



## Farmed Animal Welfare



# Sheep

A code of practice issued under the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

Code of Practice 2012



Department of  
**Agriculture and  
Rural Development**

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## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 What is the purpose of this Code of Practice?

Efficient sheep management requires both experience and the observance of high standards of care. Unless management and handling are done well, the welfare of the sheep cannot be adequately protected. This code sets out minimum standards that represent society's expectation of that standard of care, based on good practice and scientific knowledge. It is intended to encourage all those responsible for its implementation to exceed the minimum standards and to adopt the good practice of husbandry, care and handling. Advice is given throughout the code and is designed to encourage those responsible for an animal to strive for a high level of welfare.

### 1.2 Who does this code apply to?

This code applies to all persons responsible for the welfare of sheep. Under the Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 a person responsible for a farmed animal is responsible for meeting the legal obligations for animal welfare. Responsibility for meeting minimum standards relating to the provision, design and maintenance of the facilities and equipment, the allocation of operational responsibilities and the competence and supervision of performance of employees, lies with the owner and every person in charge of the sheep at all times.

#### **Legislative Requirement**

Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 states at:

**Regulation 5 - (1)** - A person responsible for a farmed animal:

- (a) shall not attend to the animal unless that person is acquainted with any relevant code of practice and has access to the code while attending to the animal;
- (b) shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that a person employed or engaged by that person does not attend to the animal unless that other person -
  - (i) is acquainted with any relevant codes of practice;
  - (ii) has access to all such codes while attending to the animal; and
  - (iii) has received instruction and guidance on those codes.
- (2) In this section, a "relevant code of practice" means a code of practice issued or revised under section 16 of the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 relating to the particular species of farmed animal to which a person is attending.

### **1.3 What animals does this code apply to?**

This code applies to sheep. In this code the word “sheep” refers to all ovine stock, and an animal under 6 months of age is considered to be a lamb.

### **1.4 What happens if I do not follow the minimum standards in this code?**

Failure to meet a minimum standard in this code may be used as evidence to support a prosecution for an offence under the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 or the Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012. A person who is charged with an offence under the Animal Welfare legislation can defend himself or herself by showing that he or she has equalled or exceeded the minimum standards in this code. You should be aware that any of the legal requirements quoted in the code could change - you should check that these are an accurate statement of the law as it currently stands.

## **2.0 Stockmanship and Animal Handling**

The importance of good stockmanship and animal handling cannot be over-emphasised. A stock-keeper should have knowledge of animal needs and behaviours, an understanding of the husbandry system and the skills needed to operate within it. They should have a rapport with the animals, an ability to observe them, and have skills in the practical aspects of handling, care and manipulation of animals. These are important if the animals' health and welfare requirements are to be met.

### **2.1 Stockmanship**

Good stockmanship requires competence, experience and the observance of high standards of animal husbandry. The knowledge and experience of a person responsible for a farmed animal and the needs of the animal, weather patterns, shelter, environment and management practices are the prime means of ensuring the welfare of sheep is maintained and enhanced.

The number and type of sheep kept and the stocking rate and/or housing density should depend on the suitability of the environment, the capacity of the farm, the competence of the person responsible for them and the time available to carry out his/her duties.

The relevant animal welfare legislation applies to owners as well as any person looking after sheep on their behalf, wherever the sheep are located. A written contract can be of value in ensuring that all parties are clear about their responsibilities in respect of welfare. However, the obligations imposed by law will still apply.

The most significant single influence on the welfare of any flock is the stock-keeper, who should develop and carry out an effective routine for continuing care. All stock handlers should be aware of the welfare needs of the sheep and be capable of safeguarding them





under all foreseeable conditions before being given responsibility for a flock. This requires the acquisition of specific skills which may be developed on-farm, working with an experienced person, or by following a course offered by a suitable training organisation. Wherever possible, the training should be of a type which leads to formal recognition of competence.

Stock-keepers should know the signs of good health in sheep. These include general alertness, free movement, active feeding and rumination.

Stock-keepers should understand the significance of a change in the behavior of the animals and know the signs which indicate ill-health in sheep. These include listlessness, abnormal posture and behaviour, lameness, visible wounds, abscesses, injuries, scouring, absence of cudding, persistent coughing or panting, scratching and frequent rubbing, rapid loss of body condition, excessive wool loss, sudden fall in milk yield and, in some circumstances, being apart from the flock.

The stock-keeper should draw up a written health and welfare plan with the flock's veterinary surgeon and, where necessary, other technical advisors, which should be reviewed and updated each year. This plan should set out health and husbandry activities that cover the yearly production cycle, and include strategies to prevent, treat or limit existing disease problems. The plan should include records to enable the health and welfare of the flock to be monitored and assessed.

A stock-keeper should know when veterinary treatment is required.

The capabilities of those in charge of the sheep is a significant factor in determining the size of a flock. The flock size should not be increased, nor should a unit be set up, unless those responsible have the skills necessary to safeguard the welfare of every animal in their charge.

It is important to ensure that enough time is available within the stock handler's normal work routine for the flock to be properly inspected and for any necessary remedial action to be taken.

It may be necessary to engage experienced, competent contractors to provide assistance during busy periods such as lambing, shearing, routine dipping and other disease prevention treatments; or when regular staff are unavailable due to holiday or sickness. Animals should be handled with care, avoiding undue stress.

## Legislative Requirement

Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 states at:

**Schedule 1, paragraph 1** - Animals shall be cared for by a sufficient number of staff who possess the appropriate ability, knowledge and professional competence.

Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 states at:

**Section 9 (1)** - A person commits an offence if that person does not take such steps as are reasonable in all the circumstances to ensure that the needs of an animal for which that person is responsible are met to the extent required by good practice.

**Section 9 (2)** - For the purposes of this Act, an animal's needs shall be taken to include:

- (a) its need for a suitable environment,
- (b) its need for a suitable diet,
- (c) its need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns,
- (d) any need it has to be housed with, or apart from, other animals, and
- (e) its need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease.

**Section 9 (3)** The circumstances to which it is relevant to have regard when applying subsection (1) include, in particular -

- (a) any lawful purpose for which the animal is kept, and
- (b) any lawful activity undertaken in relation to the animal.

**Section 9 (4)** - This section does not apply to the destruction of an animal in an appropriate and humane manner.

## 2.2 Animal Handling

Competent handling of sheep is essential for their proper husbandry. Distress and risk to both the animals and their handlers are decreased when good handling practices are followed.

Grazing animals, such as sheep, are prey species and fear motivates them to escape from perceived danger. Reducing fear by keeping an animal calm makes it easier to handle. Dogs should not be used when sheep are in a confined space.

Sheep are a flock species and are greatly stressed by separation from the flock. They should be kept with or see other sheep, except where they are isolated for veterinary reasons.





Careful and quiet handling will help improve animal welfare and productivity, reduce ill-health, risk of injury, and result in animals settling down and resuming normal behaviour (e.g. feeding) more quickly after handling.

All stock handlers should have easily operated and efficient handling pens to facilitate routine management and treatment on a size and scale to suit the flock numbers.

Pens and floors should be maintained in good repair and should not have any sharp edges or projections which might injure sheep.

When sheep are to be transported, well-designed collecting, loading and unloading facilities should be available on the farm. It is helpful if the sheep are familiar with these handling pens in order to minimise stress levels.

Sheep should not be caught by the fleece alone. They should be handled or restrained by means of a hand or an arm under the neck (holding the neck wool, if necessary) with the other arm placed on or around the rear. Lifting or dragging sheep by the fleece, tail, ears, horns or legs is unacceptable. Particular care should be taken with horns, which may be broken off if sheep are roughly handled.

