

## **Sable farms certification in Russia in accordance with the Furmark project**

FURMARK is a program that oversees the project of certification and monitoring the state of fur farming. It is designed to support: the principles of humane treatment of fur-bearing animals, their well-being.

### **The program is based on the following key principles:**

1. The certification program should meet the standards established in the country, as well as the following principles: feasibility, reliability, reproducibility, universality, accessibility, efficiency, objectivity;
2. The certification program and farm assessment protocols are based on 5 principles and 15 criteria for the well-being of fur animals and should meet the following requirements:
  - a) scientifically based;
  - b) approved by independent experts;
  - c) have objective evidence of compliance with established requirements;
  - d) be freely available.
3. Verification (confirmation) must be impartial and conducted by third parties.

By 2020, the Furmark program will include the following certification positions:

- Welfur - European certification program for foxes, arctic foxes, minks and Finnraccoons;
- SAGA certification program in accordance with Finnish standards;
- North American Mink Certification Program in America and Canada;
- Wild Fur Programs;
- Certification program for fur dressers and dyers.
- Certification of farmed and wild sable and Swakara.

The IFF Board, together with the fur auctions, decided that, starting from 2020, only certified furs will be sold at international auctions. Now certification is actively carried out in Europe at European fur farms, certification begins in America.

An integral part of global IFF projects such as Furmark and Welfur in the Eurasian region are studies carried out by the Moscow Veterinary Academy in 2018 (commissioned by the Russian Fur Union and supported by the IFF) for compliance with the rules and conditions of keeping and breeding of farmed fur animals in Russia to European standards. According to the results of the research, the scientifically-based “Rules for keeping farmed fur animals in Russia” (hereinafter referred to as “Rules”) on which certification of fur farms in Russia and Belarus will be based were published.

During the process of developing the “Rules”, the Welfur program existing in Europe was taken as a basis, and protocols for assessing the welfare of fur animals in Russian animal farms were developed.

The “Rules” is a document that reflects the principles and criteria for assessing the welfare of environmental conditions of fur animals on farms, associated with the characteristics of the maintenance, nutrition, health, behavior and methods of euthanasia.

An integral part of the “Rules” is the regulation, which allows to give a more objective assessment directly on the farm, including:

- card evaluation of the welfare of farmed fur animals;
- Bar chart of parameters and criteria for evaluation of animal welfare at the fur farms (Annex 3).

As the basic principles of expert assessment of the welfare of animals are selected:

- Health of animals;

- Feeding and water supply;
- Living conditions;
- Behavior;
- Euthanasia.

Assessment of the farm should be carried out on a 3-tier system:

Level 1 - a high level of animal welfare by this criterion;

Level 2 - the average level of animal welfare by this criterion;

Level 3 - low level of animal welfare by this criterion.

The general level of animal welfare on the farm is determined by the total score put up by the estimates entered in the expert's report form (Annex 4) for each of the criteria.

Indicators assessing the welfare of the animals should be different by:

- validity (reliability) - a reflection of the actual state of the animal;
- reliability - the absence of factors that can significantly affect (change) the objectivity of the expert's assessment;
- feasibility - the possibility of real practical implementation of the examination.

### **Tasks and conditions for accreditation and certification of fur farms**

Accreditation of fur farms is due to the need to assess and control welfare (nutrition, health, comfortable maintenance, emotional state, humane treatment) of animals on farms, both on the basis of objective signaling signs from the animal organism and the fulfillment of scientifically-based animal maintenance requirements.

Tasks:

- To establish the level of compliance of the fur farm with the requirements set forth in the documents of the regulatory framework (standards for technological design, technology for producing products at animal farms in the Russian Federation, instructions, recommendations on the use of biological substances for balancing feed mixtures, prevention and treatment of diseases, etc.), as well as the requirements recommendations of the Standing Committee of the Council of Europe on the protection of animals, the Furmark project;
- Analyze the accreditation data, use them in educational programs and publications for government officials, officials, and consumers of animal products.

Assessment indicators are generated during visits to the farm by an independent third party (experts), who possess certification skills. To receive a certificate, each farm is evaluated in 3 visits (sessions), including an assessment of well-being:

1) adult livestock during the winter period; 2) adult livestock and puppies in the reproductive period; 3) adult livestock and young stock in the period of growth.

## Inspection and certification

### 1. General Provisions

1.1. An independent structure that conducts on-site inspections of fur farms and summarizes the results of the inspection, issues certificates, is responsible for storing the database of inspections - Scientific Research Institute of fur farming and rabbit farming (NIIPZK) Moscow.

