

Chinese farmers' attitude towards the improvement of animal welfare in their facilities

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Abstract

This study sought to investigate Chinese farmers' attitude towards animal welfare by using the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). According to the TPB, an individual's intention to behave in a certain way is determined by his/her attitude towards the behaviour (specific attitude — importance — and general attitudes), the perceived behavioural control (easiness), and the supposed opinion of the people who are important to him/her (subjective norms). A total of 253 questionnaires were used, which included the three main animal productions in China (swine, poultry and cattle). Chinese farmers have perceived the improvement of animal welfare as two abstracts: general attitudes (reward-seeking, and empathic farmer); and four specific categories of actions (favourable environment, animal health, humane treatment of animals and farmers' well-being). Our analysis revealed that general and specific attitudes were the strongest predictors of farmers' intentions to improve animal welfare in the questionnaire study. In fact, Chinese farmers considered it fairly important to improve the animal welfare measures considered in the survey. In contrast, the same animal welfare measures were considered difficult to improve by the farmers as indicated by the lack of association between the easiness of improving animal welfare and the intentions. In addition, veterinarians, agricultural advisers, and scientific experts were considered to be relatively influential subjective norms as regards the activities of the farmers. This is the first study to provide an insight into the underlying meanings and values of Chinese farmers' views on improvements to animal welfare.

Keywords: animal welfare, attitudes, cattle, Chinese farmers, poultry, Theory of Planned Behaviour