



**Randall Parker**

FOOD GROUP

**Animal Welfare Policy**  
**April 2024**

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# Aims of the Welfare Policy

Welfare considerations are becoming increasingly important for the keeping and farming of animals. Practices that may once have been deemed acceptable, are now being re-assessed and modified according to new knowledge and changing attitudes. High standards of animal welfare are a legal responsibility, but also have direct economic benefits and ensure international market access for our animal products.

Without good stockmanship, animal welfare can never be adequately protected. The Randall Parker Food Group Animal Welfare policy is intended to encourage all those responsible for its implementation to adopt the highest standards of husbandry, care and stockmanship.

The Randall Parker Food Group believes that the welfare of animals should be considered with reference to the “Five Freedoms”;

1. Freedom from **hunger & thirst**
2. Freedom from **discomfort**
3. Freedom from **pain, injury and disease**
4. Freedom to **express normal behaviour**
5. Freedom from **fear and distress**

(Farm Animal Welfare Council 1993)



Tony Randall  
Chief Executive

# General Standards

## **Procurement of Livestock**

It is the intention of the company that all of the meat and livestock it procures shall originate from farms working to recognised farm assurance schemes where applicable; e.g. (BRC,SAI-GLOBAL/FABBL;FAWL;REDTRACTOR;FABPIGS) or equivalent.

This policy lays down minimum standards acceptable to the Randall Parker Food Group.

### *Cattle*

Animals should be identifiable to source throughout the production and livestock marketing chain. Breeders must maintain records of birth and parentage of all calves born.

At the time of selection for marketing, finished cattle should be in a clean condition.

### *Sheep*

Replacement breeding stock and store lambs should be obtained from sources known to be practicing good standards of husbandry and welfare. At the time of marketing, finished sheep should be in a clean condition.

### *Pigs*

Breeding stock and weaners must be obtained from sources known to be practicing good husbandry, welfare and hygiene.

## **Mutilation**

Where possible, livestock should be free from mutilation such as (but not limited to) tail docking, and beak trimming.

**At the time of marketing, stock must be in a clean, rested and healthy condition, all animals supplied will only be accepted if they comply with these requirements.**

**Records of recent treatments for all purchased stock must be obtained and recorded.**

### **Husbandry and Welfare**

All stock must be reared according to good husbandry, welfare and hygiene practices, complying with all legislation and according to the, Codes of recommendations for the Welfare of Livestock.

The person with primary responsibility for the day- to- day running of the farm must demonstrate competence in stockmanship and welfare standards appropriate to the farm.

Animals must be sourced from farms registered to recognised farm assurance schemes (BRC,SAI-GLOBAL/FABBL;FAWL;RED TRACTOR;FABPIGS).

### **Waste Products**

Animal and/or any waste products (e.g. sheep dip) should be handled in such a way as to minimise the risk of contamination or spread of disease to other animals or to humans, and in a way, which avoids the danger of polluting the environment.

### **Feed Composition and Storage**

The animal feed composition should be of the quality to provide all the nutritional requirements to maintain full health and vigour, and manufactured from high quality constituents, which must be recorded in writing.

Producers must obtain from their supplier a declaration of constituents for each compound diet and supplement fed to their stock or livestock. A new declaration should be sought, should there be any change in the diet.

Feed components should be forage, vegetable or cereal based. Additional compound based feeds should not contain animal protein, hormones or any other substance not permitted by law.

All feed is to be stored correctly away from any potential sources of contamination; containers are to be kept covered.

Containers are to be regularly cleaned and well maintained to reduce the risk of contamination.

All animals must be provided with an adequate supply of fresh drinking water and access to feed every day.

It is prohibited to use growth promoters for all meat and poultry.

### **Housing and Handling Facilities**

The accommodation should be well constructed and of sufficient size to ensure good management, appropriate stocking densities and ventilation, and be capable of being maintained in a clean and hygienic condition. Appropriate cleaning regimes must be applied.

### **Veterinary Medicines and Health Supervision**

Animals suffering ill health or injury shall receive immediate attention including the attendance of a veterinarian if necessary.

A hospital pen should be available should it be of benefit for the animal to be separated from the group. The pen should have facilities for clean, fresh water at all times and be kept clean and ready for use at all times.

