

# SUSTAINABLE FARMING

INCORPORATING AWA NEWSLETTER

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## CRY FOWL

A PERSPECTIVE  
ON PAIN IN  
ANIMALS

PLUS  
ASSESSING WELFARE  
LAMENESS IN CATTLE  
AGW IN SOUTH AFRICA





# NEW FEE STRUCTURE



Since 2008, we’ve been proud to offer AGW’s flagship certification, Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW, completely free of cost to farmers and ranchers. Our goal was—and still is—to make sustainability

accessible to every farm and ranch. But after many years of careful deliberation and discussion with stakeholder groups, we have decided to begin charging for a portion of our services, including an application fee and a \$100 audit fee (see our website for details). This was a difficult decision, but we believe it’s the best approach. Let me explain why.

This decision is partly the result of AGW’s rapid growth. As a nonprofit, we must make the most efficient use of our precious funds. The average farm audit costs us over \$850, including the auditor’s time, airfare, hotel, rental car and meals. And that’s before we factor in administration and our marketing services.

While many applicants are genuinely interested in becoming certified and recognize the value, unfortunately that’s not always the case. Despite our best efforts to screen applicants and communicate the partnership certification requires, some assume that because we are ‘free,’ our resources are expendable. Some farms have cancelled when the auditor arrives at their door; other farms drop out after the first audit. One farmer told us they just wanted to see what the auditor said.

As interest in high-welfare, pasture-based farming and AGW certification has grown, so has the frequency of these examples. We believe that implementing a small annual audit fee will not only help underscore the true value of the AGW program, but allow us to focus resources on those farms and businesses that recognize the benefits of third-party certification and all that AGW can offer.

As outlined above, the new \$100 annual audit fee won’t nearly cover the full cost of a farm audit. But it will help offset some expenses; and we hope it will ensure that everyone who applies is not only ready for audit, but values a world-leading certification that would otherwise cost hundreds—if not thousands—of dollars every year.

Finally, we know \$100 isn’t small change. Our marketing team is more than happy to support fundraising efforts for certification and help you get the most out of marketing your AGW labels. But we hope most businesses will be able to incorporate the new fee, recognizing the benefits of certification. If you have questions about these changes please reach out to the team. We look forward to continued work together toward a sustainable, high-welfare food system with integrity.

*Andrew Guenther*

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# GREEN SCREEN

AGW’s new consumer-facing video connects the dots

AGW is launching a new video to highlight the important role AGW farms are playing in addressing key social and environmental challenges.

Produced by Mike Suarez of Gorilla Byte Media, the video uses images taken at numerous AGW-certified farms, with the song ‘Beautiful Like This,’ kindly donated by singer-songwriter, Rachel Epp.

“The major social and environmental challenges we now face, such as climate change, declining rural communities, diet-related ill health or antibiotic resistant bacteria, often appear unrelated or unconnected and, at times, unsurmountable,” explains Emily Moose, AGW’s Director of Communications and Outreach.

“Unfortunately, most campaigns tend to focus on the individual issues and offer ‘silver bullet,’ short-term solutions that fail to comprehensively address the enormity of the challenges we face.”

AGW’s new video seeks to show how many of these issues are interconnected, and how simple changes in shopping habits and dietary preferences at the individual level can bring about wide-reaching changes.

“While we don’t pretend to have all the answers, one way we can comprehensively address many of these challenges is to replace our highly centralized, industrialized food system with a truly sustainable alternative,” adds Moose. “Our new video tries to show the ‘bigger picture’ and explain the vital role that sustainable, high-welfare farms play in feeding the world sustainably—and why consumers should seek out food with AGW-certified labels.”

*Look out for the new video on Facebook and Instagram and share it with your customers, friends and family.*



## IN THE NEWS...

### A BIG HIT

Farm Health Online received more than 13,500 visits per month since May 2018, with users from over 150 countries.

A partnership with the UK-based Rural Business School at Duchy College, AGW’s Farm Health Online covers all aspects of health and welfare for cattle, sheep, pigs and poultry, with comprehensive information on over 100 common diseases. The free website offers practical advice on alternative approaches to livestock health management. Visit [farmhealthonline.com](http://farmhealthonline.com)

### LOSING THE RACE

The U.S. was ranked 26th on a list of 67 countries when it comes to food loss and waste, sustainable agriculture and nutritional challenges, according to the latest Food Sustainability Index (FSI). Canada ranked third overall.

The FSI measures best practices in food sustainability. The U.S. and Canada ranked 16th and 5th when assessed solely on food loss and waste; 33rd and 16th on sustainable agriculture; and 45th and 11th on nutritional challenges, respectively. Visit [foodsustainability.eiu.com](http://foodsustainability.eiu.com)

### FARM INCOMES DECLINE

U.S. farm profits are expected to drop significantly for 2018.

According to the latest USDA Farm Income Forecast, inflation-adjusted net farm income—a broad measure of profits—is forecast to decline \$10.8 billion (14.1 percent) from 2017 after increasing \$13.0 billion (20.2 percent) in 2017. Inflation-adjusted net cash farm income is forecast to decline \$10.9 billion (10.5 percent) from 2017 to \$93.4 billion—the lowest real-dollar level since 2009.



### NEW EGG CARTON

The Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW-branded egg carton is back in stock. The newly sourced egg carton is made with 100 percent reclaimed paper and holds a dozen medium, large or extra-large eggs.

The low-cost carton features AGW’s flagship logo and clear messaging that the eggs are from pastured, high-welfare hens, and includes space for a farm-specific label. 200 dozen-egg branded cartons cost \$36 plus \$14 shipping and handling. Visit [agreenerworld.org/shop-agw](http://agreenerworld.org/shop-agw)





# IN THE NEWS...

GLANBIA IRELAND



## A GREENER IRELAND

The Glanbia Ireland farmer cooperative is now Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW, following a 24-month project.

Based in Ireland, the 4,800-farmer cooperative annually processes over two billion liters of milk, almost one third of Ireland's milk pool, into a range of ingredients—from branded cheese and butter through to the infant, sports, clinical and affordable nutrition markets.

The Glanbia Ireland cooperative of farmers holds a deep passion for the power of pasture-based farm management and was looking for a trusted third-party, high-welfare certification to support the brand, explains Nicola O'Connell, Glanbia Ireland's Head of Marketing: "With pioneering

spirit and an innate connection to the land, every one of our dairy farmers is now audited for compliance to world-renowned welfare standards by A Greener World."

"We are delighted to work closely with Irish farmers and their co-operative, Glanbia Ireland," says Wayne Copp, Executive Director for A Greener World Europe.

"Their vision and enthusiasm for sustainable farming and high standards of animal welfare has impressed us from the very start of this project. To be part of bringing a suite of products to consumers carrying the Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW seal—where they can make a positive choice—is particularly special."



