

GOOD LIFE OPPORTUNITIES FRAMEWORK

Sheep

HANDBOOK



LivWel+

Livestock Positive Welfare





Positive welfare leads to a good life

Good farm animal welfare is about more than preventing harm to animals – it's about creating the conditions for every animal to enjoy life. Animals value **positive experiences** such as feeling comfort, pleasure, interest, confidence, and good health. Allowing animals to make their own individual choices is also valuable. These help them to be relaxed, content, and able to cope well, which also supports growth and productivity. Enjoyable experiences are known as “**positive welfare**”.

To date, the main focus for farm animal welfare has been on preventing suffering. This approach is captured in the “Five Freedoms” for animal welfare, which aims to make sure animals are free from hunger and thirst, discomfort, pain, injury, disease, fear, distress, and from being stopped from behaving naturally. These harmful experiences are described as “**negative welfare**” which continue to be monitored and minimised.

For welfare to be truly good, positive experiences need to greatly outweigh any negative ones.

Defra's Animal Welfare Committee (formerly the Farm Animal Welfare Council) explains this through the idea of a “good life.” They rank animal welfare on a scale:

- **Life not worth living** – mostly negative experiences.
- **Life worth living** – a mix of positive and negative experiences.
- **Good life** – mostly positive experiences.

If animals are given resources (e.g. space, companions or enrichment) they value and that allow them to feel comfort, pleasure, interest, confidence, and good health, they have the chance to experience positive welfare and live a “good life.”

Good Life Opportunity Framework - Positive welfare tiers

Using advice from experts and research from scientific studies, scientists have created a framework that shows what farm animals need to feel comfort, pleasure, interest, confidence, and good health – and therefore live a good life.

The framework has three levels, ranging from **Welfare +**, giving animals some positive experiences that are better than the legal minimum standards, to **Welfare +++**, giving animals the best possible chance for a good life, with many opportunities for positive experiences

Moving up the tiers, animals have:



- More favoured resources (from the animal's point of view)
- A greater amount of resources
- More choice in resources
- Monitoring of behaviour and use of resources, so changes can be made to give them even more positive experiences

Defining opportunities for a good life for livestock

There are five categories of opportunities for positive experiences in farm animals:

Comfort

- Comfort focuses on the animals' ability to choose an environment that is physically and thermally comfortable.

Pleasure

- Beyond meeting their basic needs, sheep gain pleasure from food – especially when they have a choice in what they eat and can carry out natural activities like foraging and grazing.
- Young sheep also enjoy performing pleasurable behaviours like play.
- Sheep also experience pleasure from nurturing experiences, including the close bond between mother and lamb.