1.2. Farms are certified for their location and animal species.

1.3. The number of inspections and their timing on sable farms:

**Period 1: adult livestock during the winter period.**

The entire certification period: **December 1 - March 20.**

The visit to the farm: **January 1 - February 20.**

**Period 2: adult livestock and pups in the reproductive period.**

The entire certification period: **March 21 - August 1.**

The time of visiting the farm: **April 15 - June 30.**

**Period 3: adult livestock and offspring during growth period.**

The whole period of certification: **August 1 - November 30.**

The time of visiting the farm: **September 1 - October 15.**

1.4. After the results of accreditation, the farm is certified. Subsequently, certification should be carried out once every 3 years. Unscheduled inspections are allowed.

1.5. Certification cost: 150 Euro per visit to one farm.

1.6. The number of independent experts conducting inspections of farms in animal farms is 1-2 people.

1.7. To supply animal skins to international auctions, fur farms need to receive accreditation and a certificate before December 31, 2020.

1.8 If there is a non-compliance of the animal breeders with the requirements set forth in the documents of the regulatory framework, as well as low values of the farm's assessment below the pass-through, the inspector shall issue a written order to eliminate the identified non-conformities. After elimination of the above violations, the fur farm has the right to conduct an extraordinary inspection within 6 months, after submitting a second application for certification.

## **2. The procedure for certification of fur farms**

2.1. The fur farm submits an application to the Scientific Research Institute of fur farming and rabbit farming to inspect farms for certification. Before applying for certification, the farm must prepare the necessary documents and check the compliance of the conditions of keeping animals on farms with the requirements of the Russian regulatory documents and Recommendations of the Standing Committee of the Council of Europe (Annex 1).

2.2. After receiving the application, the fur farm is included in the inspection schedule, having previously agreed on a deadline with the management or representative of the farm. Conclude an agreement on the obligation of the Parties to conduct certification.

2.3. The need to change the examination schedule (in terms of time) after it has been agreed (refusal of the visit, change of the epizootic situation in the farm, etc.) should be reported no later than 10 days before the planned date.

2.4. During the session, 100 sable cages are examined. When assessing, the expert uses a flowchart of criteria and indicators for assessing the welfare of fur animals in the farm and records the assessments on the expert's registration sheet.

2.5. After three sessions (in 3 estimated periods) of animal welfare assessments, points are calculated and on this basis a decision is made to issue / refuse to give a certificate of conformity to Furmark project to the fur farm.

2.6. The certificate is a document certified by a stamp on the registration form. It contains information: the name of the fur farm, the type of animals, information on the certification, the total score, the validity of the certificate.

## Preparation for certification

1. Before applying for certification, the farm must prepare documentary information for experts on:

- livestock of animals of each species (by age and sex),
- the number of sheds and cages with animals on the farm,
- veterinary welfare of the farm for diseases,
- the frequency of daily water supply and feeding of animals and additional feeding (if any),
- on-farm animal disturbing events,
- Mortality. Fallen animals are considered dead or drowned. The animals killed during the period of euthanasia do not refer to the fallen. To register the mortality of animals (adults and puppies) for separate periods:

**Period 1: adult population during the winter period.**

The entire certification period: December 1 - March 20.

The visit to the farm on January 1 - February 20.

**Period 2: adult livestock and pups in the reproductive period.**

The entire certification period: March 21 - August 1.

The time of visiting the farm is April 15 - June 30.

**Period 3: adult livestock and offspring during growth period.**

The whole period of certification: August 1 - November 30.

The time of visiting the farm is September 1 - October 15.

According to the results of whelping, calculate the average number of puppies per female (fecundity) and at the end of the year - per the female of the main herd.

During the period of euthanasia to have information about the methods of killing and the condition of the equipment in the euthanasia house.

Sables must be kept in cages whose dimensions and area meet the following minimum requirements.

**Minimum size (cm) and enclosure dimensions (m<sup>2</sup>),  
while keeping sables on Russian farms**

Cage elements	Mesh enclosures		Huts	
Group of animals	females and males of the core herd	Offspring	Core herd	Offspring
Length	68	68	25	25
Width	40	40	40	30
Height	70	70	25	20
Area per 1 animal	0,27	0,27	0,11	0,08

From the time of weaning (May-June) to August, the pups should be kept in pairs (optimally, the female + male), then until euthanasia, one per minimum area of 0.27 m<sup>2</sup>. Sable, especially at a young age, has increased excitability, huts are necessary as shelter.

