

© 2012 Universities Federation for Animal Welfare  
The Old School, Brewhouse Hill, Wheathampstead,  
Hertfordshire AL4 8AN, UK

Animal Welfare 2012, 21(SI): 113-116  
doi: 10.7120/096272812X13345905673926  
ISSN 0962-7286

## **Global Animal Partnership's 5-Step™ Animal Welfare Rating Standards: a welfare-labelling scheme that allows for continuous improvement**

*IJH Duncan\*<sup>†</sup>, M Park<sup>‡</sup> and AE Malleau<sup>§</sup>*

<sup>†</sup> Campbell Centre for the Study of Animal Welfare, University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario, Canada

<sup>‡</sup> Global Animal Partnership, PO Box 21484, Washington, DC, USA

<sup>§</sup> Whole Foods Market, 550 Bowie Street, Austin, Texas, USA

\* Contact for correspondence and requests for reprints: iduncan@uoguelph.ca

### **Abstract**

---

*One challenge with animal welfare assessment programmes is that standards that make a meaningful difference to welfare can be difficult for a broad spectrum of producers to meet, thereby preventing many from engaging at all. Global Animal Partnership's (GAP's) 5-Step™ Animal Welfare Rating Standards are unique in that they are designed as a multi-tiered system that encourages continuous welfare improvement. The 5-Step program allows for a wide variety of production models — from small farms raising fewer than 50 animals in extensive, outdoor systems to larger, indoor operations raising tens of millions — and allows producers to move up the Steps as they choose. Each additional Step provides a four-fold benefit: the animals have improved welfare, the producer has the opportunity of greater rewards and more accurate representation of her or his farming practices, retailers can provide wider product selection to meet their customer demands, and consumers have the guarantee of ever-increasing, welfare-friendly choices as well as a transparent source of information on how their meat was raised. GAP began piloting its 5-Step program in 2008 with comprehensive on-farm/on-ranch and transport standards for meat chickens, pigs and beef cattle in an exclusive, two-year partnership with Whole Foods Market (WFM), North America's largest natural-foods grocer. The variety of farms and ranches supplying WFM provided a thorough testing ground for the programme. Chicken, pork, beef and turkey products ranging from Step 1 to Step 5+ are available regionally in WFM stores in the USA and Canada. Having successfully completed this pilot phase with WFM, GAP is now negotiating with other retailers, both restaurants and grocers, as well as further-processors, in North America and beyond. The essence of the Steps is captured by the following phrases: Step 1 — no crowding, cages or crates; Step 2 — an enriched environment; Step 3 — enhanced outdoor access; Step 4 — pasture centred; Step 5 — animal-centred: bred for the outdoors; and Step 5+ — animal-centred: entire life on the same farm. As of 1 December 2011, more than 1,740 third-party audited and certified farms and ranches are raising more than 140 million animals annually according to GAP's 5-Step Animal Welfare Rating Standards.*

---

**Keywords:** *animal welfare, beef cattle, continuous improvement, meat chickens, pigs, turkeys*