

25 years of the International Society of Livestock Husbandry (IGN) – its origins, achievements and future prospects

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1. What is IGN? A thumbnail sketch

IGN, the International Society of Livestock Husbandry, was founded in 1978 and currently has over 80 members specialising in various fields connected with animal husbandry, mainly scientists, specialists in ethology, agricultural sciences, veterinary medicine, ethics, philosophy, animal welfare, jurisprudence and government. IGN's mission is to promote the proper housing, breeding, nutrition and treatment of farm animals on a scientific basis. IGN disseminates information on proper livestock husbandry issues through specialist symposia, workshops, publications, reports, its website - www.ign-nutztierhaltung.ch - and "Nutztierhaltung" [*Livestock Husbandry*], a quarterly newsletter. It also acts as an intermediary between the scientific community, farmers, animal welfare organisations and the authorities, and awards the annual IGN Research Prize. A hallmark of IGN is that it includes interdisciplinary representatives from various specialist fields and is neither a purely scientific organisation nor an animal welfare organisation, but an association actively working to promote animal welfare on a scientific, independent, interdisciplinary and international basis.

2. The origins of IGN – a retrospective view

The International Society of Livestock Husbandry (IGN) was founded in the 70's, a time of controversial debate on animal welfare in livestock farming, especially the battery farming of laying hens. A group of individuals committed themselves to the promotion of animal welfare in research and among the public, with special emphasis on better housing for laying hens, pigs and calves. Among the many involved were Bernhard Grzimek, Director of Frankfurt zoo, Glarita Martin, a behavioural research scientist specialising in poultry, Felix Wankel, the industrialist, inventor of the Wankel engine and animal lover, Juliane Müller, a Swiss Animal Protection Society promoter, Gerrit van Putten, a Dutch behavioural research scientist specialising in pigs, Hans Hinrich Sambras, a behavioural research scientist specialising in cattle, Eisenhart von Loeper, a lawyer, and Paul Leyhausen, a behavioural research scientist specialising in cats. IGN began life in a small way as the Heidelberg Animal Welfare Group.

The inaugural meeting was held on 17/18 May 1978 in Heidelberg; 18 guests from Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Sweden were invited, and, in addition to the formal foundation of IGN, the agenda included the new society's statutes, objectives and working methods, the election of directors, membership subscriptions and the creation and work of specialist committees. In the statutes IGN's objectives were described as follows "The Society's mission is to promote the proper housing, care and treatment of farm animals on a scientific basis". This objective is still the same today. One of the first recorded membership lists included 21 members from Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Austria and Sweden with Prof. Grzimek and Dr. Felix Wankel as honorary members. In the editorial of „Nutztierhaltung“ 1/2003 Glarita Martin, committed co-founder and subsequently IGN executive board member, gave a lively retrospective account of IGN's 25 year history (Martin 2003).

The first President of IGN, from 1978-1988, was Prof. Andreas Nabholz, Säriswil (Switzerland), prior to his retirement Director of the then Swiss Federal Veterinary Office. The main events of his presidency were the expansion of IGN, numerous specialist conferences and advisory opinions on animal husbandry, publications in Birkhäuser-Verlag's Animal Husbandry series, and, in 1984, the creation of IGN's newsletter „Nutztierhaltung“. From 1988-2000 IGN was led by Prof. Engelhard Boehncke, Witzenhausen, who extended IGN's objectives to include ecologically oriented livestock husbandry, in 1991 jointly with the Schweisfurth Foundation created the Schweisfurth Research Prize for true-to-type livestock husbandry and from 1998 onwards

introduced small-scale workshops on specialist topics to complement symposia and advisory opinions. Prof. Andreas Steiger, Berne, has been President of IGN since 2000; in addition to specialist symposia and advisory opinions his term in office has seen revision of the IGN guidelines and the creation of a new IGN Research Prize to replace the old Schweisfurth Research Prize. Prof. Nabholz, Dr. van Putten and Prof. Boehncke also became honorary members of IGN.

3. A selection of IGN activities

One of IGN's key activities has always been the preparation and publication of expert advisory opinions on various animal husbandry issues for public authorities, specialist groups, livestock farmers and the public. Reports have been published on housing for laying hens, as well as on fur farming and pig farming. They are available on the IGN website (IGN-Homepage 2003). There are plans for a comprehensive publication on new housing systems for laying hens.

