Introduction

Since its foundation, the Avril Group has been driven by an original model: a sector-based organization, from farming upstream to processed products downstream, where each activity creates value for all links in the chain. Through its investments in different livestock sectors in recent years, the Group has created strong connections between its plant and animal activities, and reinforced its local relations with farmers and livestock breeders.

Attentive to demands from society on the subject of animal welfare, we wanted to publicize our policy in this area. This document establishes a frame of reference for Avril that covers all livestock species and associated sectors: pigs, laying hens, table poultry, rabbits and ruminants.

Our ambition: to drive good practices

For Avril, satisfactory conditions for the housing, transport and slaughter of animals, and disseminating a culture of consideration towards them, are crucial points that demand our attention. All actions to ensure animal welfare will contribute to the quality of our products, and form a natural part of the Group's strategy on sustainable development and its commitment to better foods for humans.

Through this policy, Avril aims to improve practices concerning the protection and welfare of farmed animals. Achieving this ambition requires the implementation of targeted action plans for each species, and the development of quality-certified sectors of excellence, as exemplified by our "Committed to Livestock"1 program.

Our approach: based on the "5 Freedoms"

In line with European and French regulations, Avril bases its policy on a globally-recognized definition of animal welfare, the "Five Freedoms" (freedom from hunger and thirst, freedom from discomfort, freedom from pain, injury or disease, freedom to express normal behavior and freedom from fear and distress).

Furthermore, it is necessary to remember that animal welfare corresponds to the "state" of the animal, and as yet there is no scientific method (based on biological or behavioral criteria) that can guarantee that this state has been achieved. In line with the recommendations of numerous specialists, Avril therefore prefers a pragmatic and operational approach. This is based on the consideration of all actors – echoing the first fundamental value of the Group, which is respect – and identifying and implementing practical actions that will favor the conditions necessary to ensure welfare.

Our responsibility

Avril is an important player in different livestock sectors, working closely in regions and with farmers. It is its responsibility to commit to ensuring animal welfare, while listening to both the needs of partner livestock breeders (relative to the long-term future of their activities) and the demands of consumers.

Our action plans are based on the direct or indirect actions available to us, depending on the nature of our involvement and our ability to intervene with other actors in the value chain.

1 Filière d'excellence « Engagés dans l'élevage »
A caring culture and good practices: the foundations for our guiding principles

Animal welfare is a multi-faceted concept (ethical, scientific, cultural, etc.) that is dependent on numerous factors. We have chosen to organize them into three main guiding principles which drive our actions and decisions.

Health – Providing solutions to guarantee an essential component of animal welfare

A key factor in the economic performance of livestock units, health is also a condition that is necessary to the welfare of animals, as underlined by the OIE. Animal health is a key skill within the Group, requiring different types of expertise which since 2009 have been grouped under our sustainable health management (GSD) approach.

This approach aims to prefer preventive solutions (livestock management, biosecurity, feeds, vaccination, phytotherapy, etc.) rather than curative interventions, the ultimate purpose being to ensure rational medication. These different solutions thus offer livestock farmers an ability to protect their animals from health risks and be able to work with their veterinarians to reduce the medication of their livestock. Nevertheless, the use of antibiotics – with the approval of veterinarians – remains necessary in certain cases to restore the health and well-being of animals.

**Biosecurity** – the health status of livestock units is essential to guaranteeing optimal living conditions for animals. Our technical teams working in “Biosecurity and Nutritional Specialties” can place their expertise at the service of partner farmers, helping them to constantly improve cleanliness and hygiene and thus reinforce the health status of their units.

**Feeds** – A satisfactory state of health and the development of immunity among livestock are favored by access to good quality water and a healthy and balanced diet that will meet their physiological needs. As the French leader in animal nutrition, Sanders is able to provide solutions that are adapted to each species and different production modes.

**Alternative nutritional solutions** – To supplement their basic diet, numerous nutritional solutions have been developed to improve the welfare of livestock.

Habitat – Ensuring good living conditions for animals

As a central element of any farm, livestock housing has a direct effect on both the living conditions of animals and the working conditions and safety of livestock farmers. Avril's technical and veterinary teams use different levers to support their partner livestock farmers under a continuing improvement approach.

**Farm management** – Through monitoring and advice, our technical experts can provide support on a daily basis to ensure the control of environmental conditions that are essential to the good health of animals (air quality, temperature, moisture levels, etc.).

