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## **INFLUENCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS ON WELFARE AND ANIMAL HEALTH**

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Animals have played important roles in the lives of people for thousands of years by serving as companions, sources of food, means of transport, physiologic and psychological models in biomedical research, sources of education and entertainment, and by providing assistance with work and tasks of daily living. Historically, research animal well-being was viewed based on the reduction of harms — freedom from disease, achievement of expected physiologic parameters, growth and reproduction characteristics for a species, and reduction of unnecessary pain and suffering experienced by research animals while on study. While these parameters are still recognized as important indicators of positive animal health, there is increased effort to promote positive affective states and aspects of natural living for research animals. Over the past several decades, society has expressed a growing interest in how we use and care for animals and has pressed for improvements in their quality of life; the subject is now at the forefront of discussions regarding responsible animal use.

The welfare is defined as a combination of an animal's physical health and psychological well-being in regards to its habitat. Physical health involves appropriate nutrition, social groupings, veterinary care, environmental conditions while psychological well-being involves access to stimuli necessary to satisfy the natural instincts. The animals' welfare has ethical, economic, social, cultural, legal, and trade implications.

The welfare can be measured by physiological indicators (heart and respiratory rate, blood pressure, concentration of catecholamines, enzymes activity, etc.), behavioural indicators (stereotypes, feather pecking, cannibalism, high levels of aggression, tonic immobility; self-narcotization), but also disease prevalence; and also evaluate of breeder parameters (e.g. gains of body weight, fertility, milk or eggs production). All these indicators directly affect the quality of products derived from animals. Therefore, in the interest of food producers as well as consumers is to provide the highest level of animal welfare.