## SNAP VERDICT

The majority of registered U.S. voters oppose recent efforts to scale back Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) food benefits and believe the government should do more to help small farms and people facing food insecurity. In a nationwide survey by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health's Center for a Livable Future, 61 percent of respondents said that they were opposed to reducing funding for SNAP, while 57 percent supported increased funding for small- and mid-sized farms.

## AGW VOLUNTEERS

AGW's volunteer program is gathering momentum, helping to raise the profile of AGW-certified farms and products.

Launched in May, the volunteer program has already attracted significant interest from people across the U.S. and Canada. The first cohort of volunteers was trained in July and they are spreading the word about both the work of AGW farmers and ranchers, and the benefits of purchasing verified and sustainably produced meat, dairy and eggs.

"AGW volunteers can help with a range of activities to empower farmers and consumers and raise the profile of AGW products," says Callie Casteel, AGW's Volunteer Coordinator. "From expanding AGW's social media reach, helping the program attract new members and even thanking retailers who are sourcing AGW-certified products, volunteer projects are well underway and there's more to come!"

If you're interested in volunteering with AGW—or want to share information with your customers—email [callie@agreenerworld.org](mailto:callie@agreenerworld.org) or visit [agreenerworld.org/get-involved/volunteer](http://agreenerworld.org/get-involved/volunteer)



## THE VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Michelle Bissett of New York is part of AGW's first cohort of AGW Volunteers.

"I wanted to volunteer with A Greener World because it's a cause I believe in. I try to encourage people to eat locally and support farmers in their area, so this volunteer work aligns with my own interests. As someone recently out of college, I'm also trying to get as much experience as I can. Volunteering is one way to do that—especially for something I believe in!"



## CHAPEL HILL SUCCESS

Chapel Hill Creamery took home five awards—including four firsts—at the North Carolina State Fair Cheese Competition in October.

Portia McKnight and Flo Hawley raise Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW Jersey cows in the Piedmont region of North Carolina, producing a range of cheeses at their state-of-the-art creamery. Chapel Hill Creamery won first place for its "Danziger" (Smear Ripened Cheese category), "Fresh Farmer Cheese" (Open-Soft and Spreadable), "Hickory Grove" (Open-Semi-Soft Cheese), "Calvander" (Open Hard Cheese) and second prize for its "Carolina Moon" (Open-Soft Ripened).

A team of four judges rated cheeses on technical and aesthetic merits using the American Cheese Society's point system. The annual 10-day North Carolina State Fair attracted almost one million visitors.

## SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS AWARD

Joan (pictured left) and Randy Walker of Walker Farm were named a 2018 Sustainable Business Award winner by the Sustainable Business Network of Massachusetts in November. The annual award ceremony honors the contributions of the network's five most sustainable businesses, recognizing businesses whose sustainability efforts are outstanding.

The Walkers raise Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW Red Devon beef cattle outdoors

on pasture at their 400-acre farm at the foot of Whortleberry Hill.

"Sustainability is central to my business because it is ecologically and financially responsible," says Joan Walker. "We're honored to receive this award and to be recognized for the efforts we've made to use every asset we have on our farm. We're also very proud to be recognized as Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW, since this is another important indicator of our sustainability efforts."



## TOP MARKS FOR AGW DAIRY FARMS

Two AGW-certified dairy farms received top 5-star ratings in the Cornucopia Institute's latest *Organic Dairy Scorecard*.

The *Scorecard* allows consumers to assess organic dairy brands in real-time while shopping. Hawthorne Valley Farm of Ghent, NY, and Working Cows Dairy of Slocomb, AL, were among 32 farms to receive top marks. Over 150 U.S. brands were rated in terms of their procurement practices, separating major industry players, like the private-label milk brands at big-box retailers that exclusively source from intensive 'mega-dairies'

from the many smaller family-owned operations. The Institute's Mark A. Kastel claims some 'organic' farms in the Southwest are milking as many as 15,000 cows in CAFO-like conditions, "defrauding consumers by depriving them of the documented nutritional superiority in pasture-based organic dairy production. With the USDA's failure to protect ethical industry participants and consumers from outright fraud, using our *Organic Dairy Scorecard* is a way for organic stakeholders to take the law into their own hands."

Visit [cornucopia.org](http://cornucopia.org)





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## Opinion

# PERFECT TIMING

Tozie Zokufa welcomes the launch of AGW South Africa

In early 2016, I contacted Andrew Gunther, Executive Director of A Greener World, to explore the opportunities for developing high-welfare, sustainable farm standards and third-party farm auditing in South Africa.

For the past decade or so, I have worked with many international and national animal welfare organizations, focusing on improving farm animal welfare in South Africa and across the continent. While demand for high-welfare, sustainable food is small but growing, the question that people always ask is, “how can I be sure if a product comes from an animal that had a life worth living?” Sadly, there was no real guarantee or assurance—certainly not for the average shopper in South Africa.

### A vision for change

In the face of growing pressure to industrialize farming in South Africa and beyond, Andrew's vision was to enable local farmers everywhere to meet the growing demand for high-welfare, sustainable meat, eggs and dairy, while supporting and empowering local communities and non-governmental organizations. I organized several farm tours and arranged meetings with government officials, potential funders, academics and farmers, and was delighted to be appointed as Executive Director of AGW South Africa later that year.

After two years of hard work, it is a great pleasure to announce that AGW South Africa was officially launched in October—and the timing could not be better. Unfortunately, South Africa is leading other African countries in the race to adopt industrial farming systems. If industrial farming gains a foothold here, it will not only result in untold misery for millions of farmed animals in the future, but it will have immeasurable impacts on thousands of independent farmers in South Africa and other African nations, our environment and public health and wellbeing.

When it comes to promoting sustainable farming solutions in South Africa, there is no better and more experienced organization than AGW. AGW's proven track record in North America—and their focus on ensuring ‘farmer-centric’ sustainable solutions—is unparalleled.

### Creating opportunities

What South Africa needs is increased agricultural output, which has decreased by almost 30% over the last three months alone, contributing negatively to the GDP. Combined with our high unemployment rate, it might look like the future is all doom and gloom. But if more farmers were to adopt sustainable, high-welfare farming, we would see increased employment opportunities for our youth who are desperately looking for work, as well as the wider availability of high-quality healthy and environmentally friendly food products and greater transparency in our food production. This is exactly what AGW brings to the table.

I am humbled and honored for the opportunity to serve South African farmers and the public as Executive Director of AGW South Africa. I am looking forward to encouraging our hard-working farmers—many of whom are passionate about farming as close as possible to nature and who already employ sustainable farming methods—to join the AGW program, helping them to connect with consumers across the country who share similar values through the trusted AGW seals.

Going back to the question that I am frequently asked: “how can I be sure if a product comes from an animal that had a life worth living?” With the introduction of AGW to South Africa, I can now confidently direct my friends, family and contacts to a small but growing number of AGW-certified farms and products.

Here's to a greener South Africa, a greener Africa, and, ultimately, A Greener World.

