section is Salla Tuomivaara, Ph.D. (Soc. Sc.), from the University of Turku.*

Human-animal studies

Human-animal studies have been growing since the 1990s driven by changes such as the rise of food scandals, the activation of animal rights movements and the changing social significance of animals. There is a growing awareness of the need for human-animal studies in addition to scientific knowledge about animals.

In the 2000s, animals began to emerge as a special subject of study in Finnish cultural studies and social sciences. The Finnish Society for Human-Animal Studies (**YKES**) was established in 2009.

There is a great need for human-animal studies. Animal welfare issues have become more institutionalised, and hobbies involving animals and the use of animals as therapists and assistants have increased. In addition, relations between humans and animals have become politicised.

In the polarised debate on the status and significance of animals, a perspective based on social sciences is required that looks at animals not only as biological but also as social constructs. Attitudes toward animals and the changes and conflicts in human-animal relations are key research topics in human-animal studies.

Animal welfare is studied in many organisations

The University of Helsinki **Research Centre for Animal Welfare** conducts animal welfare research based on natural sciences and other disciplines. The focus point of research at the University of Helsinki **Faculty of Veterinary Medicine** is the mutual health of humans, animals and the environment (One Health). Veterinary research focuses on animal health and disease management, animal welfare and food safety.

Animal science research at the University of Helsinki focuses on the nutrition, physiology, genomics and selective breeding of domesticated animals. **Natural Resources Institute Finland**, a research institute in the administrative branch of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, focuses on wild animals, farm animals and animal welfare.

Many Finnish universities do human-animal studies, including the University of Eastern Finland, the University of Turku, Tampere University, the University of Helsinki, the University of Oulu, the University of Jyväskylä, Åbo Akademi, Aalto University and other research organisations. More information about the researchers is available in **research introductions** by the Finnish Society for Human-Animal Studies, for example.

Current animal welfare research projects

Welfare of pigs

Tail biting is a welfare issue, but also an indicator of the welfare of pigs: the more intact tails there are on a pig farm, the better the overall level of animal welfare on the farm is likely to be. The proportion of intact tails can be used as a method of assessing overall animal welfare. **EHJÄ**, a collaborative project of the University of Helsinki, Natural Resources Institute Finland and three slaughterhouses, focuses on the monitoring and prevention of tail-biting in pigs during the intermediate rearing period. The project will define criteria for an intact tail and develop a method based on computer vision for automatic tail assessment on farms. An economic analysis and interviews with producers will be used to determine the best incentives to motivate the prevention of tail-biting during the intermediate rearing period.

The **SAPARO research project** used research data to develop a free **online app** for pig farms to use to manage tail-biting and plan treatment.

The **Tulevaisuuden vapaaporsitus** project collected information on free farrowing from several different perspectives. The project arranged interviews with pig producers and experts, and explored alternative diagonal wall designs as the protective structures in free farrowing pens.

Welfare of cattle

Large volumes of antibiotics have to be used in beef production because of the high morbidity of calves. About half of all calves in intermediate rearing feedlots are medicated at least once, and almost all courses of antibiotic therapy are administered to treat respiratory diseases.

A third of Finnish calves have low maternal antibody levels for an unknown reason. The **Terve ja vastustuskykyinen vasikka** project of the University of Helsinki is investigating practices in the initial care of calves on dairy farms and factors contributing to the low antibody levels in calves in search for solutions to manage risk factors. The aim is to improve the health of calves both on dairy farms and in the beef production chain, thereby reducing the volume of antibiotic therapy administered to cattle.

Dairy cows are increasingly kept in free-stall barns, although most of the barns in Finland are still tie stall barns. There is no legal requirement for providing grazing in paddocks at free-stall barns, and grazing is seen as a challenge, especially in the case of automatic milking. However, grazing is beneficial for the welfare of the animals. Developing new grazing practices can also reduce the carbon footprint of dairy farms, boost biodiversity and provide ecosystem services. The **GRAZE-WEL project** (University of Helsinki and Natural Resources Institute Finland) investigates the effects of grazing practices and farmers' attitudes on the welfare of dairy cows and soil carbon sequestration with the aim of increasing knowledge on the effects of different grazing practices on the behaviour, welfare, health, nutrition and production of the animals. The project also surveys practical grazing practices on farms and their welfare effects on animals.

The **Ratkaisuja lypsykarjan hyvinvoinnin parantamiseen vasikoiden vierihoidon avulla (CowCalfSolutions)** project studies the impact of eight weeks of maternal contact on the development and resilience of a calf, and the impact of weaning on the welfare of the cow. The project also assesses the economic impact of such maternal contact and explores options for barn design and animal keeping practices.

Welfare of horses

Mucous membrane lesions related to bits in connection with competitions in racehorses and event horses have been studied. **A horse sleep study** studies horses' sleep, sleep deprivation and the impact of sleep deprivation on the horse's behaviour, cognitive abilities and welfare.

Human-animal studies

The research project **Voiko eläintä kertoa? Eläinten käsitteellistämisen haasteet tieteissä ja taiteissa** asks how animals could be conceptualised in a way that would also take into account their mind and welfare. The project is looking for a new way of understanding animals and, through this, also new ways of coexisting with other species.

The research project **Silent Agents Affected by Legislation: From an insufficient knowledge base to inclusive solutions (SILE)** identifies how the welfare and rights of silent agents (including animals) are being taken into account in the knowledge base for legislative policy and law drafting, and how they are affected by legislation.

Welfare of farm animals

The project **Eläinten hyvinvointimerkintä suomalaisen eläintuotannon kilpailukyvyyn ja laadun edistäjänä** investigated the potential of a Finnish animal welfare labelling system and prepared a proposal and action plan for the introduction of animal welfare labelling in Finland.

Funded by the Academy of Finland, **the ANIWERE project** (2019–2024) studies the theoretical basis of animal rights. The focus is on the welfare regime of animal law, prevalent especially in the Western legal order, where animals are treated as property while protecting them from undue suffering. The breeding of animals for food or as laboratory animals is permitted but regulated. Combining jurisprudence, philosophy of law and rhetorical critique, the project aims to create a theory that explains the key features of the welfare regime and thus increases understanding of the current state of animal rights in Finland and elsewhere in the Western World.

EU animal welfare research

Funding from the European Union supports research projects that aim to improve the welfare of farm animals and develop alternative methods to laboratory animal research. The EU emphasises the importance of scientific research as a basis for policy and legislation. **The Community Research and Development Information Service (CORDIS)** is a public repository and portal through which the European Commission shares information on EU-funded research projects and their results. The EU has supported animal welfare projects through several framework programmes, the current one being called **Horizon Europe**.

The Panel on Animal Health and Welfare (**EFSA/AHAW**) of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) publishes **reports** on animal welfare and health by researchers. These publications are based on the latest scientific research on animal welfare. EFSA is currently evaluating the latest scientific evidence on the welfare of different farm animal species to be used as a basis for the reform of the EU animal welfare legislation.

Funding for animal welfare research in Finland

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (in Finnish) is a major funder of farm animal welfare research in Finland. The Ministry's research and development activities aim to proactively produce information, expertise and innovation to support decision-making, develop the competitiveness of livelihoods, promote the vitality of rural areas and ensure the sustainable use of renewable natural resources. **Projectnet** online directory for research projects in the natural resources sector can be used to search for projects, also ones on animal welfare. However, not all national animal welfare projects are included in the directory, but only projects from government agencies in the natural resource sector, research institutes and projects of the University of Helsinki Viikki campus are listed.

As a funder of scientific research, **Academy of Finland** also funds research on animal welfare. Animal welfare research is also funded by the universities in which such research is carried out. For example, the Universities of Turku, Helsinki, Eastern Finland, Oulu and Jyväskylä carry out animal welfare research.

Animal welfare research is also often funded by businesses and industries. In the food industry, for example, dairy and meat companies and the retail sector have contributed to animal welfare research. Businesses in the pharmaceutical and technology industries may also fund the research. Producer organisations and animal welfare and protection organisations are sometimes involved in the funding of animal welfare research.

Many foundations offer funding to animal welfare research; for example, **the Kone Foundation** funds human-animal studies. In 2018, the Kone Foundation launched the thematic grant call **Our vital neighbours**, which also covered non-human living beings. Some research institutes, such as Natural Resources Institute of Finland, which is part of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, also provide funding for animal welfare research.

Academic societies and networks

The Finnish Society for Human-Animal Studies arranges annual **conferences** and publishes the scientific journal **JÄLKI**, a peer-reviewed, free and open online publication that provides a forum for human-animal studies and debate.

The purpose of **Kriittisen eläintutkimuksen verkosto (in Finnish)** (Network for Critical Animal Studies) is to promote critical animal studies and act as a cooperation body for those engaged and interested in research and study in the field. It develops the institutions of research and education, and society at large, to make them more inclusive to the perspectives of other species. Critical animal studies take a multidisciplinary approach to interspecies relationships, dismantling human-centred perspectives.

Operating in the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Turku, **Turku Human-Animal Studies Network (TYKE)** brings together research on animals and human-animal relations. The studies focus on matters such as encounters and boundaries between humans and other animals, their shared history and interaction, as well as animal representations and agency. TYKE regularly arranges research seminars and other events such as guest lectures.

HOH Helsinki One Health is a network organisation established to coordinate research on the mutual health of humans, animals and the environment (One Health) at the University of Helsinki. HOH focuses on the interaction between the health of animal and human populations in the rapidly changing environment.

niin & näin is a philosophical publication that features articles on a wide range of subjects and themes, including peer-reviewed articles. Articles on animals can be found in the publication's **archives**, where the articles in all issues from 1994 to 2017 are available for download as free pdf files.

Finnish Laboratory Animal Science Association (FinLAS) (in Finnish) provides information on the life and behaviour of animals used for scientific and educational purposes, i.e. laboratory animals, and influences guidelines on laboratory animals. FinLAS arranges meetings and seminars on laboratory animals and collaborates with Koe-eläintenhoitohenkilökunnan yhdistys (the Finnish Laboratory Animal Attendants' Association).

The purposes of **the Scientific Agricultural Society of Finland (SMTS) (in Finnish)** is to promote Finnish agricultural research and its applications, as well as to serve as a link between individuals and communities interested in agricultural research. SMTS publishes the international open access scientific journal **Agricultural and Food Science** and arranges the bi-annual conference **Maataloustieteen Päivät (in Finnish)**.

Read more :

- Kaarlenkaski, Taija & Ung-Lanki, Sari 2013: *Ikkunoita ihmistieteelliseen eläintutkimukseen*. *Elore* 1, 7–12.
- Kupsala, Saara & Tuomivaara, Salla 2004: *Sosiologinen eläintutkimus: Eläinten yhteiskunnallinen merkitys sosiologian tutkimuskohteena*. *Sociologia* 4, 310–321.
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Visiting author

Visiting author: Salla Tuomivaara

Human-animal studies and animal welfare

The new multidisciplinary field of animal studies has grown rapidly since the 1990s. Human-animal studies are at the heart of this new field. But what are the benefits of human-animal studies for animal welfare, like the more than 80 million farm animals slaughtered in Finland every year? Our visiting author, sociologist Salla Tuomivaara, reflects on the role of new fields of research in shaping our perception of animals.

Image 47 by iStock.
Cultural classifications, norms and experiences of intimacy influence our attitude towards animals.

Multidisciplinary research opens up new perspectives and allows us to see what we would not see otherwise

Slaughter is an operation involving a large number of animals that has long been largely inaccessible to the general public. Only the people working there regularly visit slaughterhouses, and it is usually difficult for representatives of the media, for example, to be allowed to film the conditions in there. Slaughter also strikes a chord with a lot of people, and many would not want to see it even if the opportunity arose. Because of these uncomfortable emotions, even the food industry is reluctant to present slaughtering.

However, human-animal studies have produced a wealth of research data on slaughter. The data tells us about the industrialisation of slaughter, about people's attitudes towards it, about the experiences of slaughterhouse workers and about the process required in our culture to turn a living – even empathy-inducing – animal into meat, a food product, rather than a repulsive carcass. Human-animal studies look behind the processes, practices and ways of thinking that are considered

technical, rational or self-evident, and shows how they are socially and culturally constructed and how such practices vary over time and place.

This research data can help us resolve the question of how we can cope with the highly conflicting animal relations that characterise modern societies: how can we both love our pets as something very close to us and run a system for the slaughter of tens of millions of animals? Why do we accept the premature killing and eating of some sentient beings, but abhor the same in the case of others? The answer lies in cultural classifications, norms, and the regulation of distance and intimacy.

Need for human-animal studies emerged from results of natural science research

The treatment of animals, especially intensive animal agriculture, started to become a controversial social issue in the 1970s and 1980s. The publication of philosopher Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* in 1975 was followed by years of a growing animal rights movement. This was partly due to new research data on animals. The rapidly increasing understanding of the cognitive and social abilities of other animals, for example, forced us to reassess our attitude towards animals and their treatment. On the other hand, this politicisation caused the need for a new kind of animal studies, in the same way that environmental social science followed the growth of the environmental movement in its time.

Classification system made by humans defines status of animals in society

In the field of natural sciences, animal welfare research was created to provide information particularly on the treatment of animals by humans and its impact on animals. On the humanities side, research began from our attitudes towards animals, the changing role of animals in society and the interaction between humans and other animals. From the very beginning, the new field of animal studies was multidisciplinary. Today, almost all research under the headings of human-animal studies or animal studies is carried out in the fields of humanities and social sciences.

The new multidisciplinary animal studies do not deny the merits of the natural sciences, which have long dominated research into the understanding of animals, but point out that the significance of animals and the nature of the relationship between humans and other animals cannot be revealed by natural sciences research alone. Although we do need knowledge about the animals themselves – which humanistic animal studies do little to provide – the treatment of animals in society is determined by the way we classify and value the animal in question (e.g. Arluke & Sanders, 1996, p. 9). A classic example of this is the power of categories created by humans in the treatment of animals: the category into which a particular animal is placed by humans determines the treatment it will receive. Foxes in a fur farm and foxes in a zoo may be treated differently, and the different treatment and appreciation of dogs and pigs is not due to the animals themselves, but our relationship to them.

Attitudes and perceptions also affect research

Information on attitudes towards animals is required when considering the need to reform animal welfare legislation, for example. We need to identify our own cultural attitudes to recognise facts such as that we have a tendency to demand better treatment for some animals than others. It's useful to understand why a ban on horse tethering is so much easier to accept than a ban on cattle tethering. This information is not to be found in the species-specific characteristics for horses or cattle, but in the social and economic significance of these animals in our society. On the other hand, prevailing perceptions of animals also influence the type of scientific research we do and how we interpret the results, also in the case of natural sciences.

Our perspective on animal welfare legislation will change when we remind ourselves that we are also part of the animal kingdom and begin to question the legitimacy of the abuse allowed by law. At the heart of human-animal studies is our understanding of the distinction made between humans and other animals as a building block of human identity. Historical knowledge of our attempts to define the difference between humans and (other) animals and the fear of confusion between these categories underlie the fears that we have today about both genetic engineering and animal rights.

On the other hand, social sciences have highlighted the importance of animalistic dehumanisation as a form of subordination between humans and as a way of maintaining hierarchies.

Critical look at our perception of animals

As part of the broader field of animal studies, the 2010s saw the growth of critical animal studies – a multidisciplinary field of research that focuses on the status of animals and seeks to improve it. Critical animal studies dismantle the traditional human-centred perspectives and have been influenced by posthumanism. Critical animal studies critically examine the status and treatment of animals and our perception of animals from the perspective of social power structures. Critical animal studies have given rise to concepts such as carnism, and have analysed new ways of organising the multi-species communities in which we are living but which are currently based on the absolute domination of humans and the exploitation of other animals on human terms.

*Text by Salla Tuomivaara, Ph.D. (Soc. Sc.),
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WELFARE OF WILD ANIMALS

Image 48 by CC/Fishhawk



WELFARE OF WILD ANIMALS

(Published on 10 March 2021)

Humans affect the welfare of wild animals through their actions. Every Finn has a duty under the Animal Welfare Act (247/1996) to protect animals from distress, pain and suffering in the best possible way and to promote the welfare of wild animals. The new Animal Welfare Act (693/2023) states that all animals must be treated well and with respect. Animals must not be subjected to any undue pain and suffering, and their welfare must not be unnecessarily compromised. This section of Animal Welfare in Finland III examines the welfare of wild animals in Finland.

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Introduction

Wild animals in the human sphere of influence

Just as in the case of other animals, the welfare of a wild animal is its own experience of its physical and mental state. We humans affect the welfare of wild animals more than we often understand: transport, hunting, fishing, the control of invasive species, industrial activities, tourism, agriculture, forestry and other land use are examples of human activities that affect the welfare of wild animals.

Health is part of an animal's welfare. **The Finnish Food Authority (in Finnish)** monitors the occurrence of known diseases in wildlife and the emergence of new diseases. Disease monitoring aims to prevent the spread of diseases from wild animals to farm, companion and hobby animals and humans, as well as vice versa, and the spread of diseases among wildlife.

This report reviews animal diseases that affect the welfare of wild animals. The cause of death of a wild animal often remains unknown, with the exception of large carnivores, especially wolves, whose causes of death are investigated by the Finnish Food Authority and Natural Resources Institute Finland.

Wildlife populations are regulated by means of hunting and pest control

The numbers of animals hunted are recorded on an annual basis. Wildlife is not only hunted as game but also culled as invasive alien species to prevent their spreading. The welfare of wild animals is affected by the many regulations governing hunting and the control of the spread of invasive alien species.

The status of game and alien species changes the status and treatment of the animal in relation to other wild animals. This section of the report examines legislation affecting wild animals and proposes good practices to promote the welfare of wild animals.

Wicked problems threaten our common welfare

The interests of humans and wild animals often conflict. Transport, construction, forestry and agriculture all affect the welfare of wild animals, both directly and indirectly by altering their habitats.

Traffic kills a large number of wild animals. Silviculture changes wildlife habitats. Hunting and fishing directly affect the welfare of wild animals: for example, catch and release fishing increases the risk of disease or death for a fish caught and subsequently released. Many animals are not only killed but also injured and unintentionally harmed by traffic, hunting and fishing.

Climate change, loss of biodiversity, the sixth wave of extinction and pollution threaten the welfare and existence of wild animals, while endangering the welfare of humans. These **wicked problems (in Finnish)** are also discussed separately in this report.

The life of a wild animal has intrinsic value

By protecting nature, endangered species and their populations, we also protect animal habitats. A habitat appropriate to the species is a prerequisite for welfare, which means that nature conservation measures often improve animal welfare. Nature conservation can also focus on animals at the individual level, depending on the biological value of the animal. Animal welfare thinking always includes the individual experiences of animals and the idea of an animal's intrinsic value.

The authors of this section are Tarja Koistinen, a senior scientist from Natural Resources Institute Finland, and Satu Raussi, Principal Specialist and Tiina Kauppinen, Senior Specialist from the Finnish Centre for Animal Welfare. The visiting author in this section is Elisa Aaltola, PhD, an adjunct professor at the University of Turku.

Animal Welfare Act and wild animals

Wild animals may only be taken into temporary care

In accordance with the new Animal Welfare Act, a wild vertebrate must not be kept. By way of derogation from the former Animal Welfare Act, keeping them for farming to produce meat, eggs or breeding animals is also prohibited. Exceptions to the ban on keeping may be made in certain cases such as for keeping an animal in a zoo, for game management purposes, for fish farming or for research purposes.

An injured or helpless wild animal may be taken in for short-term emergency care or treatment. However, as soon as the animal's condition permits, it must be released back into the wild or delivered to a treatment facility. If the animal cannot be released, or its care arranged for, it must be put down. Non-emergency care of wild animals will be an activity subject to notification from the beginning of 2024. There are separate provisions in the new Animal Welfare Act on animal shelter operations. As a new requirement, the obligation for municipalities to take care of the culling of sick or injured wild animals brought to the local authority veterinary officer's clinic was added to the Act.

Animal Welfare Act improves the care of wild animals

The Animal Welfare Act (**Eläinten hyvinvointilaki 693/2023**) (in Finnish), which will enter into force at the beginning of 2024, contains some clarifications concerning wild animals compared to the currently valid Animal Welfare Act (**Eläinsuojelulaki 247/1996**) (in Finnish).

The new Animal Welfare Act specifies that a wild animal is an animal of a wild species living in the wild that was either born in the wild or bred for release into the wild but not an animal that has escaped from human care and is distinguishable from animals born in the wild.

Improvements in the Animal Welfare Act for the care of wild animals

The Animal Welfare Act (693/2023), which will enter into force at the beginning of 2024, has some clarifications regarding wild animals compared to the still valid Animal Protection Act (247/1996).

According to the new Animal Welfare Act, a wild animal means an animal belonging to a wild animal species, living in the wild, which was either born in the wild or bred to be released into the wild; however, not such an animal as has escaped human care and is distinguishable from animals born in nature

Welfare of wild animals in research activities

Welfare of wild laboratory animals must be ensured

Traditionally, wild animals have been studied by catching animals in the wild, taking samples and placing various tracking devices on the animals. Research on wild animals also requires a permit under the **Act on the Protection of Animals Used for Scientific or Educational Purposes** if the animal will be subjected to pain or suffering

equivalent to or worse than the introduction of a needle in accordance with good veterinary practice. There are also provisions on the catching, keeping and culling of wild animals in the **Nature Conservation Act** and the **Hunting Act**.

The 3Rs principle also applies to scientific activities on wild animals

Catching an animal in the wild and handling it is always stressful for the animal. In the worst case, the stress can be so great that the animal develops a condition such as capture myopathy and dies. To avoid unnecessary suffering, scientific activities on wild animals must follow the **3Rs principle**, which is familiar from the field of laboratory animals.

According to the 3Rs, the use of animals must be replaced by other methods wherever possible, and if animals must be used, as few of them as possible should be used, and pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm must be kept to an absolute minimum.

Advances in methods help promote the welfare of animals during research activities

With the development of research methods, efforts are now being made to observe animals in their natural habitats without touching them. Such non-invasive methods include taking photographs of animals with surveillance cameras and collecting **hair and droppings** for research purposes. The hair and droppings can be used to determine the genetic makeup of animals and to identify animals at the individual level. Saimaa ringed seals can be identified from photographs by their unique fur patterns. For example, citizens can also participate in research activities by assisting in the collection of data through submitting their sightings, photographs and requested information about animals.

Invasive methods are also still used. A typical example is tagging research, where animals are equipped with a unique identifier and sometimes a tracking device. Bird **ringing** is a traditional way to observe and study the life, behaviour, migration routes, resting places and nesting areas of birds. In ringing, a bird is caught and equipped with a leg or **neck ring (in Finnish)**, which may be fitted with a GPS transmitter. This provides accurate information about the bird's movements. The trapping of a bird and the installation of the tracking device always causes stress to the bird and can also cause longer-term welfare problems by increasing predation risk or interfering with the bird's social behaviour, for example.

Potential to improve welfare on fish farms

Sometimes wild animals are bred in captivity and returned to the wild. For example, endangered fish species and fish stocks that are released into the wild can be **farmed (in Finnish)**. However, salmon and trout fry bred on a farm fare less well in natural waters as those born and grown in the wild. The survival of such restocking fish is studied through exploratory fishing and samples sent in by fishermen and members of the general public.

Natural Resources Institute Finland has studied **enriched farming (in Finnish)** of fry where the natural conditions are mimicked by varying the speed, direction and height of the water flow, and by placing rocks and covers in the breeding tank for the fish to use as shelter. Enriched farming has been found to improve the subsequent survival of fish in the wild. Fish bred by means of enriched farming learn to make better use of natural food and better avoid predation once they have returned to natural waters than fish bred on a regular fish farm.

Reporting animal sightings or participating in research

- All wildlife sightings can be submitted through the **laji.fi** service.
- The website of the Finnish Museum of Natural History **Luomus** includes instructions on how to participate in a monitoring study and instructions for people who have found a ringed bird.
- Bird sightings can be reported in accordance with the **instructions by BirdLife** to the **Tiira bird data service**.
- The **Natural Resources Data** service of Natural Resources Institute Finland includes monitoring data for game species.
- Alien species sightings can be submitted through the **Vieraslajit.fi portal**.
- Fish and crayfish sightings can be submitted through the **Kalahavainnot** service of Natural Resources Institute Finland.
- Fish tags can be returned online through the **Palauta kalamerkki** service.

Modern technology brings wildlife closer to humans

Modern technology enables the bringing of the lives of wild animals closer to people. On Laji.fi, you can track the movements of **satellite-tracked birds**. Following the lives of wild animals via live cameras is very popular. WWF Finland's **Wildlive** service allows you to follow the lives of winter birds, Saimaa ringed seals, gnats, ospreys, owls and adders, among other species. WWF Finland's live feed of Saimaa ringed seals has been particularly popular, attracting millions of views in recent years. Watching live broadcasts can change people's attitudes towards wildlife in a more positive direction and inspire them to act to promote the welfare of wild animals.

Watch lectures from the Wild Animal Welfare 2019 seminar:

- **3Rs in wildlife research and management**
- **The 3Rs in Saimaa ringed seal studies**
- **Development of welfare friendly follow-up methods in large carnivores**
- **Animal welfare on bird migration studies**
- **Wildlife capture & welfare – risk awareness and prevention of complications**
- **Welfare aspects of captive breeding and reintroduction programs**

Welfare of wild aquatic animals

Human activity is also reflected in the welfare of aquatic animals

Humans influence the welfare of wild aquatic animals in many significant ways. The damming of rivers prevents the natural spawning migration of salmonids. Wastewater and runoff water from agriculture and forestry eutrophicate water systems, deteriorating the habitats of many animal species. Microplastics, litter and chemicals that end up in the water cause welfare problems for aquatic organisms. Pathogens are transferred from one body of water to another with undisinfected fishing gear. Water traffic causes noise pollution and emissions that affect animals.

Professional fishermen are responsible for most of Finland's annual fish catch. In 2022, there were some 2,150 **registered commercial marine fishermen**, and in 2021, there were some 1,700 registered fishermen in Finnish inland waters. A quarter of Finns **fish as a hobby**.

Fishing method affects welfare of fish

The fishing method that is least damaging to fish should always be selected. The amount of time the fish spends alive in a trap or net is significant in terms of the stress it experiences. Traps and nets should be checked sufficiently often to avoid the fish being caught in them for a prolonged period. The catch and release fishing method, which has become more popular in recent years, i.e. releasing caught fish back into the water, is stressful for fish. Catch and release can harm fish and expose them to diseases such as saprolegniasis. According to **statistics**, around seven million kilograms of fish were caught and released by recreational fishermen in 2018.

A fish caught in a net is usually more badly harmed than a fish that swims into a trap. Using nets in recreational fishing has become less common. In 2018 and 2020, 31% and 36% of recreational fishermen's catches were caught **with nets**. Spinning rods and trolling accounted for 38% of recreational fishermen's catches in 2018 and 28% in 2020. Other animal species and additional individuals can also be harmed during fishing. One of the best-known bycatches in net fishing on Lake Saimaa is the Saimaa ringed seal, which can become entangled and die in a fishing net.

Quick stunning saves the fish from unnecessary suffering

Quickly stunning a caught fish and ensuring that it is dead are some of the most important actions in terms of the welfare of the fish. A good practice is to stun the fish by striking it on the neck immediately after it is taken out of the water and ensure that it is dead by bleeding it immediately after stunning. Small fish that cannot be stunned by hitting them can be killed by **snapping their neck**. Ensuring the quick death of the fish after it is taken out of the water applies to all fishing, including **fishing competitions (in Finnish)**. The Animal Welfare Act prohibits causing unnecessary suffering to an animal. Section 14 of the Animal Welfare Decree (396/1996) **(in Finnish)** separately prohibits the scaling or gutting of a live fish.

There are **instructions** on how to consider the welfare of crayfish on the Finnish Food Authority's website. There are instructions on crayfish's sense of pain and crayfish stunning methods in a **report** by the Finnish Centre for Animal Welfare. Crayfish populations and the welfare of crayfish are significantly affected by **the crayfish plague**, incidences of which must be reported to the control department of the Finnish Food Authority without delay. The crayfish plague is very common in Europe and is considered the main cause of the endangered status of European crayfish species.

Wild fish catches vary from year to year

The annual wild fish catches in Finland have ranged between 120 and 190 million kilograms in the 2000s. Herring and sprat caught from the sea area by professional fishermen have accounted for around 80% of the catch in recent years. The most important commercial fish caught in inland waters is vendace. The market situation and the annually changing fishing quota affect the level of fishing and the catches.

Recreational fishermen caught 22 million kilograms of fish in 2018 and 31 million kilograms in 2020. Around 80% of the recreational fishing catch is from inland waters. Catches by recreational fishermen have been declining for almost 30 years due to a decrease in the number of fishermen and the smaller volume of net fishing. Unlike fish, crayfish are recorded per animal. Recreational fishermen caught around 2,280,000 crayfish in 2018 and 2,800,000 crayfish in 2020. These included both signal crayfish and noble crayfish. Almost all the individuals included in the total crayfish catch were signal crayfish.

Good practices to promote the welfare of wild aquatic animals

- I will not pollute or throw litter into water systems.
- I will not catch **endangered, protected or undersized** fish.
- **I will stun and kill the fish as soon as they are out of the water.**
- I will avoid **catch and release** fishing.
- I will use a trap rather than a net.
- I will check the traps often.
- I will take care not to spread **parasites (in Finnish)** or diseases with my fishing and **crayfish catching equipment (in Finnish)**.
- I will not fish in Lake Saimaa with nets or large traps, which are dangerous for Saimaa ringed seals, between 15 April and 31 July.
- In February and March, I will allow the Saimaa ringed seals to breed in peace.



Image 49 by Mervi Kunnasranta. Avoiding net fishing in the habitats of the Saimaa ringed seal is an effective way to reduce the mortality rate of seal pups.

Traffic kills millions of animals every year

A large number of animals are injured or killed by road traffic, but there are no official statistics on animal traffic deaths. Roads cut off the normal routes used by animals, disturb wildlife habitats, and cause noise and light pollution and emissions. An area fragmented by roads and settlements has ecological corridors along which animals often move. Each species has a specific need to move: for example, some regularly move between their summer and winter pasture. Animals have an innate need to move in spite of roads or other man-made obstacles. During spawning and the autumn migration, frogs move slowly over roads to get to their wintering grounds and are therefore particularly likely to be hit by a vehicle. Few frogs that cross a motorway survive. Animals living in urban green spaces are also very likely to be killed by traffic.

Statistics Finland only compiles statistics on road traffic **game accidents (in Finnish)** that pose a danger to humans. It has been estimated that three to four million birds, one million mammals, one million amphibians and around 200,000 reptiles die every year **in Finnish road traffic (in Finnish)**. Insects are certainly the largest group of animals to be killed by traffic, but there is not even an estimate of their number. It has been estimated that 194 million birds and 29 million mammals die each year on European roads (**Grilo et al. 2020**).

In what is thus far the only Finnish road ecology dissertation, **Milla Niemi (2016)** states that the white-tailed deer suffers the highest traffic mortality rates in relation to population size, followed by elk, roe deer and fallow deer. Of all the species studied by Niemi, the elk has the highest probability of surviving a road traffic accident, and the roe deer the lowest. The negative effects of traffic on animals can be mitigated

by building passageways under or over roads, for example. Dry routes under road bridges are effective in reducing the traffic mortality rate of small and medium-sized terrestrial animals. To prevent traffic deaths of animals, we not only need to build routes for animals to go over or under roads but also need to educate drivers.

Overpasses are effective in reducing the traffic mortality rate of animals if there are game fences along the same road. The appropriate dimension of an overpass and an underpass varies between species, but researchers suggest that an overpass for large mammals should be some 50 m wide. The longer the wildlife overpass, the wider it should be. Building a wildlife overpass is expensive, and the study found that overpasses were too narrow globally, averaging 34 m in width. Wider overpasses (40–60 m) are ecologically more efficient, as they are used more and by a wider range of species (**Brennan et al. 2022**).

According to **an estimate (in Finnish)**, traffic is responsible for up to 65% of the mortality rate of some bird species, 15% of the mortality rate of mammals and amphibians, and around 5% of the mortality rate of reptiles. Of birds, small species are most likely to be killed by traffic. It has been estimated that 65% of mammals dying because of traffic are moles, but shrews, hedgehogs and bats also die in large numbers. Among medium-sized mammals, the most common traffic victims are lagomorphs and raccoon dogs. The most common reptiles to die in traffic are the common European adder and the grass snake. In a **study (in Finnish)** undertaken in southern Finland, 43% of the animals killed by traffic at bridge sites and in control areas were terrestrial mammals, 39% amphibians, 14% birds, 3% reptiles and 1% bats. A collision usually kills a small animal.

Depending on the species, around three out of four cervids are killed or must be put down at the scene of an accident (Niemi et al. 2015). Birds die in traffic especially in early summer when inexperienced chicks leave the nest. The mortality rate of mammals is at its highest in the autumn when inexperienced young animals set out on their own. The mortality rates of animals are lower **are lower in the winter (in Finnish)**.

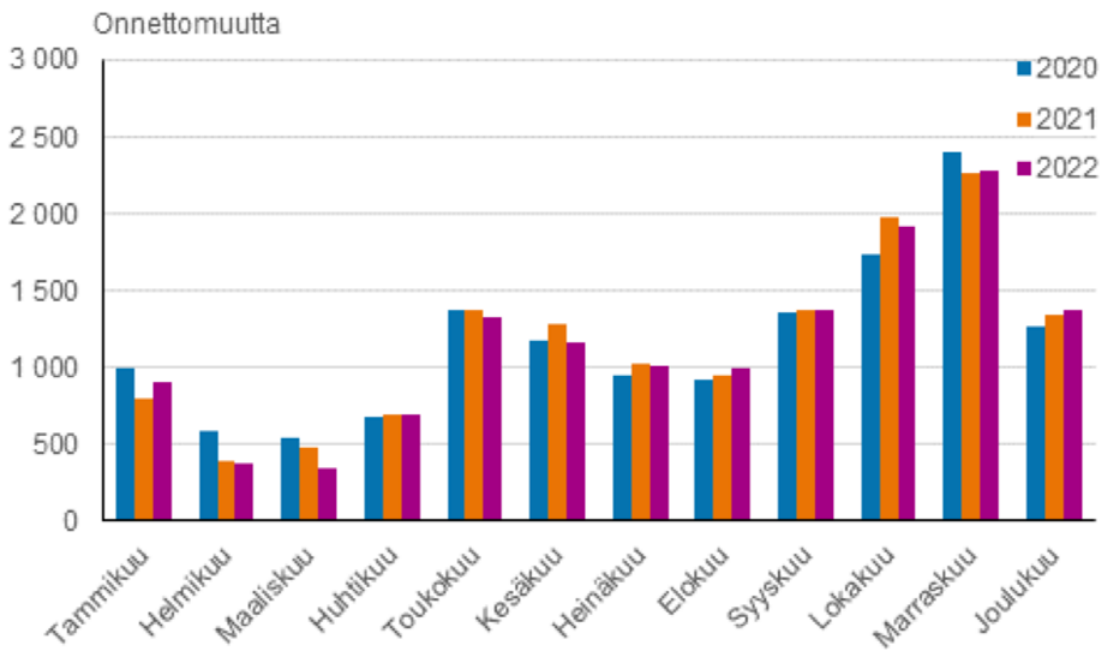
There were 13,758 game-related accidents involving cervids (usually a white-tailed deer, roe deer or elk) in Finland in 2022 (Fig. 51).

There are no statistics on what happens to the animals involved in such accidents.

The number of **accidents involving cervids** is at its highest in the autumn, and most accidents occur at dawn or dusk when the animals are active. The number of cervid accidents is linked to the size of the elk population. **The number of game-related accidents (in Finnish)** has increased over the years; in 2020, there were more than 14,000 game-related accidents.



Image 50 by Pexels/Alosha Lamkinson. Approximately 5% of reptile deaths are traffic-related.



Onnettomuutta	Accidents
Tammikuu	January
Helmikuu	February
Maaliskuu	March
Huhtikuu	April
Toukokuu	May
Kesäkuu	June
Heinäkuu	July
Elokuu	August
Syyskuu	September
Lokakuu	October
Marraskuu	November
Joulukuu	December

Image 51. Game-related accidents by month in 2020–2022.

Accidents involving animals can be prevented

To reduce animal fatalities in traffic, the natural **access routes of animals must be surveyed and taken into account (in Finnish)** in the planning and construction of the road network. Game fences have been built along busy roads. Game fences do not reduce animals' need to move but shift the risk of accidents to the edges of the fenced area.

Under- or overpasses (in Finnish) must be built alongside game fences to allow the movement of animals. Underpasses with guiding fences can also be used on stretches of road with no game fences. Underpass tunnels can be built for safer passage of small animals.

The banks of rivers and streams are natural access routes for wildlife, which is why **dry paths** under bridges can be used to reduce traffic mortality rates. A concrete catwalk can be installed in a sewer pipe, for example. At least raccoon dogs, otters, mice, moles, rats, European water voles and even birds use dry paths and catwalks.

Some **green bridges** have been built on main roads. A total of eleven wild mammal species used them during camera monitoring by the Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency. The green bridges were actively used by white-tailed deer, but also by elk, wild boars, foxes, raccoon dogs, brown hares, mountain hares, bears and lynx. Trees can be left standing for flying squirrels to cross the road. A road can also be built over a valley, for example, which can at best leave the landscape untouched. This option also allows animals and people to pass under the road.

The number of road accidents involving animals can also be reduced by removing vegetation from the roadside. Better visibility helps drivers spot an animal next to the road and gives them more time to react. The planning of roadside vegetation can influence the flight heights of some bird species, **reducing the risk of them hitting a car (in Finnish)**.

Noise barriers may also do the same. Fences are used to prevent animals accessing airports. Birds are prevented from landing and nesting at airports by repelling them by firing blanks. During take-off and landing, aircraft fly at the same altitude as birds, which means that birds can be killed if they collide with the engine. According to **Finavia (2015)**, this is quite rare, however.

Driver anticipation can save an animal's life

Anticipation, speed reduction and careful observation of the roadside are the keys to preventing accidents involving animals. There are instructions on how to avoid a collision with an elk on **the Finnish Road Safety Council's (in Finnish)** website.

If there is an accident involving an animal, the driver has a moral obligation to check the condition of the animal. A seriously injured animal should be put down as soon as possible. In the case of large game animals (cervids, large carnivores, wild boar), the driver must call the police, the emergency number or the **executive assistance in large game matters (Suurriistavirka-apu or SRVA)** even if the animal flees into the forest after the collision. The scene of the accident must be clearly marked so that the injured animal can be tracked as quickly as possible. If an animal flees after a collision, placing a marker on the side of the road where the animal was observed fleeing is especially important. An injured animal such as a large carnivore or wild boar can be dangerous and behave erratically. In such a case, it is safer to stay in the car and call for help. The Finnish Wildlife Agency provides information about what to do **in the event of a game-related accident**.

Read more :

- Manneri, A., 2002. **Traffic deaths of small and medium-sized vertebrates**, report 26/2002 of the Finnish Road Administration.
- Niemi, M., Jääskeläinen, N., Mäkelä, T. ja Nummi, P., 2009. **Kuivapolut eläinten kulkureittinä** – Vesistösiltojen rakenteen vaikutus eläinten liikennekuolleisuuteen. Tiehallinnon selvityksiä 32/2009
- Väre, S., Huhta, M. ja Martin, A., 2002. **Eläinten kulkujärjestelyt tiealueen poikki**. Tiehallinnon selvityksiä 36/2003

Wild animals found injured or dead

Condition of wild animals and their need for assistance must be carefully assessed

According to the Animal Welfare Act (693/2023; enters into force on 1 January 2024), a sick, injured or otherwise helpless wild animal must be helped. However, if the animal is in such a condition that keeping it alive would obviously be cruel, the animal must be put down, or it must be ensured that it will be put down. The municipality must ensure that sick or injured wild animals brought to a veterinary clinic maintained by the municipality are put down.

The status of a wild animal must be comprehensively assessed. It is not always easy for a human to determine whether an animal needs help. For example, a mother hare may leave its leveret on its own for a long time, and there is no reason to disturb the leveret. Immediate action is always required when an animal is seriously injured. An injured wild animal may perceive the presence of humans as threatening and behave erratically or dangerously. For some wild animals, close contact with a human can be fatally

stressful. In addition, the possibility of pathogens must be taken into account when handling a sick or injured animal. Some **zoos and animal shelters (in Finnish)** take in sick and injured wild animals.

