

Animal Welfare Delivery Strategy

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Section 1 - Introduction

1.1 The Animal Health and Welfare Strategy for Great Britain (AHWS)¹ set out in broad terms the Government's strategy for improving animal health and welfare. Delivery in England is being monitored by an independent advisory group known as the England Implementation Group (EIG)².

1.2 The AHWS confirms that the welfare of any animal is dependent on a combination of factors which contribute to its physical and mental health. In assuring the welfare of animals the Farm Animal Welfare Council has recommended that welfare should be considered in relation to "Five Freedoms":

- Freedom from hunger and thirst
- Freedom from discomfort
- Freedom from pain, injury or disease
- Freedom to express normal behaviour
- Freedom from fear and distress;

1.3 Since publication of the AHWS there have been requests from stakeholders for more detail on what this means for welfare. The Animal Welfare Delivery Strategy (AWDS) has been prepared to address this need in England. It is consistent with the AHWS and sets out in more detail, the Government's priorities for improving animal welfare standards.

1.4 The AWDS confirms the Government's commitment to improve animal welfare standards. Successful implementation of the strategy will ensure all owners and keepers of animals know and understand what they need to do to improve animal welfare standards. It will also give consumers clear and simple information on the welfare origins of the product they are buying. We will be working closely with stakeholder and other representative bodies to achieve this.

1.5 The AWDS outlines a new approach to the delivery of good animal welfare, with stakeholders and Government sharing the responsibility. Improvements in welfare standards will be delivered through joint working, or by stakeholder-owned initiatives. This approach will also involve shared accountability, and the performance of all participants will be independently monitored and assessed.

¹ www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/ahws//ahws.pdf

² www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/ahws/eig/index.htm

1.6 The EIG is responsible for monitoring implementation of the AHWS in England. It will have a similar responsibility for the AWDS, overseeing the progress made by Government, industry and others responsible for delivering good animal welfare.

1.7 The AWDS covers England only. The Scottish Executive and National Assembly for Wales are considering similar issues themselves, and Defra will work with them, to monitor progress and to share best practice. A separate animal health and welfare strategy will be introduced in Northern Ireland.

Section 2 - Scope

2.1 The scope of the AWDS is consistent with the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and applies to vertebrate³ animals for which humans have responsibility or which they control. These include:

- farm animals⁴;
- animals used for entertainment and recreation;
- companion animals;
- animals e.g. horses & greyhounds used in sport (whilst under the control of humans whether on a permanent or temporary basis),
- working animals;
- animals of a kind that are commonly domesticated that are living in the wild⁵; and
- wild animals, when under the control of humans.

2.2 The Strategy does not cover:

- wild animals, when not under the control of humans;
- animals involved in the normal course of fishing;
- animals used in research⁶.

The welfare of wild animals affected by direct human activity, e.g. cage trapping will be considered further in the Wildlife Management Strategy which is currently being developed.

³ Currently considered to be the only demonstrably sentient animals, and evidenced to be capable of experiencing pain or suffering from poor standards of welfare.

⁴ Including farmed fish.

⁵ In line with the scope of the Animal Welfare Act, this covers animals that are of a kind commonly domesticated in the British Islands, whether they can be said to be under the control of man or not. This means that, for example, stray dogs and feral cats are covered. Kinds of animals which are to be considered commonly domesticated in the British Islands are those whose collective behaviour, life cycle, or physiology has been altered as a result of their breeding and living conditions being under human control, in the British Islands, for multiple generations. Animals of a kind not commonly domesticated in the British Islands are only covered to the extent that they are under the control of man or are not living independently in the wild. It also covers animals that are not living in a wild state, meaning those which have ceased to be under the control of man but are not yet living wild, including (though not limited to) animals which have escaped, for example from a zoo or circus.

