

Animal Welfare Research at The University of Lincoln



Academic staff, post-graduate research students and undergraduates at the University of Lincoln have been involved in a number of projects whose aim is to understand better how animals cope with captive environments. Working closely with welfare charities, government bodies and industrial sponsors, we find practical solutions to welfare problems and provide students with hands on experience of welfare issues in key areas.

Horses- Professor Daniel Mills and Dr Jonathan Cooper have conducted ground-breaking work into the causes of stereotypic behaviour in stabled horses. Work has concentrated on:

- the social environment where we have found that being able to see other horses, or even a mirror reflection can vastly reduce weaving,
- the role of feeding regime, where we have found that type and timing of concentrate feeding is a major contributing factor in the performance of crib-biting.

Work continues on feeding behaviour of stabled horses and the neuropsychological basis of these problem.



Weaving is a common welfare problem of the housed horse



Laying hens in enriched cages

Chickens - Dr Jonathan Cooper and Dr Melissa Albentosa have recently completed government funded work on space requirements of laying hens in enriched cages. The work found that whilst additional space provided more room for activities such as nesting and perching, hens would still work hard for more space and that enriched cages provide limited opportunity for comfort behaviours such as wing flapping and stretching. This work is informing new legislation aimed at improving the welfare of egg-producing hens.

Ducks - Dr Jonathan Cooper has conducted a number of studies into the welfare of ducks reared for meat production. Ducks are now the second most common agricultural species in UK, and yet little is known of their behavioural needs. Our research has investigated practical means of providing commercially reared ducks with access to open water and has provided valuable information for UK/EU husbandry guidelines and RSPCA Freedom Foods standards.



Barn reared ducks



Dog being tested on a detour task

Companion animals –Staff at the University of Lincoln have an international reputation for their work into companion animal cognition and welfare. They have been instrumental to the development of a range of aids to problem behaviour management, especially the use of pheromones to reduce stress in cats, dogs, rabbits and horses.

The team is now leading the first major UK Government funded research initiative into the welfare of dogs. This is investigating the use of electric-pulse based training aids in the UK dog population and will inform future government legislation relating to the availability of such devices.

Staff are also undertaking fundamental research into the housing needs of pet rabbits

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