The aim when caring for a wild animal should always be to improve its condition so that it can be returned to the wild. Sometimes releasing an animal that has been in care could pose **a disease risk to the native fauna of the area (in Finnish)**. For example, there was a case where returning a Saimaa ringed seal that had been cared for in Korkeasaari Zoo to Lake Saimaa would have posed a risk to the endangered Saimaa ringed seal population. The case became a precedent: once removed from Lake Saimaa, a Saimaa ringed seal cannot be returned there.

Report any large game involved in a traffic accident to the police

Any large game injured in a traffic accident or otherwise must be reported to the police.

Executive assistance in large game matters

(in Finnish) (SRVA) is an organisation maintained by game management organisations that coordinates executive assistance provided by hunters to the police in conflicts involving large game. Typically, the police may call SRVA in connection with cervids, large carnivores or wild boar injured in traffic accidents, or to drive away large carnivores that have strayed into areas near human settlements. The activities are based on agreements between the police and game management organisations and on the Wildlife and Game Administration Act. The procedure starts with a request for executive assistance from the police. The participating hunters, dog handlers and game management associations work on a voluntary basis.

As a general rule, **a game animal (in Finnish)** found dead belongs to the holder of the hunting right in the area. Animals put down with police authorisation belong to the State. If **a wild boar (in Finnish)** is found dead, it must be reported to the local authority veterinary officer or the Regional Veterinary Officer. A **seal** found dead or in a trap must be reported to Natural Resources Institute Finland, while a dead **Saimaa ringed seal (in Finnish)** must be reported to Metsähallitus. Large carnivores, otters and Finnish forest reindeer found dead must be reported to the **Finnish Food Authority (in Finnish)**, to which other wild animals found dead can also be reported. An animal found dead can be sent **to the Finnish Food Authority for examination (in Finnish)**. A member of the public must not take into their possession an animal of a protected species they have found dead, but the animal may be sent to a research institute to determine the cause of death. A dead wild animal that is not of a protected species may be buried or disposed of with mixed municipal waste.

Causes of death in wild animals

Determining wild animals' causes of death is often difficult

It is impossible to compile any accurate statistics on wild animals' causes of death, as only a small proportion of dead animals are examined. For example, Metsähallitus has estimated that the actual mortality rate of the Saimaa ringed seal is three times higher than its known mortality rate. Wild animals die as a result of accidents such as traffic accidents, are caught by predators or humans, starve to death and die of diseases, for example. Small birds can die because of a gut infection caused by **salmonella (in Finnish)**, and lagomorphs because of sepsis caused by **tularaemia (in Finnish)**, for example. A string trimmer or robot lawn mower can injure a hedgehog so badly that it dies. It is often difficult to determine the cause of death of a wild animal, as a sick animal can carry several pathogens. In addition, wild animals weakened by a disease are more likely to get caught by predators than healthy ones.

The causes of death of large wild carnivores, **wolves (in Finnish)** in particular, are somewhat better known than those of other wild animals. The Finnish Food Authority publishes a **report on the cause of death (in Finnish)** of each wolf it examines. The most common cause of death of the examined large carnivores is a traffic accident. This may be because large carnivores involved in traffic accidents are found and may therefore be overrepresented in the statistics.

The known causes of death of Saimaa ringed seals include predation and drowning because of getting caught in a fishing net. Detailed information about Saimaa ringed seals found dead is available on the **Metsähallitus** website.

The causes of death of large carnivores in Finland from 2016 to 2021 are presented in Table 12. The causes of death have been taken from the Finnish Food Authority's annual **Animal Diseases in Finland** publications.

Many of the large carnivores that were put down with police authorisation were moving in the vicinity of human settlements. Examinations of wolves shot with police authorisation often reveal old injuries and gunshot wounds such as encapsulated pellets or bullet fragments. Such gunshot wounds are suggestive of poaching.

The Finnish Food Authority examines large carnivores found dead, killed in traffic, put down due to illness or injury, or put down with police authorisation. In 2018, the police made nine decisions to put down wolves (according to a **thesis (in Finnish)** completed at the Police University College). In the same year, four wolves killed with police authorisation were examined by the Finnish Food Authority. The statistics do not tell the whole truth about large carnivores' causes of death, as all dead specimens that have not been found and delivered to the Finnish Food Authority or Natural Resources Institute Finland for examination remain unexamined.

Large carnivores are protected game animals that can be hunted either based on a management-based or damage-based derogation. Large carnivores hunted based on a derogation are examined by Natural Resources Institute Finland as necessary, and large carnivores hunted in this manner were not included in Table 12. Damage-based derogations are granted by the Finnish Wildlife Agency. A management-based derogation can be granted for hunting in a major distribution area of the species.

Table 12. Causes of death of large carnivores. Findings made when examining large carnivores found dead or put down with police authorisation (*).

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Traffic accidents, vehicle and train	1 A 36 I 7 K 7 S	1 A 26 I 5 K 5 S	1 A 29 I 5 K 3 S	7 A 33 I 5 K 7 S	40 I 4 K 7 S	2 A 22 I 4 K 8 S
Hunting injuries	1 K: front paw caught in a leghold trap 2 S: shotgun pellets (previously shot)	1 I: shot 2 S*: shotgun pellets (previously shot) 1 S: minor gunshot wounds 2 S: serious gunshot wounds	1 I: shotgun pellets (previously shot; an animal run over by a vehicle)	1 I*: injured in a small animal trap 1 I: immobilised due to a gunshot wound to the hip 1 K*: leg injured by a leghold trap 3 S: pellets (previously shot – a collared wolf; died in a traffic accident and mangy)	1 A: shot 2 K: a hunting trap 1 K: amputated front leg 6 S: shot	1 I: encapsulated pellets 3 K: a hunting trap 1 K: shot 5 S: shot
Accidents	1 I: a pup: a fracture 1 S: a fractured skull 4 S*: a leg injury	1 I: killed by an animal 2 S: contusions	1 I: sepsis caused by a bite 1 I*: a fractured leg 1 K*: a leg injury	1 I*: a leg injury 2 I: serious bite injuries 1 K: a pup 1 K: killed by a predator 1 S*: a broken jaw and ribs	1 A: a pup, stillborn 1 I: killed by an animal 10 I: a contusion or a leg injury	2 I: pups, injuries
Starvation	4 I: pups 1 K pup: enterocolitis	4 I: pups	4 I	2 I	2 I: pups 1 K: pup	3 I: pups
Diseases	2 I: mange 1 S: mange	3 I: mange 1 S: mange	5 I: mange 1 I: salmonella (run over by a vehicle)	11 I: mange 1 I: empyema 1 I: leukosarcoma 1 S*: mange 1 S: inflammation of the lungs (a collared wolf) 1 S: purulent skin infection	1 I: pup, sepsis caused by Yersinia pseudotuberculosis 7 I: mange	8 I: mange 1 I: pup, sepsis caused by Listeria monocytogenes combined with a Yersinia pseudotuberculosis finding 2 S: mange
Put down with police authorisation	2 K 12 S	2 K 5 S	1 I 4 K 4 S	4 I 2 K 7 S	3 K 3 S	2 K 9 S
Total number of animals examined by the Finnish Food Authority**	2 A 45 I 13 K 22 S	2 A 38 I 7 K 21 S	2 A 42 I 10 K 9 S	7 A 56 I 10 K 16 S	3 A 56 I 11 K 18 S	2 A 37 I 10 K 21 S

A = wolverine, I = lynx, K = bear and S = wolf. * A finding made in an animal put down with police authorisation. ** Cause of death is not available for all examined animals.

Lead is a deadly poison

Lead poisoning (in Finnish) kills eagles and swans in particular every year. It is the single most common cause of death for white-tailed eagles. Lead from hunting gun pellets or fishing tackle sinkers enters the bodies of birds of prey when they eat waterfowl wounded during a hunt or the remains of birds that contain lead shot pellets or pellet fragments. Birds may also peck at lead pellets or sinkers to grind food in their gizzard. Lead causes anaemia, damages the nervous system and paralyses bodily functions. An animal with lead poisoning often dies by slowly starving to death.

Using lead shot pellets to hunt waterfowl was prohibited in Finland in 1996. In January 2021, the European Commission approved a ban on the use of lead shot pellets in wetlands (to enter into force in 2023). The European Chemicals Agency (**ECHA**) has proposed to the Commission further limiting of the use of lead bullets, shot pellets and fishing sinkers. Plenty of **pellet materials to replace (in Finnish)** lead are available on the market.

Police put down animals in the line of duty

In 2019, **police officers put down (in Finnish)** a total of 1,122 animals in the line of duty, most often in the areas of the Western and Eastern Uusimaa Police Departments. In many cases, it is a question of a wild cervid that has been injured in a traffic accident.

According to an experimental statistics publication of Natural Resources Institute Finland, approximately 2.6 million shotgun cartridges were fired during hunting in Finland in 2021, of which 37% were lead-free. The number of fired rifle cartridges was approximately 620,000, of which 27% were lead-free.

- The number of fired shotgun cartridges was approximately 2,620,000, of which 980,000 were lead-free
- The number of fired rifle cartridges was approximately 620,000, of which 170,000 were lead-free.

Source: Natural Resources Institute Finland, Statistics, Hunting. **Number of cartridges fired while hunting in 2021** (Experimental statistics publication).

According to the Police Act (**872/2011**), police officers have the right to capture and, as a last resort, to put down an animal causing danger to human life or health or significant damage to property or posing a serious danger to traffic. An animal may also be put down if keeping it alive would clearly be cruel to it.

What should you do with a dead wild animal you have found?

- Send a sample of the animal found dead to the Finnish Food Authority. The Finnish Food Authority **accepts (in Finnish)** samples of wild animals of any species that have been found dead or put down due to illness. The samples are used to monitor the presence of serious animal diseases. The Finnish Food Authority will pay for the shipment of the sample via Matkahuolto.
- If it is likely that the animal died as a result of an (infectious) disease, make sure you maintain proper hygiene when handling it.

Diseases in wild animals

Everyone can influence the disease status of wild animals through their own actions

The **Finnish Food Authority** monitors diseases in wild animals in Finland and publishes an annual **Animal Diseases in Finland** report, which also contains information about the disease status of wild animals. The systematic monitoring is based on samples submitted by the Finnish Wildlife Agency, Natural Resources Institute Finland, hunters and fishermen to the Finnish Food Authority. General disease monitoring is based on random samples provided by citizens, research institutes and the public authorities.

Everyone can influence the disease status of wild animals through their own actions. Good practices include maintaining proper hygiene at animal feeding points and keeping farm animals and pets away from wildlife. Proper handling of fish guts and other discarded fish parts and the intestines and viscera of game animals is also important for managing diseases.

Some topical serious diseases occurring in wild animals that have a significant impact on animal welfare are presented below. Some of the pathogens causing infectious diseases can be transmitted from animals to humans and vice versa. Such diseases are called zoonoses. Zoonoses are monitored with particular care when investigating diseases of wild animals.

Rabbit haemorrhagic disease

Rabbit haemorrhagic disease (**RHD**) (**in Finnish**) damages internal organs and causes fatalities. The disease has been present in Europe for decades, but was not detected in Finland until 2016. Epidemic-like outbreaks of the virus occurred in wild rabbits in the Helsinki metropolitan area in 2016 and 2019. The virus was first detected in mountain hares in 2017 and in brown hares in 2019. In pet rabbits, the virus was particularly prevalent in 2019.



Image 52 by Unsplash.
In addition to myxomatosis, threats to rabbit welfare include rabbit haemorrhagic disease.

Myxomatosis

Myxomatosis (**in Finnish**) is a viral disease that affects rabbits, brown hares and mountain hares. It can result in a high mortality rate and sudden leveret deaths. In Finland, myxomatosis was first detected in wild rabbits in 2020. To prevent the spread of the disease, pet rabbits and farmed rabbits must be kept separate from wild rabbits and vaccinated against myxomatosis.

African swine fever

African swine fever is a haemorrhagic disease in pigs caused by the ASF virus, which can lead to a mortality rate of up to 100% in a pig population. The virus is present in all excretions of infected pigs and can persist in a carcass for several months. There is no vaccine or cure. African swine fever is present in several European countries, but has thus far not been detected in Finland. A wild boar management working group established by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry has prepared **a report (in Finnish)** outlining measures to manage the wild boar population and prevent the spread of African swine fever.

Chronic wasting disease in cervids

Affecting cervids, chronic wasting disease (**CWD**) is a disease caused by prion proteins. CWD belongs to the same group of diseases as bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). The disease progresses slowly and leads to the animal's starvation. In Europe, the disease was first detected in wild Eurasian tundra reindeer in Norway in 2016. The whole herd was put down at that time. Thus far, **two samples positive** for TSE have been taken from elk in Finland. The form of TSE found in the Nordic countries is considered to be an endogenous, non-infectious brain disease rather than actual CWD, which is transmitted from animal to animal through excreta and the environment.

Aujeszky's disease

Caused by the pseudorabies virus, **Aujeszky's disease (in Finnish)** infects pigs and other animals, but not humans. Symptoms of the disease vary, and it can lead to a mortality rate of up to 100%. Aujeszky's disease is a disease combated by **law (in Finnish)**. Finland is free of Aujeszky's disease, but antibodies to the disease were detected in Finnish wild boars in 2022.

Rabies

Finland has been free of rabies since 1991. To prevent the spread of rabies, **vaccine baits** have been spread close to the south-eastern border and southern coast of Finland for decades. Vaccine baits are effective in eradicating rabies and in protecting wild and domesticated farm animals from the rabies virus. Bait vaccination is an example of an animal-friendly way to prevent the spread of a disease among wild animals.

Riemerella anatipestifer

Riemerella anatipestifer is a bacterium causing sepsis in farmed ducks, geese, turkeys and pheasants. It can be transmitted through the air or through ulcerous skin. It was first detected in Finland in wild whooper swans and barnacle geese in 2015.

Avian influenza

Avian influenza is an influenza caused by type A viruses. Type A viruses are typical of waterfowl, and their virulence varies. Two of the subtypes, H5 and H7, also include viruses that can cause serious epidemics. Symptoms of avian influenza include apathy, loss of appetite, decreased egg laying, head swelling and possibly central nervous system symptoms. The disease can be rapidly fatal, in which case there is no time for symptoms to appear. The mortality rate can be high.

Avian influenza is easily transmitted between birds. If it spreads to a poultry farm, it can kill many animals, which is why contact between poultry and wild birds must be prevented. Some strains can also infect humans, but only through direct contact with a sick bird. Avian influenza is a disease combated by law.

The highly pathogenic virus was first detected in Finland in 2016 in tufted ducks and white-tailed eagles. The highly pathogenic virus has since been **found** mainly in white-tailed eagles and in the winter of 2021, in farmed and wild pheasants and wild birds in Southern Finland. As a precautionary measure, all birds treated at the Wildlife Hospital of Korkeasaari Zoo were put down after an infection was detected in a **northern goshawk (in Finnish)**.

In the summer of 2023, highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza was detected in several wild birds in Finland. During the summer, avian influenza also spread to fur animals in Finland, and the authorities ordered fur animals to be put down due to the disease. The mutated virus was found on several fur farms where the virus did not spread only from birds to fur animals but also between fur animals. On fur farms, the disease has been found in all the fur animals most commonly farmed in Finland: mink, raccoon dogs, Arctic foxes, silver foxes and their hybrids.

Up-to-date information about avian influenza is available on **the Finnish Food Authority's website**.

Echinococci

Echinococci (in Finnish) are carnivore parasites using carnivores as their definitive hosts and herbivorous mammals as their intermediate hosts. In Finland, *Echinococcus granulosus* (dog tapeworm) has been found mainly in Eastern Finland, but since 2017 also further west. Its spread can be slowed down and prevented by properly disposing of cervid abattoir waste. Elk lungs and livers that may contain *Echinococcus* larvae should not be fed raw to hunting dogs or left in the wild to be found by small carnivores.

Echinococcus multilocularis (fox tapeworm) does not occur in Finland. Its spread to the country is being prevented by requiring all dogs and cats imported into Finland to be medicated against echinococcus. Although the fox tapeworm does not cause symptoms in the main host (such as a dog), it can spread through its faeces to intermediate hosts, i.e. moles, as well as to humans. The primary purpose of the echinococcus medication administered to pets is to protect wildlife from a new disease.

Good practices to ensure the health of wild animals

- I will not allow wild animals to come into contact with pets or farm animals.
- I will vaccinate and worm my animals according to the recommendations.
- I will ensure proper hygiene in wild animal feeding areas.
- I will not touch any dead animals I find if I suspect the animal died because of a disease.
- I will make sure that fish guts and other discarded fish parts are kept out of the reach of wild animals.
- I will bury wild boar viscera and unused parts of the carcass, as well as the viscera of cervids.
- I will not import any animals or products of animal origin carrying the risk of spreading diseases to wild animals.

Interests of wild animals and humans collide

The interests of wild animals and humans often conflict. How these conflicts of interest are resolved can have a major impact on the general attitude towards wild animals. The goal should be the peaceful co-existence of wildlife and humans.

Agriculture, forestry, construction, transport, the production and transmission of energy, and mining are examples of activities that harm the lives of wild animals and their habitats. Bird nests are destroyed during logging and fieldwork in the summer. Some birds and bats die when they collide with power lines, wind turbines and buildings. Wild animals are run over by wood harvesters, gardening equipment, agricultural machines and cars.

Wild animals cause financial losses for farmers and fishermen, among others. Large carnivores, especially wolverines, cause losses for reindeer owners by killing their reindeer. Grey seals cause harm to the fishing industry. **Wolves** kill around a hundred sheep and a few dozen dogs every year. **The State compensates** damage caused by large carnivores and cervids. There are provisions on compensation for damage caused by game animals in the Game Animal Damages Act. Damage caused by wild animals can and should be prevented.

Image 53 by Natural Resources Institute Finland. Elk like to feed on coniferous and deciduous sapling stands.



Dense populations of deer in Southern Finland and migratory stopovers and feeding on farms by large flocks of geese have been perceived as problematic in recent years. Established by the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, **the barnacle goose management working group (in Finnish)** has proposed the expulsion of birds based on derogations and the provision of suitable alternative feeding sites as the solution. If damage does occur, it can be compensated for, however. Farmers can also apply for a derogation to shoot barnacle geese. In 2023, the Government stated that hunting restrictions on viable species such as the cormorant and barnacle goose would be lifted and the species would be included in the scope of the Hunting Act.

Combining (in Finnish) game management and agriculture is possible with proper planning. Wild animals can be taken into account by leaving patches of forest in fields and by leaving the crops unharvested at the edges of the fields, for example. This way, it is possible to offer more hiding places and food for wild animals, as well as boost the biodiversity of the area.

Forestry (in Finnish) deteriorates the habitats of wild animals. For example, drainage mainly harms animals. Black grouse chicks die because of steep and watery forest ditches, and the willow ptarmigan no longer thrives in Southern Finland as a result of drainage. Forest fowl in particular have suffered from intensive forest management: their populations have declined due to habitat fragmentation. On the other hand, the elk has benefited from the forest management activities in the recent past. When elk eat sapling stands, they cause damage to forestry. Forest owners can apply for and receive compensation **for damage caused by elk (in Finnish)**.

Tens of thousands of bird nests are destroyed by logging in the summer. BirdLife Finland **aims to (in Finnish)** stop logging during the nesting season. The Finnish Association for Nature Conservation has launched a petition for **bird nesting peace (in Finnish)**, calling for a ban on felling during the main bird nesting season in May and June.

Additional information :

- **Preventing damage caused by large carnivores (in Finnish)**
- **Preventing damage caused by cervids (in Finnish)**
- **Forest management tools to reduce damage caused by elk (in Finnish)**
- **Preventing damage caused by wolves**

Hunting and game management

Hunting affects not only game animals but also other animal groups

Hunting plays an important role in the welfare of game animals. A significant number of wild animals are killed or wounded during hunting.

Finnish Nature Panel proposes (in Finnish) that, among other measures, the hunting of endangered species should be stopped to boost nature conservation and reduce the negative impact of forestry on nature. According to the panel, a legislative amendment should require that species classified as endangered, and species whose populations are in serious decline but that do not yet meet the criteria for endangerment, should be protected from hunting. It also proposes an amendment of the necessary laws to allow the reintroduction of a species that has returned to viability as a huntable species.

According to **statistics** by Natural Resources Institute Finland (Table 13), some 600,000 mammals, more than a million birds and 100–300 marine mammals are hunted in Finland every year. The statistics do not show the number of killed individuals in species classified as pests and thus excluded from protection, such as rodents.

Around 300,000 Finns have a hunting permit. They redeem a hunting card annually, and the card is subject to the payment of a game management fee. There have been no major changes in the number of hunters during the 21st century. The average age of hunters is around 50, and 7% of them are women. Two thirds of hunting card holders actively hunt every year.

Hunting is regulated by **the Hunting Act** and **the Hunting Decree (in Finnish)**. **The Finnish Wildlife Agency** annually publishes species-specific **open seasons** based on the results of annual game triangulation. Hunting restrictions aim to ensure the viability of animal populations.

Table 13. (1/2)

The Finnish game bag as indicative numbers of individuals in 2010–2022
(source: **Natural Resources Institute Finland, Statistics**).

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Mountain hare	159200	182300	155900	187700	183200	152500	118000	81000	86000	79700	97300	90500	96200
Brown hare	89000	71700	66600	66100	64900	60100	63400	50600	60500	60100	71200	72700	72100
Rabbit (2005–)	1200	1200	1100	1150	2100	5000	420	800	1400	1500	700	270	..
Squirrel	5300	4300	3500	7100	10400	7200	4800	1800	5100	4700	6400	4600	8500
Beaver	6300	5100	3700	4200	6700	5300	5000	2400	6200	4800	5500	3700	3700
Muskkrat	5900	3600	2300	3600	5800	1600	1000	1200	4900	300	800	300	2900
Fox	52700	52700	50600	46100	51100	42200	49100	51100	47800	40300	45900	40100	37500
Raccoon dog	164200	169800	144500	157200	175700	159700	212500	149700	180600	138000	168300	114600	121100
Stoat	2000	2000	3500	2000	800	1600	2700	800	1500	1000	1500	1300	1200
Mink	54200	48600	36300	40000	36100	37900	52700	51300	48900	38100	52100	34900	38200
Fitchew	600	300	500	700	500	1500	1800	..	..	166	185	131	159
Pine marten	25600	25600	17600	22700	17100	15700	18000	18100	29000	21700	25900	16200	16400
Badger	14000	12400	13400	8600	12000	10000	17400	12900	15300	10700	13000	10500	9300
Otter (2000-)*	7	9	1	3	2	..	13	8	17	7	4	7	3
Elk	68423	58577	39979	38025	39488	44122	49674	56581	58219	52302	49131	42484	37055
White-tailed deer	25455	21555	22135	21385	24773	26578	32233	41161	52781	60523	69965	74243	67183
Finnish forest reindeer (2000–)	43	48	38	11	20	18	18	19	18	17	18	15	30
Fallow deer	128	77	75	59	50	61	70	101	96	127	201	245	313
Roe deer	3487	2737	3632	3559	4192	4771	7884	9392	9228	17208	21422	21973	19988
European mouflon (1997–)	13	24	42	40	43	25	45	20	40	39	47	101	104
Wild boar (2008–)	100	100	90	160	386	486	502	571	882	855	1210	1413	1053
Wolf	..	..	..	..	13	31	56	36	16	20	8	35	37
Bear	..	..	..	..	121	126	179	241	338	305	350	389	140
Lynx	..	..	..	..	547	425	570	455	260	192	263	354	275
Grey seal (1998–)	350	165	177	134	184	157	185	232	213	316	266	421	303
Ringed seal (2015–)	..	..	..	..	..	15	87	202	210	266	310	277	271
Bean goose	5100	3600	3900	3300	0	0	0	100	..	100	508	305	205
Greylag goose	8900	5500	7700	4900	7900	3000	6500	8700	6300	4700	4200	1321	1496
Canada goose	6200	8500	3200	7800	7300	3600	8200	3800	5700	6100	5900	4300	5400
Wigeon (2003-)	38500	33700	35100	35500	31800	23400	26300	27300	18400	19300	4034	3389	2948
Common teal (2020–)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	49000	68100	43500
Garganey (2020–)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	821	647	514

The game bags for cervids, other artiodactyls, large carnivores and seals, as well as other species covered by the notification requirement, are reported by the Finnish Wildlife Agency.

The game bags for white-tailed deer, Finnish forest reindeer, fallow deer and roe deer are reported for each hunting year.

Species that can only be hunted based on a permit and that are subject to a notification requirement (cervids, large carnivores, etc.) are reported as individual animals.

Other species are reported at the accuracy of 100 animals.

0 = None or fewer than 50

.. = Missing data, the game bag for this species was not estimated for this year and/or area

**The otter is not included in the classification of fur animals in the statistics by Natural Resources Institute Finland.*

***The crow, the magpie and seagulls are non-protected species.*

Table 13. (2/2)

The Finnish game bag as indicative numbers of individuals in 2010–2022
(source: Natural Resources Institute Finland, Statistics).

Garganey (2020–)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	821	647	514
Common teal and garganey (–2019)	124300	126200	94100	124000	109200	77500	86300	93000	80500	82100	-	-	-
Mallard	265400	258500	241600	282400	255200	249400	183700	180200	157600	201000	194700	186700	164500
Northern pintail	7200	6300	2400	4800	7400	3400	3200	6100	5300	1800	804	775	841
Northern shoveller	4000	3500	2400	3600	4300	2500	3400	3000	1100	800	406	436	419
Pochard (2003–)	900	400	500	600	2200	100	600	100	0	0	0	0	0
Tufted duck	1400	2500	4400	3400	2400	1400	1100	1000	1100	400	146	179	177
Eider	5200	7100	1100	4300	2700	2200	1700	1300	1400	3200	327	257	150
Long-tailed duck	8000	8600	11700	19400	13600	9100	14700	8000	2900	1800	596	424	296
Goldeneye	52500	50300	44300	41600	33700	30900	29100	28900	28000	27000	32000	19000	17600
Red-breasted merganser (2003–)	1100	900	3700	300	300	200	1100	100	0	0	0	0	0
Goosander (2003–)	5100	4000	1400	1700	1700	2800	1400	3100	1800	2800	306	187	183
Hazel grouse	92100	117400	75100	75500	50000	40100	17300	15500	39900	45600	29400	38100	13900
Willow grouse	8400	61700	21800	27900	22900	35800	36000	14800	20300	32500	38600	20200	40900
Black grouse	170600	242900	183600	202200	136700	105200	56500	32800	88000	122600	115700	140300	128800
Wood grouse	35100	73100	36300	50600	33400	28100	19400	13400	35900	30900	34300	27900	35100
Grey partridge	5000	3500	1600	2300	1200	4900	3100	2400	5600	6000	5812	6333	6200
Pheasant	35600	43900	34200	22100	22000	50500	29100	25600	28300	28000	19600	23600	12400
Wood pigeon	232100	239800	220500	260800	270900	235100	235000	210200	263600	307900	324000	256700	249800
Coot	600	700	400	800	400	1100	100	0	0	0	48	55	30
Woodcock	4700	4100	3100	3700	3400	7500	3200	6500	2300	1700	3500	2200	2600
Crow**	182000	174700	170700	137900	155200	162900	138200	98500	140600	105600	143100	104300	97100
Magpie**	102400	94100	96900	89600	64800	82400	84500	62500	74000	55300	51900	48400	54400
Seagull (2004–)**	33000	38100	58700	25400	25100	27400	35300	17300	15200	20400	8400	12100	22100

The game bags for cervids, other artiodactyls, large carnivores and seals, as well as other species covered by the notification requirement, are reported by the Finnish Wildlife Agency.

The game bags for white-tailed deer, Finnish forest reindeer, fallow deer and roe deer are reported for each hunting year.

Species that can only be hunted based on a permit and that are subject to a notification requirement (cervids, large carnivores, etc.) are reported as individual animals.

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.. = Missing data, the game bag for this species was not estimated for this year and/or area

*The otter is not included in the classification of fur animals in the statistics by Natural Resources Institute Finland.

**The crow, the magpie and seagulls are non-protected species.

Hunter skills affect the welfare of prey animals

An animal's welfare, which is based on the animal's own experience, ends when the animal loses consciousness and no longer regains it. It is therefore essential in terms of the welfare of animals for hunters to ensure that their prey is killed or loses consciousness immediately, and that the death of an unconscious animal is ensured by bloodletting, for example.

An animal must always be killed as quickly as possible, avoiding unnecessary pain and suffering. To avoid unnecessary pain and suffering, traps must be regularly checked so that an animal caught in the trap will not suffer hunger, thirst, pain or suffering. A camera can be used as an aid: it alerts the hunter when there is movement in the trap.

When shooting a game animal, the hunter should always aim for an accurate shot that is immediately lethal. The Hunting Decree defines the weapons and hunting methods allowed for each species. By way of derogation, other suitable firearms may be used when putting down a wounded animal or an animal caught in a foot snare and putting down an animal which is in a cave, restraining trap, rock pile, building, under a building or woodpile or otherwise in a helpless state. Pursuant to the Hunting Decree, a wounded wild boar, wolf, bear, wolverine or lynx left in a forest must be reported to the nearest police without delay.

The hunting examination, the shooting test required for the hunting of cervids and bears, and the requirement for a trained hunting master in a hunting party are intended to ensure that only professional hunters who know what they are doing take part in a hunt. A responsible hunter respects nature and the prey. **The ethical guidelines for hunters (in Finnish)** published by the Finnish Wildlife Agency help hunters examine their hunting practices from an ethically sustainable perspective. The **Riistainfo.fi (in Finnish)** website contains plenty of educational materials published by the Finnish Wildlife Agency for hunters.



Image 54 by CC/Steve Hillebrandt, USFWS. The white-tailed deer population in Finland has grown strongly in the 2000s.

A retriever saves wounded animals from being lost

Using a retriever in bird hunting is an excellent way to improve the speed at which the prey is found and thus reduce the unnecessary suffering of a wounded animal. When all prey is found, hunters do not have to shoot any birds beyond their needs. The aim of the **Noutajapörssi (in Finnish)** (Retriever Exchange) service maintained by the Finnish Retriever Association is to bring together dogless hunters and retriever handlers.

In addition to retrievers, tracking dogs can be used to search for wounded game animals. A tracking dog works on a lead and therefore does not disturb wild animals during the breeding season, for example. In addition to hunting, tracking dogs can be used to track animals injured in traffic accidents.

Impact of legislation on the welfare of wild animals varies

Amendments to hunting legislation in recent years, such as those related to trapping methods, the use of dogs and closed seasons, may have an impact on the welfare of wild animals.

Using a bow and arrow in the hunting of species such as the white-tailed deer, Finnish forest reindeer and wild boar **was allowed (in Finnish)** in 2017, even though little research had been published internationally on the impact of bow hunting on the welfare of white-tailed deer, and none at all in Finland. However, using a bow and arrow to hunt elk was not allowed. **A follow-up study on hunting with a bow and arrow** was launched in 2019.

The maximum withers height of a dog used for hunting cervids was **raised (in Finnish)** from 28 cm to 39 cm in 2019, allowing the use of longer-legged dog breeds such as beagles, drevlers and basset hounds in deer hunting. The amendment was justified in particular by the increased efficiency of the hunting of white-tailed deer. It was also proposed that the use of dogs be allowed in elk hunting in January, but the bill did not pass.

Raising the withers height of a hunting dog carries the risk of compromising the welfare of the prey animal. The risk is increased because the faster dogs can cause the prey animal to run itself to exhaustion. Of hunting methods used for cervids, battue and hunting with a dog are generally more **stressful** experiences than hunting by stalking.

The protection of does with fawns **was weakened (in Finnish)** in 2016 to reduce the share of does in the deer population (the protection means that a doe that has a fawn cannot be shot). The reasoning was that the protection of does with fawns would be maintained through hunting guidelines and ethical rules. Although it is not good hunting practice to shoot a doe that has a fawn, the weaker protection may increase the risk of fawns being left without their mothers. A fawn under the age of twelve months will have difficulty surviving the winter if it has lost its mother. The hunting master must ensure that efforts are made to kill a fawn that has lost its mother as quickly as possible.

In 2020, the Hunting Act **was temporarily amended (in Finnish)** due to the COVID-19 pandemic so that there was no need to renew shooting tests expiring in the same year, and the validity of the tests was extended by a year. Under normal circumstances, the shooting test for cervids and bears must be renewed every three years.

Hunting of waterfowl at dusk was banned (in Finnish) in early August 2023. The aim of the ban is to ensure that the lighting conditions are sufficient for the identification of the bird species during hunting, which reduces the risk of accidentally shooting protected or declining species. The ban on hunting at dusk improves species identification and the shooting situation, and it is easier to find wounded animals during daylight hours so that they can be put down quickly to avoid unnecessary suffering.

Riistainfo.fi (in Finnish) has presented legislative amendments concerning hunting since 2017 in an easily understandable format.

Game management contributes to a good game bag

The aim of game management is to ensure favourable reproduction and living conditions for game animals. From a hunter's perspective, game management aims to achieve a good catch. Every hunter can improve the living conditions of wild animals through their own actions.

Game management can include (winter) feeding of animals, building nests, planning the agricultural environment with wildlife in mind and restoring habitats such as wetlands. There is national interest in the work on wetlands, and the many positive effects of wetlands are well known, but there is a need for more practical advice. The motivation behind establishing a game management wetland is the improvement of hunting opportunities.

Game management is also part of more extensive projects such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's **SOTKA project (in Finnish)**, which restores and creates waterfowl brood habitats and a network of bird resting areas, and enhances the hunting of small carnivores.

In game management, the hunting of carnivores can cause conflicts when the habitat of one species is improved by killing individuals of another. **Competitive (in Finnish)** trapping of small carnivores has also given rise to an intense debate about the ethical legitimacy of the activity.

Game feeding has its benefits but also poses risks to the welfare of animals

Additional feeding of wild animals can help them survive in the wild. The feeding of game animals is often motivated by a larger game population in the area and thus a larger game bag. For example, white-tailed deer are fed in Finland for game management reasons, but also because it is easy to shoot a deer at the feeding site by stalking: an animal that has stopped to eat can be targeted easily. For the prey, getting shot at a feeding site is less stressful than being chased by a human or a dog.

Properly managed feeding can improve the welfare of game animals and help them survive the winter, but it also has its risks: feeding sites can act as disease hot spots and attract other (unwanted) species for which the food is not intended. Feeding also affects the behaviour of animals: at feeding sites where there are more animals than they would normally be in the wild, aggression between animals has been found to increase. In turn, the increased aggressive behaviour causes stress and injuries to the animals.

Locations of feeding sites can be used to control movement of animals

When feeding wild animals, matters to be considered include the type of food used, where and how it is placed, and when the animals are fed. For example, when feeding small cervids, care must be taken to ensure that their basic diet remains the same throughout the winter. Introducing only small amounts of different foods at a time is a good idea, as a rapid change in diet can upset the bacterial digestive system of deer and make it difficult or impossible for them to absorb nutrients.

The feeding site should be set up in an open area so that the feeding animals can spot predators in time to escape. The placement of a feeding site can divert animals away from farmland and roads, helping to reduce human-animal conflicts. The food should be placed in automatic feeders or in shelters where wild boars cannot get to it. For example, deer can be fed hay which does not attract wild boars.

The feeding must not be stopped in the middle of the season. If there is no longer food at a familiar feeding site in the middle of winter, the animals may have difficulties in finding new sources of food. During the summer, game animals can be fed by reserving fields for this purpose, for example.

Feeding sites carry a considerable disease risk, which can be reduced by establishing several small feeding sites instead of a single large one. In particular, there are fears that wild boar could infect farm pigs with **African swine fever (in Finnish)**. A feeding site for wild boar should not be placed near a pig farm. The Finnish Food Authority does not recommend feeding wild boar at all, but food can be used to attract wild boar as an aid to hunting.

Good hunting and game management practices

- I will respect wild animals.
- I will only hunt permitted and unprotected species at the authorised times, in authorised areas and with authorised equipment.
- I will practise species identification beforehand.
- I will maintain my shooting skills, practise regularly, familiarise myself with my weapon, and determine the right point of impact and the right shooting distance.
- I will not shoot at an animal if I am unsure of whether I can hit it.
- I will not shoot an animal if I am unsure of which species it is.
- I will use a dog as an aid to look for the catch.
- If a hit is bad and the animal is wounded, I will find the wounded animal.
- I will always follow good practice and **the ethical guidelines for hunters**.
- I will not exceed my catch quota and will submit the necessary catch reports.
- I will take part in game management work such as annual game triangulation.

Crime, vandalism and poaching of wild animals

Hunting offences, violations and vandalism

Metsähallitus game wardens perform 8,000–10,000 inspections annually, **detecting violations (in Finnish)** in about a tenth. Typically, around half the violations involve fishing: failures to mark fishing gear and failures to pay fisheries management fees and fishing permits are common. Most hunting violations involve defects in carrying a hunting weapon, in the use of safety clothing or in permits. There are also violations of laws such as the Off-Road Driving Act (Maastoliikennelaki 1710/1995), the Nature Conservation Act and the Waste Act. Some violations such as inadequately marked fishing gear do not affect animal welfare. This report focuses on violations that have a direct impact on animal welfare.

In recent years (2014–2021), there have been regular incidents of grouse being shot from a road. According to the Hunting Act, shooting a grouse when this or the shooter is on a private road is not permitted. Finnish forest reindeer and elk have been killed illegally, and snowmobiles have been used to hunt elk, which is against the law. The use of

carcasses to hunt bears has been suspected. Large carnivores have been disturbed regularly over the years. Sentences for aggravated hunting offences or disturbance have been given in cases involving bears, wolves, wolverines, lynx, otters and Finnish forest reindeer. Sentences for nature conservation offences have been given for the killing of golden eagles and the shooting of a red-throated diver.

The Fishing Act has been violated by leaving fishing gear under the ice for too long. Gear-related violations have been detected in 23% of the inspections for the conservation of Saimaa ringed seal, but no violations have been detected in the densest seal population areas.

There are also occasional cases of vandalism against wild animals such as **the destruction of bird nests (in Finnish)**^f. Vandalism against wild animals is always reprehensible.

Conflicting interests of humans and wild animals

Attitudes towards Finland's **large carnivores** – the bear, wolf, lynx and wolverine – are mixed: they are both respected and feared. The interests of humans and large carnivores sometimes conflict. For example, large carnivores prey on reindeer in the reindeer herding area and may occasionally prey on domesticated animals or dogs in a yard or pasture. Large carnivores feed mainly on herbivores, and weak prey animals in particular easily fall prey to them.

Wolves often attack **dogs** close to the boundaries of their territories. The wolf may perceive the dog as a competitor and therefore attack the intruder, just as it would an unfamiliar wolf moving at the outer edge of its territory. A dog is also easy prey for a wolf, especially in the event of an attack near the dog's home. A wolf usually eats all or part of a dog it catches. Dogs are also injured and killed in traffic accidents during hunting.

Damage caused by large carnivores can be prevented

One way to prevent dogs from being killed by wolves is to have publicly available information about the movements of wolf packs: sightings of large carnivores can be monitored in the **e-service** of Natural Resources Institute Finland. Other ways to **protect (in Finnish)** hunting dogs are to avoid areas recently used by wolf packs, staying close to the dog and equipping the dog with a safety vest and a camera. New ways to prevent dog damage are also needed.

Large carnivores can be fatal not only for dogs but also for other domesticated animals. They can injure and kill grazing sheep, visit apiaries and cause agitated farm animals to escape from pastures and enclosures through fences. The number of attacks by large carnivores can be **reduced** by building electric or sturdy fences, taking farm animals inside for the night, increasing surveillance and herding the animals with the help of dogs, for example. Food sources that can attract large carnivores should not be placed near settlements to prevent wolves learning to look for food there.

Estimates of wolf population size and mortality rate are based on research and sightings

According to an estimate by Natural Resources Institute Finland, in the spring of 2023, there were 16–23 wolf pairs and 40–46 wolf packs in Finland (when a pack is defined as a group of at least three individuals). Of these, 203 pairs and 607 packs moved on both sides of the eastern border. The total number of wolves was estimated at 2910331 individuals. The size of the Finnish wolf population has been increasing in recent years.

Natural Resources Institute Finland's wolf population estimate is based on wolf sightings (including the counting of tracks in the snow), the known mortality rate and DNA analyses. Hunters and other people spending time in the wild submit their wolf sightings to the Tassu system for population assessment. Natural Resources Institute Finland has **trained (in Finnish)** people to collect wolf droppings for DNA analysis. DNA samples allow the identification of individuals, and this data can be used to fine-tune the population estimate. The location of collared wolves is used to determine territory boundaries.

