

Perceptions of what a good life, enjoyment and environmental enrichment mean for farm animals:

Summary report of an interview study

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Background:

Positive animal welfare (PAW) is a relatively recent concept that emphasises animals having positive experiences and a good quality of life.

Little is known about how stakeholders involved in farm animal supply chains perceive these ideas.

This study:

We interviewed 15 stakeholders with broad and practical experience of farm animal welfare.

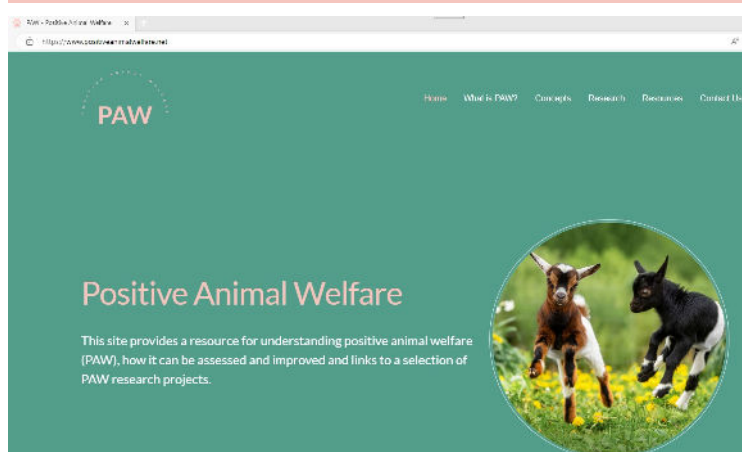
Our aim was to better understand perspectives on a good life, enjoyment, and environmental enrichment in farm animals including fish.

This summary highlights the key themes we identified from these interviews using thematic analysis.

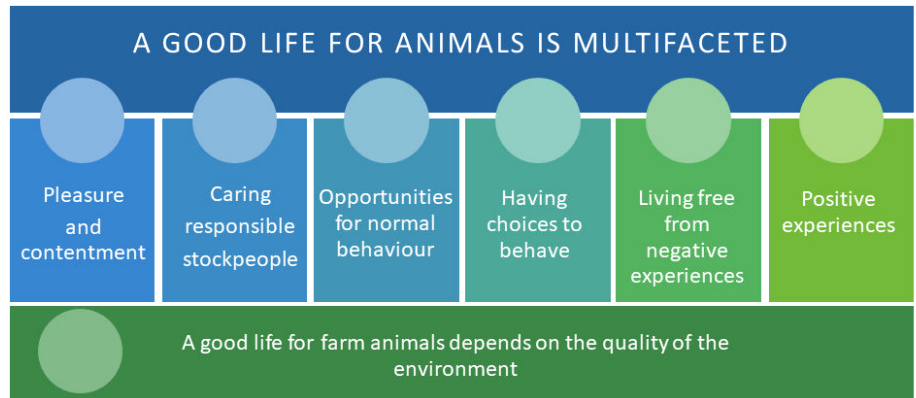
We also provide example quotes from the interviews to help illustrate the key themes. We finally reflect on the interview process and the next steps with the study.

Learn more about PAW by visiting:

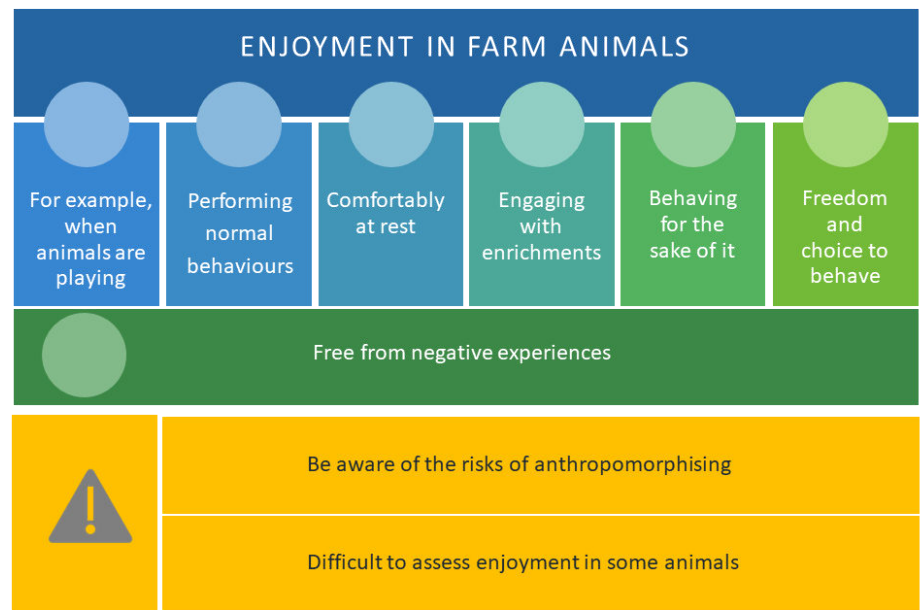
www.positiveanimalwelfare.net



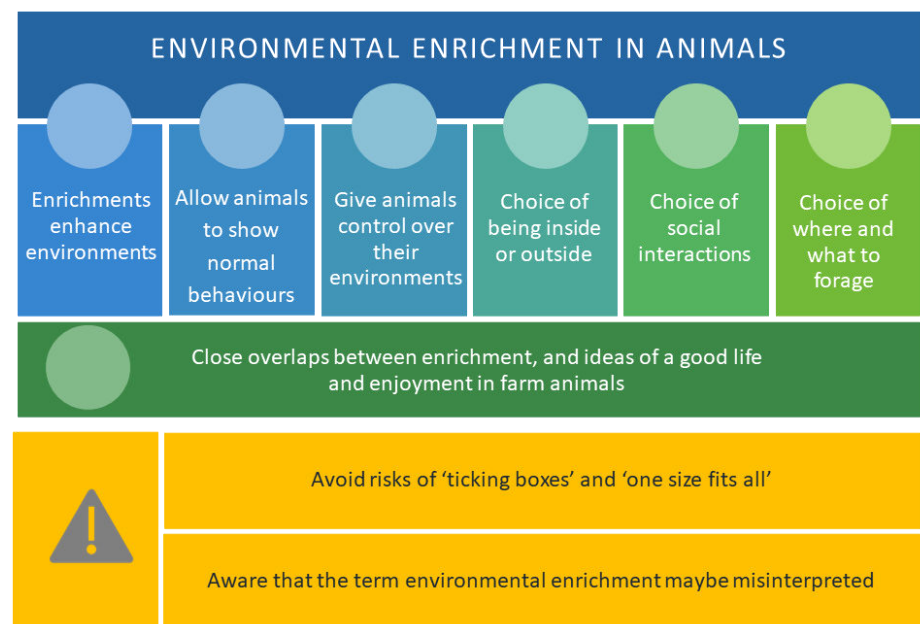
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A GOOD LIFE

“ Ultimately, there are many benefits to giving farm animals a good life, both for the farm animals, but also for the farming industry ”

“ not just looking after their health and their physical being, it needs to consider their mental well-being as well ”

“ I think a good life implies it is more than just being healthy. It's about having fun, you know, having joy ”

“ more positive opportunities within the day-to-day life of our farm animals is really important and not straightforward but really, really important ”

“ to sort of manage their environment and manage their experiences. And that can potentially be considered part of a good life as well ”

“ move forward attitudes away simply from let's not have any suffering to let's actually make life good for farm animals ”

“ an animal with many quite complex needs physical and psychological, it would be the option to have a choice of environments ”

“ it will help to pull up those that still are in a life not worth living ”

ENJOYMENT

“ happy healthy pigs, there's no aggression and they are not bored they're just doing what pigs should be doing ”

“ They're sentient beings. So, you know, they have the capacity to feel many of the things that we feel as humans. ”

“ showing positive behaviours and natural behaviours. The chances are they're probably feeling alright in themselves ”