Medicines for treatment should only be used when necessary or when prescribed by a veterinary surgeon. The preventive use of veterinary medicines should only be in conjunction with good husbandry practices under the supervision of a veterinary surgeon.

Medicines and veterinary treatments must be kept in a locked storage facility, and used in accordance with current legislation, Codes of Practice and the Manufacturers' recommendations.

Records of the use of medicines and veterinary treatments must be maintained in the animal medicine record books or equivalent.

Use of antibiotics can be administered as necessary but the routine use of antibiotics is prohibited.

**It is especially important that withdrawal periods are strictly observed.**

# Welfare of Livestock During Transit - General

## Minimising Stress

Despite best intentions and conditions, animals, which are being transported, are subjected to a number of stressors, which need to be minimised at all times. These stressors may include:

1. Increased handling, holding for extended periods of times in strange environments,
2. Deprivation of, or changes in quantity or the quality of food and water,
3. Changes in micro-climatic conditions,
4. The grouping of animals strange to each other both within and between species,
5. Separation from others of the same group,
6. Unfamiliar surroundings, noises and sensations,
7. Physiological responses associated with pregnancy,
8. Unloading and loading onto vehicles,
9. Disease

Stress is a cumulative response of an animal to its surroundings and may result in severe behavioural and physiological effects. Animals of different species and breeds may vary in their susceptibility to stress.

## Drivers responsibilities

The driver of a road vehicle is responsible for the care and welfare of animals during transit, the driver must hold a statutory licence to drive a goods vehicle, and be experienced in the handling and welfare of animals under their care; operators should make training courses available to drivers. The use of the Humane Slaughter Association's Video *The Road Ahead* as introductory training is a minimum.

Transport operators have the right to refuse to transport stock. They must refuse to transport stock they consider unfit and should ask for a veterinary opinion in writing where doubts exist.

The welfare of animals during transit depends upon good driving techniques whereby the driver pulls away slowly and smoothly, anticipate hazards, takes corners and roundabouts smoothly and gently so that the animals are not discomforted in any way.

Drivers must stop and assist distressed or injured animals immediately they become aware of a problem affecting the welfare of the animals being conveyed. Where the driver cannot provide adequate assistance, appropriate aid should be enlisted.

### **Pre-travel rest period**

A rest period appropriate to the species, after holding or assembly and before loading, is beneficial and should be added to the pre-transport timetable.

Where the gathering of animals is undertaken over a large area or for extended periods, animals should be rested for 24 hours with free access to food and water (subject to paragraph below).

Food should be withdrawn for the last 4-6 hours before transport, appropriate to the species.

### **Food and water requirements**

Deprivation of food and water or changes in the volume or quality of food and water will compound the stress associated with transportation. This may result in metabolic disturbances or an increase in the number of pathogenic organisms in the gut.

Clean drinking water should be provided in facilities suitable for the animals being held. Appropriate watering facilities should be provided to cater for the number of animals being handled to prevent excess aggression.

In calculating the period of deprivation of food and water, account needs to be taken of the time of initial holding and assembly prior to the start of the journey until unloading at the final destination, including all transit rest periods.

**It is imperative that on a long haul journey, arrangements need to be made for the provision of adequate food and water.**

### **Shelter**

Appropriate shelter from heat, wind and cold shall be provided in all holding areas. Young animals, goats, deer, pigs, recently shorn sheep and stock in poor conditions must be protected from climatic extremes, particularly combinations of cold, wind and rain.

Suitable shelter for mature, healthy sheep, cattle, horses and goats from heat, wind and cold must be provided in extreme climatic conditions.



### **Selection of Animals**

Owners have a responsibility to select only fit and healthy animals for travel. The following observations should be routinely taken into account when selecting animals for transport include;

1. Body Condition
2. Clinical evidence of disease or parasitism
3. Injuries or other physical defects

Transport operators have the right to refuse to transport unfit stock. They have a responsibility for animals that are accepted for transport and must refuse to transport stock they consider unfit to travel.

Animals must be able to stand and bear weight on all limbs and be fit enough to be able to withstand the journey without suffering unnecessary pain or distress. "To bear weight" means that the animal must be able to take weight on all limbs to stabilise itself during transport.

