

Animal Welfare

MAINTAINING HIGH STANDARDS OF CARE AND OVERSIGHT



MII and its members collaborate with the Department of Agriculture, AHI, Teagasc, Bord Bia and other stakeholders on animal welfare standards throughout the supply chain



The Animal Health & Welfare Act applies strict regulations on how animals are cared for, which is in the best interest of all parties including farmers, hauliers and processors



Best practice assessment tools such as the Bord Bia QA schemes and other independent accreditations are important ways of demonstrating the integrity of Irish meat



The Irish meat sector must also adhere to exacting international welfare requirements to sell into vital export markets. Healthy animals deliver the best returns



MII member companies ensure employees who are dealing with animals have completed the appropriate Animal Welfare Training programmes



All processing plants dealing with live animals must have a qualified Animal Welfare Officer



MII member companies continually invest in their livestock handling facilities to ensure the best animal welfare approach



MII members provide financial support to Animal Health Ireland (AHI) that assists various health initiatives including the AHI Beef HealthCheck programme

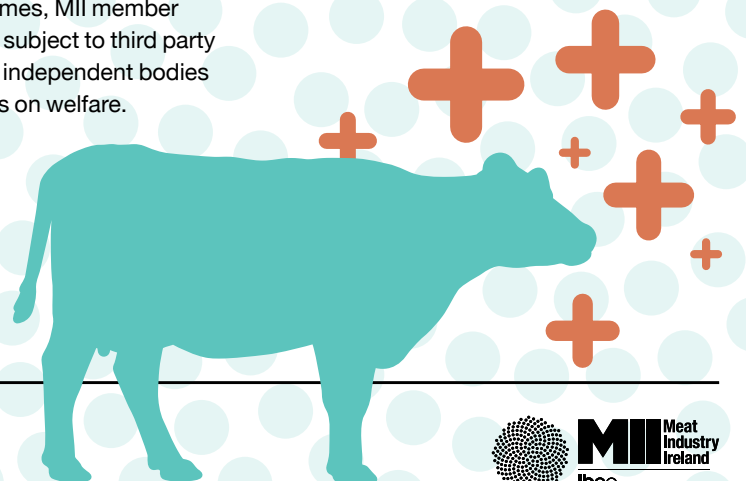
Overview

Meat Industry Ireland, and its members, are committed to the welfare of animals reared in the Irish agri-food sector. Consumers expect this and healthy, well cared for animals deliver best quality and value. The sector collaborates closely with Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine (DAFM), Animal Health Ireland, Teagasc, Bord Bia and other stakeholders to improve animal welfare outcomes across Ireland.

From farm to fork, Ireland has comprehensive national and EU animal welfare legislation in place. In addition to statutory obligations regarding animal

welfare, Quality Assurance schemes - across all species - require farmers to follow a documented Animal Health Plan and various welfare parameters to ensure high standards are maintained. In addition to participation in the Bord Bia quality assurance programmes, MII member companies are also subject to third party accreditations from independent bodies and customer audits on welfare.

Irish farmers care greatly about their animals and work to the highest standards in animal welfare. The Irish herd enjoys a more natural pasture-based system delivering the highest animal welfare, environmental and biodiversity standards.



Quality Assurance

Ensuring optimal animal welfare is paramount as it can improve livestock productivity and food quality, which benefits all parties in the supply chain. The Animal Health & Welfare Act applies strict regulations on how animals are cared for and MII member companies rigidly adhere to all relevant legislation.

Best practice assessment tools such as Bord Bia Quality Assurance Scheme, are important ways of upholding the integrity of Irish meat. The Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Council outlines the guiding principles by which good animal welfare has been an integral part of Irish livestock farming. The guidelines are based on following five freedoms:



Bord Bia has long-established Quality Assurance systems which sees more than 100 farm auditors undertake almost 700 independent farm audits each week. Best practice assessment tools, such as the Bord Bia Quality Assurance Scheme, are important ways of upholding and demonstrating the integrity of Irish meat.

Additional criteria which are applied to manage animal welfare are:

- **Animal Identification and Movement system:** DAFM maintains cattle traceability records on a central database known as the Animal Identification and Movement system (AIM) which traces all bovine animals from birth to slaughter. Similar robust traceability systems are in place in the sheep and pigmeat sectors including electronic identification.

- **Ireland's National Action Plan (iNAP) on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR):** The iNAP on AMR increases awareness of AMR, provides prudent use guidelines to producers and veterinary practitioners, and establishes best practice procedures to reduce reliance on antimicrobials in the animal health sector.
- **Hormone use:** The use of hormones for growth promotion in farm animals is banned in Ireland and across the EU.

Meat Processing Facilities

MII members have protocols and procedures in place across meat processing facilities to uphold the highest standards of animal welfare on-site. Members adopt the principles of best

practices to ensure the highest standards of animal welfare in transport, unloading, calm handling on-site, through to processing.

Animal welfare policies and processes within the meat processing facilities align to Irish legislation, Bord Bia Quality Assurance and ensure the highest quality and tenderness of the meat.

International Markets

Annual exports of Irish meat amount to approx. €4bn. which highlights the vital role of international markets to the sector. To successfully compete in export markets and meet the exacting criteria of customers, the Irish meat sector must adhere to the highest level of animal health and welfare standards.

Climate

Ireland benefits from a temperate climate, perfect for growing grass and a long grazing season. This enables superior animal welfare conditions on Irish farms, greatly valued by customers throughout the world.

In Ireland cattle are at grass for up to 300 days a year with a diet that is 95% grass and grass-based forage

Knowledge and training

MII member companies monitor international best practices as a way of ensuring continuous professional development on animal welfare issues.

Members provide employees access to training programmes and workshops including Teagasc's well-regarded Animal Welfare Training programme. This supports meat processing facilities in having properly trained staff to ensure welfare requirements are maintained throughout the process.

Animal Welfare Officer

In line with Irish and EU legislation, all processing plants dealing with live animals must have a qualified Animal Welfare Officer (AWO). The strict qualification criteria for the AWO are set down in EU regulation - Council Regulation (EC) N° 1099/2009 - and continuous training and certification must be maintained.

Conclusion

Healthy, well cared for animals ensure the best quality meat. At all stages of the supply-chain, MII member companies adhere to the high standards set by Ireland's animal welfare legislation. Our robust legislation, world-class traceability systems, investment in animal health and welfare programmes and quality assurance schemes all aim to provide assurances to consumers about the quality, origin and traceability of our meat and the the standard of care for the livestock we produce.