



Animal welfare matters

New Zealand Animal Welfare Strategy

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New Zealand Animal Welfare Strategy

Why is animal welfare important?

Values

It matters how animals are treated – it matters to the animals and it matters to us.
We have responsibilities toward animals in our care and animals affected by our activities.
Using animals is acceptable as long as it is humane.

Why does New Zealand need a strategy?

Animal welfare matters

Animals are sentient – they can feel pain and distress.
Not complying with minimum standards of animal welfare is unacceptable.
Even isolated cases of poor animal welfare could damage our reputation.

What is New Zealand trying to achieve?

Outcome 1

Care of animals

We meet the needs of our animals and avoid causing unreasonable or unnecessary harm to animals through our activities.

Outcome 2

Reputation for integrity

New Zealand's animal welfare practices add value to our exports and contribute to our reputation as a responsible agricultural producer.

What are the best ways to improve animal welfare?

Better planning to prevent animal welfare problems

Better animal husbandry, science and technology

Clear expectations and sanctions; with help for people to comply

Measuring animal welfare performance

What roles are needed?

All New Zealanders

- Understand the needs of our animals and meet our animal welfare obligations
- Improve practices and adopt better technology
- Address animal welfare issues early before problems occur

Collaboration

- Recognise and build animal husbandry skills
- Implement industry schemes to assure welfare
- Educate members about best practice and meeting standards
 - Replace, reduce, and refine the use of animals in research, testing and teaching
 - Reach out and engage with the public and consumers

- Participate in setting animal welfare standards
- Measure animal welfare performance
- Partnership to improve compliance
- Contingency planning for and responses to adverse events
- Co-invest in animal welfare science and technology

- Set, update and champion animal welfare standards
- Provide opportunities for people to participate in decision-making
- Provide information to make it easy for people to comply
- Act rapidly and appropriately when standards are breached
- Maintain independent advisory committees for animal welfare, and for research, testing and teaching involving animals
- Contribute to international obligations, networks and guidelines

Sector leadership

Government leadership

Where are our strengths?

- Our history of caring for animals and a tradition of good animal husbandry
- A strong science base to our decisions and good capability in animal welfare science
- All the main players – Government, industry, professionals, NGOs, scientists – work together
- Progressive legislation that obliges all people in charge of animals to meet their animals' needs
- Independent committees to provide expert advice on animal welfare, and for research, testing and teaching involving animals
- Strong international links and engagement

How will we know it is working?

- Evidence of improved compliance with animal welfare standards
- Better evidence base for measuring animal welfare performance
- Sectors leading the promotion of best practice
- Evidence of earlier intervention in emerging animal welfare issues by sectors
- Increased public satisfaction with New Zealand's animal welfare performance
- Evidence of consumer trust in the animal welfare system, domestic and international

1 Why a New Zealand animal welfare strategy?

Animals¹ are sentient – they can feel pain and distress – and as a humane society we have responsibilities to ensure our animals’ needs are met. Animals play an important role in many aspects of New Zealand life, and New Zealanders have high expectations of our animal welfare system.

New Zealand also relies on animals for substantial parts of its economy. A high proportion of New Zealand’s export earnings are attributable to animals and animal products, and New Zealand’s animal welfare practices add value to our exports by contributing to our reputation as a responsible agricultural producer. Animal welfare is increasingly important for accessing premium markets and differentiating New Zealand’s products.

Cases of poor animal welfare can have a negative impact on our reputation and result in a loss of export markets, inability to gain access to new markets, or additional conditions and checks being placed on our products or production processes. Primary industry leaders believe that New Zealand must do more to protect the significant financial benefit derived from New Zealand’s reputation for quality, sustainable, and trustworthy agricultural products.²

New Zealand’s animal welfare system has evolved without an explicit strategy, but is generally sound. The strengths of the current system include:

- Our history of caring for animals and a tradition of good animal husbandry.
- A strong science base to our decisions and good capability in animal welfare science.
- All the players – government, industry, professionals, non-government organisations, and scientists – work together.
- Progressive animal welfare legislation that goes further than just preventing cruelty, by placing an obligation on all people in charge of animals to meet their animals’ needs.
- Independent committees to provide expert advice on animal welfare, and for research, testing and teaching involving animals.
- Strong international links and engagement.

The New Zealand Animal Welfare Strategy aims to build on this existing foundation by reinforcing that:

- Animal welfare has both domestic and international dimensions – even isolated cases of poor animal welfare could damage our reputation.
- Not complying with minimum animal welfare standards is unacceptable.
- Professional and industry groups should take a proactive and leading role, particularly in educating their members.
- Good care of animals and animal husbandry are fundamental, and there are opportunities to adopt better planning, practices and technologies.

