

## OUTDOOR ACCESS FOR ALL ANIMALS ALL YEAR ROUND

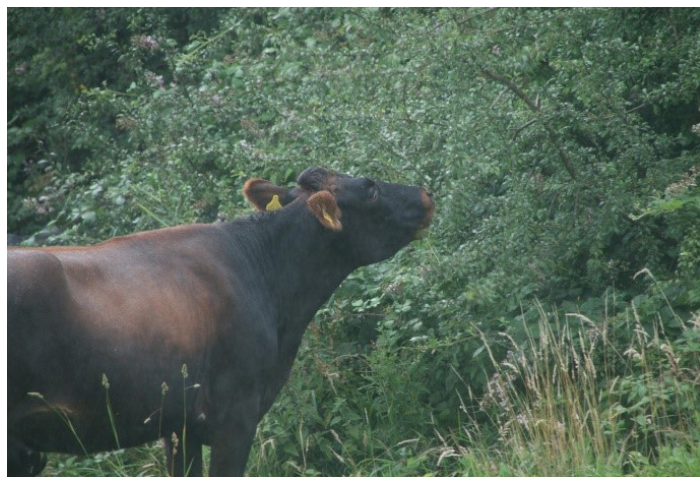


Photo: ORC

### PROBLEM

Restricting animals in expressing their natural behaviour in confined conditions.

### SOLUTION

Allowing animals access to open-air areas and preferably pasture whenever the weather conditions allow and the state of the ground permits.

### OUTCOME

For most of the species we keep as farm animals, being outside is their natural habitat.

Animals that have maximum outdoor access are able to express much of their natural behaviour that can be more restricted in housed conditions, such as foraging, exploring and developing social contacts. This leads to improved animal welfare.

Grazed forages are cheap feed resources which contribute directly through nutrient recycling.

Specific positive outcomes for pigs and poultry include a beneficial effect on their diet intake and digestibility and the prevention of behavioural problems such as feather pecking and tail biting.

### APPLICABILITY

#### Applicable production types



#### Application time

All year round

#### Required time

Varies from farm to farm

#### Equipment/resource required

Walkways, fences and water troughs

Exercise yards or verandas if no access to pasture

#### Best in

Everywhere

### PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

#### IMPLEMENTATION

- Outdoor access is best achieved through grazing
- Integration of trees in outdoor areas provides shelter for livestock
- Where and when grazing is impossible, exercise yards could be provided
- For poultry, verandas can be very useful to allow them to sand bathe. Feeding some part of the ration outdoors and providing shelter encourages the birds to make use of the outdoor space.
- For pigs, suitable sites need to be found that will help prevent cold stress and unsuitable underfoot conditions. A light, free-draining soil type free of sharp stones is important to avoid lameness and stress and to guarantee all year round access. Regularly moving stock, for example through integration with the crop rotation, can help avoid problems of overstocking.



## EASE OF ADOPTION ON NON-ORGANIC FARMS

- High for cattle and sheep; medium for pigs and poultry

## BENEFITS OF IMPLEMENTATION

- Economic: Grazed forages are a cheap feed resource for many animals
- Social: Keeping animals outdoors will help meet consumer's expectations of how animals should be kept

## DRAWBACKS OF IMPLEMENTATION

- Environmental: Overstocking of small areas over a long period of time (e.g. for pigs and poultry) can lead to nutrient overloading; rotational systems should be used where possible.
- Economic: Additional investment potentially for water points and fences. Potentially reduced growth rates during cold weather periods and because of energy used for exercising.
- Social: Increased labour required for stock monitoring if they are further away from the farm.

## BARRIERS AND RISKS

- Outdoor areas can encourage E. coli
- More weeds on poached land
- Having enough room around sheds; space limitations

## FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

A large number of very different scenarios can be related with the adoption of this practice. Therefore the financial implications were not assessed.

## RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND CURRENT INCENTIVES

- NVZ implications need to be considered where a farm is in the NVZ legislative framework and infrastructure.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

### Videos

- Hogget Farming the Natural Way: <https://www.agricology.co.uk/file/hogget-farming-natural-way-0>

### Further reading and weblinks

- Jonty & Mel Brunyee Agricology farmer profile: <https://www.agricology.co.uk/field/farmer-profiles/jonty-mel-brunyee>
- Look for outdoor access under welfare for the different species at <http://www.farmhealthonline.com> with detailed references for each species
  - Cattle: <http://www.farmhealthonline.com/health-welfare/cattle/environment/>
  - Pigs: <http://www.farmhealthonline.com/pig-outdoor-access/>
  - Pigs – results from the Core Organic 2 funded ICOPP (Improved Contribution of Local Feed to Support 100% Organic Feed Supply to Pigs and Poultry) project: <https://tinyurl.com/ICOPP-pigs-range>
  - Sheep: <http://www.farmhealthonline.com/health-welfare/sheep/grazing-sheep/>
  - Poultry: <http://www.farmhealthonline.com/health-welfare/poultry/outdoor-ranging/>
  - Poultry – results from the ICOPP project: <https://tinyurl.com/ICOPP-poultry-range>



## CASE STUDY FARMER APPLYING THE PRACTICE: CONYGREE FARM

**Location:** Gloucestershire

**Size:** 75 hectares

**Enterprises:** Sheep and beef with permanent pasture, herb rich leys and some arable (currently growing wild bird feed). Also finish a small number of pigs each year

“We keep rare breed Cotswold sheep, Traditional Hereford cattle and native breed pigs. Our free-range cattle and sheep are reared on a natural organic diet of grass, wildflowers and herbs all year round.

“Our pasture fed ethos (assured by the Pasture-Fed Livestock Association) means that our animals eat a natural diet of grass, wildflowers and herbs - never any grains or imported soya. We sell most of our lamb, pork and beef direct to the consumer from the farm gate. We are also fully organic (assured by OF&G). Income is supplemented by a small DIY livery on the farm and educational activity.”

<https://www.agricology.co.uk/field/farmer-profiles/jonty-mel-brunyee>



### ABOUT THIS PRACTICE ABSTRACT

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