⁶ The use of animals in scientific procedures is regulated by the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

Section 3 – Strategic Goals

3.1 The AWDS is intended to ensure that all those who care for or are responsible for animals understand, accept and meet their duty to ensure good standards of welfare for them. It also seeks to ensure they have the necessary skills and knowledge to manage and minimise risks of harm (including the prevention of foreseeable problems), and to recognise and deal promptly with other problems as they arise. Those who interact with, or benefit from, animals are also expected to pay due regard to their welfare. These objectives will be achieved by ensuring:

- ◇ Goal 1 - Those who care for or have contact with animals have the necessary skills and knowledge to ensure appropriate standards of animal welfare.
- ◇ Goal 2 - Animal welfare policy is based on sound scientific research, practical experience and other relevant evidence.
- ◇ Goal 3 - Economic markets function effectively and transparently allowing customers to make informed choices based on animal welfare standards.
- ◇ Goal 4 - Compliance with welfare rules, underpinned by efficient and effective enforcement, using risk-based assessments which avoid placing unnecessary burdens on animal keepers.
- ◇ Goal 5 - Globally accepted animal welfare standards are embedded in international legislation and agreements and, are enforced to the same standards.

3.2 **Annex A** describes the actions required to achieve each of the strategic goals identified above. These will be used as a starting point for developing an Implementation Action Plan (see section 5.2) that will underpin delivery of the AWDS.

Section 4 – Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 While primary responsibility for animal welfare must rest with the individual who cares for the animal on a day-to-day basis, this does not remove the need for others less directly involved to consider welfare issues. Consequently the AWDS seeks to promote an awareness of animal welfare issues amongst the community as a whole. It also seeks to ensure the owner of the animal and those responsible for directing and managing the keeper are aware of legislative and best practice requirements and, that those standards are consistently applied. More specifically all those who have contact with animals have responsibilities to consider, and in some cases provide for, their welfare. Similarly those who benefit from products made from animals should be able to consider the welfare standards involved in the preparation of those products. Specific responsibilities for each of the main groups with an interest are described in the following paragraphs.

Owners and users of animals

4.2 Individual animal owners and users of animals should fulfil a duty of care for animals they are looking after which includes:

- Understanding and complying with animal welfare best practice contained in relevant legislation, codes of practice, guidelines and quality assurance programs;
- Ensuring that their animals are managed in a way that does not have an adverse impact on other animals; and
- Having regard to the welfare standards that have been applied to the animals that they buy.

Consumers and users of animal products

4.3 Individual consumers and users of animal products have the ability to exercise considerable influence over animal welfare issues. They should be encouraged to take an interest in ensuring the application of good animal welfare practice to the animals from which the products have been derived.

Central Government

4.4 Central Government (including its agencies, where appropriate) should:

- Use its unique position and expertise to push forward collective action to improve animal welfare;

- Promote the UK's position on animal welfare in international bodies and negotiations;
- Prepare and implement legislation and codes of practice when necessary, and promote them to the public and stakeholders, including through early consultation;
- Consider and pursue alternatives to regulation where appropriate, with a view to minimising burdens, including the provision of joined-up advice;
- Co-ordinate enforcement activities to achieve the consistent, efficient, open and transparent enforcement of animal welfare legislation, and encourage best practice;
- Identify, resource and facilitate high quality scientific research and information gathering and monitoring activities to improve understanding of existing standards and trends and to help define effective solutions;
- Facilitate provision of information, education and training to animal keepers and the wider public;
- Develop and co-ordinate a national approach to emergency animal welfare planning, preparedness and response; and
- Ensure appropriate standards of welfare in its direct dealings with animals;
- Regularly evaluate action to deliver good welfare and modify policies or activities as needed;
- Work effectively with other interested parties to achieve the best possible results from action to improve animal welfare.

