



**Sustainable Leather Foundation
Standard for Animal Welfare**

Reference: FSG3.1

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FSG3 ANIMAL WELFARE STANDARD AND BENCHMARK

Summary: The SLF *Animal Welfare Standard and Benchmark* provides the context, definitions, relevant international indices and known risks to be considered when sourcing raw material in the leather value chain. This document gives the facility under audit the basic principles and a starting point for understanding consumer and society expectations, but it is not exhaustive and recognises that there are no globally applicable laws or regulations that apply to all.

Where there are matters of interpretation in relation to the standard, applicable laws or organisational norms, the auditor will assess in favour of the published information available.



1. Scope

1.1 The SLF *Animal Welfare Standard and Benchmark* specifies the basic provisions and obligations that a company shall ensure to support responsible raw material sourcing in respect of animal welfare. Animal welfare is a relatively new scientific discipline, evolving mostly from within veterinary medicine into an independent subject. It is a big topic, since it covers everything that may affect the physical and emotional state of the animal. An animal is in a good state of welfare if (as indicated by scientific evidence) it is healthy, comfortable, well-fed, safe, able to express important behaviours, and if it is not suffering from unpleasant states such as pain, fear, and distress.

Being able to demonstrate an acceptable animal welfare outcome can be challenging, particularly when considering large industrial operations or less developed countries where the knowledge, technology and financial means of rural communities maybe limited. SLF recognises that traditionally, animal welfare during the farming process has been seen as responsibility of the meat and dairy industry, rather than the leather industry, however, as SLF is concerned with the whole of the value chain from farm to post-consumption, the welfare of animals is an intrinsic part of the responsibility remit.

1.2 The SLF *Animal Welfare Standard and Benchmark* is intended to ensure that companies understand factors to consider when looking at animal welfare including:

- Larger scale, intensive farming vs. smaller scale rural farming differential
- Knowledge and support to eliminate animal cruelty
- Farming of some species specifically for their skins (positive impact on conservation)
- Link to social prosperity (local communities with small-holdings as a way of life)
- Protection of indigenous people and species
- Bio-diversity and ecosystems that are interconnected with the farming of animals

1.3 It is expected that all SLF certified facilities shall work with their upstream value chain partners to ensure a combined approach to eliminating poor animal welfare practices and improving the health and wellbeing of all animals during their life (and including the end-of-life process).

2. Normative references

2.1 The following references are useful in the understanding of this document and are provided for further guidance. In the case of dispute these references will form the core of the evidence in support of the Standard and Benchmarks used here:

Global Animal Law Association, Database of Animal Welfare Legislation¹

World Animal Protection, Animal Protection Index (API)²

¹ Global Animal Law Association, Database of Animal Welfare Legislation
<https://www.globalanimallaw.org/database/national/index.html>

² World Animal Protection, Animal Protection Index <https://api.worldanimalprotection.org/about>



OIE World Organisation for Animal Health, Terrestrial Animal Health Code³

3. Terms and definitions

- 3.1 **Preventive Action:** Action to eliminate the cause(s) and root cause(s) of a potential non-conformance.
- 3.2 **Non-conformance:** Inability to meet the requirements of the standard.
- 3.3 **Facility:** The entirety of the business operation that is responsible for meeting the requirements of this *SLF Animal Welfare Standard and Benchmark*, including all personnel employed at the facility (e.g. farm, tannery, sub-contracting facility, head office organisation, etc)
- 3.4 **Personnel:** All individuals employed or contracted by the facility to perform specified tasks (e.g. managers, directors, farmers, stockpeople, etc)
- 3.5 **Worker:** All non-management personnel

4. Principle

4.1 The *SLF Animal Welfare Standard and Benchmark* is based upon the two basic principles of animal welfare; that we provide for an animal's physical and mental wellbeing, and we provide animals with the opportunity to express important species-specific behaviours. To attempt to analyse the welfare of a sentient animal, we need a practical assessment framework. The Five Freedoms⁴ represent a set of key animal welfare outcomes and the provisions needed to achieve those outcomes. The provisions associated with each of the five freedoms have also been recently refined (within a framework called the "Five Provisions of Animal Welfare" by David J. Mellor and published by MDPI⁵) to include reference to the overall animal welfare aims.