Devices such as raddles, harnesses, tethers and yokes should be of suitable material and should be properly fitted and adjusted to avoid causing injury or discomfort. They should be checked regularly and should not be used for longer than necessary. Tethering by the horns is unacceptable. The practice of “langling” where the front leg is tied to the back leg to prevent sheep escaping is unacceptable and should not be used.

Further information is available on “Understanding Flight Zone and Point of Balance for Low Stress Handling of Cattle, Sheep, and Pigs” at <http://www.grandin.com/behaviour/principles/flight.zone.html>

All stock handlers should be aware of their own safety as handling sheep can cause a variety of manual injuries, ranging from strains and sprains through to broken bones. Reducing the risk of manual handling injuries includes attention to posture, correct lifting techniques and maintaining fitness. All stock-keepers should walk through all sheep handling areas and look for hazards, then make any necessary changes to improve safety. Remember inexperienced workers are at a greater risk of injury, so make sure they are thoroughly trained.

The HSE website provides essential information and guidance on health and safety in agriculture - <http://www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/index.htm>

## Legislative Requirement

Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 states at:

**Schedule 1, paragraph 9** - The freedom of movement of animals, having regard to their species and in accordance with good practice and scientific knowledge, shall not be restricted in such a way as to cause them unnecessary suffering or injury.

**Schedule 1, paragraph 10** - Where animals are continuously or regularly tethered or confined, they shall be given the space appropriate to their physiological and ethological needs in accordance with good practice and scientific knowledge.

## 2.3 Transport

Facilities should be available on-farm to load and unload sheep onto and from a vehicle, with as little stress as possible. Stock-keepers should know how to handle animals during loading and unloading, (see Section 2.2 Animal Handling).

If you transport animals you should make sure that you know the rules and procedures that affect you. There are a number of specific points that anyone transporting sheep needs to take account of. These are summarised in a DEFRA leaflet at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/2011/05/04/pb12544f-welfaresheep/>

Farmers transporting their own animals to/from their holding, using their own vehicles, on journeys of less than 50km (approximately 31 miles) must comply with the general conditions for transport as detailed below.

In order to transport sheep on journeys of more than 65km (approximately 40 miles) transporters based in Northern Ireland must hold a transporter authorisation issued by DARD and a certificate of competence. Additional requirements apply for journeys lasting more than 8 hours.

### Fitness to transport

If there is any doubt about an animal's fitness to transport veterinary advice must be sought before the animal is loaded onto the transport.

Sheep are not considered fit to transport in any of these situations:

- they are unable to move independently without pain or to walk unassisted
- they have a severe open wound, or prolapse
- they are heavily pregnant (past 90% gestation)
- they have given birth within the previous seven days



Lambs are not considered fit to transport if:

- their navel has not completely healed, or
- if the intended journey is more than 100 km and they are less than 1 week old.

Weak, sick or injured sheep may be transported if the transport will cause no unnecessary suffering or ill treatment to the animals, and:

- they are only slightly injured or ill and transport would not cause additional suffering, and/or
- they are transported under veterinary supervision for or following veterinary treatment or diagnosis.

### **Legislative Requirements**

The Welfare of Animals (Transport) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 (as amended) makes for the administration and enforcement of COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 1/2005 of 22 December 2004 on the protection of animals during transport and related operations and amending Directives 64/432/EEC and 93/119/EC and Regulation (EC) No 1255/97.

#### **Article 3 – General conditions for the transport of animals**

No person shall transport animals or cause animals to be transported in a way likely to cause injury or undue suffering to them.

In addition, the following conditions shall be complied with:

- (a) all necessary arrangements have been made in advance to minimise the length of the journey and meet animals' needs during the journey;
- (b) the animals are fit for the journey;
- (c) the means of transport are designed, constructed, maintained and operated so as to avoid injury and suffering and ensure the safety of the animals;
- (d) the loading and unloading facilities are adequately designed, constructed, maintained and operated so as to avoid injury and suffering and ensure the safety of the animals;
- (e) the personnel handling animals are trained or competent as appropriate for this purpose and carry out their tasks without using violence or any method likely to cause unnecessary fear, injury or suffering;
- (f) the transport is carried out without delay to the place of destination and the welfare conditions of the animals are regularly checked and appropriately maintained;
- (g) sufficient floor area and height is provided for the animals, appropriate to their size and the intended journey;
- (h) water, feed and rest are offered to the animals at suitable intervals and are appropriate in quality and quantity to their species and size.

### 3.0 Feed and Water

Sheep need daily food and fresh, clean water in adequate quantities and containing sufficient nutrients to meet their requirements for good health and welfare. A good diet provides the animal with sufficient energy and nutrients for metabolic and behavioural needs and does not harm the animal.

When considering the amount of food, nutrients and water sheep require, a number of different factors need to be taken into account e.g. age, physiological state (growing, pregnant, lactating), and weather. These factors, along with variation in requirements among individual animals, mean there is considerable variation in feeding practices in farming systems.

Feed requirements vary throughout the year, but are generally greatest during lactation, late pregnancy, growth and during periods of excessive cold (especially after sheep are shorn). Sheep should have access to suitable feed in sufficient quantities and an adequate supply of fresh drinking water each day or be able to satisfy their fluid intake needs by other means. Ideally, water should be available at all times and most particularly during lactation. It is not acceptable to rely on the water content of feedstuffs, including roots.

Sheep need regular access to feed on a daily basis. Feed and water should never be totally withheld for management purposes such as drying off ewes. Sudden changes in the type and quantity of feed should be avoided.

Sheep should be provided with fresh feed, and any which is stale or contaminated should be removed from troughs before more is added. Feed should be palatable and of good quality. It is especially important to dispose of any silage which has deteriorated in storage or in the feed trough.

Systems involving the use of high intakes of cereal-based diets should have a gradual introductory feeding period. Sufficient roughage or a suitable high fibre concentrate should always be available for sheep to eat. Care should be taken to prevent individual sheep from gorging by ensuring that there is plenty of trough space available to the flock. In such systems mineral mixtures should be specifically designed to avoid urinary problems in male animals.

Certain substances, in particular copper, can be harmful to sheep. Compound feeds or mineral preparations which have been prepared for other species should be avoided unless the composition has been assessed as suitable for sheep. Stock-keepers should be aware of breed variations in susceptibility to copper poisoning.



Sheep should not have access to farm waste which may cause unnecessary suffering or injury i.e. silage wrap, waste oil, antifreeze containers or junk piles. Plant poisoning usually happens when animals are grazed on poor pasture and are tempted to seek out weeds and plants that they would normally leave alone, (see section 10 on Noxious Weeds).

Sheep should only be given substances which are safe for them.

### **Legislative Requirements**

Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 states at:

**Schedule 1, paragraph 22** - Animals shall be fed a wholesome diet which is appropriate to their age and species and which is fed to them in sufficient quantity to maintain them in good health, to satisfy their nutritional needs and promote a positive state of well-being.

**Schedule 1, paragraph 23** - Animals shall not -

- (a) be provided with food or liquid in a manner which may cause unnecessary suffering or injury; or
- (b) be provided food or liquid containing any substance which may cause unnecessary suffering or injury.

**Schedule 1, paragraph 24** - All animals shall have access to feed at intervals appropriate to their physiological needs (and, in case, at least once a day), except where a veterinary surgeon acting in the exercise of his profession otherwise directs.

**Schedule 1, paragraph 25** - All animals shall have access to a suitable water supply and be provided with an adequate supply of fresh drinking water each day to be able to satisfy their fluid intake needs by other means.

**Schedule 1, paragraph 27 (1)** - No other substance, with the exception of those given for therapeutic or prophylactic purposes or for the purpose of zootechnical treatment shall be administered to animals unless it has been demonstrated by scientific studies of animal welfare or established experience that the effect of that substance is not detrimental to the health or welfare of the animals.