Tozie Zokufa is Executive Director, AGW South Africa. Contact him at [info@agreenerworld.org](mailto:info@agreenerworld.org).



# PAIN MANAGEMENT

This sheep is lame and in pain. How can we detect welfare problems as early as possible—and what can we do to alleviate the effects? Jennifer L. Burton considers the options



Picture this: you notice that one ewe tends to rest only on her left side. Is this just a habit or is she trying to prevent her lambs from nursing a sore teat?

Discovering a breach in the fence, a stray dog harassed your turkeys for several minutes. All of the birds managed to escape the dog, but several tumbled clumsily to the ground when a roost was toppled. The birds seem shaken, but it is unclear whether any are injured.

You always disbud when calves are just a few days old, but are unable to obtain lidocaine from your veterinarian. The two calves you disbudded yesterday were up within minutes and eating a few hours later, and they seem fine today.

Are these animals in pain? Does it matter?

### When animals experience pain

In a healthy, comfortable animal, much of the energy gained from food is stored as glucose and used for normal metabolism, growth and production. Immune cells circulate in the bloodstream, waiting for a signal that they are needed out in the tissues. When they receive that signal they move through the vessel walls to fight invading germs, clean up debris or help repair tissues.

But pain tells the body that something dangerous—maybe even deadly—is happening. This is no time for growth or healing: the hormones epinephrine and norepinephrine are released, instantly preparing the animal to fight or run for its life. Pupils dilate, the heart quickens and blood vessels and airways widen to boost sight, strength and speed. Intensified metabolism and a surge of glucose into the blood divert energy away from production for emergency use, and for a few minutes survival may take precedence over protecting the injured area. Bracing for additional trauma, the immune system sends signals that promote germ-fighting inflammation throughout the body.

### Fight or flight

As the initial insult subsides, so does this “fight or flight” response. But when pain continues for hours or days, the stress hormone cortisol is released. Cortisol continually redirects energy away from growth and production, keeping blood glucose high. At the same time, cortisol can decrease appetite, so the animal may lose weight or decrease production. This hormonal response to lingering pain also reduces the ability of healing cells to move through vessel walls, so those cells are less responsive when the body calls for help resolving illness or injury.

Clearly, a good steward of a farm’s animals, finances and food products will seek to recognize and mitigate pain.

ATTITUDE
Is the animal less curious or less playful than usual? Does she separate herself from the herd/flock or behave differently toward others?
APPETTITE
Watch for changes in feed and water intake, quality and quantity of urine and feces
GAIT
Look for symmetry in stride length, limb mechanics, foot placement. A hunched back or bobbing head often indicates pain
POSTURE
Observe movement and position while standing and at rest
BODY
Evaluate body condition regularly. Notice any discharges. For wounds, lumps and lesions: monitor size, shape, heat, discoloration
PRODUCTION
Has milk or egg production decreased? Has the animal lost weight or has growth rate slowed compared to the rest of the herd or flock?

### Continuous assessement

Changes in behavior, movement and physical features can help you detect problems early, when they are most responsive to therapy. Use the guides below to learn what is normal in your healthy animals, recognize deviations that signal discomfort or disease, and determine whether your intervention is working.

Try to evaluate each of the points in the panel (left) regularly to establish what is normal for your healthy animals. For all animals that are ill, injured or receiving treatment, these items should be noted in your medical observation and treatment records.

### Detecting pain

There is no perfect method for measuring pain in animals. However, some of the most useful research compares how animals respond to a given procedure, such as castration, with and without a pain-reducing intervention such as a nerve block. Physiological changes and behaviors that occur only in the absence of pain-reducing treatment are attributed to pain.

Physiological indicators such as vital signs can help us gauge pain, but behavior is our best guide. Research has shown that objectively looking for specific behaviors is more accurate than subjective assessment or personal interpretation. At the same time, research has also shown that individuals familiar with the animal’s personality are better at gauging pain. If your ewe has always rested on her left side it may not mean anything, but if this is a new behavior there is a good chance it is driven by discomfort.

**Pain in different species:** Ruminants in pain tend to lose their appetites, act slow or uninterested, and breathe more rapidly. They may grind their teeth, but with less cud chewing or rumination.

Cattle and goats tend to vocalize more when in pain; sheep vocalize less and have a greater tendency to hide within the flock.

Pigs in pain may become more tolerant of handling, but move less on their own. Grunting is common. Some lose their appetites, others do not.

Poultry pain signs can be harder to spot: they move less, eat less and take less interest in foraging. Some isolate themselves, others seek safety within the flock. Birds may vocalize, wings may flap or droop and rapid open-mouth breathing may be observed. Poultry in pain may preen less overall, yet over-preen a target area.

**Pain of different duration:** Acute (immediate) pain may be indicated by dilated pupils, sweating, restlessness; avoidance of a specific item, individual or location; aggression, anxiety, or vocalization. Chronic (long-term) pain signs include irritability,





With pressed back ears and a hunched back, this kid is clearly in some discomfort



Investigate any sudden changes in behavior, such as isolation from the rest of the flock



Castration is a painful procedure; consider providing pain relief, where available

aggression, decreased appetite and weight loss, constipation, increased sensitivity to other pain and abnormal behaviors. Activity, mobility and socialization may be reduced. Animals that have given up on finding relief may show no behavioral signs at all.

**Pain during different procedures:** When tail docking (lambs only) or castrating, look for restlessness, kicking, foot-stomping, rolling, jumping, licking or biting at the wound, tail wagging.

When ear notching (pigs only) or applying ear tags, watch for head shaking, vocalization, rubbing ears against objects. Pigs may also shiver or tremble.

Upon disbudding, expect head shaking, tail wagging, vocalization.

If pain signs are not detected during or after an amputation, it is very likely that you are overlooking observable signs of distress.

It's said that "the squeaky wheel gets the grease." Animals that show obvious signs of pain are more likely to receive appropriate treatment. If you're not sure, consider providing pain relief on a trial basis to see if it has an effect. Doctors and veterinarians sometimes use this "response to therapy" test to determine when treatment is indicated—especially for stoic prey animals, such as turkeys, that have fallen from a roost.

### Ecological healthcare for pain

We have seen that pain can significantly retard healing. So can some treatments. Pharmaceuticals such as NSAIDS (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs), corticosteroids and opioids can be lifesavers, but they can also interfere with healing, cause side effects, end up in the environment or become residues in milk, meat and eggs.

Ecological healthcare seeks first to create an environment in which the body's natural healing and pain mitigation processes function well. Healing is optimized with good nutrition and minimal exposure to oxidative chemicals or pro-inflammatory feedstuffs. Proper handling, social environment and housing help keep cortisol levels low. Research has shown that cortisol levels are higher when animals are separated from the herd or flock, so keep injured animals where they can see and hear others, and provide a companion animal, if possible.