Local Authorities

4.5 Local Authorities (and their representative organisations) should:

- Ensure animal welfare legislation is enforced effectively and consistently;
- Participate in the development of codes, policies and programmes, aimed at delivering appropriate animal welfare outcomes;
- Provide data to determine baselines and participate in on-going surveillance, monitoring of standards and evaluation of enforcement delivery;
- Provide their staff and the community with factual information on animal care and good welfare and encourage the adoption of best practice; and
- Facilitate provision of information, education and training to animal keepers and the wider public, including those in schools and colleges;

- Work effectively with other interested parties to achieve the best possible results from action to improve animal welfare;
- Ensure appropriate standards of welfare in its direct dealings with animals.

Stakeholder organisations

4.6 Stakeholder Organisations (including industry groups and welfare organisations) should:

- Represent their interests and responsibilities on animal welfare issues in relevant bodies in an appropriate way;
- Participate in the development of legislation, codes, policies and programmes aimed at delivering good animal welfare outcomes;
- Promote the implementation of required welfare standards, and co-ordinate activities to achieve consistent, open and transparent action;
- Engage with enforcement agencies at all levels to ensure animal welfare legislation is enforced effectively and consistently;
- Encourage the adoption of best practice, national codes and standards;
- Provide their members, animal keepers and the wider public with information, education and training;
- Sponsor or undertake high quality scientific research and information gathering and monitoring activities to improve understanding of existing standards and trends and to help define effective solutions;
- Participate in the regular evaluation of action to deliver good welfare;
- Work effectively with other interested parties to achieve the best possible results from action to improve animal welfare.

Prioritisation

4.7 It is important that efforts to improve animal welfare are targeted on areas of agreed priority. These will be developed in collaboration with stakeholders and will be reflected in the Action Plan developed to underpin implementation of the AWDS.

4.8 What central Government and its agencies do will be assessed against the following principles:

- The number of animals affected;

- The duration of the welfare problem experienced by each affected animal;
- The impact of the problem on, each of the Five Freedoms;
- Whether or not improvement is achievable and measurable; and
- For notifiable diseases, the welfare impact of imposing statutory control measures on animals not affected by the disease.

Section 5 - Putting the strategy into practice

5.1 Successful delivery of the AWDS will require all those with an interest to work together to achieve the five strategic goals. This will lead to an increased emphasis on sharing responsibility for achieving good animal welfare. In some cases Government may have a critical role, working with stakeholders (for example in EU negotiations on standards and labelling). In other areas it will be appropriate for Government to act as a facilitator, bringing together interested parties and providing guidance and information. The Government may also back specific initiatives that are entirely stakeholder-owned. This approach will create a greater sense of collective responsibility for ensuring good standards of welfare amongst animal carers and all those who have contact with animals.

Managing the strategy

5.2 Defra will work closely with stakeholders to develop a detailed Implementation Action Plan. This will set short, medium and longer term (5 years and beyond) objectives. This process will help foster a new relationship with stakeholders which will lead to a more appropriate balance in responsibilities between stakeholders and Government. Increasingly the focus will be on improving animal welfare through joint working, or by stakeholder-owned initiatives. This shared responsibility will also require shared accountability, and the performance of all participants will be independently monitored and assessed.

5.3 The Action Plan will be reviewed and revised over time. It will contain detailed objectives and actions and will identify those with lead responsibility for taking individual action points forward. The Action Plan will recognise progress to date against the five strategic goals in individual industry sectors and stakeholder areas of interest. It is anticipated that the Action Plan will be published towards the end of 2007 as a stand-alone document.

5.4 Once the Action Plan has been finalised the EIG have agreed to establish a Subgroup, including some non-EIG members to oversee implementation of the AWDS by monitoring progress against the Action Plan. The EIG will report on progress against the AWDS and associated Action Plan regularly as part of its high level report on progress against the AHWS.

5.5 Defra will review the AWDS periodically and will amend / update the Strategy as required to ensure that its scope and content remains consistent with current legislation and best practice. Defra will also review and update the Action Plan as appropriate.