Confidence

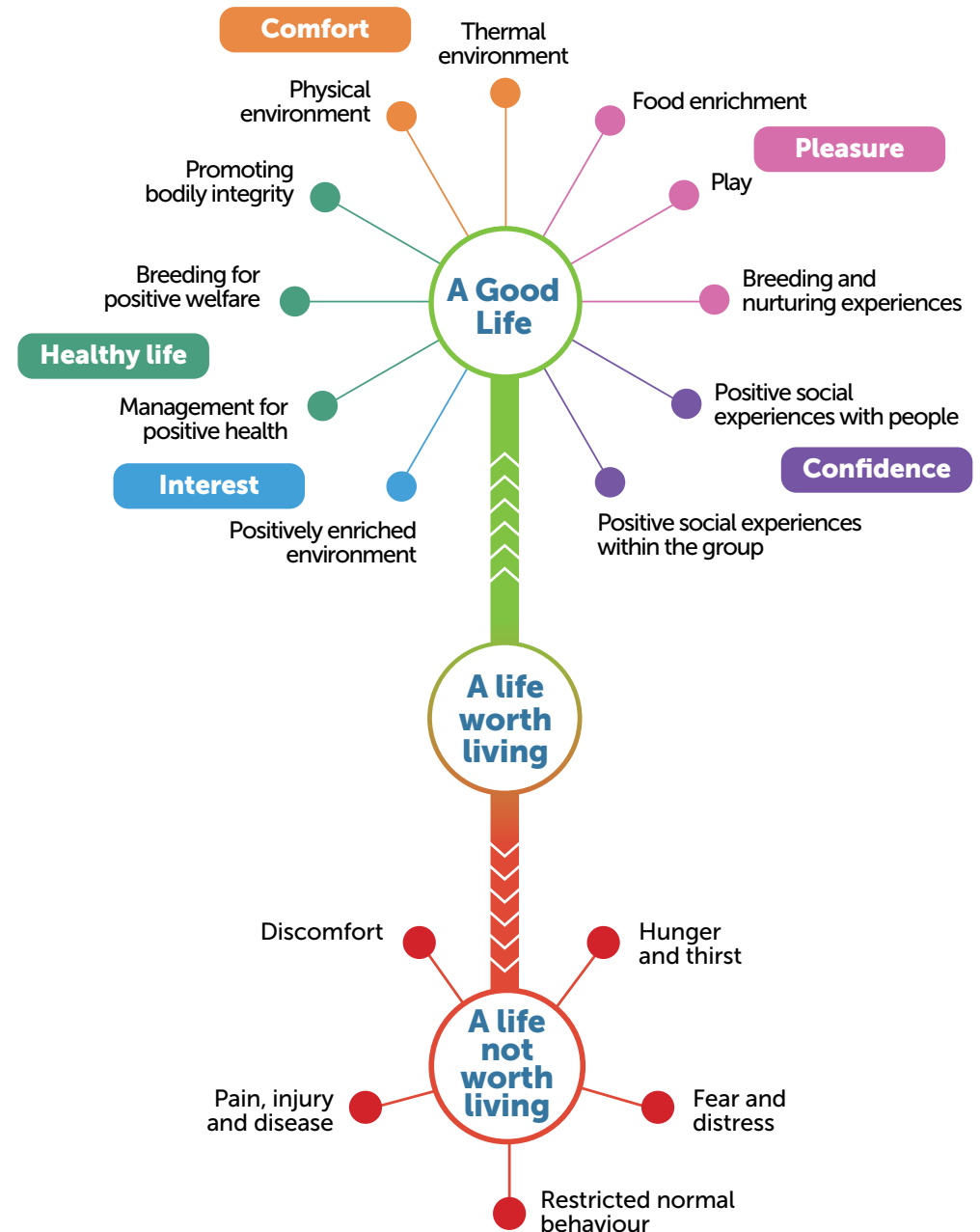
- When sheep are handled and managed in ways that help them feel safe, they can build trust with and enjoy the company of people.
- Sheep are flock animals and form strong bonds with other sheep.

Interest

- Sheep are inquisitive animals. They benefit from chances to explore, learn, show natural behaviours, and make choices in a varied and interesting environment throughout their lives.

Healthy life

- A healthy life is needed for a good life with day-to-day health managed effectively.
- Long term health and welfare is positively influenced by breeding choices.
- By not removing body parts of sheep, sheep are able to perform behaviours that are core to their basic nature.



Comfort: Physical environment

POSITIVE FRAMEWORK TIERS



- Sheep are untethered
- Indoors, dry and comfortable lying area consisting of solid floor (i.e. no slatted floors) and bedding
- Enough space for all sheep to rest simultaneously and undisturbed
- Enough space to choose a comfortable lying position
- Suitable level and period of darkness for undisturbed, nighttime rest
- Access to pasture for at least part of the year (e.g. a 3 month grazing season minimum)
- At pasture, sheep can all use a sheltered, dry lying area at the same time



- Bedding is deep as well as clean and dry
- Access to pasture for most of the year, i.e. at least 183 days



- Enough space to choose where and with whom to rest (i.e. more than enough space for all to rest together)
- Access to pasture all year round, unless extreme weather prevents this
- Sheep are observed and management is adjusted to optimise physical comfort, including trying different bedding types

Physical comfort is about being able to choose a comfortable lying position, rest undisturbed, all being able to lie down together when they choose, and the quality of lying surfaces on offer.