In the reindeer herding area, reindeer may be brought into an enclosure for calving and wintering if there is a high risk of predator damage. However, it should be noted that in addition to large carnivores, loose dogs can kill reindeer and drive them to exhaustion.

Particularly in urban areas, large carnivores can be repelled using a variety of sound and light stimuli. **A derogation (in Finnish)** to kill a large carnivore that is causing problems can be applied from the Finnish Wildlife Agency. Compensation can be claimed from the State for damage caused by large carnivores under the Game Animal Damages Act.

Metsästäjä magazine **reports (in Finnish)** that according to the game damages register, damage caused by wolves to 47 dogs, 131 sheep, 12 head of cattle, 213 other domesticated animals and 588 reindeer (excluding calf damage compensation) was compensated as damages caused to domesticated and farm animals in 2019. The total amount of damages compensated was just over one million euros.

The **known wolf mortality rate (in Finnish)**, determined based on statistics maintained by Natural Resources Institute Finland, the Finnish Wildlife Agency and the Finnish Food Authority, was 31 individuals during the 2019–2020 hunting season. Damage-based derogations from the Finnish Wildlife Agency to kill wolves that have caused damage are the largest contributor to the known mortality rate of wolves. Between 2015 and 2020, around 170 wolves were killed based on derogations. The police can also order the culling of a wolf. Furthermore, wolves die in traffic and some wolves are found dead. The known mortality rate in 2019–2020 was just over 10% of the wolf population. In addition, there are deaths that have been unaccounted for, which include (undetected) poaching.

Poaching is the leading cause of wolf deaths

According to a **report (in Finnish)** shedding light on the attitude of the general public towards wolves, Finns' fear of large carnivores has intensified. Many are concerned about wolves, but relatively few feel that they pose a significant risk to children or domesticated animals. What gives cause for concern is that there is more public support for the poaching of wolves than in the past. The illegal killing of wolves, i.e. poaching, is an offence and makes it difficult to manage the wolf population.

The poaching of wolves and other large carnivores is driven by frustration with the large carnivore policy and the damage they cause, as well as fear and anger at their presence. The poaching of wolves may also be motivated by a **hunting dog** having been attacked by a wolf.

In Finland, poachers target wolves in particular. In a **study** covering the period from 1998 to 2016, poaching was the leading cause of death for wolves. The study covered 130 wolves collared for research purposes, of which 91 died. Of those that died, 52 were killed illegally and 29 legally. Individual wolves were killed in traffic accidents, put down when seriously injured or died after attacking an elk or in another type of interspecies encounter. Poaching was most commonly carried out by shooting, but wolves were also killed by car, snowmobile and poison. Poaching was most commonly directed at breeding individuals.

According to the researchers, legal wolf hunting alone is an ineffective tool for the protection of wolves and the regulation of the wolf population, especially if there is no information on the extent of poaching and its relation to legal hunting.

A 2019 **doctoral thesis** at the University of Oulu investigated the ecological effects of poaching on the wolf populations in Finland and Sweden. A remote location and being able to see wolves from forest roads increased the likelihood of poaching. The volume of poaching was best explained by the size of the wolf population and the volume of legal hunting. Poaching increased as the wolf population grew and decreased as the number of legal hunting permits increased. However, the study found that despite legal hunting, poaching appears to have regulated the wolf populations.



Image 55. Poaching is the leading cause of wolf deaths. Image by CC/Wild Wonders of Europe, Sergei Gorshkov.

Management-based wolf hunting led to the deaths of too many alphas

As the wolf is one of the species protected under the EU Habitats Directive, management-based hunting of wolves requires a viable wolf population. According to the **population management plan**, the minimum viable population size is at least 25 packs or breeding pairs. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry allowed an experiment in **management-based hunting** of wolves in 2015 and 2016. However, there were too many alpha individuals among the wolves caught in the winter of 2016 to ensure **the sustainability of management-based hunting (in Finnish)**. The simultaneous use of derogations in several different territories caused problems, and targeting the hunting at young individuals proved challenging. The overall impact of hunting on the wolf population could not be fully anticipated when the permit decisions were made. After the experiment, the hunting of wolves has only been possible with a derogation granted by the Finnish Wildlife Agency based on damage or safety.

On several occasions, Finland has been condemned by the Court of Justice of the European Union for wolf hunting, but according to a precedent, management-based wolf hunting could be possible in Finland. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry set up a **working group** to examine the prerequisites for hunting. A **citizens' initiative (in Finnish)** on the introduction of management-based wolf hunting was launched in 2020. It gathered the 50,000 signatures required for the parliamentary process in less than a week. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry restored the authorisation for **the management-based hunting of wolves from the beginning of 2022 (in Finnish)**, but administrative courts have suspended the implementation of the management-based hunting permits granted by the Finnish Wildlife Agency by means of interlocutory decisions.

Updated in 2019, the aim of the **Management Plan for the Wolf Population in Finland** is to reconcile the protection of the wolf population with the needs of citizens living in the wolves' territories. The management plan describes measures to keep the wolf population viable and reduce wolf-related conflicts among the general public (Fig. 56).

Image 56a.
Measures required for the management of the wolf population (source: Management Plan for the Wolf Population in Finland).

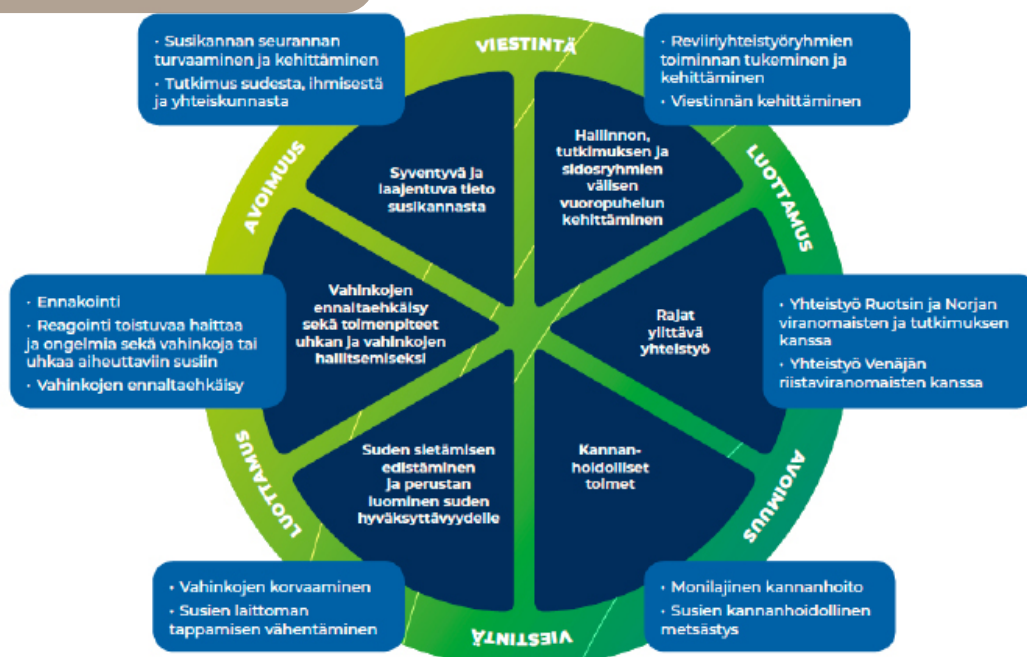


Image 56b.
Measures required for
the management of the
wolf population (source:
Management Plan for the
Wolf Population in Finland).

VIESTINTÄ	COMMUNICATION
LUOTTAMUS	TRUST
AVOIMUUS	TRANSPARENCY
Syventyvä ja laajentuva tieto susikannasta	Deepening and widening knowledge of the wolf population
Hallinnon, tutkimuksen ja sidosryhmien välisen vuoropuhelun kehittäminen	Developing dialogue between government, research and stakeholders
Rajat ylittävä yhteistyö	Cross-border cooperation
Kannanhoidolliset toimet	Population management measures
Suden sietämisen edistäminen ja perustan luominen suden hyväksyttävyydelle	Promoting tolerance towards wolves and laying down a foundation for their acceptance
Vahinkojen ennaltaehkäisy sekä toimenpiteet uhkan ja vahinkojen hallitsemiseksi	Preventing damage and measures to manage threats and damage
Susikannan seurannan turvaaminen ja kehittäminen	Safeguarding and development of the monitoring of the wolf population
Tutkimus sudesta, ihmisestä ja yhteiskunnasta	Research on wolves, humans and society
<u>Reviiriyhteistyöryhmien toiminnan tukeminen ja kehittäminen</u>	Support for and development of the activities of the territory cooperation groups
Viestinnän kehittäminen	Development of communication
Yhteistyö Ruotsin ja Norjan viranomaisten ja tutkimuksen kanssa	Cooperation with the Swedish and Norwegian authorities and research institutes
Yhteistyö Venäjän <u>riistaviranomaisten kanssa</u>	Cooperation with the Russian game authority
Monilajinen kannanhoito	Multispecies population management
Susien kannanhoidollinen metsästys	Management-based hunting of wolves
Vahinkojen korvaaminen	<u>Compensating damages</u>
Susien laittoman tappamisen vähentäminen	Reducing the poaching of wolves
Ennakointi	Foresight
Reagointi toistuvaa haittaa ja ongelmia sekä vahinkoja tai uhkaa aiheuttaviin susiin	Responding to wolves causing repeated harm, problems, damage or threat
Vahinkojen ennaltaehkäisy	Damage prevention

SusiLIFE resolves conflicts

The purpose of **SusiLIFE**, a joint project between five organisations, is to promote interaction at the local level and provide tools for the prevention of harm and damage caused by wolves. The project aims to boost people's trust in the authorities and their ability to handle conflicts caused by wolves. Among other measures, the project has set up a **patrol (in Finnish)** consisting of a police officer and a game warden to prevent hunting offences, with a special focus on the poaching of wolves.

Other key themes of the project include the collection and monitoring of DNA samples, the prevention of damage, the development of modelling tools for population management, interaction and cooperation in areas where wolves are found, and communication of the latest research data. These themes correspond to the measures specified in the Management Plan for the Wolf Population in Finland. The **website** of the project, which will run until 2024, provides a wealth of useful and up-to-date information about conflicts with wolves and potential solutions.

Alien species

An invasive alien species poses a risk to native species

An **alien species (in Finnish)** is a species that has been introduced to a new area by humans. An invasive alien species threatens biodiversity. It can either completely displace or limit the range of native species, spread diseases or parasites, or prey on or compete with native species. The invasive alien species may also interfere with the recreational use of the area or cause negative economic or health effects. The term 'invasive alien species' refers to an alien species whose introduction or spread has been found to threaten or adversely affect biodiversity and associated ecosystem services.

Only some invasive alien species cause enough harm to require common management measures across the European Union or in the whole of Finland. These invasive alien species are listed in **EU list of harmful invasive alien species (in Finnish)** and **Finland's national list of harmful invasive alien species (in Finnish)**.

The species on these lists must not be introduced into Finland or kept, bred, transported, transferred, placed on the market, sold or otherwise transferred. The introduction of all invasive species, including those not on the list of harmful invasive species, into the environment is prohibited.

Finland has received approval from the European Commission to grant **derogations (in Finnish)** for the keeping and breeding of the invasive alien species raccoon dog for fur production throughout the EU, subject to certain conditions. The approval is valid until 31 January 2049 and covers a maximum of 239,216 raccoon dogs. The national Act on Managing the Risks Caused by Alien Species allows the breeding of mink and, in principle, other alien predators such as the sable, for fur production.

Invasive alien species status threatens the welfare of the raccoon dog and mink

The raccoon dog is classified as an invasive alien species in the EU and the mink as a national invasive alien species. Previously classified as game animals in the Hunting Act, **the raccoon dog and mink were removed from the list of game animals in 2019 (in Finnish)** to facilitate and boost their hunting. The raccoon dog and mink are now subject to the regulations of the Hunting Act and Hunting Decree on the capture and killing of unprotected animals. The use of methods prohibited in the case of the hunting of game species such as artificial light, electronic sighting devices and sound-producing mechanical devices is allowed when hunting them.

In addition, passing the hunting examination is no longer a requirement to kill raccoon dogs and minks. This poses a significant risk to the welfare of the raccoon dog and mink: the invasive alien species status may cause them unnecessary distress, pain or suffering during hunting, contrary to the purpose of the Animal Welfare Act. The raccoon dog and mink do not have any closed season, which means that they can be hunted and killed at any time of the year, including during the breeding season.

Raccoon dogs live in pairs. When the pups are born in the late winter or early summer, the female raccoon dog moves around in search of food, and the male stays in the nest to look after the pups. If the female is killed while the pups are still dependent on suckling, the pups are likely to die of starvation. Killing a male raccoon dog can also be fatal for the pups, as the male plays an important role in caring for the pups. According to the **ethical guidelines for hunters**, when hunting during the breeding season, offspring **should always be killed before the mother (in Finnish)**. However, this is not a legal obligation, and the morality of the hunter decides what they do.

A Nordic raccoon dog project (in Finnish) aims to prevent the spread of raccoon dogs from Northern Finland to Sweden and Norway. Preventing the spread means hunting raccoon dogs as effectively as possible with traps, with dogs above ground, with dogs in caves, and with camera traps and carcasses. The project also uses raccoon dog Judases: a GPS transmitter is attached to a male raccoon dog, which will provide location data to determine when and where the male has found a breeding partner. The partner is killed, and the collared male is left to look for a new partner.



Image 57 by CC/Karlakas. The welfare of individual animals must also be taken into account when hunting invasive alien species.

Invasive alien species must also be protected from unnecessary suffering

Raccoon dogs and minks can be a threat to biodiversity especially in waterfowl habitats, as they destroy waterfowl nests. Waterfowl are protected not only because of the depletion of their populations but to maintain game bird populations at levels that will allow humans to hunt them without endangering the existence of the species. Although predators included in an invasive species cause harm in waterfowl habitats, each animal is an individual with its own physical and mental experiences. The welfare of individuals, even those included in an invasive alien species, should be respected at least by ensuring that the animal is killed only by a competent person who has completed the hunting examination, that the animal experiences a rapid loss of consciousness before being put down and does not suffer before falling unconscious, and that any pups are not left to starve to death.

A person who kills a wild animal must always act in line with the purpose of the **Animal Welfare Act (in Finnish)**, to promote the welfare of animals and to protect animals from any harm in the best possible way. The welfare of an individual animal must be considered from the animal's own perspective and equally regardless of the social significance attributed to the animal by humans.

Read more:

- [Vieraslajit.fi \(in Finnish\)](#)
- [Vieraspeto.fi \(in Finnish\)](#)
- A lecture at Wild Animal Welfare 2019 : [Invasive alien species as a vector of diseases and parasites](#)

Wild animals in the wrong place – expelling pests

Sometimes there are too many wild animals from the human perspective, or they are in the wrong place. Geese rest in fields during their migration, and large flocks can destroy crops. Pigeons stain buildings with their droppings. Mice, moles and rats invade human dwellings and farms, contaminating food or feed. Insects invade human dwellings. Animals are called pests when they cause damage to food, goods or buildings, or a health hazard to humans or domesticated animals.

Sometimes a pest can prove to be a beneficial animal. For example, if you can get bats to live in a box in your yard instead of inside your home, you get a great mosquito repellent. A single bat can catch up to 2,700 small insects in one night. Building a **box (in Finnish)** for bats following the instructions by the Finnish Museum of Natural History is therefore a good idea.

The nuisance caused by animals should first and foremost be resolved by means that cause the least harm to them. Therefore, the **Finnish Safety and Chemicals Agency (Tukes)** says that the first step in pest control is prevention. Prevent animals entering the building, ensure proper hygiene and make sure that food or anything that animals could feed on is kept out of their reach.

If prevention is not enough and pest control is necessary, trapping is the first option for the control of mice, moles and rats. Use a trap that kills the animals as quickly as possible. Insecticides or rodenticides intended for pest control should be used as a last resort. Rodenticides are only sold to consumers to kill mice. When handling chemicals, keep in mind that they can also be dangerous to animals other than the targets.

Rodenticides intended for mice contain **alphachloralose**, which makes mice drowsy and thus easy prey for cats, for example. Birds and cats are particularly sensitive to alphachloralosis, and several cases of alphachloralosis poisoning in cats have been reported in Finland, according to Tukes.

The common European adder is protected by virtue of the **Nature Conservation Act (in Finnish)** in Finland. However, an adder found in a yard area or otherwise posing a danger to humans or domesticated animals may be caught and moved if necessary and, if moving is not possible, put down. Instructions on how to remove an adder from your yard are available on the **Yle website (in Finnish)**, for example.

Read more :

- **Rauhoitettujen eläinten aiheuttamat vahingot. Ympäristöhallinnon verkkopalvelu ymparisto.fi (Information about damage caused by protected animals on the website of the Ministry of the Environment's Administrative Branch)**
- **Valkoposkianhien aiheuttamien vahinkojen ja haittojen vähentäminen.** Valkoposkianhityöryhmän raportti 2020 (Reducing damage caused by barnacle geese, a report by the barnacle goose management working group)
- **Valkoposkianhien aiheuttamien maatalousvahinkojen ehkäisy.** Tutkimushankkeen loppuraportti 2022 (Preventing agricultural damage caused by barnacle geese, a final report of a research project)

Harm to wild animals caused by pets

Free-ranging cats **have been estimated to kill** more than a million animals, most commonly rodents, every month in Finland. Of this number, it is estimated that at least 144,400 are birds. The estimate is based on a study of the prey brought home by free-ranging cats in the Turku region. The number of animals killed by cats is estimated to be so high that it is taking a toll on populations of species living in urban parks and gardens. Cats catch the most birds during the nesting season.

According to **the study**, cats prey on birds in the morning and small rodents in the afternoon. Cats tend to play with their prey, which means that free-ranging cats can also harm wild animals without killing them. There are differences between cats in how efficient predators they are. The impact of a free-ranging cat on wildlife can be prevented by attaching a bell to the cat's collar, for example. Free-ranging dogs can also kill or harm wild animals, especially during the breeding season.

According to the Hunting Act (**615/1993**), dogs over five months of age must be kept on a leash or so that they can be immediately put on a leash between 1 March and 19 August.

Established by Finnish Government, the Companion and Hobby Animal Welfare Council has taken the position that in the interest of cat welfare, **the free ranging of cats** in nature should be prohibited in the Animal Welfare Act. The only exception would be cats moving on the premises of a registered primary producer or a stable, which would have to be sterilised, tagged and registered.

The owner is responsible if a cat kills **an animal protected** under the Nature Conservation Act. Almost all Finland's bird species are protected. **Guideline values** have been set for specimens of protected species. A cat owner can be ordered to pay the State the value of a protected animal killed by their cat.

Read more:

- Kauhala, K., Talvitie, K. & Vuorisalo, T. 2015. Free-ranging house cats in urban and rural areas in the north: Useful rodent killers or harmful bird predators? *Folia Zoologica* 64: 45-55.

Nature tourism

Nature tourism where the aim is to see and observe wild animals in their natural habitat is part of what is known as **wildlife tourism**. A guide can be used as an aid to search for animal tracks and droppings or to listen to animal sounds. Wildlife tourism can even have a global impact on saving endangered species, as large protected areas can be maintained, and guards against poachers can be hired with the entrance fees paid by nature tourists. Nature tourism can be used to promote respect and appreciation for wild animals.

Nature tourism can benefit not only endangered species but also local people by providing them an opportunity to earn their livelihood, but there is a risk of an increasing number of human-wildlife conflicts. When surrounded by humans, large carnivores lose their fear of humans, which may increase the number of encounters between humans and large carnivores.

Nature photographers started **photographing large carnivores feeding on carcasses** in the 1970s. Nowadays, nature tourists are also taken to hides to see and photograph bears, wolves, wolverines and birds of prey. To protect land and water areas and for animal health reasons, the materials used as

carcasses and their placement are regulated. The use of carcasses is subject to a permit. When feeding at feeding sites, carnivores become accustomed to humans and may also venture to forage food closer to human settlements.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry is in the process of preparing **harmonised guidelines and rules (in Finnish)** for photography and tourist activities based on the feeding of animals. For example, using carcasses from cattle that have died a natural death will no longer be allowed because of the possibility of spreading bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). If domesticated animals and their offal are used for feeding, the local authority veterinary officer must be informed. The Government Programme also requires that the spread of animal diseases be prevented in nature photography and tourism.

Read more:

- Leino, O. 2021. **Kotimainen villieläinturismi jakaa mielipiteitä ja haastaa turvaamaan kohde-eläinten hyvinvoinnin**. Finnish Centre for Animal Welfare, elaintieto.fi
- Winter, C. 2020. **A review of research into animal ethics in tourism: launching the annals of tourism research curated collection on animal ethics in tourism**. *Annals of Tourism Research* 84: 102989
- **Large carnivore tourism in Finland and elsewhere**
- **Watching and photographing large carnivores from photography hides**

Wild animal welfare operators

Citizens

Under the **Animal Welfare Act (in Finnish)**, which will enter into force at the beginning of 2024, Finnish citizens have a duty to promote animal welfare and to protect animals in the best possible way from harm to their welfare, as well as to promote respect for and good treatment of animals.

Public authorities and operators of an official nature

● Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

Prepares, maintains and controls legislation

Supreme supervisory authority of the Hunting Act

Manages the operations of the Finnish Wildlife Agency and Natural Resources Institute Finland

Appoints the **National Wildlife Council (in Finnish)**

Appoints **Regional Wildlife Councils (in Finnish)**

Handles game administration (in Finnish)

● Finnish Food Authority

The Finnish Food Authority promotes, controls and studies animal health and welfare

Zoonoses

Receives reports of dead wild animals

Tests wild animals for animal diseases, **sampling instructions**

● Ministry of the Environment

Supreme supervisory authority of the Nature Conservation Act

Protects wild animal species

● Finnish Wildlife Agency

Promotes sustainable game husbandry

Promotes the activities of game management associations

Implements the game policy

Handles permit-related matters laid down in the Hunting Act

● Metsähallitus

An unincorporated state enterprise

Uses, manages and protects state-owned land and water areas under its control

Handles fishing permits

Handles hunting permits

Receives reports on Saimaa ringed seal sightings

- **Natural Resources Institute Finland**

Monitors animal populations

Engages in wildlife research

Reporting of seal and porpoise sightings

- **Finnish Centre for Animal Welfare**

Promotes animal welfare by communicating research data

Monitors and reports animal welfare status

Arranges **lectures** for the Wild Animal Welfare seminar

- **Animal Welfare Ombudsman**

Promotes animal welfare through monitoring, initiatives, proposals, opinions and other forms of influence

Promotes cooperation to improve animal welfare

- **Southwest Finland Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY Centre)**

Processes derogations from the protection provisions of the Nature Conservation Act

- **Regional State Administrative Agency**

Receives notices and keeps records of game management farms

- **Police**

The police is an animal welfare authority

Matters involving large carnivores

- **Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency**

Bears the responsibility for the development and maintenance of the Finnish road network, railways and waterways

Manages **projects** to resolve conflicts between wild animals and traffic.

Organisations

● Finnish Road Safety Council

A road safety umbrella organisation and road safety advocate

Handles accidents involving animals

● Finnish Hunters' Association

An advocate of Finnish hunters

Promotes hunting

Promotes sustainable hunting and game management associations

Educates hunters

● Finnish Association for Nature Conservation

An environmental organisation

Protects Finnish nature

● Finnish Nature Association

A nature and environmental protection organisation for children and youth

● WWF Finland

An environmental organisation

Safeguards biodiversity

● Finnish Kennel Club

An expert organisation in the canine sector

Promotes responsible ownership, breeding and use of registered dogs

Manages hunting dog activities

● SEY Animal Welfare Finland

An animal welfare expert organisation

Provides **advice** on wild animals

Published the Animal Week 2017 **information package** for children and the young on wild animals

● BirdLife Finland

A bird protection and hobby organisation

Promotes the conservation of biodiversity

● Finnish Federation for Recreational Fishing

A development organisation and a fisheries advocate

Controls the sustainable and responsible use and management of fish resources

● Finnish Road Safety Council

Promotes the fishing opportunities of recreational fishermen

Provides advice for recreational fishermen on sustainable fishing

Wildlife Hospital at Korkeasaari Zoo

Nursing & caring for lost and hurt animals at Ranua Wildlife Park

Heinola Bird Sanctuary

Pyhtää Bird Sanctuary



Image 58.
Under the Animal Welfare Act, every citizen must strive to assist a wild animal in distress. Image by iStock.

Visiting author

Visiting author: Elisa Aaltola

Helping wild animals

Why is it that the most common way we help a wild animal in distress is by putting it down? The visiting author Elisa Aaltola, PhD and adjunct professor in environmental and animal ethics, asks whether there could be other ways, and what kind of ethical standards make us tick. According to Aaltola, there are limits to what we can do, but we are nowhere close to them yet.
Mangy city fox is cured

In the winter of 2020, Turku was buzzing about a mangy fox that was scurrying hairless along the city streets. Many called for the quick death of the fox. In Finland, the most common way to help a wild animal is to put it down, whether it be a mangy fox or a deer in distress. Sometimes putting an animal down is the only way – but not always.

During my eight years in the UK, I had volunteered at sanctuaries rehabilitating wild animals. Helping mangy foxes was commonplace there. An ordinary citizen could also get the necessary medicine and measure it out in baits, and lo and behold – the fox was cured. So why not in Finland?

I contacted the city animal welfare officer and the Turku Humane Society (Turun eläinsuojeluyhdistys). One day, I saw a miserable-looking fox, its body covered with scaly skin instead of hair, whiz across the road in front of me. I leapt after it, and it went exactly where I wanted it to go: right into the trap we had set. The vet prescribed medicine for the fox that would not only cure the mange but also prevent it from being reinfected. It was a young female fox that, despite her poorly appearance, started to eagerly dig holes and stalk birds at the shelter. Soon her red coat was restored, and the healed fox regained her freedom.

The rare ones are helped, the more common ones are not

The help given to the fox sparked a discussion. The vast majority of people were delighted, but a small group was very upset. ‘Why did you spend so much time and money on a fox? You shouldn’t help them!’ was the core message of the critics. Some even threatened to hunt down and shoot the fox. The situation was bewildering. Why did helping a wild animal lead to such protests?

This is partly explained by groups of animals. Helping rare birds is generally acceptable and even required – if you come across an injured Eurasian eagle owl, it would be socially reprehensible to kill it or not to try to help it. On the other hand, helping a carnivore to heal is rare, so it has not become the social norm. Actions that deviate from the norm can cause irritation, especially among conservative people.

Should helping wild animals – regardless of the species – be made the new normal? Traditionally, animal ethics has suggested that humans are only responsible for the suffering and destruction caused by us to other animals and nature. We are primarily responsible for human actions, not natural events. This means that criticising intensive animal agriculture is necessary, but we should stay out of predator-prey relationships – even if they cause suffering.

Line between intervention and helping is blurred

However, according to Spanish philosopher Oscar Horta and Portuguese philosopher Catia Faria, we have a duty to help those who suffer, even when the cause of suffering is nature rather than humans. If you come across an injured person, you must help them, regardless of whether their injuries are the result of an assault or a fallen tree. In the same way, we must help other animals even when their suffering is caused by non-human nature.

Horta and Faria would like to see extremely far-reaching assistance. Personally, I’m in favour of an intermediate form. If we respect the animality and ecological relationships of animals and the continuity of life in its full diversity in general, we should not interfere with many natural events. Foxes should be allowed to feed on ducks in peace, even though it’s no fun for the ducks. We really are responsible above all for our own actions and those

of human society. Regardless, wild animals²³³ deserve some help too. Although the degree differs, we do have some responsibility for suffering in nature. This is especially true in situations where helping will not essentially prevent any ecological benefits, and where people have the possibility to offer their assistance.

The law obliges you to help

This is not a revolutionary claim. Even the Animal Welfare Act obliges you to help injured wild animals. Yet we often narrowly interpret this obligation in our daily lives, excluding many groups of animals from the scope of our assistance and healing, even when humans are the source of the problem. When a bear’s paw is stuck in a leghold trap, the bear often loses its life, even though the trap could just as easily be removed under general anaesthesia.

There is a lot of suffering in nature, but human animals can do their part to alleviate that suffering in the right places. The good life of animals and respect for the existence of other species are sufficient justification to help injured animals. There are limits to what we can do, but we are nowhere close to them yet.

It would literally be vital to support the work that is already being done by volunteers and shelters, and to develop it further at the level of society. This work deserves more financial resources – it needs to be significantly scaled up. Promotion and coordination of the help provided to wild animals in a much more comprehensive way, also by the public authorities, is also important.

Humans are moral animals, and the desire to cause as little harm to others as possible is one of the basic elements of ethics. We do what comes naturally to us when we also try to minimise the harm we cause to other animals and nature. Helping actively is also ethical. Future generations may wonder why so little help was offered to struggling wild animals in the early 21st century.

Text by Elisa Aaltola, adjunct professor in environmental and animal ethics, University of Turku

WELFARE OF LABORATORY ANIMALS

Image 59: iStock



Welfare of laboratory animals

(Published on 26 May 2021)

Laboratory animals are used in scientific research, for educational purposes, and in testing the safety of various chemicals and compounds. Animal testing is subject to authorisation. The principle of replacing animals, reducing their use and refining their welfare is the guiding principle that must be followed in all animal testing activities. This section of the Animal Welfare in Finland III report deals with the welfare of laboratory animals and examines the number of laboratory animals used and the severity of the pain inflicted on the animals during experiments, among other things.

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Introduction

The use of laboratory animals is regulated by the EU Directive (2010/63/EU) on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes. Animal testing requires education and proven competence. Each project involving the use of animals must be approved by an authority in advance. The authorisations are granted by a Project Authorisation Board made up of representatives from the fields of science, industry, ethics and animal welfare organisations, among others.

It is important to ensure the protection and welfare of animals used for scientific purposes at the international level. It is necessary to improve welfare by raising the minimum standards for their protection in line with new scientific knowledge on factors influencing animal welfare, as well as the capacity of animals to sense pain.

In practice, the welfare of laboratory animals is often approached from the perspective of the relief or elimination of pain. However, being pain-free does not guarantee an animal's welfare. Welfare depends above all on the animal's ability to adapt: how it can influence its own circumstances, make choices and fulfil its species-typical behavioural needs.

The life of a laboratory animal should be as good as possible from birth to death. For scientific purposes, laboratory animals may have to live in a restricted environment and may be subjected to procedures that cause pain or suffering. Legislation requires that minimum pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm is caused to animals used for scientific purposes.

The welfare of laboratory animals is safeguarded under the refinement obligation included in the 3Rs principle. The welfare of animals must be refined when they are kept and bred, and when they are subjected to procedures. Here, 'refining' means preventing or reducing the animal's suffering to a minimum and actively promoting the animal's welfare.

The authors of this section are Satu Raussi, Principal Specialist, and Tiina Kauppinen, Senior Specialist, from the Finnish Centre for Animal Welfare.

Legislation aims to protect laboratory animals from unnecessary suffering

In Finland, animal testing is governed by the **Act on the Protection of Animals Used for Scientific or Educational Purposes (in Finnish)**. The purpose of the Act is to ensure that only a minimum number of animals are used for scientific or educational purposes for necessary and important reasons and that minimum pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm is caused to the animals.

In the act, animal testing or a procedure on an animal means any use of an animal for experimental purposes or other scientific or educational purposes so that pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm equivalent to the feeling caused by the introduction of a needle in accordance with good veterinary practice may be caused to the animal. Animal testing also means any course of action intended or liable to result in the birth or hatching of a genetically modified or other animal or the creation and maintenance of a genetically modified animal line in a way that pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm may be caused to animals. For an individual animal, a procedure starts when the preparation of the animal for use in the procedure starts and ends when making observations from the live animal has been stopped.

The Act does not apply to practices unlikely to cause pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm equivalent to or higher than that caused by the introduction of a needle in accordance with good

veterinary practice. This means actions such as taking a blood sample make scientific research an animal experiment. This Act does not apply to non-experimental agricultural practices, clinical veterinary practices or practices undertaken for the purposes of recognised animal husbandry, or for practices undertaken for the primary purpose of identification of an animal (such as ringing birds or tagging fish).

The welfare of laboratory animals is safeguarded in more detail by **the Government Decree on the Protection of Animals Used for Scientific or Educational Purposes**. The Act and the Decree implement the **EU Directive on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes**, the final goal of which is full replacement of procedures on live animals for scientific and educational purposes as soon as it is scientifically possible.

Animal testing is guided by the 3Rs principle

The legal guideline for animal testing are the 3Rs (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement). Animals must be replaced in scientific activities, i.e. non-animal test methods must be used wherever possible. The number of animals used in experiments must be kept to a minimum: only the number of animals absolutely necessary to obtain a statistically reliable result must be used.

Animal welfare in experimental use must be refined: for example, the amount of pain and suffering experienced by animals must be minimised, and their welfare promoted, through pain relief and supportive care and allowing them to satisfy their species-typical behavioural needs.

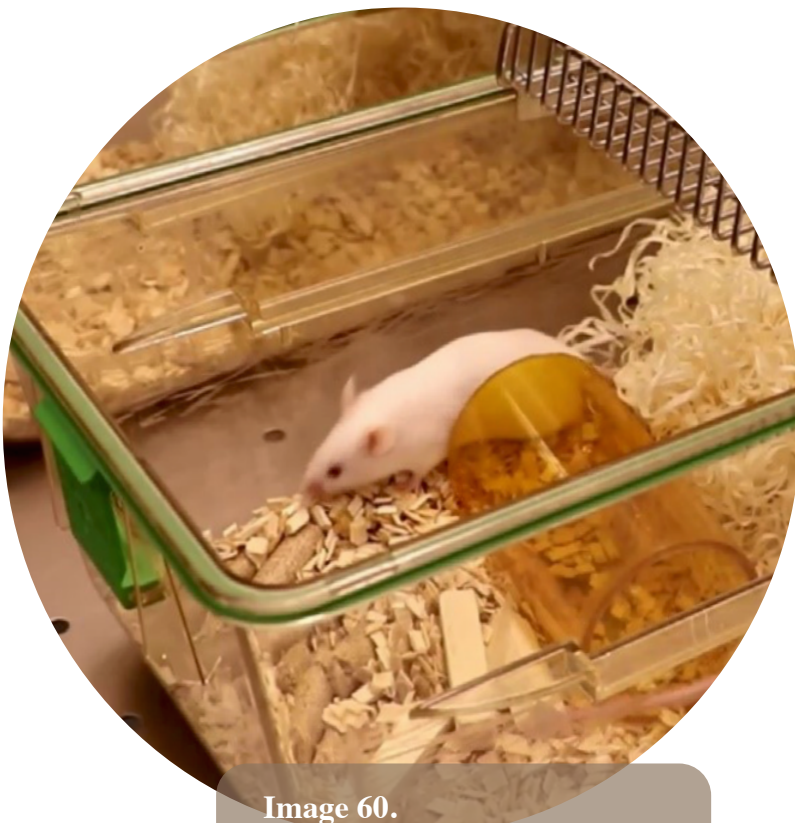


Image 60. Laboratory animals often live in a limited space. The companionship of other animals of the same species is important for social species.

Means to promote animal welfare in scientific activities

Continuously improving the breeding, management and care of animals to better take species-typical environmental and behavioural needs into account.

Planning and realising experiments so that the welfare of the animals does not deteriorate or deteriorates as little as possible. During the experiments, modifying the environment and care to reduce the stress experienced by animals.

Hiring qualified staff whose knowledge and skills are maintained through continuous training.

Offering a good habitat: a suitable, sufficiently spacious, comfortable, diverse and safe environment with suitable nesting materials and/or a nesting box, stimuli and companionship for social animals.

Good planning of the experiments and mastery of statistical methods: choosing the optimal research model and statistical methods in terms of animal welfare to obtain reliable test results. Reliable estimation of the number of animals needed and preventing an experimental bias.

Arranging proper care: appropriate feeding and watering, good hygiene, sufficiently frequent monitoring of the welfare of the animals and appropriate handling skills. Making sure the animals have a positive and trusting attitude towards humans, and they are used to being handled by humans and being subjected to procedures.

Good technique: proper management of animal handling and experimental techniques so that the optimal methods in terms of animal welfare can be selected, and unnecessary harm can be avoided. Wherever possible, using procedures that include positive sensations for the animals.

Ensuring good health: preventing the spread of pathogens and the risk of injuries.

Preventing and alleviating pain and suffering: selecting procedures that cause minimum or no harm to the animals. Using appropriate anaesthesia and analgesia when necessary.

Proper breeding: taking into account special needs of the species and strain, as well as genetic alteration, in the breeding of animals and the monitoring of their welfare.

Taking harm caused by genetic makeup into account: preventing or minimising the effects of artificial genetic modification on the welfare of animals. Planning the procedures so that their combined effect and the harm from genetic modification is not excessive.

Using timely humane endpoints: replacing breeding animals before their welfare deteriorates, monitoring the development of offspring and putting down any individuals in poor condition as early as possible. Selecting the endpoint and criteria for termination of the procedure so that reliable test results will be obtained, the animal will suffer little or no harm and the duration of the harm is as short as possible.

Painless death: putting down the animals using appropriate methods and causing the least possible suffering to the animals while ensuring reliable test results.

(Source: Council on the protection of animals used for scientific or educational purposes)

Ethical issues in the use of laboratory animals

Animal testing is not an end in itself, but a means to obtain scientific knowledge. The ethical use of laboratory animals is the starting point for any scientific activities involving animals. For a project authorisation for experiments on animals to be granted, the ethical criteria must be strong and logical. The aim is to completely eradicate scientific activities that cause serious harm to the welfare of laboratory animals. The project authorisation board, the council on the protection of animals used for scientific or educational purposes and the animal welfare bodies play a key role in the elimination of severe animal suffering.

Like the old **Animal Welfare Act (in Finnish), legislation (in Finnish)** on animals used for scientific or educational purposes is animal welfare oriented. The purpose of the legislation is to ensure that only a minimum number of animals are used for scientific or educational purposes for necessary and important reasons and that minimum pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm is caused to the animals.

In practice, most animal testing is carried out for basic biological research with the aim of increasing knowledge and understanding of the biological mechanisms and responses of the human body, for example. Applied research also plays an important role. Animal testing is used to study serious disorders affecting the human nervous system and mental health (such as Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, multiple sclerosis, epilepsy, migraine, depression and addiction), cardiovascular diseases, cancers and their treatments.

The harm caused by the experiments to animals must not outweigh the benefits to humans, but weighing the harms against the benefits is a complex question of values. Operators using animals must be able to justify the ethical acceptability of the experiments on animals and take a position on their necessity.

It is important that scientists involved in animal testing contribute to the debate on the ethics of animal testing themselves. This ethical reflection is not about differences of opinion. Ethical theories assist in seeing the consequences of each ethical choice. Ethical assessment methods can be used to identify the outcome of a particular system, whether that is what is wanted and whether the outcome is acceptable.

When considering the necessity and ethical acceptability of experiments on animals, the 3Rs, i.e. replacing experiments on animals, reducing the use of animals and refining animal welfare, are not enough. Open discussion is needed on what the aim of animal testing is, what it can achieve and what kind of use of animals is accepted in society. In addition to the scientists who are experimenting on animals, the discussion needs ethicists, philosophers, social scientists, animal keepers, animal welfare activists and ordinary citizens. The knowledge gained from animal testing benefits us all, so everyone has the right to take part in the discussion.

Number of laboratory animals used and authorisation for projects involving the use of animals

Authorisation for animal testing is granted by the **project authorisation board** appointed by the Government, which assesses each application for a project involving the use of animals. Animal testing may only be carried out for necessary and important reasons, and the expected benefits must be acceptable in relation to the harm caused to the animals. **Non-technical summaries** of the project authorisations granted are published for the general public. Some projects are subjected to a retrospective assessment after the end of the project period. The use of laboratory animals is controlled and supervised by the Regional State Administrative Agencies of Southern and Eastern Finland.

In 2022, a total of 93,650 laboratory animals were **used** in Finland for procedures and for the creation and maintenance of genetically modified strains (Fig. 61). ‘Procedure’ refers to any use of an animal that causes the animal pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm at least equivalent to the feeling caused by the introduction of a needle in accordance with good veterinary practice. A total of 96,896 animals were used for other purposes. ‘Other purposes’ refers to the breeding or maintenance of animals for scientific purposes such as the collection of tissues from dead animals for research purposes. The total number of animals used for procedures and other purposes was 190,546. The number of animals used for procedures and other purposes has remained more or less stable in recent years.

