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Welfare science into practice: a successful case example of working with industry

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Abstract

Close collaboration between science and industry is essential for the formulation of evidence-based welfare policies. However, there is a need to recognise and manage potential challenges that may arise during collaborative projects. An applied animal welfare science project evaluating the inclusion of welfare outcome measures into UK pig farm assurance, with a view to industry implementation, is used as a case example to illustrate potential challenges. This project encountered difficulties associated with differences in understanding and expectations, discussion of controversial welfare issues, challenges to personal values and conflict between academic and industry outcomes. With the assistance of an independent review conducted during the project, potential solutions were developed and successfully implemented. It is proposed that similar science-industry partnerships should allow sufficient time for dialogue, distinguish between experimental and applied science, ensure sufficient involvement from interested parties and use facilitation techniques to develop consensus.

Keywords: animal welfare, farm assurance, industry, pigs, research, science