The best remedy for pain is to eliminate the cause. But when illness, injury or painful procedures occur, pain can be managed by changing how the signal is transmitted or perceived.

Acupuncture, chiropractic and therapeutic massage can provide significant pain relief when performed by veterinarians trained in these specialties. Importantly, these hands-on modalities should only be considered for animals that tolerate contact.

### MEDICAL TERMS

**Analgesia** reduces pain

**Sedation** reduces agitation or irritability. It can reduce fear, but does not effectively reduce pain

**Anesthesia** blocks all sensation, including pain:

- **General** (whole-patient) causes unconsciousness
- **Local** numbs a region of the body, and may be used to facilitate a procedure such as disbudding or removal of an extra teat dilution

### ACUPUNCTURE

Used to treat a wide variety of pain and other maladies

Injury risk: low

Interactions: few. Can be used in conjunction with other treatments

Residues: none

### THERAPEUTIC MASSAGE

Used to reduce pain and improve range of motion

Injury risk: low to high depending on provider's massage and veterinary expertise

Interactions: few. Can be used in conjunction with other treatments

Residues: none

### ARNICA

Used in trauma to prevent bruising, swelling and pain

Toxicity risk: none when used in homeopathic dilution

Interactions: does not interfere with other medical treatments. However, many practitioners find that some medical treatments, foods or other exposures interfere with homeopathic treatment

Residues: none when used in homeopathic dilution

**Acupuncture:** Acupuncture—the insertion of thin needles at very specific points—stimulates the body's production of natural pain reducers. A wealth of research finds acupuncture effective for chronic hip, back and neck pain, and it is now used by veterinarians to treat many types of pain. Extensive training is required to correctly locate acupuncture points on animals, so seek a veterinarian trained in this modality.

**Therapeutic massage:** When performed properly, therapeutic massage increases circulation, relaxes tight muscles and loosens scar tissue. It also reduces cortisol, while releasing substances that ease pain via complex neural pathways. Massage therapy is often prescribed after injury or surgery to reduce pain and help the animal regain range of motion. Thorough knowledge of veterinary anatomy and the specific injury is crucial to performing this therapy safely.

**Chiropractic:** If pain is caused by misalignment of joints, chiropractic could help eliminate the cause.

**Homeopathy:** Homeopathy is a complete medical system that uses specific remedies to treat patients on the principle "like cures like." Many homeopathic remedies are made from toxic substances, but they are always highly diluted such that they do not carry risk for toxicity or residue. Homeopathic preparations of Arnica or Hypericum may be administered before castrating or disbudding, or after a traumatic birthing event. Animals can be treated individually per label instructions or the remedy can be added to water following a group procedure.

### Conclusion

Prompt and effective relief of distress is essential to animal wellbeing and any delay in effective relief allows the physiological effects of pain to continue unchecked. Farmers who practice continuous assessment are better at detecting discomfort and disease early, when first-choice treatments are most effective. When trauma occurs, assume pain is present—even if you cannot detect it. Treat appropriately, record your observations and reassess regularly to determine whether your treatment is effective. Finally, expect excellent results: if treatment is not making the animal comfortable, change course and seek veterinary assistance.

Special thanks to Cynthia Lankenau, DVM

Jennifer L. Burton, DVM, is a veterinarian and educator with a special interest in the intersection of food animal medicine and public health



Any unusual stance or change in posture could be an indication of pain



This cow is unwilling to put weight on one hind foot and should be examined urgently



Hunched back and head down is another classic sign of pain





# ASSESSING WELFARE: A NEW APPROACH

Welfare outcome assessment is a pioneering concept for improving animal welfare on farms. Kate Still explores the benefits

Two examples of the AssureWel welfare outcome sampling approach: laying hens and beef cattle. For examples of other species—including dairy cows, pigs, sheep and broilers—visit [assurewel.org](http://assurewel.org)

## LAYING HENS

### Individual measures

Select 50 birds from oldest flock and assess for:

- Feather loss across head/neck and back/vent areas
- Dirtiness

### Group measures

Assess all birds in the flock for:

- Beak trimming
- Antagonistic behavior
- Flightiness
- Birds needing further care

### Record measures

- Mortality

## BEEF CATTLE

### Individual measures

Select 20 animals from across all age groups and assess for:

- Mobility
- Body condition
- Cleanliness

### Group measures

Assess all cattle on the farm for:

- Hair loss, lesions and swellings
- Animals with signs of respiratory illness
- Cattle needing further care

### Record measures

- Caesarean and assisted calvings
- Pneumonia treatments
- Disbudding, dehorning and castration
- Mortality

Today, most farm certification programs focus on “input” standards that define any given production system. In other words, the auditor visits a farm or ranch and assesses a list of key measurables like total stocking rates, housing type and how much space is given for individual animals, feed requirements and so on. The traditional audit checks an operation is compliant with the standards without thoroughly assessing how effective those resources and management are at providing a good level of welfare for the individual animals.

If we *really* want to ensure the welfare of the livestock we need a method for routinely—and directly—assessing the animals themselves, rather than just ‘checking boxes’ on a list.

## A new approach

Welfare outcome assessment is a relatively new and scientifically informed process that involves directly assessing farm animals themselves for a variety of different measures relating to their health, physical condition and behavior. The information and results gathered provide a direct measure of the welfare of the individual animals assessed, as well as the overall level of welfare being achieved on that farm.

### Welfare outcome assessment in farm audits:

Farm certification programs like Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW play a major role in enhancing the welfare of farm animals by ensuring farmers work to high standards. As mentioned, farm standards have generally focused on what must be provided to the animals, primarily in terms of resources and management requirements (‘inputs’). Although there is good scientific and practical evidence to suggest these input standards are important for animal welfare, it now is widely recognized by the food and farming industries that farm certification programs should also include welfare outcome assessment to provide the full picture and ensure high welfare.

When incorporating welfare outcome assessment into the farm audit process, auditors should be assessing samples of animals for specific welfare outcome measures alongside routine inspection of resource provision. In addition, they should be reviewing health and performance records maintained by the farmer. Auditors should explain the process and scoring approach being used and any identified animals of welfare concern should be discussed with the farmer immediately. It is important to remember that the identification of welfare issues is generally not a non-compliance if it has been previously identified by the farmer and management is in place to improve or resolve the problem. The major concern is when farmers and ranchers have not identified the problem and/or there is a lack of action to make necessary

changes to improve, resulting in a high risk of normalizing poor welfare status.

Farm certification programs can collect data on welfare outcome measures to help determine the level of welfare being achieved for an individual animal, farm or across the certification program; it can be used to help evaluate and compare the effect of different farming systems on animal welfare and help to evaluate and improve the farm certification process and standards.

### Welfare outcome assessment in daily

**management:** Farmers and ranchers will already be assessing welfare outcome measures to some degree as part of their routine observations and husbandry practices—for example, identifying animals that are lame, reviewing the body condition of animals to adjust feeding or monitoring records, such as mortality and cull rates. However, it can become all too easy to accept high levels of lame cows or high occurrence of feather loss in hens, particularly if production performance seems reasonable.

