



BVA, BCVA, GVS and BVPA position on surplus male production animals

Executive summary

The specialisation of breeds for desirable food production traits, such as high yield milk, meat and egg production, has created a problem of unwanted offspring in some farmed species¹. Many of these animals are killed at a young age, often shortly after birth. This raises ethical issues, although the killing of animals is not a welfare harm per se providing it is carried out humanely.

Sentient animals are capable of experiencing positive and negative feelings such as pain, frustration and contentment. Where animals are used for human benefit this should be exercised with responsibility, and with consideration and compassion for the animals concerned.

The overarching priority should be the five welfare needs, the principle of a life worth living and a humane death. We believe that:

Recommendation 1: Quality of life should always take precedence over lifespan.

Recommendation 2: The dairy and egg industries should aim to move away from the production of surplus animals and seek solutions to the killing of unwanted animals.

Recommendation 12: Farm Assurance Schemes should be promoted to better enable customers to make sustainable and ethically informed choices about the food products they buy and the impact of these products on animal health and welfare.

Recommendation 13: Within the context of One Health, the agricultural sector and veterinary -derived products, where quality encompasses good animal health and welfare, food safety, environmental protection and fair returns for producers.