HKFOODS

Responsibility Fact Sheet Finland

Animal health and welfare: Beef

At HKFoods, responsibility of our operations applies to the entire supply chain from feed and genetics of animals all the way to the consumer. We ensure responsible animal rearing in close collaboration with our contract farmers.

Holistic welfare

HKFoods' contract farms in Finland are committed to following strict guidelines for animal rearing, feeding, health care and biosecurity.

Beef cattle are reared in cowsheds and cold loose barns as well as in pens and pastures. Beef breed cattle calves are born on suckler cow farms where they graze with their sucler cows until they are about 6 months old. The calves are then moved to specialised farms or they stay on their birth farm. From 2 weeks to 3 months of age, calves born on dairy farms are moved to a specialised calf rearing unit or to the calf section on the finishing beef cattle farm.

Traceability – result of the individual tagging of cattle and contractual production

- ANIMAL CARE AND ANIMAL WELFARE ON A HIGH LEVEL
- GOOD HEALTH AND CONTROLLED USE OF MEDICINES
- FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY OF THE HIGHEST STANDARD

PRIMARY PRODUCTION

- Space to move freely and free to feed
- Roughage for the good of the rumen and soy-free feeding
- Access to clean drinking water
- Padding to lie down on
- Minimum use of antibiotics
- The use of growth hormones is prohibited
- Disbudding in calf rearing units with sedation, anaesthesia, and pain relief. Other required procedures are performed by a veterinarian.
- Salmonella free
- Centralized Health Care Register for Finnish Cattle Herds - Naseva

ANIMAL TRANSPORT

- Skilful and calm treatment of animals
- Trained drivers certified for animal transport
- Transport vehicles specifically designed for cattle
- Transport distances as short as possible
- After every transport the vehicles are washed and disinfected. Hygiene of the trucks is regularly checked.

SLAUGHTERHOUSE

- Supervision of food safety and slaughtering hygiene
- Adequate rest and the shortest possible waiting time at the slaughterhouse. The presence of an animal welfare officer.
- Possibility for movement at own initiative
- Assessment and control of animal welfare. Strictly controlled slaughtering process.
- Trained staff and the continuous presence of an official veterinarian
- Recording video surveillance and the continuous improvement of conditions

Cows are the number-one utilisers of roughage. The rumen of a cow digests ingredients that humans cannot make use of as nourishment. As grazers, cows play a role of unparalleled importance for biodiversity. Given that cows are big animals with a long life, each cow is especially valuable as an individual and deserves the best possible care and treatment. The health and breeding of cattle stock are of a good standard in the Nordic countries and an important part of HKFoods' contractual production.

Tuire Tuukkanen, beef veterinarian
HKFoods Finland Oy

Supporting cattle welfare in various ways

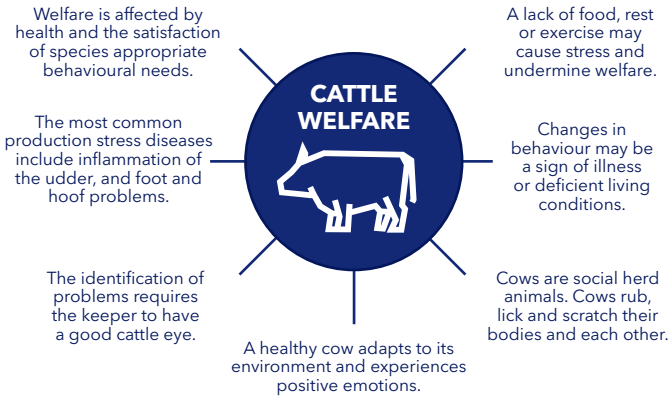
Cattle are intelligent and social animals that spend most of their time eating, chewing and resting. Cattle form close relationships and develop a strict hierarchy. Grooming other members of the herd is an important part of social interaction. For calves, playing is a particularly important way to learn social skills and body control.

Despite their sociability, cattle also need peace. Adult cattle rest for 11 to 13 hours a day. Too short a rest or uncomfortable lying area may cause stress and predispose to illness. The lying area must be soft, spacious, peaceful and well ventilated.

Our farmers make sure that there are enough feeding and drinking places for the entire herd. Cattle are ruminants that spend most of the day collecting feed, chewing and ruminating. Cattle eat 8 to 12 hours and ruminate 6 to 9 hours a day.

Beef cattle are reared in cold loose barns or in insulated establishments. The bedding and padding of resting places consists of straw, peat or rubber mats. These provide a warm resting place.

Cattle have a wide, 300-degree field of vision. Even so, they cannot see as clearly as humans and take time to process what they are seeing. Cattle also have poor stereoscopic vision, which is why they have to lower their heads to see things on the ground clearly. It is important to understand the behaviour specific to the species in the treatment of cows as well as how their senses work.



Source (in Finnish): http://www.nautatieto.fi/naudan-elintavat

FAVOURABLE IMPACT ON THE ECONOMY, CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT

The short growing season and abundant natural water resources of the Nordic countries makes them ideal for the cultivation of herbage and the production of forage. The production of dairy and beef maintains the self-sufficiency of food production.

THE BASIS OF A CIRCULAR ECONOMY AND BIODIVERSITY

- Livestock manure is a valuable fertilizer and soil conditioner that contains nutrients and organic substances
- Grazing prevents the overgrowth of meadows
- The grazing of purebred cattle increases the diversity of organisms and species spectrum of natural pastures

THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF PASTURES

- Bind atmospheric carbon dioxide
- Reduce the phosphorus load
- Prevent nutrients from draining into the waterways
- Maintain biodiversity
- Ensure the beneficial use of the soil
- Grass is an important plant in the crop

About 80 percent of the beef produced in Finland derives from animals in the dairy production chain, due to which the carbon footprint of the production is relatively smaller than in separated beef production. In addition to dairy and beef products, every bit of a cow's carcass is utilised, thereby also yielding leather, gelatin and bone meal.

A LIGHTER CARBON FOOTPRINT

The carbon footprint result of the beef of the Finnish HK quality chain calculated by VTT from 2019 data was 8.2 kg CO_2e per kilogram of live weight of the animal.* The calculations are based on the latest ISO standardized methods and IPCC calculation guidelines. The calculation takes into account the carbon footprint of production from the field to the gate of the production facility. In addition to carbon dioxide, the carbon footprint includes, among other things, methane and nitrous oxide converted into carbon dioxide equivalents.

* The results are reported as mass-allocated kg CO_2e / kg live weight.