It is therefore essential we step back and consider the impact on the individual animal and act in the early stages. Adopting a more routine and uniform approach to welfare assessment can help monitor and identify welfare problems, allowing the earliest application of solutions that will have the biggest impact. Maintaining records on welfare measures can also strengthen farm management and identify the impact of change in practices. Measures can be benchmarked to enable the easy review of system and management performance on individual farms or across a number of farms.

## Improving welfare for the future

The only way of properly checking that a farm’s management resources and day-to-day husbandry is delivering good welfare is to directly assess the condition of the animals, as opposed to the traditional approach of assessing the method of production alone. You can only improve what you measure and any welfare outcome assessment monitoring—whether via farm audit or self-assessment—should provide a check as part of proactive health and welfare planning. It should be used to help guide continuous improvement on farm—and may even call for immediate action. Applying this new welfare outcome approach to farm certification and day-to-day management will contribute significantly towards minimizing stress and supporting resilient health, ensuring the management and system combined delivers a good life for each individual animal.

*Kate Still is Animal Welfare Advisor for the AssureWel Project.*

## OUTCOME ASSESSMENTS AND AGW

Welfare outcome assessments already form an integral part of audits on Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW farms, taking into account the three levels identified in the AssureWel table (see opposite page):

- **Individual:** for example, body condition scoring, feather loss and lameness
- **Group:** for example, animal response to stock person
- **Records:** for example, culled animals and mortality

## ASSUREWEL

AssureWel is a UK collaboration between the Soil Association, RSPCA and University of Bristol, UK, who have developed welfare outcome assessment protocols for the main farm animal species specifically for use in farm certification audits. All the AssureWel protocols, score sheets and detailed explanation of why measures have been selected are available at [assurewel.org](http://assurewel.org)





# BEST HOOOF FORWARD

Anna Heaton looks at common factors for lameness in cattle—and options for prevention

Lameness in cattle can be defined as an abnormality that causes the animal to change the way it walks. Lameness is not a single disease, but a symptom of multiple conditions. It is not only painful for the affected animal, but has been shown to reduce production, appetite and fertility. A lame animal is not only in a state of pain and poor welfare: it is having an impact on your farm's bottom line.

## Factors affecting lameness

Lameness can be caused by infections, as well as environmental, animal or management factors. Reducing the risk of lameness requires an understanding of the factors present on your farm.

The type of system cattle are kept in is key. Research shows that cows in pasture-based systems experience lower levels of lameness than cows kept in housed systems. Similarly, cows housed in straw yards have lower levels of lameness than those on slats. This “stands” to reason: consider the difference in standing on unyielding concrete versus walking on grass and soil, and how much your own feet hurt if you have to spend a day pounding the side-walks in town.

Managing your cows according to Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW standards will significantly reduce the risk of cows getting lame. But that doesn't mean you should stop thinking about lameness and ways you can keep your animals' feet and legs healthy.

Other factors include breed and genetic characteristics. Research shows certain breeds are more (or less) susceptible to lameness. For example, Jersey cattle tend to have harder feet and suffer less from lameness, while Holstein Friesian cows generally experience more lameness problems than other breeds. Research also suggests that lighter animals are less prone to lameness, although one study found Guernsey cows more susceptible to white line disease.

A range of management factors can impact lameness. The more time cows spend standing, the greater the risk, so both the size of the herd and the space available can be key factors. When it comes to space, it is not just the total area or number of free stalls, but whether animals that are less dominant can get away from others. There is evidence that lower dominance animals

spend more time standing and therefore have higher lameness risks.

The risk of lameness also changes throughout the production cycle. Cows can become immuno-suppressed around calving time and therefore more susceptible to certain types of lameness—particularly true for first-calving heifers. There seems to be a reduction in horn growth late in pregnancy for heifers, presumably partitioning energy to their developing calf rather than their own growth, which makes them more prone to bruising and other foot problems. Ensuring calving cows have space and comfort to lie down is essential to preventing lameness at this time.

## Types of lameness

The majority (around 90%) of lameness in cattle involves the foot. Some of the main problems include the non-infectious sole ulcers and white line disease and infectious digital dermatitis (hairy warts). The main weight bearing area for cattle is the outer digit of a hind foot. Lameness problems are therefore more likely to be seen there, though the exact location will depend on the issue. Sole ulcers typically occur in the middle of the outer claw; white line disease on the outside of the outer claw. Each type of lameness has a different cause and treatment, the details of which go beyond the scope of this article. For more information, visit Farm Health Online (see right).

## Injury

Injuries can also lead to lameness and a minor injury left untreated can become a severe infection that is much harder to cure. Injuries can result from debris on pastures or in handling areas.

Puncture wounds to the sole can lead to deep infection which may be evident from swelling of the foot. A handy rule of thumb is that asymmetric swelling—where one side of the foot swells more than the other—is generally caused by deep infection. Symmetrical swelling either side of the midline of the foot is most likely to be footrot. It is important to examine the foot before deciding on the best course of treatment.

## Mobility scoring

Early recognition, investigation and treatment of lame animals is essential to limit pain, aid recovery and minimize further complications.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Farm Health Online offers in-depth advice on cow health. Visit [farmhealthonline.com](http://farmhealthonline.com), select 'disease management,' 'cattle diseases' and then 'lameness.'

The AssureWel Project (see pages 12–13) provides guidance on mobility scoring. Visit [assurewel.org/dairycows/mobility](http://assurewel.org/dairycows/mobility)

The AHDB's excellent mobility score guide (below) is available at [dairy.ahdb.org](http://dairy.ahdb.org). Select 'Resources library,' 'Technical information,' 'Health & welfare' and find Mobility score instructions.



Regular on-farm mobility scoring is an important tool in identifying and resolving lameness issues.

Mobility scoring is more than just looking out for lame animals when moving cows from pasture to pasture. Cows have evolved to mask most of the early signs of lameness (to avoid predation). In many cases, cows will go several weeks with painful foot lesions before showing obvious lameness. Mobility scoring helps to identify and take action on lameness early.

Mobility scoring should be carried out at least monthly for dairy cows and every few months for beef cattle. Cows should ideally be scored while walking on a hard, non-slip surface. Each cow should be assessed individually, allowing them to take between 6–10 uninterrupted strides while observed from the side and the rear. Cows are scored from 0–3 (walking normally to severely lame).

## Results

Scoring the herd will generate lists of cows that either need treatment now (score 2 or 3) or may need investigation or foot trimming (score 1). It is important to remember that it takes at least six weeks for sole bruising or a sole ulcer to become visible on the sole surface. Consequently, it is normal to find score 2 lame cows with innocuous lesions, such as sole overgrowth, outer hind claw overgrowth, toe overgrowth and mild surface bruising, generally indicating deeper sole bruising or ulceration.