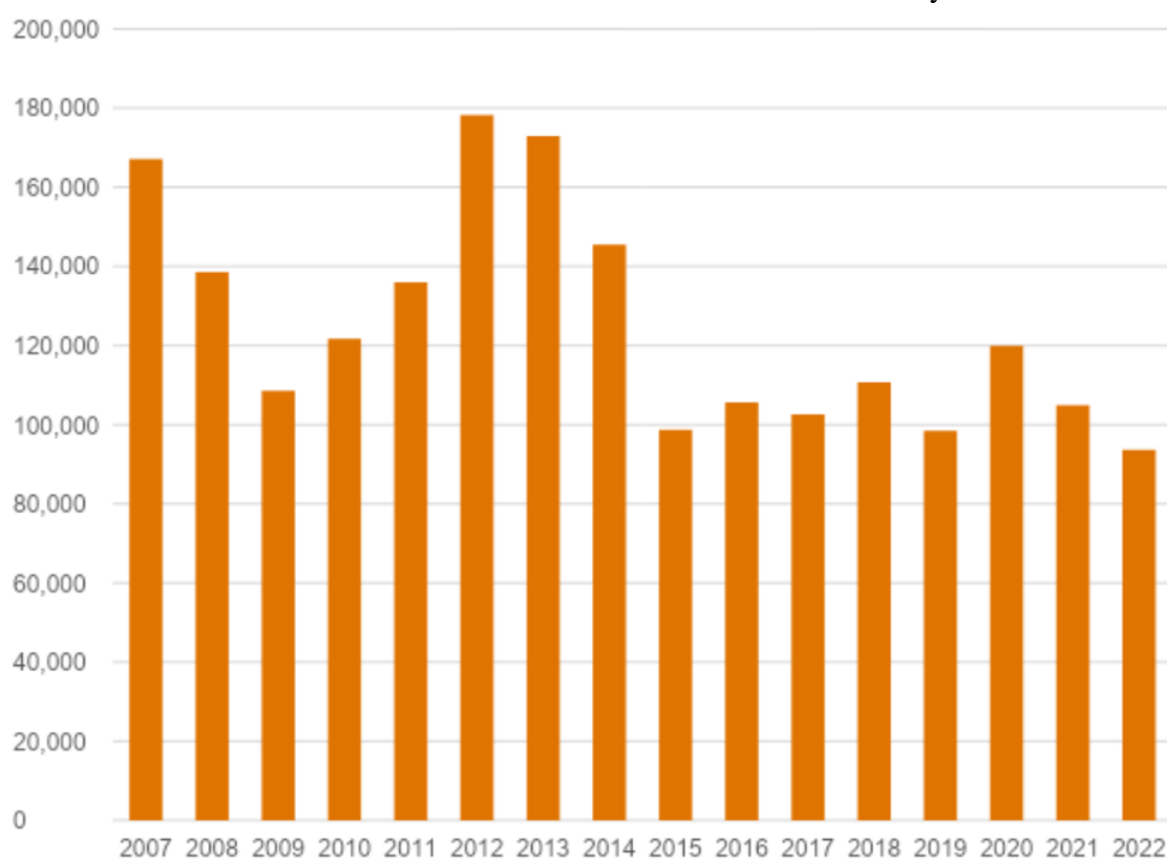


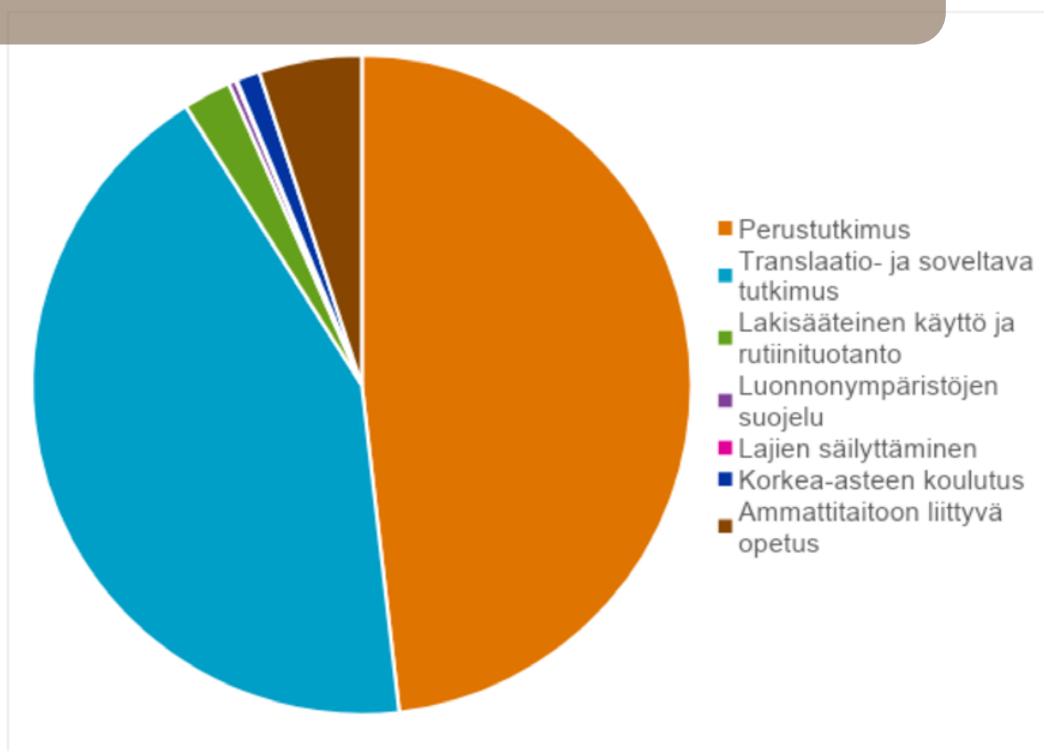
Image 61. Total number of animals used for scientific or educational purposes in Finland 2007–2022. Source: Regional State Administrative Agency of Southern Finland.

More than half of all animal testing in Finland is performed on mice: mice accounted for 61% of all animals used for procedures in 2022. The next most used species were fish at 18%, followed by rats at 11%. Other rodents, rabbits, birds, sheep, pigs, cattle, horses and dogs were also used. The use of pet dogs and cats in research also counts as the use of animals for scientific or educational purposes; in practice, blood samples are taken from the pets for research purposes. In 2022, 1,081 dogs and 182 cats participated in disease gene or metabolic studies and patient studies in Finland (Table 14). In 2022, 28 procedures were performed on laboratory-bred dogs, of which 20 were reuse procedures (the animal had been previously used in another study).

In 2022, 48% of the animal testing in Finland was related to basic research. The aim of basic research is to increase knowledge and understanding: for example, to identify the mechanisms of diseases and how the body reacts to a new situation. A total of 43% of the animal testing was applied or translational research. Applied research aims to find a treatment or cure for diseases in humans (and other animals), while translational research aims to rapidly integrate and apply knowledge obtained from basic research to clinical research and methods of treatment. The remaining 9% of animal testing in Finland in 2022 was related to the regulatory testing of compounds, the routine production of antibodies, educational purposes and the protection of habitats and species. (Fig. 62)

Image 62. Shares of procedures on animals in 2022.

Source: Regional State Administrative Agency of Southern Finland.



Perustutkimus	Basic research
Translaatio- ja soveltava tutkimus	Translational and applied research
Lakisääteinen käyttö ja rutiinituotanto	Statutory use and routine production
Luonnonympäristöjen suojelu	Protection of habitats
Lajien säilyttäminen	Protection of species
Korkea-asteen koulutus	Higher education
Ammattitaitoon liittyvä opetus	Teaching related to vocational skills

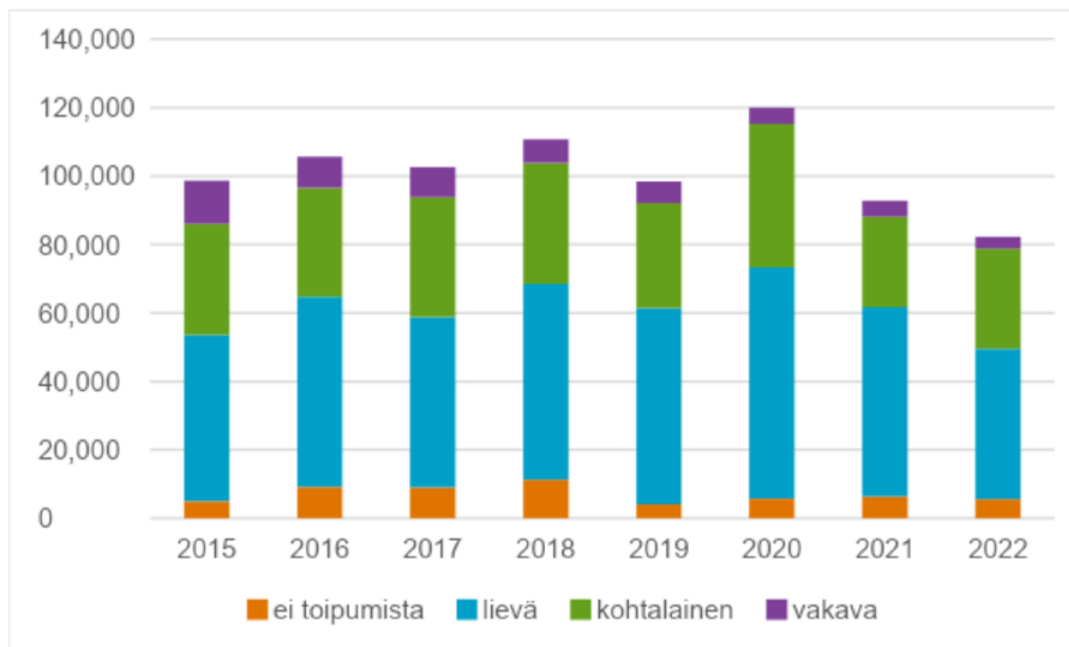
Table 14. Number of animals used for scientific or educational purposes in Finland by species and number of animals used for purposes other than procedures 2007–2022. Source: Regional State Administrative Agency of Southern Finland.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Mice	101,501	78,446	67,684	77,873	73,503	67,758	69,793	60,988	44,926	57,839	53,001	51,557	53,124	61,27	52,874	50,238
Rats	28,585	26,058	21,13	18,212	18,586	30,568	25,469	17,655	22,98	15,297	13,472	10,951	9,96	10,487	9,845	8,966
Guinea pigs	400	215	171	0	11	151	122	33	50	10	9	1	2	8	4	0
Hamsters	59	302	66	199	201	184	105	13	197	273	149	72	180	64	415	274
Other rodents	4,156	3,142	2,405	2,325	2,682	3,527	4,185	4,312	0	1,364	690	2,539	2,315	4,745	2,018	1,972
Rabbits	632	814	750	533	357	302	259	177	213	237	227	186	160	92	44	89
Cats	0	0	0	429	454	831	707	452	100	259	311	218	178	138	142	182
Dogs	82	54	92	3,968	2,805	3,276	6,191	4,26	2,619	3,961	3,061	6,297	2,196	1,283	1,918	1,209
Other carnivores	150	761	162	390	656	48	92	11	270	18	107	35	91	160	413	493
Horses, donkeys and crossbreeds	61	37	8	0	23	10	15	26	48	76	77	236	45	114	74	101
Pigs	600	819	713	880	681	1,124	565	431	479	611	632	958	919	772	448	385
Goats	0	0	0	0	40	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sheep	465	571	1,005	723	684	274	1,027	1,379	1,128	1,35	1,319	1,348	1,243	692	625	564
Cattle	76	300	2	19	63	101	133	309	87	541	216	190	272	219	608	399
Other mammals	513	84	238	239	17	15	6	0	2,88	103	1,533	319	119	134	150	169
Quails	0	0	34	0	0	0	0	n/a	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Chickens	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	7	3,646	8,411	8,485	5,468	2,785	5,039	479	2,393
Other birds	7,033	5,568	6,389	2,421	4,426	4,595	9,064	2,51	717	501	404	1,063	1,296	1,082	743	486
Reptiles	137	317	35	0	15	0	169	0	0	0	0	30	0	0	0	0
Amphibians	151	34	0	0	73	55	71	4	10	2	0	77	0	5	250	157
Fish	22,472	21,078	7,747	13,512	30,766	65,393	54,995	52,975	18,349	14,762	18,882	29,178	23,572	33,682	21,719	14,179
Use of animals for procedures total	167,073	138,6	108,631	121,723	136,043	178,212	172,968	145,542	98,699	105,615	102,575	110,723	98,457	119,986	92,769	82,256
Animals used for the creation and maintenance of GM strains															12,117	11,394
Use of animals for procedures based on a permit other than a project authorisation for the use of laboratory animals	1,631,454	262,497	316,476	241,043	252,146	224,071	166,428	142,600*	157,065	168,548	169,233	151,74	162,04	212,258	137,108	96,896
Animals used for procedures and other purposes total	1,798,527	401,097	425,107	362,766	388,189	402,283	339,396	145,542	255,764	274,163	271,808	262,463	260,497	332,244	241,994	190,546

*Breeding and/or maintenance and putting down without procedures

Use of laboratory animals classified according to severity of measures

Since 2014, the number of animals used for scientific or educational purposes has also been recorded separately according to the severity of the procedure (Fig. 63). The severity of suffering from animal testing is assessed in the EU on a scale of mild, moderate, severe and non-recovery. The pain, suffering, distress and lasting harm caused to the animal is assessed before undertaking each procedure.



Ei toipumista	Non-recovery
Lievä	Mild
Kohtalainen	Moderate
Vakava	Severe

Image 63. Severity of harm to animals from procedures by category in 2015–2022. Source: Regional State Administrative Agency of Southern Finland.

Classification of the severity of animal testing

Mild: Procedures on animals as a result of which the animals are likely to experience short-term mild pain, suffering or distress, as well as procedures with no significant impairment of the welfare or general condition of animals.

Moderate: Procedures on animals as a result of which the animals are likely to experience short-term moderate pain, suffering or distress, or long-lasting mild pain, suffering or distress, as well as procedures that are likely to cause moderate impairment of the welfare or general condition of animals.

Severe: Procedures on animals as a result of which the animals are likely to experience severe pain, suffering or distress, or long-lasting moderate pain, suffering or distress, as well as procedures that are likely to cause severe impairment of the welfare or general condition of animals.

Non-recovery: Procedures which are performed entirely under general anaesthesia from which the animal will not recover consciousness.

In 2022, procedures classified as severe were performed on 2,308 mice, 1,026 rats, 60 other rodents and 7 zebrafish. Procedures causing serious harm were mainly performed in applied and translational research in areas such as nervous system function and mental health disorders, cancers, skin, eye and ear diseases, and infectious diseases.

Non-technical summaries of all authorised projects since 2013 are available on [the website of the Regional State Administrative Agency for Southern Finland](#).

Laboratory animal facilities are controlled by the authorities

The control of laboratory animal facilities is based on a risk assessment according to which the facilities are divided as those to be inspected twice a year, once a year, every other year or every three years. The risk assessment takes aspects such as the nature of the tests carried out in the research institute, the species and numbers of animals kept and the institute's previous control results into account. In addition, inspections are carried out to monitor the implementation of specified measures and whenever the control authority is informed of a suspected violation of the legislation.

In recent years, the number of non-compliances observed during inspections has stabilised at 8–15% in the case of minor issues. There has been more variation in the prevalence of moderate non-compliances (Table 15). Serious non-compliances have been observed only occasionally over the years. The Regional State Administrative Agency for Southern Finland annually publishes the control results on its [website](#).

Minor non-compliances give rise to guidance and minor comments. They do not typically cause any harm to the animals and are corrected immediately. Minor non-compliances do not require any further action by the control authority.

Moderate non-compliances lead to bans or orders issued by the control authority to remedy the non-compliance. They involve an animal welfare issue that does not, however, cause the animals avoidable or unnecessary pain, suffering or other long-lasting harm.

Severe non-compliances require consideration of the withdrawal of the authorisation for the use of laboratory animals. They include issues such as a serious animal welfare issue, a serious breach of an operating permit or project authorisation, a risk of

recurrence, or evidence of dishonesty or avoidance of responsibility. However, there are no grounds for the consideration of charges.

Non-compliances leading to consideration of charges involve serious animal welfare issues, a failure to apply for or a serious breach of an operating permit or project authorisation, recurring or persistent severe non-compliances or serious breaches requiring the consideration of charges. For non-conformances of this scale, the Regional State Administrative Agency always submits a request for investigation to the police.

Year	Minor non-compliances	Moderate non-compliances	Severe non-compliances	Non-compliances leading to consideration of charges
2013–2014	28	17	6	0
2015	30	41	3	0
2016	12	24	0	0
2017	6	17	2	0
2018	8	18	0	1
2019	14	20	0	0
2020				
2021	15	10	2	0
2022	8	0	1	0

Table 15. Non-compliances observed in laboratory animal facilities 2013–2022, percentage of facilities inspected. Only one research institute was inspected in 2020, which is why the percentages for that year are missing from the table. Source: Regional State Administrative Agency of Southern Finland.

Parties promoting the welfare of laboratory animals

Council on the protection of animals used for scientific or educational purposes (TOKES)

The council on the protection of animals used for scientific or educational purposes (in Finnish)

operates in connection with the Regional State Administrative Agency for Southern Finland. The council is the national body set up by the Finnish Government, as required by the **EU Directive**, whose members have expertise in animal testing and research, research methods that do not require the use of animals, and animal welfare organisations and related authorities.

The aim of the council is to monitor and promote the implementation of the principle of replacement, reduction and refinement. The council prepares recommendations and proposals on matters relating to the welfare of laboratory animals. It organises training for scientists using animals for scientific or educational purposes on topics such as the ethical principles of research with animals and the use of cell and tissue models and computer modelling instead of animals. The council's long-term objective is to limit the volume of animal testing.

According to a joint definition prepared by the Farm Animal Welfare Council and the Companion and Hobby Animal Welfare Council, *'Welfare is an animal's experience of its mental and physical state. The concept of animal welfare describes the welfare of an animal, which can vary from good to bad. An animal's welfare is affected by its ability to adapt to developments and conditions in its environment. If adaptation is impossible, or if it causes the animal constant or intense stress, strain, behavioural disorders or health hazards, the welfare of the animal is reduced. Animal welfare can be affected by conditions of husbandry, care and breeding.'*

The council on the protection of animals used for scientific or educational purposes adds to the definition *'the welfare of laboratory animals is influenced by their genetic makeup and any changes to it, as well as their state of health, habitat, care and experimental procedures'*. This addition has been justified by, for example, the existence of experimental procedures that cause serious harm and by the fact that when animals are used for experimental purposes, it often involves genetically modified animals, whose welfare must be separately taken into account.

See the videos of the council on the protection of animals used for scientific or educational purposes (in Finnish):

The council on the protection of animals used for scientific or educational purposes

Why do animal experiments take place?

What does 3R mean?

Non-animal experimental methods

3R Centre Finland

In Finland, the 3Rs in research are promoted by **3R Centre Finland (FIN3R)**, which is made up of universities, research institutes operating in the sector and private bodies. It is a collaborative body that provides information and training, seeks research funding and prepares research programme initiatives to reduce the use of laboratory animals, promote animal welfare and replace laboratory animals. It includes the major Finnish universities, research institutes operating in the sector and private bodies. It provides information about the promotion of the 3Rs, arranges training, participates in research funding application processes and prepares research programme initiatives.

Animal welfare bodies

By law, an operator using animals for scientific or educational purposes (such as a university or research institute) must designate an animal welfare body. The tasks of the animal welfare body are to advise the staff on matters related to the welfare of animals, to develop and review the monitoring, reporting and follow-up in relation to the welfare of animals, to follow the development and outcome of projects regarding the welfare of animals, and to decide on the rehoming or returning to a suitable husbandry system of an animal used or intended to be used in a project.

Associations in the field

In Finland, there are associations in the field of laboratory animals that organise training for operators in the sector, for example. Finnish Laboratory Animal Science Association **FinLAS (in Finnish)** provides information about the lives and use of animals for scientific or educational purposes. The Finnish Association for Laboratory Animal Veterinarians **FALAV (in Finnish)**, Koe-eläinten hoitohenkilökunnan yhdistys (Finnish Association of Laboratory Animal Personnel, KATY) and the Finnish Consensus Platform for Alternatives **Fincopa** arrange further education and seminars, with the development of the welfare of laboratory animals as an important focus area.

Alternative methods to animal testing

Animal testing is done to advance research and ensure human health and safety, and there is no end in sight to the use of animals for scientific or educational purposes at least in the foreseeable future. However, alternative methods to animal testing are constantly being developed, and they can increasingly replace experiments that would previously have required the use of laboratory animals.

The use of animals for scientific or educational purposes is being discouraged not only because of the ethical problems involved but also because animal testing does not always adequately model the effects of a compound in humans. The basic biological mechanisms in animals are not exactly the same as in humans: for example, a disease gene may be manifested in animals through different pathways than in humans, and genetically modified animals are therefore not always suitable models for humans.

‘Alternative methods’ to replace animal testing refer to any research or testing methods that do not involve the use of live animals. Most alternative methods use tissue cultures, yeast cells or microbes grown from cells of human or animal origin. The most commonly used technical methods are various computer programs and simulations. These methods are used to replace the testing of the safety and toxicity of chemicals and medicines on animals in particular.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry funds activities to promote the implementation of alternative methods in Finland. A state subsidy of €200,000 per year has been introduced to promote the implementation of methods to replace animal testing.

Alternative methods have been developed by parties such as the subsequently closed Finnish Centre for Alternative Methods **FICAM** of Tampere University, which participated in a validation project coordinated by the EU Commission with **its heart model**, among other measures. The aim of the Commission project was to demonstrate that test methods which do not require the use of animals can be reliably used to test chemicals that act as endocrine disruptors. FICAM’s successor in the development of alternative methods to animal testing is **FHAIVE** (Finnish Hub for Development and Validation of Integrated Approaches).

Animal testing in the EU

The EU keeps statistics on the number of animal tests carried out in the Member States, the species used and the severity categories. The most recent statistics on animal experiments carried out between 2015 and 2017 are available in the **Commission report on statistics on the use of animals for scientific purposes**. Thus far, the Commission has not published any more recent data on the volume of animal testing. **The Commission's website** includes links to statistics published by the Member States.

Established by the Commission, the **ALURES**-database covers all use of animals for scientific purposes in the EU. The database contains information at the EU level about matters such as the number of animals used per species, the number of tests, the estimated severity of the pain experienced by the animals and the number of genetically modified animals used to maintain animal populations. An open database helps identify where and what kind of alternatives to animal testing are needed. The aim of the database is to promote transparency in the use of animals in the EU.

The EU Reference Laboratory for Alternatives to Animal Testing, **EURL ECVAM**, promotes and facilitates the use of non-animal test methods in scientific research. In 2020, the laboratory published a recommendation that animals should no longer be used to develop or produce antibodies for research, regulation, diagnosis or the treatment of diseases, and that EU Member States should no longer allow the immunisation of animals for the development and production of antibodies without a sound scientific basis. The recommendation sparked a **debate** in the scientific community on whether abandoning antibodies of animal origin was possible yet.

The European Chemicals Agency (**ECHA**) promotes the safe use of chemicals. ECHA implements EU chemicals legislation to improve human health and the status of the environment, as well as to promote innovation and competitiveness in Europe. In the summer of 2023, ECHA arranged a **workshop** in Helsinki for 500 participants to discuss new ways

to replace and reduce dependence on animal testing. ECHA aims to increase awareness of alternatives to animal testing, develop guidance and tools for stakeholders and the OECD member countries, and promote international cooperation in areas such as chemical safety risk assessments.

REACH is a chemicals regulation that is binding on the Member States of the European Union and aims to ensure a high level of health and environmental protection throughout the EU and to increase the competitiveness of the EU's chemical industry. It also promotes alternative methods to animal testing in chemical risk assessments to reduce the need to use laboratory animals. Using animals in the safety testing of chemicals is only allowed if alternative methods are not available. The Commission is expected to review and reform REACH in the near future.

In July 2023, the European Commission issued a **communication** regarding the **Save Cruelty Free Cosmetics** citizens' initiative. Using animal testing for cosmetics is not allowed in the EU, and the Commission states in its communication that the ban should be protected and strengthened. REACH requires that the safety of cosmetic ingredients be tested to ensure consumer, worker and environmental safety. The cosmetic ingredients to be tested may also be ones that are used for purposes other than cosmetics and must therefore be tested by law. The EU cosmetics animal testing ban is therefore not completely watertight. In its communication, the Commission does not promise any direct further action to complement the ban, but expresses its support for the objective of reducing animal testing in research, training and education.

Amendment of laboratory animal legislation: eggs are now protected by law in animal testing

The Finnish legislation on laboratory animals was recently **supplemented (in Finnish)** by correcting technical shortcomings detected in the national implementation and by adding embryos of birds and reptiles, i.e. eggs, during the last trimester of the gestation period to the scope of the law. EU legislation was considered neither up to date nor appropriate for the protection of foetuses, as current research suggests that the foetuses of birds and reptiles are probably capable of feeling pain and distress at the end of the gestation period.

Eggs and embryos have previously been used in animal testing by making a soon-to-be-hatched chicken embryo the culture dish and the yolk sac membrane the culture medium for growing the desired tissue. This method has also been used in Finland, but only during the first two trimesters of foetal development. However, using eggs even in the last trimester has been legally possible because bird eggs were not included in the scope of the EU Directive on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes.

In practice, the amendment means that testing using the eggs of birds and reptiles in the last trimester, which may cause pain to the foetus at least equivalent to the feeling caused by the introduction of a needle in accordance with good veterinary practice (the grounds when applying for a project authorisation for the use of laboratory animals), will now require project authorisation and compliance with the conditions of the authorisation under the supervision of the authority.

There are still open questions in the legislation on laboratory animals, at least in terms of the use of invertebrates. The Animal Welfare Act applies to all animals that humans keep or encounter in the wild, while the legislation on laboratory animals only applies to vertebrates, which means that insects and platyhelminths, among other species, are excluded. Legislation allows the use of these species as laboratory animals, even though there is insufficient research data on their sense of pain.



Image 64. Pixnio / congerdesign

A scientist in a white lab coat and blue hairnet is holding a small, square, transparent chip with a circular pattern on it. The background is blurred, showing a laboratory setting.

Image 65.

Scientist Hanna Vuorenpää holding a chip in her hand. The body-on-chip modelling technology uses a combination of stem cell technology and microtechnology to develop a chip that mimics the functions of the human body.

Photo Jonne Renvall / Tampere University

Visiting author

Visiting authors: Tarja Toimela, Laura Saarimäki and Hanna Vuorenpää

How are methods to replace animal testing being developed in Finland?

To ensure the development of medicine, alternative new methods that can reliably model the mechanisms of the human body without causing suffering to other species are needed. The pharmaceutical industry, the chemical industry and basic medical research are pushing for a change in which animal testing would be replaced with tissue models based on human cells and computer modelling.

Visiting authors, cellular and molecular biologists Tarja Toimela, Laura Saarimäki and Hanna Vuorenpää from the Tampere University write about the development of methods to replace animal testing.

The aim is to increasingly replace animal tests with other methods, but this is yet to be reflected in the number of animals used.

Medicine aims to prevent and cure diseases and thus reduce suffering in society. When developing treatments, it is very important to find a predictive and reliable model before moving to the clinical phase, as the clinical phase is when the medicine or cure will be administered to humans. Models that reliably mimic the human body are needed to screen new drugs, predict the efficacy and safety of medicinal substances in humans and assess the (adverse) effects of different chemicals.

Traditionally, animal testing and simple cell cultures have been used to achieve this. However, the conventional models do not always reliably reproduce human biology, and the responses are not directly comparable with the reactions of the human body. The fact that the models are defective has led to the withdrawal of medicines from the market, huge losses in pharmaceutical development, human losses and lack of medically assisted treatment for some diseases.

In addition to the medical challenges, the suffering of laboratory animals has been recognised, and the ethical problems of animal testing are a growing concern among the general public. A social debate about the benefits and disadvantages of animal testing has been going on since the 19th century, and it continues today.

Despite the objectives, the volume of animal testing has not been successfully reduced; instead, the number of animals used for scientific purposes has increased slightly in the EU (1). The pressure to create a common EU roadmap setting targets for the phasing out of animal testing is growing every year.



Image 66. Cells are used to build tissue models that replace laboratory animals and function like human tissue. Photo Jonne Renvall / Tampere University

Cell models create the foundation for the replacement of animal testing

Tarja Toimela, cellular biologist, Senior Scientist (FHAIVE, Finnish Hub for Development and Validation of Integrated Approaches, Tampere University)

Methods to replace animal testing have evolved, particularly as the science behind them has made great strides forward. Cell culture techniques have benefited greatly from the development of technology and the general increase in scientific knowledge. Nowadays, cells can be used to build almost any type of multicellular tissue models that work in much the same way as actual human tissue. Technological advances in biomaterials and bioprinting and the miniaturisation of components (e.g. micro and nano pumps) have contributed to the development of cell culture methods.

In practice, cells of any human tissue can be produced by the differentiation of either tissue stem cells (mesenchymal stem cells) or pluripotent stem cells. The differentiation of cells from stem cells to tissue-specific cells occurs by mimicking events of developmental biology in a Petri dish. The stem cells are given the right signals at the right times, i.e. the same growth factors that allow tissues to develop in a human embryo. Following a breakthrough in stem cell technology in 2006, adult human cells such as skin cells can be reverted to stem cells and further differentiated as pluripotent cells into cells of any tissue type. The availability of human cells isolated directly from tissue and whole tissues in tissue banks and university hospitals has also increased significantly, which means that the general public is also to thank for this advance. In Finland, patients usually agree to donate their cells for scientific purposes.

The use of human cells and tissues is scientifically well justified. Human biology differs from the biology of other animal species, even though many necessary processes screened by evolution are common to several species. Well-designed and implemented human cell and tissue models are suitable for a wide range of research, as long as the underlying scientifically validated data is applied on a case-by-case basis. There is a wide range of cellular methods, ranging from very simple single

cell cultures to highly complex and demanding multicellular tissue cultures. In laboratory conditions (in vitro), the conditions of the methods can be easily controlled and changed, unlike in animal experiments carried out on a living body (in vivo). Precise analytical methods for analysing the substances produced by cells and for imaging cell structures and for gene expression are widely available, enabling high-quality research.

The main purpose of testing the safety and efficacy of substances is to ensure that the medicine, chemical or treatment is safe for humans. The lack of a reliable model means that medicines tested with mice, for example, will successfully cure arrhythmia in mice, but there is no certainty that they will do the same in humans. A mouse is not a small person! Test methods based on human cells are ideal as screening tests at the early stages of pharmaceutical development to weed out medicines that are unsuitable for humans. Furthermore, the official approval process for medicines requires a certain number of tests on animals to detect systemic (affecting the whole body) and chronic (recurring) adverse effects, for example. These have traditionally been the main challenges for cell models, but the development of multicellular culture techniques is likely to change this in the future.

Computer modelling provides effective methods to replace animal testing

Laura Saarimäki, molecular biologist, Doctoral Researcher (FHAIVE, Finnish Hub for Development and Validation of Integrated Approaches, Tampere University)

Computer modelling and computational methods play a key role in the reduction of animal testing. They support experimental test methods, and their main objectives are to predict the effects of chemicals and medicinal substances, to prioritise compounds (identify the most harmful substances) and to guide other test methods based on the information obtained. This reduces costly and time-consuming laboratory testing and avoids unnecessary tests. In pharmaceutical development, potential late-stage failures are minimised by already weeding out poor candidates before the start of the actual laboratory testing.

There is a huge range of computational methods. The possibly best-known models are based on the assumption that similar compounds have similar biological effects. Methods based on this idea are called read-across models. In practice, substances can be grouped according to their similarities and the effects of known substances can be interpolated to less well-known compounds included in the same group. In addition, methods based on determining the (quantitative) structure-activity relationship, i.e. (Q)SAR modelling, play a key role. QSAR models are used to predict the properties of substances and their effects on the environment based on their chemical structure.

At Tampere University, FHAIVE aims to develop methods to replace animal testing by combining cellular models with advanced computer modelling. Determining chemicals' modes of action is a key aspect of these integrated methods. By combining the mechanisms with the physicochemical properties of substances, we can really determine what makes a substance harmful. This enables safer and more efficient chemical and pharmaceutical development. Computational methods can be used to increase the value of the information obtained from a simple biological model and promote the applicability of the results to an entire organism, for example.

Although the development of integrated testing methods is at the core of FHAIIVE, the same expertise can also be applied to other purposes such as the identification of new uses for existing drugs (i.e. drug repositioning). A recent achievement of FHAIIVE's scientists, who combined various computational biology tools with QSAR modelling and previously obtained knowledge of the chemical structures of compounds to find potential COVID-19 medications, is a good example. These methods allowed the identification of the best candidates from a library of thousands of compounds and the selection for further testing of only a handful (rather than thousands) of medicinal substances that were most likely to produce the desired result. Finally, a combination of two of the medicinal substances prioritised in this manner proved to be particularly effective against the Sars-CoV-2 infection. A by-product was a comprehensive idea of the chemical structures required for an effective COVID-19 medicine. For more information about this subject, please see the original publication (2) or a news article by Yle (3).



Image 67. Cells used to build cell models are stored frozen in liquid nitrogen. Image Janne Renvall / Tampere University

Body-on-chip modelling produces information on the systemic effects of the body

Hanna Vuorenpää, cellular biologist, Postdoctoral Research Fellow (Centre of Excellence in Body-on-Chip Research, Tampere University)

Combining stem cell technology and microtechnology to develop a chip that mimics the functions of the human body, body-on-chip represents the latest developments in the field of cell and tissue engineering. The novelty of the technology is illustrated by the fact that the terms used in the field have yet to be translated into Finnish. Body-on-chip means building a tissue or several tissues on a fluidic platform (chip), the conditions of which can be controlled and monitored as desired. Compared to the previously developed cell models, the advantage of body-on-chip is its ability to incorporate the diversity of tissue, including its three-dimensional structure, the surrounding biomaterial, multiple cell types, blood circulation and nerves. The ability to control the chip's conditions and the tissue growth environment, e.g. the pH, the oxygen level and the temperature, and real-time monitoring of the environment makes the new technology a highly promising method for basic medical research, pharmaceutical development and chemical safety testing.

Advances in stem cell technology have made it possible to move from simple single-cell cultures towards three-dimensional, multi-tissue modelling. Body-on-chip requires broad multidisciplinary expertise in cellular and tissue biology, biomaterials, sensor technology, microsystems, imaging and computer modelling. Tampere University is home to the internationally unique Centre of Excellence in Body-on-Chip Research funded by the Research Council of Finland (4), a multidisciplinary research consortium composed of six research groups. The developed tissue models are composed of differentiated human stem cells and primary cells isolated directly from human tissue. The aim is to form human heart, liver, nerve and adipose tissues, which are also vascularized and innervated.

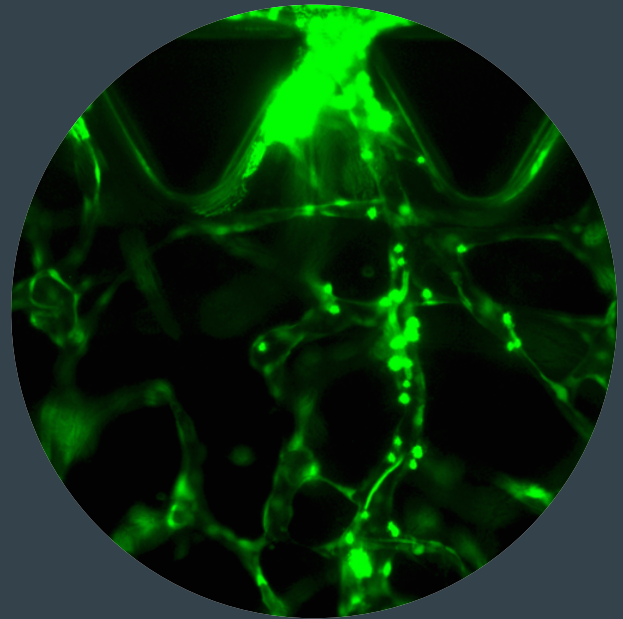


Image 68. A functional vascular model carries a bloodlike substance and particles. A GIF photo by Anna Yrjänäinen

The body-on-chip development process starts with the construction of functional healthy tissue and moves towards disease modelling. For example, the three-dimensional vascular network that underlies the tissue models is constructed using two types of human cells so that the blood vessels formed will actually transport fluids and particles like the circulatory system (5). The underlying cause of a disease is often a defective mechanism at the level of proteins or molecules, which typically differ in different animal species. For example, ion channel proteins on the surface of myocardial cells transmit the electrical activity and contraction of the myocardium. The ion channels of different animal species differ, and cardiac medication tested on mice or dogs may not work for humans. This has led to the withdrawal of arrhythmia medication from the market as unsafe for humans, for example.

It has been thought that animal testing is the only way to study systemic reactions occurring in the entire body, and this has been used to justify the need for animal testing. Body-on-chip challenges this view and also offers the possibility to control the conditions and monitor tissue responses in a way that differs from animal testing. As a technology, however, body-on-chip requires the standardisation of methods and the ability to increase capacity, i.e. to produce multiple reproducible tissue models for pharmaceutical development, for example.

What is slowing down the introduction of methods to replace animal testing?

The Directive on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes (2010/63/EU) requires that animal testing should not be performed if an alternative test method exists. All officially accepted test methods are listed in the guidelines of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Strikingly, of the approximately 150 currently valid test methods, fewer than 20 use cells or other non-animal methods. This means the number of officially approved non-animal test methods remains limited.

This is often because the process of developing a new test method is long, expensive and requires specific expertise. The test method needs to be proved in extensive international validations before it can be adopted as part of the OECD guidelines. The validation of test methods must be carried out in a laboratory using the GLP (Good Laboratory Practice), of which there are only six in Finland. It is very difficult to obtain funding for the validation of a test method or for participation in international validation work. Research funding is not granted for already developed test methods that will not generate any new scientific knowledge but require the testing of the method's performance with known test substances instead. Maintaining the GLP quality system also requires funding, which is not usually provided by science-oriented sources.

A contradictory result is that in many cases a ready-made test method does not become an officially accepted replacement method for animal testing but remains a research-level scientific publication. In Finland, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry funds the country's only EU-approved reference laboratory **FHAIVE** at Tampere University. FHAIVE's GLP system can perform validations of non-animal test methods, albeit with limited resources.

The EU's **REACH Regulation** requires extensive chemical risk assessments to protect human health and the environment. Chemicals are ranked according to how much of them are produced and an assessment of their risk to humans and the environment. More comprehensive testing focuses on chemicals that are produced in larger quantities and are potentially the most harmful.

The priority of non-animal methods as test methods is part of REACH, which simultaneously places great testing pressure on chemical safety assessments. Computer modelling and computational methods have high performance and great potential to replace animal testing. However, their widespread use is hampered by matters such as a lack of comprehensive data of a good quality and concerns about the reliability and reproducibility of the data and methods.

In basic research in universities, cellular models and computer modelling must, above all, be able to produce new scientific knowledge in a reliable manner. Although animal models have never been proved to be scientifically valid test methods, non-animal methods must demonstrate their ability to produce scientific knowledge even slightly better than animal models to earn their place as replacements for animal testing. In certain fields of research, the first substitute for animal models is yet to be produced. In these cases, the harm caused by animal testing should be weighed against their benefits using ethically sound methods.

Text by Tarja Toimela and Laura Saarimäki, FHAIVE (Finnish Hub for Development and Validation of Integrated Approaches), Tampere University and Hanna Vuorenperä, Centre of Excellence in Body-on-Chip Research, Tampere University

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WELFARE OF FARM ANIMALS



Image 69 by
Tiina Kauppinen

WELFARE OF FARM ANIMALS

(Published on 1 October 2021)

There are several indicators for the welfare of production animals, such as health, production, the conditions in which they are kept, care and the achievement of species-specific behaviour. Transport to slaughter, stunning and killing are also essential parts of the life and welfare of farm animals. This section of the Animal Welfare in Finland III report examines the development of farm animal welfare in the light of indicators from recent years.