Experts should be provided with measuring tape, shoe covers, working clothes and gloves on the farm.

2. The survey procedure (session) of the farm for the purpose of its accreditation is carried out in several stages (periods): during the year experts make three visits to the farm in different production periods.

According to the results of a farm survey, the state of health and behavior of animals is analyzed, the characteristics of feeding, water supply and living conditions of animals during a specific period, the conditions of euthanasia are analyzed, the presence of disturbing external factors for animals is noted, the animals' mortality (causes and volume) is estimated during the assessment period.

**Evaluation of indicators**  
**Health of animals**

Health of animals is evaluated visually; good health is ensured through good living conditions, care, feeding and specific preventive measures (vaccination). Daily control during visual inspection of animals.

Criteria	Level	Parameter
1. Injuries	I	No visible damage of skin and fur, paws, tails, ears
	II	Insignificant damage of skin and fur, paws, tails, ears.
	III	Serious damage of skin or fur. Significant injuries, lameness.
2. Diseases	I	No diseases; animals are visually healthy with no signs of depression. Animals move freely around their enclosures, have good appetite and body condition. No diarrhoea. Preventive measures against diseases are organized and carried out.
	II	Diarrhoea, anaemia, pathological conditions are observed, but do not require specific preventive measures. Some animals refuse food or lose weight.
	III	Mass diseases: viral enteritis, distemper, pseudomonosis, viral hepatitis. Animals are lethargic, their body condition does not conform to breeding parameters. Mortality (deaths of animals).
3. Parasitic and invasion diseases	I	No sign of parasitic (ear mange, scabies) or invasion diseases on visual inspection.
	II	Insignificant number of animals have signs of diseases.
	III	Mass disease

## Feeding and water supply

This parameter is evaluated based on the animals' body condition and feed consumption; control via visual inspection and weighting. Conformance is ensured by providing good quality feed mixture in sufficient quantities and with enough variety.

Criteria	Level	Parameter
Feed supply. Feed quality and variety	I	No long-term diet limitations. Good quality feed mixture in sufficient quantities and with enough variety (good quality of feed mixture based on sensory parameters). Balanced diet, which satisfies the animals' nutritional needs. Control weighting and visual evaluation of body condition are performed.
	II	Insufficient variety and quality of feed mixtures; sensory evaluation reveals unpleasant smell or watery texture. The animals' excrements are inhomogeneous. Significant number of animals refuse food. Use of biological additives to compensate for poor feed quality.
	III	The animals' diet is not balanced. Feed quality and variety are poor. Animals refuse food. Weight loss is pronounced, body condition does not conform to breeding parameters. Stool is watery. Fur is dingy, felted, thin. Significant animal mortality.
Fasting days.	I	No fasting days.
	II	Diet limitations serve to regulate the animals' body condition.
	III	Insufficient diet due to feed shortages.
Water supply.	I	Continuous access to clean water, automatic water supply is in good order, water bowls are clean.
	II	Temporary breaks in water supply, animals are thirsty.
	III	Insufficient and irregular water supply, limited access to water.

## Living conditions

Animal living conditions are assessed visually, monitored daily.

Criteria	Level	Parameter
Comfort during rest	I	No outside stimuli (noise, smells). The cage design does not have any elements that might lead to animal injuring itself. Access to nesting box. The enclosure/cage, as well as the nesting box are in good sanitary condition, with no visual filth / dirt. The cage has ledges for rest.
	II	The enclosure/cage are in sufficient sanitary condition. Harmful outside stimuli are not the norm.
	III	The enclosure/cage, as well as the nesting box are in poor sanitary condition. No access to a nesting box.
Microclimate	I	Animals are completely protected from adverse atmospheric conditions (temperature, humidity, air movement, excess sun exposure). Good quality lining inside the nesting boxes during cold season.
	II	Additional protection from adverse atmospheric conditions is required. Lining is provided inside the huts during cold season.
	III	The process design requirements to placement of facilities (sheds at the farm) are not complied with. Animals are not fully protected from adverse atmospheric conditions.
Freedom of movement	I	Animals move freely inside the cages. The size of the cages fully complies with recommendations of the Council of Europe and the technological standards of Russia.
	II	Animals move freely inside the cages. Renovation (expansion) of cages is needed to comply with recommendations of the Council of Europe and the technological standards of Russia.
	III	The size of the cages does not comply with recommendations of the Council of Europe and the technological standards of Russia. Movement of animals inside the cages is limited.

