



UNIVERSITIES FEDERATION FOR ANIMAL WELFARE

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PRESS RELEASE

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New paper identifies welfare improvements and research priorities for cephalopods and decapods

A [new paper](#), published in [Animal Welfare](#), has detailed a range of simple yet impactful interventions that could be implemented with immediate effect to improve the welfare of cephalopods and decapods in commercial operations.

The paper draws from and updates the 2021 [Review of the Evidence of Sentience in Cephalopod Molluscs and Decapod Crustaceans](#) which was commissioned by the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), and was instrumental in extending the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act 2022 to include these species.

The recommendations include banning declawing and nicking in crabs, banning eye-stalk ablation and limb removal in farmed decapod species, ending the sale of live decapods to untrained handlers such as through online retailers to private homes, and pre-emptively banning octopus farming in countries where it is likely to proceed such as Spain, Australia, Japan and Mexico.

In addition to the recommendations, the paper also highlights existing knowledge gaps that urgently require research to ensure that the welfare of these species is protected. These include:

- analgesia and anaesthesia for both decapods and cephalopods
- the determination of optimal environmental conditions, feeding and stocking densities to prevent disease and poor welfare in farmed decapod species
- the development of best-practice guidelines for the capture, transport, breeding, housing and husbandry of cephalopods, outside of a scientific context
- the urgent need to develop and validate welfare indicators for all cephalopod and decapod species, and
- development of humane stunning and slaughter methods.

Dr Heather Browning, lead author of the paper, said: “Whilst the paper includes recommendations for relatively simple improvements to guidance, research and policy that could be implemented in the near-term, its main goal is to draw attention to the animal welfare implications of some common commercial practices involving these species. By raising awareness, we can then initiate discussions as to how best mitigate or prevent these risks. The paper also highlights important

research gaps that should be prioritised in order to create evidence-based best-practice guidelines.”

Commenting on the paper, Joint Editor-in-Chief of *Animal Welfare*, Dr Birte Nielsen, said: “The publication of this paper serves as an excellent reminder that simply recognising these species as sentient is not enough to ensure that their welfare is protected. Further research is needed to enable development of evidence-based guidance and legislation to protect the welfare of not only the animals affected, but also those working with them.”

Professor Bas Rodenburg, Joint Editor-in-Chief of *Animal Welfare*, concluded: “By identifying the current commercial practices with the highest welfare risks, suggesting strategies that allow for the immediate improvement of the welfare of cephalopods and decapods, as well as highlighting the most pressing evidence gaps, the authors of this paper have provided a tangible roadmap to improving the welfare of these animals.”

The full paper is available to read open access [here](#).

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

Image Attached: Animal welfare risks from commercial practices involving cephalopods and decapods.jpg

Paper: Browning H, Burn C, Schnell AK, Crump A and Birch J (2025) Animal welfare risks from commercial practices involving cephalopod molluscs and decapod crustaceans. *Animal Welfare*, 34,e24. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/awf.2025.25>

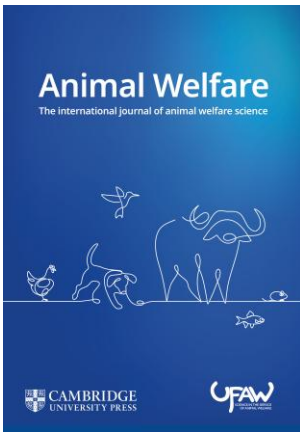
About the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare:

The [Universities Federation for Animal Welfare \(UFAW\)](#) is an international, independent scientific and educational animal welfare charity and membership organisation. UFAW’s vision is a world where the welfare of all animals affected by humans is maximised through a scientific understanding of their needs and how to meet them. UFAW promotes an evidence-based approach to animal welfare by funding scientific research, supporting the careers of animal welfare scientists and by disseminating animal welfare science knowledge both to experts and the wider public.

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About the UFAW Journal - *Animal Welfare*:

[Animal Welfare](#) is an international scientific journal. It publishes the results of peer-reviewed scientific research, technical studies, surveys and reviews relating to the welfare of kept animals (eg on farms, in laboratories, zoos and as companions) and of those in the wild whose welfare is compromised by human activities. Papers on related ethical and legal issues are also considered for publication. The journal also includes letters to the editor, opinion papers, horizon topics and



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commentary on topical issues such as developments in legislation and codes of practice relating to animal welfare, as well as book reviews.

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