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Introduction

Statistics show that there have been many advances in the welfare of farm animals in recent years: for example, the proportion of cows living in free-stall barns has increased, and tethering has become less common. Around 70% of cows on farms covered by the output monitoring system now live in free-stall barns, while more than half of cows lived in tie stall barns in 2013. Disbudding of calves by a veterinarian, using pain relief and sedation, has become more common on farms covered by the Naseva Centralized Health Care Register for Finnish Cattle Herds. Only a couple of per cent of disbudding is currently done by the producer without any pain relief which promotes the calves' welfare. The corresponding share in 2012 was 24%.

Free farrowing and suckling of sows are rapidly becoming more common in Finland. The switch to free farrowing has been facilitated by the various subsidies paid to farmers such as the animal welfare payment and increased investment aid when switching to free farrowing. A decision has been made to abolish surgical castration of male piglets by 2035. Anaesthesia during surgical castration will be introduced before that.

The health of broiler chickens is good internationally speaking: for example, the national salmonella control programme ensures that salmonella is virtually non-existent in Finland. According to the statutory foot condition scoring of broilers, the birds' feet are in excellent condition: in 2020, almost 99% of the broiler flocks slaughtered in Finland scored below the excellent score of 20 points (the lower the score, the better the result). The foot index is based on the Council Directive setting minimum rules for the protection of chickens kept for meat production.

Overall, the animal disease situation in Finland is very good from the global perspective. For example, there are few infectious animal diseases classified as public health hazards, which reduces the need to use medication and promotes animal welfare. An exception to the good animal disease situation is the

highly pathogenic avian influenza (H5N1) that killed wild birds and fur animals in the summer of 2023 in Finland.

There is still plenty of room for improvement in the keeping of farm animals, however. For example, the calf mortality rate has decreased less in recent years than was hoped. Stag reindeer are usually castrated without any pain relief. A large proportion of sows are still farrowing in immobilising crates. In slaughterhouses, pigs and chickens are most commonly stunned with carbon dioxide gas, which causes the animal a painful sensation of suffocation. Broilers are raised almost exclusively on fast-growing hybrid, which causes its own welfare risks. A considerable number of dairy cows and heifers are kept indoors in free-stall cowsheds without access to outside to walk or graze.

This section of the report contains indicators and statistics related to the welfare of farm animals, such as the number of animals, animal enclosures and animals for slaughter, as well as the duration of animal transport. Statistical data on findings made during meat inspections and rejected carcasses of slaughter animals are also provided. In addition, this section provides information about the conditions, health, stunning, slaughter and killing of animals. Basic species-specific information about the most common farm animals and their welfare is available in the different sections of the eläintieto.fi website (**fur animals, pig, cattle, sheep, chicken and rainbow trout**) (in Finnish). **The Consumer Guide** on the eläintieto.fi website is designed to help consumers of animal products understand how animal welfare is realised in connection with different products of animal origin produced in Finland (**eggs, milk and minced meat**).

The authors of this section are Satu Raussi, Principal Specialist, and Tiina Kauppinen, Senior Specialist, from the Finnish Centre for Animal Welfare.

Welfare of cattle

Information about Finnish milk production is collected via an output monitoring system. The ProAgria dairy farm output monitoring system was launched in 1898. The output monitoring is regulated by the International Committee for Animal Recording (ICAR), whose common practices and standards are followed by 128 member organisations in 57 countries. In Finland, the output monitoring system covers 73% of dairy farms and 80% of cows (ProAgria: [Lypsykarjan tuotosseuranta 2022](#)).

On dairy cattle farms, various types of automatic monitoring devices are increasingly used to monitor the condition of the cows. These include activity meters, calving and gestation monitors, and devices and CCTV cameras to alert the farmer of calving.

On average, cows covered by the output monitoring system live 5.4 years, calve 3.4 times and produce more than 32,000 kg of milk in their lifetime ([ProAgria: Lypsykarjan tuotosseuranta 2022 \(in Finnish\)](#)). In 2021, 69% of the cows on the monitored farms were living in a free-stall cowshed, compared to less than 50% of cows in 2013.

In 2010, 20% of Finnish beef cattle lived in tie stall barns. In the 2020 agricultural census, the share had decreased to five per cent (source: [Natural Resources Institute Finland/Statistics database/Agricultural statistics/Structure/Livestock buildings and manure storages/Distribution of cattle places by the type of building](#)).

Image 70. Around 60% of dairy cows have access to pasture during the summer. Grazing contributes to the welfare of cows in many ways. Image by Olli Leino.



Tethering restricts the species-specific behaviour of cattle

Being tied in a stall limits a cow's ability to move and interact with other cows. On the other hand, dairy cows and heifers kept in a tie stall barn must have access to open-air during the grazing season, and this obligation does not apply to cattle kept in free-stall cowsheds. For many years now, state investment aid has not been granted for the construction or extension of new tie stall cattle barns. The Animal Welfare Act, which will enter into force at the beginning of 2024, does not allow for the building of new tie stall barns. Adding more tie stalls when extending or renovating an existing barn will no longer be allowed, but the Animal Welfare Act does not set any deadline for the use of old tie stall barns.

Under the new Animal Welfare Act, the keeping of beef cattle in tie stalls will stop by the end of 2027 at the latest. Keeping calves, i.e. cattle under six months of age, tethered to a tie stall will no longer be allowed from the beginning of 2024.

A study **on the welfare and economic impact of keeping cattle in tie stall and free-stall barns** from 2014 includes more information about the impact of barn type on animal welfare and production economics.

The cubicles of cattle included in the scope of the output monitoring system (the stall in a tie stall barn and the cubicle bedding in a free-stall barn) is most often covered by a rubber mat (63% of stalls). A total of 21% of the stalls are covered with softer mattresses, and 2% are deep-bedded stalls. A few barns have waterbeds for cows, and just over 10% of the stalls are concrete.

The proportion of dairy cows let out to pasture decreased from 2010 to 2020. In 2010, 87.1% of dairy cows had access to pasture, compared to 72.4% in 2020. The proportion of non-dairy cattle let out to pasture increased, however. In 2010, 57.7% of cattle other than dairy cows were let out to pasture, while the proportion of grazing non-dairy cattle in 2020 was 67.8% (Natural Resources Institute Finland/ Statistics database/Agricultural statistics/Structure/ Livestock buildings and manure storages/Grazing of cattle).

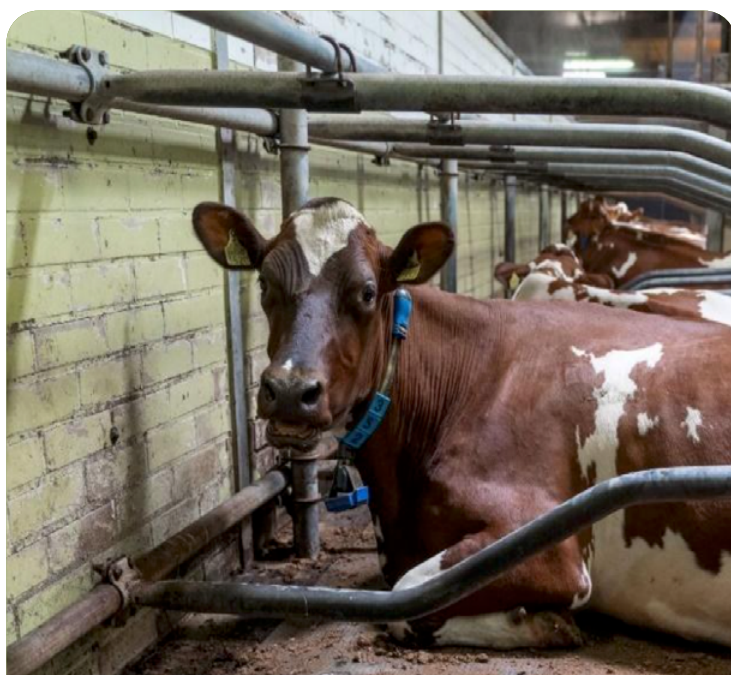


Image 71. Keeping cows untethered is becoming more common: approximately 70% of dairy cows are already living in free-stall barns. Image by Olli Leino.

Of the cattle included in the scope of the output monitoring system:

- 10% are allowed to graze in the summer and to go into an outdoor exercise area in winter
- 59% are allowed to graze only in summer
- 2% are allowed to go into an outdoor exercise area all year round
- 6% are allowed to go into an outdoor exercise area only in the summer

Cows that are kept indoors all the time live in free-stall barns.

Grazing of cattle in Finland

Ca. 60-70 % of cattle keepers offer grazing during summer months (2020).

Thethered cows must graze during summer but animal keeper can apply for special exemption.

Grazing is optional for cows in loose housing.



Cows without summer pasture 2020: 260 452 cows

Natural Resource Institute Finland,
Livestock Buildings and Manure Storages



Outdoor access of cows in Finland

Benefits of winter outdoor access

- Satisfying need for free movement
- Better body condition
- Fresh air
- Cleaning effect of snow for claws
- Better appetite



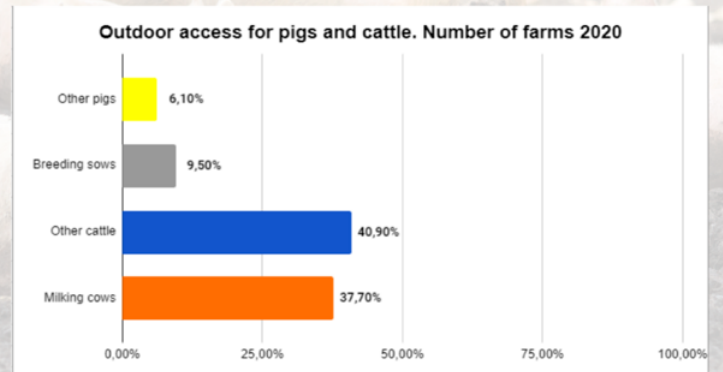
Cow's access to summer pasture in Finland

Benefits of grazing on summer pasture

- Grazing and ruminating in a group
- Satisfying need for free movement, good body condition
- Ease of lying down and getting up
- Fresh air
- Maintaining social relationships
- Better health (udder, claws, feet)



Outdoor access for pigs and cattle in Finland



Natural Resource Institute Finland,
Livestock Buildings and Manure Storages



Image 72. Grazing of cattle in Finland. Photos and infographics by Heta Rautiainen.

Image 73. Outdoor exercise of cattle and pigs in Finland. Photos and infographics by Heta Rautiainen.

Care practices have a huge impact on the welfare of calves

When calves are dehorned, the procedure is performed by a veterinarian while the calf is sedated, and a local anaesthetic and an analgesic are administered, on approximately 98% of the farms included in the scope of the **Naseva** Centralized Health Care Register for Finnish Cattle Herds. The corresponding share in 2012 was around 76% of Naseva farms. Approximately 83% of all cattle farms in Finland were covered by Naseva in early 2023.

Calves get their milk by suckling on a teat bucket or bottle, or from an automatic milk feeder on about 96% of the dairy farms included in the scope of the output monitoring system.

Feeding with a teat bucket or automatic milk feeder provides a natural way for the calf to suckle and is therefore better for the calf's welfare than drinking directly from an open bucket.

The median calf mortality rate on the output monitoring farms in 2020 was 6.7%, compared to 6.3% in 2015. The calf mortality rate refers to the proportion of stillborn calves and calves that die before reaching the age of three months of all calves born.

The above data on the conditions of dairy cows and calves can be found in ProAgria's Tonkka database, which contains data on the conditions of around 4,000 dairy farms.

Animal welfare payment for cattle

Producers can receive an animal welfare payment to promote the welfare of cattle under **certain conditions (in Finnish) (for more information about the animal welfare payment, see Politics and economy/Animal agriculture subsidies section of this report)**. In 2021, welfare payments were granted for improving the feeding and care of cattle (this measure was selected 4,105 times), for improving the conditions of calves with a surface area requirement (2,155 times) or without a surface area requirement (804 times), for improving the conditions of calves on suckler cow farms (719 times), for improving the conditions of cattle aged 6 months or more (2,848 times), for improving the conditions of cattle aged 12 months or more (145 times), for the grazing of cattle during the grazing season or for outdoor exercise outside the grazing season (300 times), for longer grazing periods of cattle during the grazing season (1,382 times), for stalls for the treatment of sick or calving dairy/suckler cows (1,947 times), and for stalls for the treatment of sick or calving cattle (1,971 times) (source: Finnish Food Authority, **Eläinten hyvinvointikorvauksen sitoumusedot uudistuivat vuonna 2023) (in Finnish)**).

Naseva provides information about cattle welfare

Naseva Centralized Health Care Register for Finnish Cattle Herds is a quality management system certified by a third party operating under **Animal Health ETT**. The costs arising from Naseva are borne by the 25 dairies and seven slaughterhouses that are members. Joining Naseva is voluntary for producers. At the beginning of 2023, around 83% of all cattle farms in Finland were members of Naseva, compared to 58% in 2015. A total of 95.5% of Finnish dairy farms and 58.6% of suckler cow farms were members of Naseva at the beginning of 2023.

A veterinarian prepares a management plan and carries out an annual farm visit for each Naseva farm. The total number of veterinarians carrying out Naseva farm visits in 2020 was 650. During the visit, the feeding, disease status and symptoms, mortality rate, conditions and behaviour of the cattle are assessed using a form containing some 240 items. In 2020, veterinarians carried out a total of 7,013 annual Naseva farm visits. Between 2012 and 2014, nearly 6,500 farm visits per year were carried out by veterinarians.

Table 16 shows the data recorded in Naseva for the farms covered by the system. The figures in the table are percentages of observations. The categories ‘not applicable to the farm’ and ‘cannot be assessed’, i.e. situations where the farm did not have any animals concerned, data was not available or the assessment could not be completed for another reason, have been left out of the table.

The assessment guidelines for the individual indicators are explained below the table. The assessment guidelines have been amended over the years. The percentages for 2020/2021 are largely based on farm visits carried out in 2020 (2,975 visits) and 2021 (4,399 visits). The Naseva farms, and therefore the figures in the table, are not exactly the same, i.e. not fully comparable between 2012–2014 and 2020. The farm data is constantly changing as farms abandon cattle farming (leave Naseva), or as new farms join Naseva. (Source: Animal Health ETT)

Table 16. Information from farms included in Naseva Centralized Health Care Register for Finnish Cattle Herds from 1 May 2012 to 1 May 2012, from 1 May 2013 to 1 May 2014 and from 2020/2021.

	Good			Satisfactory			Issues to be eliminated		
	2012/2013	2013/2014	2020/2021	2012/2013	2013/2014	2020/2021	2012/2013	2013/2014	2020/2021
1. Mortality rate, all cattle*	65.8	70.8	60.3	27.5	24.1	28.3	6	4.9	10.6
2. Availability of water, dairy cows*	68	69.4	69.5	26.1	25.3	26.2	5.8	5.2	3.8
3. Availability of water, calves 0–3 months	80.2	81.7	80.1	16.3	15.8	16.8	2.3	1.6	1.6
4. Skin and joint disorders, dairy cows*	70.7	66.6	55.8	28.2	32.8	42.5	0.9	0.6	1.3
5. Hair/fur, suckler cows	83.5	83.2	85.4	14.6	15.7	13.6	1.5	0.9	0.3
6. Dehorning, calves*	75.5	80.4	97.7	8.9	9.2	1.1	14.6	9.6	0.8
7. Hygiene and dryness, dairy cows*	75.2	75	77.2	23.1	23.6	21.5	1.6	1.3	1.0
8. Hygiene and dryness, heifers*	78.2	78.4	79.8	19.4	19.9	18.1	2.2	1.6	1.6
9. Hygiene and dryness, calves 3–6 months	82.6	83.3	85.4	16.1	15.6	13.0	0.8	0.8	0.7
10. Sleeping area, dairy cows	91.8	91.8	86.0	6.6	7.1	12.6	1.4	1.1	1.1
11. Sleeping area, calves 3–6 months	93.2	94.1	92.47	5.6	5.2	6.0	0.8	0.4	0.7
12. Comfort of sleeping area, dairy cows*	76.2	76.1	58.9	23.4	23.6	37.5	0.4	0.3	3.4
13. Comfort of sleeping area, bulls*	56.1	59	60.0	42.3	40.4	29.4	1.3	0.6	10.2
14. Comfort of sleeping area, calves 3–6 months*	64.5	65.7	66.2	34.2	33.3	26.9	1.1	n/a	6.2
15. Comfort of sleeping area, calves 0–3 months*	88	89.5	87.7	9.7	8.8	9.3	n/a	n/a	1.5

Guidelines for the evaluation of the indicators

1. Mortality rate, all cattle

2012–2014

Good: mortality rate below 3% in all groups of animals (dairy cows, heifers, calves and bulls).

Satisfactory: mortality rate 3–10% in one or more groups of animals.

Issues to be eliminated: mortality rate above 10% in one or more groups of animals.

2020

The mortality rate estimation guideline is based on an imputed monthly mortality rate and has changed compared to 2012–2014.

Good: mortality rate below 5% in all groups of animals (dairy cows, suckler cows, heifers, calves 0–3 months, calves 3–6 months and bulls).

Satisfactory: mortality rate 5–10% in one or more groups of animals.

Issues to be eliminated: mortality rate above 10% in one or more groups of animals.

2 and 3. Availability of water, dairy cows and calves

2012–2014

Good: animals have free access to clean water in cups or troughs. In a free-stall barn, dairy cows have one drinking cup per five cows or an equivalent amount of trough space per cow. In an open/uninsulated free-stall barn, the water container or drinking equipment is heated. The water flow rate is at least 15–20 litres per minute for dairy cows and 2 litres per minute for calves.

Satisfactory: the statutory requirements are met.

The water flow rate is at least 10 litres per minute for dairy cows and 2 litres per minute for calves. If the animals get their water from nipple drinkers, the rating is satisfactory at best.

Issues to be eliminated: the statutory requirements are not met, or the water flow rate for dairy cows is less than 10 litres per minute.

2020

Good: animals have free access to clean water in cups or troughs. In a free-stall barn, dairy cows have one drinking cup per four cows or an equivalent amount of trough space per cow (approximately 10 cm of trough edge). For other cattle, there is at least one cup per ten head of cattle or an equivalent amount of trough space per animal. In an open/uninsulated free-stall barn, the water container or drinking equipment is heated. The water flow rate is at least 15–20 litres per minute for dairy cows, 4–6 litres per minute for young stock and beef cattle, and 2 litres per minute for calves.

Satisfactory: the statutory requirements are met. The water flow rate is at least 10 litres per minute for dairy cows, 4 litres per minute for young stock and beef cattle, and 2 litres per minute for calves. If the animals get their water from nipple drinkers or the flow rate of water containers cannot be measured, for example, the rating is satisfactory at best.

Issues to be eliminated: the assessment result is the same as for 2012–2014.

4. Skin and joint disorders, dairy cows

2012–2014

Good: healthy feet in good condition. Mild issues (bursitis, abrasions and oedema) occur only in individual animals.

Satisfactory: mild skin or leg issues occur in several animals (5–25%).

Issues to be eliminated: the joints of more than a quarter of the animals are swollen, or they have abrasions.

2020

Good: healthy feet in good condition. Mild issues (hairless spots, thickened skin, abrasions without severe swelling) occur in less than 10% of the animals. No severe issues (extensive bloody abrasions, swollen joints, severe bursitis) occur.

Premature removal or slaughter due to joint issues amounts to less than 1% of animals.

Satisfactory: mild skin or leg issues occur in at most 10–25% of animals; more severe issues in only one or two animals or less than 5% of animals.

Premature removal or slaughter due to joint issues amounts to 1–5% and 3–5% of the animals.

Issues to be eliminated: mild skin issues are present in well over 25% or severe issues in well over 5% of animals. Premature removal or slaughter due to joint issues amounts to >5% of animals.

5. Hair/fur, suckler cows

2012–2014 and 2020

Good: the animals have good and shiny hair/fur.

Minor changes in the hair/fur occur in individual animals at most.

Satisfactory: the hair/fur of several animals exhibits minor changes due to ectoparasites, defective feeding, structures or other factors.

Issues to be eliminated: more than a quarter of the animals clearly exhibit the above symptoms.

6. Dehorning, calves

2012–2014

Good: all calves are dehorned by a veterinarian with sedation, local anaesthesia and analgesic injections or the animals have never had horns or there is otherwise no need for dehorning.

Satisfactory: all calves are dehorned by a veterinarian with sedation and local anaesthesia but without any analgesic, or all calves are dehorned by the owner with an analgesic.

Issues to be eliminated: the owner dehornes the calves without any analgesic, or the calves are not being dehorned even though the need is obvious.

2020

Good: calves are dehorned at the right age by a veterinarian with sedation, local anaesthesia and analgesic injections or the animals have never had horns or there is otherwise no need for dehorning.

Satisfactory: all calves are dehorned by a veterinarian with at least local anaesthesia, but there are issues with pain relief, or the veterinarian is often forced to dehorn calves when they are too old or saw the horns of individual calves.

Issues to be eliminated: calves are dehorned without local anaesthesia and an analgesic, or not dehorned even though the need is obvious.

7, 8 and 9. Hygiene and dryness, dairy cows, heifers and calves

2012–2014

Good: the udders of dairy cows are clean. The hair/fur is dry throughout from the coronet upwards in the case of dairy cows and from the hocks and carpi upwards in the case of other cattle, with no dungy hair/fur.

Satisfactory: there are some dungy animals, but none with a ‘manure armour’, or the hair/fur is moist. However, when animals kept outdoors get wet in the rain, their hair/fur is not to be considered moist if they had the opportunity to seek adequate shelter from the weather.

Issues to be eliminated: the animals have ‘manure armours’.

2020

Good: all animals are clean, or there are individual somewhat dungy animals.

Satisfactory: more than 5% of animals are somewhat dungy; there are some dungy individuals but none that are excessively dungy.

Measures have been taken on the farm to keep the dung under control.

Issues to be eliminated: more than 10% of animals are dungy, with some excessively dungy individuals. Sufficient measures to keep the dung under control have not been taken on the farm.

For more information, see the farm visit instructions for veterinarians in the Naseva Centralized Health Care Register for Finnish Cattle Herds, Section 2.1.3 Olosuhteet (Conditions), 1. Eläinten puhtaus/kuivuus (Animal hygiene/dryness).

10 and 11. Sleeping area, dairy cows and calves

2012–2014 and 2020

Good: all animals can simultaneously lie down in all natural positions in the sleeping area and use the area.

Satisfactory: animals can simultaneously lie down in a sleeping area or stalls, but individual animals lying elsewhere or queueing for a resting place can be observed in a free-stall barn.

Issues to be eliminated: there is no dedicated sleeping area for all animals, or the sleeping area is non-functional and several animals queueing for a resting place can be observed, or the animals cannot lie down in the stalls because of insufficient space.

12, 13, 14 and 15. Comfort of sleeping area, dairy cows, bulls and calves

2012–2014

Good: the sleeping area is clean, dry and soft. There is enough bedding. Animals can lie down quickly and effortlessly.

Satisfactory: there is inadequate bedding or the sleeping area is slightly dungy or the animals have to lie down on a hard surface. The maximum rating given to a grating or beam base is satisfactory.

Issues to be eliminated: the animals have to lie down on a wet, icy or dungy base, or the sleeping area for calves under 2 months of age is not soft and equipped with enough bedding.

2020

Good: the sleeping area is clean, dry and soft with enough bedding. Animals can lie down and get up quickly and effortlessly.

Satisfactory: bedding is inadequate or the sleeping area is slightly dungy or the animals have a sufficiently large rubberised sleeping area on which all animals can lie down.

Issues to be eliminated: the animals have to lie down on a wet, icy or dungy base (such as non-rubberised concrete), or the sleeping area for calves under 2 months of age is not soft and equipped with enough bedding.

Welfare of pigs

Free farrowing becoming more common

Free farrowing promotes the welfare of sows compared to crate farrowing, and it is rapidly becoming more common in Finland. According to the results of the 2020 agricultural census, free farrowing pig farms accounted for 10% of all Finnish pig farms ([Statistics database/Agricultural statistics/Structure/Livestock buildings and manure storages/Number of places per farm](#)). However, the majority of sows are still farrowing in immobilising crates. The switch to free farrowing has been facilitated by the various subsidies paid to farmers, such as the terms of the animal welfare payment to improve farrowing conditions, the free farrowing commitment terms and the increased investment aid when switching to free farrowing. When the Animal Welfare Act enters into force at the beginning of 2024, increasing the number of farrowing crates when expanding or renovating a pig house will no longer be allowed.

Castration of boar piglets

The new Animal Welfare Act will change the pain management practice for boar piglets during surgical castration, and surgical castration will eventually be completely banned. From the beginning of 2024, an analgesic must be administered to piglets during surgical castration. In addition, piglets must receive local anaesthesia in connection with surgical castration from the beginning of 2027. Surgical castration will be completely prohibited with a transition period of 12 years, i.e. from the beginning of 2035.

Image 74. Most sows in Finland are still farrowing in immobilising crates. Photo by Tiina Kauppinen.



Partly perforated floor most common in Finnish pig houses

Most Finnish pigs stand on a partly perforated floor (the share was 83% of pig houses in 2010 and 85% in 2020). The share of pig houses with completely perforated floors increased slightly, from 4.2% in 2010 to 5.1% in 2020. Most Finnish pigs are not allowed to go outdoors: outdoor rearing accounted for 0.1% of Finnish pig farms in 2020. This information is available in the results of the agricultural census (<https://www.luke.fi/fi/tilastot/elainsuojat-ja-lantavarastot>).

Image 75.
Pig house floor types.
Infographics: Heta Rautiainen.

Floor types in piggeries



Requirements

- holes max 10 % of slatted floor (also in farrowing pen)
- Bedding if needed
- Exploratory and digging material mandatory
- Minimum space allowance by weight (0,15-1,20 m²/pig)
- Outdoor access voluntary

Natural Resource Institute Finland,
Livestock Buildings and Manure Storages



Floor types in piggeries



Requirements

- Bedding if needed
- Exploratory and digging material mandatory
- Minimum space allowance by weight (0,15-1,20 m²/pig)
- Outdoor access voluntary

Natural Resource Institute Finland,
Livestock Buildings and Manure Storages



Floor types in piggeries



Requirements

- holes max 10 % of slatted floor (also in farrowing pen)
- Bedding if needed
- Exploratory and digging material mandatory
- Minimum space allowance by weight (0,15-1,20 m²/pig)
- Outdoor access voluntary

Natural Resource Institute Finland,
Livestock Buildings and Manure Storages



Floor types in piggeries



Requirements

- Cut straw, whole straw, wood shavings or peat as bedding
- Exploratory and digging material mandatory
- Minimum space allowance by weight (0,15-1,20 m²/pig)
- Outdoor access voluntary

Natural Resource Institute Finland,
Livestock Buildings and Manure Storages



Animal welfare payment for pigs

Producers can receive an animal welfare payment to promote the welfare of pigs under **certain conditions (for more information about the animal welfare payment, see Politics and economy/Animal agriculture subsidies section of this report)**. In 2021, animal welfare payments were granted for improving the feeding and care of pigs (this measure was selected 636 times), for the outdoor exercise of sows and gilts in gestation (14 times), for improving the conditions of sows and gilts (143 times), for

improving the farrowing conditions of sows/gilts (119 times), for the drying of stalls for weaned piglets/fattening pigs (358 times), for pain relief during the castration of male piglets (277 times), for pig enrichment (252 times), and for stalls for sick and nursing pigs (615 times) (source: Finnish Food Authority, **Eläinten hyvinvointikorvauksen sitoumusedot uudistuivat vuonna 2023 (in Finnish)**).

Sikava health classification register for swineherds produces statistics on pig welfare

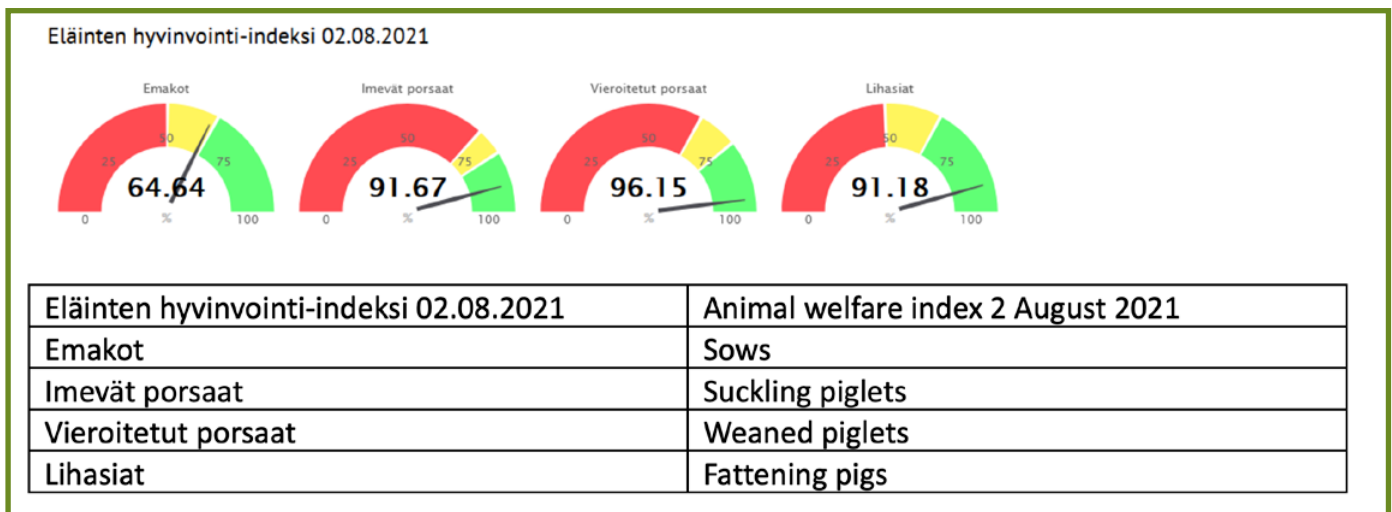
Sikava health classification register for swineherds operates under Animal Health ETT. Its costs are borne by the member slaughterhouses. The operation of Sikava is based on a pig farm health classification system and a quality system audited by a third party. Sikava was awarded national quality management system status in 2013. This means that in the production of pigs bred in accordance with national conditions, measures that go beyond the statutory requirements are taken. These include a requirement that the farms included in the scope of the quality management system must be free of several contagious pig diseases, as well as salmonella surveying requirements that are stricter than those in the national salmonella control scheme. A veterinarian visits the farms several times per year to observe the conditions, health, welfare and care of the animals.

The number of pig farms in Finland has decreased considerably in recent years, as has the number of farms included in Sikava. In 2010, some 2,300 pig farms were registered in Sikava, compared to 1,036 in 2020 and 862 in 2023. However, more than 90% of Finnish pig farms are registered in Sikava, and in commercial pork production, Sikava's coverage is more than 97%.

In 2010, animal welfare assessment indicators were added to Sikava based on the Welfare Quality™ protocol. An agreement on limit values for responsible animal agriculture have also been made through Sikava, which are monitored by Sikava twice a year. The content of the farm visits has been updated over the years as necessary. In 2019 and 2020, Sikava's veterinarians visited registered pig farms more than 4,600 times. Between 2011 and 2014, the annual number of visits ranged between 5,500 and 8,000. The most recent additions to the farm visit form are observations on free suckling, soft bedding and the proportion of intact tails.

A welfare index has been calculated for the farms twice a year based on the farm visit observations since 2018. The welfare index is calculated by stage of production (suckling piglets, weaned piglets, sows and fattening pigs). The results of the welfare index are illustrated in Sikava with traffic light symbols. Green indicates that the welfare of the animals on the farm is good, and a yellow index means that animal welfare is slightly below average. If the index is red, measures should be taken to improve animal welfare, animal health and conditions.

Image 76. Results of the Sikava welfare index for sows, suckling piglets, weaned piglets and fattening pigs, status on 2 August 2021 (source: Animal Health ETT).



The revised Sikava management plan form from 2021 provides a more comprehensive assessment of the welfare of animals and complements the assessment made based on the farm visits. Results may be reported based on the new plan from 2022 onwards.

The Biocheck.UGent® assessment tool was introduced as part of Sikava in 2018 for farm-level disease control. Improved disease control improves the health and welfare of animals and reduces the need to use antibiotics. The maximum assessment score is 100%. The average score for all Biocheck.UGent® assessment visits to Finnish pig farms is currently 67%, compared to an international average of 70%. The average score for external disease protection in Finland is 73% and for internal disease protection 61%; the corresponding international scores are 74% and 66% respectively. The international figures consist of 5,813 farm visits.

Image 77. Adequate space and the provision of materials to explore and dig helps prevent tail biting in pigs. Photo by Tiina Kauppinen.



Table 17 presents Sikava data for registered farms. The figures in the table are average percentages of the observations made during farm visits.

‘Weaners’ refers to the period between weaning and the fattening phase, i.e. from around four weeks to just under three months of age. ‘Fattening phase’ refers to the period after the end of intermediate breeding, ending with the slaughter of the pig at around six months of age.

Table 17. Data from the Sikava health classification register for swineherds from registered pig farms in 2011, 2012, 2013, 2019 and 2020. (*In 2019 and 2020: Hygiene and condition of water and feeding equipment, fattening pigs)

% havainnoista	Hyvä					Tyydyttävä					Heikko							
	2011	2012	2013	...	2019	2020	2011	2012	2013	...	2019	2020	2011	2012	2013	...	2019	2020
Aistinvarainen ilmanlaatu, välikasvatus	84,0	87,0	86,0		86,2	88,9	16,0	13,0	14,0		13,7	10,8	0,4	0,2	0,1		0,1	0,3
Aistinvarainen ilmanlaatu, porsitusosasto	87,0	90,0	90,0		92,0	92,7	13,0	10,0	10,0		7,9	7,1	0,1	0,1	0,1		0,1	0,2
Karsinoiden puhtaus, lihasiat	73,0	76,0	73,0		60,2	59,8	26,0	24,0	26,0		37,3	37,7	0,6	0,4	0,5		2,4	2,5
Rakenteiden kunto, lihasiat	81,0	82,0	82,0		79,8	79,2	19,0	18,0	18,0		19,5	20,2	0,4	0,4	0,3		0,8	0,6
Ruokintalaitteiden kunto, lihasiat*	81,0	88,0	82,0		89,1	90,1	18,0	11,0	17,0		10,5	9,7	0,4	0,1	0,3		0,4	0,1
Eläintiheys, välikasvatus	84,0	89,0	87,0		89,7	89,5	14,0	9,0	11,0		9,9	9,9	0,8	0,3	0,5		0,4	0,6
Eläintiheys, lihasiat	91,0	93,0	93,0		94,9	94,7	8,0	6,0	6,0		4,9	5,0	0,3	0,2	0,2		0,2	0,4
Virikemateriaali, välikasvatus	80,0	83,0	82,0		76,1	73,6	18,0	16,0	17,0		23,4	25,7	0,9	0,6	0,3		0,4	0,7
Virikemateriaali, lihasiat	75,0	77,0	79,0		68,5	66,6	23,0	21,0	20,0		30,4	31,9	2,0	1,0	0,7		1,1	1,5

*Vuosina 2019 ja 2020: Vesi- ja ruokintalaitteiden puhtaus ja kunto lihasiat

% havainnoista	Percentage of observations
Aistinvarainen ilmanlaatu, välikasvatus	Air quality based on sensory observations, weaners
Aistinvarainen ilmanlaatu, <u>porsitusosasto</u>	Air quality based on sensory observations, farrowing house
Karsinoiden puhtaus, lihasiat	Hygiene of pens, fattening pigs
Rakenteiden kunto, lihasiat	Condition of structures, fattening pigs
Ruokintalaitteiden kunto, lihasiat*	Condition of feeding equipment, fattening pigs*
Eläintiheys, välikasvatus	Stocking density, weaners
Eläintiheys, lihasiat	Stocking density, fattening pigs
<u>Virikemateriaali, välikasvatus</u>	Enrichment materials, weaners
<u>Virikemateriaali, lihasiat</u>	Enrichment materials, fattening pigs
*Vuosina 2019 ja 2020: Vesi- ja ruokintalaitteiden puhtaus ja kunto lihasiat	*In 2019 and 2020: Hygiene and condition of water and feeding equipment, fattening pigs
Hyvä	Good
Tyydyttävä	Satisfactory
Heikko	Poor

Table 18. Share (%) of intact tails in weaners and fattening pigs in the Sikava data in 2019 and 2020.

Share of intact tails : 0 = more than 95%, 1 = more than 80%, 2 = more than 70 %, 3 = less than 70%.									
	2019				2020				
	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	
Share of intact tails, weaners, %	74.6	16.3	7.4	1.7	73.5	18.1	7.3	1.0	
Share of intact tails, fattening pigs, %	65.0	22.8	10.1	2.2	62.1	24.3	11.4	2.2	

Tail biting in Sikava data

2013: In 2013, the prevalence of tail biting in pigs was assessed during Sikava farm visits on the scale of no tail biting, a few bitten tails (1–5%), several bitten tails (6–19%) and many bitten tails ($\geq 20\%$). In the case of weaned piglets, the tail biting status was observed on an individual basis. In 2013, no tail biting in weaned piglets was observed during 61% of visits, some bitten tails were observed during 37% of visits, several bitten tails during 2% of visits and many bitten tails during 0.2% of visits. In the case of fattening pigs, no tail biting was observed during 33% of visits, some bitten tails during 63% of visits, several bitten tails during 3% of visits and many bitten tails during 0.3% of visits.

2019 and 2020: The prevalence of tail biting has been assessed both in terms of the number of bitten tails and the proportion of intact tails, especially at the weaners and fattening phases, since 2018.

Mortality rates in Sikava data

2012 and 2013: In 2012, 7.9% of piglets were stillborn, compared to 7.7% in 2013. The mortality rate of piglets by the time they were weaned was 8.9% in 2012 and 10.0% in 2013. The post-weaning mortality rate was 1.1% in 2012 and 1.5% in 2013. The mortality rate was lower at the fattening phase: a total of 0.7% of fattening pigs died in 2012 and 2013.

2019 and 2020: The mortality rate figures for 2019 and 2020 also take the mortality rate of pigs put down on farms into account. In 2019, 7.3% of piglets were stillborn, compared to 7.5% in 2020. On average, 10.1% and 10.3% of piglets died or were put down before weaning in 2019 and 2020 respectively. After weaning, at the weaners phase, the average share of piglets dying or being culled was 2.2% per year in the years mentioned above. Both in 2019 and 2020, 1.4% of pigs died or were culled at the fattening phase.

According to AgroSoft® (now Agrovision), the total mortality rate of piglets from birth to weaning (up to an approximate age of 29 days) was 21.1% in Finland in 2013.

Free suckling on Sikava farms

‘Free suckling’ means that the farrowing crate, which restricts the sow’s movements, is opened within three days of farrowing. Sows are usually kept in a crate during the actual farrowing but not during suckling. In 2020, there were more than a hundred Sikava farms where free suckling was used for more than half of all sows farrowing at the same time.

Welfare of poultry

The consumption of broiler meat has increased significantly in recent years in Finland, which is reflected in the number of birds slaughtered. The majority of broilers in Finland are those bred to grow to slaughter size in 5–6 weeks. In 2010, just under 55 million broilers were slaughtered in Finland, compared to over 80 million in 2020.

In 2012–2020 (in Finnish), 3,500–4,000 flocks of broilers for slaughter were brought to Finnish poultry slaughterhouses.

Broilers are hatched, transported as chicks from hatcheries to breeding farms, bred, collected and transported to slaughterhouses at the highest volumes of all farm animals, which is why special attention should be paid to their welfare. Professor Donald Broom, author of the 2017 Animal Welfare in the European Union report, identified broiler foot issues as the worst animal welfare problem worldwide.

Image 78.

Fast-growing hybrids are commonly used in broiler production in Finland. The birds reach slaughter size in 5–6 weeks. Photo by Tiina Kauppinen.



Condition of broilers' feet used as welfare indicator

In Finland, broiler foot health is at an extremely high level. The welfare of broilers is assessed by examining and scoring a certain number of feet after slaughter. The assessment procedure is prescribed by law, covers the entire Finnish broiler production and is carried out by a veterinary inspector at the slaughterhouse. At least one foot from a hundred broilers in a slaughtered flock is assessed.