SCIENTIFIC REASONING

Bedding/lying material matters—straw is better than bare wooden slats⁴, especially for shorn ewes⁵. Other options like mats or woodchips have been shown to encourage them to lie and rest more than straw⁶.



It's important sheep have enough space to all lie down at the same time¹. When space is restricted, they rest less, move around more, and get disturbed often². Resting together is a sign of good welfare and strong flock bonds³.

Offering a choice of space and bedding allows for animals to express their own individual preference which is associated with positive welfare⁷.



1. Stokes et al 2017
2. Bøe et al., 2006; Averos et al., 2014; El Sabry et al 2023
3. Papageorgiou and Simitzis 2022
4. Gordon and Cockram 1995
5. De et al 2019
6. Færevik et al 2005, McGreevy et al 2007, Wolf et al 2010, Hansen et al 2012, Teixeira et al 2015
7. Englund and Cronin 2023

Comfort: Thermal environment

POSITIVE FRAMEWORK TIERS



- Housing maintained at a comfortable temperature (e.g. fans, ventilation, blinds, etc)
- Access to pasture for at least part of the year (e.g. a 3 month grazing season minimum)
- Access to some shade or shelter when outside
- Housed sheep have some choice of temperature in the housing (e.g. sheep able to move closer to/further away from open, ventilated areas)



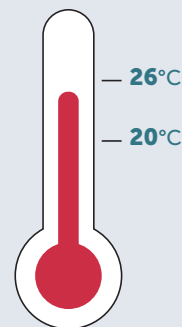
- Access to pasture for most of the year i.e. 183 days
- Access to a range of shelter types and shade intensities (e.g. trees, hedges, walls, portable shelters) when outside



- Enough space indoors for all sheep to choose to move nearer to or further from open, ventilated areas, at the same time
- Access to pasture all year round, unless extreme weather prevents this
- Outdoors, enough shelter/shade that all sheep can use at the same time
- Sheep are observed and management is adjusted to optimise thermal comfort (e.g. extra water sources, fans, ventilation etc in heat, extra bedding, shelter, exclusion of drafts etc in cold, especially for newly shorn sheep; adjusting field choice)

Thermal comfort is about providing a comfortable temperature as well as choice of temperatures, so all sheep can adapt as they prefer.

SCIENTIFIC REASONING



Sheep do not have to expend additional energy at temperatures between 12 and 27 °C¹, and are most comfortable between 20 and 26°C².

Sheep alter their behaviour to maintain bodily temperatures³. It is therefore important to provide opportunities for sheep to choose various temperatures in their environment.

Providing shade at pasture increases grazing activity. Sheep also choose to rest and ruminate in the shade⁴.



Sheep will behave as a flock and perform certain behaviours at the same time as one another⁵. There should be enough space for all sheep to access resources like shade and shelter at the same time.

When given the choice, sheep prefer to be outside even under extreme conditions⁴. Allowing both indoor and outdoor access all year round provides greater choice of thermal environment.

1. Čukić et al. 2023
2. Furtado et al., 2017; de Sousa Silva et al 2024
3. Hafez 1964
4. Melo et al 2024
5. Piirsalu et al 2020.

Pleasure: Food enrichment

POSITIVE FRAMEWORK TIERS



- At least some food delivered in a way that encourages grazing behaviour e.g. access to grass, or long fibre roughage (hay/straw) when indoors
- Enough space for all sheep to feed together at the same time



- Housed sheep are offered variety in food i.e. more than one feed/ forage type (e.g. grass silage, wholecrop silage, straw, turnips, fodder beet, tree hay) or variety within forage (e.g. hay made from multi species sward)
- Outdoors, sheep are offered a choice of pasture vegetation e.g. herbal/multi species sward (including grasses, herbs and legumes)



- Housed sheep are offered variety in food (more than two feed/ forage types)
- Access to browse hedges/trees in the pasture
- Feeding choices are monitored and acted on e.g. more preferred types of feed and foraging opportunities and novelty offered, within a nutritionally balanced diet

Finding pleasure from food is about providing variety and opportunities to naturally graze and browse.