The pan-European Welfare Quality[®] assessment protocols for the welfare of farm animals also uses a similar framework to identify four welfare principles: good living environment, good nutrition, good health and appropriate behaviour. There are a number of contemporary animal welfare standards that have adopted this approach.

³ OIE World Organisation for Animal Health <https://www.oie.int/en/what-we-do/animal-health-and-welfare/animal-welfare/>

⁴ Animal Welfare: Freedoms, Dominions and "A Life Worth Living", John Webster, MDPI Publishing <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/6/6/35/htm>

⁵ Moving beyond the "Five Freedoms", David J. Mellor, MDPI Publishing <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/6/10/59>



The table below illustrates the original Five Freedoms, the key point being that they are all outcome measures. The associated provisions outline the husbandry necessary to achieve these outcomes, whilst the animal welfare aim considers how we can practically achieve this in a livestock production and processing environment.

Five Freedoms ⁴	Related Provisions	Animal Welfare Aims ⁵
Freedom from thirst, hunger and malnutrition	<i>By ready access to a diet to maintain full health and vigour</i>	Minimise thirst and hunger and enable eating to be a pleasurable experience
Freedom from discomfort and exposure	<i>By providing a suitable environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area</i>	Minimise discomfort and exposure and promote thermal, physical and other comforts
Freedom from pain, injury and disease	<i>By prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment</i>	Minimise breathlessness, nausea, pain and other aversive experiences and promote the pleasures of robustness, vigour, strength and well co-ordinated physical activity
Freedom from fear and distress	<i>By providing conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering</i>	Promote various forms of comfort, pleasure, interest, confidence and a sense of control
Freedom to express normal behaviour	<i>By providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind</i>	Minimise threats and unpleasant restrictions on behaviour and promote engagement in rewarding activities

4.2 The SLF *Animal Welfare Standard and Benchmark* also references the Global Map, produced by the Global Animal Law Association, that indicates the countries around the world that have some form of animal welfare laws in place. The mapping indicates a large number of countries where there are still no animal welfare laws in existence. SLF must take into account these differences when assessing raw material provision in the leather value chain.

4.3 In addition, reference is also taken from the World Animal Protection's "Animal Protection Index" (API) which ranks 50 countries according to their legislation and policy commitments to protecting animals. It uses 10 key indicators that cover important aspects of animal protection. The API indicators are listed below, with many of the having direct relevance to the leather industry upstream raw material sourcing:

1. Animal sentience is formally recognised in legislation
2. There are animal protection laws that prohibit causing animal suffering either by a deliberate act of cruelty or by a failure to act.
3. There are laws that apply to animals used in farming including rearing, transport and slaughter
4. There are laws that apply to animals in captivity
5. Companion animals
6. Animals used for draught and recreation
7. There are laws that apply to animals used in scientific research
8. There are laws that apply to wild animals
9. The government has assigned responsibility and accountability for improving animal protection at a high government level and has provided resources
10. The government has incorporated the OIE's guiding principles for animal welfare and its animal welfare standards into policy and legislation



4.4 SLF are committed to supporting the leather industry to understand the complexities around animal welfare globally and to support facilities to responsibly work with their upstream value chain partners to improve animal welfare practices through collaborative effort. SLF certified facilities will be aware of their raw material origins and operate with the intent of ensuring good animal welfare outcomes.

5. Procedure

5.1 The facility will provide data and documentation that demonstrates a knowledge and understanding of their raw material origins and the animal welfare standards that are adopted by the suppliers of their raw material through an effective management system to effectively meet the requirements of the SLF *Animal Welfare Standards and Benchmark* as follows:

- 5.2 Management System: The facility shall have a system in place that permits the company to accurately demonstrate that effective policies and procedures are in place in respect of:
- a. Raw Material Origin
 - b. Animal Welfare Declarations
 - c. Adoption of the OIE’s guiding principles for animal welfare and its animal welfare standards
 - d. Utilisation of an outcome-based approach to identify and evaluate the efficacy of specific actions necessary to achieve acceptable animal welfare, for example “Five Provisions of Animal Welfare”⁴

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