
Farm animal welfare — Dairy sheep

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Introduction

The purpose of this standard is to ensure that the rearing practices of the establishment provide greater confidence in consumers' expectations that the final products are safe and fit for human consumption. The handling and care of sheep should consider relevant aspects of safety, animal health and the environment, in order to minimize the physical and behavioural risk for the animal and the farmer. Furthermore, animal welfare matters should adhere to access to wholesome and nutritious feed; appropriate environmental design; caring and responsible planning and management; skilled, knowledgeable, and conscientious animal care; and considerate handling, and transport.

The purpose of this Standard is to provide for science-based husbandry practices that are in line with international best practice, in order to ensure that the good welfare of animals in production systems is safeguarded.

An animal is in a good state of welfare when healthy, comfortable, well nourished, safe, able to express innate behaviour and able to move around in a spacious, clean, species-appropriate environment; furthermore, if the animal is not suffering from unpleasant states such as pain, discomfort, injury, fear and/or distress.

This Standard is developed in accordance with international best practice, including the Five Domains models, in accordance with which animals should be managed:

Nutrition: Access to sufficient, nutritious, species-specific, balanced, varied, clean and good quality water and food in the correct quantities.

Environment: Factors that enable a comfortable physical environment, such as mild temperatures, suitable substrate, space, fresh air, appropriate light intensity, low noise, normal environmental variability, and predictability.

Health: Factors that enable good health through the absence of disease, injury, and functional impairment, with an appropriate body condition.

Behaviour: The ability to exercise agency by means of varied, novel, engaging environmental challenges, as well as pleasant sensory inputs, available choices, movement, exploration, foraging, bonding, rearing young, playing, retreat, rest, and others.

Mental State: The mental state of the animal shall benefit from positive states, such as pleasure, satiety, comfort, vitality, reward, calmness, sociability, playfulness, confidence, and others, while avoiding negative states, such as thirst, hunger, discomfort, breathlessness, pain, debility, illness, frustration, boredom, helplessness, loneliness, depression, anxiety, fear, panic, exhaustion, and others."

Farm animal welfare — Dairy sheep

1 Scope

This Committee Draft African Standard sets out the general principles and good humane practices and minimum requirements in the rearing of sheep for dairy use.

Industry specific requirements for sheep production system may be developed provided that it satisfies the minimum requirements set out in this draft standard.

Statement not necessary

2 Normative references

There are no normative references to this document.

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

3.1

abnormal behaviour

change developed as a response to disease or poor management practice causing stress to the sheep

3.2

sheep

animal of genus *ovis*, conventionally raised or reared for food and non-food (e.g. sheep by-products such as wool, leather, etc.) purposes

3.3

authorized

that which has been permitted by the competent authority

3.4

competent authority

entity/agency who has the knowledge, expertise and authority as designated by law

3.5

ewe

female sheep used for breeding and having given birth at least once

3.6

lamb

not defined

3.7

dehorning

removal of horns after they have already formed

3.8

disbudding

removal or destruction of horn buds, done in young sheep whose horns have not yet formed

3.9

establishment

given due permission, a firm authorized to operate

3.10

farm owner

legal entity who is responsible for the management and general operation of the farm; the term maybe used interchangeably

3.11

farm technician

certified trained personnel who is technically skilled and knowledgeable in the various aspects of specialized farm operation

3.12

farm worker

trained personnel directly responsible for the rearing of sheep

3.13

feeds

any single or multiple materials, whether processed, semi-processed or raw, which is intended to be fed directly to domesticated sheep to meet the nutrient requirements in order to maintain life, promote growth, production and reproduction

3.14

feed supplement

feed ingredient or mixture of feed ingredients intended to supply the deficiencies in a ration or improve the nutritive balance or performance of the total mixture

3.15

forage

anything grown on the ground intended for use as sheep feed, whether for grazing, cut- and-carry, ensiling, or haying

3.16

gait

way of walking or pace of the sheep

3.17

ration

total amount of feed given for one day

3.18

rearing

act of raising of sheep

3.19

shearing

removal of the wool or fleece of the sheep

3.20

vehicle

means of transporting sheep, including but not limited to trucks, tractors, trailers, trains, ferries, ships and aircrafts