**Schedule 1, paragraph 27 (2)** - “zootechnical treatment” has a meaning given I Article 1(2)(C) OF Council Directive 96/22/EEC(a) concerning the prohibition on the use in stockfarming of certain substances having a hormonal or thyrostatic action and beta-agonists.

## 4.0 Shelter and Housing Facilities

### 4.1 General

The relationship between an animal and its environment is crucial to its welfare. Most sheep are required to cope with regularly changing climatic conditions and, occasionally, with more severe and extreme events. Persons in charge of animals have a legal obligation to ensure that animals in their care have a suitable environment, that the animal is able to exhibit normal behavior patterns and any need it has to be housed with, or apart from other animals.

Winter housing of sheep can improve their welfare but problems of both disease and welfare can arise when large numbers are kept together. Advice should be sought on the design, construction or modification of buildings. Adequate ventilation without draughts is of particular importance, as is the provision of sufficient trough space and lying area.

All fields and buildings should be kept clear of debris such as wire or plastic which could be harmful to the sheep.

When sheep are kept outdoors in winter, and particularly when fed on root crops, they should be allowed either to run back to pasture or to a straw bedded area which gives a more comfortable lying area as well as limiting the build-up of mud or dung on the fleece. Ground conditions should be such that mudballing of the fleece does not occur. Where there is no natural shelter for the sheep, artificial shelter, such as the placement of straw bales, should be provided.

### 4.2 Accommodation

The greater the restriction imposed on a sheep through housing systems, the less the animal is able to use its instinctive behaviour to minimise the effects of any imposed, unfavourable conditions. Housed sheep require continuing conscientious attention by staff well trained in the nutritional and environmental needs of the sheep.

When sheep are kept in a building they shall be kept on, or have access at all times to, a lying area which is well drained or well maintained with dry bedding.

When first housed, sheep should be both dry and free from footrot. A sheep affected by footrot should be segregated and treated immediately in order to prevent it from becoming a flock problem. Dry, clean, comfortable conditions under foot should be provided to minimise footrot and hygiene problems. Regular provision of fresh bedding is particularly important at lambing time. Wire meshed flooring is preferable to maintain foot health.

Internal surfaces of housing and pens should be made of materials which can be cleansed and disinfected or be easily replaced when necessary.





Surfaces should not be treated with paints or wood preservatives which may cause illness or death. There is a risk of lead poisoning from old paintwork especially when second-hand building materials are used.

All floors should be designed, constructed and maintained so as to avoid discomfort, stress or injury to the sheep. Regular maintenance is essential.

Solid floors should be well-drained and the sheep provided with dry bedding.

Newly-born and young lambs should not be put on slatted floors unless suitable bedding is also provided.

Water bowls and troughs should be constructed and sited so as to avoid fouling and to minimise the risk of water freezing in cold weather. They should be kept thoroughly clean and should be checked at least once daily, and more frequently in extreme conditions, to ensure that they are in working order.

Troughs should be designed and installed in such a way as to ensure small lambs cannot get into them and drown.

For sheep given concentrate feed, when all animals are fed together, it is important to have adequate trough space to avoid competition and aggression. In normal practice, approximately 30 cm of trough space is needed for hill ewes and approximately 45 cm for the larger lowland ewes. Excessive competition is detrimental to sheep welfare.

When feeding hay and silage ad libitum, trough space should normally be provided within the range 10-12 cm per ewe, dependent upon size. Racks and troughs should be positioned and designed to avoid injury, discomfort and damage to sheep.

### **Legislative Requirements**

Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 states at:

**Schedule 1, paragraph 4** - Where any animals (other than poultry) are kept in a building they shall be kept on, or have access at all times to, a lying area which is well drained or well maintained with dry bedding.

**Schedule 1, paragraph 11**- Materials used for the construction of accommodation, and in particular for the construction of pens, cages, stalls and equipment with which the animals may come into contact, shall not be harmful to them and shall be capable of being thoroughly cleansed and disinfected.

**Schedule 1, paragraph 12** - Accommodation and fittings for securing animals shall be constructed and maintained so that there are no sharp edges or protrusions likely to cause injury to them.

**Schedule 1, paragraph 26** - Feeding and watering equipment shall be designed, constructed, placed and maintained so that contamination of food and water and the harmful effects of competition between animals are minimised.

### 4.3 Lighting

Fixed or portable lighting must be available so that sheep kept in buildings can be thoroughly inspected at any time.

Throughout the hours of daylight the level of indoor lighting, natural or artificial, should be such that all housed sheep can be seen clearly by the person responsible for them.

Animals kept in buildings shall not be kept in permanent darkness and shall not be kept without an appropriate period of rest from artificial lighting. Light patterns should follow the daily rhythm of night and day.

#### Legislative Requirements

Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 states at:

**Schedule 1, paragraph 3** - Where animals are kept in a building, adequate lighting (whether fixed or portable) shall be available to enable them to be thoroughly inspected at any time.

**Schedule 1, paragraph 14** - Animals kept in buildings shall not be kept in permanent darkness.

**Schedule 1, paragraph 15** - Where the natural light available in a building is insufficient to meet the physiological and ethological needs of any animals being kept in it, then appropriate artificial lighting shall be provided.

**Schedule 1, paragraph 16** - Animals kept in buildings shall not be kept without an appropriate period of rest from artificial lighting.



## 4.4 Space Allowances

The space allowance and group size for housed sheep should be determined according to age, size and class of livestock. Some examples of current good practice, with adequate ventilation and well bedded on straw indoors, are set out below.

Space:	
Lowland ewes (60-90kg liveweight).	1.2-1.4m <sup>2</sup> floor space per ewe during pregnancy.
Lowland ewes after lambing with lambs at foot up to 6 weeks of age.	2.0-2.2m <sup>2</sup> floor space per ewe and lambs.
Hill ewes (45-65kg liveweight).	1.0-1.2m <sup>2</sup> floor space per ewe during pregnancy.
Hill ewes after lambing, with lambs at foot, up to 6 weeks of age.	1.8-2.0m <sup>2</sup> floor space per ewe and lambs.
Lambs up to 12 weeks old.	0.5-0.6m <sup>2</sup> floor space per lamb.
Lambs and sheep 12 weeks to 12 months old.	0.75-0.9m <sup>2</sup> floor space per lamb/sheep.
Rams.	1.5-2.0m <sup>2</sup> .

### Shorn Sheep

The space allowances and group size for housed sheep may be reduced by 10% for winter shorn sheep.

### Group size

Where possible pregnant ewes should be kept in groups of less than 50 to allow for better individual recognition and attention at lambing time.

## 4.5 Ventilation

Effective ventilation of buildings (to avoid high humidity, condensation and draughts) is essential as sheep are particularly susceptible to respiratory diseases. Properly designed ventilation will permit the free circulation of air above sheep height and avoid draughts at sheep level.

All artificial ventilation systems including fans, adjustable louvres should be maintained and monitored for optimal ventilation in all weathers.

If the health and wellbeing of the animals depends on an artificial ventilation system, the stock-keeper must have an appropriate back-up system which, if the main system fails, guarantees enough air renewal. An alarm system (which will operate even if the principal electricity supply to it has failed) shall be provided to give warning of any failure of the system.

Stock-keepers must thoroughly inspect the back-up system and test each alarm system at least once every seven days to check that they are working. Any defect must be rectified immediately.

### Legislative Requirements

Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 states at:

**Schedule 1, paragraph 13** - Air circulation, dust levels, temperature, relative air humidity and gas concentrations shall be kept within limits which are not harmful to the animals.

**Schedule 1, paragraph 20** - Where the health and well-being of the animals is dependent on an artificial ventilation system -

- (a) Provision shall be made for an appropriate back-up system to guarantee sufficient air renewal to preserve the health and well-being of the animals in the event of failure of the system; and
- (b) An alarm system (which will operate if the principal electricity supply to it has failed) shall be provided to give warning of any failure of the system.

