



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 01, 2011

CONTACT: Jill Nado
202-446-2138/301-233-4544

ANIMAL WELFARE APPROVED TEAMS UP WITH UK PARTNERS TO DEVELOP WORLD CLASS ANIMAL WELFARE ASSESSMENTS

Alexandria, VA -- Animal Welfare Approved is proud to be a partner on a new project with the world renowned Bristol University Veterinary School, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) and the Soil Association, all in the United Kingdom. The "AssureWel" project will improve how animal welfare is assessed.

What makes "AssureWel" the next natural step for AWA is that it's going to assess the outcome of standards, rather than just judging how well a farm complies with standards. Judging compliance of animal welfare standards is simple—an auditor will look to see how much space an animal has, what kind of food they are getting, and the like. But outcome measurements, sometimes described as animal-based measures, look at things like animal behavior and health, as well as at farm records on lameness incidence and mortality. By combining both the outcome of standards and a farm's compliance with standards, auditors will get the best picture possible of animal welfare.

By combining input and outcome measurements, auditors gain deeper insight into the outcomes for the animal. AWA standards already do this in many areas, but "AssureWel" takes standards auditing to a new level of transparency and fact-based research. Greater use of outcome measurements in welfare programs ensure that scientifically sound judgments can be made to confirm that the animals in the programs attain real welfare benefits.

Four members of the AWA team have recently undergone "AssureWel" training with the RSPCA and Soil Association at Bristol University. AWA looks forward to putting that training into practice in the United States. "We have always objected to outcome measures alone," says AWA program director Andrew Gunther. "They have the potential to hide negative systems. But this training allows us to use the best of both systems. It will ensure AWA stays at the forefront of farm animal welfare auditing."

Dr. David Main, Head of the Division of Farm Animal Science at Bristol University, said: "We look forward to collaborating with AWA on the 'AssureWel' project to ensure animals have the best quality of life."

Animal Welfare Approved audits and certifies farms that raise their animals with the highest animal welfare standards, outdoors, on pasture or range. The World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) has lauded these standards for two years running as being the most stringent when compared to other third-party certification programs. Visit www.AnimalWelfareApproved.org for an online directory of approved farms (now in 42 states and Canada), as well as restaurants, shops and markets where AWA farmers' products are sold. Choose the one independent food label that means healthy, safe, environmentally responsible and humanely raised.

###

Note to editors: Contact details for the UK partners are available from Jill Nado (details above)