Blind animals that are otherwise fit to travel may be transported provided they travel with other animals and will not suffer unnecessary distress.

### **Emergency Transport**

An animal with a broken leg must not be transported for slaughter.

An animal with a broken leg must not be transported for any other reason unless a veterinarian has treated it.

A sick, injured or deformed animal may be transported for veterinary treatment at another location provided supportive treatment will be adequate to ensure that added distress is not incurred en route.

A sick, injured or deformed animal may be transported on a short haul journey if the animal is able to stand and bear weight on all limbs and is fit enough to withstand the journey without suffering unnecessary pain or distress.

The following matters should be assessed when making emergency decisions to transport:

1. The animal should be able to arrive at the destination in a state similar to loading.
2. There should be little likelihood that transport will cause the animal unnecessary pain or suffering.
3. The nature and duration of the journey should be taken into account and should be as short as possible.
4. The need for separation, bedding and/or padding and any other appropriate supportive treatment should be considered and provided if required.

## **Design and Construction of Ramps and Holding Facilities**

Loading facilities and pens must be constructed so that they do not cause injury to animals.

Ramps should be wide enough to allow for the unhindered passage of mature animals.

Because animals move more readily uphill than downhill, ramps should be horizontal or slope upwards. The slope should be as flat as possible. The maximum incline should not exceed 20°.

All surfaces, ramps and pens should be made of a non-slip material with either criss cross cleats or, if concrete, a suitable non-slip pattern or steps to provide good grip when the ramp is wet.

Portable or adjustable ramps should be equipped with anchoring devices.

All inner rails must be smooth with no sharp projections, which may injure animals.

Care should be taken to ensure correct alignment of vehicles and loading ramps so that any gap that could lead to injury is avoided.

## **Loading and Unloading**

Loading and unloading are the activities during which injuries and stress are most likely to occur.

Persons responsible for the loading and transport of animals should have a good basic knowledge of their behavioural and physical needs.

Correct planning well in advance will allow adequate time for stock to be loaded quietly and with care. Animals must be loaded in a way that does not cause them injury.

All vehicles should be adequately cleaned before animals are loaded.

An experienced stockperson should supervise loading. Adequate numbers of handlers should be available to facilitate the easy loading of animals.

Animals should be loaded quietly from a suitable dock, using voice, flags, sacks or pig boards. Dogs must not be used to load or unload livestock.

During loading, the trailer doors need to be properly aligned with the loading race to ensure the smooth movement of stock and to minimise bruising or injury.

Different classes of animals and species should not be penned together during transport. Where possible different species should not be transported on the same vehicle.

Animals should be unloaded as soon as possible after arrival.

Animals should not be kept on stationary vehicles for extended periods of time – should there be a delay in unloading, the vehicle should be driven around to help ventilation and prevent temperatures within the vehicle becoming extreme.

### **Bruising and Pain in Animals**

The excessive use of force when moving animals can cause bruising and pain and adversely affect the welfare and quality of animals. The delivery of injured, bruised or stressed animals is unacceptable and is reflected in the carcass yield and meat quality.

In addition to welfare considerations, there are a number of financial implications that are associated with poor transportation.

If animals are stressed the quality of the meat will be affected. Very obvious pale, soft, exudative meat (PSE) is produced from pigs, which have been stressed shortly before slaughter.

If cattle or pigs have been stressed for some time before slaughter then dark, firm, dry meat (DFD) is produced. Fighting amongst pigs causes obvious carcass blemishes as does pulling sheep by their fleece.

Animals should never be hit on, nor pressure applied to, sensitive parts of the body such as the head or genitals. Animals must not be lifted or pulled by the head, ears, tail, feet or fleece. Tail twisting in cattle is strictly forbidden.

### **Recommended Standards for Stock Vehicles**

The livestock transporters must be suitable for the species being carried. Non-slip flooring must be fitted which must be free from projections or other hazards likely to cause injury.

Vehicles must be designed so as to ensure that animals are contained within the vehicle. Limbs and heads must not be able to protrude outside the sides and top of the vehicle. They must have enough room overhead to enable them to travel in a natural position without injuring their heads or backs and to give them enough air when the vehicle is not moving.