3.21

weaning

process of complete withdrawal from the ewe and withdrawal of milk feeding

3.22

humane handling

act or practice that is exercised in a manner that shows compassion and benevolence, and inflicts the least pain and suffering possible

3.23**animal welfare**

physical and mental state of an animal in relation to the conditions in which it lives and dies

3.24**farm operator**

person who is in possession, custody, control or charge of an animal

4 Minimum requirements

4.1 Responsibilities of the farm operators and workers

4.1.1 General skills and responsibilities

4.1.1.1 The farm owner/operator and farm workers should undergo training on the necessary knowledge and skills about basic procedures of farm management including the correct handling of sheep, pasture/ forage development and conservation, feeding management, sheep health management and, other routine management practices and usage of farm tools or equipment as well as the animals' behaviour, health and welfare needs.

4.1.1.2 The farm operator/worker should be responsible for the welfare of the sheep by giving adequate provisions so that they are able to perform at their optimum levels without compromising the welfare of the animals.

4.1.1.3 The farm operator/owner shall provide farm workers with appropriate personal protective equipment.

4.1.1.4 The farm operator/owner shall provide working personal protective equipment, as prescribed by the farm bio-security protocol shall be provided to visitors who need to be at the production area.

4.1.1.5 In cases of housed staff, the farm owner/operator should provide comfortable accommodation for the workers.

4.1.1.6 The farm operator/worker should always promote a safe and healthy working condition in the farm. Accident and emergency procedures should be available with clear instructions for all workers. First aid kits, fire extinguishing equipment, and information on hotline numbers should be easily available at all times, and placed conspicuously in strategic locations.

4.1.1.7 The owner/operator should ensure that all farm operators and farm workers undergo annual routine health check-up/medical examination.

4.1.1.8 The farm operator should report immediately or within 24 h to relevant authorities any incidence of abnormal behavioural changes, health conditions and mortalities in the farm or any characteristic of a reportable/notifiable disease outbreak (e.g. Hemorrhagic Septicemia, Bluetongue).

4.1.2 Legal responsibilities of the farm operator/owner

4.1.2.1 The farm owner should conform to existing sheep farming and welfare legislation. This covers the management of environment issues, farm location, sheep welfare requirements, disease control and reporting, dead sheep disposal, production of wholesome food and occupational hazards associated with sheep farming.

4.1.2.2 The farm operator should conform to existing labour legislation.

4.1.3 Sheep welfare responsibilities

4.1.3.1 Farm workers and farm operators shall not cause or allow anyone to cause cruelty to animals, including, but not limited to:

- a) maltreatment of sheep under his/her care and attention;
- b) neglect of sheep, such that it experiences pain, suffering or distress;
- c) failure to implement the proper feeding program to maintain the live weight of the sheep within the normal physiological range for the species type, age and sex;
- d) removal of any part of the anatomy without adequate anaesthesia, whenever applicable;
- e) putting to sleep (euthanasia), confine, handle or transport any sheep in a manner causing deliberate pain, suffering or distress; and
- f) keeping a sheep alive, especially that which is pronounced physically or physiologically incapacitated, unless it is under the direct care of a licensed and registered veterinarian.

4.1.3.2 The farm technicians and workers should not neglect sheep according to the following criteria:

- a) freedom from hunger and thirst and malnutrition. Feed withdrawal of sheep destined for slaughter should follow the guidelines set by the National Meat Inspection Service;
- b) freedom from physical discomfort and pain;
- c) freedom from injury and disease;
- d) with due consideration to the differences in the production system (confined and free-range/grazing), sheep should be given enough freedom to conform to essential behavior patterns; and
- e) freedom from fear and distress.

4.2 Farm location

4.2.1 Site selection

The farm should:

- a) be strategically located within the approved land use plan of the local government and should be compliant with
- b) have a reliable supply of adequate power, potable water and good access road;
- c) not be prone to flooding. Perimeter canals that drain to a closed lagoon may be constructed to prevent runoff from contaminating bodies of water and/or adjacent farms;
- d) be accessible to major facilities of production (i.e. feed mill, water system, forage area);
- e) with exception for those practicing integrated farming with their own post-harvest facilities, the farm should not be near service/public slaughter houses; and
- f) existing farms should have full control of the risks and ensure that there are mitigation measures in place. New farms should comply with the above provisions.