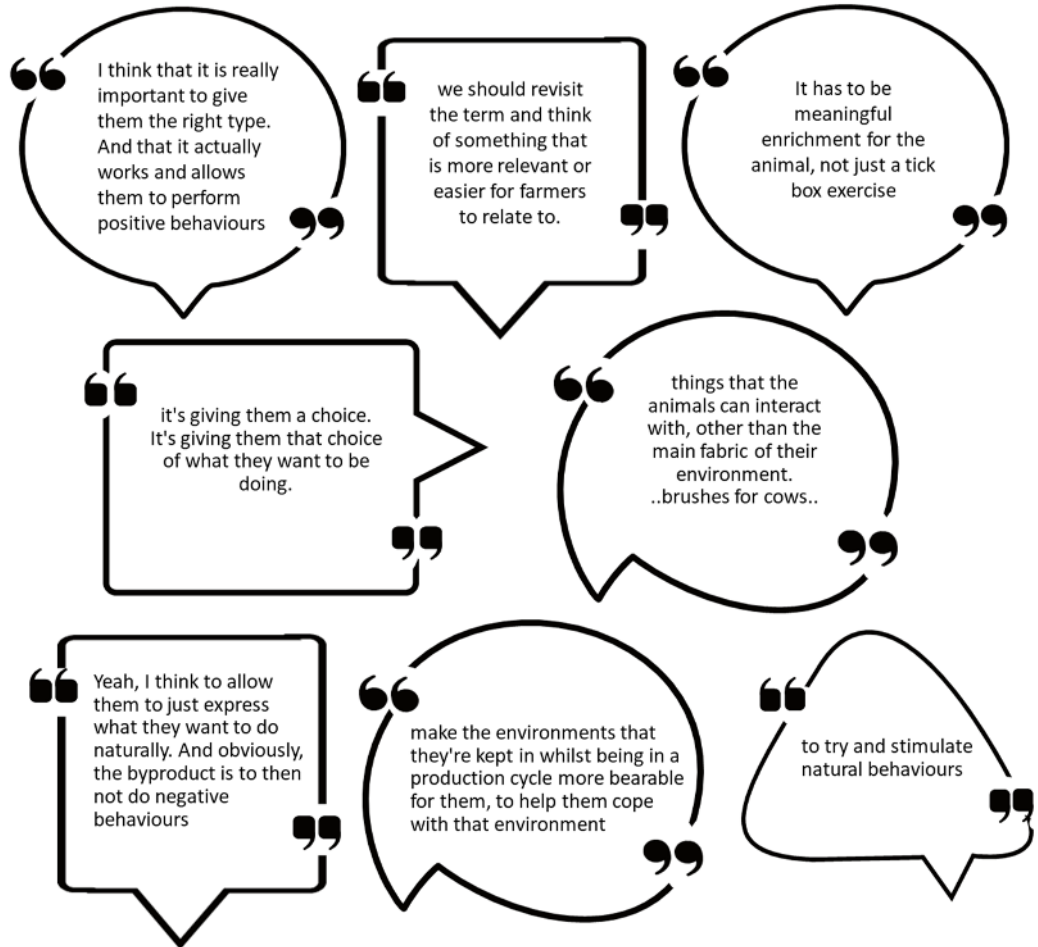
“ they would just race around and rummage around in the fresh straw finding new smells and heightening their senses and play just the playful nature of pigs is something just lovely to watch ”

“ cattle when they go outside when they go out to pasture. And they just jump around. And it's just amazing to see these huge animals springing about ”

“ two or three-week old piglets run around as a gang on an outdoor pig unit includes some joy about it. ”

“ a physically unhealthy animal could have enjoyment, but I think it will be harder to achieve ”

“ joyfully play and gamble around ”



Post-interview reflections

We have circulated an initial draft of this summary to the participants and taken account of their comments in this version. Compiling this new version has also allowed us to reflect on the interviews. Aspects that stand out include:

- The general agreement across the interviews of what constitutes a good life for a farm animal. Participants’ ideas of a good life include the absence of harms and the importance of animals having positive experiences. This matches to the scientific view that positive animal welfare (PAW) is dependent on removal of negative experiences.
- The recognition that there is a need for further research including:
 - (a) development of PAW indicators;
 - (b) estimation of the biological benefits of enrichment to help refine farmers’ use of enrichments and to incentivise wider uptake;
 - (c) understanding more of the species-specific nature of enrichment and to base enrichments on their biological efficacy for different species.

Post-interview reflections

- An observation made by a participant (below) in response to our first draft indicates the extent of the challenge we face in giving farm animals a good life.

“I am convinced that we can only give farm animals a worthy life by changing housing systems drastically (and only by reducing animal numbers) ”

Next steps

We continue work on these interviews with the aim of publishing a peer reviewed paper in due course. In the meantime, we would like to thank all participants for willingly giving their time and their thoughtful contributions to the interviews.

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