



Department
for Environment,
Food & Rural Affairs

Policy paper

Animal welfare strategy for England

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Applies to England

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- develop and provide training on the new standards to our panel of zoo licensing inspectors by 2027
- update any necessary guidance and inspection forms to make it more straightforward for zoo licensing inspectors and local authorities to enforce the new standards by 2027
- improve welfare standards for elephants in zoos and introduce new biennial reporting to the Zoos Expert Committee by the Elephant Welfare Group to ensure improvements are being continued

Farmed animals



Overview

The government's ambition is to embed the principle of good farm animal welfare, where animals experience not just a life worth living but a good life throughout all life stages^{[\[footnote 3\]](#)}.

The government values the excellent work of the British farming industry in producing the highest quality food that feeds our country. We are rightly proud of the high animal welfare standards we have in this country; they are one of the selling points of our British farming industry and are greatly valued by consumers both at home and abroad.

Good animal health and welfare is linked to better farm business management, which supports the government's growth mission. Farm animal welfare policy is being considered alongside other government commitments, such as the Food Strategy, Farming Roadmap, the Trade strategy, Food and Farming Decarbonisation Plan, and five-year antimicrobial resistance national action plan. Healthier, higher welfare animals contribute to outcomes across all these strategies. The Animal Health and Welfare Pathway provides the framework for a generational shift towards achieving and maintaining universally high standards of farm animal health and welfare, through partnership with farmers and vets. Healthier animals generally produce food in a more sustainable way; producing lower greenhouse gas emissions and with less use of antibiotics.

Our farm animal welfare policy will continue to be backed by robust science and evidence, supported and shaped by input from expert advice groups, including the AWC, as well as a wide-ranging programme of funded research and development. It is also vital that this work is supported by proportionate, transparent and robust enforcement systems.

We are committed to working together with the farming community to maintain and enhance our world-class animal health and welfare standards. We can achieve this in a number of ways, in partnership with those involved in keeping, transporting and slaughtering animals. Our goal is for farmers to make positive choices to improve the health and welfare of their animals and to see the benefits of their increased investment. Legislation alone will not achieve wholesale change: we will work with all livestock sectors to promote good practice through guidance and continue to use appropriate financial incentives to reward early adopters.

Not all animal welfare improvements are achieved through regulation or other government action. We have been pleased to see many in the meat chicken industry sign up to the 'Better Chicken Commitment', which aims to improve the lives of meat chickens. A good proportion of the sector has now moved to lower stocking densities. It is vital that this work is supported by proportionate, transparent and robust enforcement systems. We continue to support and encourage the uptake of these higher welfare standards.

The government shares the public's high regard for our high welfare standards at home. While we rightly explore areas where these standards can be further enhanced, we recognise the potential for increased divergence between domestic standards and those of

significant global exporters. Where necessary we will be prepared to take appropriate steps to protect our most sensitive sectors and uphold animal welfare standards where we consider overseas produce has an unfair advantage.

As we develop and implement the policies set out below, we will consider how they may impact on UK businesses, consumers, the food supply chain.

Our public sector food procurement policies also have the potential to drive more positive animal welfare outcomes. We will explore such opportunities as we develop our policy, including the potential to strengthen the animal welfare provisions within the Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering Services (GBSF).

Objective

To ensure that farmed animals, including farmed fish, have a life worth living and as many animals as possible have a good life by:

- working in partnership with farmers and vets through the framework of the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway, to improve the health and welfare of livestock
- working with industry to phase out the use of enriched cages for laying hens and farrowing crates for pigs
- improving welfare at the time of killing, including by introducing legislative requirements for the humane slaughter of farmed fish and by phasing out the use of CO2 gas stunning for pigs
- working with the sectors to improve welfare during transport, reduce the prevalence of painful mutilations, and ensure breeding practices do not cause any unnecessary suffering

How we will deliver this objective

The use of cages and crates

Enriched 'colony' cages for laying hens – which [supply just over 20% of the UK shell egg production](https://www.egginfo.co.uk/egg-facts-and-figures/industry-information/data) (Egg info, 2024) - are larger than battery cages and are legally required to have nest boxes, litter and perches. However, these cages do not fully provide for the physical and behavioural needs of the birds, as in these systems the birds do not have full freedom to express normal behaviours. Enriched 'colony'

cages restrict a hen's choice, preventing her from accessing the ground and other levels and limiting her ability to run, flap her wings, dustbathe, and forage.