4.2.2 Site history

If there is available data/information from relevant government agencies or organizations on the prior land use, then it should be used to establish that the site is not a possible source of physical, chemical, microbiological, and other hazards. However, when these data are not available and uncertainty exists as to the suitability of the land for agricultural use, it is recommended to have the soil and water source analyzed for contamination.

4.3 Sheep housing and facilities

4.3.1 Housing

4.3.1.1 The farm building should be designed and constructed appropriately for the intended purpose, should provide proper ventilation and should be well maintained.

4.3.1.2 The building intended for keeping sheep should be constructed in the orientation that minimizes the adverse effects on sheep performance and eliminates possible hazards to its surroundings.

4.3.1.3 The building should be designed and constructed using materials that:

- a) should not cause any injury or impart hazard to the welfare of the sheep;
- b) provide comfort;
- c) can be easily cleaned and disinfected;
- d) can be easily replaced when damaged;
- e) create efficient stock management; and
- f) enhance biosecurity.

4.3.1.4 There should be an effective drainage system in place at the building.

4.3.1.5 Sheep should be provided with sufficient floor space/size suitable for their age, body weight and size to allow sheep to feed and drink comfortably.

4.3.1.6 The feeding and drinking equipment and facilities should conform with the standards/requirements for each species and should be constructed and conspicuously placed such that:

- a) sheep are able to eat and drink freely, allowing them to have normally; and
- b) contamination with sheep faeces and urine is prevented.

4.3.1.7 Pens and pathways should be:

- a) designed and constructed to prevent sheep from escaping; and
- b) free from protruding objects or structures (e.g. nails and bolts) that may cause injury to the sheep and farm operators and farm workers.

4.3.1.8 Housing design (particularly roof height and sides) should provide proper ventilation (whether natural or artificial) to maintain a comfortable environment.

4.3.1.9 Sheep buildings should have adequate lighting to ensure that sheep can be thoroughly inspected as required. Housing shall allow natural light to enter. Sheep shall not be subjected to dim and/or continuous lighting, nor permanent darkness. The use of artificial lighting is permitted, subject to it not exceeding a maximum day-length of 16 h.

4.3.1.10 Electrical installations and wirings should be protected and should not be accessible to the sheep.

4.3.1.11 Floors and pathway used by the sheep should be elevated and made from non-slippery materials, safe, stable and well-lighted to prevent injury or abnormal gait to the sheep.

4.3.1.12 The design of alleys and chutes should allow effective management of the sheep.

- a) Floors of alleys and chutes should be properly built to provide good footing, preventing slippage and injuries.
- b) Alleys and chutes should have sides of sufficient height to prevent sheep from jumping off or falling.

4.3.1.13 The farm should provide effective and appropriate facilities to restrain or handle sheep without causing undue stress and injury to both sheep and farm workers.

4.3.1.14 The premises should be kept clean at all times to prevent disease occurrence, establishment of breeding ground for pests and prevent environmental degradation.

4.3.2 Facilities

4.3.2.1 Holding pen

4.3.2.1.1 Sufficient pens and floor space should be provided to prevent overcrowding and permit necessary segregation of sheep.

4.3.2.1.2 Pen floors should be rough finished for cemented flooring, grass finished or sandy flooring and well-drained to provide good footing and prevent slipping or tripping.

4.3.2.1.3 The holding pen should be constructed in such a way that it will adequately protect the sheep from adverse weather conditions and will provide sufficient ventilation.

4.3.2.1.4 The holding pen should have proper facilities for sheep to feed and drink.

4.3.2.2 Pasture area and paddocks

4.3.2.2.1 Grazing sheep

4.3.2.2.1.1 There should be enough space for the sheep.

4.3.2.2.1.2 Shade or shelter within the pasture area should be provided.

4.3.2.2.1.3 Pasture area shall be properly maintained and managed to avoid being over grazed and polluted or heavily infested by parasites. Rotational grazing may be practiced, i.e. the herd is moved after one pasture lot has been grazed for some time.

