

From Farm to Fork: The Journey of Ethical Animal Treatment in Our Food System

Dr. Shailesh Kumar Purohit^{1*}, Dr. Tinkal Damor¹, Dr. Utsav Chaudhary¹, Dr. Raj Patel¹ and Dr. M. M. Islam²

¹M.V.Sc. Scholar, Department of Livestock Production Management, College of Veterinary Science & A. H., Kamdhenu University, Anand, Gujarat, India

²Associate Research Scientist and Head, Pashupalan Sanshodhan Kendra, VASREU, Kamdhenu University, Ramna Muvada, Gujarat, India

***Corresponding author:** shaileshpurohit3222@gmail.com

[DOI:10.5281/Vettoday.15719034](https://doi.org/10.5281/Vettoday.15719034)

Abstract

In today's world ethical treatment of animal within our food system has become a very critical issue because in large scale farming and producers minimize the rearing space of animal, overuses of antibiotic, improper transport facilities and handling, unethical and unhygienic slaughtering techniques, and unsuitable processing of food to prioritizing the profit over the welfare. from farm to fork journey of ethical treatment in our food system we providing to animal proper space, feeding, watering, medicine, rest, and care about animal become free from pain, injury, disease, discomfort, fear, distress, and able to express their normal behaviour. Encourage and educate society to follow humane slaughtering techniques, ethical transportation, and processing of food. In addition to promoting people towards the vegetarianism, veganism, and flexitarianism and uses of ethical labels such as free-range, organic, grass-fed, or cruelty-free help consumers identify products that attract towards the animal welfare standards. Consumer choice is a very impactful in our ethical way of animal treatment. When consumers demand ethically produced food, it forces producers to adopt better practices, consequently creating a positive feedback loop.

Keywords: Farm, fork, ethical, behaviour, vegetarianism, veganism, pain, food

Introduction

Its today's world, where the demand for animal-originated food products is rising exponentially in last 2 decades, the ethical treatment of animal within our food system has become a very critical issue. The term 'from farm to fork' represent the entire journey of food production, starting from the farm where animals are raised, to the processing units, transportation system, markets, research and finally the consumer's plate (Salisu *et.al.*, 2025). Ensuring that animal is treated ethically through this journey is not only a moral responsibility but also crucial for food safety, quality, and sustainability. This review aims to shed light on the various stages of animal handling within our food system, the challenges involved and growing importance of adopting ethical standards in animal breeding, raising, slaughtering for human uses. Cattle,

buffalo, sheep, goats, pigs, poultry, and other animal uses for meat, milk, eggs, wool, leather, glue, brush, and other products.

Ethical Animal Husbandry at the Farm Level

The journey begins at the farm where livestock are bred and raised. Ethical treatment at this stage involves ensuring animals have access to sufficient space, proper nutrition, clean water, shelter, and health care. The Five Freedoms of Animal Welfare, developed by the Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC), serve as a global guideline for ethical livestock management:

- 1) Freedom from hunger and thirst
- 2) Freedom from discomfort
- 3) Freedom from pain, injury, or disease
- 4) Freedom to express normal behaviour
- 5) Freedom from fear and distress

However, large-scale industrial farming or 'factory farming' has often been criticized for confining animals in minimal spaces, overusing antibiotics, and prioritizing profit over welfare. Such practices not only cause physical and psychological stress to animals but also pose risks to public health through the development of antibiotic-resistant bacteria. (Friedmann, 2021)

Transportation and Handling

Transportation is a very critical phase where animals are highly susceptible to stress, injury, and even death. Overcrowded transport, lack of ventilation, prolonged travel without rest or water, and rough handling are common issues (Nielsen *et.al.*, 2010). Ethical transportation practices include:

- Decrease transportation time, cover short distances
- Use a proper Vehicles: Vehicle should properly ventilated, non-slippery and not overcrowded.
- Providing adequate ventilation
- Ensuring proper loading and unloading techniques
- Training handlers in humane treatment: Workers must be trained to load and unload animals calmly and without forces. (Amos *et.al.*, 2018)

In many countries, legal frameworks exist to regulate animal transport, but enforcement remains a challenge, especially in developing nations.

Slaughter and Processing

The ethical dimension follows in slaughterhouses where animals should be handled with care and killed in the most humane way possible. Pre-slaughter stunning, which renders animals' unconscious before killing, is a recommended practice and is mandated in several regions. However, religious, and cultural practices such as Halal and Kosher slaughter may pose variations in ethical norms. Proper facility design, trained personnel, and regular inspection are essential for upholding humane slaughter standards (Cockram, 2017).

