

Codex 'Keeping Farm Animals without profit'

Assay framework for government and hobby holder/small breeder

Introduction

Hobby holders and small breeders of farm animals want to structure their responsibility with respect to their animals in their own manner. Until now the government offers too little space to this end. The government policy that applies to commercial farming generally counts unabridged for hobby holders and small breeders. Because of this an always larger gap between government and these non-commercial holders arises. Some are inclined to withdraw themselves from the rules of that government; others see no other way than to stop. That is not a good development. The government should not discourage the pleasure of keeping animals by legislation which insufficiently takes into account the way in which small breeders and hobby holders wish to keep their animals. They contribute considerably to the landscape, to the bio-diversity and to the general well-being of people. The Dutch Hobby and Smallholder Association (NBvH) has pleaded since its establishment in 2002, for policy that takes into account the more than one hundred thousand people who keep farm animals and park animals **without profit and with eye for animal well-being**. She wants where necessary to realise differentiated rights for hobby holders and their animals, but she is aware of the fact that on the other hand there are responsibilities as well. Responsibilities towards the kept animals, but also responsibilities towards society, so that one can speak of justified hobby holdership.

The NBvH has approached the Wageningen university to study the conceptions of hobby holders and small breeders concerning the responsibilities of the hobby holder towards animals, people and environment. This has resulted in a research report within the framework of a doctoral study which is connected to a promotion research into the protectability of animals. The results of it underpin this codex. In this codex the NBvH give a definition of hobby holders and small breeders.

Then the NBvH outline the main framework. The core of it is the protectability of the animal. Finally the NBvH formulate the standards and directives for the authorities on one side **and** for hobby holders and small breeders on the other side. These standards and directives form a coherent assay framework for the government measures and for the individual behaviour of the hobby holder and small breeder.

Definition of 'hobbydierhouder' (hobby holder and small breeder)

The term 'hobby holder' is typically Dutch: it arose during the foot and mouth-crisis of 2001. In other countries one did not know the term hobby holder. One uses mostly the term 'smallholder' but recently also 'hobby holder' is used more and more.

The ministry of LNV has published several researches in an attempt to define the 'hobbydierhouder'. So far this has not led to a definition of the same tenor.

The group of hobby holders and small breeders is very diverse, both concerning the type of animals that one keeps and the purpose for which one keeps them. But what unites the different holders is that they keep animals and breed **without the purpose of making a profit and with an eye for animal well-being**. In other words one does not keep these animals with the primary aim of making a profit. Many breeders occupy themselves with the preservation of rare breeds and species, thus importantly contributing to the preservation of bio-diversity and cultural heritage. Breeding these animals occurs mostly in a very professional manner. Therefore they are not happy with the term *hobby* holder.

For this reason the NBvH use the following definition:

Hobbydierhouders and small breeders are "individuals who keep farm animals or park animals (whether or not they breed) without the purpose of making a profit and with an eye for animal well-being."

Protectability of the animal

The core of the definition of hobby holder is the absence of the purpose for profit. The striving towards profit when keeping animals, fairly often puts reasonable pressure on the protectability and the well-being of the animal. The standards regarding these different ways of keeping animals lead to tensions between commercial and non-commercial holding.

Examples of this are:

The vaccination policy for foot and mouth (FMD), classical swine fever (CSF) and avian influenza (AI), which was introduced in the ninety's. This policy has been based on calculations from which supposedly showed that killing (culling) animals during outbreaks would be commercially more advantageous, than to vaccinate the animals. Thousands of cows, sheep, goats and pigs have been killed in Europe. For a long time one has hardly taken the effort to develop an adequate vaccine for AI. Consequently billions of birds are killed worldwide. Although the vaccination policy is more and more criticised, economic obstructions are still raised against actual abolition of the policy.

For identification (tracking and tracing) of animals the animal well-being is insufficiently taken into account for economic reasons only; the law on Animal Health - and Well-being shows that animals should not be damaged or hurt without a proper reason and the EU Regulation I&R (EC21/2004 shows that ID-means must be devised in such a manner that it remains attached to the animal without being harmful to it.

Everyone even knows the pictures of mutilated ears of goats, sheep, cows and even deer as a result of soars and tearing caused by the large ear tags. Until now hobby holders and small breeders have insufficient possibilities to friendlier methods of tracking and tracing.

Hobby holders and small breeders who keep animals without profit expect the government to give them enough space to take responsibility for the well-being and the protectability of their animals in their own manner. The social tension between commercial holding and the non-commercial holding could be solved in two ways:

1. Either the measures to take for farm animals are acceptable for both the commercial and the non-commercial holding;
2. Or for the non-commercial holdings one should have exceptions to the rules (for example a 'status aparte' for hobby holders and small breeders).

The NBvH is trying to find solutions along both lines.

