



**Joint Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) - American Veterinary
Medical Association (AVMA) Statement on
The Roles of Veterinarians in Ensuring Good Animal Welfare**

The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) and the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) recognize that sentient animals are capable of pain and suffering, deserving consideration and respect.

The FVE and AVMA recognize that veterinarians — as knowledgeable and accountable professionals — have an opportunity and an obligation to help animal owners, caretakers, handlers, and policy makers protect and improve animals' welfare.

Consistent with the internationally accepted five freedoms,¹ animals must be provided water, food, proper handling, health care, and environments appropriate to their species and use, and should be cared for in ways that prevent and minimize fear, pain, distress, and suffering.

Establishing and implementing good animal care is a balancing act involving animal needs, human needs, societal expectations, and environmental concerns. Actions taken to improve animal welfare should be informed by veterinary, ethological, ecological, and ethical considerations.

In serving animals and society, veterinarians have unique attributes that make them valuable partners and effective advocates. Among these are:

- Strong science-based knowledge about animal health and husbandry, and proficiency in the technical and practical application of that information;
- Empathy, which encourages veterinarians to ensure uses of animals are necessary and appropriate;
- Direct practitioner access to animals, the environments in which they are housed, and the people who own and care for them;
- Regular interactions with other individuals indirectly responsible for the welfare of animals (e.g., other scientists, policy makers, advocates in the industry and humane communities, the public); and
- Long-standing credibility earned through public service and adherence to high ethical and professional standards.

All veterinarians have an opportunity to provide education and knowledge that can promote welfare-friendly animal care practices. Veterinarians must not only work to implement existing standards, but must also contribute to ensuring continual improvement of those standards.

Veterinarians in different types of practices may have unique roles:

- Private clinical practitioners provide direct-to-owner/caretaker assistance in assessing regularly the welfare of animals and in ensuring good animal welfare.
- Consulting veterinarians may complete in-depth evaluations of facilities and recommend standard operating procedures and best practices.
- Veterinary educators school future generations of veterinarians and paraprofessionals in the scientific and ethical bases behind the development and adoption of appropriate animal care practices.
- Veterinary researchers promote good animal welfare within existing animal care systems and propose alternatives that may better accommodate animal needs. Veterinarians employed in governmental and nongovernmental organizations develop, certify, and enforce animal care standards.
- Veterinarians with species-specific animal welfare expertise can serve as highly qualified, independent evaluators for assurance schemes.

Veterinarians are, and must continually strive to be, the leading advocates for the good welfare of animals in a continually evolving society.

Approved by the FVE Board, 30 August, 2011

Approved by the AVMA Executive Board, 23 August, 2011.

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For more information on the FVE-AVMA joint statements, visit the FVE website at [www.fve.org](http://www.fve.org) or the AVMA website at [www.avma.org](http://www.avma.org).

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The FVE is an umbrella organization of 44 veterinary organizations from 38 European countries, representing approximately 200,000 veterinarians.

The AVMA, founded in 1863, is one of the oldest and largest veterinary medical organizations in the world. More than 81,500 member veterinarians worldwide are engaged in a wide variety of professional activities.

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<sup>i</sup> Farm Animal Welfare Council. Five freedoms. Available at [www.fawc.org.uk/freedoms.htm](http://www.fawc.org.uk/freedoms.htm). Accessed June 16, 2011