SCIENTIFIC REASONING

Finding and eating food and feeling “full” are associated with pleasure¹. Sheep are very motivated to forage therefore providing a variety of opportunities is important not only for nutrition but to allow them to perform this natural, pleasurable behaviour.

Preventing grazing behaviour has been associated with an increase in behaviours related to frustration².



Sheep like to perform similar behaviours at the same time³. It is therefore important to provide enough space for this, particularly for meal-fed sheep.

Providing multiple food types allows choice and for sheep to select the food that they need or prefer⁴. Sheep will also self-medicate by selecting foods with particular properties (e.g. antiparasitic or anti-inflammatory) resulting in sheep that are more comfortable and resilient in their environment⁵.



1. Mellor 2015
2. Vaseur et al., 2006; Parés et al., 2023, Kanakanja et al., 2024.
3. Jørgensen et al 2009, Papageorgiou and Simitzis 2022

4. Englund and Cronin 2023
5. Villalba et al 2007, 2010.

Pleasure: Play

POSITIVE FRAMEWORK TIERS



- Enough space and companions for some lambs to engage in active play and social play, for at least part of the day
- Continual access to at least one type of enrichment/natural feature which allow opportunities for play at all times
- (e.g. mounds, rocks, ramps, platforms, tunnels, bales, replenishing straw, hanging balls, ropes, cardboard boxes)
- Housing has a suitable unobstructed area and non-slip floor for safe play



- Enough space most of the time for most lambs to engage in active/social play
- Continual access to at least two types of enrichment/natural feature which allow opportunities for play at all times



- Enough space at all times for all lambs to engage in active/social play
- Continual access to more than two types of enrichment/natural feature which allow opportunities for play at all times
- Resources to encourage play are replenished/changed regularly to maintain novelty
- Sheep are observed and management is adjusted to increase play behaviour

SCIENTIFIC REASONING

Pleasure from play is promoted by providing plenty of space, companions and interesting features and objects



Sheep will only perform play behaviours when the environment is sufficiently enriched and their basic needs are met.

When moved to a more spacious area, sheep show increased active play (bucking, trotting and cantering) and social play (rubbing and butting heads)¹.



Play behaviour is enjoyable and important for youngstock. Play becomes less common in yearling and older sheep².

Lambs have been shown to increase play when moved into a larger area containing objects (chains, volley balls, tunnels)³, and when provided with platforms⁴.

1. Stokes et al. 2017
2. Fisher and Matthews 2001
3. Chapagain et al 2014
4. Anderson et al 2015 Villalba et al 2007, 2010.

Pleasure: Nurturing experiences

POSITIVE FRAMEWORK TIERS



- Lambs are kept with, and able to feed from their own mother (or a foster ewe) for at least 8 weeks
- For dairy sheep, ewes and lambs kept together for a day (~ 24 hours) before separation
- Lamb adopters/restraint of ewe not used for fostering spare lambs
- If not naturally weaned, interventions protect against stress of milk and social weaning (e.g. solid food offered, no other stressor undertaken at the same time)
- Ewes have enough space/separate lambing pens (with clean, dry bedding) to move away from the main group and remain undisturbed when lambing



- Ewes and lambs kept together for at least 12 weeks after lambing
- If not naturally weaned, artificial weaning is gradual (>1 week) using methods such as fence-line contact
- Some ewes are left with lambs at weaning to help reduce the stress for lambs
- Some interventions are used to reduce the stress of weaning for the ewes, e.g. access to a ram
- Triplet, rejected or orphaned lambs fostered onto another ewe (preferably using a wet foster technique)



- Ewes and lambs kept together until natural weaning
- Sheep are provided with artificial and/or natural, sheltered, secluded places (e.g. hides, hedges) for lambing
- Sheep are observed and management is adjusted to optimise low stress weaning

SCIENTIFIC REASONING



Enabling pleasure from nurturing focuses on the ewe's opportunity to raise her lambs and management of the weaning process.