A key lameness prevention technique is routine foot trimming to maintain correct foot shape. Do not disregard a slightly lame cow with overgrown feet: without action this could develop into something much worse. Overall, the aim for the herd is for at least 85% of animals to score 0 or 1 and for no animals to score 3.

## Keep on moooving

While pasture-based systems have a lower risk of lameness for cattle, problems can still occur causing pain to the animal and a potential loss of income. Monitor your herd carefully and take action at the first sign of lameness to keep your herd moving as they should.

*Anna Heaton is Lead Technical Advisor with A Greener World.*





# STRONGER TOGETHER

In the second of our two-part feature, Callie Casteel explores how group marketing works in practice—and the key challenges

New opportunities are emerging to supply high-welfare, sustainable products to large retail traders. However, these buyers generally require a scale and continuity of supply that individual farm businesses will struggle to meet on their own. Cooperative or group marketing approaches can allow farmers to work together to coordinate supply of high-welfare, sustainably produced products to these larger buyers—with the negotiating power needed to secure fairer and more sustainable prices.

## A cooperative approach

The North Carolina Natural Hog Growers Association (NCNHGA) is officially set up as a cooperative, where key decisions are made by a majority vote. Farmer members take on some responsibility for running the group, while the president coordinates marketing and sales.

Before applying to join the NCNHGA, farmers must be Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW and Certified Non-GMO by AGW. “Every application we receive is reviewed and voted on by the board,” NCNHGA president Jeremiah Jones explains. “The written application has questions like farm size, why they want to join the co-op, what benefits they see in being a member—different vetting questions we’ve learned over the years. Not everyone will fit the group, so it’s important to figure that out early on.”

NCNHGA farmers sign a basic marketing agreement, which specifies price and weight ranges and other responsibilities, such as meeting attendance, volunteering time and so on. “This agreement is important for multiple reasons, but it’s something to fall back on if we ever have to enforce rules,” Jeremiah adds.

## Producer groups

Producer or marketing groups operate in a different manner. These privately owned companies frequently develop where an individual business needs to supply a growing market, and animals or products are purchased from participating farmers at an agreed price. Colleen and Dylan Biggs of TK Ranch in Hanna, Alberta, pre-purchase cattle from a number of trusted certified farmers

## DEFINITIONS

A **cooperative** is defined as a group of farmers who work together and market their product under one name or brand, mutually benefiting from the profits and other shared activities/resources.

A **producer or marketing group** is a privately owned company; they usually evolve from an individual farm’s need to increase supply, buying animals or product from participating producers at an agreed price.

and ranchers, process the carcasses and market the beef cuts alongside beef from their own herd under the brand.

“We started direct marketing almost 25 years ago to add value to our production and were one of the first farm families to sell grassfed beef in Canada,” Colleen says. “As demand increased, we began working with a few small families to supply beef.” TK Ranch suppliers must be Certified Grassfed by AGW and meet certain genetic criteria, which is primarily Angus based. “The farmers must also exhibit livestock handling skills that demonstrate their commitment to animal welfare and environmental management,” Colleen adds.

The Biggs plan beef production about three years in advance. Before they work with a family, the Biggs inspect the cattle herd and discuss animal specifications and other requirements in detail. “We still have a strong code of conduct in Alberta that allows us to trust them at their word. So we do not have written contracts. Our producers are paid when they deliver their animals. We’ve occasionally had animals arrive that did not meet our specs and mutually agreed to discount price accordingly.”

## Responsibilities

Jeremiah is responsible for scheduling NCNHGA farmer and buyer deliveries, maintaining buyers’ relationships, communications and general management, as well as admin and billing. “We try to plan production a year out or more, but it’s hard to get buyers to commit to numbers more than a year from now. But we don’t want to be raising more pigs than what we’ve got market for.”

Co-op members are responsible for keeping to production schedules. While members are paid per pound, there are penalties if pigs go too heavy or too light. “Farmers can get docked or have to pay a fine,” Jeremiah explains. “If you don’t fill out the monthly production projection sheet, there’s a fine for that, too. Three complaints from buyers and the board will investigate and membership could be terminated.” The co-op is investing time and energy to educate members on estimating weights and improving projections for younger pigs. “We’re trialing a software program where farmers input the number of pigs born and date, and it figures how many days it takes to finish, based on feed ratios. It’s early days but it looks promising.”

## Decision making

For the Biggs, the marketing group structure enables more streamlined decision making. “The big difference between us and a cooperative is we are responsible for the entire value chain,” Colleen explains. “You can only form a cooperative with people who are like-minded and have money to invest.”

“We pay suppliers a premium above the market high and they have no other responsibilities. As the producers have no financial skin in the game, except ownership of their cattle, the Biggs dictate the terms. “Overall, managing producers is not difficult—especially when their responsibilities are limited,” Colleen adds.

## Financial risks

But it means the Biggs are solely responsible for any related marketing costs and all financial risks: “The families we work with are wonderful people and we appreciate their hard work and commitment. However, we are responsible for the entire program and receive no additional help or involvement from our producers beyond buying their livestock. The onus is entirely on us to make this business work and it’s far from easy.”

And there are real risks: “The recession in Alberta has sent our economy into a tailspin since 2015. Unfortunately, those of us marketing high-end products are struggling because so many people have lost their jobs, and some direct marketers have seen a 40% decline in sales. We are holding our own, but only just.”

## Marketing benefits

Joining a co-op or producer group can offer real benefits to farmers. Marketing is the big one: in both set-ups, farmers can focus on day-to-day farming and not worry about marketing the end product. There can be other benefits, too. “We try to help with whatever issues are brought to the group,” says Jeremiah. “So we’ll bring in an expert speaker to the monthly meetings or try to figure it out among ourselves. There’s a lot of collective knowledge among the group.” NCNHGA members have also worked together to buy breeding stock, farrowing huts and bulk grain.

If you are thinking of setting up a cooperative or marketing company then a sound knowledge of your market, good communication skills and the ability to work effectively with all types of people is essential. “And you’d better like Tylenol!” Jeremiah adds.

*Callie Casteel is AGW’s Farmer and Market Outreach Coordinator for the Southeast region*

## Please note

Any marketing group or cooperative that wishes to market products using AGW’s seals must ensure all members are certified. AGW will audit and certify every individual co-op or producer group member.



# THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Managing the human-animal relationship is fundamental to successful shepherding

Good shepherding skills are of paramount importance in all sheep systems. Shepherds should be aware of the welfare needs of their sheep and be capable of safeguarding them under all foreseeable conditions. But understanding the behavior of sheep—and their behavioral needs—is fundamental to shepherding and caretaking.

## Flocking behavior

Sheep are a highly social species and five sheep can be considered as the smallest grouping that enables the group to exhibit flock behavior. Sheep can become stressed when isolated, even when they are in earshot of others. Flocking behavior and the bond between sheep in flocks are important traits to consider, particularly when handling and moving sheep. Research suggests the extent of the bond formation varies between breeds; the strongest bond is between mother and offspring, which can last for a number of years.

