



# Record-keeping, regulation, and animal welfare: understanding farmer perceptions and practices

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# Aim of this presentation

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**Paris Risk Group June 2015** “Evidence based *innovation*, the *quality* of information and its use in risk assessment and risk management”

## **This presentation’s contribution:**

- How to understand quality?
- What innovations does the evidence suggest?

# Background

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## **Fellowship No. 1 on Social Science in Defra:**

- Research to understand farmers usually draws from psychology
- Assumes that behaviour is determined by attitudes and values

## **Fellowship No. 2 Follow-up study:**

- Show the potential of alternative social science approaches
- Focus on why farmers fail to keep and use legally required data

# The puzzle: Assumptions

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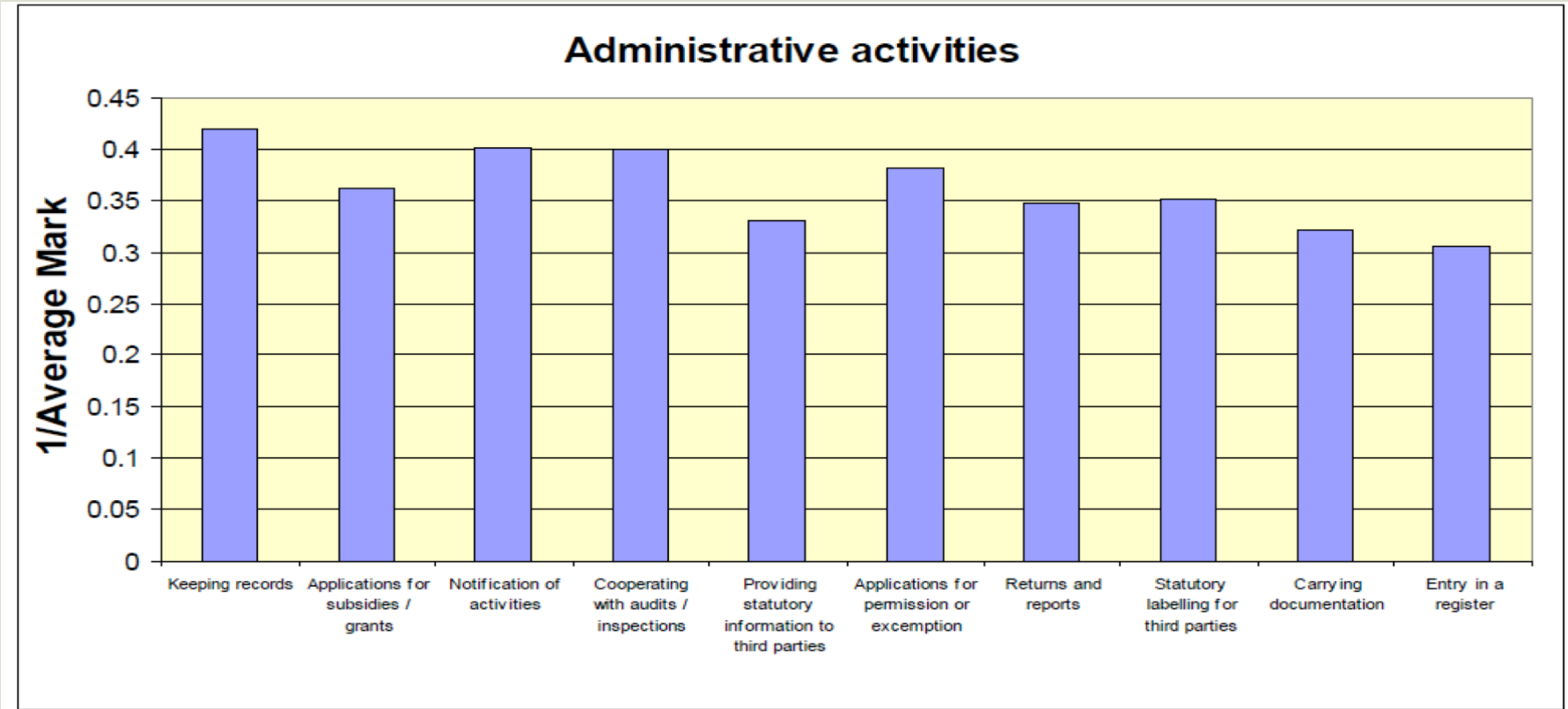
EU Council Directive 98/58, transposed into Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations of 2007 require farmers to keep records of

- (a) any medicinal treatment given to animals; and
- (b) the number of mortalities found on each inspection of animals

These requirements are perceived as light touch because:

1. Records are seen as a benefit for the farmer
2. Thus farmers should already be keeping them

# The puzzle: Record-keeping is burdensome



Source: Defra 2007 Administrative burdens in European agriculture: an evidence base, p.