**Schedule 1, paragraph 21** - The back-up system referred to in paragraph 20 (a) shall be thoroughly inspected and the alarm system referred to in paragraph 20 (b) tested at least once every seven days in order to check that there is no defect in the system, and, if any defect is found at any time, it shall be rectified immediately.

## 4.6 Mechanical Equipment and Services

All equipment and services including water bowls and troughs, ventilating fans, heating and lighting units, milking machines, fire extinguishers and alarm systems should be cleaned and inspected regularly and kept in good working order.

Legislation requires all automatic equipment or mechanical equipment essential for the health and well being of the animals to be inspected by the person responsible for the task, or other competent person at least once a day to check that there is no defect in it and that no parts of the equipment have become seriously worn.

Any defect must be rectified immediately, or if this is impossible, appropriate steps shall be taken to safeguard the health and well-being of the animals pending the rectification of such defects including the use of alternative methods of feeding and watering and methods of providing and maintaining a satisfactory environment.



All electrical installations at mains voltage should be inaccessible to sheep, well insulated, safeguarded from rodents and properly earthed.

### **Legislative Requirements**

Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 states at:

**Schedule 1, paragraph 18** - All automated or mechanical equipment essential for the health and well being of the animals shall be inspected at least once a day to check that there is no defect in it and no parts of the equipment have become seriously worn.

**Schedule 1, paragraph 19** - Where defects or worn parts in automated or mechanical equipment of the type specified in paragraph 18 are discovered, these shall be rectified immediately, or if this is impossible, appropriate steps shall be taken to safeguard the health and well being of the animals pending the rectification of such defects including the use of alternative methods of feeding and watering and methods of providing and maintaining a satisfactory environment.

**Schedule 1, paragraph 20** - Where the health and well-being of the animals is dependent on an artificial ventilation system -

- (c) Provision shall be made for an appropriate back-up system to guarantee sufficient air renewal to preserve the health and well-being of the animals in the event of failure of the system; and
- (d) An alarm system (which will operate if the principal electricity supply to it has failed) shall be provided to give warning of any failure of the system.

**Schedule 1, paragraph 21** - The back-up system referred to in paragraph 20 (a) shall be thoroughly inspected and the alarm system referred to in paragraph 20 (b) tested at least once every seven days in order to check that there is no defect in the system, and, if any defect is found at any time, it shall be rectified immediately.

## **4.7 Fire and Other Emergency Precautions**

There should be plans in place to deal with emergencies on the farm, such as fire, flood or disruption of supplies. The owner should make sure that all staff are familiar with the appropriate emergency action. More information is available in the Defra booklet, "Farm Fires: protecting farm animal welfare" <http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/2011/04/12/pb9326-farm-fires/>

It is important that a person responsible for a farmed animal gets advice about design when building or modifying a building. Stock handlers need to be able to release and evacuate livestock quickly if there is an emergency. Consideration should be given to installing fire alarms that can be heard and acted upon at any time of the day or night.

If sheep are housed, knowledge of fire precautions by the stock handler should be a priority.

## 4.8 Contingency Planning for Severe Weather Conditions

Arrangements should be made in advance to ensure that adequate supplies of suitable feed and water can be made available to sheep in emergencies, such as severe winter storms or summer drought.

Severe weather conditions and low temperatures can cause problems for livestock and it is important that those responsible for the sheep, like all businesses, should be as prepared as they can be.

Extreme weather conditions are an added pressure which makes planning ahead very important. To help minimise the impact and meet animals' needs, those responsible for the sheep should ensure that they have contingency arrangements in place to ensure water supplies, adequate feed supplies and sufficient stocks of bedding.

Private Veterinary Practitioners (PVPs) also have a vital role to play in animal welfare through the provision of professional advice. PVPs should be approached as soon as a welfare problem is noticed so that immediate action can be taken.

### Legislative Requirement

Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 states at:

**Schedule 1, paragraph 17** - Animals not kept in buildings shall, where necessary and possible, be given protection from adverse weather conditions, predators and risks to their health and shall, at all times, have access to a well drained lying area.

### General Information

Expert advice on all fire precautions can be obtained from local fire officers in Fire Brigade Area Command Headquarters.

Training and short courses to help farmers assess fodder requirement are provided by the College of Agriculture and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) Development Advisors who are also available to provide assistance with drawing up feeding plans for livestock.

CAFRE contact details: <http://www.cafre.ac.uk/index/enquiries/enquiries-about-courses.htm>

CAFRE Development Advisors: [http://www.dardni.gov.uk/ruralni/index/livestock/beef-index/beef\\_contacts\\_links/people.htm](http://www.dardni.gov.uk/ruralni/index/livestock/beef-index/beef_contacts_links/people.htm)





## 5.0 Management

### 5.1 General

Sheep farming involves a range of animal husbandry procedures to maintain and enhance animal health, welfare and production. They include careful selection of animals for breeding and farming, using technologies to increase desirable characteristics and animal production, monitoring and managing animals during critical periods (e.g. during pregnancy and birth), artificially rearing new-born animals, managing them in more intensive systems and permitted procedures such as tail docking, castration etc.

### 5.2 Marking

Permanent marking of sheep, such as by ear tattooing or tagging, should be carried out only by a skilled stockman using properly maintained instruments. Ear tags used should be suitable for use in sheep. Where, for flock management purposes, ear marking is by notching or punching, this should be done using proprietary equipment. If horned breeds of sheep are to be marked for flock management purposes, horn branding is to be preferred. Wherever possible, marking should not be undertaken during the fly season. If marking does have to be carried out during the fly season stock-keepers should take measures which will prevent or reduce the threat of fly strike. Aerosols or paints used for temporary marking should be non-toxic.

#### Legislative Requirement

Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 states at:

**Schedule 1, paragraph 27** - No other substance, with the exception of those given for therapeutic or prophylactic purposes or for the purpose of zootechnical treatment shall be administered to animals unless it has been demonstrated by scientific studies of animal welfare or established experience that the effect of that substance is not detrimental to the health or welfare of the animals.

**“zootechnical treatment”** has a meaning given in Article 1(2)(c) of Council Directive 96/22/EEC( ) concerning the prohibition on the use in stockfarming of certain substances having a hormonal or thyrostatic action and beta-agonists.

### 5.3 Fencing and Hedges

Fences and hedges should be well maintained so as to avoid injury to sheep and prevent entanglement. Where any type of mesh fencing is used, particularly for horned sheep and around lambing fields, it should be checked frequently so that any animals which are caught can be released.

Electric fences should be designed, installed, used and maintained so that contact with them does not cause more than momentary discomfort to the sheep. Electric mesh fencing should not be used for horned sheep.

## **5.4 Shearing**

Every mature sheep should have its fleece removed at least once a year.

Shearers should be experienced, competent and have received adequate training in shearing techniques. Inexperienced shearers should be supervised by suitably competent staff. When shearing, care should be taken not to cut the skin of the sheep. Where a wound does occur, immediate treatment should be given.

Shearers and all contractors should clean and disinfect their equipment between flocks to minimise the risk of spreading disease.

Full use should be made of weather forecasts and shelter to avoid excessive cold stress to newly-shorn sheep at whatever time of year shearing is carried out.

Winter shearing is not a suitable practice unless the sheep are housed.

Sheep which were shorn and housed in winter should be turned out to grass in spring only when the fleece has regrown to 15-20 mm in length and when weather conditions are favourable. Where adequate natural shelter is not available, other means should be adopted, such as the provision of straw bales.

## **5.5 Permitted and Prohibited Procedures**

There are different procedures that are allowed or not allowed to be carried out by lay persons on farmed animals. In this section a “lay person” is the same definition as that set out in Regulation 2 (1) Welfare of Animals (Permitted Procedures by Lay Persons) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012, which is a person who has received instruction or who is otherwise experienced in the performance of that procedure.