The laying hen sector is increasingly moving towards free-range and barn production systems. We are already supporting the transition to cage-free systems through grants for laying hen and pullet farmers in England with flocks of 1,000 birds or more, to refurbish or replace existing housing, including those transitioning from colony cages to high welfare non-cage systems. This transition has been accelerated by the major retailers' pledge to stop selling shell eggs from hens kept in colony cages by the end of 2025 – with some retailers extending their 2025 pledge to processed egg, such as powdered or liquid.

We are committed to working with the laying hen sector to move towards cage-free systems for all laying hens.

For pigs, a significant number of sows are confined in farrowing crates from around 5 days before they are due to give birth, until the piglets are weaned at approximately 28 days of age. A farrowing crate, which is designed to protect piglets from being crushed by the sow, restricts the sow's movement, preventing her from turning around and performing natural behaviours, such as nest building. [Approximately 92% of indoor production systems still use farrowing crates](https://nationalpigassociation.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/NPA-Position-Paper-Flexible-Farrowing-Systems-Nov-2024-FINAL.pdf) (<https://nationalpigassociation.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/NPA-Position-Paper-Flexible-Farrowing-Systems-Nov-2024-FINAL.pdf>) (National Pig Association (NPA), 2024).

There is already a significant outdoor pig sector with [50% of the national sow breeding herd giving birth freely on outdoor units with no option for confinement](https://nationalpigassociation.co.uk/resources/faqs/) (<https://nationalpigassociation.co.uk/resources/faqs/>) (NPA, 2024). Currently [around 8% of indoor production has already moved to alternative farrowing systems](https://nationalpigassociation.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/NPA-Position-Paper-Flexible-Farrowing-Systems-Nov-2024-FINAL.pdf) (<https://nationalpigassociation.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/NPA-Position-Paper-Flexible-Farrowing-Systems-Nov-2024-FINAL.pdf>) (NPA, 2024) to improve sow welfare, protect piglet welfare and ensure human safety. We want to work with the sector to move all sows out of farrowing crates over a sustainable transition period.

Removing the use of intensive confinement systems is an essential component of the government's plan to ensure all farmed animals have a life worth living, and that as many animals as possible have a good life. Ending the use of cages and crates is therefore a key priority for this government.

We are pleased that the cattle industry is already moving from individual calf pens towards pair housing of young calves and some farm assurance schemes require calves to be housed in groups or pairs from less than 8 weeks of age. Defra's cattle welfare code provides guidance on how both dairy and beef cattle should be kept, including recommendations on accommodation and we will look to update that to reflect latest developments and scientific research.

Gamebirds bred and reared for sporting purposes are not subject to the same legislative requirements on welfare as farmed poultry. Defra's 'code of practice for the welfare of gamebirds reared for sporting purposes' provides keepers with guidance on how to meet the welfare needs of their gamebirds but has not been updated for several years. We are considering the existing protections for gamebirds that are bred and reared under controlled conditions for the purpose of release for sport shooting, together with birds retained or caught up for breeding purposes.

Actions

We will:

- transition to non-cage systems and consult on phasing out enriched 'colony' cages
- work with the industry to explore how to transition away from the use of farrowing crates to alternative systems: either flexible farrowing where the sow is confined for the crucial few days around farrowing, or free farrowing where there is no confinement during farrowing or lactation and consult on the transition
- improve cattle welfare through working with stakeholders on improving the welfare code for cattle
- improve our understanding of the welfare issues on how gamebirds are reared in the gamebird sector through issuing a call for evidence

At slaughter

All animals should be spared avoidable pain, suffering and distress when they are killed. The available evidence shows that there are significant changes that can be made to improve the welfare of animals at the time of killing.