Weaning is stressful for ewes and lambs due to:

- Separation and loss of the mother-lamb bond;
- End of nursing, which calms and relaxes both;
- Loss of a key social and, for lambs, learning figure;
- Sudden changes in environment and social group³.

A ewe's connection with her lamb is powerful, naturally rewarding, and generates positive feelings for both the mother and the young¹.

Lamb-ewe contact also influences the development of stress-coping abilities in lambs², influencing future confidence and resilience.

Natural weaning for calves, according to the UK Farm Animal Welfare Council (now AWC) is the highest ethical standard⁴ and this can be extrapolated to other ruminants.

Natural weaning preserves the ewe-lamb bond and nutritional dependency until it naturally declines with age.

Signs of stress and anxiety in lambs decrease when weaned between 11 – 14 weeks of age compared to 6 – 7 weeks of age⁵. Gradual progressive weaning at 12 weeks of age earliest promotes positive welfare.

Science has shown these practices to reduce stress at weaning:

- Supplementary feed before and after weaning³;
- Keeping lambs in a familiar environment with other lambs and separating twins into separate groups⁶;
- Gradually increasing separation time leading up to permanent separation (with visual/olfactory contact with their mothers)²;
- Aligning weaning to when rams are introduced to flocks for ewes⁷;
- Keeping newly weaned lambs with some adult animals⁸.

1. Mellor 2015b

2. Freitas-de-Melo et al 2023

3. Freitas-de-Melo et al 2022

4. FAWC 2019

5. Sowinska et al., 2001; Schichowski et al.,

2010, Çakmakçi et al., 2021.

6. Casuriaga et al., 2021

7. Pérez-León et al., 2006

8. Pascual-Alonso et al., 2015

Confidence:

Positive experiences with stock keepers

POSITIVE FRAMEWORK TIERS



- Farm environment is calm and quiet
- Stockkeeper behaviour towards, and handling of sheep is gentle, calm and confident
- Stockkeepers have been trained and/or are experienced in sheep handling



- Sheep have the opportunity to associate people with regular neutral interactions (e.g. stock keepers walking and talking calmly amongst the sheep)
- Sheep are handled (e.g. by a person/vehicle/dog/drone etc) always using low-stress principles: pressure is applied to initiate movement and released once sheep respond, allowing them to move away calmly rather than being chased
- Sheep have the opportunity to familiarise with stock keepers, handling equipment and routine management
- Positive reinforcement given for some handling (e.g. feeding treats at handling)
- Design and layout of handling systems allow for safe, natural and low stress movement of sheep



- Formal training of stockkeepers on sheep welfare and handling
- When handled or moved, sheep are trained to confidently approach using rewards e.g. feed associated with vehicles/ buckets/trough, calling/whistling, hand/body signals, rather than being moved away through their fear response
- Sheep are monitored and action taken to increase confidence around humans

SCIENTIFIC REASONING

Ensuring confidence with stock keepers means handling animals in a calm, confident way. This requires good training and suitable equipment that sheep have been able to get comfortable and familiar with.



The human-animal relationship is key to improving the welfare of animals¹.

Calm, quiet stock keepers and proper training are essential for low-stress handling and building a positive human-animal relationship².

Positive routine handling methods, such as using feed incentives or training a lead sheep, promote positive welfare by allowing animals to move towards something rewarding, rather than moving away from pressure, which supports more confident behaviour⁵.

Calm, neutral human contact has been shown to improve welfare. Lambs exposed to a quiet calm person three times a day showed better growth and reduced mortality possibly due to reduced stress and enhanced immunology³.