## Behaviour

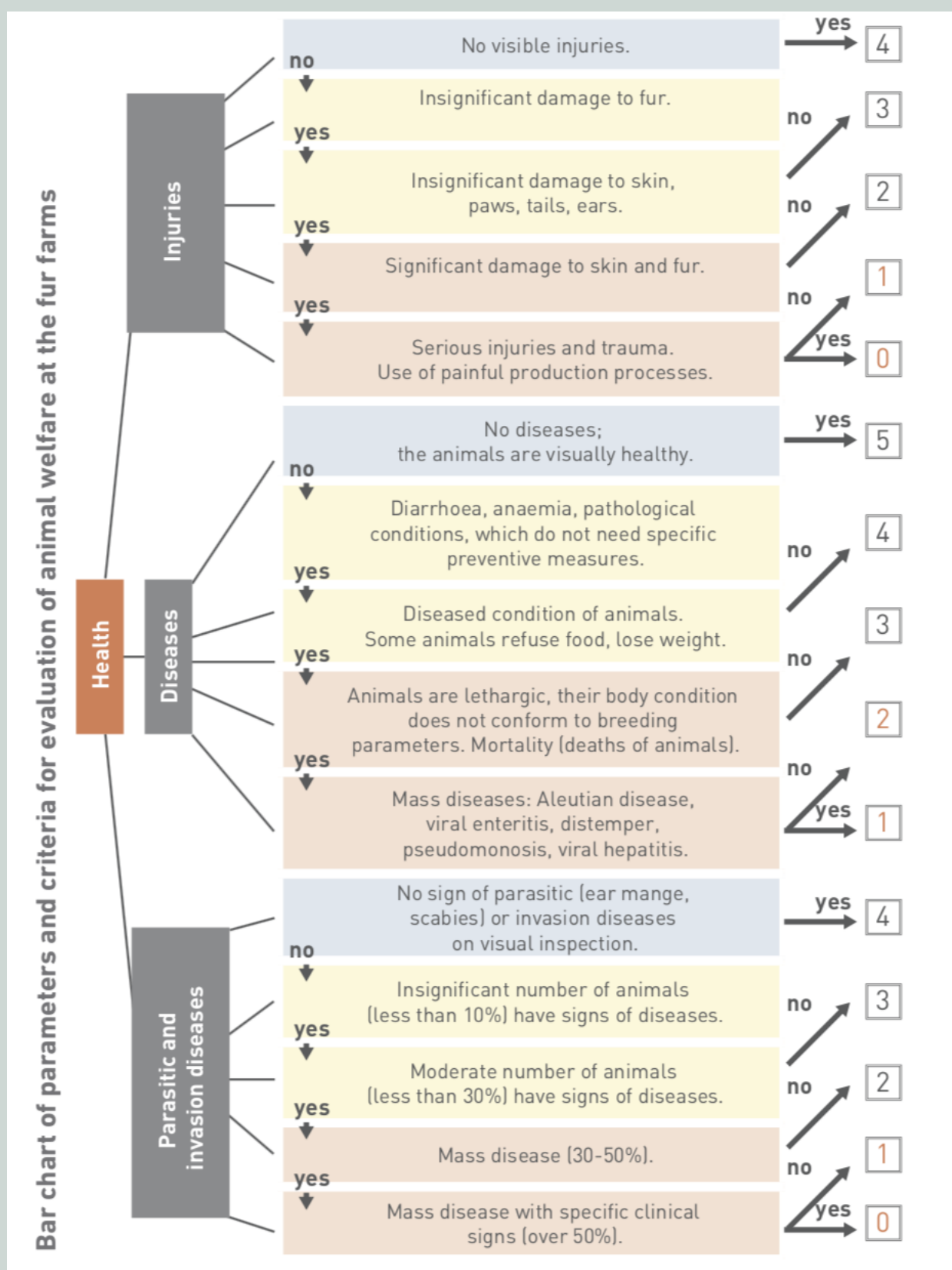
The animals' behaviour is evaluated through visual inspections. Control parameters are observable behavioural abnormalities, sharp sounds.

