Ölmez Mükremin, Riaz Roshan, Şahin Tarkan

AN ASSESSMENT OF CALF WELFARE STANDARDS IN TURKEY COMPARED TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

Department of Animal Nutrition and Nutritional Disease, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Kafkas University, Kars, Türkiye
mukreminolmez@kafkas.edu.tr

Calf welfare is a crucial component of animal production, ethical compliance, and farm economics. The European Union (EU) has extensively studied calf welfare, and through Council Directive 91/629/EEC and its subsequent amendments, the EU has established a comprehensive model for calf housing, feeding, social interaction, and overall well-being, which has been implemented at the farm level in all the member states. In contrast, Türkiye efforts have been made to design a model parallel to the EU's legislations. Through the "Regulation on Minimum Standards for the Protection of Calves," inspired by EU Directive 2008/119/EC, Türkiye has established its legal provisions, although the application of these models in all Turkish regions remains limited. This study conducted a comparative evaluation of calf welfare standards between the EU and Türkiye, focusing on regulatory frameworks, implementation practices, and the welfare status of calves in Turkish farms. Studies indicates that while Turkish animal welfare legislation aligns with EU standards in its legal structure, calf welfare in some Turkish regions remains at approximately 70% of the EU level. The deficiencies in these regions include un-controlled milking practices, inadequate shelter facilities, suboptimal feeding practices, cultural practices concerning male calves, and insufficient veterinary services. These shortcomings highlight the necessity for a new legal framework, implementation model, and awareness-raising initiatives through extension services. This assessment will provide a foundation for reconsidering policies and models to enhance calf welfare standards in Turkish production conditions, aligning them with EU models.