Welfare of Animals (Permitted Procedures by Lay Persons) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 sets out the procedures that are permitted to be carried out on animals by a lay person.

A person commits an offence under the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 if that person carries out a prohibited procedure on a protected animal for example, vasectomy, electro-ejaculation, tooth grinding, dehorning, disbudding and surgical procedures. A prohibited procedure means a procedure which involves interference with the sensitive tissues or bone structure of an animal.



## Legislative Requirement

The Welfare of Animals (Permitted Procedures by Lay Persons) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 states at:

**Regulation 4 (1) - (3)** A prohibited procedure may be carried out in an emergency for the purpose of saving life or relieving pain of a protected animal and must be done -

- in such a way as to minimize pain and suffering it causes;
- in hygienic conditions; and
- in accordance with best practice.

A record shall be kept for 3 years detailing the circumstances and reasons for carrying out the emergency procedures.

Permitted procedures and any conditions that are attached to that procedure which may be performed by a lay person in relation to sheep under the **Welfare of Animals (Permitted Procedures by Lay Persons) Regulations (NI) 2012 - Schedule 3** are;

- **Ear notching;**
- **Ear tagging;**
- **Microchipping;**
- **Tattooing;**
- **Other methods of identification involving a prohibited procedure required by law and not restricted to being undertaken by a veterinary surgeon;**
- **Artificial Insemination;**
- **Castration - when the method used is the application of a rubber ring or other device to constrict the flow of blood to the scrotum, the procedure may only be carried out on an animal aged not more than 7 days. When any other method is used it shall only be used up to the age of 3 months.**

**NOTE:** Stock handlers should consider carefully whether castration is necessary within any particular flock. Castration is unlikely to be necessary if lambs will be finished and sent to slaughter before reaching sexual maturity. The procedure should only be carried out when lambs are likely to be retained after puberty and where it is necessary to avoid welfare problems associated with the management of entire males.

Account should be taken not only of the pain and distress caused by castration but also the stress imposed by gathering and handling and the potential risk of infection. For very young lambs gathered in large groups there is a real risk of mis-mothering which may lead ultimately to starvation and death. Castration should not be performed on lambs until the ewe/lamb bond has become established.

Once the lamb is over 3 months of age, castration may only be performed by a veterinary surgeon using a suitable anaesthetic.

- **Implantation of a subcutaneous hormone - this would apply to subcutaneous hormone (or other pharmaceutical product) for modulating seasonal reproductive activity in adult females;**
- **Trimming of the insensitive tip of an ingrowing horn; - NOTE:** it is good practice for this to be done before the tip touches the sensitive tissues of the sheep i.e. face, cheek or eye.
- **Tail docking - In all cases, enough of the tail shall be retained to cover the vulva of a female animal or the anus of a male animal. When the method used is the application of a rubber ring or other device to constrict the flow of blood to the tail, the procedure may only be carried out on an animal aged not more than 7 days, or by any other means such as a hot docking iron, before the age of three months.**

**NOTE:** Stock-keepers should consider carefully whether tail docking within a particular flock is necessary. Tail docking may be carried out only if failure to do so would lead to subsequent welfare problems because of dirty tails and potential fly strike. Tail docking, if considered necessary should be done using a rubber ring or hot docking device. If it is considered that both tail docking and castration are necessary, thought should be given to performing both operations simultaneously so as to minimise disruption through repeated handling and the potential for mis-mothering and distress.

## 5.6 Electro-immobilisation

The electro-immobilisation of sheep is prohibited by law.

### Legislative Requirement

Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 states at:

**Schedule 1, paragraph 30** - A person shall not apply an electrical current to any animal for the purpose of immobilisation.



## 6.0 Breeding

The body condition of the ewe and nutritional management prior to tupping have a marked effect on the ovulation rate and eventual litter size. The ram should also be in appropriate body condition. Stock-keepers should be aware of the influence of pre-mating management upon the subsequent needs of the ewe in pregnancy and plan accordingly.

It is possible to manipulate the time and pattern of lambing by using vasectomised rams, intra-vaginal progestagen sponges (with or without pregnant mare serum gonadotrophin (PMSG)) or administration of melatonin. If the lambing date is changed and/or litter size is increased, account should be taken of the special requirements for feed, labour and other inputs both before and at lambing time when the welfare of ewes is under particular pressure. In particular, housing or shelter should be available if lambing is to take place in adverse weather conditions.

Any person using artificial insemination should be trained and competent in the technique.

Laparoscopic artificial insemination is a surgical technique which must only be carried out by a veterinary surgeon using an anaesthetic.

Treatment of ewes using hormones to produce multiple embryos and subsequent embryo transfer must only be carried out only by a veterinary surgeon. Embryo transfer is an act of veterinary surgery.

When selecting sheep for breeding consider the breeds most suitable for the farm environment and skills that will be needed to care for them. Factors which should be considered are ease of lambing, lamb survivability, mothering skills of the dam, projected lamb size when selecting the ram, breed hardiness and resistance to disease such as fly strike and foot rot.

### Legislative Requirement

Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 states at:

**Schedule 1, paragraph 28 (1)** - Natural or artificial breeding or breeding procedures which cause, or are likely to cause, suffering or injury to any of the animals concerned shall not be practiced.

**Schedule 1, paragraph 28 (2)** - Sub paragraph (1) shall not preclude the use of natural or artificial breeding procedures that are likely to cause minimal or momentary suffering of injury or that might necessitate interventions which would not cause lasting injury.

**Schedule 1, paragraph 29** - Animals shall not be kept for farming purposes unless it can be reasonably expected, on the basis of their genotype or phenotype, that they can be kept without detrimental effect on their health or welfare.

## 7.0 Pregnancy and Lambing.

The nutritional management of pregnant ewes is particularly important. Both condition scoring and scanning can be of benefit.

Pregnant and nursing ewes should receive adequate food to ensure the development of healthy lambs and to maintain the health and bodily condition of the ewe.

Scanning can be a valuable aid to management. However, scanning is simply a tool to assist good husbandry not a replacement for it. The scanning procedure allows barren, single, twin and triplet bearing ewes to be managed as separate groups. A combination of scanning and condition scoring allows ewes carrying more than one lamb and thin ewes to be separated for special feeding and supervision. Equipment should be properly cleansed and disinfected between flocks.

Heavily pregnant ewes should be handled with care to avoid distress or injury which may bring about premature lambing. However, if a heavily pregnant ewe requires treatment e.g. for lameness, she should receive appropriate treatment as soon as possible and not be left untreated until after lambing.

A large proportion of ewe mortalities occur during the period around lambing so particular skill and expertise are required at this time. Severe damage can be caused through inexperience when assisting a ewe in difficulties. Stock-keepers should therefore be experienced and competent before having responsibility for a flock at lambing time. Where necessary, they should receive training.

Stock handlers should pay particular attention to cleanliness and hygiene of equipment and pens during pregnancy and lambing. Personal cleanliness is essential when assisting ewes to lamb. Attention to cleanliness and hygiene is also important in the lambing area and pens used in treating or assisting lambing ewes. Lambing pens, sufficient in number and size, should be easily accessible and on a dry, well drained site. Each pen should be provided with feed and water. If the pens are outdoors their tops should be covered.

Every effort should be made to prevent the build-up and spread of infection by ensuring that lambing pens are provided with adequate, clean bedding and are regularly cleansed.

There may be times when even a proficient stock handler experiences difficulty in delivering a lamb single handed. In such cases assistance should be called for immediately and where necessary veterinary advice should be sought.

Any ewe with a prolapse should be treated immediately using an appropriate technique and where necessary veterinary advice should be sought.





Embryotomy, the dissection and removal of a foetus which cannot be delivered naturally, should be carried out on dead lambs only. It should never be used to remove a live lamb.