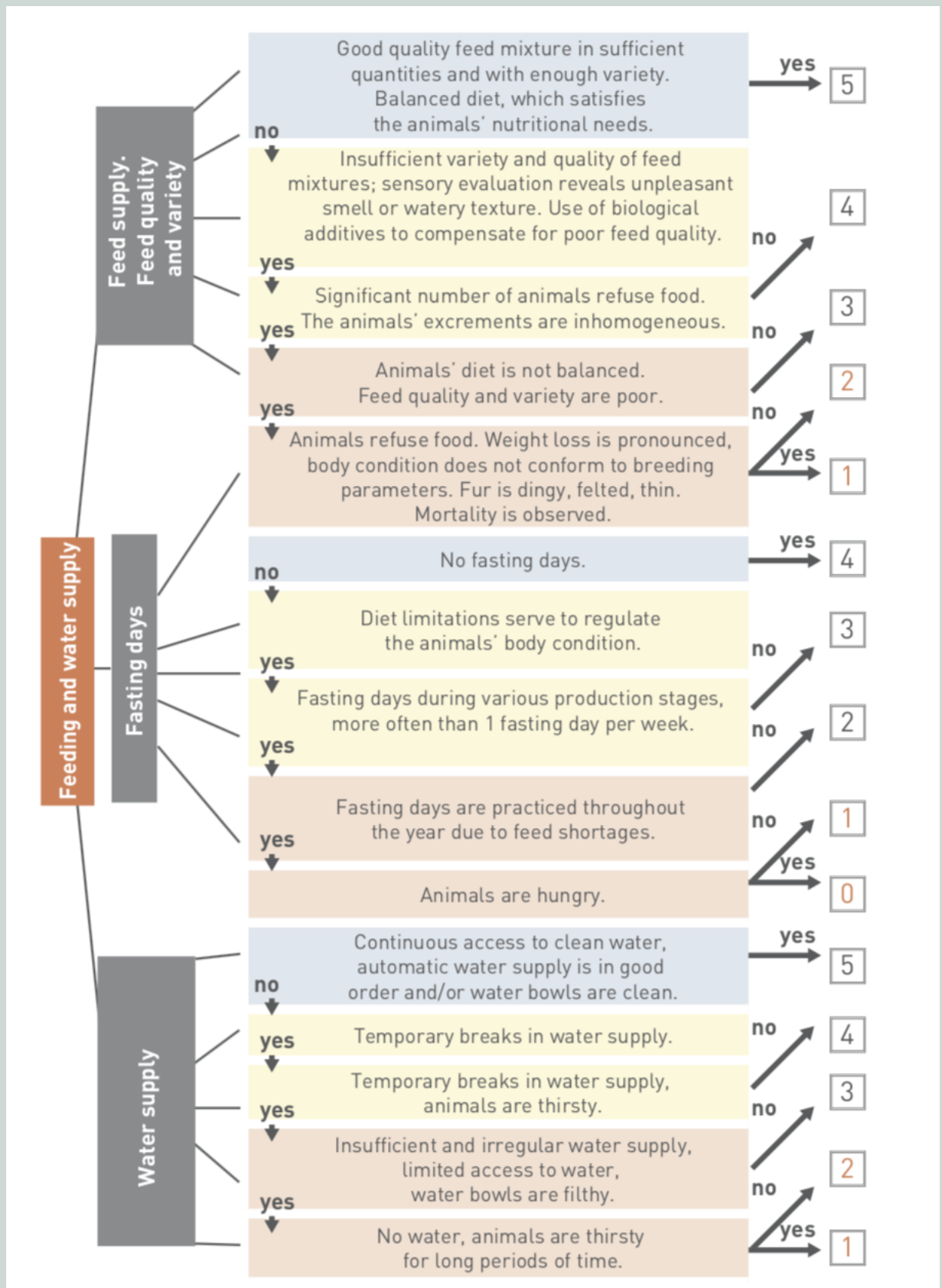
Criteria	Level	Parameter
Factors causing abnormal behaviour (weaning, separation by sex)	I	Optimal time as per Recommendations of the Council of Europe and the technological standards of Russia; the offspring are able to feed themselves independently.
	II	Insignificant deviations from times recommended for weaning and separation by sex (up to 5 days).
	III	Significant deviations from the recommended separation time (5 days and more).
How pronounced the abnormal behaviour is	I	No abnormal behaviour.
	II	Insignificant behavioural abnormalities; the animals are easily spooked.
	III	Significant behavioural abnormalities; the animals are aggressive.
Emotional attitude toward humans	I	Positive
	II	Neutral
	III	Negative