Codex keeping farm animals without a profit

This codex contains the pursuable standards for justified actions of the government and of the individual hobby holder or small breeder to guarantee the protectability and the well-being of kept animals.

The pursuable standards for government policy have been formulated in general terms so that the current and future policy can be reviewed along them. Subjects which are currently at the top of the list for hobby holders and small breeders, beside the vaccination policy and the tracking and tracing issue are for example:

the control of Aujeszky disease, the scrapie breeding programme, the regulations for animal transports, local regulations for keeping hobby animals, the lists of species which can/cannot be kept, etc. In the near future replacing the law on Animal Health and well-being for example will be an important issue.

The directive for hobby holders and small breeders has been formulated in general terms as well. The concrete interpretation of it will differ according to the species of animal. On the site of the NBvH one can find 'links' to several organisations and breeding associations for all information on keeping animals.

Standards for government policy

1. The protectability of animals should be the main starting point for the government policy. Animal disease control and - prevention should primarily be based on veterinary insights and actual public health issues.
If economic interests would be decisive for the manner of disease control then it should be in the interest of hobby holders to be excluded if they wish so. This means for example that there should be no obstructions for (preventive) vaccination of animals of hobby holders and small breeders.
In the risk analysis when applying measures in case of an (imminent) outbreak the competent authority must take into account the possible differences between the commercial and non-commercial (hobby) holding. There are for instance mostly large differences between the commercial and non-commercial (hobby) holdings like in contact structure and transport movements.
2. If tracking and tracing (I&R) are necessary (and legally obligatory, like for cows, sheep, goats, pigs) the identification must be possible in an animal friendly manner. Therefore no large, double ear tags, but alternatives such as subcutaneous, injectable transponder or iris scan with (for breeders) a small ear tag for visual recognition.
3. Hobby holders, who do not depose their animals into the (international) trade circuit, must be able to indicate this to the official I&R office. This distinction could be necessary if commercial reasons (mostly export obstructions) are decisive in the animal disease control policy, while many hobby animals are not deposited in the export circuit.
4. For small-scale breeders of sheep and goats (mostly of rare breeds in the Netherlands or Europe) it is important that they can depose their redundant animals. Small traders and slaughter houses play an important role in this. Therefore one needs enough space in the legislation on this matter in order to guarantee the existence of these small traders and slaughter houses.
5. Measures of government (whether based on European directives or not), provincial and municipal governments, product boards and independent governing bodies aimed directly or indirectly at farm animals must always be weighed as to whether they should apply to farm animals which are kept on a small scale. The holders must be heard *before* the measures are taken. It should be a tailor-made job. It is of the utmost importance that non-commercial (hobby) holding can develop reasonably. Small breeders and hobby holders contribute largely to bio-diversity, to an attractive landscape and general well-being.
6. The administrative pressure has to be as little as possible for hobby holders and small breeders.

Directive hobby holders and small breeders

Holders are responsible for:

1. careful purchase, sale and depositing of animals;
2. proper housing, proper care of the animals and proper hygiene;
3. providing sufficient possibilities for animal characteristic behaviour;
4. careful handling of rare breeding material;
5. prevention of animal diseases (bio-security);
6. taking care of a responsible slaughtering;
7. preventing of senseless suffering;
8. proper disposal of dead animals;
9. preventing noise - or stench imposition.

Illustration of above directive:

1. Proper purchase, sale and disposal of animals

Animals are entirely dependent on the care of the holder. This also applies to depositing of animals. Holders are responsible for making sure that the animals have a proper next home or destination, if one can no longer take care of them oneself.

Purchase starts by considering if one can prove the responsibility for the care of animals. Also as a breeder one must take into account that in general one cannot keep all the animals and there is not always a market for redundant animals. Looking for a good home or an address, where animals can be properly slaughtered, is necessary. One must seek a solution in advance. If (whether or not through the Internet) one offers the animals to unknown people, one risks improper care of these animals.

Keeping European and other protected birds starts with the 'assurance' that these birds are cultivated and not caught in the wild. For these birds a fixed leg ring, which must meet with certain requirements, is prescribed. The Dutch bird associations which can issue these rings on behalf of the Minister can all the information necessary. Purchase from a breeder or bonafide trader is the best guarantee for this 'assurance'.

2. Proper housing, proper care and proper hygiene

Proper housing and care evidently differs from one species to another. Most of the animals need some kind of shelter, albeit for shade or to take shelter from rain. Sheds should be sufficiently spacey, free from draft and humidity and should be regularly cleaned. Water should be refreshed regularly and left over fodder be removed to prevent mould and attracting vermin. Every animal type needs its specific food. Grazers for example that thrive on poor grounds, should not be put in fertilised grazing land.

3. Animal-characteristic behaviour

Most of the animals live in groups or in coveys. So do not keep single animals; provide for companions. A correct social climate is important for all animals.

