



ANIMAL WELFARE GROUP COUNTRY PROFILE

ARGENTINA



KEY METRICS

(All figures are approximate)



POPULATION



51,600,000



4,400,000



4,700,000



14,500,000



SLAUGHTER RATES (2014 data)

12,100,000

1,300,000

5,100,000

3,200,000



2,275

Feedlots in 2010



700

Average animals per feedlot



300-400

Slaughterhouses

2016 BEEF CONSUMPTION



54.5
kgs/capita
(120.2 lbs/capita)



The objective of the country profiles is to provide an overview of the animal welfare landscape and the differences between regions. The information provided is general in nature and a summary of facts, it does not represent the opinion of Leather Working Group. The country profiles are living documents, that are reviewed and updated from time to time. While Leather Working Group has taken due care to ensure the information is accurate as of the date of publication, the information is provided on an "as is" basis and we make no representation or warranty as to its accuracy. Please note that examples of high-quality and low-quality animal welfare can be identified in every region. Leather Working Group is not liable to any person for any loss suffered or incurred as a result of reliance on the information.

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☰ SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

Transport

- There is some legislation outlining how animals may be transported within Argentina. These include the conditions of the vehicles, the training of the drivers and the duration of travel.

Traceability

- The use of ear tags is widespread in Argentina and is reducing the prevalence of hot-iron branding.
- Micro-chipping is emerging as a system of traceability but is not yet as common as tagging due to the costs involved.

Slaughter

- Legislation in Argentina dictates that all animals are properly rendered unconscious prior to slaughter and that all staff must be properly trained so as to reduce the risk of causing animals undue harm or stress.
- Some religious slaughter does occur but the laws state that animals must be slaughtered as quickly as possible once the hold takes place.
- Slaughterhouses appear to comply with legislation in an effort to make Argentinian products more attractive on the global market.

Legislation

- There is some legislation relating to animal welfare in Argentina although much of this is somewhat outdated.
- Due to the differences in population size, much of the legislation applies directly to bovine animals and does not acknowledge specific measures that should be made for different species.

Governance

- There is evidence of some corruption in Argentina.
- Multiple studies have shown that animal welfare on farms is not a high priority for the Argentinian government and people.

NGO Activity

- NGOs in Argentina largely focus on promoting the welfare of companion animals.
- A number of exposés in the country have shown that the treatment of animals on farms does not comply with legislation.

FARMING

Argentina is a large farming nation with a national herd consisting of 52 million cattle¹ and over 5 million pigs, with over 56,000 pig farms². The sheep herd stood at 14.5 million in 2014, the majority of which are wool sheep. The goat population in 2014 stood at 4.4 million and is consistently much lower than the sheep population³.

Institutions within Argentina have adopted the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) definition of animal welfare. Due to the livestock makeup of the country, most information on animal welfare refers to bovine animals^{2&4}.

Many Argentinian cattle are raised using a multi stepped farming process. Animals are traded from breeding farms where the calves are weaned as early as 60 days old. The calves are often then traded to raising farms where they gain weight up to around 300kg before being traded again to fattening farms where they are sold to slaughter at around 350kg. Ownership of the cattle changes multiple times through this process⁵ and in some cases, different aspects of an animals life are contracted to other parties, such as the farming, fattening and slaughter. The owner of the farm that an animal is housed on is not necessarily the owner of the livestock, as occasionally cattle are contract farmed⁵.

Argentinian beef production for 2018 was projected to be 2.9 million tons, an increase of around 5% on the previous year and the highest level since 2008. The main reasons for this rise is due to higher slaughter rates and carcass weight⁶.

Over the last 30 years, Argentina has moved from a largely pasture-based production system to a more intensive system,⁷ and in 2010 there were 2,275 feedlots with an average of 700 animals per feedlot⁸. Up to 80% of the country's beef now goes through a feedlot^{9&10}. There are two farming sectors within Argentina, the commercial farming sector and the subsistence communal sector. The communal sector relies heavily on labour and lacks in the technology to efficiently farm to the extent that commercial farming does. Just three key companies provide 70% of the total milk produced within Argentina¹¹.