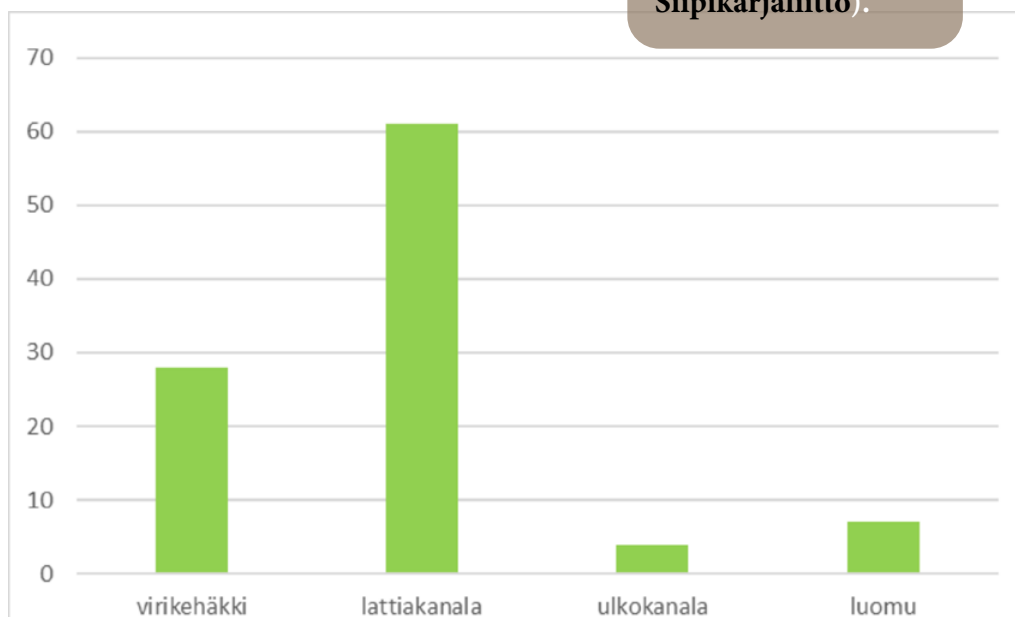
The healthier the foot pads of a flock, the lower the score. The score for a flock can range from 0 to 200 (0 = no changes in the flock's foot pads, 200 = severe footpad dermatitis in all 100 feet checked). The weighted means of the baseline scores for foot pads are based on the monthly averages of slaughterhouses, from which a national average weighted by the production share is calculated. The foot pad scores for 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 were 4.28, 2.43, 1.48, 1.94 and 2.64 respectively. If the foot pad health index of a slaughtered flock of broilers is below 20, the birds' foot health is excellent. In 2022, almost 97% of broiler flocks slaughtered in Finland **scored less than 20 points (in Finnish)**. (Source: **Animal Health ETT**)

Most laying hens live in an aviary-type hen house

In 2020, half the eggs laid in Finland still came from hens living in enriched cages. In 2022, only 28% of grade A eggs came from furnished cages, while the majority, 61%, were produced in aviary-type hen houses. In 2022, free-range hen houses (where the indoor premises are equivalent to a conventional aviary-type hen house) accounted for 4% of egg production and organic hen houses for 7% (source: **Finnish poultry association Suomen Siipikarjaliitto**) **(in Finnish)**.

The industry has set its own **targets (in Finnish)** for poultry welfare. Broiler hens (the grandparent stock is raised in Sweden) and turkeys are also raised in Finland. As of yet, there are no reportable results on their welfare, but data collection is being developed by the industry.

Image 79. Shares of different egg production premises (%) in 2022 (source: **Suomen Siipikarjaliitto**).



Virikehäkki	Enriched cage
Lattiakanala	Aviary-type hen house
Ulkokanala	Free range hen house
Luomu	Organic hen house

Laying hen production types in Finland



Resources in enriched cage

- Wire floor
- Nest
- Perch
- Nail trimming board
- Area with litter
- 750 cm²/hen, 10-60 hens/ cage

Resource: Siipikarjaliitto, Tuotantotapa



Laying hen production types in Finland



Requirements

- No outdoor access
- Max 9 hens/m²
- Different levels
- Nests
- Min. 1/3 of floor is litter (bath, pawing)

Resources: Siipikarjaliitto, Tuotantotapa



Laying hen production types in Finland



Requirements

- Indoor season max. 16 weeks, max. 9 hens/m²
- Outdoor pen on terrain, 4 m²/hen
- Nests
- Perches
- Litter areas (bath, pawing)

Resource: Siipikarjaliitto, Tuotantotapa



Laying hen production types in Finland



Requirements

- Outdoor access mandatory
- Outdoor pen on terrain, 4 m²/hen
- Indoors max. 6 hens/ m²
- Nests
- Litter (bath, pawing)
- Perches

Resource: Siipikarjaliitto, Tuotantotapa



Image 80. Minimum space requirements for Finnish laying hen facilities.
Photos and infographics by Heta Rautiainen.

Animal welfare payment for poultry

Producers can receive an animal welfare payment to promote the welfare of poultry under **certain conditions** (for more information about the animal welfare payment, see [Politics and economy/Animal agriculture subsidies section of this report](#)).

In 2021, animal welfare payments were granted for improving the feeding and care of poultry (this measure was selected 330 times), for improving the conditions of chickens and turkeys (207 times), for improving the air quality on egg producing farms (76 times), for poultry enrichment (265 times), and for platforms, ramps and roosts (225 times) (source: Finnish Food Authority, [Eläinten hyvinvointikorvauksen sitoumusehdot uudistuivat vuonna 2023](#)).

European citizens' initiative on cage-free production

Improvements to the welfare of farm animals are being called for across Europe. In 2021, the EU Commission backed a citizens' initiative calling for a ban on the cage farming of laying hens, layer breeders, breeding hens, broiler breeders, quail, ducks, geese, rabbits, sows and calves. Cages limit the opportunity of the animals to fulfil their behavioural needs, and there are alternatives to cage farming.

The citizens' initiative has also received support from the European Parliament. The Commission intends to move forward with the matter and propose legislation to prohibit cage farming, initially in stages and eventually completely, by the end of 2023. The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) will carry out a scientific assessment of animal welfare to be used as the basis for the preparation of the legislation. The impact on international trade will be assessed, as will the social and economic impact in the agricultural sector.

Read more:

- A column by the Animal Welfare Ombudsman in KMVET magazine on 12 August 2021: [Komissio siivittää siirtymää kohti häkিতöntä tuotantoa](#)
- European Commission: [Animal welfare – 'End the Cage Age' European citizens' initiative](#)

Welfare of fur animals

Fureva (in Finnish) is a Finnish healthcare system for fur animals funded by the Finnish Fur Breeders' Association. Developed by veterinarians, the system was introduced in 2015. It focuses on the identification of potential problems in production, systematic healthcare work, the improvement of the production and profitability of fur farms, and the prevention of disease outbreaks.

In the summer of 2023, the welfare of fur animals was affected by **the highly pathogenic avian influenza virus that has infected fur animals**. By mid-August 2023, the virus had been detected on 24 Finnish fur farms in all the most commonly farmed fur animals. By that date, **the Finnish Food Authority** had ordered the culling of 80,000 fur animals. Fur animals infected with avian influenza suffer from symptoms such as diarrhoea, convulsions and respiratory symptoms, and may go into a state of torpor or experience sudden death (source: [Helsingin Sanomat](#)).

Welfare of sheep and goats

Producers can receive an animal welfare payment to promote the welfare of sheep and goats under **certain conditions (in Finnish) (for more information about the animal welfare payment, see section Politics and economy/Animal agriculture subsidies of this report)**. In 2021, welfare payments were granted for improving the feeding of sheep and goats (this measure was selected 217 times), for improving the conditions of sheep and goats (287 times), for the care of sheep and goats (261 times), for the grazing of sheep and goats during the grazing season or for outdoor exercise outside the grazing season (65 times),

and for longer grazing of sheep and goats during the grazing season (103 times) (source: Finnish Food Authority, **Eläinten hyvinvointikorvauksen sitoumusehdot uudistuivat vuonna 2023) (in Finnish)**).

Image 81.

Animal welfare payments are available for the grazing of goats. Photo by Heta Rautiainen.



Welfare of reindeer

Around 2,500 reindeer bulls are castrated every year in Finland, usually without pain relief. The bulls are castrated at around five years of age when they are no longer needed for breeding. The castration improves the condition of the reindeer. Racing reindeer and reindeer used in tourism services are also usually castrated. There is no research data on pain relief in reindeer castration. There is a desire to promote the treatment of pain during castration, and optional medicines are currently being studied in a project managed by the University of Helsinki, **Welfare of castrated reindeers**.

Image 82. Stag reindeer are usually castrated in Finland without any pain relief. Photo by Satu Raussi.



Welfare of animals for slaughter

When an animal needs to be put down, **by law** it must be protected from avoidable pain, distress and suffering during the killing and related actions. This means that the killing of animal must be conducted as quickly and painlessly as possible. It is a deliberate process leading to the death of the animal.

Slaughtering an animal means that the plan is to use the remains of the animal for human consumption. Slaughtering an animal involves stunning and bleeding. Stunning is used to render the animal unconscious so that it cannot feel anything as the bleeding starts and until the animal dies. Bleeding ensures that the animal is dead. Finnish legislation allows for a special method of slaughter for religious reasons where the bleeding is started simultaneously with the stunning of the animal, meaning that the bleeding must not be started before the animal has been stunned.

The slaughter of animals is regulated by **the Council Regulation (EC) No. 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing**. The Regulation also covers related measures such as the handling, lairaging, restraining, stunning and bleeding of animals for slaughter. The Regulation defines the stunning methods allowed for different animal species and imposes different obligations on slaughterhouse operators to ensure animal welfare. For example, there is a training requirement for slaughterhouse staff, larger slaughterhouses must have an animal welfare officer and slaughterhouses must have operating procedures in place to ensure the welfare of animals at the time of killing.

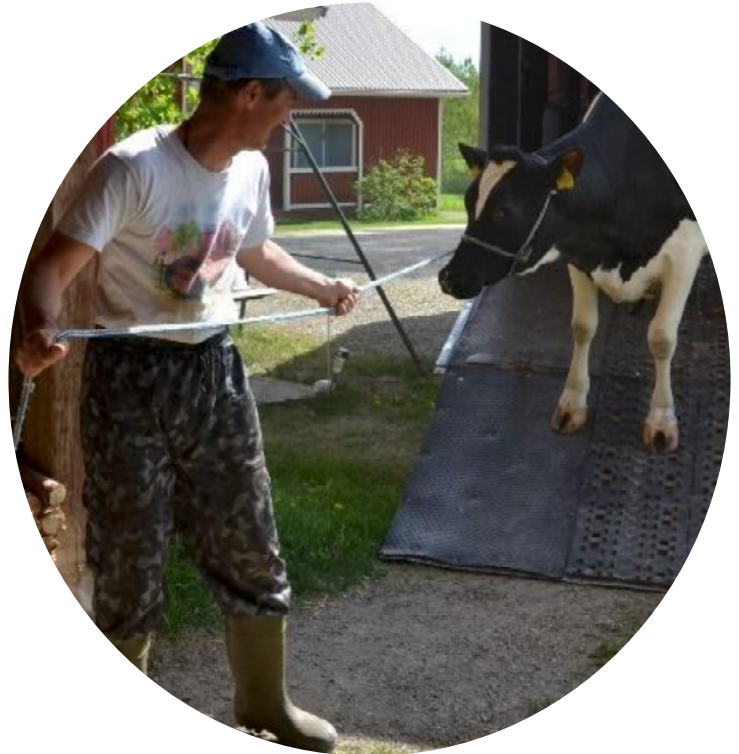


Image 83.

At the end of a farm animal's life, its welfare is affected by transport to slaughter, stunning and the slaughter itself. Photo by Tarja Jalkanen.

Most common stunning and killing methods

Stunning is a method rendering the animal unconscious until death. In Finland, bovines are most commonly stunned with a bolt gun fired at the head. The hit from a penetrating bolt gun and the intrusion of the bolt into the brain causes severe and irreversible damage.

In large slaughterhouses, pigs are commonly stunned with carbon dioxide gas. In addition, pigs may be stunned with an electric current directed through the brain or with a bolt gun. The electric current causes a generalised epileptic seizure in the EEG.

Horses are stunned with a bolt gun or by shooting. Sheep are stunned with electricity or a bolt gun. Reindeer are usually stunned with a bolt gun. Of fur animals, foxes and raccoon dogs are killed with electricity, using electrodes on both the head and the body. Minks are stunned with carbon monoxide or carbon dioxide gas.

Hens that no longer lay eggs are generally killed with carbon dioxide gas in or near the hen house. Broiler stunning is done with carbon dioxide gas or with electrical water bath stunning, i.e. by exposing the animal to an electric current in a pool of water. The electric current causes a generalised epileptic seizure and ventricular fibrillation or cardiac arrest. Turkeys are stunned with electricity, either in a water basin or with electric pliers aimed at the head.



image 84. A mobile slaughter house.
Photo by Tiina Kauppinen.

Mobile slaughterhouse

The idea of a mobile slaughterhouse is that the slaughterhouse lorry will come to the farm so that the animals do not need to be transported. There are apparently no actual mobile slaughterhouses in Finland yet, but a mobile slaughterhouse made by a Finnish company has been used in Sweden.

Read more: Hultgren, J., Arvidsson Segerkvist, K., Berg, C., Karlsson, A.H., Algers, B. 2020. **Animal handling and stress-related behaviour at mobile slaughter of cattle. Preventive Veterinary Medicine 177.**

Finnish slaughterhouses

In 2015, 19 large and 59 small slaughterhouses, as well as 21 reindeer slaughterhouses, were registered in Finland. By 2022, the number of both large and small slaughterhouses had decreased, and there were 15 large and around 50 small slaughterhouses, as well as 19 reindeer slaughterhouses. **The approved slaughterhouses and the contact details of the largest slaughterhouses** are available on the Finnish Food Authority's website. Slaughterhouses' veterinary inspectors carry out animal welfare inspections in the slaughterhouses, the results of which are reported by the Finnish Food Authority. There is additional information on the Finnish

Food Authority's website under **Usein kysytyä teurastuksesta** (Frequently asked questions about slaughter).

Finnish Centre for Animal Welfare (EHK) is the **scientific support point** in Finland designated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry under the Regulation on the protection of animals at the time of killing. The **publications** (in Finnish) on the EHK's animal information pages include good practices for slaughtering cattle, pigs and poultry, as well as guidelines for the best way to put down poultry.

Slaughter condemnation and meat inspection findings

Farm animal carcasses may be rejected in part or in whole at the slaughterhouse (Tables 19 and 20). A decision on the condemnation of a carcass is made by the veterinary inspector working at the slaughterhouse. A condemnation means a financial loss for the producer and the business. It may also be indicative of deficiencies in the welfare of the animal. An animal whose carcass is condemned has probably fared ill at some point in its life.

The meat industry has jointly agreed on national carcass condemnation limit values leading to action: for fattening pigs, the limit for full carcass condemnation is 1.1%, and for sows 7%. The limit for partial carcass condemnation for fattening pigs is 12%. If a farm delivers a greater number of pigs that are ultimately condemned, a representative of the slaughterhouse will visit the farm to give instructions for how to remedy the situation. The farm must decrease the figure to below the limit value for full carcass condemnation within a year if it wants to continue cooperation with the slaughterhouses.

Tables 21a and 21b (p.306-307) presents the meat inspection findings, observations and diseases in carcasses of slaughtered animals in 2020 and 2022 as recorded by the Finnish Food Authority. In a slaughterhouse meat inspection, suitability for food of the carcass and/or meat is assessed using several criteria to achieve an overall assessment.

Issues caused by parasites were the most significant cause of partial and full carcass condemnation in reindeer, according to post-slaughter meat inspection decisions (550,000 decisions) in 2005–2006 and 2014–2015 (**Nieminen 2017**). Parasites were observed in reindeer from the southern reindeer herding area in particular. The cause of the problem is thought to be the warming climate caused by climate change, which contributes to the proliferation of parasites.

Table 19. (1/2)

Partially and fully rejected carcasses for cattle, pigs, sheep, goats, horses and reindeer in slaughterhouses, small slaughterhouses and reindeer slaughterhouses in 2015–2022 (source: Finnish Food Authority).

2015	Cattle	Pigs	Sows	Sheep	Goats	Horses	Reindeer	In total
Number of animals brought to the slaughterhouse	277 870	2 027 299	42 479	57 622	239	1 639	69 803	2 459 922
Partially rejected carcasses	33 022	142 080	5 573	102	2	3	11 326	192 094
Fully rejected carcasses	1 466	6 271	842	60	1	8	67	8 715
2016	Cattle	Pigs	Sows	Sheep	Goats	Horses	Reindeer	In total
Number of animals brought to the slaughterhouse	279 800	2 008 209	43 266	57 711	248	1 284	62 465	2 452 983
Partially rejected	24 407	136 741	5 657	162	1	0	9 190	176 158
Fully rejected carcasses	1 575	6 967	782	106	0	5	85	9 520
2017	Cattle	Pigs	Sows	Sheep	Goats	Horses	Reindeer	In total
Number of animals brought to the slaughterhouse	273 026	1 930 452	35 133	56 749	326	1 263	60 995	2 357 944
Partially rejected carcasses	22 878	135 866	4 460	128	0	0	10 767	174 099
Fully rejected carcasses	1 581	7 160	688	73	1	19	88	9610
2018	Cattle	Pigs	Sows	Sheep	Goats	Horses	Reindeer	In total
Number of animals brought to the slaughterhouse	273 710	1 785 775	33162	64 093	353	1 171	55 158	2 213 422
Partially rejected carcasses	25 113	139 218	4 753	134	0	0	10 182	179 400
Fully rejected carcasses	1 786	7 525	596	65	0	7	93	10 072

Table 19. (2/2)

Partially and fully rejected carcasses for cattle, pigs, sheep, goats, horses and reindeer in slaughterhouses, small slaughterhouses and reindeer slaughterhouses in 2015–2022 (source: Finnish Food Authority).

2019	Cattle	Pigs	Sows	Sheep	Goats	Horses	Reindeer	In total
Number of animals brought to the slaughterhouse	267 796	1 789 066	33 543	62 319	845	1 105	73 702	2 228 376
Partially rejected carcasses	25 063	160 156	5 219	166	3	3	11 811	202 421
Fully rejected carcasses	2 026	9 146	866	83	2	30	194	12 347
2020	Cattle	Pigs	Sows	Sheep	Goats	Horses	Reindeer	In total
Number of animals brought to the slaughterhouse	261 237	1 886 437	32 772	62 741	613	834	41 982	2 286 616
Partially rejected carcasses	25 139	141 342	4 951	76	1	2	8 305	179 816
Fully rejected carcasses	2 065	9 423	858	88	14	25	71	12 544
2021	Cattle	Pigs	Sows	Sheep	Goats	Horses	Reindeer	In total
Number of animals brought to the slaughterhouse	258 048	1 908 372	34 924	50 424	749	782	56 051	2 309 350
Partially rejected carcasses	23 523	150 033	4 969	73	1	0	10 950	189 549
Fully rejected carcasses	1 910	10 123	1 044	78	8	29	120	13 312
2022	Cattle	Pigs	Sows	Sheep	Goats	Horses	Reindeer	In total
Number of animals brought to the slaughterhouse	256 774	1 835 893	34 678	55 403	910	865	53 158	2 237 681
Partially rejected carcasses	28 008	182 353	7 702	79	6	2	25 026	243 176
Fully rejected carcasses	2 017	9 904	993	123	1	19	88	13 145

Table 20 (1/2).

Partially and fully rejected carcasses in poultry slaughterhouses and small poultry slaughterhouses in 2015–2022 (source: Finnish Food Authority).

2015	Broilers	Broiler breeders	Turkeys	Hens	Ducks	Geese	Wild duck	In total
	67 362 664	573 866	823 957	60 979	2 779	5 280	4 458	68 833 976
Number of animals brought to the slaughterhouse	3,5	4,3	7,3	0	4,1	0	0	3,5
Partly rejected carcasses %	3,5	4,3	7,3	0	4,1	0	0	3,5
Fully rejected carcasses %	3,4	13,3	2,9	7,6	2,4	0,25	0,4	3,5
2016	Broilers	Broiler breeders	Turkeys	Hens	Ducks	Geese	Wild duck	In total
	69 443 416	545 532	879 763	40 972	3 020	3 659	7 778	70 924 140
Number of animals brought to the slaughterhouse								
Partly rejected carcasses %	3,868	3,437	6,441	0	0	0	0	3,89
Fully rejected carcasses %	2,634	20,521	3,231	9,307	10,368	0,355	0,026	2,78
2017	Broilers	Broiler breeders	Turkeys	Hens	Ducks	Geese	Wild duck	In total
	73 591 904	555 285	884 186	3 446	4 399	3 712	9 782	75 052 720
Number of animals brought to the slaughterhouse								
Partly rejected carcasses %	3,14	4,155	7,905	0	0,409	0	0	3,203
Fully rejected carcasses %	3,575	21,654	4,267	11,705	1,523	0,162	0.000	3,716
2018	Broilers	Broiler breeders	Turkeys	Hens	Ducks	Geese	Wild duck	In total
	79 932 752	534 576	914 384	3 070	4 688	4 766	12 884	81 407 120
Number of animals brought to the slaughterhouse								
Partly rejected carcasses %	4,111	4,171	6,955	0	1,474	0	0,233	4,142
Fully rejected carcasses %	4,849	20,517	5,046	4,56	3,311	0,126	0,078	4,953
2019	Broilers	Broiler breeders	Turkeys	Hens	Ducks	Geese	Wild duck	In total
	78 922 528	532 267	902 265	4 224	1 967	4 658	17 703	80 385 608
Number of animals brought to the slaughterhouse								
Partly rejected carcasses %	4,321	4,43	7,529	1,435	2,798	0,022	0,277	4,357
Fully rejected carcasses %	4,303	27,456	4,844	2,511	7,019	0,258	0,085	4,461

Table 20 (2/2).**Partially and fully rejected carcasses in poultry slaughterhouses and small poultry slaughterhouses in 2015–2022 (source: Finnish Food Authority).**

2020	Broilers	Broiler breeders	Turkeys	Hens	Ducks	Geese	Wild duck	In total
Number of animals brought to the slaughterhouse	80 673 152	573 644	923 156	1 008	3 096	4 596	8 787	83 864 128
Partly rejected carcasses %	3,8	4,3	8,1	0	1,2	0	0	3,9
Fully rejected carcasses %	3,1	23,4	4,2	4,4	3,7	0,2	0	3,3
2021	Broilers	Broiler breeders	Turkeys	Hens	Ducks	Geese	Wild duck	In total
Number of animals brought to the slaughterhouse	82 349 840	573 644	923 156	1 008	3 096	4 596	8 787	83 864 128
Partly rejected carcasses %	3,8	4,3	8,1	0	1,2	0	0	3,9
Fully rejected carcasses %	3,1	23,4	4,2	4,4	3,7	0,2	0	3,3
2022	Broilers	Broiler breeders	Turkeys	Hens	Ducks	Geese	Wild duck	In total
Number of animals brought to the slaughterhouse	82 605 120	579 526	934 778	772	2 934	4 096	10 224	84 137 450
Partly rejected carcasses %	3,8	4,3	8,1	2,3	1,6	0	0	3,9
Fully rejected carcasses %	2,6	23,2	3,9	3,4	3	0,3	0	2,8

Table 21a.

Meat inspection findings from carcasses of slaughtered cattle, pigs, sheep, broilers and turkeys in 2020 (21a) and 2022 (21b) at slaughterhouses (source: Finnish Food Authority).

	CATTLE		PIG		SHEEP		BROILER		TURKEY	
Number of animals slaughtered	260 366		1 917 473		55 213		80 595 848		907 910	
	number of individuals	%	number of individuals	%	number of individuals	%	number of individuals	%	number of individuals	%
Extremely dirty animal	646	0,25			0	0				
Abscess	4 122	1,58	57 585	3,06	25	0,05				
Pneumonia	6 691	2,57	58 282	3,09						
Pleuritis	2 255	0,87								
Pleural membrane inflammation			448 605	23,8						
Arthritis or osteoarthritis	2 481	0,95	56 066	2,98	18	0,03				
Changes suggesting parasites	362	0,14								
Ascaris damage			96 242	5,11						
Cachexia	89	0,03			56	0,1	27 348	0,03	3 441	0,38
Fracture	339	0,13			14	0,03				
Bruises	11 412	4,38			40	0,07				
Bleeding, fresh fractures							74 465	0,09	433	0,05
Fasciola hepatica	24	0,01			8	0,01				
Dicrocoelium dendriticum	6	0			189	0,34				
Pericardium inflammation			106 456	5,65						
Tail biting			19 389	1,03						
Shoulder ulcers, only sows			477	1,46						
Body cavity changes							222 119	0,28	6 856	0,76
Ascites							354 162	0,44	0	0
Dermatitis or subcutaneous tissue							307 414	0,38	21 339	2,35
Other reasons							166 350	0,21	3 269	0,36

Table 21b.

Meat inspection findings from carcasses of slaughtered cattle, pigs, sheep, broilers and turkeys in 2020 (21a) and 2022 (21b) at slaughterhouses (source: Finnish Food Authority).

	CATTLE		PIG		SHEEP		BROILER		TURKEY	
Number of animals slaughtered	256 774		1 870 571		55 403		82 605 120		934 778	
	number of individuals	%	number of individuals	%	number of individuals	%	number of individuals	%	number of individuals	%
Extremely dirty animal	255	0,204			0	0				
Abscess	4 432	1,728	82 989	4,522	62	0,112				
Pneumonia	7 531	2,936	79 153	4,313						
Pleuritis										
Pleural membrane inflammation	2 232	0,87	513 039	27,955						
Arthritis or osteoarthritis	2 687	1,048	51 414	2,802	11	0,02				
Changes suggesting parasites	276	0,108								
Ascaris damage			79 140	4,312						
Cachexia	24	0,025			55	0,099	34 749	0,042	2 646	0,283
Fracture	368	0,143			26	0,047				
Bruises	27 857	10,861			29	0,052				
Bleeding, fresh fractures	368	0,143					75 745	0,092	975	0,104
Fasciola hepatica	32	0,012			5	0,009				
Dicrocoelium dendriticum	53	0,021			547	0,988				
Pericardium inflammation			165 017	8,992						
Tail biting			38 273	2,085						
Shoulder ulcers, only sows			1191	3,444						
Body cavity changes							141 176	0,171	8 420	0,901
Ascites							406 574	0,492	0	0
Dermatitis or subcutaneous tissue							410 695	0,497	18 409	1,969
Other reasons							206 919	0,25	1 367	0,146

Animal transport

Loading, transport and unloading are high-risk situations in terms of animal welfare. A farm animal is usually transported at least once during its lifetime, i.e. when it is taken to the slaughterhouse. Hens that have stopped laying eggs and fur animals are usually killed on the farm, as they are not destined for human food. Large numbers of calves are transported from dairy farms where they were born to beef cattle farms. Newly hatched broiler chicks are transported from hatcheries to broiler farms. Farmed fish are also transported from hatcheries to fish farms. According to statistics on the number of animals for slaughter, it can be said that tens of millions of animals for slaughter were transported on Finnish roads in 2020 (see Table 25, Number of animals for slaughter), as according to the Finnish Food Authority, more than 80 million heads of poultry were transported to slaughterhouses.

Animal welfare during transport must be properly ensured. Farm animal transport distances in Finland are long due to the geography and the low number of slaughterhouses. In addition, small herd sizes sometimes force the collection of animals from a wide area. In terms of individual animals, broilers are the most transported animals for slaughter. No open statistics are available on the transport times or distances for broilers, but most broiler farms are located relatively close to a poultry slaughterhouse. In 2014, the mortality rate for poultry during transport, unloading and lairaging in slaughterhouses was 0.16% (source: Finnish Food Authority).

The reference data for 2014 includes almost 17,000 animal transport loads, accounting for more than half the total slaughter and transit transport for the year. The majority (67%) of these commercial transport operations lasted less than nine hours. Longer journeys of 9–12 hours accounted for 15% in 2014, while journeys of more than 12 hours accounted for 18%. In 2008, SKAL recorded 33,214 animal transport loads, of which 85% were transported for less than nine hours, 12% for 9–12 hours and 3% for more than 12 hours.

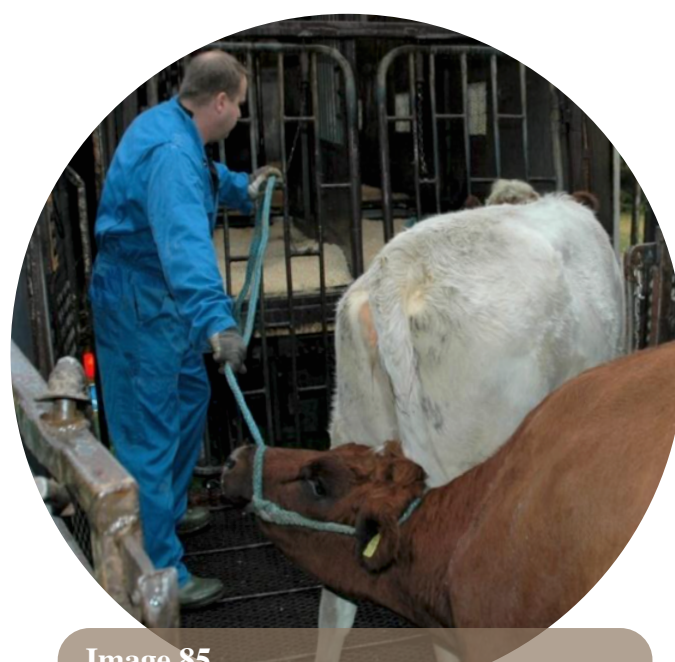


Image 85. Slaughter transport with the loading and unloading is a high-risk situation for the welfare of the animal. Photo by Tarja Jalkanen.

Table 23. Duration of the transport of cattle and pigs for slaughter and transit transport in 2020. The data in the table covers some 80% of transport for slaughter and transit transport. (Source: Finnish transport and logistics association Suomen kuljetus ja logistiikka ry SKAL).

% of transport	Pig slaughter transport	Transport of piglets between farms	Cattle slaughter transport	Transport of calves between farms
under 8 h	97,3	98,6	74,6	86,1
over 8 h	2,7	1,4	25,4	13,9

Average animal transport distance varies from year to year

In 2022, live animals were transported an average of 120 km by road in Finland, with an average loading rate of 47% (Table 24). Over the last decade or so, the average distance which live animals were transported by road ranged between 96 and 408 km, and the loading rate ranged between 47% and 78%. This data is available in the annual **Goods transport by road** statistics by Statistics Finland.

During EU inspections of animal transport in 2011–2014 and 2015–2018, the authorities inspected a total of 1,547 and 1,531 animal transport operations respectively. A total of 1,239 animal transport operations were inspected in 2019–2021. The average duration of the animal transport operations inspected between 2011 and 2017 ranged between 3.5 and 4.5 hours. Of the transport operations inspected between 2011 and 2014, 99 exceeded eight hours. In 2015–2018, 136 animal transport operations of more than eight hours and 51 in 2019–2020 were inspected.

Year	Average distance travelled (km)	Loading rate (%)
2010	120	53
2011	134	51
2012	153	66
2013	212	77
2014	110	50
2015	408	75
2016	261	64
2017	352	78
2018	343	67
2019	356	78
2020	376	54
2021	96	77
2022	120	47

Table 24.
Transport of live animals,
average distance travelled (km)
and loading rate (%) in 2010–2022
 (source: Official Statistics of Finland,
 Goods transport by road).

Goal is to reduce the duration of animal transport

The duration of transport of animals for slaughter has long been the subject of debate in the EU. Animal protection organisations have suggested an upper limit of eight hours for animal transport. The Government Decree on Animal Transport (Asetus eläinten kuljetuksesta 491/1996) establishes transport time limits for various species beyond which the animals must be allowed to rest or must be given food and water. Unweaned calves, lambs, kids, foals and piglets must be allowed to rest for at least an hour after nine hours of travel, and must be given water and also food as necessary. After the rest period, the transport may continue for a further nine hours. According to the government decree, pigs may be transported for a maximum of 24 hours. There are also regulations on the daily working hours of the driver: during a period of 24 hours, a driver may drive a maximum of nine hours in total.

Legislation requires an animal transport authorisation in commercial animal transport. Regional State Administrative Agencies issue the authorisations and save all authorisations, long-haul road transport vehicle qualification documents and the identification data of other means of transport, as well as the certificates of qualification for the driver and caretaker and the associated information in the animal transport register maintained by the Finnish Food Authority. An up-to-date list of animal transport authorisations for long-haul transport granted in Finland is available on [the Finnish Food Authority's website \(in Finnish\)](#).

Animal diseases

Several diseases common in animals, such as respiratory infections, arthritis and mastitis, cause pain to animals and thus deteriorate their welfare. The animal disease situation in Finland has been very good globally speaking; for example, there have been very few infectious animal diseases classified as public health hazards. The good animal disease situation promotes animal welfare and reduces the need to use medication. The Finnish Food Authority reports on animal health annually in its reports on [animal diseases in Finland](#).

In **2021**, the animal disease status in Finland deviated from the generally good level, as highly pathogenic avian influenza was detected for the first time in poultry. There were also cases of infectious haematopoietic necrosis (IHN) in salmonids in Åland and Varroa mite infestations in bees. Highly pathogenic avian influenza is classified as a category A animal disease under EU Animal Health Law. In the summer of 2023, **avian influenza** was detected in wild birds and fur animals in Finland. The authorities ordered the culling of fur animals. The avian influenza virus was also found to have mutated on fur farms.

Animals bred on natural pastures

‘Natural pasture’ refers to a traditional biotope such as a meadow, a wooded pasture or grazed woodland. Such areas are rare but particularly valuable for biodiversity. The best managers of natural pastures are grazing animals, most commonly cattle and sheep.

Producers of organic pasture meat (in Finnish) breed animals that graze in natural pastures for part of the year. **The criteria for the production of organic pasture mea (in Finnish)** include requirements on conditions to promote animal welfare such as no confinement and housing animals during winter on solid and bedded area.

European citizens’ initiative on cage-free production

Improvements to the welfare of production animals are required throughout Europe. In 2021, the EU Commission supported a citizens’ initiative to prohibit the use of cages for hens, sows, calves, rabbits, ducks, geese and other farmed animals. Cages limit the realization of animals’ behavioral needs, and there are alternatives to cage rearing.

The citizens’ initiative has also received support from the European Parliament. The European Commission intends to move forward in the matter and propose legislation to ban cage rearing initially in stages and eventually completely by the end of 2023. As a basis for the legislative work, the European Food Safety Agency EFSA will make a scientific evaluation of the matter regarding animal welfare. The effects related to international trade are assessed, as are the social and economic effects on the agricultural sector.

Read more:

- Animal Welfare Officer, column in KMVET magazine on August 12, 2021: [Komissio siivittää siirtymää kohti häkitöntä tuotantoa](#)
- European Commission: [Eläinten hyvinvointi – eurooppalainen kansalaisaloite ”End the Cage Age”](#)

Quantities of farm animals, animal farms, animals for slaughter, laboratory animals, game and fish caught, as well as fish farmed

In Finland, the quantities of animals are recorded individually for farm animals (Table 25), organic farm animals (Table 26), animals for slaughter (Table 27), animals used for scientific or educational purposes, i.e. laboratory animals, and game. The quantities of fish caught (Table 28) and farmed (Table 29) are measured in units of weight. However, the number of individual fish is recorded when the fish are used as laboratory animals.



Image 86. Finnish Eastern Finncattle on natural pasture.. Image: Olli Leino

Table 25.
Number of farm animals in 2007–2022 and animal farms in 2010, 2014, 2018 and 2022 in Finland (sources: Official Statistics of Finland, Natural Resources Institute Finland: Number of livestock, Finnish Statistical Yearbook of Forestry 2014, Finnish Fur Breeders' Association). For cattle, pigs, sheep, goats and poultry, the quantities are recorded in the spring. The production line is the company's most economically significant production line. If more than two thirds of a farm's total profit comes from a single product, the farm is included in the production line category corresponding with this product.

Number of farm animals	Number of animal farms																			
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2010	2014	2018	2022
Cattle	926700	915300	918300	925800	914053	912768	911847	914439	914800	909000	893200	882300	857600	846385	844038	833949	14555	11887	10530	8211
Pigs	1448000	1482800	1381200	1366900	1335114	1290363	1307930	1244816	1242600	1234900	1135600	1089000	1072400	1087084	1107822	1060928	1355	932	1027	798
Sheep	119300	122200	117700	125700	129091	130005	135546	137865	155200	156500	155900	155000	144900	140171	131086	132084	1349	1451	1387	1208
Goats	6200	5900	5900	4900	4902	4886	4509	4364	4500	4800	5300	5400	5900	6034	5931	6304	165	165	143	129
Poultry	9791100	10521700	9369500	9586800	10235681	10760571	11980551	12576851	12926900	13444900	13135600	14140300	14359900	13576881	13831933	14355838	375	423	1243	475
Horses	..	..	..	75000	..	..	75000	74600	74200	74200	74400	74400	74300	74000	74000	72000	..	16000	16000	16000
Reindeer*	314000	301000	298000	301000	306000	304000	290000	262000	..	191473	..	191188	184934	..	..	..	..	4464	..	4313
Fur animals ¹	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Minks	2100000	1800000	1900000	1900000	1700000	1800000	2000000	2100000	1900000	1620000	1448000	1368000	1042000	769000	784000	538000	..	368	268	386
Blue foxes	1300000	1100000	1200000	1300000	1400000	1600000	1700000	2000000	2400000	1729000	1857000	1628000	1564000	1030000	1059000	635000	..	767	694	595
Silver foxes	91000	91000	94000	96000	102000	105000	110000	108000	92000	86000	74000	82000	83000	56000	39000	23000	..	396	280	296
Crossbreeds of foxes	522000	605000	241000	176000	248000	331000	256000	195000	156000	230000	211000	224000	260000	197000	81000	70000	..	..	..	..
Finnraccoon	160000	151000	101000	125000	133000	128000	120000	134000	148000	123000	140000	158000	153000	138000	87000	45000	..	135	109	100
Fish fry, 1000 individuals ²	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Rainbow trout < 20 g	19569	19068	12547	13630	18344	11832	11568	9350	8946	9221	11934	9245	10556	10129	13050	10560	..	..	..	..
Rainbow trout 20-200 g	7225	6150	5692	4321	7439	6371	8017	6523	5782	4928	6545	7119	6727	5833	6115	5025	..	..	..	..
Rainbow trout > 200 g	2292	2092	2387	1829	2811	2539	2296	3517	2100	2329	2356	2486	2635	2963	2266	2579	..	..	..	..
Salmon and lake salmon < 20 g	1000	835	1192	1111	753	403	541	385	293	219	264	314	334	548	438	635	..	..	..	..
Salmon and lake salmon 20-200 g	2581	2736	2440	2269	2464	2161	1825	2106	1559	1568	1687	1537	1441	1387	1592	1450	..	..	..	..
Salmon and lake salmon > 200 g	49	17	30	34	37	32	21	31	13	19	20	33	13	75	16	14	..	..	..	..
Lake and brook trout < 50 g	1040	1263	977	1137	572	1135	651	931	826	1023	1043	569	497	521	518	673	..	..	..	..
Lake and brook trout > 50 g	1044	1236	1034	1011	1019	910	893	984	745	780	719	638	640	589	703	547	..	..	..	..
Trout < 50 g	774	643	829	600	556	443	546	460	519	252	545	330	388	177	109	212	..	..	..	..
Trout > 50 g	1115	1375	1480	1462	1363	1026	979	1063	959	1060	1169	930	765	746	740	706	..	..	..	..
Arctic charrs < 50 g	52	107	266	503	171	171	203	204	113	135	162	172	..	66	97	43	..	..	..	..
Arctic charrs > 50 g	54	54	59	96	106	56	51	32	36	34	8	9	0	7	3	2	..	..	..	..
Whitefish < 20 g	20625	23926	25945	23895	23623	18100	17314	17371	17276	17498	15730	16476	16948	16541	15009	17642	..	..	..	..
Whitefish > 20 g	1124	822	472	1516	2390	1678	968	1504	1670	1348	1882	2044	1850	1343	2443	2346	..	..	..	..
Pike perch	9635	9527	7988	9156	8614	6905	7081	7427	7203	8058	7561	6690	5879	6013	5710	5361	..	..	..	..
Grayling	1433	1704	1407	1199	780	1386	629	639	991	773	635	729	836	588	586	871	..	..	..	..
Pike	293	247	177	94	83	84	91	50	40	58	..	24	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Roach fishes	0	1	18	1	3	0	9	8	4	3	4	4	0	..	..	0	..	..	..	..
Other fish species	210	40	108	34	119	0	154	109	103	20	24	..	12	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Crayfish	70	66	54	46	34	18	33	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..

