

Wageningen UR publication

Title:	Elements of societal perception of farm animal welfare: A quantitative study in the Netherlands
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Department(s):	Leerstoelgroep Rurale sociologie (Rural Sociology Group) (2000 -) Wageningen Institute of Animal Sciences (1994 - 1999) Mansholt Graduate School of Social Sciences (1998 -) <i>Subtheme: Consumer-driven chains</i>
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Abstract:	To study societal perception of animal welfare in The Netherlands and to search for intervention possibilities to influence this perception, 1074 randomly selected Dutch respondents completed a questionnaire on animal welfare. We analysed 15 propositions (4-point Likert scale) and through factor analysis we defined four factors of societal perception of animal welfare: Human-Animal Hierarchy (HAH), Use of animals for Human Consumption (HC), Life Quality of farm animals (LQ), and Farmers' Image (FI). On average, Dutch society perceived farm animal welfare as slightly positive. We distinguished perception into the elements: Values, Convictions, Emotional Experiences (with animals and farms) and Factual Knowledge. Factors HAH and HC are considered as convictions in Dutch society. LQ is the only element significantly influenced by values. Pet owners and people without farm experiences perceived FI and LQ as being less positive than people without a pet or with farm experiences. These emotional experiences with farms, farm animals and/or pets are important elements of perception. FI is the only element influenced through factual knowledge. Hence, it is important that people experience and learn what farming entails and how farm animals live, e.g. through farm visits.