

BVA's seven farm assurance principles



To assist members of the veterinary profession and public to better understand farm assurance schemes on the basis of animal health and welfare, the British Veterinary Association has developed a farm assurance schemes policy position, setting out seven guiding principles.

Farm assurance schemes enable customers to make sustainable and ethically informed choices about the food they buy, and allow producers to demonstrate their food products have met independently certified standards at each stage of the supply chain from farm to fork. The breadth of UK farm assurance schemes is testament to the UK's leadership in animal health and welfare standards. However, this variety could create a confusing customer experience when food shoppers are navigating both ethical and budgetary considerations as well as the shopping aisles.

BVA's policy position has been developed as part of BVA's Animal Welfare Strategy and sets out that the veterinary profession has a key role to play in helping inform the public about the animal health and welfare credentials of animal derived food. Based on the five welfare needs set out in the UK Animal Welfare Acts and highlighting the importance of welfare outcomes, through the new position's seven principles BVA is encouraging consumers to consider schemes that include:

1. **Lifetime assurance** – from farm to fork, ensuring that health and welfare is assured throughout the animal's life from birth to slaughter.
2. **Welfare at slaughter** – animals should be stunned before slaughter or, if permitted, meat or fish products are labelled as such. Animals should be transported the least possible distance to slaughter.
3. **Veterinary involvement** – schemes that are underpinned by veterinary expertise and committed to continuous improvement of animal management and husbandry practices. These are crucial to the value of schemes in terms of animal health and welfare, public confidence and producer/farmer buy-in.
4. **Behavioural opportunity** – schemes that strike the right balance between allowing animals to perform important behaviours and ensuring good health outcomes.
5. **Responsible use of antimicrobials and other medicines** – consider whether schemes support responsible use of antimicrobials and what animal health and welfare requirements, such as disease prevention strategies, improved animal husbandry and management, are incorporated to help prevent the need for prescribing.
6. **Animal health and biosecurity** – schemes that can evidence effective biosecurity plans, developed in collaboration with a veterinary surgeon, to prevent the spread of disease amongst animals, humans and their surroundings.
7. **Sustainability and the environment** – incorporate environmental stewardship, such as the reduction of carbon emissions and the conservation of biodiversity.