4.3.2.2.2 Confined sheep

Those practicing cut-and-carry should establish their own forage or obtain a steady supply of forages.

4.3.2.3 Storage facilities

4.3.2.3.1 Feeds and forage materials, machinery and equipment and chemicals shall be properly stored, with accompanying signage or labels.

4.3.2.3.2 The storage facilities should be kept clean at all times.

4.3.2.3.3 The storage should have adequate ventilation, adequate protection from moisture to prevent growth of moulds, and should be vermin-proof.

4.3.2.3.4 Effective stock rotation should be practiced, i.e. "FIRST IN – FIRST OUT" rule.

4.3.2.4 Breeding facilities

The breeding facility and equipment should be properly designed to provide the sheep a comfortable and conducive environment for reproduction.

4.3.2.5 Isolation area

There should be a separate area intended for sick, quarantine, pregnant, injured and disabled sheep which require necessary veterinary attention.

4.3.2.6 Condemnation/disposal facility

There should be a separate area for disposal of mortalities that is enclosed and isolated, and should conform to existing environmental waste management regulations.

4.3.2.7 Fencing

4.3.2.7.1 The fence, including its posts (e.g. concrete, iron, hardwood and live posts) and gates, should be effectively designed to prevent entry of stray animals, predators, and escape or injury of the farm sheep.

4.3.2.7.2 If electric fence is used, it should be operated as per manufacturer's instructions.

4.4 Farm management

4.4.1 Sheep sourcing, identification and traceability

4.4.1.1 Animals shall be procured from reputable sources and records shall be maintained to ensure traceability.

4.4.1.1.1 Ear tagging, microchips and tattooing are the recommended methods of identification. Methods that are likely to cause the least amount of pain and distress to the animal should be used. Personnel shall be trained in the method of application.

4.4.1.2 Sheep identification should be routinely done (ear tagging and other forms of identification that are compliant with sheep welfare regulations) and the records of identification for the sheep should be kept properly.

4.4.1.3 If the establishment imports sheep, updated records of pertinent documents should be kept.

4.4.1.4 The farm operator should record all movement of sheep in and out of the farm. This includes updated records of veterinary protocols as prescribed by the concerned authority.

4.4.2 Feeds and nutrition

4.4.2.1 Sheep should be provided with optimum level of nutrition at all times, as required for their respective functions and well-being.

4.4.2.2 There should be adequate and continuous access to potable water.

4.4.2.3 Safe, clean, and adequate rations or feeding materials (silage, grasses, legumes and concentrates) suited for sheep should be provided.

4.4.2.4 When giving commercial feed, farm operators should use those that have been officially registered with the competent authority.

4.4.2.5 In case of farm-mixed feed formulation, farm operators should only use ingredients from authorized and traceable suppliers. Records of purchases should be kept.

4.4.2.6 The farm may also keep a record of available forage.

4.4.2.7 Banned chemicals, feed additives, supplements and any form of medication in the diet of the sheep, including those disallowed by the authorities or importing countries, should not be used.

4.4.2.8 Feed from animal origin shall be prohibited except for milk and milk products.

4.4.2.9 The feed mixing equipment should be kept clean at all times and have regular preventive maintenance schedule.

4.4.2.10 The farm operator should provide a daily feeding schedule or routine.

4.4.2.11 Procurement documents of feed concentrates and ingredients should be kept and updated properly to include:

- a) supplier or source of feed concentrate and its registration number;
- b) type of feed and supplements;
- c) quantity;
- d) declaration of ingredients;
- e) document of feed analysis;
- f) date of delivery; and
- g) date of manufacturing and batch number.

4.4.2.12 The type and quantity of ration being fed to the sheep should be recorded.

4.4.3 Breeding and weaning

4.4.3.1 Only sexually mature sheep of appropriate age and weight, and free from any disease or probable inherited abnormality should be bred.

4.4.3.2 In natural mating, appropriate ratio of male to female sheep should be practiced; general recommendation is 1 male for 25 females.