4. Carefully handle rare breeding material

Fanciers who breed rare breeds or species invest much energy and generally also considerable amounts of money. Sometimes animals must be imported from abroad. Pedigree and breeding associations can offer support to breeders of (special and rare) breeds. As a member (or becoming one) of a pedigree association one preserves animals for the special breeding. That is essential for rare breeds and species, because the amount of blood lines is usually limited.

5. *Prevention of animal diseases*

The prevention of animal diseases starts with the purchase of animals. Purchase your animals from a reliable address. No animals (or hatching eggs) should be imported from countries where contagious animal diseases occur. This is also usually prohibited.

Proper hygiene is a first requirement to prevent animal diseases. Examine the animals daily during feeding time and be alert to any changed behaviour (if an animal withdraws itself and does not eat, that is an important indication that it does not feel well).

Given the contagiousness of some animal diseases it is important not to disperse manure outside one's own area and see to the disposal of manure in a proper manner.

Prevention of animal diseases is always essential, but more so certain special regulations apply to some animal diseases. This concerns diseases which are very contagious and sometimes dangerous for people as well. For this reason these animal diseases are *notifiable*. This means that you are obliged to warn a veterinary surgeon if you believe to notice such a disease. Notifiable diseases can enter the Netherlands (or any other country) by means of (whether or not illegal) animal transports or by means of contaminated kitchen disposal (swill). Feeding with kitchen disposal is therefore forbidden. Also wild animals, including birds, can play a role in the introduction of animal diseases. The spread of these animal diseases is activated by the intensive contact structures and animal transports, particularly when live animals are concerned.

For many farm animals tracing and tracking (I&R) is obliged. The purpose of this is to enhance prevention of animal diseases. The current means of identification are problematic because of the obligatory large ear tags and moreover because they are susceptible to fraud. Current jurisprudence stating that identification should and **can** be applied in an animal friendly manner and therefore should be allowed in this manner (all this based on the law on Animal Health - and Well-being which overrules the Regulation for I&R).

The transport of some animals (cows, sheep, goats, pigs, donkeys) is bound to legislation in order to prevent animal diseases. Also for collecting and showing animals rules to the same end apply. There is much ado about these rules. They are generally very complex. Because of this they are badly observed both by the commercial sector, and by the hobby holders. Improvement of the legislation is necessary to obtain the required supporting basis.

6. *Proper slaughter*

One is allowed to slaughter birds and park birds. One cannot slaughter other warm-blooded animals. You are then designated to a slaughter house butcher or a reliable

trader who takes the animals to the slaughter house. The legislation on small slaughter houses/butchers has unfortunately become more and more strict and has been insufficiently tailored to the needs of the small breeder who needs to have animals slaughtered.

7. Senseless suffering

Animals can become sick or get ailments of old age as a result of which they suffer. If these ailments cannot be treated, one must relieve the animal from its suffering. For poultry and other birds one can perform a careful emergency slaughter or one can call the help of a vet. For warm-blooded farm animals one must call the veterinary surgeon.

8. Disposal of dead animals

The disposal of dead animals is bound to legislation. For this one must get in touch with the Rendac. For horses one has the possibility to cremate these animals. One can bury small animals also in the garden or at an animal cemetery. Hobby holders, who need this, must be able to take respectful farewell of their animals. This should prevent undesirable situations.

9. Prevention of noise - and stench imposition

Keeping animals is a nice sociable pass time and it frequently is valuable company for people, especially where children are concerned. In a small country like the Netherlands it is important to ensure that even the neighbours will favour your animals. This means an effort of the holders to limit any noise and stench. Municipal regulations and local environment legislation in this area are frequently implemented without any lenience and sometimes even improper. It should be a matter of give and take, both in the relation with the neighbours and in applying legislation. If there are complaints, try solve them reasonably.

The Codex is underscribed by the following associations in the Netherlands:

Alg. Ned. Bond v. Geitenhouders - Aviculture-Europe - Aviornis Int. Nederland
Conf. Ornithologique Mondiale Mondiale - Drentse Hoen Club - Fokkersver. Ouessantschappen - Franse Hoenderclub
Land. Fokkersclub v. Ned. Landgeiten - Ned. Fed. v. verenigingen v. Dwerggeitenhouders
Ned. Fokkersver. van Dreits Heideschaap en Schoonebeker
Ned. Werkgroep hobbymatig gehouden Pluimvee en Parkvogels - St. Zeldzame Huisdierrassen
Ver. v. Parkdierenliefhebbers - Ver. Speciale Schapenrassen



Algemene Nederlandse Bond van
Geitenhouders



DHC



NFDH



Nederlandse Belangenvereniging van Hobbydierhouders
Puurveenseweg 20, 3774 PJ Kootwijkerbroek
www.hobbydierhouder.nl
info@hobbydierhouder.nl
0342-441911