Appropriate shelter from heat, wind and cold must be provided during transport. Small lambs, recently shorn sheep and stock in poor condition must be protected from climatic conditions, particularly combinations of cold, wind and rain. Pigs need shade from direct sunlight.

### **Stocking Densities**

Animals must neither be overcrowded nor too loosely stocked during carriage; correct use of partitioning ensures the desired stocking density. Stocking densities should be decreased and ventilation increased during hot weather.

### **Separation**

In an individual vehicle, horned stock must be carried separately from polled and dehorned animals.

Significantly different sized animals should be partitioned off.

Sex & Age should always be considered.

Fractious and excitable stock need special consideration, some may respond to individual penning, others may become calmer with other animals.

### **Driving**

Stock vehicles conveying animals must be driven steadily, avoiding rapid acceleration and braking as far as possible. Corners should be rounded at an appropriate speed to reduce the centrifugal force as much as possible.

### **Inspections**

Animals should be inspected at every break and at least every 2 hours throughout the journey.

### **Transport of Livestock by Road in Light vehicles**

Where livestock are carried on a light vehicle, whether a light truck or a trailer, the driver of the vehicle is responsible for ensuring that the stock is provided with reasonably comfortable and secure accommodation.

The crate and floor of the vehicle must be sound and free from any rot or rust.

The sides of the vehicle must be sturdily constructed and suitable wind protection must be provided.

Any crate used must be bolted to the vehicle, be free from sharp projections, and have secure hinges and bolts.

Care should be taken that the animals are neither too loosely nor too lightly loaded. Where the vehicle is lightly loaded, the vehicle should be packed with hay bales or the vehicle should be divided by partitions.

### Minimum Transport Standards

1. Transport operators have the right to refuse to transport unfit stock. They have a responsibility for animals that are accepted for transport and must refuse to transport stock they consider unfit to travel.
2. Clean drinking water must be provided to all animals while being held prior to loading.
3. Appropriate shelter shall be provided. Young animals, goats, deer, pigs and recently shorn sheep and stock in poor condition must be protected from climatic extremes. Shelter for mature, healthy sheep, cattle and goats from heat, wind and cold must be provided in extreme climatic conditions.
4. Animals selected for transport must be able to stand and bear weight on all limbs and be fit enough to withstand the journey without suffering unreasonable pain or distress.
5. An animal with any leg broken must not be transported for slaughter. An animal with any leg broken must not be transported for any other reason unless a veterinarian has treated it.
6. Where an animal is not fit to travel and is suffering unreasonable pain or distress, immediate veterinary assistance must be obtained for the animal or it must be destroyed without delay.
7. Loading facilities must be constructed so that they do not cause injury to animals. All inner rails must be smooth with no sharp projections, which may injure animals.
8. Animals must be loaded in a way that does not cause them injury.
9. Dogs must not be used for unloading of livestock.
10. Animals should be loaded quietly using voice, flags, sacks or pig boards.
11. Electric goads must not be used.
12. The livestock transporters must be suitable for the species being carried. Non-slip flooring must be fitted which must be free from projections or other hazards likely to cause injury. Vehicles must be designed to ensure that animals are contained within the vehicle. Limbs and heads must not be able to protrude outside the sides and top of the vehicle. Animals must have room overhead to enable them to travel in a natural position without injuring their head or back and to give them enough air when the vehicle is not moving.
13. The transporters conveying animals must be driven steadily, avoiding rapid acceleration and braking as far as possible. Corners must be rounded at their correct speed to reduce the centrifugal force, as much as possible.
14. The driver must have details of the stock in his/her care.

# Welfare of Livestock at Slaughter - General

## Management Issues

Every person involved with the handling of animals until death, either directly or in a supervisory capacity, must have a full understanding of the company welfare policy.

All staff must be aware of and fully understand the premises contingency plans for emergencies, or equipment failure.

All staff must also be fully aware and understand the standards expected by the management and know the lines of responsibility.

Mechanisms should be in place for welfare-related meat quality issues to be reported back to lairage management and staff.

Procedures should also be in place for reporting welfare-related issues with reference to haulage back to the haulier.