25 <http://archive.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/policy/farm/regulation/documents/admin-burdens-eu-ag.pdf>

# The puzzle: Compliance is low

Percentage from total breaches	England Random and Risk	England Targeted	Scotland R & R	Scotland Targeted	Wales R % R	Wales Targeted
Staffing	10.1	11.9	0	9.2	23.1	13.3
Inspection	1.8	1.5	0	5.3	15.4	3.8
Animal Care	14.7	21.8	12.5	29	23.1	27.2
<b>Records</b>	<b>37.6</b>	<b>20.3</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>21.1</b>	<b>23.1</b>	<b>17.1</b>
Accommodation	6.4	7.4	0	2.6	0	5.7
Environment	14.7	11.9	12.5	6.6	7.7	10.8
Equipment	0	0	0	2.6	0	0
Freedom of Movement	0.9	0	0	2.6	0	0
Feed & Water	11	23.3	0	17	7.7	22.2
Mutilations	1.8	0	0	1.3	0	0
Breeding	0.9	2	0	2.6	0	0

Source: Random and targeted AHVLA Inspections January – June 2013

Animal Health Veterinary Laboratories Agency AHVLA (now APHA – Animal and Plant Health Agency)

... in other words... why don't we see enough of this







# Methodology

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- Semi-structured interviews: what records do you keep, why, how do you use them, if not then why, own records, how are they more useful
- On-farm field visits to 16 farms: 9 pig, 7 dairy. BPEX, DairyCo support
- 25 semi-structured interviews with farmers and stock people
- 6 interviews with inspectors: 4 government, 2 private schemes
- Desk-based evidence review: inspectors and farmers guidance



# Key findings: Farmers, regulation and record-keeping

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**1. Farmers and regulators understand and use welfare records differently**

**2. These contrasting views reflect different understandings of 'good' animal husbandry**

**1. The formats required for audit compliance make it harder for farmers to use records for animal welfare**

# 1. Competing understandings of records:

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## **Regulators:**

- “cannot make linkages between why suddenly at the end of the rearing period they’ve had a 6% mortality when the previous six months they’ve had 3%” (I1).
- “typically seeing spikes in sort of respiratory disease in autumn and spring” (I2).

## **Farmers:**

- “To show my farm assurance man when he comes around every year, show I’ve got one” (F15)
- “if you want to use them as a management tool they are no good, they’re no good” (F10).

## 2. Different understandings of good husbandry practice

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**Regulators:** Measure, monitor and manage  
Records= key step

**Farmers:** Smell, see, know, act  
Records= disconnected step



### 3: Format issues: mortality records

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#### Mortality records: Flexibility and lack of clarity

- Directive (98/58/EC) allows farmers to satisfy its record-keeping requirements with “equivalent information ... kept for other purposes”
  - Animal by-products records
  - Movement records
  - Herd size records at key rearing periods
- No detail of age, cause or place of death

### 3: Format issues: veterinary medicines records

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#### Medicine records: Chronological shape is unhelpful

- Designed to account for medicine usage
- Unsuitable for individual/herd epidemiology
- To glean individual health records: animal cards, other records
- To glean herd epidemiology: medicine expenses

# Key findings: Farmers, regulation and record-keeping

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1. Farmers and regulators understand **AND USE** welfare records differently

2. These contrasting views reflect different understandings of 'good' animal husbandry

1. The formats required for audit compliance make it harder for farmers to use records for animal welfare

# How inspectors use the records

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“you will check that period of mortalities [and if the farmer explains] these calves were very poorly [then you say] well then, show me on your records that you treated them ... and you did try to improve their health?” (I6)

“The only way for us to know if the farmer is doing a good job is seeing that he is doing a lot of treatments...If he doesn't keep the records, we don't know.” (I6)

“if you've got very good up to date well completed records, the rule of thumb, the farm is quite good and you wouldn't expect there to be major welfare problems” (I2)

# Conclusions

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**Why do farmers fail to USE the records they are required to keep:**