*Number of reindeer by reindeer herding year (1.6.-31.5.) as of 2006/2007
¹Cubs only, don't include number of breeding animals. FIFUR, Fur industry statistics <https://fifur.fi/turkiselinkeinon-tilastot>
²Does not contain newly hatched
.. Information missing

Number of horses and stables: Horse management in numbers <https://www.hippolis.fi/hevostalous-lukuina-2022/>
Number of reindeer: Natural Resources Institute Finland and Reindeer Herders' Association
Fur animals: FIFUR, Fur industry statistics
Cattle, pigs, sheep, goats, poultry: Natural Resources Institute Finland, Number of Livestock
Fish fry: Natural Resources Institute Finland, Aquaculture

Table 27a and b.**Number of animals slaughtered or culled in Finland in 2007–2022****(sources: Official Statistics of Finland, Natural Resources Institute Finland: Meat production, Finnish Statistical Yearbook of Forestry 2014, Hevostalous lukuina 2014 and Finnish Fur Breeders' Association).**

27a

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Cattle	301010	275060	272600	264943	268100	264400	266600
Pigs	2446330	2458540	2344800	2246632	2269100	2143700	2146000
Sheep and lambs	38470	41720	41400	37352	48800	48500	50400
Goats	350	200	200	92	92	259	285
Poultry	55414400	56289050	52390600	54821782	57445500	60881300	63138300
Horses	880	770	800	1257	1675	1795	1861
Reindeer*	117000	103000	102000	105000	107000	108000	91000
Minks**				1326897			
Blue foxes**				1315352			
Silver foxes**				68159			
Crossbreeds of foxes**				..			
Finnraccoons**				101445			

27b

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Cattle	270300	278970	280936	274288	274749	269269	261685	258518	256477
Pigs	2055400	2079788	2081858	1984644	1827212	1839308	1913739	1928911	1861304
Goats	55000	59023	63158	63674	69151	67050	65122	59359	59108
Poultry	219	241	203	378	462	765	700	774	891
Horses	64475400	66393561	69152347	72172400	77302839	79194189	80628317	81826913	82171165
Reindeer*	1616	1489	1070	1231	1057	870	675	657	729
Minks**	72000	84997	86698	..	78936	72734	83656	56920	..
Blue foxes**	1217855				935345	842510	473929	527650	608088
Silver foxes**	1293115				1410748	1326455	280814	1023893	750605
Crossbreeds of foxes**	66422				44855	55885	14326	33061	36976
Finnraccoons**	363254				..	..	..	..	..
	92877				130314	143986	69164	69316	91485

OSF, Natural Resources Institute Finland, Meat production

*Reindeer Herders' Association, The number of slaughtered reindeer from the reindeer herding year 2006/2007

**FIFUR, Fur industry statistics, The furs of animals in the sales of Fur producers Plc during the period 2009/2010 and in the sales of Saga Furs Plc during the periods 2013/2014, 2017/2018, 2018/2019, 2019/2020, 2020/2021 ja 2021/2022

Table 28.

Catches of professional and recreational fishermen by species (1,000 kg) in 2010, 2014, 2018 and 2021 (source: Official Statistics of Finland, Natural Resources Institute Finland: Fishery and game statistics, Total fish production and Recreational fishing).

	The catch of professional fishermen				The catch of recreational fishermen			
	2010	2014	2018	2021	2010	2014	2018	2021
Perch	960	1371	793	1007	7915	8369	6477	11419
Eel	0	1	1	0	10	20	2	2
Grayling	0	0	0	0	105	163	165	140
Pike	353	390	395	425	7833	7186	5964	6467
Lake salmon	..	..	..	..	64	89	68	..
Flatfish	26	5	3	3	12	11	5	12
Sprat	24602	11812	16455	14774	10	1	11	48
Rainbow trout	7	2	5	6	371	374	377	377
Pike perch	572	806	946	1082	2863	3348	3378	2748
Smelt	675	1442	1797	2595	..	..	..	..
Bream	1060	1311	862	815	1445	1806	1044	1496
Salmon	215	250	208	200	..	..	310	296
Burbot	88	95	91	105	730	439	290	423
Atlantic salmon	..	..	..	..	116	280	242	..
Vendace	2584	3088	2600	2371	1995	1116	727	2634
Turbot	3	0	0	0	..	..	0	0
Whitefish	750	757	528	481	1092	1057	1023	1570
Baltic herring	92400	130414	126487	76726	357	271	391	890
Roach	688	1630	902	742	3429	2717	1375	1631
Ide	29	31	26	22	245	309	146	197
Trout	60	45	28	27	313	581	375	244
Cod	1028	376	54	35	11	0	0	3
Other fish species	355	426	633	959	281	415	196	131
IN TOTAL	126633	154252	152815	102375	29198	28555	22255	30751

WELFARE OF COMPANION AND HOBBY ANIMALS

Image 87 by Insplash



WELFARE OF COMPANION AND HOBBY ANIMALS

(Published on 12 October 2021)

Pets as a hobby are somewhat on the rise in Finland, with a companion or hobby animal living in more and more homes. Familiarising oneself with a pet's behavioural needs will help promote its welfare. Pet owners should also be familiar with legislation governing their pet and any welfare issues related to the health and breeding of the species. This section of Animal Welfare in Finland examines, among other matters, legislation governing the welfare of companion and hobby animals, as well as welfare issues of cats, dogs and horses.

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Introduction

In Finland, there are only estimates on the number of many pet animal species, as there has been no mandatory identification and registration of pets other than horses. The situation is changing rapidly, however, as an official national register for all dogs was opened in 2023, and a similar register for all cats is planned for 2026. In practice, the majority of dogs are already registered with the Finnish Kennel Club. No statistics are kept on the number of other pet species.

According to **Statistics Finland**, nearly a third of households had a pet in 2016. At that time, an estimated 700,000 dogs and 590,000 cats were living in Finnish homes. The actual number of cats in Finland is higher, as Statistics Finland's estimate does not include feral cat populations.

The change in the status of pets is reflected in the amount of money invested in them. Not all species are treated equally, though, as people are spending considerably more on dog supplies, food and vet visits than corresponding supplies and services for cats.

Excessive breeding of pets based on their appearance is detrimental to their welfare. According to a **study (in Finnish)** on dog breeding realised in cooperation by researchers and authorities, dog breeding that is detrimental to animal welfare should be stopped. Breeding that is detrimental to welfare is not limited to dogs: the breeding of pedigree cats, rabbits, aquarium fish, etc. also sometimes favours pathological characteristics that have a detrimental effect on the health of the animal.

The most important condition for the welfare of a pet is the satisfaction of its species-typical behavioural needs. Knowing the behavioural needs of the species, breed and individual pet helps provide the animal with a motivating environment and activities during which the animal will be able to satisfy its species-typical needs. Species kept as companion and hobby animals still have the same essential behavioural needs as their wild ancestors, as breeding does not replace the animal's need to exercise, eat, rest, play and breed.

The new Animal Welfare Act, which will enter into force in 2024, and the decrees issued based on it will further regulate the keeping, conditions, care and breeding of companion and hobby animals. The Act includes several new tools to promote the welfare of pets. For example, the owners of mammals will be obliged to prevent uncontrolled reproduction of their animals. The provision aims to make breeding more favourable to the welfare of the animals.

In addition to the minimum requirements for keeping and care, pet owners should be aware of the conditions under which animals can be bought and sold. The new Act includes stricter rules on the sales of cats and dogs and related advertising to prevent puppy farms, so studying the provisions before selling or buying a pet is a good idea.

There are also rules for the import and export of animals, both within and outside the EU, and knowing and following these regulations will assist in the maintenance of the vitality of wild animal species in the country of import, for example. The import regulations also help prevent the spread of infectious animal diseases and maintain the conditions for the welfare of species in Finland.

As a member state of the European Council, Finland is a signatory to the European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals, which states that the keeping of specimens of wild fauna as pet animals should not be encouraged. As a result of the Convention, the Finnish Food Authority does not issue permits for the import of wild animals as pets as a rule.

The authors of this section are Satu Raussi, Principal Specialist, and Tiina Kauppinen, Senior Specialist, from the Finnish Centre for Animal Welfare.

Companion and hobby animals in Finland and the rest of Europe

A pet in every third Finnish home

An important basic piece of information for the promotion of the welfare of pets is the number of animals. Obtaining this data requires individual identification and registration of animals. Identification and registration make a pet an individual known to society and allows, for example, determination of the owner of the pet, i.e. the person responsible for the welfare of the animal.

In Finland, there is a comprehensive mandatory identification and registration obligation for horses and from 2023 for dogs. A similar obligation will apply to cats as of 2026. Other pets are not registered, which means that there are only estimates of the numbers of individuals of many species.

The mandatory identification and registration of dogs entered into force in Finland at the beginning of 2023. A similar system for cats is particularly necessary, as cats are less valued as individuals than dogs in Finland. **This lack of appreciation is detrimental to the promotion of the welfare of cats (in Finnish).** The Animal Welfare Act does not yet oblige cat owners to tag and register their pets, but the identification and registration of cats will become mandatory under the Act on the Identification and Registration of Animals (Laki eläinten tunnistamisesta ja rekisteröinnistä 1069/2021) from the beginning of 2026.

The slight increase in the number of pets from 2012 to 2016 is reflected in **Statistics Finland's households consumption statistics** (Fig. 88). According to the statistics, 31% of households had a pet in 2016, compared to 30% in 2012. Households were estimated to have around 700,000 dogs and 590,000 cats in 2016. According to an estimate by the Vieraslajit.fi portal, there may be as many as a million cats in Finland. A survey by the Taloustutkimus estimates the number as up to 1.3 million.

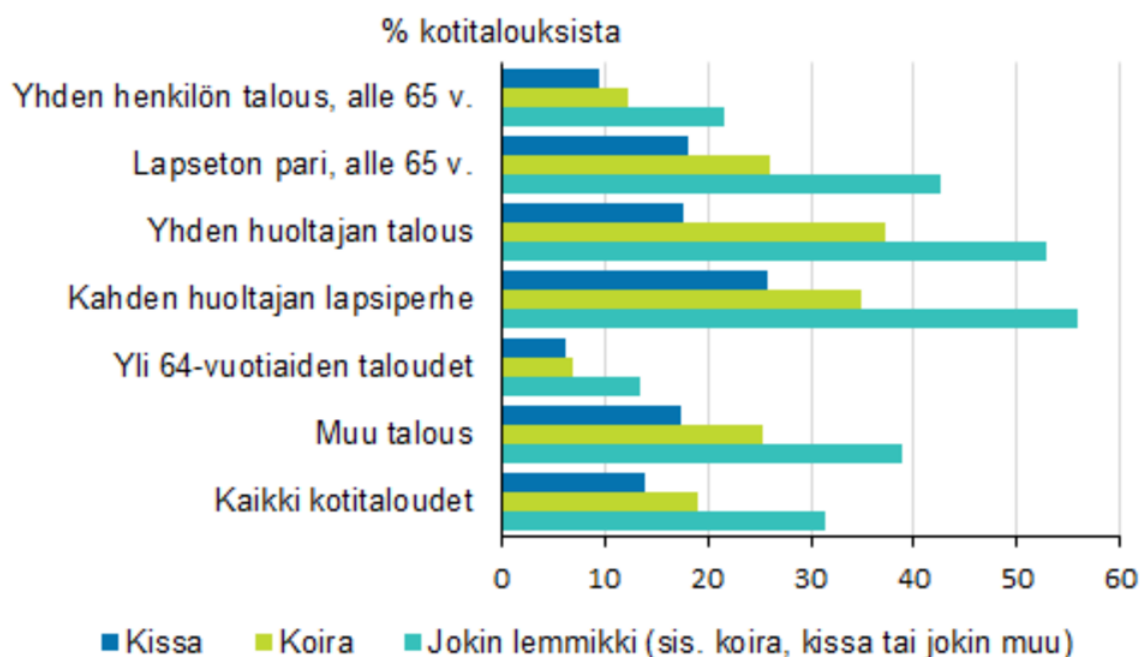
Between 2012 and 2016, the number of households with dogs increased by around 60,000. The increase in the number of cat households was more moderate: there were some 15,000 more cat households in 2016 than in 2012. According to Suomen Kissaliitto ry (the Finnish cat owners' association), between 2,000 and 4,000 pedigree cats are registered in Finland every year. However, the vast majority of cats in Finland are unregistered "domestic cats" (mixed-breed).

A keeper of equine animals must register the establishment where the animal is kept and keep a record of the animals residing in, entering and leaving the establishment. According to the publication **Hevostalous lukuina 2022** ("Horse farming in figures"), there were 72,000 horses in Finland in 2022.

Individuals keeping chickens as a hobby must also register the establishment. **Establishments must also be registered** for camel and deer, as well as more traditional farm animal species, and the keeper must keep a record of the animals residing in, entering and leaving the establishment. The purpose of the requirement to keep records of the establishment is to ensure the traceability of the animals in the event of an animal disease.



Image 88
by Olli Leino. Because of their vibrant colours, poison dart frogs are popular pets among frog enthusiasts. The photo shows a blue poison dart frog.



% kotitalouksista	% of households
Yhden henkilön talous, alle 65 v.	Single-person household, under 65 years of age
Lapseton pari, alle 65 v.	Couple with no children, under 65 years of age
Yhden huoltajan talous	Single-parent household
Kahden huoltajan lapsiperhe	A family with children and two parents
Yli 64-vuotiaiden taloudet	A household consisting of persons aged 64 or more
Muu talous	Other household type
Kaikki kotitaloudet	All households
Kissa	Cat
Koira	Dog
Jokin lemmikki (sis. koira, kissa tai jokin muu)	Any pet (incl. dog, cat and others)

Image 89.
Share of households with pets by household type (2016). Source: Official Statistics of Finland (OSF): Households' consumption

Read more:

The Finnish Centre for Animal Welfare publishes articles on the welfare of companion, hobby and pet animals in its blog. See the following blog entries, for example:

Lemmikkieläin ei kuulu luontoon – huolenaiheena erityisesti vieraslajilemmikit

The dog registry benefits dog welfare in the long term

Suomalainen tutkimus vertasi koirarotujen suoriutumista kognitiivisissa testeissä: rotujen on välillä eroja, mutta ennen kaikkea jokainen koira on yksilö

Koiran hyvinvointi etusijalle – jalostukseen vain terveitä koiria, selvitys linjaa

Harrastekanojen pito teettää töitä ja tarjoaa hauskoja hetkiä

Minipossu yllättää: satakiloiseksi kasvava aktiivinen tonkija myllää kaiken

Hallinnan tunne miellyttää koiranomistajaa – kissa maksaa itsenäisyydestään

● **Rakas lapsi, tupakissa, sotakoira**

● **Kissan elämä on yhtä arvokas kuin koiran**

● Farm animals can also be companion/hobby animals or pets. The species-specific pages on the Eläintieto.fi website provide information about the welfare of **chickens, cattle, pigs, sheep, fur animals** and **rainbow trout**.

● **The University of Helsinki Research Centre for Animal Welfare** studies the welfare of companion animals. Among other publications, the Centre has published **Tuotantokanin hyvinvointiopas** (a guide to the welfare of rabbits as production animals), which can also be applied to the welfare issues of pet rabbits.

● Schuurman & Syrjämaa 2021: **Shared Spaces, Practices And Mobilities: Pet-Human Life in Modern Finnish Homes**. Home Cultures 18 (2).

Number of pets in Europe increasing

European Pet Food Industry (**FEDIAF**) has estimated that by 2021, nearly one in two European households will have at least one pet. **FEDIAF** has estimated that there are some 113 million cats and about 92 million dogs in Europe (Fig. 89).

Top pets in Europe

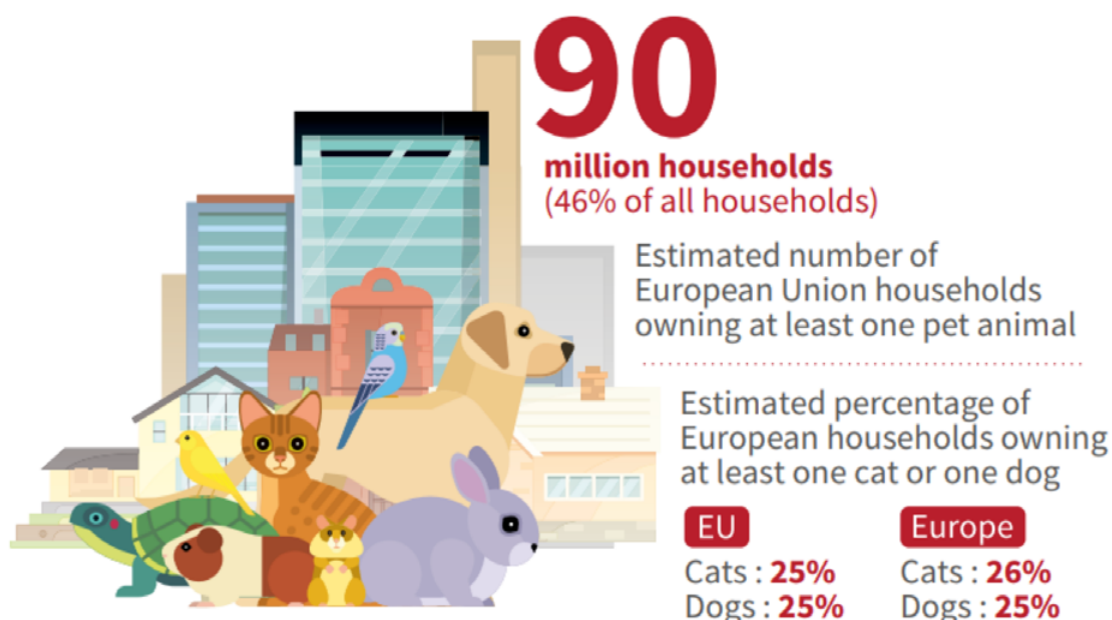
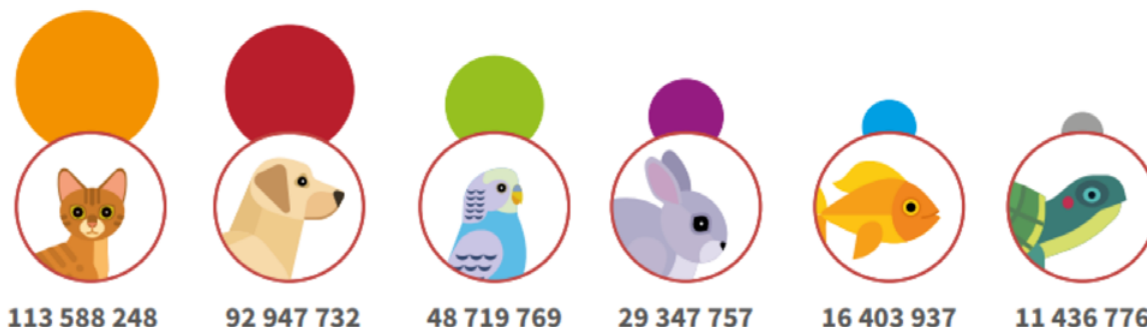


Image 90.
Number of pets and pet households in Europe. Source: FEDIAF Facts and figures 2021

Hoping for a harmonised EU-wide pet identification and registration obligation

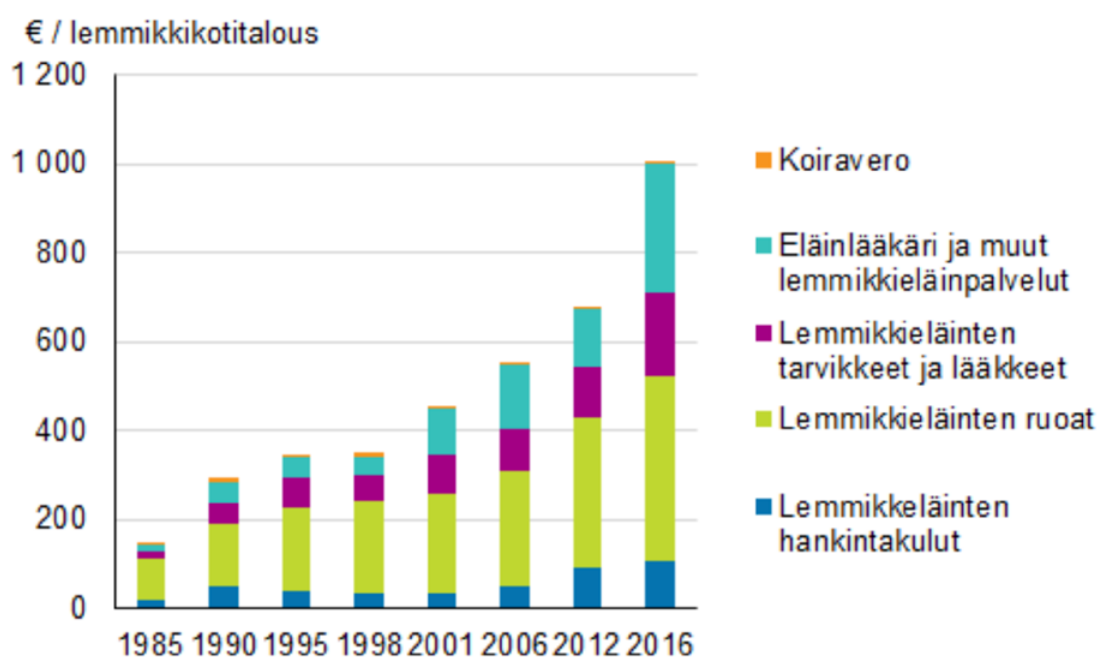
A harmonised EU-wide pet identification and registration system would be an effective tool in combating illegal pet trade, tracing the origins of disease outbreaks, and tackling animal abuse and other welfare issues.

There is a related resolution of the European Parliament on the introduction of compatible systems for the registration of pet animals across Member States ([2016/2540\(RSP\)](#)).

More and more spent on pets

The average amount of money spent by households on pets has increased over the last decade. In 2016, Finnish households spent just over €925 million on pets, including the purchase of new pets, food, accessories, medicines, insurance, veterinary services and other pet-related services.

Households with pets spent an average of €1,000 on pet products, services and new pets in 2016 (Figure 90). Overall, the sum spent on pets increased by €330 per pet household between 2012 and 2016. The increase was most pronounced in spending on veterinary and other pet services: in 2012, households spent an average of around €130, compared to some €300 in 2016. Between 1985 and 2016, the largest share of the expenditure on pets was spent on pet food.



€/ lemmikkitalous	€ per pet household
Koiravero	Dog tax
Eläinlääkäri ja muut lemmikkieläinpalvelut	Veterinary and other pet services
Lemmikkieläinten tarvikkeet ja lääkkeet	Pet supplies and medicines
Lemmikkieläinten ruoat	Pet food
Lemmikkieläinten hankintakulut	Purchasing pets

Image 91. Average pet household expenditure on pets (excluding insurance) at current prices 1985–2016. Source: Official Statistics of Finland (OSF): Households' consumption

The Companion and Hobby Animal Welfare Council has prepared **calculations (in Finnish)** on the annual costs arising from the keeping of some species of animals as pets (Table 30). The council points out that the maintenance of a pet costs many times its acquisition cost. The upkeep of a dog costs between €670 and €1,960 per year, while keeping a horse costs between €3,600 and €14,400 per year. Appropriate upkeep of a cat costs more than €1,000 per year, and even a rabbit racks up some €1,000 per year.

When these figures are multiplied by the expected lifespan of the animal, the expenditure of keeping an animal can be tens of thousands of euros. In addition, unexpected costs such as veterinary expenses due to an illness or injury can add up to several times the annual costs mentioned above, and the annual costs can vary a great deal.

Table 30. A calculation of the annual costs of keeping some species as pets by the Companion and Hobby Animal Welfare Council (€).

	Food and nutrition	Supplies	Veterinary expenses	Insurances	Total per year
	Feeds, foods, vitamin and trace element preparations, etc.	Interiors, toys, equipment, bedding, etc.	Vaccinations, worming, veterinary and medical expenses, dental care, etc.		
Cat	530	300	160	200	1190
Dog	490	150	155	275	1070
Ferret	290	360	115		765
Rabbit	240	300	100		640
Rat	300	180	100		580
Guinea pig	240	300	35		575
Chinchilla	290	120	20		430
Mouse	160	60	135		355
Dwarf hamster	80	100	135		315



Welfare of companion and hobby animals

Cat

Image 92 by Patrik Pesonius. The cat is one of the most popular pet species in Finland, especially in families with children.

Owner's activity crucial for the welfare of a cat

The cat and the dog are the most popular pet species in Finland: one in every five Finnish homes has a dog, and cats are even more common. Recently, there has been plenty of debate on the welfare of cats due to, for example, homeless cats and the ensuing **cat crisis (in Finnish)** and the promotion of good cat-keeping practices such as **identification and registration (in Finnish)**. The mandatory identification and registration of cats, which will enter into force in 2026, is particularly necessary, as there is still a large number of cat populations that are not properly cared for, as well as free-ranging domestic cats without a microchip. The key to **the welfare of a cat (in Finnish)** is it being able to fulfil its species-typical needs at home. This requires effort and dedication on the part of the owner.

A healthy cat is active and sociable. A cat feels well when it has **just the right amount of company and things to occupy it (in Finnish)**. Even though food is served to a domestic cat, it still has an innate need to exercise and catch prey. It also has a need to scratch and climb, and these needs will not go away if there is no opportunity to fulfil them. Cats are sensitive to their environment: changes in a cat's behaviour can even be due to things such as an argument between members of the owner family. Problem behaviour is usually a sign of a lack of care or food, pain, fear, inconsistent or abusive treatment, the circumstances when the cat was a kitten, or past experiences.

What does a healthy cat look like ?

A cat's welfare is reflected in its behaviour: a healthy cat is active and has a wide range of behaviours.

A healthy cat rests and eats just enough, observes its surroundings with interest, plays and seeks contact with people. When in contact with people, the cat may purr and butt its head against the human.

A cat normally sharpens its claws, washes itself and uses a litter tray to relieve itself.

A sociable and relaxed cat is friendly towards humans. It is enthusiastic about playing, practising predation and training with humans. A healthy cat is also able to settle down to rest and does not react fearfully to events in its surroundings.

Social welfare is indicated by good relationships with other cats and animals in the family and normal behaviour around them, provided that the cat has had the opportunity to become socialised with them.

A cat can also enjoy being the only pet in the family. In such a case, it is a good idea to observe whether the cat is enjoying its surroundings and the company provided by humans.

Neglect and abandonment of cats leads to serious welfare problems

The most serious welfare issues for cats are caused by abandonment and the possibility of uncontrolled reproduction. Allowing cats to breed without control gives rise to populations of semi-feral cats living close to human settlements but without the care and protection provided by humans. A feral cat's quality of life is poor, as it is threatened by hunger, cold, diseases, parasites, traffic and predators. Feral cat populations are often inbred and suffer from hereditary diseases and injuries.

The welfare of pet cats is compromised by neglect. At an individual level, the most common welfare issues are dental problems and reduced welfare due to a lack of stimulus and obesity in indoor cats. The fact that cats are held in low regard and that there is a lack of awareness among cat owners of their pets' needs have a negative impact on the welfare of cats. Awareness of the needs and proper care of cats among cat owners should be improved, according to [a report on the welfare of cats in Finland \(2019\)](#).

In the wild, even the cutest domestic cat becomes a representative of an invasive alien species that is a threat to wild animals and biodiversity. According to [a Finnish study](#), free-ranging cats prey on around one million animals every month. Most of these are rodents. However, in urban areas almost a quarter of the prey brought home by cats are small birds, which means that free-ranging cats, especially in urban areas, are a threat to bird populations.



Image 93 by Johanna Tunkkari. A cat is an efficient predator in the wild, but also a prey animal itself. For their own welfare, it is best to only allow cats to go outside under supervision.

Read more about the welfare of cats:

- **Kissa on aktiivinen metsästäjä**
 - **Kissan käyttäytyminen kertoo sen hyvinvoinnista – Kissan hyvinvointi**
 - **Kissa on saalistava lihansyöjä – Kissa luonnossa**
 - **Kissan arvostusta on nostettava – Kissa seura- ja harrastuseläimenä**
 - **Companion and Hobby Animal Welfare Council: Lemmikkieläinten olennaiset käyttäytymispiirteet**
 - **SEY Animal Welfare Finland: Hyvinvoiva kissa, a free cat care guide.**
 - **A report by the Finnish Food Authority: Kissojen hyvinvointi Suomessa 2019**
 - **University of Helsinki and Folkhälsan Research Center: Feline genetic studies**
 - **A seminar on cat welfare (2017) arranged by SEY Animal Welfare Finland, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Suomen Kissaliitto ry, the Companion and Hobby Animal Welfare Council, and Purina**
- Cat-related blog posts on Eläintieto.fi :**
- **Hyvinvoiva lemmikki on aktiivinen ja seurallinen – päivitettyillä eläintietosivuilla uutta asiaa kissojen ja koirien hyvinvoinnista**
 - **Kissat tarvitsevat pakollisen merkinnän ja rekisteröinnin**
 - **Kissakriisi haastaa kansanedustajat ottamaan kantaa**
 - **Leikkisaalistus ja liharuoka vähentävät kissan saalistustarvetta**
 - **Kissa ansaitsee paikan maatilalla omavalvonnassa**
 - **Hallinnan tunne miellyttää koiranomistajaa – kissa maksaa itsenäisyydestään**
 - **Rakas lapsi, tupakissa, sotakoira**
 - **Sisäkissan hyvinvoinnin ratkaisee omistajan aktiivisuus**
 - **Vastuullisen omistajan kissa ulkoilee valvotusti**
 - **Kissa kaipaa arvostusta**
 - **Kannanotto: Metsästäjän oikeus tappaa villiintynyt kissa on poistettava metsästyslaista**
 - **Kissan elämä on yhtä arvokas kuin koiran**
 - **Kissa tuntee ja kommunikoi**

Dog

Company and breed-specific activities ensure a dog's welfare

The dog is a carnivore with a mixed diet, and its daily activities include action, rest, and socialising with people and other dogs. **The welfare of pet dogs (in Finnish)** is most often compromised by excessive periods of solitude and a lack of exercise and socialising. When combined, these can lead to problem behaviour that is manifested as frustration or obesity, which are common welfare issues in dogs. Every dog should have daily exercise. In addition to exercise, exploring their environment, working with scents, play and chewing are pleasurable activities for almost all dogs, and an increase in these activities can help promote the dog's welfare.



Image 94 by Tiina Reilas. One in every five Finnish families has a dog.

What does a healthy dog look like ?

Signs of a healthy dog include clear, non-watering eyes, clean-smelling breath and ease of breathing, healthy teeth, clean ears, a shiny coat, appropriate body composition (ribs easy to feel), ease of movement and body grooming, as well as normal bowel function and faecal composition.

From a behavioural perspective, a healthy dog can express itself through species-typical, breed-specific and individual behaviour. A healthy dog expresses curiosity and friendliness towards the environment, people and other dogs, at least ones they know. The dog is unafraid of its surroundings and the people with whom it lives. The dog can spend enough time on the behavioural needs that are important to it. A healthy dog is able to settle down to rest but is also still willing to play and socialise with people or other dogs. The dog spends time sniffing its surroundings with curiosity.

Different dog breeds may have a pronounced need to realise different parts of the hunting chain. For example, a dog may regularly perform activities such as searching, chasing, digging, and grabbing and tearing of prey (such as food or toys) in a way that leads to satisfaction and relaxation. Normal behavioural needs are not constantly highly intensive and compulsive, but a healthy dog can switch from one maintenance activity to another in a balanced manner.

The natural behaviour of dogs (in Finnish) includes activities related to preying and other foraging activities, active exploration of the environment, social interaction, play, body grooming, marking areas and vocalising to communicate. Pet dogs require these activities in the same way as their wild ancestors. Many motivating behaviours that are normal for a dog can be disturbing to the owner, and the behaviour can be misinterpreted. The behaviour is not necessarily harmful to the dog itself. A dog should not be punished for displaying its normal behaviour; instead, it should be directed towards permissible activities.

From a dog's perspective, problem behaviour is often a way to relieve discomfort and frustration. Some problem behaviours such as persistent passivity do not disturb the owner and may therefore go unnoticed.



Image 95 by Olli Leino. Breeding by humans has not eliminated the key behavioural needs of dogs, such as playing and the chasing of prey.

Dogs needs a consistent owner who trains by rewarding

Studies have shown that **reward-based dog training (in Finnish)** is better for the welfare of the dog than punitive and coercive training. A dog will learn effectively when the desired behaviour is reinforced by rewarding the dog in a way that the dog likes. Rewarding also helps the dog understand how it should behave. A dog does not always naturally understand what a human considers desirable behaviour. Adequate training of a dog will prevent problem behaviour and create better prerequisites for a good relationship between the dog and the owner.

Puppy farms cause unnecessary suffering for puppies and mother dogs

When acquiring a new puppy, you should be careful of how and from what kind of conditions you buy one. Carefully studying the puppy's background and the conditions in which the mother and puppy live before making a purchase decision will help prevent puppy farms. Puppy farms involve too frequent mating of female dogs, inadequate feeding and care of mothers and puppies, neglect of basic healthcare and premature weaning of puppies. Puppies from puppy farms end up on the Finnish market both from within Finland and abroad.



Image 96 by Tiina Reilas. A trustworthy breeder lets the buyer take their time to get to know the puppies and their mother.

Read more about the welfare of dogs:

- **Koira on vanhin kesyeläimemme**
- Anna koiralle tekemistä – **Koiran hyvinvointi**
- Kesä koira eroaa sudesta – **Koira luonnossa**
- Koira on monelle perheenjäsen – **Koira seura- ja harrastuseläimenä**
- Society for Canine Genetic Health and Ethics (HETI): **Dog Buyer's Guide** for responsible acquisition of a dog
- Finnish Kennel Club: **Koiranomistajan peruskurssi (Basic course for dog owners)**
- A report by the Finnish Food Authority: Eläinjalostukseen liittyvän eläinsuojelulainsäädännön toimeenpanon tehostaminen, Osa II: **Alustava selvitys koirien jalostukseen liittyvistä ongelmista ja puuttumiskeinoista**
- Animal welfare in tourism services: **Vinkkejä ja hyviä käytäntöjä lappilaisten matkailueläinten hyvinvointiin (Tips and good practices for the welfare of tourism animals in Lapland)**
- University of Helsinki and Folkhälsan Research Center: **Canine genetic studies**
- Natural Resources Institute Finland and Finnish Food Authority, a project on the breeding of pets: **Problems of dog breeding and control criteria for the authorities**
- **Green activities -kriteeristö: Vetokoirien hyvinvointikriteerit (Welfare criteria for sled dogs)**

Dog-related blog posts on Eläintieto.fi:

- Hyvinvoiva lemmikki on aktiivinen ja seurallinen – päivitettyillä eläintietosivuilla uutta asiaa kissojen ja koirien hyvinvoinnista
- Koirien aggressiivisuus juontaa juurensa perimästä, mutta olosuhteilla ja omistajan koirakokemuksella on merkitystä
- Ilon kautta oppiva koira voi hyvin
- Lyhyitä kalloja tuottavan koiranjalostuksen on loputtava
- ”Minun koirani voi paremmin kuin sinun koirasi”
- Hallinnan tunne miellyttää koiranomistajaa – kissa maksaa itsenäisyydestään
- Rakas lapsi, tupakissa, sotakoira
- Tutkimukset vahvistavat: palkitsemiseen perustuva kouluttaminen edistää koiran hyvinvointia
- Koiran mielen kiemurat kiinnostivat Eläinten hyvinvointifoorumissa
- Rescue-koiran tuonti – riskinotto, laupeudentyö vai harkittu hankinta?
- Kohde-eläinten hyvinvointiin kiinnitettävä huomiota koirakokeissa
- Liian söpö ymmärrettäväksi – koiran inhimillistäminen houkuttelee
- Tunteilla on väliä – koirat katsovat kasvojenilmeitä eri tavoin

Horse

Horses need exercise and company

A horse needs the company of other horses and the opportunity to explore, move and graze for short periods at a time. Horses are large prey animals that benefit from handling based on positive experiences. The welfare of a horse, like that of other animals, is its own experience of its physical and mental state. This experience is fundamentally influenced by the horse's ability to fulfil its species-typical behavioural needs.

A healthy horse must be able to enjoy the company of other horses, play, receive care and have the opportunity to explore its surroundings, forage for food and move freely at its own pace. A horse's welfare can be compromised by an unstimulating environment, harsh treatment, and issues with breeding and the standard of living. In an unstimulating environment, a horse may exhibit undesirable stereotyped behaviour. Inappropriate living conditions, pain and handling that causes discomfort can also lead to abnormal behaviour. Feed with an excessive caloric density and a passive lifestyle can make a horse obese. In horse breeding, musculoskeletal disorders are a particular problem.



Image 97 by Heta Rautiainen. The welfare of a horse depends on the company of other horses and the possibility to forage, explore and move freely.

What does a healthy horse look like?

A healthy horse is relaxed, active and interested in what is going on in its surroundings. In a suitable habitat and in good health, the behaviour of a horse is varied and regular in terms of the behavioural needs that are essential for horses. The horse does not exhibit any abnormal behaviour such as apathy, aggression or stereotypical behaviour.

A healthy horse has a well-balanced body composition and moves effortlessly with no sign of pain in all gaits. The muscles of the body and head (e.g. around the mouth and eyes and the cheek muscles) are mainly relaxed at rest.

A healthy horse moves around calmly, exploring its surroundings and using its time to forage. Periodic bursts of activity are associated with play and the horse's normal need to move freely at its own pace. Although the normal species-typical behaviour of horses includes occasional spontaneous escape training in a group, a horse does not need to get scared and escape every day to feel well. In addition, the horse should show signs of relaxation and recovery after an exciting situation.

A horse that is healthy from the social perspective approaches other horses in a friendly manner and has the opportunity to maintain long-term friendships with other horses. The horse has a balanced relationship with other horses in the herd and is only involved in occasional conflicts. The herd spends time eating, scratching, playing or resting together. In a conflict situation, a horse will start very subtle evasive gestures towards the other horse at a long distance, so that the other horse has enough time to notice it and move away.

In addition to resting standing up and guarding the herd in its turn, a healthy horse also dares to lie down for a deep sleep and shows no persistent signs of fatigue. With sufficient nutritional resources, horses are relatively calm when food arrives. When relaxed, a horse will chew a lot and in a leisurely manner. Bedding, sand and mud in a horse's coat may indicate that the horse has had the opportunity to roll around or rest on the ground.

Horses enjoy interacting with people who behave calmly. Due to its large size and fear reflexes, the safety of a horse and the person handling it can be compromised if the horse is taken into situations to which it is unaccustomed. In addition, a horse may find handling to which it is unaccustomed threatening, which can lead to it learning to fear humans. Getting a horse used to a new environment or things that humans consider safe may take some time, because the horse is originally a prey animal. With systematic habituation and by boosting the horse's sense of control, it is possible to get a horse used to things it finds frightening. A horse learns quickly and exhibits behaviour to the human that will lead to rewarding consequences for the horse. Providing positive experiences and suitable living conditions, as well as understanding the behaviour and learning of horses, form the basis for training that promotes the welfare of horses.

Loneliness and passivity predispose horses to welfare issues

Horse welfare problems stem from conditions that are inadequate for the species-typical needs, health issues, breeding issues and how the horse is treated in its daily interactions. Welfare issues can arise in situations where the horse keeper's understanding of welfare in terms of the species-typical needs of horses is defective, or where there is a conflict between knowledge and practice.

A lack of exercise and the company of other horses, as well as too infrequent feeding intervals, are examples of welfare issues related to a horse's habitat. In Finland, most horses live in box stalls and are allowed to go out to a paddock alone or as a herd. Horses kept alone often live a more passive life than those living in a well-built free-range barn. Common health issues associated with a passive lifestyle include digestive tract obstructions, gastric ulcers, limping and metabolic disorders. Excessive energy intake and a lack of exercise predispose horses to metabolic disorders and laminitis. This applies to coldbloods and ponies in particular.



Image 98 by Heta Rautiainen. Horses need social contacts and play throughout their lives.

Non-violent training is a basic condition for horse welfare

Training a horse requires getting to know the horse as a species and the specific horse as an individual, as well as paying attention to the horse's emotions. The experience of welfare during training can be enhanced by the fulfilment of behavioural needs in the horse's daily life, the human remaining calm, an experience of positive consequences and the horse's perception of its ability to anticipate the human's actions or influence events through its own actions.