There is a pressing need to address the welfare issues associated with high concentration CO₂ gas stunning of pigs. Defra commissioned the AWC to provide an up-to-date assessment of the current evidence on high concentration CO₂ stunning of pigs and potential alternative stunning methods. The AWC concluded that to prevent pigs from

experiencing avoidable pain, distress or suffering at slaughter associated with high concentration CO₂, its use should be prohibited and that the transition period provided should be as short as possible. They also concluded that argon gas stunning and automated electrical stunning are higher welfare alternatives. These are commercially feasible alternatives, and we therefore want to see an end to the use of CO₂ gas stunning.

Each year [approximately 40 to 45 million male chicks of conventional laying hen breeds are culled within 12 to 36 hours of hatching](https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2023-11/awc-opinion-alternatives-culling-newly-hatched-chicks-poultry-industry.pdf?utm_source=thehumaneleague.org.uk&utm_medium=referral) (https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2023-11/awc-opinion-alternatives-culling-newly-hatched-chicks-poultry-industry.pdf?utm_source=thehumaneleague.org.uk&utm_medium=referral) (AWC, 2023). The AWC in its 2024 'Opinion on alternatives to culling newly hatched chicks in the egg and poultry industries' considered a range of technologies that could help end the routine culling of male chicks by identifying or determining the sex of chick embryos before hatching.

We would like to see an end to the practice of killing day-old chicks. The currently permitted killing methods for chicks in legislation, such as gas stunning, are based on scientific research and assessment to ensure birds are spared any avoidable pain, distress or suffering. However, in recent years there has been rapid global progress in the development of technologies that remove the need for killing day old chicks and we welcome the UK egg industry's interest in the development of day zero sexing technology.

Actions

We will:

- ban the use of carbon dioxide gas stunning of pigs, subject to a consultation
- encourage industry to end the practice of culling male laying hen chicks
- publish a review of the Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (England) Regulations 2015 to ensure that the regulations still meet their objectives

Management practices

The Animal Welfare Act 2006 prohibits any procedure which involves interference with the sensitive tissues or bone structure of an animal. The Mutilations (Permitted Procedures) (England) Regulations 2007 list certain exemptions to which the prohibition does not apply if certain conditions are met.

Exemptions include: tail docking of pigs, which is done to prevent tail biting in certain circumstances; beak trimming of laying hens which is done to reduce the risk of injurious pecking and cannibalism; castration of ram lambs carried out to avoid unwanted pregnancies, for stock management purposes and to avoid lower market appeal and value (due to ram taint); and tail docking of lambs done to decrease the risk of fly strike, a significant welfare issue. We want to encourage farmers to move away from using these procedures routinely.

We will aim to work with sectors to either reduce frequency of management procedures or, where procedures are deemed necessary, improve the use of anaesthetics and analgesics. We will work with veterinary societies to promote the use of the Animal Health and Welfare Review to initiate a discussion with farmers on the need to perform management practices and the most 'welfare-friendly' methods to use.

The industry's Laying Hen Welfare Forum is working to accelerate progress to reduce injurious pecking, which is key to eliminating the need for beak trimming.

Actions

We will:

- reduce the prevalence of pig tail docking, working with the industry and the veterinary profession
- end the practice of beak trimming of laying hens, working with the laying hen sector through the Laying Hen Welfare Forum
- work with the sheep sector to implement the advice and recommendations in the AWC's '[Opinion on the Implications of Castration and Tail Docking for the Welfare of Lambs](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/opinion-on-the-implications-of-castration-and-tail-docking-for-the-welfare-of-lambs)' (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/opinion-on-the-implications-of-castration-and-tail-docking-for-the-welfare-of-lambs>)' (2024) and update the Sheep Welfare Code.

Fish

There has been growing attention paid recently to the welfare of farmed fish, including those raised using recirculating aquaculture systems, a type of onshore fish farm, as well as calls for new legislation to set down detailed requirements at the time of killing. Whilst existing legislation on the protection of animals at the time of killing requires that farmed fish be spared avoidable pain, distress or suffering during their killing, unlike terrestrial livestock farmed fish have no further detailed protections in domestic law (such as no requirement to stun fish pre-

slaughter).