Low-stress handling involves calmly stepping into the edge of a sheep's flight zone to encourage movement, then stepping back to reward the sheep once it moves, and allowing the sheep to follow each other's natural herding instincts. This keeps sheep calmer and more confident compared to continuous pressure from dogs/people, which can increase fear and stress⁴.

1. Waiblinger et al 2006
2. Coleman and Hemsworth 2014
3. Cowie, 2024
4. Grandin 2022
5. Hutson and Grandin 2024

Confidence:

Positive social experiences within the flock

POSITIVE FRAMEWORK TIERS



- Physical environment, i.e. space, resource distribution and visual barriers, enables sheep to avoid negative interactions
- No sheep are kept alone; outside of the breeding season rams kept in a stable social group with carefully managed reintroduction after breeding season to avoid fighting. Sheep that need to be separated for health reasons have at least visual contact with other sheep
- Any new sheep introduced gradually and sensitively (e.g. initial fence separation)



- Lambs kept and reared together in the same group (from separation from ewe or arrival on farm)
- Any mixing/regrouping is carried out gradually and carefully (e.g. at pasture, regrouping with at least two familiar animals)
- Sheep are kept in groups of familiar animals to establish and maintain a stable social flock



- Enough space for sheep to choose who to spend time with and synchronise behaviour
- Natural social flock structure is maintained e.g. ram present, lambs with ewes for social learning)
- Minimal or no mixing of sheep (e.g. sheep remain on the same farm, within the same social group, from birth through to death)
- Sheep monitored and action is taken to reduce negative and increase positive interactions between animals

SCIENTIFIC REASONING



Sheep are social animals. To ensure they have positive social experiences, they need space so they can be selective and synchronised, and stability so they can form social bonds.

Sheep are motivated to form bonds with one another for companionship and protection, and to facilitate learning.

In wild situations, sheep will form stable flocks. Ewes will form groups of mothers and daughters. Rams, outside of mating season, will also form stable groups⁴. Maintaining stable groups with natural composition promotes positive welfare.

Mixing sheep has been shown to cause negative social interactions, and stress, which can lead to reduced meat quality⁵.

Stable social groups are characterised by positive social interactions between sheep such as rubbing and grooming⁶. These interactions are associated with positive wellbeing. Rams receiving fewer positive interactions displayed poorer wellbeing⁷.

Sheep are a social species and should be able to have positive social experiences within their group. This starts with allowing sheep to avoid negative interactions by enabling sheep to move away and avoid others if they choose, by providing space and good distribution of resources.

Providing enough space also allows sheep to synchronise their behaviour, which is reflective of flock bonding and indicates positive welfare¹.

Providing enough resources can increase positive social behaviours², which are associated with the comforting positive feelings of bonding³.

- Berthel et al 2022
- Teixeira et al 2014, Aguayo-Ulloa et al 2015
- Papageorgiou and Simitzis 2022.
- Fisher and Matthews 2001
- Sevi et al 2001, Ithurralde et al 2025
- Fisher and Matthews 2001
- Papadaki et al 2024 Schiller et al 2023

Isolating sheep from flocks has been shown to be distressing, therefore unwell sheep should be kept in visual contact of other sheep.

Interest: Enriched environment

POSITIVE FRAMEWORK TIERS



- Continual access to a scratching object (e.g. scratching posts/trees/branches)
- Continuous access to at least one type of enrichment/natural feature for exploration, investigation and/or foraging behaviour (e.g. indoors: hay bales, hay nets, straw, piles of logs, branches, ramps, brushes, scratching posts; outdoors: mounds, hills, rocks, streams, trees/woods/orchards, accessible hedges, tree stumps/roots, logs, bales, a variety of edible vegetation)
- Access to pasture for at least part of the year (e.g. a 3 month grazing season minimum)
- Enough space to allow for natural behaviour, i.e. grazing on clean pasture



- Continuous access to at least two types of enrichment/natural feature for exploration, investigation and/or foraging behaviour
- Access to pasture for most of the year (i.e. more than 183 days)



