



Veterinarians and Animal Welfare

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FVE 7-step input towards new European Animal Welfare Action Plan

Considering that the European Union recognizes animals as sentient beings whose welfare requirements need to be well regarded, the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe calls upon the Union to develop and implement a consistent and holistic **Animal Welfare Policy**.

An important tool for this is the development of a **new legislative framework** that aims to:

- Assure a "life worth living"¹; taking into account the 5 freedoms, for all sentient animals kept by humans e.g. for production purposes, sports, companion, working, laboratory, exotic and zoo animals;
- Prevent harm to all animals, including wild animals, their habitats and ecological niches;
- Set standards for good welfare instead of minimum legal standards where a level of insufficient welfare that is permitted;
- Use animal-based criteria (moving to outcome animal based criteria as well as resource/input based);
- Realizes that animal health, welfare and public health are closely and inextricably linked;
- Follow public expectation that decision makers will ensure that animals are properly kept and cared for;
- Establishes that the roles and responsibilities are clearly described for the different parties, including veterinarians, involved in ensuring good welfare of animals;
- Ensure the sustainable keeping and handling of animals; consistent with the Europe 2020 goals of sustainable growth.

The FVE therefore encourages the EU to:

1. **Form a European network of reference centers for animal welfare without delay.** The FVE believes that there should be one institute used as a coordination institute.
2. **Continue to set acceptable, practical, evidence-based and enforceable animal welfare standards.** The FVE believes that existing legislation should be upgraded (such as in transport) and standards to ensure the welfare of species not yet covered by legislation such as rabbits, fish, dairy cows, sheep should be set.
3. **Research the development of key, validated, reliable, robust and feasible indicators ("iceberg indicators").**
The FVE believes that the welfare of an animal should be assessed at various times

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¹ <http://www.fawc.org.uk/pdf/vetrecord-100410.pdf>

during an animal's life such as on farm, during transport, at animal gatherings and at the slaughterhouse.

4. **Increase its efforts in animal welfare education.**
The FVE believes in the motto "everybody is responsible". The inclusion of animal welfare throughout pre-graduate veterinary training, as well as in Life Long Learning programmes, would enhance knowledge and raise awareness of welfare issues amongst veterinary surgeons.
5. **Continue to work on providing EU citizens with accurate, transparent and impartial information on welfare issues.**
The FVE believes that food should be labelled according to its welfare provenance in order to facilitate consumer choice. Marketing claims about higher welfare standards should be independently verified.
6. **Continue its international initiatives.**
The FVE believes that the inclusion of animal welfare requirements in international agreements is essential. In addition, the investigation of the trade in exotic and companion animals into the EU should be a priority.
7. Focus on appropriate **implementation and enforcement of existing legislation.**
The FVE believes that in particular legislation on animal transport and pigs should be investigated. In addition, an implementation scoreboard could be considered as a tracking tool.

The FVE believes that:

- The veterinary profession – as knowledgeable and accountable professionals - has an important responsibility in promoting and assuring the health and welfare of animals.
- Veterinary surgeons have an important role in providing expertise and knowledge to the general public and animal keepers as well as to policy makers.
- The role of the veterinary surgeon must be recognised by the EU and a clear Member States commitment must be given.
- A clear description of expectations, roles and responsibilities of all relevant parties is essential for the implementation of an effective legislative framework.