A joint government and industry working group on farmed trout has been exploring options for more detailed welfare at killing requirements for farmed fish. This co-design work has made good progress. To increase the protections, detailed requirements on killing farmed fish should now be brought into legislation.

We also want to work with stakeholders to build the evidence base as to how fish can be farmed to ensure their welfare is safeguarded.

Actions

We will:

- introduce humane slaughter requirements for farmed fish into legislation, subject to consultation
- improve fish welfare during production and, as a first step, commission the AWC's advice on the welfare of farmed fish prior to slaughter

Breeding

Over the last decade there have been a number of significant technological advances in livestock breeding, including greater emphasis on genetic selection in breeding programmes. These changes have the potential to improve health and welfare of animals, as well as the sustainability and resilience of farming systems, but concerns have been expressed by animal welfare NGOs about fast-growing breeds of chicken, and the health and welfare of high production dairy cattle.

The government supports the production of healthy, high-welfare animals as part of the UK's food system. A responsible, evidence-led approach to animal breeding is essential for this goal. The AWC has been commissioned to provide a sound, up-to-date evidence base on livestock breeding and animal welfare. The project involved a [systematic evidence review by Queen's University Belfast \(https://sciencesearch.defra.gov.uk/ProjectDetails?ProjectId=21198\)](https://sciencesearch.defra.gov.uk/ProjectDetails?ProjectId=21198) (2024), and wide-ranging stakeholder engagement.

Actions

We will:

- publish and consider carefully the report from the AWC on breeding and breeding practices, including how we reflect advice in the welfare codes

- support voluntary efforts to move away from the use of fast-growing meat chicken breeds
- monitor the welfare risks associated with breeding practices and update standards as necessary

During transport

During transportation, animals can be subjected to extreme temperatures, limited space allowances, motion and vibrations, and a restriction on expressing normal behaviours. These factors can lead to serious negative effects on animal welfare.

The government's aim is that animals should only be transported if it is necessary, and transport should be by the most welfare considerate route. Journey durations should be minimised where possible to reduce the risk of welfare complications arising during transport.

We are taking action to ensure the live exports ban is enforced as robustly as possible so that animals are spared a long journey prior to slaughter. We have put in place a regulatory and enforcement regime, providing the Animal and Plant Health Agency and local authorities with the powers necessary to act against any non-compliance, through the Animal Welfare (Livestock Exports) Enforcement Regulations 2024.

Actions

We will:

- explore further measures to prevent equines being exported for slaughter, working closely with the horse sector and enforcement bodies
- continue to monitor progress of the EU proposal for a new welfare in transport regulation, and engage with industry to gather evidence of its anticipated impacts across the UK, including how these interact with a future Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Agreement between the UK and the EU

Food labelling

[Most consumers care about how their food is produced](https://www.food.gov.uk/research/food-and-you-2/food-and-you-2-wave-7)

<https://www.food.gov.uk/research/food-and-you-2/food-and-you-2-wave-7>

(FSA, 2024). However, we recognise that the current lack of consistency in food labelling makes it difficult for consumers to understand the animal welfare standards their food was produced to and make informed purchasing decisions. This lack of transparency also makes it harder for farmers to differentiate their goods and be fairly rewarded for their higher welfare products.

We are committed to ensuring that consumers have access to clear information on how their food was produced. To support this, we will work with stakeholders to explore how improved animal welfare food labelling could provide greater consumer transparency, support farmers and promote better animal welfare.

Actions

We will:

- work with relevant stakeholders, including farming and food industry stakeholders, vets, scientists and animal welfare NGOs to continue exploring how improved food labelling, including method-of-production labelling, could improve animal welfare

Adaptation to climate change

During the 2022 heatwave, millions of birds died on farm on the hottest two days whilst other animals experienced heat stress either on farm or during transport. Future climate predictions suggest that we will continue to see heatwaves and these present challenges for all those who keep livestock. Risks to UK agriculture from climate change include drought, flooding, heat stress and increased pests and diseases, all of which can impact farm animal welfare.

We want to work with industry, keepers and farmers to improve resilience to a changing climate, which is expected to lead to warmer, wetter winters, and hotter, drier summers in the UK.