**They do not find them useful: welfare is about care, records come after the effect**

**They are kept for compliance, not as management tools**

**In their current shape they cannot be management tools**

# Implications

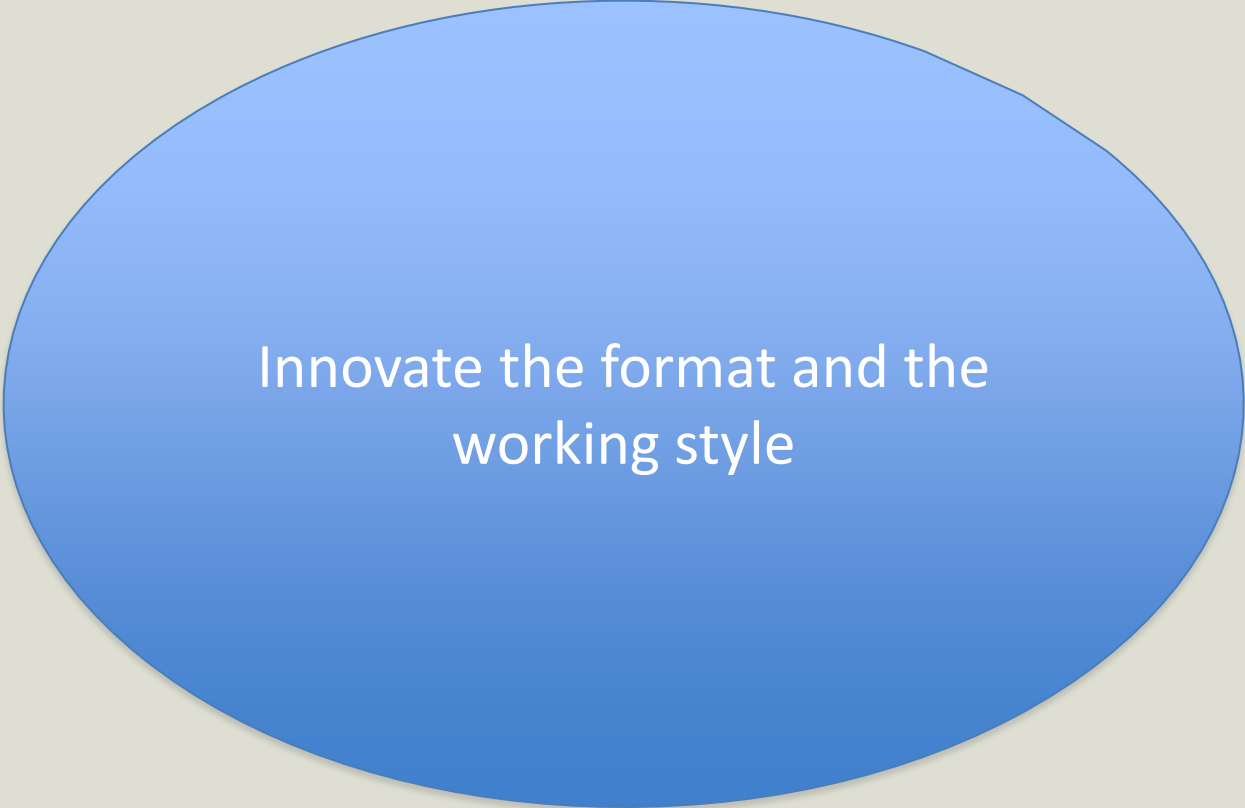
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1. What do the records speak for?
  - a. The “quality” of farming?
  - b. The “quality” of animal welfare standards?
  
2. There is a mismatch between the requirements’ goal of driving welfare standards and their effectiveness: they serve to demonstrate compliance but not to drive welfare

# What to do?

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**Engage with farmers and assurance schemes to work together on improving the format**



**Innovate the format and the working style**

# What to do?

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**Efforts to reduce regulation by re-using records are not effective drivers of change, they turn record-keeping into burdensome compliance. Abandon the pretense that records are about something different to compliance**



Innovate the narrative

# What to do?

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## Revised approach to inspection and assurance

- Show me-tell me?




Innovate inspection process

# What have I contributed?

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1. Alternative social science approaches can help you ask new questions and find new answers so that you can find new options to achieve your goal
2. A new way of thinking about social science: At the moment social science is at the end of the policy cycle (input-output) at the beginning of the cycle (input-output) is more useful



Innovate the breadth and role  
of social science in policy