## Human-animal interactions

Contact with humans generally results in an alarm or stress and is dependent on the behavior and actions of the human, as well as frequency of contact. Crowding, particularly with unfamiliar sheep, can be highly stressful. Driving a flock by a shepherd and dog can significantly increase the heart rate, indicative of stress. Human contact at critical times can also disrupt reproduction and maternal behavior. Different breeds respond differently to humans, and breeds that are easily moved in flocks tend to be more difficult to physically restrain.

Sheep remember negative (and positive) learned responses for long periods, sometimes years, and can be conditioned to handling procedures. They quickly learn to avoid negative handling experiences and seek out positive stimuli—for example, if food is offered after handling. Brief, gentle contacts

## OVERCOMING HANDLING STRESS

Approaches to reduce stress and the negative experience of being handled include:

- Making the treatment less severe
- Gentle handling during early critical periods
- Changing the sheep's perception of the treatment
- Breaking the link between being handled and receiving a negative treatment
- Training leader sheep

with handlers can improve the approachability of sheep, while familiarization through frequent exposure to handling facilities can have slight improvements in the animals' response to handling. It is also possible to train 'leader' sheep to, for example, use handling facilities, which encourages others to follow.

At lambing time, human interactions and the response of the sheep to human presence will be particularly important for sheep welfare, especially in extensive systems, where the infrequency of exposures to the handling treatment limits familiarization—and can lead to extreme stress.

## Moving sheep

Understanding and sensitivity to the 'flight zone' can assist the shepherd to catch individual sheep. Research shows that head orientation in relation to an approaching human can provide a useful predictor of flight distance. On the edge of the flight zone approximately half the flock will be facing towards the handler and half facing away. The flight distance is reduced when the approach is rapid and when sheep are more closely confined.

Movement of flocks or individual sheep by humans or dogs occurs when the flight zone is penetrated, causing the animal to move away. Moving sheep in a particular direction, without causing stress and dispersion, is best achieved by utilizing two notional 'points of balance' on the animal. Forcing the animal from the point behind the shoulder causes the animal to move forward and vice versa. Moving the animal left or right can be achieved by moving either side of the point between the eyes.

Article adapted from Farm Health Online. For more information about practical, science-based advice on high-welfare livestock management, visit [farmhealthonline.com](http://farmhealthonline.com)

## Certification news

# BUYING IN BREEDERS

What are the rules when buying breeding stock? Tim Holmes explains

As explained in the last issue, in order to meet the Certified Animal Welfare Approved (AWA) by AGW program's birth-to-slaughter requirements, any additional feeder or store animals raised and sold for meat must always be sourced from other certified farms. Likewise, our Certified Grassfed by AGW program requires that any additional bought-in feeder or store animals must be sourced from other Certified Grassfed farms, while our Certified Non-GMO by AGW standards have different requirements depending on the species.

The requirements for sourcing breeding animals, however, allow for more flexibility.

## Breeding animals

While we encourage our farmers to source breeding animals from other certified farms, we recognize there is currently insufficient genetic diversity and distribution of farms producing certified breeding animals to make this a realistic requirement. Farmers can therefore source initial breeding stock (and breeding stock replacements) from any farm as long as the following conditions are met.

Breeds and strains must be chosen with consideration for their ability to thrive on the farm's prevailing climatic conditions and suitability for pasture-based production. The animals must not be cloned or genetically engineered, and must not be deliberately selected for double-muscle traits that require routine caesarean sections and assistance during birth.

Similarly, a farm cannot knowingly source breeding stock produced by embryo transfer. The prohibition on use of embryo transfer extends to a single generation, so if the sire or dam of the animal to be purchased as a breeder was produced by embryo transfer that animal cannot be bought into the herd as a breeding animal. Finally, the farm cannot source rescue animals or culls from other herds as breeding animals. Farmers must keep records of the source, date or purchase and number of all breeding animals bought.

## Seal use and breeding animals

The AWA program has a policy of not looking backwards from the first audit. In other words, all animals on the farm at the date of certification are deemed compliant to the AWA standards, and are eligible to have the seal used on products produced from them. This includes all breeding stock and market animals on the farm.

However, things change after the certification date. While any breeding stock replacements purchased from non-AWA farms would be eligible to produce feeder/store animals that can go on to carry the AWA seal, any products produced from the slaughter of these non-AWA sourced breeders at culling are not eligible to carry the AWA seal, as they would not meet the program's birth-to-slaughter requirements.

Similarly, under the Certified Grassfed by AGW program, farmers can still source additional breeding stock from non-certified farms to produce animals for the Grassfed program. However, those breeders cannot be slaughtered and marketed using the Certified Grassfed by AGW seal.

The Certified Non-GMO by AGWO program requires that breeding stock destined to be slaughtered and sold using that seal would need to be born from animals that were managed to the Certified Non-GMO standards for the last third of gestation onwards, or in the case of poultry, from hatch.

## Key points

The main thing to remember is that while AGW recognizes the current need for many farms to source breeding stock from non-certified farms, there are additional requirements if the seal is being used on any products other than their offspring. If a farm wishes to slaughter breeders and market their products under any AGW seal, the animals must also meet the birth-to-slaughter standards. If they do not, the meat from these animals is not eligible to carry the seal.



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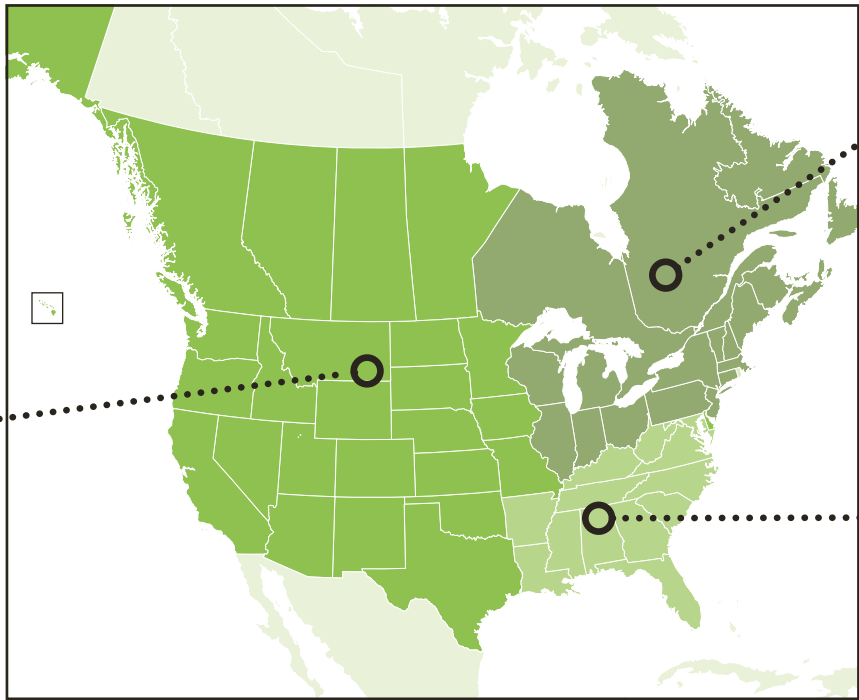
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# SPICE OF LIFE

Shannon and Tyler Eaton and their two young sons, Wyatt and Shepherd, raise Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW East Friesian sheep at Blue Pepper Farm in Jay, NY, located right on the edge of the Adirondack high peaks, where farmland meets the mountains.