Stock handlers should be able to recognise lambs in need of resuscitation and be familiar with resuscitation techniques and survival aids such as feeding by stomach tube and, the use of a warmer box. A source of heat (e.g. a warmer box) should be available to revive weak lambs but care should be taken to avoid overheating.

It is particularly important to ensure that dead lambs and afterbirths are removed and disposed of in a suitable manner without delay.

It is vital that every newly-born lamb receives colostrum from its dam, or from another source, as soon as possible and in any case within three hours of birth. Adequate supplies of colostrum should always be available for use in emergencies, for example when a ewe lambs with poor milk supplies.

Where lambing takes place out-of-doors some form of shelter or windbreak should be available as well as plenty of feed.

Indoor lambing needs an area where some lambing pens can be set up. Lambing pens should be 1.5m x 1.5m and aim to have one lambing pen for every ten ewes in the flock. More pens will be required for very compact lambing flocks or the presence of ewes synchronised using sponges. Location of the lambing pens should allow for easy cleaning and feeding.

The problem of mis-mothering, which occurs particularly during gathering, handling, transporting or dipping of ewes and lambs should be reduced by keeping group size to a minimum. Identifying lambs and mothers is also beneficial, using non-toxic colour markers.

Wherever possible, young lambs, other than with their mothers, should not be sold at market. Arrangements for the direct transfer of orphan lambs from farm-to-farm, rather than through a market, should be encouraged in order to minimise disease risk. The law forbids the transport and the sale at market of lambs or goat kid with an unhealed navel.

A Defra booklet on improving lamb survival gives further information (see: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/2011/04/18/pb2072-improving-lamb-survival/>).

### **Legislative Requirement**

Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 states at:

**Schedule 1, paragraph 5** - Any animals which appear to be ill or injured shall be cared for appropriately without delay, and where they do not respond to such care, veterinary advice shall be maintained as soon as possible.

## 8.0 Artificial Rearing

Artificial rearing of lambs requires close attention and high standards of supervision and stockmanship if it is to be successful. It is essential that all lambs should start with an adequate supply of colostrum as soon as possible and in any case within three hours of birth.

All lambs should receive an adequate amount of suitable liquid feed, such as ewe milk replacer, at regular intervals each day for at least the first 4 weeks of their life.

From the second week of life, lambs should also have access to palatable and nutritious solid food (which may include grass) and always have access to fresh, clean water.

Where automatic feeding equipment is provided, lambs should be trained in its use to ensure that they regularly consume an adequate amount of food.

Troughs should be kept clean and any stale feed removed.

Equipment and utensils used for liquid feeding should be thoroughly cleansed and sterilised at frequent intervals.

A dry bed and adequate draught-free ventilation should be provided.

Where necessary, arrangements should be made to supply safe supplementary heating for very young lambs.

Suitable accommodation should be available for sick or injured lambs. This should be separate from other livestock.

Until weaning, housed lambs should be kept in small groups to facilitate inspection and limit the spread of disease.

Where young lambs are being reared at pasture without their mothers care should be taken to ensure that they have adequate shelter. Sheep are a flock species and are greatly stressed by separation from the flock. They should be kept with or see other sheep, except where they are isolated for veterinary reasons.

## 9.0 Hazards

To minimise the risk of sheep being trapped in snow or being unable to gain shelter, care should be taken in sitting shelters, shelter belts and fences.

As far as practicable, sheep should be prevented from gathering in places where they may be buried by snow; where possible they should be allowed to move naturally or be shepherded into safer areas.



All sheep should be removed from areas which are in imminent danger of flooding. Young lambs should be protected, as far as possible, from hazards such as open drains and predators.

Any dog is a potential hazard to sheep and should be kept under control on agricultural land. Well-trained sheepdogs, however, can greatly facilitate gathering and handling, particularly under extensive conditions. They should be trained so that they do not grip sheep. Sheepdogs should be regularly wormed to eliminate endoparasites.

## 10.0 Noxious Weeds

Noxious weeds should be controlled because they can harm animals by:

- poisoning them (e.g. ragwort);
- injuring them (e.g. thistle); and
- reducing their grazing area by reducing the edible plants that are available.

### Legislative Requirement

Under the Noxious Weeds (Northern Ireland) Order 1977, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development is empowered to serve upon an owner or occupier of land, or on anyone with cropping or grazing rights, a notice requiring one or more of four noxious weeds to be cut down or destroyed within a specified time. The Order permits DARD officials to enter land to inspect whether a notice has been complied with. If an owner, occupier or anyone with cropping or grazing rights has unreasonably failed to comply with the notice, particularly if a serious threat is posed to agricultural animals or to agricultural production by noxious weeds growing on land neighbouring on agricultural land, he or she shall be guilty of an offence and on conviction liable to a fine. The Order also contains additional powers which enable the Department to take action to arrange for the noxious weeds to be cleared and recover the cost of doing so, if necessary through the Courts. The four weeds that this legislation applies to are:

- **Wild oat:** *Avena fatua* L. and *Avena ludoviciana* Durieu
- **Thistle:** *Cirsium vulgare* (Savi) Ten. and *Cirsium arvense* (L.) Scop.
- **Dock:** *Rumex obtusifolius* L. and *Rumex crispus* L.
- **Ragwort:** *Senecio jacobaea* L.

More information on noxious weeds can be obtained in DARD's fact sheet 'Herbicides for the Control of Noxious Weeds in Grassland' <http://www.dardni.gov.uk/index/publications/pubs-dard-fisheries-farming-and-food/noxiousweeds-2008.htm>

## 11.0 Health

### 11.1 General

Stock handlers should be experienced or trained and be competent across the range of health and welfare skills which should include vaccination; drenching to control internal parasites; prevention and treatment of internal and external parasites including scab and fly strike; prevention of footrot and treatment of lame sheep; tail docking and castration. It is particularly important that stock handlers have competence in the skills required at lambing time.

A written health and welfare programme for all animals should be prepared for each flock. This should cover the yearly production cycle. It should be developed with appropriate veterinary and technical advice and be reviewed and updated annually. The programme should include sufficient records to assess the basic output of the flock and should address as a minimum, vaccination policy and timing, control of external and internal parasites and foot care. Pasture management should form an integral part of disease control and especially so in the case of internal parasites and footrot where total reliance on drugs is best avoided.

Particular attention should be paid to sheep, including rams, which are to be introduced into an established flock, as diseases can be easily spread. Such sheep should be segregated for at least 4 weeks and inspected and treated, if necessary, for diseases such as sheep scab or footrot. Newly introduced ewes should again be segregated for about 4 weeks before lambing and lambed separately, preferably after the main flock, to avoid the introduction of infectious abortion agents at this time.

Before introduction of rams to a flock at tupping time, ewes should be checked for fitness (especially for soundness of gait, teeth, udders and body condition) and any ewe which is sub-standard should be culled together with any that have suffered reproductive problems in previous seasons. This is particularly important for animals expected to live under harsh conditions. Rams should also be checked for their suitability for breeding.

Stock-keepers must keep a record of:

#### Legislative Requirement

Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 states at:

**Schedule 1, paragraph 7** - A record shall be maintained of -

- (a) any medicinal treatment given to animals; and
- (b) the number of mortalities found on each inspection of animals carried out in accordance with any of the following provisions -
  - (v) in any other case, paragraph 2 (1) or (2) of this Schedule.



**Schedule 1, paragraph 8** - The record referred to shall be retained for a period of at least three years from the date on which the medicinal treatment was given, or the date of the inspection, as the case may be, and shall be available to an inspector upon request.

