

© 2019 Universities Federation for Animal Welfare
The Old School, Brewhouse Hill, Wheathampstead,
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www.ufaw.org.uk

Animal Welfare 2019, 28: 137-141
ISSN 0962-7286
doi: 10.7120/09627286.28.2.137

Animal welfare as preventative medicine

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Abstract

Antimicrobial resistance is a major threat to both human and animal health, but reduction of use raises issues of how standards of animal health and welfare can be maintained without them. This turns the spotlight onto the role of good management and higher standards of animal welfare as drug-free ways of improving immune function and increasing resistance to infection. Research is urgently needed into the relationship between animal welfare, immunity, gut microbiota and disease and we are not yet in a position to claim that improving welfare will improve resistance to disease. ‘Boosting’ the immune system is not straightforward and an interdisciplinary approach is needed.

Keywords: *animal health, animal welfare, antimicrobial resistance, immunity, positive emotions, stress*