



U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish Animal Welfare

Industry Statement

Catfish Farmers of America and our members take animal care seriously, and we are very proud of our contribution to the quality of life of American consumers. Our commitment to the health and care of our animals is nearly unequalled, matched only by our commitment to the highest quality, safest and most affordable food products available anywhere.

U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish is the most humanely handled fish commodity in the world. Every catfish farmer has a vested interest in making sure his or her catfish are properly treated, healthy and marketable to consumers. Catfish is the only aquatic or marine commodity that receives USDA inspection; this is the same federal agency that inspects all U.S. livestock and poultry. In fact, this USDA inspection of catfish was requested by our members in an effort to heighten food safety and animal welfare standards. This also applies to imported catfish species, which far outnumber those raised domestically.

CFA members continue to examine their practices to find ways to improve humane handling, but the public can rest assured that there is no better source of any fish anywhere in the world than U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish.

The following page includes a summary of our industry's Catfish Welfare Policy, which was revised and adopted by CFA Membership at our annual meeting in February 2018.

Robert L. Jones
President
Catfish Farmers of America

The Catfish Farmers of America represents catfish farmers, processors, feed mills, scientists, and suppliers of U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish across the United States. Our organization is a non-profit trade association that was formed in 1968 and is the United States' strongest aquaculture organization.



Catfish Welfare Policy

Catfish Farmers of America is an association of U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish producers, suppliers, processors and marketers. Our association encompasses the entire supply chain from feed ingredients to the catfish products that consumers enjoy across the U.S. Our commitment to quality is grounded in our commitment to the welfare of the fish that we raise. Our members work diligently to provide an environment within which catfish are treated with dignity and respect and are raised in environments that promote their health and well-being.

The Catfish Farmers of America works closely with researchers and experts to continuously improve the welfare of the catfish we raise. Our industry is proud of its history of raising healthy, quality fish for our customers and further recognizes that the welfare of those animals is of paramount importance both for ethical reasons and for the benefit of our customers.

The Catfish Farmers of America adhere to the following principles of fish welfare:

- 1) Fish are animals and must be treated with care and respect.
- 2) While there is significant scientific evidence showing that fish do not experience pain in the same way as do higher animals, there is sufficient controversy that we will always err on the side of caution. Fish will be handled as gently as possible and attempts made to avoid actions or procedures that would be reasonably expected to cause significant pain in a higher animal.
- 3) Fish are handled in ways designed to minimize distress to the greatest practical extent.
- 4) Fish will be protected to the extent possible from disease by following the farm's biosecurity guidelines. In the event that fish show signs of disease, the fish will be provided with disease treatments most appropriate to their condition.
- 5) Farm conditions will be maintained to provide oxygen levels and water quality consistent with good fish health. In the event that water quality deteriorates below acceptable levels, every practical effort will be made to re-establish acceptable conditions.
- 6) When fish are sampled, harvested, or handled, they will be maintained in water as much as possible and salt and appropriate treatments used as practical to mitigate the effects of stress. Fish will be gradually acclimated to temperature changes.
- 7) Catfish are slaughtered quickly and humanely for rapid processing, which enhances the quality of farm-raised aquatic animals.
- 8) Those desiring additional information on fish welfare may consult this comprehensive review:

Erickson, H. S. 2003. Information resources on fish welfare 1970-2003. Animal Welfare Information Center Resource Series N. 20, Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Beltsville, MD.