Numerous specialist symposia have been held over the years in Germany, Switzerland and Austria, most recently in Tänikon, Switzerland (1997), Vienna (1999), Halle (2001) and Munich (2003), some jointly with other organisations and universities, each with published conference papers which are also on the IGN website. Workshops on specific topics have proved easier to organise, are cost-efficient and effective: each has a limited number of participants and the results are published. Such workshops were held in Marburg (1998) on the topic of „Suffering“ (Baum et al. 1998), Gumpenstein, Austria (1998) on „Group housing of dry sows“ (Bartussek et al. 2000), and in Bielefeld (2000) on „Ethological and neurophysiological criteria for suffering with special reference to the domestic pig“ (Buchholtz et al. 2001). These publications are also available on the IGN website.

The IGN newsletter „Nutztierhaltung“, introduced in 1984, featured brief reports - primarily on scientific publications relating to animal husbandry - with other short notices e.g. conference announcements. From 1984-1997 it was edited by Anne-Brit Gassmann-Langmoen, from 1998 by Nadja Brodmann Weber. In the editorial of the first issue 1/1984 Prof. Nabholz gave the reason for the newsletter's introduction as follows: „In recent years numerous institutes all over the world have conducted this type of research, but in some cases the results have been swamped by the flood of publications or have not attracted enough attention. The newsletter created by IGN therefore seeks to bring such work to the notice of all groups involved in animal husbandry. Abstracts will concentrate on key results and work, referring those interested in the detailed contents to the original article. It is to be hoped that such information will provide an impetus for the proper monitoring and design of housing systems in the interests of animal welfare“. The newsletter „Nutztierhaltung“ is a quarterly publication and has been available on the IGN website since 1998. Its circulation is currently around 2600, mainly to recipients in Europe (CH 1350, D 1080, A 30, NL 17, approx. another 40 in CZ, DK, E, F, GB, HU, N, RU, SE and overseas). In Germany BMVEL started emailing the newsletter to provincial veterinary officers in 2003. Between 1996 and 2001 „Nutztierhaltung“ published articles on the following topics: cattle 88x, pigs 81x, laying hens 45x, sheep 29x, broilers 18x, general animal production 15x, horses 14x, turkeys 11x, quails, geese, ducks, pigeons and ostriches 10x, statutory bases 10x, proper animal husbandry and welfare 10x, ethics 9x, stress and suffering 8x, rabbits 7x, laboratory and experimental animals 6x, goats 5x, deer 4x, livestock husbandry education and public relations 2x, fur farming 2x, fish 2x, invertebrates (lobsters, bees) 2x.

IGN currently has about 80 members, primarily in Germany, Switzerland and Austria, but also in the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, Belgium and a few other countries. Membership can be acquired or awarded on the basis of a request to the executive board from an existing member.

The IGN website, which went online in October 1998 (IGN-Homepage 2003, www.ign-nutztierhaltung.ch) shows the Directors on the IGN Executive Board, the IGN image („About ourselves“), the newsletter „Nutztierhaltung“ (issues since 1998), various IGN advisory opinions (laying hens, fur farms, pigs), IGN events (symposia, symposium reports, workshops), the new IGN Research Prize (formerly the Schweisfurth Research Prize), in addition to various links and news items. Website hits are increasing all the time.

IGN Executive Board members: Christoph Maisack (District court judge, Säckingen), Glarita Martin (Dr., Stuttgart), Andreas Steiger (Prof., Dept. of Animal Husbandry and Welfare, Berne

University, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine; President), Josef Troxler (Prof., Institute for Animal Husbandry and Animal Welfare, Vienna University of Veterinary Medicine), Roland Weber (Dr., Swiss Federal Research Station for Agricultural Economics and Engineering FAT, Centre for Proper Housing of Ruminants and Pigs, Tänikon), Beat Wechsler (PD, Federal Veterinary Office BVET, Centre for Proper Housing of Ruminants and Pigs, Tänikon). Nadja Brodmann Weber (Liestal, Schweiz, cf. IGN-Homepage) runs the office.