## How did you hear about AGW?

A combination of Tyler's passion for ecology, family ties to the Adirondacks and my interest in high-welfare animal husbandry merged us onto this path of regenerative agriculture and AGW certification. We strive to be stewards of this little corner of the Earth; starting a diversified farm and sheep dairy is the vehicle by which we can afford to fulfill this calling.

## Describe a typical day

No such thing as typical! The seasonality of our farm and our products keeps it ever changing. Every day involves juggling two kids, emails, deliveries, twice-daily chores, filling water, moving fencing, hand washing eggs, fixing something broken, getting to be outside lots and eating really good food.

## Who are your customers?

We sell a lot of our products direct through farmers' markets and off the farm or at a friend's farm store up the road. We also sell our yogurt at stores throughout the Adirondacks and northern New York, and our meats to a handful of nearby restaurants.

## What's the benefit of being certified by AGW?

For us, it is nice to get credit for 'walking the walk.' We've worked hard to create a farm that balances the needs of soil, grass and animals while creating a quality product. Having a certification that helps us showcase much of our mission is a valuable marketing tool, allowing us communicate the importance of sustainable, restorative agriculture to our customers.

## Sustainable farming principles: why do they matter?

Farming can be highly impactful on the earth. The way we manage the land, animals and our resources is hugely important to fostering a system that can be perpetuated for generations while producing good food.

## What's the most frustrating about what you do?

Stuff breaks! It's easy to glorify farming and only think about animals grazing on green pastures, but in truth, a lot of time is spent on repairs and rebuilds.

## Any unusual hobbies or past careers?

Shannon worked for a container shipping company for seven years and now milks sheep in a repurposed shipping container.

## Who or what is your biggest inspiration?

My farming mentor, Jennifer Megyesi, who took a chance on me as one of her apprentices when I had zero farming experience. She's still often my first phone call when I have a sheep problem.

## What is the biggest threat to the sustainable farming movement?

Consumer education and 'greenwashing.' The onus is on us to show that we really are farming in a responsible manner. People often, perhaps unknowingly, vote with their dollars for harmful and inhumane farming practices.

## What's your vision for the future?

Making more sheep milk yogurt and processing all of our milk into a value-added product instead of selling our sheep milk wholesale.

## If I was President I would ...

Make climate change my number one priority.

## AT A GLANCE

**Farm:** Blue Pepper Farm, Jay, NY

**Certification date:** December 2014

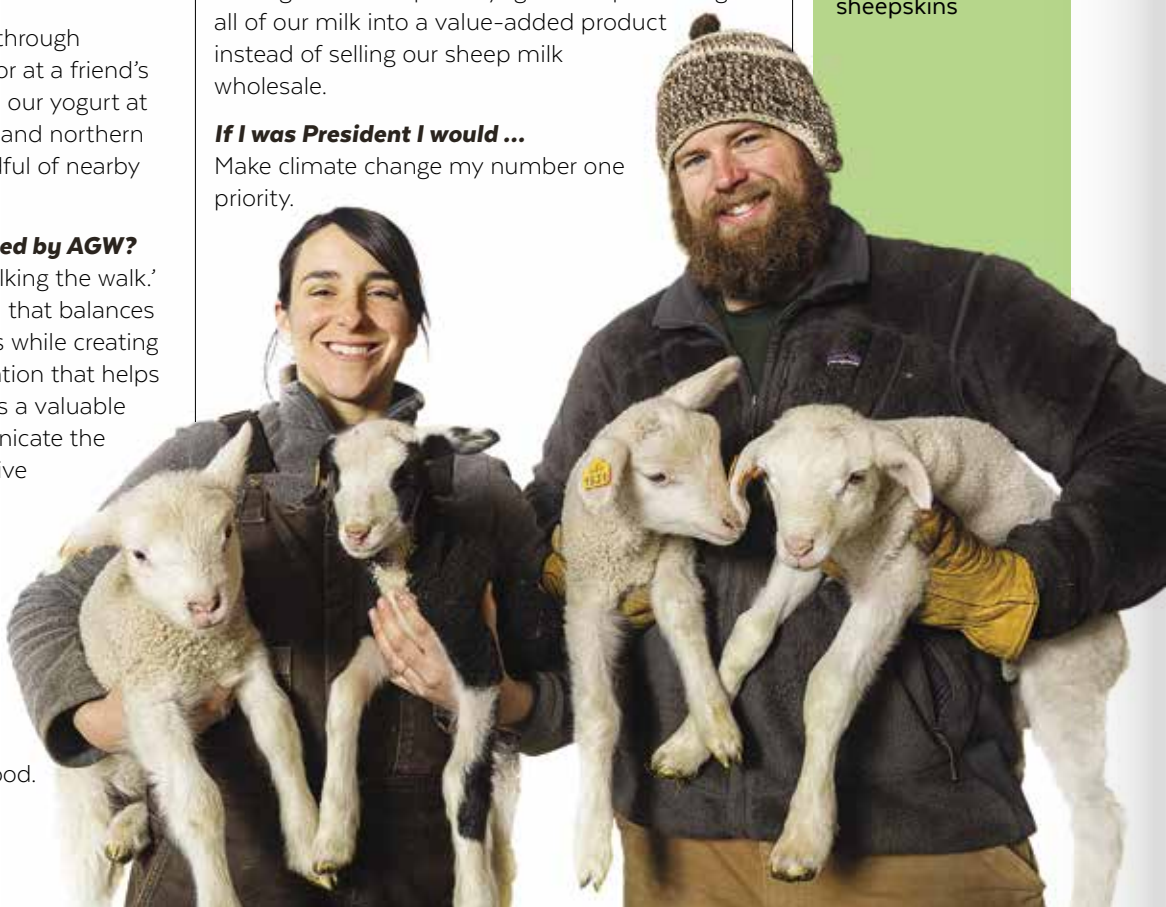
**Size:** 86 acres (46 acres owned plus 40 acres leased)

**Soil type:** Sandy loam

**Altitude:** 730 ft  
**Annual rainfall:** 37 inches

**Enterprises:** 50 East Friesian dairy ewes (100 lambs), selling Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW sheep milk yogurt, lamb, yarn and tanned sheepskins

LISA GODFREY (x2)





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