Argentina is the second largest per capita consumer of beef at 54.4kg per capita annually, second only to Uruguay¹². Pork consumption is currently at 16.8kg per capita, which is significantly lower than beef⁶. Total meat consumption is around 99.8 – 110.2 kg per capita making Argentina one of the highest per capita meat consuming nations².

Registration with RENSPA (Registro Nacional Sanitario de Productores Agropecuarios - The National Sanitary Register of Agricultural Purposes) is mandatory to be able to carry out any agricultural or livestock activity. RENSPA is designed to strengthen sanitary conditions and prevent, eradicate and control diseases and pests¹³.

TRANSPORT

All in-country movements, imports, and exports of livestock are regulated by SENASA (Servicios y Estudios para la Navegación Aérea y la Seguridad Aeronáutica S.M.E. S.A. - The National Food Safety and Quality Service) as per RENSPA¹³. This includes the registration and authorisation of any vehicle used to transport animals. Drivers must also be trained in animal welfare and have the appropriate expertise to minimise stress and injury to the livestock⁴.

According to the animal welfare manual, travel time must not exceed 24 hours and all transport must be suitable for the species of animals being transported. Suitable transport conditions include: the use of specific flooring for various animal species (i.e non-slip), separations where required, specified room between the head of the animal in their natural position and the roof/cover if necessary⁴.

Resolution 581/2014 states that all transportation vehicles and trailers designed to carry animals must be registered in the National Sanitary Register of Media Transport of Live Animals. All vehicles must also be designed in a way that animals can be loaded and unloaded easily, and adequate climatic conditions must be implemented¹⁴.

To become certified against the Standards for Organic Production, transport times should not exceed 8 hours, unless there is an interruption throughout the journey¹⁵.

It is likely that animals will travel significant distances due to the infrastructure in place and location of most slaughterhouses in Buenos Aires.

TRACEABILITY

From 2006, the Argentinian government gradually made it compulsory for the national cattle herd to be tagged for identification purposes¹⁶. Currently farmers use coloured ear tags to manually track their livestock, however the use of micro-chips may be increased to expand export volumes and allow trade to countries that require such identification tools.

The result of compulsory tagging of livestock has reduced the need for hot-iron branding, a previously widespread form of identification in Argentina. Although branding may still be taking place, the practice is likely to be reducing to the point of becoming a clandestine practice in the future.

The new use of micro-chipping may also aid the prevention of human error and the loss of information on an animal compared to a paper trail. The micro-chipping system will initially be voluntary due to the financial cost for some small-scale farmers¹⁷.

Every cattle owner must comply with the formalities established in each province to register a particular brand or mark to identify its cattle as well as comply with any legal act governing transfer of ownership of cattle¹³. Any cattle intended for export to the EU must be double tagged, but if the tag falls off, a blue replacement tag must be fitted. However, under these conditions the animal is no longer fit for export to the EU¹⁸.

The identification of cattle and buffaloes must be unique and permanent, to prevent inaccurate readings of livestock¹⁹.

SLAUGHTERING

There are roughly 300-400 slaughterhouses in Argentina⁶ with the two largest slaughterhouses accounting for approximately 10% of slaughter²⁰. Many slaughterhouses are independent operations, whereby cattle owners send the animals for slaughter and take back the meat, leaving by-products like hide to the slaughterhouse. The slaughterhouse has little to no influence over the on-farm welfare of animals that are processed in their facilities⁵.

It is compulsory to stun animals prior to slaughter within Argentina, which is regulated by the National Directorate for Agrifood Inspections. For cattle, Argentinian slaughterhouses use concussion and electronarcosis to render the animal unconscious before carrying out slaughter. Argentina also states that the treatment of their animals (particularly in slaughterhouses) complies with OIE standards for animal welfare²¹.

All slaughterhouses must be registered to SENASA and the establishment should be maintained and in good condition. Animals must be slaughtered with minimal waiting time and an animal welfare officer must be present until the end of slaughter. The animal welfare manual states that animal welfare procedures should be developed and implemented for all stages of animal handling within the slaughterhouse. To ensure that animal welfare is considered, there should be minimum noise within the slaughterhouse during operation and correct desensitising tools should be used, taking the species of animal into account⁴.