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2 World Organisation for Animal Health
3 See our page dedicated to GSD – http://www.sanders.fr/fr/demarche-gestion-sanitaire-durable
**Policy on farm animal welfare**

**Farm maintenance** – Avril has initiated efforts to raise the awareness of partner livestock farmers, and verify their compliance, regarding the maintenance of their farms in order to ensure good working conditions and permit optimum living conditions for their animals.

**Gradual improvements to housing** – Avril support its partner livestock farmers through technical advice, trials of alternative housing systems or possibly financial support, in order to facilitate the modernization of existing buildings.

**Care and handling – Developing a culture of consideration for animals**

The livestock farmers with whom we work take care of their animals on a daily basis in order to provide them with optimum conditions for their growth. All their actions are designed to prevent situations that might affect the well-being of their livestock.

**Care given to farmed livestock** – In certain cases, and if approved by the veterinarian, efforts are necessary to prevent the onset of disease. In addition, research is trying to develop effective alternatives that will reduce interventions on animals.

**The transport of animals** – Avril strives to be vigilant regarding transport, whether this is in the context of direct involvement (its subsidiary Abers) or indirectly (subcontractors).

Upstream, in order to prevent injuries to animals, Avril seeks to remind its partner farmers about the fundamental principles and good practices governing the loading of livestock. In parallel, efforts are made to remind transporters of good practices with respect to animal welfare.

**Support for animals in the abattoir** – through its subsidiary Abers, Avril is active in pig slaughtering and meat cutting operations.

Major investments have been made in this abattoir in order to improve the comfort of animals and limit human intervention as much as possible. Thus conditions in the waiting area favor the resting of animals following their arrival, while allowing them freedom of movement and constant access to water.

The automated channeling system enables a calm atmosphere for the animals as they move towards the stunning area. Furthermore, the technique employed (CO₂) can guarantee an effective stun, inducing deep unconsciousness.

**Implementation**

The guidelines described in this policy document apply to all Group subsidiaries, whose mission is now to inform the other actors in their sectors (livestock farmers, transporters, abattoirs) with whom they interact.

Farmers whose practices do not comply with these guidelines will be encouraged to gradually fall into line with our requirements. If no improvements are seen, then the Group may decide to cease all commercial relations with the farms concerned.

These guidelines are being deployed species by species, with certain priority actions during 2017 and others in the longer term. Internal working groups, dedicated to each species, are responsible for the implementation of these actions.
## Our key undertakings

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| **All sectors** | • To design during 2017 a training course on animal welfare for our technical teams.  
• To provide training in animal welfare for our technical teams between now and the end of 2018.  
• To help all partner livestock farmers improve their practices regarding maintenance of their units so as to favor good working conditions and satisfactory living conditions for their animals.  
• To deploy our sustainable health management approach, and notably to determine a progress plan on the reduction of antibiotic use in livestock units.  
• To implement a progress plan on existing buildings, notably through environmental enrichment or the installation of windows.  
• To ensure natural light in 100% of all new buildings.  
• To implement a progress plan designed to limit the appearance of footpad dermatitis to a maximum.  
• To implement a plan on the adaptation of units so that more than 50% of the eggs sold by Avril in 2022 are produced under alternative livestock systems.  
• To ensure verification by an independent organization of all layer cage units supplying Matines in 2017 (based on internal reference standards).  
• To conduct research on improving the living conditions of animals.  
• To develop a system to evaluate animal welfare in 2017.  
• To pursue research and trials on environmental enrichment (pieces of wood, ropes, rags or straw) that go beyond regulatory requirements.  
• To limit transport distances (farm-abattoir) to 250 km in our “Engagés dans l’Élevage” and “Porc Armorique” value chains.  
• To ensure the implementation of actions listed in the “Guide to Good Hygiene Practices in Pig Rearing” (this guide on voluntary use was compiled by an interprofessional consortium).  
• To work to develop value chains dedicated to animal welfare with business partners downstream in the chain.  
• To continue to work on trials of alternatives to conventional housing: ground-based, no roof, large fenced areas.  
• To develop and disseminate good practices to ensure animal comfort (environmental, food, water, biosecurity).  
• To compile a Good Practice guide on animal handling and train all technical teams and partner livestock farmers appropriately between now and the end of 2018.  
• To perform animal welfare diagnoses in Avril’s Young Cattle value chain.  
• To implement the monitoring of, and communication on, animal welfare at our Research and Innovation Center in Sourches in order to raise the awareness of professionals through 3000 annual visits. |

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4 Alternative livestock systems produce eggs coded 0 (organic), 1 (free range) and 2 (open air).
6 Filière Jeunes Bovins Avril