IGN is indebted to a whole range of institutions for their considerable financial support over the years, namely the Felix-Wankel-Stiftung, thanks in particular to the constant commitment of Frau Gerda Burkhardt and Herr Fried Meysen, the Federal Ministry of Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture BMVEL, the Swiss Federal Veterinary Office BVET, the German Animal Welfare League DTB, Swiss Animal Protection Society STS and Zurich Animal Protection Society, and, of course, IGN members.

4. IGN objectives – from its Guidelines

The „Guidelines of the International Society of Livestock Husbandry IGN“, revised on 19 November 2003, include among others the following objectives, fields of activity and principles (extract, the IGN website has the full version):

- a) IGN objectives: The International Society of Livestock Husbandry (IGN) promotes the proper housing, breeding, nutrition and treatment of farm animals on a scientific basis.
- b) Livestock husbandry and animal welfare: On a national and international level IGN provides an impetus for the formulation of legislation and regulations allowing proper animal husbandry and contemporary, scientifically based animal welfare.
- c) Animal husbandry, ethology and veterinary medicine: within the research framework appropriate scientific approaches can be used to draw conclusions on diminished animal well-being using behavioural indicators, parameters from veterinary medicine and clinical physiology. IGN fosters efforts to place a high value on ethological, physiological and clinical arguments in the formulation and enforcement of animal welfare legislation.
- d) Animal husbandry and ecology: Animal husbandry in the agricultural sphere should also take farm animal ecology into consideration. Proper animal husbandry, feeding and care must not be developed independently of environmental requirements.
- e) Animal nutrition and breeding. The well-being, health, behaviour and life of animals can be adversely affected by feedstuffs inappropriate to the requirements of a particular species and by improvements to the efficiency of livestock production through breeding, bio-engineering, genetic engineering and associated measures which ignore the needs of the animals. IGN wants feeding and breeding to take account of animals' type-specific needs.
- f) IGN members and activities: IGN members are specialists from various fields connected with animal husbandry, mainly scientists and experts in ethology, agrarian sciences, veterinary science, ethics, philosophy, animal welfare, jurisprudence and government. IGN disseminates information on issues relating to proper animal husbandry using specialist conferences, workshops, publications, reports, its website www.ign-nutztierhaltung.ch, and its quarterly newsletter, "Nutztierhaltung".

5. The Schweisfurth Research Prize for animal welfare

In 1991 the annual DM 20,000 Schweisfurth Research Prize for animal welfare was set up jointly by the Schweisfurth Foundation in Munich and IGN. The invitation to apply includes the following requirements: „This is an award for outstanding national and international scientific achievement which is application-oriented and aids the promotion of animal welfare with special emphasis on farm animals. Work which examines the legal, ethical or general humanitarian aspects of animal friendly husbandry may also be singled out for recognition. The Schweisfurth Foundation Research Prize is awarded to scientists for their work in helping to reconcile economics and ethics in animal husbandry. The starting and finishing point of any consideration must be the health, welfare and dignity of animals and humans. The primary function of the prize is to encourage the new generation of scientists“.

Each jury comprises IGN's incumbent directors and a few other specialists representing the Schweisfurth Foundation. Between 1991 and 2002 38 prizes were awarded to 41 prizewinners at a total of 12 award ceremonies (in 1991 1 prize was jointly awarded to 3 prizewinners and 1 prize

went jointly to 2 prizewinners). Award winning work dealt with the following subjects: cattle husbandry (incl. 2x human-animal relationship) 6 prizes, pig husbandry 13 prizes, poultry husbandry (incl. 1x quail husbandry) 10 prizes, horse husbandry 1 prize, special organic animal husbandry 2 prizes, general topics (role of natural science, genetic engineering, animal ethics, animal welfare legislation, mass slaughter) 6 prizes. The types of paper were as follows: degree papers (incl. Master's and Bachelor's degree papers) 16 papers, Doctoral dissertations 13 papers, books 3 papers, essay, study, research paper, video publications 5 papers, habilitation 1 paper. A total of 23 women and 18 men were awarded the prize. The award ceremony speeches 1991-2000 have been published in a collected volume „Den Tieren gerecht werden„ [*Treating animals properly*] Schneider 2001).