Standard procedures should be put into place for religious slaughter and the cut must be carried out immediately after the hold takes place, to minimise the stress experienced for the animal⁴.

Regardless of the form of slaughter, an animal must be rendered desensitised immediately on the first attempt. The time between desensitisation and slaughter must be the shortest time possible, with a maximum time of 60-75 seconds. All staff must be trained to recognise the signs of an animal regaining consciousness and repeat the desensitisation procedure immediately⁴.

Anecdotal evidence from an LWG member based in Argentina states that legislation is strictly followed in slaughterhouses, especially in those that the member has seen and knows of. The member has stated that there is a strong political push toward world class regulations and controls due to the desire to export meat globally from Argentina.



HIDES, SKIN & LEATHER

The 2016 total export value of bovine raw hides and skins equated to US \$2.85 billion, with key import markets including Thailand, Portugal, China, Uruguay and Mexico. Tanned and crust bovine export values in 2016 equated to US \$0.5 billion, the five largest importers were Thailand, China, Croatia, USA and Mexico²².

Total raw sheep hide export value equate to US \$0.9 billion, with the main importers being China, France, Uruguay and Chile²². Anecdotal evidence suggests that export levels are low due to export taxes on raw and wet blue hides. In usual market conditions, exporting these raw materials is economically unviable. Exports have risen slightly due to low hide prices, which has allowed the export of these products to become economically viable even with the cost of taxes.

Argentina produces over double the amount of leather from bovine animals as it does sheep and goats. Production figures are roughly 669 million ft² of light bovine leather and 36.4 million ft² of sheep and goat leather²³. Argentina has started to import cattle from neighbouring countries due to increased beef prices in Argentina²⁴.

In 2015, beef exports to China accounted for 36% of Argentina's total exports¹⁰, however, beef exports from Argentina have declined in recent years due to various limits and taxes put into place on exports of beef in an attempt to make the beef more affordable to the Argentine population. Although the limits and higher taxes have now been removed, it is unknown whether beef exports will return to previous levels or not^{25&26}.

There is increasing pressure from European livestock farmers against the proposed Mercosur trade deal between the EU and the four founding members of Mercosur: Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay. Organisations such as the Irish Farmers Association (IFA) have publicly questioned animal welfare conditions within the Mercosur nations focusing on Brazil, however Argentina is indirectly included by association²⁷.

Recently, there has been an increase in demand for shoe leather from Asia. Demand for automotive leather has remained consistent over recent years, but the reduction in prices from Brazil may pose a risk for the demand on automotive leather in Argentina²⁸.





LEGISLATION & REGULATION

As a member state of the OIE, Argentina should theoretically follow the legislation and standards that the OIE recommend²⁹. Animal welfare meets OIE standards within Argentina, as a member state. There is regulation in place that requires the stunning of animals before slaughter can be carried out²¹.

Argentina has developed partial legislation relating to animal welfare. SENASA have defined animal welfare as “the set of measures taken to diminish the animal’s tension, suffering, trauma and pain during its transfer, exhibition, quarantine, commercialisation, exploitation, training and slaughter”². Further, SENASA has published five statements that demonstrate good animal welfare; animals must be free from hunger, thirst and malnutrition; free from fear and distress, free from physical and thermal discomfort, free from pain, injury or disease; and able to express normal behaviour².

Law 14346 (Bad Treatment and Acts of Cruelty to Animals) defines ill-treatment of animals as: inadequate and insufficient feed for animals; forcing animals to work with the use of instrument or inadequate rest; forcing an animal to work when they are not fit to do so; and forcing an animal to carry a load too heavy for what they are capable of³⁰.

Acts of cruelty are defined as: unnecessary vivisection; mutilation without need; surgical procedures without the use of anaesthesia; abandonment of animals; causing death to pregnant animals; intentionally injuring or wounding an animal; putting an animal to fight³⁰.

Current Argentinian legislation is largely outdated and does not directly apply to the animal welfare concerns identified in more developed legislation such as that developed by the European Union. Most information on animal welfare refers to bovine and there is no legislation that regulates specific animal welfare practices for pig production². Laws developed to implement the legislation are relatively basic and tend to have been published more than 15 years ago.