- Pre-slaughter stunning: Slaughtering of animal by stunning is a humane method of slaughtering, in this method animal is unconscious before slaughter to prevent the pain.
- Follow hygienic standards and legal regulation.

- Ethical supervision: Presence of veterinarian during the ante-mortem examination and compare with welfare laws.

Additionally, animal welfare at this stage directly influences meat quality. High levels of stress can lead to conditions like PSE (pale, soft, exudative) meat in pigs, decrease the pH of meat or DFD (dark, firm, dry) meat in cattle, which are less desirable and causes economic losses.

Consumer Awareness and Ethical Consumption

Ethical treatment does not end at the slaughterhouse-it also depends on consumer choices and it is also very impactful in our ethical way of animal treatment. With the rise of movements like vegetarianism, veganism, and flexitarianism, many people are reconsidering their food choices based on how animals are treated (Santo *et.al.*, 2020). Ethical labels such as free-range, organic, grass-fed, or cruelty-free help consumers identify products that adhere to higher animal welfare standards. Public awareness campaigns, educational programs, and social media advocacy by the government or non-government organization play very important roles in shaping consumer behaviour. When consumers demand ethically produced food, it forces producers to adopt better practices, thus creating a positive feedback loop. (Friedmann, 2021)

Role of Legislation and Policy

Government policies and international standards are pivotal in institutionalizing ethical animal treatment. Organizations like the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH, formerly OIE) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) have developed guidelines to promote animal welfare globally. National laws, veterinary oversight, and regular audits are tools to ensure compliance. Still, challenges remain in implementation, especially in regions where awareness is low or economic constraints force farmers to compromise on welfare. Policy support through subsidies, training, and welfare certification can encourage farmers to follow ethical practices (Parker, 2021; Amos *et.al.*, 2018).

Innovations and Future Directions

Technology and innovation are transforming animal welfare. Precision livestock farming tools help monitor animal health and behaviour in real-time. Automated feeding, climate control, and health tracking systems improve welfare and productivity simultaneously.

Plant-based meat alternatives and cultured meat are emerging as sustainable and cruelty-free solutions that may redefine our food system in the future. However, their scalability and affordability are still under research (Santo *et.al.*, 2020).

Conclusion

The journey from farm to fork involves multiple stages where ethical considerations must be maintained to ensure the humane treatment of animals. From responsible farming to humane slaughter, and informed consumer choices to strong legislation, each stakeholder plays a crucial role in building a compassionate and sustainable food system. As a student of livestock production and management, I believe that integrating animal welfare with production goals is not only feasible but essential for the future of agricultural farming. Promoting ethics in animal handling will lead to healthier animals, safer food, and more benefit to the society.

References

- Amos, N., and R. Sullivan. (2018). The business benchmark on farm animal welfare report 2018. Available from https://www.bbfaw.com/media/1549/web_bbfaw_report_2018_.pdf
- Cockram, M. S. (2017). Understanding the effects of handling, transportation, lairage and slaughter of cattle welfare and beef quality. In: Dikeman, M., editor. Ensuring safety and quality in the production of beef (vol. 2). London: Burleigh Dodds Science Publishing; p. 157–202.
- Friedmann, D. (2021). Adding Ethicality to the Menu of the Farm to Fork Strategy. Peking University School of Transnational Law Research Paper <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4018161>
- Nielsen, L., Dybkjaer, L. and M. S. Herskin. (2010). Road transport of farm animals: effects of journey duration on animal welfare. *Animal* (2011),5:3, pp.: 415-427.doi:10.1017/S1751731110001989
- Parker, M. (2021). The legal exploitation of farm animals: 'unnecessary suffering' in a nation of animal lovers,". *Plymouth Law Review*: Vol. 14, Article 8. Available at: <https://pearl.plymouth.ac.uk/plr/vol14/iss1/8>
- Salisu, M. A., Bamiro, N. B., Elegbede, I. O., Rus, R. C. (2025). Farm-to-Fork Framework Supply Chain for Integration of Green Economy for Halal Industry Sustainability. In: Green and Blue Economy Frameworks for

Halal Industry Sustainability. Springer, Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-96-1729-6_1

Santo, R. E., Kim, B. F., Goldman, S. E., Dutkiewicz, J., Biehl, E. M.B., Bloem, M. W., Neff, R.A. and Nachman, K. E. (2020) Considering Plant-Based Meat Substitutes and Cell-Based Meats: A Public Health and Food Systems Perspective. Sustainable Food Processing, a section of the journal *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems* Front. doi: 10.3389/fsufs.2020.00134