Adapting livestock housing, using more heat tolerant breeds, and improving livestock transport will improve the health, welfare and productivity of farmed animals. We welcome the move to lower stocking densities for meat chickens across parts of the sector and the potential for improvements in welfare this could bring, particularly during extreme hot weather events.

Defra has commissioned the AWC to assess the likely impacts of climate change on farm animals and what further measures could be put in place by industry sectors to help mitigate those effects. Part 1 of this project has begun and focuses on poultry species across all stages of life. Part 2 is due to start in 2026 and will cover pigs and ruminants.

We have published a review of welfare outcomes when transporting poultry in commercially available temperature-controlled vehicles. It provides valuable information on the feasibility of using temperature-controlled vehicles based on historical data and on factors such as temperature and humidity, which can negatively affect bird welfare

during transport.

Actions

We will:

- publish and consider carefully the reports from the AWC and support work to help the poultry and livestock sectors adapt to the effects of climate change

Enforcement

The government is aware of the challenges in enforcing animal welfare laws. The [Animal Sentience Committee's report on enforcement published in February 2025](#)

[published in February 2025](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/animal-sentience-committee-report-on-the-due-regard-to-animal-welfare-legislative-compliance-and-enforcement/animal-sentience-committee-report-on-the-due-regard-to-animal-welfare-legislative-compliance-and-enforcement)

[\(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/animal-sentience-committee-report-on-the-due-regard-to-animal-welfare-legislative-compliance-and-enforcement/animal-sentience-committee-report-on-the-due-regard-to-animal-welfare-legislative-compliance-and-enforcement>\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/animal-sentience-committee-report-on-the-due-regard-to-animal-welfare-legislative-compliance-and-enforcement/animal-sentience-committee-report-on-the-due-regard-to-animal-welfare-legislative-compliance-and-enforcement) identified systemic issues, such as poor inter-agency coordination, lack of transparency and consistency of enforcement action, and insufficient detection of offences. We are taking these concerns seriously and are committed to strengthening enforcement mechanisms to ensure meaningful accountability.

While most people want to do the right thing when it comes to protecting the welfare of animals, there are occasions where animals suffer, or welfare is compromised. When this occurs, it is vital that we have proportionate, transparent and robust enforcement systems in place that can educate, redirect and, where appropriate in serious cases, punish and disqualify offenders from keeping animals.

Our integrated approach to improving enforcement focuses on 6 key themes that are essential aims for good enforcement. These interdependent themes create a framework for future action and underpin our ambitions for a fair, effective and proportionate enforcement system, working in conjunction with each other to achieve the outcome of an enforcement system that protects the welfare of animals.

1. The right rules: Ensuring legislation sets a minimum baseline and states what might happen when an animal keeper does not follow the rules.
2. Good enforcers: Ensuring enforcers are upskilled and have fit for purpose resources, tools and powers to ensure that keepers and businesses are meeting the legal baseline for animal health and welfare in England.

3. Right corrective action: Ensuring regulators and enforcers are taking appropriate and proportionate corrective actions to encourage compliance and redirect non-compliant behaviours.
4. People know and understand the rules: Ensuring animal keepers understand their responsibility to ensure animal welfare and the rationale for this, reducing the need for enforcement action.
5. Knowing when something is going wrong: Ensuring that enforcers and policy makers can intervene at an early stage to redirect behaviour towards compliance with less severe measures.
6. Good support: Ensuring animal keepers have access to support that prevent problems before they escalate and reduce the likelihood of expensive interventions.

We will continue to support our regulators and enforcement partners in sharing knowledge and best practices to drive continuous improvement. By fostering strong partnerships and sharing knowledge, we will build a culture of continuous improvement where compliance is not just a regulatory obligation, but a shared commitment to protecting animals and promoting their welfare across all sectors.

Actions

We will:

- systematically track and publicly report enforcement actions taken in response to non-compliance for animal welfare, working closely with local authorities. Our initial focus is on the farming sector, with the first data return—covering the 2026 calendar year—set for publication in 2027
- undertake a review to ensure the appropriate tools and frameworks are in place to deliver a proportionate and robust enforcement system

International



Overview

The UK has some of the highest standards of animal welfare in the world. Animal welfare is a global issue, and the government will continue to work in international fora, including the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO), to champion the importance of high standards of animal welfare and promote best practice.