Communications

5.6 Defra will promote the strategy through a broad range of communication channels including the web, briefing and face to face communication depending on the needs of the target audience.

ANNEX A

Actions required to achieve each of the strategic goals

Goal 1 - Those who care for or have contact with animals have the necessary skills and knowledge to ensure appropriate standards of animal welfare.

- Ensure individual animal keepers understand and accept their welfare responsibilities through advice and training.
- Ensure all communications, advice and information relating to good animal welfare and husbandry is tailored to the needs of the audience / intended recipient.
- Ensure a clear, consistent and comprehensive message is given on good animal welfare through joint working and co-ordination amongst information and training providers.
- Improve access to information and minimise burdens through the use of a single point of contact wherever appropriate.

Goal 2 - Animal welfare policy is based on sound scientific research, practical experience and other relevant evidence.

- Develop robust indicators to allow measurement of changes in overall standards of animal welfare.
- Increase stakeholder involvement in the identification of research priorities, selection of project proposals and the provision of funding in some areas.
- Broaden research to include social and economic research and other sources of information relevant to the measurement of animal welfare standards.
- Ensure evidence takes account of action at EU level e.g. plans to develop standardised European welfare indicators under the EU's Community Action Plan on the Protection and Welfare of Animals.

Goal 3 - Economic markets function effectively and transparently allowing customers to make informed choices based on welfare standards.

- Improve information for consumers on the welfare standards used to produce the animals and animal products that they intend to purchase, so that they can make informed choices.
- Work with supermarkets and the food service sector to ensure information for consumers is simple, transparent and so far as is practicable, provided in a standardised form.
- Ensure assurance schemes pay due regard to high standards of animal welfare.
- Work to ensure welfare rules in the UK and other Member States of the EU are fully aligned to provide for good animal welfare without disadvantaging UK producers.
- Seek to ensure EU welfare rules are based on sound evidence, are risk-based, easily implemented and that they provide measurable welfare outcomes with consistent and assured compliance across the EU.
- Ensure producers receive a fair return from the market premium derived from the application of high welfare standards to help contribute to a competitive and sustainable UK farming sector and animal industries.

Goal 4 - Compliance with welfare rules, underpinned by efficient and effective enforcement, using risk-based assessments which avoid placing unnecessary burdens on animal keepers.

- Ensure legislative controls are appropriate, consistently and effectively enforced by all enforcement bodies taking account of the animal welfare risks involved.
- Ensure the approach taken to enforcement includes the provision of suitable advice and guidance to animal keepers.
- Ensure high standards of animal welfare are promoted through self-regulation by industry and companion animal organisations, breed societies, assurance schemes, and through the contractual requirements imposed by retailers on producers.
- Reduce unnecessary burdens on keepers by minimising the number of multiple checks/assessments made by statutory regulators
- Regulators should provide comprehensive information on legislative requirements through an easy to access single contact point.
- Regulators should ensure an open and transparent approach through the publication of enforcement policies.
- Regulators and policy makers should, through simplification, reduce the burden of data provision on producers imposed by licensing/registration requirements.
- Ensure forthcoming EU legislation does not duplicate regulatory burdens.

Goal 5 - Globally accepted animal welfare standards are embedded in international legislation and agreements.

- Encourage the international community to pursue humane care and treatment for all animals, wherever they are kept whilst recognising and acknowledging the social, economic, religious and cultural differences that exist between societies
- Work with other countries and international organisations to develop agreed standards of animal welfare as a basis for lateral and multilateral agreements
- Support the work of the EU, Council of Europe, the OIE and others to promote a collaborative approach to animal welfare standards.
- Seek to develop international standards that ensure the application of good animal welfare practices which are appropriate to local production systems whilst reflecting any social, economic, religious and cultural differences between them.
- Ensure international standards do not compromise producers in developing countries, or constitute a barrier to trade.
- Enhance the role UK stakeholders play in the development of international standards.