Procedures should also be in place for reporting welfare-related issues with reference to on-farm treatment back to the farmer.

All welfare policies and Standard operating procedures must be reviewed annually and whenever procedures for a given task change.

All relevant staff must be made aware of changes to the policy immediately.

There must be at least one person working within the lairage/stunning area during killing times who is designated as an Animal Welfare Officer (AWO).

There must be a full and up-to-date list of all trained AWOs held in the slaughterhall office. There must also be a board naming the AWO(s) on duty.

## Staff Issues

All lairage and slaughter staff must receive structured and appropriate training in the handling and slaughtering of the animals and the welfare policy of the abattoir. Records of training must be documented.

Time must be allocated for regular in-house training, specific to the abattoir, at least once a year.

All staff must have access to the relevant and most recent Codes of Practice and Standards, in addition to the company welfare policy.

### **Contingency plans**

Contingency plans must be in place to deal with emergencies. They must be regularly reviewed and rehearsed with staff. As a minimum these must include plans for: escaped animals, factory breakdowns, power failures, fires and gas leaks.

Contingency plans must also detail who is in charge and what type of alarm signals will be given.

### **Animal Welfare Officers**

The nominated AWO is responsible for monitoring the handling and slaughter operation and will ensure that the welfare of each animal is protected. If problems arise these will be reported back to management for immediate action. This person must have the skill, knowledge, training (through a recognised course) and authority to take appropriate action, if and when necessary.

The nominated AWO will be responsible , either directly or through personally supervised staff, for :

1. facilities within the lairage that can affect animal welfare;
2. effective operation of the stunning equipment;
3. regular maintenance, adjustment and setting up of equipment;
4. daily inspections of equipment;
5. training of lairage/slaughter staff, in accordance with the welfare policy.

The nominated AWO, in collaboration with the management, must establish documented procedures and ensure that up-to-date records are kept of:

1. all inspections of stunning equipment;
2. performance against clear pass/fail criteria;
3. corrective action taken;
4. maintenance/cleaning/adjustment and setting up of equipment;
5. staff training.

The AWO will be responsible, either directly or through personally supervised staff, to make frequent checks throughout the day to ensure that animals are being effectively stunned and remain insensible throughout the slaughter operation.

The AWO must attend a welfare update/awareness course at least once every four years.

The nominated AWO must be on the premises at all times whilst slaughter is being



carried out. He/she must be able to raise issues with management immediately and have the authority to stop procedures, which raise concern.

The nominated AWO should head an animal welfare team, which pulls together a cross section of lairage workers and senior management to continually assess and develop the facilities in terms of animal welfare.

The nominated AWO is an AWO with responsibility for reporting all problems. He/she will usually be in a position of authority and be able to instigate changes when required.

### **Casualty Animals**

Sick or injured animals must be isolated and housed in a casualty pen as soon as they are identified.

Casualty animals must be treated as a priority; it is not acceptable to leave them, even if this means slaughtering the animal on the vehicle.

At least one pen must be available and ready for immediate use as a casualty pen at all times. The pen should be situated close to the unloading bay, be easily accessible and clearly identified. Bedding must also be readily available.

The Official Veterinary (OV) and AWO must be notified immediately of any sick or injured animals. Appropriate action must be taken immediately on the advice of the OV.

Animals that are injured after arrival and unable to walk must be slaughtered in situ, without delay. Equally any animal not able to pass through the handling system without suffering must be slaughtered immediately in situ.

Any animal slaughtered on a casualty basis must be slaughtered in a humane manner. When a stun-only method is employed, bleeding must be carried out within a maximum of 15 seconds.

Staff carrying out emergency slaughter must be trained in the methods of slaughter used and must be able to recognise the signs of an effective stun and the signs of recovery.

Animals being held in the casualty pen must have access to clean drinking water at all times.

# Animal requirements

The process of holding animals within a lairage prior to slaughter can be a very stressful experience. It is essential that this stress is minimised at all time to ensure high standards of welfare and maintain good meat quality.

Each species has very different requirements and can undergo different methods of slaughter. These requirements should therefore be looked at very carefully for each circumstance.

As such, each species and method of slaughter should be written in accordance with the HSA best practice guidelines.

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