The Animal Behavior and Well-Being Symposium titled “Metrics for On-Farm Animal Welfare Assessment—Current State and Future Needs” was held at the 2016 Joint Annual Meeting, July 19–23, 2016, in Salt Lake City, Utah. Across all production animal species, there are a number of existing animal welfare assessment and assurance programs. This symposium was developed to bring attention to the metrics used in those programs, with specific focus on identifying where further science is needed to help refine the metrics and approaches for assessment in various production systems. The symposium comprised 4 invited presentations, each of which is briefly discussed below.

The symposium began with an invited presentation by Dr. R. A. Blatchford (University of California, Davis) titled “Poultry welfare assessments: Current use and limitations.” Dr. Blatchford gave an overview of how assessment of commercial poultry welfare is increasingly playing a greater role in assuring consumers that birds are treated in a humane manner (Blatchford, 2017). Additionally, Dr. Blatchford discussed how little research has been performed on the commercial scale to evaluate the welfare of poultry in North America, but researchers are beginning to adopt the use of many measures developed in Europe. He suggested that with more benchmarking of these measures on commercial farms, researchers will begin to better identify causes of welfare issues and provide support for recommendations in housing design and management.

The second speaker was Dr. D. Griffin (West Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Center, Canyon), who gave a presentation titled “Metrics for beef cattle welfare.” Dr. Griffin gave an overview of how maintaining welfare is an important concept for the stewardship of beef cattle (Griffin, 2016). Included in his presentation was a description of some of the beef welfare assurance programs and audits currently being used, as well as those under development. Dr. Griffin also described key areas that need to be addressed in such assessments.

Dr. E. Vasseur (McGill University, Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue, QC) was the third speaker and presented on “Optimizing outcome measures of welfare in dairy cattle assessment.” In her presentation, Dr. Vasseur described how reliable indicators of welfare are the basis for on-farm dairy cattle welfare assurance initiatives (Vasseur, 2017). Dr. Vasseur discussed how most currently available indicators are qualitative and require on-farm assessment and monitoring, providing various examples of such indicators. She also described how some indicators require technology, which is not currently available on most farms. Despite that, Dr. Vasseur suggested that automation and big data are going to play an important role in the future for the assessment of cow welfare.

The final presentation of the symposium, “The Common Swine Industry Audit: Future steps to assure positive on-farm animal welfare utilizing validated, repeatable and feasible animal-based measures,” was delivered by Dr. C. J. Rademacher (Iowa State University, Ames) on behalf of Dr. M. Pairis-Garcia (The Ohio State University, Columbus). The presentation focused on describing the Common Swine Industry Audit, including its development, scientific evaluation, implementation, and future refinements (Pairis-Garcia and Moeller, 2017). An overview of the audit was provided, including the 27 key aspects that cover swine care, husbandry, and preharvest food safety. Focus was placed on describing 1 of those key areas, animal-based measures, which represent approximately 50% of the total points achievable for the audit and encompass all critical criteria. The importance of having validated, repeatable, and feasible animal-based measures in the assessment of sow and pig welfare was emphasized.