

FAN Meat and Animal Welfare in Practice

PAIN MANAGEMENT

ANIMAL WELFARE MEANS HOW AN ANIMAL IS COPING WITH THE CONDITIONS IN WHICH IT LIVES.

As livestock producers, we have a responsibility towards the wellbeing of the animals in our care and possession. Pain management is proven not only to be good management practice, but also has monetary value in the sense that animals showed an increased daily gain when pain management was practiced.

The well-being of animals is as important as their health. Animal health and animal welfare cannot be seen as separate issues. Animal health is thus a key component of animal welfare and a weakened health status will affect the animals' welfare, and when welfare is compromised, the animals will be more susceptible to infection and disease.

An animal is in a good state of welfare if it is healthy, comfortable, well-nourished, safe, able to express normal behaviour and if it is not suffering states such as pain, fear and distress.

Pain and the biological responses to it are part of a highly integrated multidimensional system that causes all animals to react, respond and protect themselves from their environment. The ability to experience pain is universally shared by all mammals. Whether or not animals "feel" pain the same as humans is immaterial, since most of the neural elements and biologic consequences of pain among all mammalian species are the same. It is important to note that cattle, sheep and goats may be in pain without the visual evidence indicating they are painful. Since these animals are a prey species, it is in their best interest to not exhibit pain.

Pain is an illness, experienced by all mammals, and can be recognised and effectively managed in most cases.

Signs of pain

Reluctance to move, rolling, grinding teeth, licking / biting at site of stimulus, kicking and stamping, inappetance, restlessness, pacing, vocalization, change in facial expression, turning toward site of stimulus, decrease in production, increased respiratory rate, increase in plasma cortisol (the stress hormone), changes in blood pressure, increased heart rate, decreased milk yield, weight loss.

Ruminants often become subdued, spend more time lying down and less time eating.

Pre-emptive pain management

Much of the pain research performed has shown tremendous benefits of pre-emptive administration of anti-inflammatory drugs.

During routine management procedures such as castration, dehorning and tail docking, studies showed that the use of general and local analgesia **prior** to performing the procedure resulted in lower serum cortisol levels, greater feed intake and less inflammation and swelling.

Studies also showed that without the use of general and local analgesia, there was a marked rise in serum cortisol and noradrenaline levels after castration, dehorning and tail amputation, indicating severe pain and stress.

The amount of pain experienced is not affected by age, and pain management should be practiced in animals of all ages.

FAN Meat will investigate the most appropriate intervention to minimise pain associated with standard management practices and advise producers in due course on the most appropriate action to follow.

