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Economic, education, encouragement and enforcement influences within farm assurance schemes

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Abstract

Farm assurance schemes are voluntary certification schemes that aim to provide consumers and retailers with assurances on animal welfare, environment and food safety standards. Whilst current schemes have often been focused on resource-based standards there has been interest in schemes including more outcome-based assessments. In order to maximise the likely impact of including these outcome assessments it is important to consider the economic, education, encouragement and enforcement drivers that may improve welfare. Using dairy cattle lameness as an example, the potential mechanisms to use these drivers within farm assurance schemes is reviewed. Future development of schemes should focus on encouraging the active participation of farmers in monitoring and managing outcome measures. Economic and educational approaches have a role in supporting change. Where possible, economic drivers need to be working in the same direction as welfare (ie provide win-win situations). Educational initiatives, such as providing generic technical information and farm-specific advisory support, need to be available when requested. Finally, enforcement tools, based on existing non-compliance procedures, may be needed to stimulate activity if other initiatives prove ineffective on individual farms.

Keywords: *animal welfare, economic, education, encouragement, enforcement, farm assurance*