In April 2002 the Schweisfurth Foundation told the jury that it no longer intended to continue funding the prize after 2003, as the Foundation wanted to refocus on two core themes of principal interest to the founder, firstly the treatment of animals in agriculture and secondly the connection between health, nutrition and ecological food processing and quality.

6. The new IGN Research Prize

The prize was highly regarded in specialist research circles, so the Executive Board of IGN subsequently decided to adopt it in another form, creating the new „Research Prize of the International Society of Livestock Husbandry IGN“ as a continuation of the Schweisfurth Research Prize for animal welfare. The first invitation was issued and the prize first awarded in 2003. The new prize, worth 10,000 euros, is funded by the Felix-Wankel Foundation, IGN, the German Animal Welfare League, Swiss Animal Protection Society and Zurich Animal Protection Society. The object is similar to that of its predecessor, with a few adjustments and minor extensions: „The prize is awarded for outstanding scientific achievement serving the further development of animal friendly livestock husbandry. Work should be application-oriented and help to promote animal welfare with special emphasis on farm animals and their proper breeding, housing and nutrition. Studies examining the legal, ethical or general humanitarian aspects of the human-animal relationship will also be considered. IGN awards the research prize to scientists for their work in helping to reconcile economics and ethics in animal husbandry. The research must basically be concerned with the health, welfare and dignity of animals and humans. The prize serves primarily to encourage the new generation of scientists, and in particular singles out new degree and doctoral theses “. Papers are submitted in spring each year.

7. Where is IGN going? The way ahead

As well as looking back and giving the current state of play, it is also appropriate to look at what the future holds for IGN. Where should IGN be heading, what tasks await it? Some ideas were mooted in the 2/2003 editorial of „Nutztierhaltung“ (Steiger 2003) and will be discussed here, partly as an incentive to further debate.

One important activity, which needs to be built on, will continue to be the active influencing of various levels of government and livestock farmers, mainly by submitting scientifically based opinions and disseminating specialist knowledge. In this area IGN recently commented on the draft Pig Husbandry Order in Germany, and similarly gave an advisory opinion on the Hanover study „EpiLeg – Orienting epidemiological investigation of performance level and health status in various housing systems for laying hens – Interim Report of 1 Sept. 2003“. There are plans for a comprehensive IGN publication on new housing systems for laying hens. A whole range of IGN members are actively using their expertise to help achieve IGN's objectives in different countries, in different institutions and on different occasions.

Further specialist symposia and workshops on specific themes will continue to play an important part in the dissemination of specialist knowledge, as will the publication of conference papers, reports and advisory opinions by way of the newsletter „Nutztierhaltung“ and the IGN website. In future one of IGN's basic tasks will also be to fulfil the high-minded and ambitious role of intermediary between the worlds of science, farming, government and other groups. There is a particular need for increased public relations activity, using among other things conferences, workshops and advisory opinions - again with the object of disseminating more specialist

knowledge, thus also raising the IGN profile - and for an improved flow of information both within IGN and from IGN to the outside world.

As an international organisation IGN certainly has space to increase its membership outside Germany, Switzerland and Austria, whence the majority of the members come. It could also make sense to initiate task-oriented and theme-related joint ventures with other organisations whilst maintaining IGN's independence, e.g. arranging specialist symposia and compiling advisory opinions. The debate is still open on the concept of „animal husbandry“ and thus on the sphere of Society interest, including an examination of extending its activities to „non-classical“ farm animals and to topics such as killing and slaughtering, intensive breeding and genetic engineering. New animal welfare problems will occur on a regular basis, in animal housing, breeding, nutrition and treatment; IGN must monitor them carefully. Managing the new IGN Research Prize is a fascinating new task.

Looking back in the 1/2003 editorial of „Nutztierhaltung“ 2003 Glarita Martin said: „For many years IGN's main concerns in Germany were to avert negative welfare-relevant developments in animal husbandry and to prove breaches of animal welfare law in expert scientific opinions, reviews and publications. Now it can increasingly address the complex question of animal friendly and ecologically-orientated animal husbandry, as there is still a great need for research in individual areas“ (Martin 2003).

For all its excellent plans and visions, IGN has limited financial and personnel resources and will always have to respect the feasibility and reality of implementing ideas. The future will also bring much important work and activity. May IGN continue to achieve as many of its goals as possible and may the animals be the first to benefit!

8. Literature

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