A horse should be systematically desensitised without fear to all potentially exciting situations in which the horse should act in a relaxed manner. Especially when learning new skills, the training environment should be sufficiently calm to allow the horse to concentrate on the task at hand.

All horses are motivated and can quickly learn different activities when they **systematically achieve something that is worthwhile to them.** The use of aids based on increasing and decreasing mild unpleasant pressure (negative reinforcement or subtraction) has traditionally been the main way of trying to reinforce desired behaviour in horses. Reinforcing behaviour with pleasurable consequences (positive reinforcement or addition) is an essential part of training that improves welfare. A reward can also be given immediately after the removal of pressure. Some highly motivating behaviours can also be self-reinforcing.

A recent study (in Finnish) has alerted equestrians to the high incidence of mouth lesions caused by bits in trotters and riding horses. In **studies** by Kati Tuomola, Doctor of Veterinary Medicine, mouth lesions were observed in 84% of trotters and 52% of event horses. The risk factors associated with the use of bits were the type of bit, the sex of the horse and the breed. Attitudes of stakeholders in the equestrian industry towards mouth lesions vary.

The use of a whip as a signalling device in trotting has been restricted since 1 March 2022. **According to the new rules (in Finnish)**, a whip and reins may only be used for light signalling without applying any particular force. Commanding the horse is not allowed.

Read more about the welfare of horses:

- **Hevonen on viisas laumaeläin**
Hevonen kaipaa liikettä ja seuraa – **Hevosen hyvinvointi**
- Hevonen on yhä luonnoltaan laiduntava saaliseläin – **Hevonen luonnossa**
- Palkitseamalla kouluttaminen edistää hevosen hyvinvointia – **Hevonen seura- ja harrastuseläimenä**
- The horse information page (elaintieto.fi/hevonen) also includes information about the welfare of donkeys and mules.
- Research Centre for Animal Welfare: **Horse sleep study**
- **The Finnish Equine Information Centre**, a development unit for counselling and education in the equine industry
- University of Helsinki **equine research site**
- Suomen Hippos, Finland's national central organisation for trotting and horse breeding: **Hyvä hevosenpito – Opas hevosen arkeen (Good care of a horse – a guide to the daily lives of horses)**
- **Mittarit hevosen hyvinvoinnin arviointiin (Indicators to assess the welfare of horses) project**
- SEY Animal Welfare Finland: **Harrastuskaverina hevonen** a guide for equestrians
- **Equestrian sports managed by the Finnish equestrian federation Suomen Ratsastajainliitto (in Finnish)**
- **Horse- and donkey-related blog posts on Elaintieto.fi::**
- **Miltä näyttää hyvinvoiva hevonen? Tämä ja paljon muuta uudessa hevostietopakettissa**
- **Fiksu kuin aasi? Aasi on nopea oppija ja persoonallinen lemmikki**
- **Urheiluhevosten suunvauriot odotettua yleisempiä – suomalaistutkimus valottaa riskitekijöitä ja ennaltaehkäisyä**
- **Loppukesä on hevosen kesäihottuman pahinta aikaa**
- **Ärhäkkä hevosen herpesvirus leviää Euroopassa**
- **Lumi tuo kaivatun tauon hevosten hiekansyöntiin**
- **Kengittä kilpailemisessa on riskejä**
- **Hevosen persoonallisuus ja temperamentti hyvinvoinnin tekijöinä**
- **Ravihevosta on suuhun katsominen**
- **Hyvinvoivalla hevosella on empaattinen omistaja**
- **Hevosen hyvinvoinnin ongelmat löytyvät usein tarkkailemalla lauman muita hevosia**
- **See also:**
- **Eläinten oppimisen ja kouluttamisen sanasto**
- **Eläinten hyvän kohtelun edistäminen vaatii sitkeää tiedotusta ja kouluttautumista – eläinsuojeluasiamiehen ja Eläinten hyvinvointikeskuksen järjestämä pyöreän pöydän keskustelu eläinten kohtelusta ja käsittelystä**

Ornamental fish

According to **the Finnish Food Authority (in Finnish)**, the welfare of fish kept in an aquarium depends on the aquarium's sufficient volume, water quantity and good water quality, as well as the correct temperature, water surface area and water depth when considering the species, the size of the fish and the number of fish.

There must be a screen on one side of the aquarium unless the fish are adequately protected by vegetation or other features in the aquarium. If necessary, the aquarium must be equipped with a cover made from glass or another material to prevent the fish from jumping out.

The interior of the tank and the bottom material must be suitable for the fish, and the fish must have access to appropriate hiding places as necessary. The water must be changed or cleaned regularly to maintain good water quality. Any dead fish must be removed from the aquarium without delay. When combining groups, schools and species of fish or introducing new fish into a school, particular attention must be paid to compatibility and flocking behaviour.

Read more about the welfare of fish:

Finnish Food Authority, Harrastus- ja lemmikkieläimet: **Akvaariokalat**

Helsingin Akvaarioseura HAS ry (Helsinki Aquarium Association)



Image 99 by Wikimedia commons. The guppy is a popular common pet fish.

Welfare issues caused by the breeding of companion and hobby animals

Breeding pets solely and excessively based on their appearance can cause hereditary diseases and long-term suffering. According to [a study \(in Finnish\)](#) by Natural Resources Institute Finland, the Finnish Food Authority and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (2020), dog breeding that is detrimental to the welfare of the animals should be stopped, and control criteria should be set as a tool for the authorities. The first study focused especially on the welfare issues caused by brachycephalism in dogs, while [a follow-up study \(in Finnish\)](#) further specified the control criteria.

Brachycephalism or a short face exposes an animal to many hereditary diseases and defects. Brachycephalic animals can have respiratory, dental, reproductive, eye, skin and digestive system issues. Breeding to achieve an exaggerated short skull shape violates the Animal Welfare Act, as the Act prohibits breeding that may cause suffering or significant harm to the health or welfare of an animal. In the case of some dog breeds, it is no longer possible to modify the shape of the skull through breeding to make the species healthier, as no genotypes that cause a normal skull are left in the population. In such a situation, breeding can only be continued through crossbreeding.

Read more:

Finnish Food Authority 2020, Eläinjalostukseen liittyvän eläinsuojelulainsäädännön toimeenpanon tehostaminen, Osa II [Alustava selvitys koirien jalostukseen liittyvistä ongelmista ja puuttumiskeinoista \(A report on dog breeding issues and ways to address them\)](#).

Natural Resources Institute Finland and Finnish Food Authority, a project on pet breeding: [Problems of dog breeding and control criteria for the authorities](#)

[European Commission Responsible Dog Breeding Guidelines](#)

Blog posts on breeding on Eläintieto.fi:

[Lemmikkieläinten jalostus tuottaa kauniita yksilöitä, mutta myös kärsimystä](#)

[Lyhyitä kalloja tuottavan koiranjalostuksen on loputtava](#)

[Englanninbulldoggien kärsimys paljastuu röntgenkuivissa](#)

Hyvän jalostuksen merkkejä

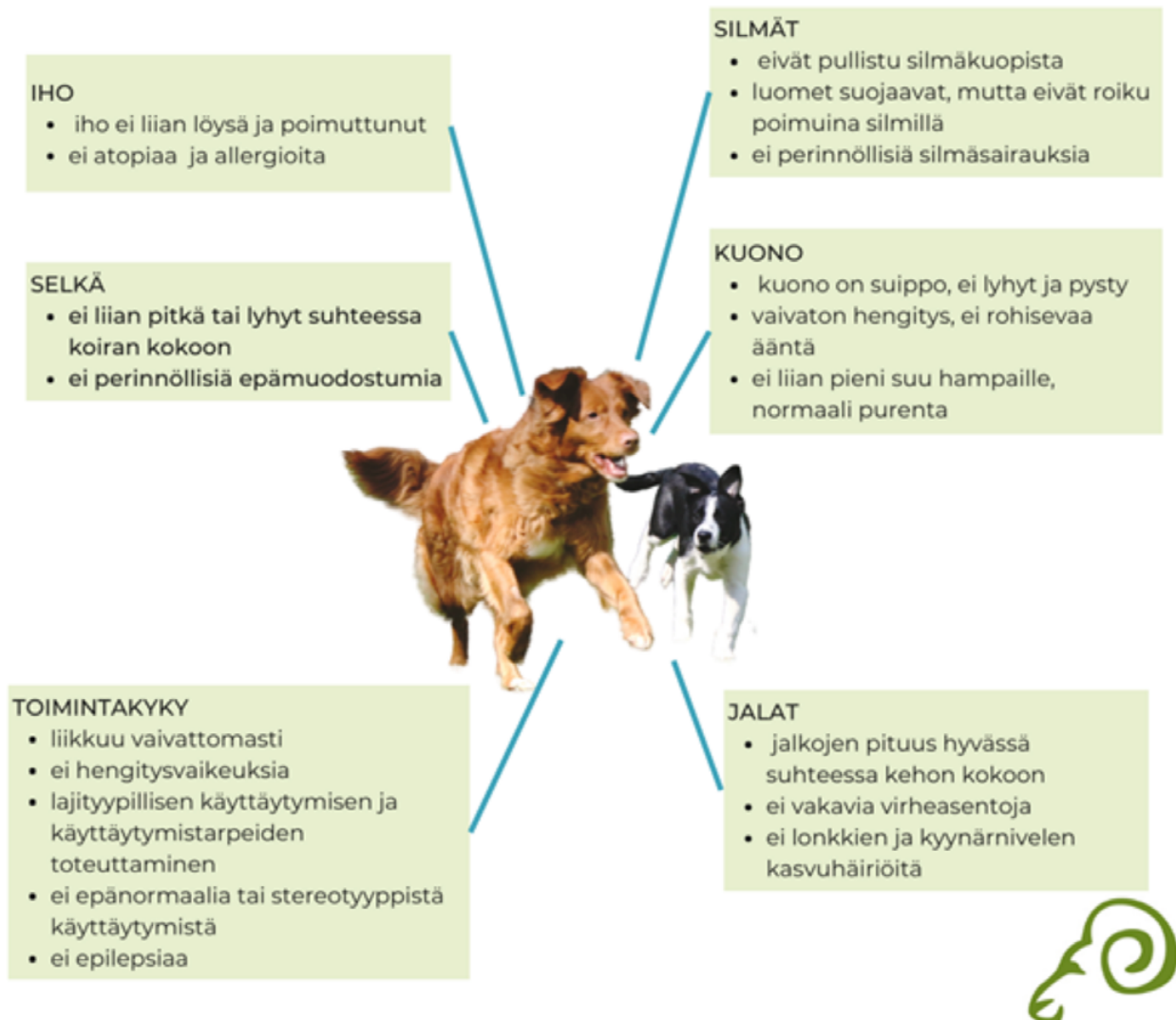


Image 100a by Heta Rautiainen.
Signs indicating proper breeding in dogs and cats

Image 100b

Signs indicating proper breeding in dogs and cats (FIN-EN)

Hyvän jalostuksen merkkejä	Signs of proper breeding
IHO	SKIN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> iho ei liian löysä ja poimuttunut 	Not overly loose and folded
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ei <u>atopiaa</u> ja <u>allergioita</u> 	No atopy or allergies
SILMÄT	EYES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> eivät pullistu silmäkuopista 	Not bulging out of their sockets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> luomet suojaavat, mutta eivät roiku <u>poimuina silmillä</u> 	The eyelids protect the eyes but do not hang over them
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ei perinnöllisiä silmänsairauksia 	No hereditary eye diseases
SELKÄ	BACK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ei liian pitkä tai lyhyt suhteessa koiran kokoon 	Not overly long or short in relation to the size of the dog
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ei perinnöllisiä epämuodostumia 	No hereditary deformities
KUONO	MUZZLE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> kuono on suippo, ei lyhyt ja pysty 	The muzzle is tapering instead of short and <u>snubby</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> vaivaton hengitys, ei <u>rohisevaa ääntä</u> 	Effortless breathing, no rasping sounds
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ei liian pieni suu hampaille, normaali purenta 	Mouth not overly small for the teeth, normal occlusion
TOIMINTAKYKY	FUNCTIONAL CAPACITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> liikkuu vaivattomasti 	Moves effortlessly
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ei hengitysvaikeuksia 	No difficulties breathing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lajityypillisen käyttäytymisen ja <u>käyttäytymistarpeiden toteuttaminen</u> 	Able to realise species-typical behaviour and behavioural needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ei epänormaalia tai stereotyyppistä käyttäytymistä 	No abnormal or stereotyped behaviour
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ei <u>epilepsiaa</u> 	No epilepsy
JALAT	LEGS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> jalkojen pituus hyvässä suhteessa kehon kokoon 	Legs are a good length in proportion to the body size
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ei vakavia virheasentoja 	No severe malalignments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ei lonkkien ja kyynärnivelen kasvuhäiriöitä 	No dysmorphia of the hips or elbow joints

Legislation and regulatory control of the welfare of companion and hobby animals

Animal Welfare Act (Laki eläinten hyvinvoinnista 693/2023)

New Animal Welfare Act (**Laki eläinten hyvinvoinnista**), which will replace the old Animal Welfare Act (Eläinsuojelulaki 247/1996), will enter into force at the beginning of 2024. The Act includes several tools to promote the welfare of pets.

The new Act will clarify and further specify the regulations on the breeding of animals. According to the Act, breeding must aim to produce viable and healthy animals that can function normally. In future, only physically and mentally healthy animals that can be expected to pass on these characteristics to their offspring must be used in breeding. The Act prohibits the use for breeding of an animal which, due to a hereditary trait or disease, is unable to reproduce naturally or whose welfare would probably be significantly impaired by reproduction. This provision will be further specified by a new government decree on breeding.

As a new requirement, the Act imposes an obligation for the owners or holders of mammals to prevent uncontrolled reproduction of the animals. The provision aims to make breeding more favourable to the welfare of animals.

The Act on Access to and Pursuit of the Profession of Veterinary Surgeon includes an obligation for veterinarians to report any diseases and defects they have diagnosed in cats and dogs that restrict the breeding use of the animal. The diseases and defects to be reported will be specified in more detail in a government decree. In practice, procedures to be reported will include surgery to open the airway and caesarean sections in dog breeds that are unable to give birth naturally. The Act will enter into force from the beginning of 2024 for dogs and from the beginning of 2027 for cats.

The new Act includes a list of species that may be kept as farm animals, circus animals or in travelling exhibitions. The purpose of these provisions is to ensure that only animals which can in practice be kept in the manner required by law will be kept for these purposes. Species that may be kept as companion and hobby animals will be specified at a later point in time in a government decree.

One of the completely new provisions in the legislative proposal concerns the import of kittens and puppies. It prohibits the import into Finland of puppies and kittens under six months of age if the intention is to sell or otherwise hand over the puppy/kitten in Finland within four months of importation. The aim is to more effectively tackle the import and sale of puppies produced on puppy farms.

Another entirely new provision sets minimum requirements for the information to be provided when marketing dogs and cats for the purpose of sales or transfer by other means. The notices must include the name of the seller or another transferor, information about any professional breeding activities and the associated identification, the animal's date of birth, age or estimated age, the country of birth, and the location of the animal. In addition to any illnesses or injuries of the animal, the purchaser or transferee must also be given any other information relevant to the welfare of the animal. This provision is intended to improve the traceability of dogs and cats sold or otherwise transferred.

The Act will also restrict the transfer of animals at certain types of events or venues: for example, the transfer of animals as lottery or competition prizes will be prohibited, as well as the sale of animals at markets and fairs. The sale of dogs, cats, ferrets and large parrots in pet shops will be prohibited, and animals are not to be permanently transferred to a person under the age of 16 without the consent of the person who has custody of the child.

Furthermore, the Act will prohibit equipment and devices that cause unnecessary pain, suffering or risk of harm to animals. In addition to the manufacture, sale, supply and use of such equipment, their import, marketing and possession will be prohibited to allow effective enforcement of the prohibition. This provision prohibits spiked collars, spiked bits and spiked spurs, as well as a new addition, electric shock collars and any other devices that can be attached to an animal to give it an electric shock. If necessary, a government decree may be enacted to further specify the list of prohibited equipment in the Act.

The system of animal welfare control authorities will otherwise remain unchanged except that Customs will be given the power to enforce animal welfare rules at the EU's internal borders. The reform will help enforce the ban on the import of puppies and kittens included in the Act.

A new provision in the Act introduces a reporting obligation to designated persons who may have discovered an animal in need of aid during a customer visit, but who, due to confidentiality provisions, were previously unable to report the animal to the animal protection authority. Section 88 of the new Act provides that, notwithstanding the confidentiality provisions, parties employed by certain bodies or persons acting in a position of trust or in a corresponding position in a principal-contractor relationship or as a self-employed person are obligated to inform the competent animal protection authority without delay if they become aware of an animal in need of aid in the course of their duties and to provide the supervisory authority with the information necessary to assess the case. Such parties include healthcare and social welfare authorities and providers of healthcare and social welfare services, healthcare professionals, fire and rescue services, the execution authority, and

churches and other religious communities. The change is important for the welfare of pet animals, as the plight of pets living within the walls of a home often remains hidden unless an outside party has the opportunity to report it to the animal protection authority.

The Animal Welfare Act provides that there must be water available to the animals at all times in a permanent enclosure for mammals and birds. However, a permanent supply of water is not required in permanent enclosures at professional kennels for sled dogs in cases where the water would freeze due to the weather conditions. In such cases, the dogs must be given water at least three times a day. However, lactating female dogs and unweaned puppies must always have access to water in their permanent enclosure.



Image 101 by Olli Leino. The new Animal Welfare Act stipulates that birds and mammals must have access to drinking water at all times.

Other legislation on the welfare of companion and hobby animals

In addition to the Animal Welfare Act, the welfare of companion and hobby animals is regulated by several different provisions. These are referred to in the following laws and regulations that are currently valid (in 2022), for example:

- **Animal Welfare Act (247/1996) (valid until the end of 2023)**
- **Animal Welfare Decree (396/1996) (in Finnish)**
- **Government Decree on the Protection of Dogs, Cats and Other Small Companion and Hobby Animals (Valtioneuvoston asetus koirien, kissojen ja muiden pienikokoisten seura- ja harrastuseläinten suojelusta 674/2010) (in Finnish)**
- **Hunting Act (615/1993), which includes, among other provisions, the obligation to keep a dog on a leash and the prohibition on abandoning a cat (in Finnish)**
- **Public Order Act (612/2003), where the section on the control of dogs (14) includes provisions on locations where cats and dogs are not allowed (in Finnish)**
- **Animal Transport Act (1429/2006) (in Finnish)**
- **Act on the Identification and Registration of Animals (Laki eläinten tunnistamisesta ja rekisteröinnistä 1069/2021) (in Finnish)**
- **Decree of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry on the Identification and Registration of Dogs (Maa- ja metsätalousministeriön asetus koirien tunnistamisesta ja rekisteröinnistä 1/2021) (in Finnish)**

Regulatory control of pet welfare

Regulatory control of pet welfare is carried out by local veterinary enforcement officers, Regional Veterinary Officers and the police. The Food Authority publishes the results of the regulatory control of animal welfare annually. The authorities control the welfare of pets during animal welfare inspections based on suspected violations. The inspection results are available in the section **Control of animal welfare – Animal welfare inspections based on suspicion of violation** of the Animal welfare in Finland report.

Read more on the website of the Finnish Food Authority:

Seura-, harrastus- ja lemmikkieläimet (Companion and hobby animals)

Lemmikkieläin – eläinsuojelulainsäädäntöä koottuna (Pets – animal welfare legislation in a nutshell)

Control of horse transport

Animal welfare authorities inspect the transport of horses as part of their animal transport inspection measures. Around a couple of dozen of horse transport inspections are carried out each year, and the rate of non-compliance has varied between 18% and 50% in recent years. For example, 24 horse transport operations were inspected in 2021, and non-compliances were observed in half of them. A typical non-compliance is related to a missing permit/licence, certificate of competence or transport document.

In the Helsinki metropolitan area, most animal welfare notifications concern dogs

According to a **Finnish study**, most (70%) of the reports of animal welfare violations or animal welfare notifications filed in the Helsinki metropolitan area concern dogs, while 27% concern cats and 10% other pets. The most common reasons for reporting are a suspicion that the living environment is unsuitable for an animal or a suspicion that there is insufficient exercise. In the case of cats and other pets, the most common reasons for reporting are an inappropriate diet and living environment, and inadequate basic care. The reports concerning dogs most often involve a lack of exercise, loud barking, an aggressive dog or violent treatment of a dog by a human.

Read more :

Valtonen, E-M. I., Koskela, T., Valros, A., & Hänninen, L. 2021. Animal welfare control – inspection findings and the threshold for requesting a police investigation. *Frontiers in Veterinary Science* 8

Import of companion and hobby animals into Finland

Unlawful import

In 2014, Evira (now the Finnish Food Authority) made 20 administrative decisions on the illegal import of animals from a third country, compared to 40 in 2015. The illegal import of animals seemed to be on the rise at the time, and the authorities can never detect all cases of illegal import.

Cats and dogs in particular are imported into Finland in violation of the import regulations. Kittens and puppies imported against the regulations may come from a puppy farm. The origin of such puppies/kittens may be unknown, and animal welfare may have been neglected. Illegal import also carries the risk of introducing serious diseases such as rabies and echinococcosis into Finland.

Pets crossing national borders within the EU must have a microchip and a pet passport (dogs, cats and ferrets). Adopted in 2004, the EU pet passport has already made travel with pets easier in Europe. The EU Regulation on the movement of pet animals (576/2013), which entered into force at the end of 2014, changed some regulations on travel with pets. Pets imported from a third country must be identified by a microchip and vaccinated against rabies. In addition, dogs must have been given medication against echinococcosis.

Each year, dogs and cats are also imported into Finland without the necessary documentation. Animals are sold on various websites and through advertisements. The buyer of an animal must ensure that it has been legally imported. The owner of an illegally imported animal is responsible for the consequences, including the return of the animal to its country of origin or its euthanising. The owner is also responsible for any costs associated with such measures. Illegal import can give rise to criminal liability.

How can you identify an illegal animal? Pay attention to at least the following:

- The animal is inexpensive
 - The importer does not have any certificates entitling them to import the animal
 - The certificates have been falsified
- The animal has a foreign vaccination card but no other certificates
- An animal imported from abroad may have a tattoo as the identification marking – in Finland, tattoos are no longer used as an official identification marking
 - A seller from a third country assures that all documents are in order – the buyer is obligated to ensure that the import requirements are met
 - The seller promises to send the documentation later
 - An animal born outside the EU has an EU passport – an EU passport can only be issued within the EU
 - There is a mismatch in the animal's documentation – always ask to see all documents

Sometimes an animal is found to violate the import conditions after it has crossed the border. In most cases, it is a question of an animal transferred by a non-commercial operator that has not been presented to Customs for inspection, or an animal imported into Finland to be handed over to someone without a veterinary border inspection,

i.e. disguised as a non-commercial transfer. In such a case, the control authority (the local authority veterinary officer) must carry out an inspection of the animal in accordance with the Animal Diseases Act, which includes a documentary check and an examination and identification of the animal. A general clinical examination is carried out to detect rabies and other infectious diseases in particular.

Fate of animals illegally imported into Finland from third countries

The Finnish Food Authority decides on measures to be taken regarding animals that were illegally imported or transferred into Finland and have been in the country for less than six months if the requirements have not been complied with, even if the animal does not show any signs of rabies. According to law, it may be ordered that an illegally imported animal be returned to the country of origin, euthanised or placed in quarantine approved by the Regional State Administrative Agency. There is no official quarantine in Finland, which means that in such cases the owner of the animal must obtain the quarantine premises and have them approved by the Regional State Administrative Agency.

At a road border, Finnish Customs will return an illegally imported animal to its country of origin. Returning an illegally imported animal detected by Customs at an airport is more difficult in practice. In this case, the animal may be kept in isolation under official control at the airport for a short period until return is possible. If return is impossible, the animal must be euthanised.

Keeping wild animals as pets should be discouraged

Importing a wild animal as a pet requires an import permit issued by the Finnish Food Authority. In addition to disease risks, animal welfare considerations and the protection of endangered species affect the granting of import permits and the import conditions. Wild animals such as monkeys are traded on free websites. Such advertisements are likely to be scams, as private persons are not granted import permits for monkeys.

As a member state of the European Council, Finland is a signatory to the European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals. According to the Convention, humans have a moral obligation to respect all living creatures. The large variety of species kept by humans causes problems for the health and safety of humans and animals. The Convention therefore states that the keeping of specimens of wild fauna as pet animals should not be encouraged. As a result of the Convention, the Finnish Food Authority does not, as a rule, issue permits for the import of wild animals as pets.

No import permits have been granted for the following species so far:

- *Monkeys*
- *Meerkats (Herpestidae)*
- *Kangaroos (Macropodidae)*
- *Import of F1–F4 crossbreed hybrids of domestic dogs and cats is prohibited; this applies to F1–F4 Savannah cats and F1–F4 wolfdogs, for example*

Wild animals can spread infectious diseases. Infectious diseases that can spread to humans are called zoonoses. In particular, monkeys spread many infectious diseases that are dangerous to humans and animals, such as Ebola and other highly infectious diseases with high mortality rates, as well as tuberculosis and other slowly progressing diseases.

An import permit may be granted for small mammals that may be suitable as pets and do not pose a risk of spreading zoonoses. An example of such a mammal is the African pygmy hedgehog.

Read more:

Finnish Customs: Buying a pet from abroad

Finnish Customs: Travelling with pets

Finnish Food Authority: Import and export – food, animals, products of animal origin and plant products

Regulation of international trade in endangered species of wild animals

Trade in exotic pets such as parrots and reptiles has led to the endangerment of the wild populations of many species. Almost all parrots and several species of lizards, snakes, turtles/tortoises and amphibians are therefore covered by CITES.

Read more:

CITES: exotic pets

In Finland, CITES has been enforced by EU regulations that govern trade in flora and fauna, as well as import and export across the EU's external borders. The regulations also apply to animals imported and exported for non-commercial purposes. In addition, EU regulations regulate trade between and within EU Member States. When acquiring or transporting a pet, one should always check whether the import, export or trade of the species is prohibited or subject to a permit under EU law.



Image 102 by Olli Leino. A permit according to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is required for the import of many species of reptiles and amphibians. The tokay gecko in the photo is a species included in Appendix II of CITES, for which proof of legal origin is required during import.

Operators in the field of companion and hobby animal welfare

Companion and Hobby Animal Welfare Council

The **Companion and Hobby Animal Welfare Council** is an advisory council that promotes the welfare of companion and hobby animals and collaboration between organisations in the field and people interested in companion and hobby animals. Its duties are to promote an understanding of the importance and appreciation of the welfare of companion and hobby animals in society and to support and promote cooperation between the authorities and other actors to improve animal welfare. Its other duties include the monitoring and evaluation of developments in the welfare of companion and hobby animals, submitting proposals on the long-term development of welfare, and issuing opinions on major projects and proposals concerning the welfare of companion and hobby animals.

According to a joint **definition** by animal welfare councils, welfare is an animal's experience of its mental and physical state. In the case of companion and hobby animals, the definition covers a wide range of animals, including horses, dogs, cats, rodents, rabbits and birds, as well as terrarium and aquarium animals.

The Companion and Hobby Animal Welfare Council studies welfare through three rights. Animals are sentient beings that can legitimately claim to have rights. These rights mean that humans have duties towards animals. Among other issues, the rights of animals cover the safeguarding of their welfare: animals have the right to be treated in a way that supports their welfare. Humans have obligations that correspond to this right.

The rights can be negative or positive. 'Negative rights' refers to the right not to be disturbed or hindered by others, while 'positive rights' refers to support and help from others. The use of the word 'rights' in this context places an obligation on those working with animals.

The Council regularly comments on and issues opinions to promote animal welfare. The opinions and minutes are available **on the Companion and Hobby Animal Welfare Council page on the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry website**. The opinions and information about recent Council meetings are also available on the eläintieto.fi website.



Image 103a. The three rights approach to animal welfare. Source: Companion and Hobby Animal Welfare Council

Image103b. The three rights approach to animal welfare. Source: Companion and Hobby Animal Welfare Council

Oikeus hyvään kohteluun sekä positiivisiin tuntemuksiin ja kokemuksiin	The right to be treated well and to have positive emotions and experiences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Osaava ja motivoitunut hoitaja 	A competent and motivated carer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yksilöllinen kohtelu 	Individualised treatment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sopivat, väkivallattomat koulutusmenetelmät ja -välineet, jotka tukevat eläimen hyvinvointia eivätkä aiheuta eläimelle kipua, tuskaa tai kärsimystä 	Appropriate non-violent training methods and tools that support the welfare of the animal and do not cause the animal pain, suffering or distress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eläimelle sopiva toiminta, joka ei kuitenkaan rasita eläintä niin, että se uhkaa eläimen hyvinvointia 	Activities that are appropriate for the animal but do not impose a burden on the animal that threatens its welfare
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lajille, rodulle ja yksilölle sopivat virikkeet 	Stimuli appropriate for the species, breed and individual
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vuorovaikutus ihmisen kanssa 	Interaction with humans
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuskaton kuolema 	A painless death
Oikeus lajinmukaiseen käyttäytymiseen ja elinympäristöön	Right to species-typical behaviour and habitat
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Riittävä tila, joka mahdollistaa lajityypillisen käyttäytymisen ja erilaiset käyttäytymisen muodot 	Sufficient space to allow species-typical behaviour and different forms of behaviour
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Lajityypillisille</u> tarpeille sopivat, mukavat ja turvalliset ympäristöolosuhteet 	Comfortable and safe environmental conditions suitable for species-typical needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lajitovereiden seura sosiaalisille lajeille 	Companionship of other animals of the same species in the case of a social species
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mahdollisuus välttää muiden eläinten ja ihmisen seuraa ja läheisyyttä 	Opportunity to avoid the company and proximity of other animals and humans
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ympäristön tutkiminen ja muokkaaminen 	Possibility to explore and change the environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ruuan hankintaan liittyvä käyttäytyminen 	Behaviour related to foraging
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leikki 	Play
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jälkeläisillä riittävän pitkä emon hoiva 	Sufficient maternal care for offspring
Oikeus hyvään terveyteen ja toimintakykyyn	Right to good health and functional capacity

Image103c. The three rights approach to animal welfare. Source: Companion and Hobby Animal Welfare Council

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fyysinen ja psyykinen terveys 	Physical and psychological health
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terveyttä ja hyvinvointia tukeva jalostus 	Breeding that supports health and welfare
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hyvä fyysinen kunto 	Good physical condition
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Kivuttomuus</u> 	Absence of pain
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sairauden hoito 	Treatment of illnesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hyvälaatuinen, puhdas vesi 	Clean water of a high quality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lajinmukainen ja yksilölle sopiva ruokinta ja ravinto 	Feeding and nutrition appropriate to the species and the individual
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ennaltaehkäisevä suunnitelmallinen terveydenhuolto 	Preventive planned healthcare
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eläinlääkäripalvelut tarvittaessa 	Veterinary services as necessary

Read more about the operation of the Companion and Hobby Animal Welfare Council:

- Hyönteisten hyvinvointi huomioitava kasvatuksessa ja käytössä
- Yhdelle lemmikki, toiselle ruokaa – hyönteisten hyvinvoinnista huolehdittava käyttötarkoituksesta riippumatta
- Kissojen vapaa ulkoilu kiellettävä
- Haitalliset vieraslajit lemmikkeinä – mitä tehdä kodinvaihtajille?
- Pidä huolta lemmikin hampaista
- Muistilista lemmikinottajan avuksi
- Suojaa lemmikkikani tappavalta RHD-taudilta rokotteella
- Lemmikit, sosiaalityö ja raha – mitä tekemistä niillä on keskenään?
- Lemmikkieläinten jalostus tuottaa kauniita yksilöitä, mutta myös kärsimystä
- Pyörätuoli eläimellä vaatii tapauskohtaista harkintaa
- Jalostuksen hyvinvointiongelmien puuttuttava aiempaa tehokkaammin
- Positiivilista takaa, ettei tiikeri tai panda joudu lemmikiksi
- Metsästäjän oikeus tappaa villiintynyt kissa on poistettava metsästyslaista
- Kissan elämä on yhtä arvokas kuin koiran
- Kalat ansaitsevat saman kohtelun kuin muutkin eläinryhmät
- Luonnosta pyydettyjen eläinten ottaminen lemmikiksi kiellettävä
- Eläinten arvoa puitiin yhteiseurooppalaisessa tapaamisessa
- Koirien tuonnissa kiinnitettävä huomiota eläintautien ehkäisemiseen
- Lemmikille hoitoa, mutta millä rahalla ja hinnalla?
- Rescue-koiran tuonti – riskinotto, laupeudentyö vai harkittu hankinta?
- Eläimellä on itseisarvo
- Eurooppalaiset eläinten hyvinvoinnin neuvottelukunnat kokoontuivat Säätytalolla
- Lemmikkieläinten eläinlääkäripäivystyksen siirto kunnalta yksityiselle voi heikentää lemmikkien hyvinvointia

Associations for companion and hobby animals and pets in Finland

The **Finnish Kennel Club** aims to increase the benefits of dog ownership for individuals and society by promoting the health and welfare of dogs, good dog keeping and the social impact of the Finnish Kennel Club.

The purpose of the Finnish cat owners' association **Suomen Kissaliitto ry** is to unify, contribute to and control the breeding of pedigree cats and to maintain a Finnish cat registry. Suomen Kissaliitto wishes to increase the appreciation and better treatment of cats and promote cats as a hobby in Finland.

Animal welfare associations working for the welfare of pets

SEY Animal Welfare Finland has 39 member associations in different parts of Finland. The independent member associations work with homeless and lost and found animals, among other things. Many of the associations run an animal shelter.

According to SEY Animal Welfare Finland, the **most common animal welfare issues influencing pets** in Finland are a lack of exercise for dogs and keeping animals in unstimulating conditions. Puppy farms are a growing problem across Europe. There is also outright cruelty and violence against dogs.

In Finland, cats are the pets most often in need of help. At least 20,000 abandoned or feral cats need human help each year. The number of feral cat populations is on the rise, and there are more homeless cats than there are good homes for them.

Typical issues with small pets such as rabbits and rodents include small, unstimulating enclosures and inappropriate feeding. A lack of pain management and treatment of illnesses is also a problem.

SEY has published numerous guides on the welfare of companion and hobby animals, such as:

Harrastuskaverina hevonen (Horses as a hobby)

Fiksun koiranostajan opas (Smart dog buyer's guide)

Hyvinvoiva koira (Welfare of dogs)

The Finnish equestrian association **Suomen Ratsastajainliitto ry** is the central organisation for equestrian sports which promotes riding as a general form of sport and physical education, organises equestrian events, and develops riding instruction and the training of equestrians in Finland.

Suomen Hippos ry is Finland's national central organisation for trotting and horse breeding. Its most important tasks are to maintain a register and studbook of all horse breeds bred in Finland and to manage and supervise trotting race activities in Finland. Suomen Hippos also engages in educational, organisational and publishing activities.

Hyvinvoiva kissa (Welfare of cats)

SEY Lemmikitieto (information about various pets):
Tietoa jyrsijöistä ja kaneista (rodents and rabbits)

Helsinki Humane Society HESY ry focuses mainly on helping homeless animals. HESY takes care of lost and found animals in the Helsinki metropolitan area at Viikki Animal Shelter in Helsinki, arranging further care for animals whose owner cannot be found through the animal shelter. HESY also takes care of animals lost and found in Siuntio, with the exception of dogs. As far as its resources allow, HESY assists provincial animal welfare organisations through grants and by taking animals into its own premises. HESY also receives an increasing number of animals that have been taken into care.

Lemmikkilinnut Kaijuli ry is Finland's largest pet bird and parrot association, which aims to promote the welfare of pet birds and organise activities for those interested in them.

Read more:

Tuoreet herkut maistuvat kaneille ja marsuille – aloita tuoreruokinta vähitellen

Muistilista lemmikinottajan avuksi

Afterword

The welfare of animals and their role in society are emerging social issues. Ethical debate about how we treat other animals is on the rise. We are constantly learning more about the sensibility of animals and their welfare requirements. Published for the third time, the Animal Welfare in Finland report compiles valuable information about the state and development of animal welfare in Finland. Information about animal welfare is fragmented, and compilations on animal welfare are necessary to support the social debate and decision-making, as well as to achieve an overall picture of the subject matter.

The new Animal Welfare Act, which will enter into force at the beginning of 2024, sets Finnish society the goal of promoting animal welfare and increasing respect for animals as individuals in their own right. The law states that welfare is an animal's experience of its mental and physical state. Diverse, up-to-date and objective information about the state of animal welfare is necessary for us to be able to monitor in which ways and how quickly we are making progress in the promotion of animal welfare. In addition, regular reporting allows us to identify key areas for improvement and any trends that could be detrimental to animal welfare. Information is essential when making decisions on measures to promote animal welfare.

The trends section of the report proposes several indicators to monitor the status and development of animal welfare. Finland lacks comprehensive national animal welfare monitoring indicators, so the proposal is welcome. The development of animal welfare should be monitored using several indicators in the same way as the development of other areas of society (such as human rights or environmental protection) is being monitored. The compiled information about welfare status and the indicators will allow the assessment of the impact of the measures taken and legislation on the welfare of animals. This will support decision-makers and the public authorities in the evaluation of policy measures, businesses in their

corporate responsibility efforts and associations in the planning of their activities. The indicators will also increase public awareness of the state of animal welfare.

Like the previous reports, this report provides information about the welfare of farm animals, companion and hobby animals, and laboratory animals. A new section of the report covers the welfare of wild animals. The status of wild animals has long been examined from perspectives such as game management and nature conservation, while the welfare aspect with its emphasis on the individual experience of each animal has received less attention. It is therefore important that the report summarises the many ways in which human activities influence the welfare of wild animals.

The report includes another new section on how global issues – climate change, biodiversity loss, antimicrobial resistance and zoonoses – are linked to the welfare of the planet's animal inhabitants. The welfare and health of humans, animals and natural systems are interdependent in many ways. An improvement in the welfare of animals can help solve wicked problems, which will contribute to the welfare of people and nature.

Published every few years, the reports reveal the increasing availability of openly published statistics on animal welfare in Finland. In addition to the public authorities, statistics are produced by associations, businesses, commerce and advisory organisations. On the other hand, some fundamental information is still missing or not easily available. Little monitoring data is collected by the public authorities about the welfare of companion and hobby animals. To promote the welfare of pets, we need information about the numbers of individuals, for example. In future, the identification and statutory registration of dogs and cats will provide us important basic information about the most common pets in Finland. More openly published statistics on the conditions of farm animals are also needed

to monitor how free farrowing is progressing, for example. In terms of laboratory animals, we need more concrete indicators and monitoring to track the progress on the principle of replacement, reduction and refinement.

The report highlights several positive developments that have improved the welfare of animals, the most important being the completion of the Animal Welfare Act with its welfare improvements and deadlines for progress. In the near future, the welfare of animals can be further improved by supplementing the Act with government decrees including more detailed species-specific requirements for breeding, procedures, treatment, care and conditions, among other issues. Housing conditions for farm animals in general are moving in the direction of freer movement. For example, the majority of Finnish hens have been moved from enriched battery cages to floor-based aviary systems and dairy cows from tie stall barns to free-stall barns, and sows are being switched to crate-free gestation and farrowing. Consumers' opportunities to make choices that support animal welfare have also improved since the launch of the first animal welfare label in Finland. In addition, there is a gradual move away from painful procedures that are no longer necessary, and pain relief has improved as more scientific data has become available.

On the other hand, the report also reveals that progress in some issues has come to a halt. For example, further active measures are still needed to improve calf health, viable alternatives to carbon dioxide stunning are necessary and there is an urgent need to reform the statutory requirements for the keeping of fur animals. The number of broilers has increased considerably, which further raises the ethical significance of their welfare. The report also highlights signs of deterioration such as the reduced grazing of dairy cows and long animal transport distances. It is important that operators and decision-makers pay attention to these issues. Hunting legislation has also been amended, in some cases to the detriment of animal welfare. Attention should be paid to issues such as the introduction of ethically sustainable practices when hunting invasive species.

An improvement to animal welfare requires a strong knowledge base, transparency, discussion and continuous evaluation of the decisions made. The report provides a wealth of useful information and food for thought for ordinary citizens, decision-makers and professionals alike.

Saara Kupsala

Animal Welfare Ombudsman (until 31 December 2023)