- Continuous access to a complex outdoor environment, offering diversity through a choice of three or more items/natural features e.g. accessible hedges, tree stumps/roots, logs, bales, ramps, trees/woods/orchards, rocks, hills, streams, a variety of edible vegetation
- New items introduced regularly to maintain interest (could include regular rotation or choice of pasture for novelty)
- Access to pasture available all year round
- Quality of the pasture environment is maintained throughout all seasons (e.g. reduce poaching, bale grazing)
- Sheep monitored and action taken to provide a more enriched environment

SCIENTIFIC REASONING

Sheep are highly motivated to explore their environment. Engaging in this behaviour is both fulfilling and rewarding, especially when it leads to finding food ¹.

Providing more complex enrichment—such as a variety of vegetation types outdoors—increases environmental complexity. This is linked to an increase in positive behaviours associated with good emotional wellbeing ².



A more diverse environment also increases the opportunity for sheep to express choice and agency as to what they interact with, which also supports positive mental wellbeing³.

Sheep actively use and exercise choice in their outdoor environment. For example, they may move uphill at night and downhill during the day to graze. In varied pastures, they also show more selective foraging behaviour ⁴.

1. Boissy et al 2007, Mellor 2015a 2015b
2. Manteuffel et al 2009
3. Englund and Cronin 2023
4. Stokes et al 2017

Promoting interest in sheep requires a diverse and interesting outdoor environment, or if housed, providing enrichments to increase the opportunity for grazing and investigative behaviours.

Healthy life:

Management policy for positive health

POSITIVE FRAMEWORK TIERS



- Sheep health and welfare plan setting out health and husbandry activities, developed with appropriate veterinary advice, and reviewed at least annually
- Any variation in normal feeding, drinking, behaviour or physical condition of sheep given immediate attention to identify the cause
- Specific training given on medication and humane culling
- Pain relief used as part of management of unwell/injured animals e.g. lameness/mastitis treatment



- Procedures in place to reduce the risk of disease and other negative consequences from being outdoors
- Regular dialogue e.g. every 6 months with vet or other advisors/consultants to discuss welfare
- Carry out welfare outcome monitoring in addition to daily livestock inspections
- Welfare outcome monitoring data used to adjust resources and/or management to improve health and welfare accordingly



- Farm staff take active part in welfare activities with wider benefits (e.g. member of peer-to-peer discussion group, scheme policy/management group, on farm welfare research)
- Daily livestock inspections in extensive systems
- Formal training given on medication and humane culling

SCIENTIFIC REASONING



Positive welfare relates to both brief positive experiences as well as long term wellbeing. Positive health is part of this long term wellbeing.

Managing for positive health refers to promoting an animal's ability to function well by focusing on proactive interventions that promote health and resilience¹.

A resilient animal can adapt to its environment and maintain or restore good health². Resilience is a proposed indicator of positive welfare³.

This opportunity for a healthy life was developed by experts using key principles of positive health management.

Managing for positive health focuses on proactive interventions that promote health and resilience.

1. Colditz 2022
2. Cohen et al 2024
3. Rault et al 2025

Healthy life: Breeding for positive welfare

POSITIVE FRAMEWORK TIERS



- Undesirable side-effects of genetic selection for production efficiency recognised and breeding choices made to reduce current health and welfare problems and increase positive health within flock



- If own replacements are not home bred, feedback is given to the rearers/breeders or genetics companies as to what traits are important
- Breeding choices are made for future flock health and welfare, valuing these EQUALLY to production parameters



- Breeding choices made for long-term improvement of health and welfare, resilience and metabolic normality, including suitability to particular type of land/system, valuing these OVER production parameters

SCIENTIFIC REASONING



Breeding for positive welfare means selecting the right breeds and traits to ensure a healthy life through long term positive wellbeing and resilience.

Farm animals have been selectively bred with a large focus on increasing production, which is often negatively correlated with welfare¹.

Breeding choices should address key health and welfare issues by carefully selecting for better traits.