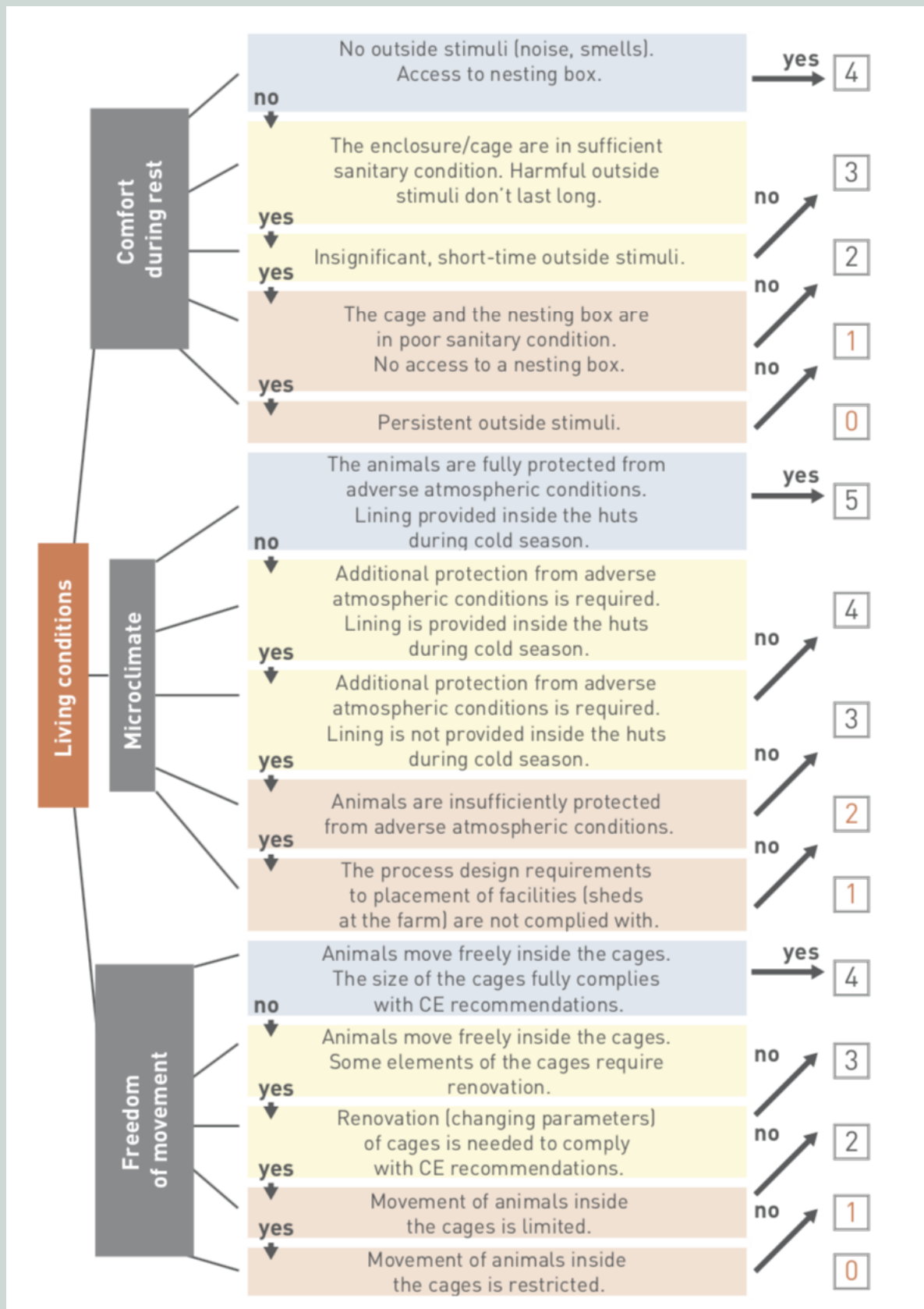
## Euthanasia

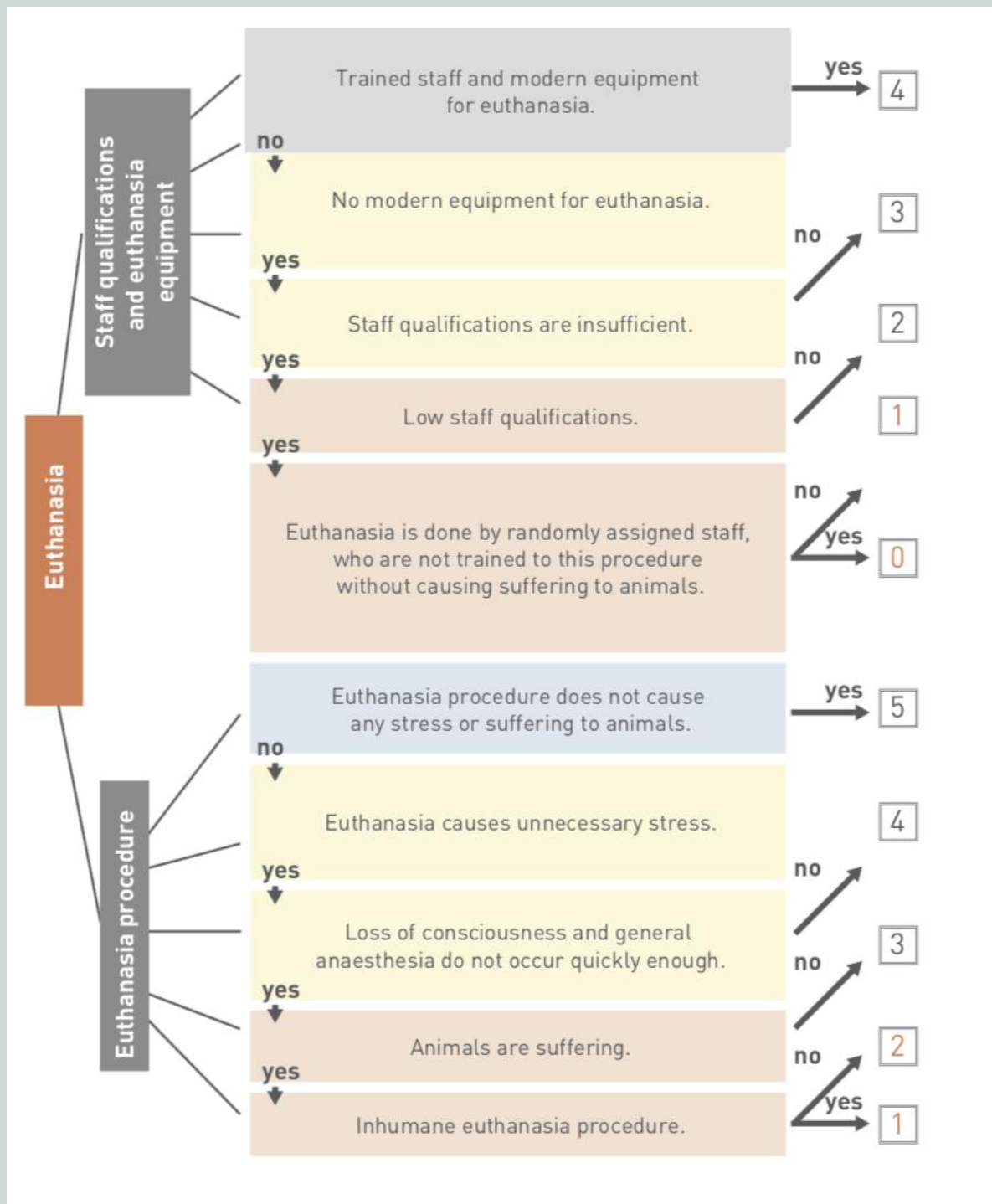
Criteria	Level	Parameter
Specialist qualifications	I	Trained staff are available.
	II	Staff training is not sufficient.
	III	Euthanasia is done by randomly assigned staff, who are not trained to kill animals without causing suffering.
Euthanasia procedure	I	Euthanasia does not cause suffering to animals.
	II	Euthanasia causes unnecessary stress and suffering.
	III	Euthanasia causes mass stress to animals.