According to a study published in 2008 by INTA (Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Agrícola - Argentinian National Institute of Agriculture Technology), the perceived advantages of animal welfare in Argentina tend to focus on aspects such as food safety and quality rather than any inherent value to the animal’s wellbeing in itself. The study goes on to state that in general, the five statements on animal welfare published by SENASA are rarely applied by producers, transporters and processing plants². However, changes in general application are likely to have improved in the time since the publication of this study.



GOVERNANCE

Argentina has been given a Corruption Index ranking of 95/176 by Transparency International, suggesting that corruption occurs in Argentina. This places Argentina alongside countries such as Benin, El Salvador, Kosovo, Maldives and Sri Lanka³¹. Argentina ranks in the High Social Progress index developed by The Social Progress Imperative with a score of 75.9/100³². A high social progress and mid-level corruption ranking suggest that whilst Argentina appears focused on social factors and improving the welfare of people, livestock and their treatment is currently not a high priority for the country.

A Corruption Index ranking of 95 suggests that governance on animal welfare may not be a high priority for the government. EconWelfare carried out research into animal welfare standards in selected countries across the world, including Argentina. An outcome of this research deemed farm animal welfare as a low priority on the political agenda amongst Argentine citizens, reinforcing the idea that it is a low priority for the government also³³.

There are two primary institutions responsible for the implementation and verification of animal welfare practices; SENASA is a state managed organisation charged with delivering national policy on animal health amongst other things. The organisation is in charge of the Animal Welfare Program and responsible for verifying compliance with the corresponding laws. The second institution is the Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food (SAGPyA) which sits under the Ministry of Production of Argentina and is responsible for developing the agribusiness sector of the country².

NGO ACTIVITY

NGO activity within Argentina appears to be concentrated in educating the poor and promoting good animal welfare to companion animals rather than farm animals. This suggests that the welfare of farm animals is not being pushed higher up the government agenda by NGO's within Argentina due to higher priority concerns. Similarly, the lack of NGO activity in Argentina may be due to the lack of influence that they may have.

In 2015 PETA, a key animal welfare NGO, carried out an exposé on the welfare of wool sheep in the Ovis 21 network of farms based in Argentina, which is a supplier of Patagonia. The sheep on these farms were seen to be mistreated during the slaughter process, kicked, mutilated and neglected. Surgical procedures were also carried out with no pain relief for the animals, causing the the animals to show clear signs of pain and distress. The investigation caused Patagonia, Stella McCartney and Kering to all stop sourcing from Ovis 21, with Patagonia stating that they will not consider sourcing from Ovis 21 again until they can be assured that the animals will receive humane treatment³⁴.

In 2017, PETA carried out another investigation into sheep cruelty, at Red Pine Land & Livestock, another supplier of Patagonia based in Argentina. This investigation showed heavily pregnant sheep being whipped, sheared in unacceptable manners that resulted in wounds, and forced to give birth in freezing temperatures. Patagonia was again criticised for sourcing from an irresponsible farm³⁵.

FARM ASSURANCE SCHEMES

Farm assurance schemes associated with livestock are largely linked to the use of organic farming.

Certification of organic farming may be awarded to farms that fit the criteria for organic livestock. Part of the criteria for the certification involves the suitability of housing for farm animals. Animals must be kept in a premise suitable to their age and requirements, and must not be overcrowded. Solitary confinement is not allowed, and animals must be protected from excessive sunlight, rain, temperatures and wind. All animal welfare legislation must be met, at a minimum, to obtain the certification which can be awarded by the ARGENCERT program¹⁵.

Although some farms commit to higher welfare standards, there is no formal recognition for this and the packaging and labelling of meat does not indicate the source of the products. This means that there is little incentive for farmers to provide higher welfare standards if it will come at a financial cost, as the meat sells for the same price regardless. Higher animal welfare standards could therefore be viewed as decreasing the profit margin for those that invest in the meat and livestock industries⁹.

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Where web links have been viewed as part of the research for this document the date accessed is logged. Documents may have been accessed over a period of four to six weeks however most recent view date is provided.

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