Examples of breeding for positive welfare include^{2,3,4,5}:

- selecting sheep for less reactive temperaments to improve handleability and the human-animal relationship
- improved maternal care and easier birthing,
- ensuring the suitability of the breed to the land and system.

1. FAWC, 2012
2. Salvin et al. 2024
3. Pickup and Dwyer 2011
4. Redfearn et al 2023
5. Fonsêca et al 2024

Healthy life: Promoting bodily integrity

POSITIVE FRAMEWORK TIERS



- Some lambs are not tail docked and strategies to prevent flystrike implemented e.g. early season lambs, parasite control, pasture control, resilient breeds (fleece structure and dag score, self-shedding), dagging and crutching as needed
- Some ram lambs are not castrated and appropriate management strategies implemented e.g. lambs that finish before puberty not castrated, separating ram from ewe lambs before puberty
- If castration is undertaken, it is carried out on lambs over 24 hours and younger than 7 days old using the clip method
- If tail docking is undertaken, anaesthetic AND long-term pain relief are used for all ages of lambs



- Majority (>50%) of lambs are not tail docked
- Majority (>50%) of ram lambs are not castrated



- No lambs are tail docked
- No rams are castrated
- No lambs are ear notched

SCIENTIFIC REASONING

Removing or altering a body part of an animal, i.e. a "mutilation", reduces the ability of the animal to perform activities that are intrinsic to the basic nature of that animal.

This is a welfare issue because the animal's desire to pursue such activities still remains, potentially resulting in reduced mental wellbeing and ability to perform behaviours that result in positive physical and mental experiences (positive welfare).



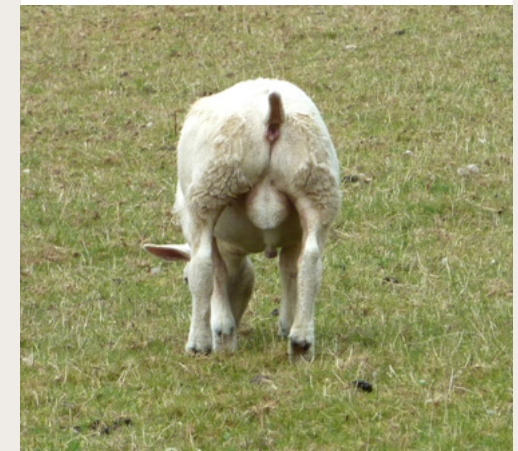
Sheep may use their tails to communicate with each other as seen in other social species¹.

The tail is important for sending scent signals, which helps form social bonds, helps sheep recognise one another and for the ewe-lamb bond².

Research shows that when used in lambs under 7 days old, the ClipFitter method can reduce the immediate pain of castration to a level similar to leaving lambs uncastrated. For tail docking, ClipFitter and rubber rings produced similar short-term responses when lambs were given pain relief⁵.

Mutilations including tail docking and castration are painful³.

In other mammals, surgical castration has been found to be associated with signs of depression⁴, suggesting that no castration improves welfare.



By not removing body parts of sheep, sheep are able to perform activities that are core to their basic nature.

1. Reefman et al 2009
2. Fisher and Matthews 2001
3. Lomax et al 2010
4. Lin et al 2024
5. SRUC 2022

LivWel+ focuses on evolving farm animal welfare assessment into capturing “positive welfare” opportunities, but this sits alongside measuring and minimising “negative welfare” which can be done through AssureWel welfare outcome assessment protocols. For more information about AssureWel visit: www.assurewel.org/sheep

LivWel+

Livestock Positive Welfare



To find out more about the
LivWel+ project contact:
kstill@soilassociation.org

Good Life Opportunities Framework:
Sheep Handbook – 2nd Edition,
©Soil Association April 2026

LivWel + is funded by Ocado Retail,
the Welsh Government and the Eschersheim Fund



Ariennir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
Funded by
Welsh Government



Soil Association
Spear House, 51 Victoria Street, Bristol BS1 6AD
T 0117 314 5000
Registered charity no. 206862
www.soilassociation.org