4.4.3.3 Only duly trained certified personnel should perform assisted breeding techniques (e.g. artificial insemination, embryo transfer and ovum pickup) on the sheep.

4.4.3.4 The lambs should be weaned only at a recommended body weight and age.

4.4.3.5 Weaning should be conducted with minimum stress to both the ewe and its young.

4.4.3.6 The farm operator/owner should provide the basic facilities for the newly weaned sheep.

4.4.3.7 The farm operator/owner should maintain updated individual sheep records that contain their lactation, breeding and reproductive performance.

4.4.3.8 Breeding programs and activities should be properly recorded, maintained, monitored and evaluated.

4.4.4 Other management practices

4.4.4.1 The farm personnel, when performing the management practices listed below, should use the appropriate tools and equipment, observe proper procedure (including provisions for restraint and pain management), and should keep records of such activities:

- a) hoof trimming;

- b) disbudding/dehorning;
- c) castration;
- d) shearing; and
- e) other routine management practices.

4.4.4.2 Guard and herding dogs should be properly trained.

4.5 Sheep health management

4.5.1 The farm operator should be responsible for maintaining good health of the sheep at all times, through proper management practices that include prevention, treatment and disease control and containment measures of the disease affecting the sheep.

4.5.2 There shall be a written sheep health program in place that is updated regularly and supervised by a licensed veterinarian, in accordance with the requirements of the competent authorities.

4.5.3 The health status of the sheep in the farm should be monitored and recorded regularly by the farm, and veterinary assessment of the establishment should be carried out annually by a licensed veterinarian and/or by a competent authority.

4.5.4 The vaccination program should be adopted against the diseases as required by competent authorities.

4.5.5 Drugs, medicines, and vaccines should be administered by a licensed veterinarian or trained personnel under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian. The use of growth promoters is prohibited.

4.5.6 Drugs or medicines should only be used for prophylactic (dairy sheep) and treatment reasons.

4.5.7 The use of illegal and banned medication and vaccines should be prohibited.

4.5.8 Drugs, medicines, and vaccines should be stored and identified properly; proper disposal of these items should be followed to prevent contamination to the environment.

4.5.9 Instructions of medication of each specific drug being administered should be strictly followed, particularly the withdrawal period before sheep are sent to market.

4.5.10 The farm operator should keep and maintain complete records of farm operations, management routines, and sheep health records like disease monitoring and medication. These records should be easily retrievable.

4.5.11 Records include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a) vaccination program;
- b) deworming;
- c) disease condition;
- d) diagnosis;
- e) intervention or treatment done;
- f) control measures;
- g) post-mortem findings;

- h) surveillance; and
- i) disposal.

4.5.12 The farm should maintain updated records of medicine purchase and administration that should be readily available for inspection.

4.5.13 The procurement records should have:

- a) date of purchase;
- b) name of the product (generic compound);
- c) quantity purchased;
- d) batch number;
- e) expiry date; and
- f) name of supplier.

4.5.14 Administration records should consist of the following:

- a) type of drugs or medication used;
- b) batch number;
- c) quantity of medicine used;
- d) date administered;
- e) route of administration;
- f) identification of sheep/group treated;
- g) number of sheep treated;
- h) date of completion of treatment;
- i) withdrawal period; and
- j) name of the person who administered the medicine.

4.6 Sheep welfare management

4.6.1 Proper techniques should be applied to handle and restrain sheep. Sheep should always be handled and restrained in such a way to protect them from fear, stress, pain and injury.

4.6.2 Appropriate and functional facilities, equipment, and tools should be used for effective sheep handling and restraint, in order to minimize stress and injury against sheep. The operators should acquire the skills and techniques to use the tools properly.

4.6.3 Sick, injured or disabled sheep should be separated from healthy sheep and should be given the necessary veterinary attention, including euthanasia if required and following the rules and regulations in euthanasia.

