

Sheep welfare in stud and meat farms in South Brazil using the Animal Welfare Indicators protocol

Fabiana de Orte Stamm¹, Luana Oliveira Leite² and Carla Forte Maiolino Molento¹

¹Animal Welfare Laboratory (LABEA), Federal University of Paraná (UFPR), Agrarian Sciences Sector, Rua dos Funcionários, 1540, 80035-050, Juvevê, Curitiba, Paraná, Brazil, ²Department of Veterinary Medicine, Federal University of Paraná (UFPR), Agrarian Sciences Sector, Rua dos Funcionários, 1540, 80035-050, Juvevê, Curitiba, Paraná, Brazil; carlamolento@ufpr.br

Considering the lack of information about sheep welfare in Brazil, our objective was to assess ewe welfare in stud (S) and meat (M) farms. Seven S and 10 M farms were assessed during spring 2015, in Southern Brazil, using the Animal Welfare Indicators (AWIN) protocol for sheep, which has four welfare principles: good feeding, good housing, good health and appropriate behaviour. Total number of ewes was 164 in S and 267 in M farms. Results were compared with Mann-Whitney test at 0.05, and are presented as median (min-max) values, in the order S followed by M; AWIN indicator names are marked in *italic*. No differences were observed for indicators within good feeding and appropriate behaviour principles, including social isolation, stereotypies, excessive itching, familiar human approach test and Qualitative Behaviour Assessment. Overall, 6.9 (0.0-21.9)% of evaluated ewes were emaciated and the automatic drinker was not functioning in one M farm. There were differences within good housing principle, in the category fleece clean and dry with 74.2 (9.4-96.9)% vs 4.7 (0.0-73.9)%; and within good health principle, categories some fleece loss with 4.2 (0.0-45.8)% vs 17.3 (3.1-78.9)%; soiling and dags with 0.0 (0.0-0.0)% vs 17.4 (0.0-44.8)% and minor lesions 8.4 (3.1-27.6)% vs 0.0 (0.0-13.0)%; these differences probably relate to different shearing schedules (twice vs once a year) and to differences in breed (28.6 vs 90% of predominantly wool-blood). Head lesions were observed in 3.4 (0.0-8.3) vs 10.4 (0.0-26.3)%, probably due to tears caused by ear tagging, less common in S (50%) than in M (80%) farms. Indicators that seemed to restrict welfare but did not differ between groups were hoof overgrowth in 44.8 (11.5-75.0)% and tail docking 95.5 (3.4-100)%. We were able to identify main welfare restrictions in both stud and meat farms; overall welfare seems higher in stud farms due to fleece characteristics and shearing practices.