## 11.2 Inspection

The health and welfare of animals depends upon regular supervision. Stock-keepers should carry out inspections of the flock at regular intervals appropriate to the circumstances in which sheep are kept and pay particular attention to signs of injury, distress, illness or infestation (e.g. sheep scab, fly strike, lameness and mastitis) so that these conditions can be recognised and dealt with promptly. Frequency of inspection will depend on factors which affect sheep welfare at any particular time, e.g. housing, lambing, fly strike, adverse winter weather conditions etc.

The possibility that sheep may be affected by a notifiable disease should always be considered. If the cause is not obvious, or if immediate action taken is not effective, a veterinary surgeon or other expert should be called in immediately - failure to do so may cause unnecessary suffering.

An up-to-date list of Notifiable Diseases relevant to Northern Ireland can be found at the following site - <http://www.dardni.gov.uk/index/publications/pubs-dard-animal-health/publicationsahw-notifiable-diseases.htm>

### Legislative Requirement

Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 states at:

**Schedule 1, paragraph 2 (1)** - Animals kept in husbandry systems in which their welfare depends on frequent human attention shall be thoroughly inspected at least once a day to check that they are in a state of well being.

**Schedule 1, paragraph 2 (2)** - Animals kept in husbandry systems in which their welfare does not depend on human attention shall be inspected at intervals sufficient to avoid any suffering.

## 11.3 Condition Scoring

Stock handlers should be aware that the use of condition scoring can contribute significantly to good husbandry. Condition scoring is an easy technique to learn and allows the body reserves of individual sheep to be assessed quickly. The information gained enables high standards of husbandry to be achieved and can prevent a welfare problem from developing. This technique enables the identification of animals requiring special

care. For example, a condition score of less than 2 for lowland sheep and 1.5 for those on the hill, in a significant number of the flock can indicate inadequate management and the need for positive steps to rectify the situation.

For more information on condition scoring of sheep please follow link:  
<http://adlib.everysite.co.uk/adlib/defra/content.aspx?doc=12790&id=12791>

## 11.4 Lameness

Lameness in any animal is usually an indication of pain. Lameness in sheep is one of the most common signs of ill-health and discomfort. It has clear adverse welfare implications and also affects the performance and production of both ewes and rams.

Good stockmanship, including frequent and thorough inspection along with correct diagnosis and implementation of a suitable programme of prevention and treatment, will help to reduce the incidence of lameness.

Lameness can originate in the feet or joints, although in adult sheep the foot is the most common site. A flock programme of foot care should be part of the written welfare programme. An effective foot care programme will include regular inspection of the sheep's feet. It may also necessitate regular and careful paring, treatment of infected feet and foot bathing with a suitable solution which is maintained at the manufacturer's recommended dilution and where appropriate, vaccination. If footrot is a major cause of lameness or if normal treatments are unsuccessful, veterinary advice should be sought.

Foot paring is a skilled procedure and can damage feet if carried out incorrectly or excessively. If in doubt, specialist advice should be sought.

If a chronically lame sheep does not respond to remedial treatment it should be culled and not left to suffer. As such animals are often unable to be transported in a way which avoids further suffering they should, where necessary, be slaughtered on the farm. In addition, sheep that cannot get up without assistance or sheep that can bear weight on only three legs when standing must not be transported. Sheep that can bear weight on all four feet but are slightly lame should not be consigned to market or sent on any journey which is likely to make the injury worse, however slight. Advice should be sought on the best treatment procedure to avoid spread of disease.

A Defra booklet on lameness in sheep gives further information, click on link <http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/2011/04/18/pb1149-sheep-lameness/>





## 11.5 External Parasites

Where external parasites such as those causing scab or fly strike, ticks or lice, are likely to occur, sheep should be protected by dipping or the use of an effective preventive chemical agent. Where sheep are clinically infected with such external parasites effective treatment must be given without delay.

## 11.6 Internal Parasites

Internal parasites should be controlled by grazing management and/or anthelmintic treatment administered at appropriate times based upon the life cycle of the parasite. Advice on appropriate timing and steps to avoid the development of anthelmintic resistant worms should be sought from a veterinary surgeon or specialist adviser. The Sustainable Control of Parasites in Sheep (SCOPS) principles are essential to reducing the development of resistance to current drugs. For more information on the SCOPS principles, please follow link: <http://www.scops.org.uk/>

## 11.7 Casualties

Injured, ailing or distressed sheep should be identified and treated without delay. When they do not respond to such treatment, veterinary advice should be obtained as soon as possible.

Provision should be made, and used when necessary, for sick or injured animals to be isolated in suitable accommodation with, where appropriate, dry comfortable bedding.

It is an offence to allow an animal to suffer. It may be necessary to cull or humanely kill the animal on farm if it does not recover or is unlikely to recover after treatment or to prevent further suffering. The animal should be destroyed in a humane manner and, by a person experienced and/or trained both in the techniques and the equipment used for killing sheep.

If animals are killed or slaughtered on farm, the operation must be carried out in accordance with current welfare of animals at slaughter legislation.

For further details please follow link to Welfare of Animals (Slaughter or Killing) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1996 (as amended):  
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/1996/558/contents/made>

No animal shall be transported unless it is fit for the intended journey, and all animals shall be transported in conditions guaranteed not to cause them injury or unnecessary suffering. Particular care needs to be taken regarding stocking densities especially where sheep with heavy fleeces are being transported.

## Legislative Requirement

Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 states at:

**Schedule 1, paragraph 5** - Any animals which appear to be ill or injured shall be cared for appropriately without delay, and where they do not respond to such care, veterinary advice shall be maintained as soon as possible.

**Schedule 1, paragraph 6** - Where necessary, sick or injured animals shall be isolated in suitable accommodation with, where appropriate, dry comfortable bedding.

Welfare of Animals (Slaughter or Killing) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1996 (as amended): <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/1996/558/contents/made>

Welfare of Animals (Transport) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 (as amended): <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2006/538/contents/made>

Council Regulation on the protection of animals during transport and related operations **(EC) No. 1/2005** and amending Directives **64/432/EEC** and **93/119/EC**

## 11.8 Dosing and Vaccination Equipment

Care should be taken to ensure that all equipment used in dosing, vaccination and treatment is maintained to a satisfactory standard. Equipment used for any injections should be frequently cleansed and sterilised to avoid infections. Ideally, disposable needles should be used. Dosing gun nozzles should be of a suitable size for the age of the animal. Hazardous waste such as needles should be disposed of correctly.

Where necessary, the stock handler should receive training in the use and maintenance of equipment used for dosing, vaccination and treatment.

## 12.0 Milk Sheep

### 12.1 Management

Milk sheep flocks are in many cases subjected to a more intensive system of husbandry than a conventional flock and will require especially vigilant stockmanship to ensure that their health and welfare are maintained.

Stock handlers should be aware of specific problems relevant to milk sheep and the ways in which these may be avoided.



Some breeds of milk sheep appear to be especially susceptible to foot problems and these can be exacerbated by the husbandry methods under which the sheep are kept. The roadway, entrances and exits to buildings and fields should be well maintained and kept as clean as possible.

Routine treatments to prevent foot problems should be adopted but care should be taken in the observance of withdrawal periods for any medicines used, particularly during lactation. Efforts to combat footrot during the drying-off period are particularly important. Milk sheep are naturally prolific and require particular attention to the level of nutrition provided during pregnancy and lactation.

## **12.2 Milking Practices**

Special attention should be paid to milking techniques, the adjustment of milking equipment and dairy hygiene. Milking should take place at least daily, on a regular basis, ensuring that ewes are not left with unrelieved, distended udders.

Before and after milking, hygiene measures should be adopted to reduce the spread of diseases of the mammary gland.

Good milking practices include careful handling, examination of foremilk and the avoidance of excessive stripping.

## **12.3 Milking Parlours and Equipment**

Pens, ramps, milking parlours and milking equipment should be properly designed, constructed and maintained to prevent injury and distress.