We will also keep working collaboratively with international partners bilaterally to build a shared understanding of animals as sentient beings, emphasise the importance of phasing out low welfare practices, explore opportunities for sharing approaches that have worked well, and collaborate on mutually held challenges.

As part of our work to phase out animal testing, we are working within the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Environmental Health and Safety Programme to produce internationally harmonised tools and guidance for alternatives to animals in science.

The UK government is not the only party able to make a difference on these issues. Choices made by UK consumers and retailers also impact the welfare of animals abroad for example the animal activities they choose to undertake while on holiday or sell to holiday-makers. There is

also a thriving array of non-governmental organisations and groups working with their counterparts around the world. Together, powerful opportunities exist to improve the welfare of animals worldwide.

Objective

- To champion high animal welfare standards around the world; promoting robust standards nationally and internationally.
- In our approach trade, to consider whether overseas produce has an unfair advantage and be prepared to use the full range of powers at our disposal to protect our most sensitive sectors.

Trade

A [2021 NFU survey](https://www.nfuonline.com/updates-and-information/champion-and-protect-british-food-in-trade-deals-british-public-say/) (https://www.nfuonline.com/updates-and-information/champion-and-protect-british-food-in-trade-deals-british-public-say/) found 86% of respondents believe animal welfare standards for imports should match those in the UK, and a [Which? survey \(2023\)](https://www.which.co.uk/policy-and-insight/article/are-the-uks-trade-deals-reflecting-consumer-priorities-a1dLg3t8aeCq) (https://www.which.co.uk/policy-and-insight/article/are-the-uks-trade-deals-reflecting-consumer-priorities-a1dLg3t8aeCq) found similar results, with 87% of people agreeing that imported food should meet UK animal welfare standards. Around 1 in 3 UK respondents identify maintaining animal welfare standards as one of their top five priorities in trade negotiations with non-EU countries, and rank animal welfare alongside or above environmental and product standards in trade priorities (DBT, 2025).

As set out in the UK's Trade Strategy, we will not lower food standards and will uphold high animal welfare standards as part of our approach to trade. We recognise concerns about methods of production, such as sow stalls and battery cages, which are not permitted in the UK. While methods vary in line with different climates, diseases and other contextual reasons, we will always consider whether overseas produce has an unfair advantage and any impact that may have. Where necessary, we will be prepared to use the full range of powers at our disposal to protect our most sensitive sectors including permanent quotas, exclusions and safeguards.

In May 2025, the EU and the UK agreed to work towards a UK-EU SPS Agreement to make agrifood trade with our biggest market cheaper and easier for British producers and retailers. The UK and EU share high animal welfare standards and a desire to go further in many key areas. The details of the Agreement are subject to negotiation, but we have

been clear about the importance of being able to set high animal welfare standards.

Actions

We will:

- promote the importance of high animal welfare standards and best practice as part of our bilateral and international relations, including through international fora

The fur trade

Fur farming has been banned in England and Wales since 2000, and since 2002 in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Meanwhile, the import of fur and fur products remains legal, both from farmed animals and those hunted or trapped in the wild.

There are restrictions on some skin and fur products that may never be legally imported into the UK. This includes fur from cats and dogs. Seal products can only be imported and placed on the UK market for sale in limited circumstances and subject to strict conditions linked to the rights of indigenous communities. We have established controls on fur from endangered species protected by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species and we do not allow imports of fur from wild animals caught using methods that are non-compliant with international humane trapping standards.

The 'Opinion on the Responsible Sourcing of Fur', which Defra commissioned from the AWC, will provide a range of conclusions and recommendations to inform possible future action in this area.