4.6.4 Sticks or canes should not be used to restrain the farm sheep.

4.7 Sheep transportation

In accordance with, the following measures should be observed during the transport of sheep:

- a) soiling and cross-contamination with faecal material should be minimized.
- b) Records that include sheep identification and place of origin should be carried during transport.
- c) Undue stress and/or risk from injury during loading, transport and unloading should be avoided.
- d) Whenever necessary, separate each sheep to avoid injury during transport.
- e) Whenever necessary, under loaded vehicles should contain partitions to avoid injury of sheep during transport.
- f) If the transport vehicle has more than one deck, sheep should be protected from cross-contamination.
- g) Adequate ventilation for the sheep should be maintained throughout the journey.
- h) Transport vehicles and crates should be cleaned and sanitised as soon the sheep have been unloaded.
- i) To mitigate the abrupt changes in weather condition, the transport vehicle should be fitted with supplies, including but not limited to containers with water, truck blanket or cover, and other tools to include water hose, sprinklers, pail, and shovel, whichever is needed.
- j) Transport vehicles should be provided with supplies necessary for emergencies such as tools, spare tires, etc.
- k) Transport vehicles should comply with the requirements of the competent authorities, e.g. registration with the Sheep Health and Welfare Division of the Bureau of Sheep Industry and accompanied by registered livestock handlers.
- l) Prior to slaughter, resting period of sheep should follow the relevant guidelines for resting.
- m) The maximum allowable time for sheep to be in transit, from loading until off-loading and rest, is 8 h.

4.8 Biosecurity measures

4.8.1 The farm should have a written protocol of biosecurity measures. Proper warning signage should be provided.

4.8.2 Biosecurity procedures should be well implemented and continuously monitored to prevent introduction of disease into the farm and/or to control its spread within the farm.

4.8.3 The biosecurity measures should take into consideration the relevant diseases identified by local regulations/authority.

4.8.4 The farm should have the appropriate and functional lay-out and infrastructure to ensure effective implementation of the biosecurity measures. These should include facilities for disinfection, with appropriate concentration of disinfectant, at entry (e.g. wheel bath or spraying, shower for visitors, handwashing facility, etc.)/exit point of the farm and the building (footbath).

4.8.5 All incoming sheep should undergo the appropriate quarantine measures.

4.8.6 Farm visitors and workers should undergo the appropriate quarantine measures.

4.8.7 Stray sheep should not be allowed within the premises. Sentinel sheep, when used, should be properly restrained/contained.

4.8.8 Imported sheep and sheep products should be accompanied by official documentation from the competent authority.

4.9 Farm sanitation program and environmental management

4.9.1 Farm premises should be kept clean and free of potential conditions conducive to breeding of pests, sheep parasites and disease outbreak. This is to avoid negative effects on the landscape, environment and sheep welfare.

4.9.2 Organic materials should be regularly removed from all livestock contact surfaces (i.e. floors, pen partitions). Where bedding is used, it should be regularly replaced.

4.9.3 The farm should have a proper and functional drainage system towards a water treatment facility. Solid and liquid waste should be managed and disposed according to existing relevant guidelines imposed by competent authorities.

4.9.4 The farm should have proper handling and disposal system for sick, injured and dead sheep, and should be in accordance to existing regulations of the authority.

4.9.5 The farm should have a written sanitation program that includes integrated pest management, e.g. fly control, rodent control, etc.

4.9.6 The farm operator/owner should take necessary measures to ensure that activities related to sheep farming do not contribute to the degradation of the environment (i.e. land, water, air) and cause destruction to bio-diversity.

4.9.7 The farm operator/owner should maintain and display clear instructions on procedure for disposal of farm solid wastes and farm chemical wastes (e.g. paint, expired pesticide/herbicide and containers, etc.).

4.9.8 The farm operator should be familiar with the proper procedure for disposal and schedule of actions to be taken, especially at times of emergency.

4.9.9 Waste shall be regularly removed to discourage ammonia build up and promote better air quality within buildings.

4.9.10. The farm should take appropriate measures to minimize excessive odor coming from the farm, especially those that may be associated with waste decomposition.

5 Review and evaluation of practices

5.1 Practices should be checked for compliance and evaluation for effectiveness and do-ability on a regular basis.

5.2 In cases where provisions are no longer applicable, they should be amended.

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