

Early indicators of potential farm animal welfare cases

FARMWELL
SCOTLAND



This document describes indicators that a farmer and/or their animals may have welfare issues. It also highlights early warning signs, where prompt intervention and support may prevent animal suffering.

When a keeper of animals has problems, animal welfare must also be considered and specialist support may be required. Where animal welfare is impacted, it may be appropriate to alert APHA, Local Authority and SSPCA of potential problems. RSABI (details below) will act as a contact for early concerns and they can help signpost people to relevant support or action.

Animal neglect or abuse arises through a complex range of factors and can be a symptom of other problems e.g. ill health including poor mental health, financial difficulties, relationship breakdown or addiction. The list below is not exhaustive but indicates when it may be appropriate to seek help to prevent animal suffering. Compiled by those with experience of working in animal welfare and farming, it is intended for use by a range of bodies not normally involved in farm animal welfare; Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue, Scottish Ambulance Service, social services, NHS staff etc.

RSABI Helpline: 0300 111 4166. RSABI is a Scottish charity providing support to individuals and families across the agricultural sector.

Factors which can impact on animal welfare

- Financial difficulties
- Mental health issues such as stress and depression
- Illness and/or old age affecting ability to manage the farm and livestock
- Bereavement and relationship breakdown.

Symptoms of the above problems can vary widely but some early warning signs are detailed here:

- Physical and social isolation – not attending sales as usual, avoiding company
- Housekeeping issues – hoarding, accumulation of rubbish/mail
- Poor state of repair/ cleaning of land and steadings
- Struggling to cope with paperwork or workload – failures in identification/registration of livestock, not claiming subsidies
- Dropping out of assurance schemes
- Concerns being expressed by private vets, abattoir OVs, farm workers, friends/neighbours, vehicle drivers, market staff etc about welfare or ID issues.

The following warning signs should always warrant further follow up and are recognised as frequently being linked to poor animal welfare

- Domestic violence
- Child abuse and/or neglect
- Addiction (e.g. alcohol, drug or gambling problems)
- Antisocial behaviour
- Aggressive behaviour
- Difficulty in finding/keeping farm help