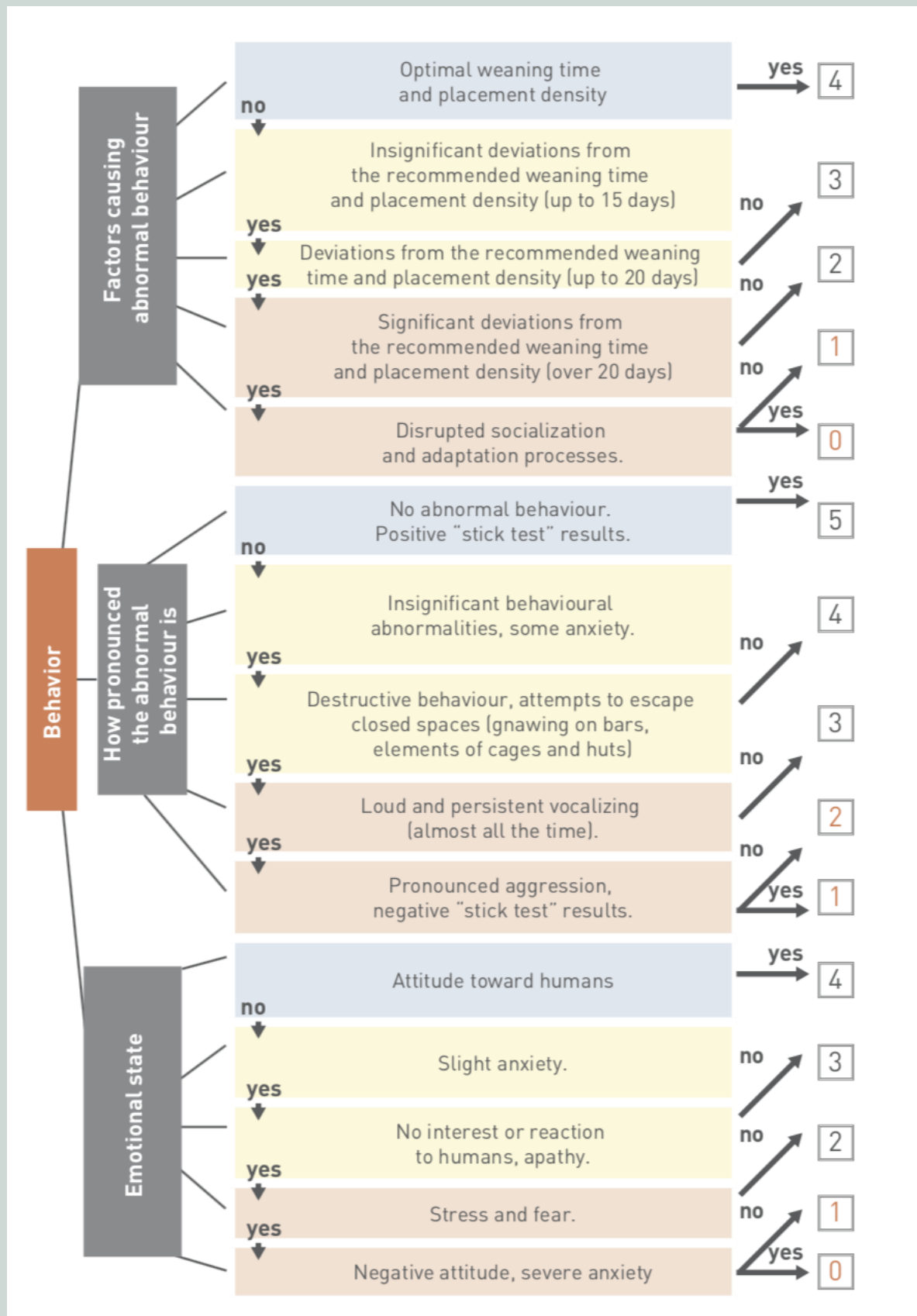
## Bar chart of parameters and criteria for evaluation of animal welfare at the fur farms











**Expert's Report form for evaluation  
of the animal welfare on Russian fur farms**

Expert's Report form for evaluation of the animal welfare on Russian fur farms									
Principles	Criteria	Score					mln	Total	
Health	Injuries	4	3	2	1	0	2		
	Diseases	5	4	3	2	1	3		
	Parasitic and invasion diseases	4	3	2	1	0	3		
Feeding and water supply	Feed supply. Feed quality and variety	5	4	3	2	1	3		
	Fasting days	4	3	2	1	0	2		
	Water supply	5	4	3	2	1	3		
Living conditions	Comfort during rest	4	3	2	1	0	2		
	Microclimate	5	4	3	2	1	3		
	Freedom of movement	4	3	2	1	0	2		
Euthanasia	Staff qualifications	4	3	2	1	0	2		
	Euthanasia procedure	5	4	3	2	1	3		
Behaviour	Factors causing abnormal behaviour	4	3	2	1	0	3		
	How pronounced the abnormal behaviour is	5	4	3	2	1	3		
	Emotional state	4	3	2	1	0	3		
Main criteria total (max score: 62)							37		
Bonus scores									
Improved living conditions (max score: 2)									

Describe, what the score was given for:		
<b>Additional equipment to improve production process (max score: 4)</b>		
Describe, what the score was given for:		
<b>Additional cage elements for comfort improvement (max score: 2)</b>		
Describe, what the score was given for:		
Total bonus score (max score: 8)		
Total score (max score: 70)		