It is essential to ensure that milking machines are functioning correctly by carrying out proper maintenance and adjustment of vacuum levels, pulsation rates and ratios, and taking account of the manufacturers' recommendations.

## Appendix A

### Useful Information

For further DARD Animal Health and Welfare publications please visit the DARD website at:  
<http://www.dardni.gov.uk/index/publications/pubs-dard-animal-health.htm>

For general information visit [www.dardni.gov.uk](http://www.dardni.gov.uk)

DEFRA Publications:		
PB Number	Title	Hyperlink
1149	Lameness in Sheep.	<a href="http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/2011/04/18/pb1149-sheep-lameness/">http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/2011/04/18/pb1149-sheep-lameness/</a>
2072	Improving Lamb Survival.	<a href="http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/2011/04/18/pb2072-improving-lamb-survival/">http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/2011/04/18/pb2072-improving-lamb-survival/</a>
9326	Farm Fires: Protecting Farm Animal Welfare.	<a href="http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/2011/04/12/pb9326-farm-fires/">http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/2011/04/12/pb9326-farm-fires/</a>
12544f	Welfare of Animals During Transport: Advice for transporters of sheep.	<a href="http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/2011/05/04/pb12544f-welfare-sheep/">http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/2011/05/04/pb12544f-welfare-sheep/</a>
<b>Copies of the above DEFRA publications can be viewed on Defra's website at:</b> <a href="http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/">http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/</a>		

**Rural Support** - offer a listening and signposting service for farmers and rural families in Northern Ireland, who may need help with bureaucracy, family circumstances, health and finances. They can help you source information and advice about farm payments, personal and business finance and debt, social security benefits, support for carers, mental health assistance and many other issues. If you're feeling worried or stressed and would like to talk to someone in confidence, trained volunteers are ready to help.

**All calls are confidential and the helpline operates from 8am to 11pm, seven days a week (voicemail and support options available at all other times).** - 0845 606 7 607 -  
<http://www.ruralsupport.org.uk/>



<b>Other Useful Sites</b>	
<b>Understanding Flight Zone and Point of Balance for Low Stress Handling of Cattle, Sheep, and Pigs.</b>	<a href="http://www.grandin.com/behaviour/principles/flight.zone.html">http://www.grandin.com/behaviour/principles/flight.zone.html</a>
<b>Herbicides for the Control of Noxious Weeds in Grassland.</b>	<a href="http://www.dardni.gov.uk/index/publications/pubs-dard-fisheries-farming-and-food/noxious-weeds-2008.htm">http://www.dardni.gov.uk/index/publications/pubs-dard-fisheries-farming-and-food/noxious-weeds-2008.htm</a>
<b>Condition scoring of sheep.</b>	<a href="http://adlib.everysite.co.uk/adlib/defra/content.aspx?doc=12790&amp;id=12791">http://adlib.everysite.co.uk/adlib/defra/content.aspx?doc=12790&amp;id=12791</a>
<b>Sustainable Control of Parasites in Sheep (SCOPS).</b>	<a href="http://www.scops.org.uk/">http://www.scops.org.uk/</a>
<b>List of Notifiable Diseases relevant to Northern Ireland.</b>	<a href="http://www.dardni.gov.uk/index/publications/pubs-dard-animal-health/publications-ahw-notifiable-diseases.htm">http://www.dardni.gov.uk/index/publications/pubs-dard-animal-health/publications-ahw-notifiable-diseases.htm</a>
<b>CAFRE contact details - Training and short courses to help farmers assess fodder requirement are provided by the College of Agriculture and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE).</b>	<a href="http://www.cafre.ac.uk/index/enquiries/enquiries-about-courses.htm">http://www.cafre.ac.uk/index/enquiries/enquiries-about-courses.htm</a>
<b>CAFRE Development Advisors - are available to provide assistance with drawing up feeding plans for livestock.</b>	<a href="http://www.dardni.gov.uk/ruralni/index/livestock/beef-index/beef_contacts_links/people.htm">http://www.dardni.gov.uk/ruralni/index/livestock/beef-index/beef_contacts_links/people.htm</a>
<b>DARD - Rural NI Sheep section, here you will find information on all aspects of sheep production, including breeding, nutrition, management and profitability.</b>	<a href="http://www.dardni.gov.uk/ruralni/index/livestock/sheep.htm">http://www.dardni.gov.uk/ruralni/index/livestock/sheep.htm</a>
<b>HSE website provides essential information and guidance on health and safety in agriculture.</b>	<a href="http://www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/index.htm">http://www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/index.htm</a>
<b>Expert advice on all fire precautions can be obtained from local fire officers in Fire Brigade Area Command Headquarters.</b>	<a href="http://www.nifrs.org/feedback.php">http://www.nifrs.org/feedback.php</a>

## Appendix B

### Contact Details for Codes of Practice at Dard Direct Offices

#### **ARMAGH**

A:tek Building  
Edenaveys Industrial Estate  
Newry Road  
Armagh  
BT60 1NF  
Tel: 0300 200 7840  
Fax: 028 3752 9108

#### **BALLYMENA**

Academy House  
121a Broughshane Street  
Town Parks  
Ballymena  
BT43 6HY  
Tel: 0300 200 7840  
Fax: 028 2566 2853

#### **COLERAINE**

Crown Buildings  
Artillery Road  
Millburn  
Coleraine  
BT52 2AJ  
Tel: 0300 200 7840  
Fax: 028 7034 1135

#### **DOWNPATRICK**

Rathkeltair House  
Market Street  
Demesne of Down Acre  
Downpatrick  
BT30 6LZ  
Tel: 0300 200 7840  
Fax: 028 4461 8226

#### **DUNGANNON**

Crown Buildings  
36 Thomas Street  
Drumcoo  
Dungannon  
BT70 1HR  
Tel: 0300 200 7840  
Fax: 028 8775 4888

#### **ENNISKILLEN**

Inishkeen House  
Killyhevlin Industrial Estate  
Killyhevlin  
Enniskillen  
BT74 4EJ  
Tel: 0300 200 7840  
Fax: 028 6634 3043

#### **LONDONDERRY**

Crown Buildings  
Asylum Road  
Edenballymore  
Londonderry  
BT48 7EA  
Tel: 0300 200 7840  
Fax: 028 7137 2489

#### **MAGHERAFELT**

Unit 36-38  
Meadowlane Shopping Centre  
Moneymore Road  
Magherafelt  
BT45 6PR  
Tel: 0300 200 7840  
Fax: 028 7939 5338

#### **MALLUSK**

Castleton House  
15 Trench Road  
Grange of Mallusk  
Mallusk  
BT36 4TY  
Tel: 0300 200 7840  
Fax: 028 9034 0909

#### **NEWRY**

Glenree House  
Unit 2 Springhill Road  
Carnbane Industrial Estate  
Carnbane  
Newry  
BT35 6EF  
Tel: 0300 200 7840  
Fax: 028 3025 3222

#### **NEWTOWNARDS**

Sketrick House  
Jubilee Road  
Corporation South  
Newtownards  
BT23 4YH  
Tel: 0300 200 7840  
Fax: 028 9181 3870

#### **OMAGH**

Sperrin House  
Sedan Avenue  
Lisnamallard  
Omagh  
BT79 7AQ  
Tel: 0300 200 7840  
Fax: 028 8225 3500







**Farmed Animal Welfare**  
Code of Practice 2012 -Sheep

# Sheep Updated 2014

ISBN: 978-1-84807-463-7



Department of  
**Agriculture and  
Rural Development**

[www.dardni.gov.uk](http://www.dardni.gov.uk)

AN ROINN

**Talmhaíochta agus  
Forbartha Tuaithe**

MÁNNYSTRIE O

**Fairms an  
Kintra Fordèrin**



**INVESTORS  
IN PEOPLE**