Actions

We will:

- publish the results of the previous government's call for evidence on the fur trade and publish and consider carefully the report from the AWC
- bring together a working group on fur, with involvement from both industry experts and those who support restrictions on the trade in fur to explore concerns and the different ways in which they could be addressed
- engage with the EU, a major source of fur imported into the UK, as they consider the findings of the recently published European Food Safety Authority scientific opinion on the welfare of animals kept for fur production, and the results of the European Commission's recent

Call for Evidence on the 'Fur Free Europe' Citizens' Initiative

Animals abroad

Some animals abroad are subjected to considerable suffering and unacceptable practices to provide entertainment or experiences for tourists. Many individuals may not be aware of the conditions these animals experience.

Tourists should be supported to choose higher welfare animal activities when on holiday, thereby helping protect animals abroad from these unacceptable practices. Businesses and organisations advertising activities which involve animals should ensure that they do not promote or support low welfare activities and help improve information available on how the animal activities they might wish to engage in when travelling overseas could impact on animal welfare.

Actions

We will:

- explore with industry and NGOs legislative and non-legislative options to stop the advertising in the UK of low animal welfare activities abroad
- work with industry and NGOs to enable travellers to choose activities which have high welfare standards

Next steps

This strategy sets out the priority areas we have identified to improve animal welfare in England. We will monitor progress against this strategy to ensure that the outcomes we are seeking to achieve are met.

We will continue to develop the evidence base on animal welfare and draw on the expertise of the Animal Health and Welfare Board England, the Animal Welfare Committee, the Animal Sentience Committee, and the Zoo Expert Committee in developing our approach to animal welfare.

The government cannot monitor real-world animal welfare impacts alone. Continued engagement with stakeholders is a vital part of our ongoing work, facilitating the partnership approach we seek to build. Sharing information and insights is critical to being able to assess whether policies are delivering their intended improvements, whether

and how improvements can be made, and keeping abreast of new or emerging issues.

We will therefore convene regular meetings at both official and ministerial level to facilitate sharing of information and best practice and as a forum to explore where further steps are needed. We will also work through the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway to improve the welfare of livestock. This will ensure that there are regular reviews of the policies set out in this strategy and help ensure their effective implementation.

Acknowledgements

Defra would like to acknowledge all the stakeholders with whom we have engaged in the development of this strategy. Their work, expertise, and continual support have helped shaped our priorities and where we should focus our efforts. We look forward to our continued engagement in the implementation of this strategy.

Photo credits

Cover: John P Kelly / Getty Images

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Wild animals: Uros Poteko / Getty Images

Farmed animals: Getty Images

International: Jeremy Edwards / Getty Images

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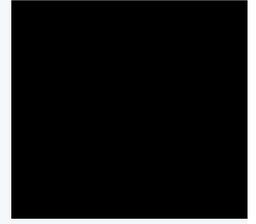
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1. As defined in the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act 2022: any vertebrate other than homo sapiens, any cephalopod mollusc, and any decapod crustacean.
2. Assessment of animal welfare at different points in an animal's life is key to ensuring that good welfare is maintained, including a humane death. An animal's quality of life can be classified as: a life not worth living, a life worth living and a good life. A life not worth living is one where the animal is suffering from a debilitating untreatable disease, or experiences severe negative conditions such as chronic, intense pain, fear or distress. A life worth living requires that the balance of an animal's experiences must be positive over its lifetime. Any pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm must be necessary, proportionate and minimal, and there should be good husbandry, considerate handling and transport, and humane slaughter. The concept of 'a good life' is where an animal's quality of life is over and beyond that of a life worth living, for example there is a higher standard of accommodation, positive mental experiences, etc.
3. Assessment of animal welfare at different points in an animal's life is key to ensuring that good welfare is maintained, including a humane death. An animal's quality of life can be classified as: a life not worth living, a life worth living and a good life. A life not worth living is one where the animal is suffering from a debilitating untreatable disease, or experiences severe negative conditions such as chronic, intense pain, fear or distress. A life worth living requires that the balance of an animal's experiences must be positive over its lifetime. Any pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm must be necessary, proportionate and minimal, and there should be good husbandry, considerate handling and transport, and humane slaughter. The concept of 'a good life' is where an animal's quality of life is over and beyond that of a life worth living e.g. there a higher standard of accommodation, positive mental experiences, etc.



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