The intended audience of the strategy is broad. Industry groups, research organisations, professional groups such as veterinarians, hunting and fishing groups, agencies and people managing pests, animal advocacy groups, and the 68 percent of New Zealand households that own at least one pet, all have an interest in how New Zealand protects the welfare of its animals and their role in it.

¹ The Animal Welfare Act 1999 defines animals broadly to include mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and other aquatic animals.

² KPMG. *Agribusiness Agenda 2012*. (kpmg.com/nz/aa2012).

2 New Zealand animal welfare values

Compassionate treatment of animals has long been a human value. The principle that we take care of animals and animals take care of us reflects the co-evolution of people and domestic animals.

New Zealand's heritage is closely bound with farming, animals, and the environment. However, within our society there are a range of views about how we should use and care for animals. Opinions range from those who do not accept the use of animals under any circumstances to the other extreme of those who exploit animals with little or no regard to their welfare. Most opinion falls within a broad middle ground.

During 2012 the Government sought public views on the values that most New Zealanders hold about animal welfare. The following three values were generally supported by most respondents.

IT MATTERS HOW ANIMALS ARE TREATED – IT MATTERS TO THE ANIMAL AND IT MATTERS TO US

Animals are sentient, which means they can feel pain and distress and have other experiences. All those experiences are important to the animal and it matters to us as a society how animals are treated.

WE HAVE RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARD ANIMALS IN OUR CARE AND ANIMALS AFFECTED BY OUR ACTIVITIES

We have a duty to provide for the welfare of animals in our care, by attending to their physical, health, and behavioural needs. We also have a responsibility to avoid causing unreasonable or unnecessary pain or distress to animals affected by our activities.

USING ANIMALS IS ACCEPTABLE AS LONG AS IT IS HUMANE

Animals play an important part in many aspects of New Zealand life, including food production, companionship and recreation, and research and teaching. Ideas of humane treatment evolve over time, and our standards of welfare need to keep pace with changes in scientific knowledge and good practice, available technology, and our society.

3 New Zealand's animal welfare outcomes

New Zealand will work to achieve two broad outcomes for animal welfare. Outcome 1 has a domestic focus. Outcome 2 recognises the significant contribution that animal welfare makes to our export success:

OUTCOME 1: CARE OF ANIMALS

We meet the needs of our animals and avoid causing unreasonable or unnecessary harm to animals through our activities.

OUTCOME 2: REPUTATION FOR INTEGRITY

New Zealand's animal welfare practices add value to our exports and contribute to our reputation as a responsible agricultural producer.

4 How best to improve animal welfare

This strategy is not aiming to lift animal welfare standards immediately from their current settings, but there are some clear opportunities to improve animal welfare where compliance is falling below minimum standards. The best ways to improve animal welfare are through:

BETTER PLANNING TO PREVENT ANIMAL WELFARE PROBLEMS

Many animal welfare problems can be avoided with better planning. Everyone in charge of animals needs to identify risks and plan to prevent animal welfare issues before they arise. This applies in all contexts: from planning for adverse events; designing facilities for the physical, health, and behavioural needs of animals; to choosing a pet.

BETTER ANIMAL HUSBANDRY, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Animal husbandry has a significant influence on the welfare of farm animals. In any production system, the knowledge, skills, and behaviour of the stockpeople are integral to the standard of welfare. Declining stock skills and availability of good stockpeople is an area of concern.

Across all sectors, some practices and technologies are being used that have become outdated. There are opportunities to adopt less harmful practices and technologies, and to invest in research and development to support improvements. Examples here might be providing environmental enrichment to better meet the behavioural needs of animals in intensive production systems, zoos, and research laboratories.

Continued investment in animal welfare science is essential for New Zealand. Science is a critical part of New Zealand's animal welfare infrastructure. It provides a secure foundation for animal welfare policy and developing animal welfare standards.

CLEAR EXPECTATIONS AND SANCTIONS, WITH HELP FOR PEOPLE TO COMPLY

It is important that owners and people in charge of animals are clear about the standards of animal welfare required of them, and also about the sanctions that will be applied if they fall below these standards.

The Government plays a key role in setting and updating animal welfare standards, providing information to make it easy for people to comply, and acting rapidly and appropriately when standards are breached. Sector groups also play a leadership role in helping to educate their members about welfare standards and best practice. A partnership between Government and sector groups aimed at improving compliance with the Animal Welfare Act, known as *Safeguarding our Animals, Safeguarding our Reputation*, will continue to be a key component of the New Zealand's animal welfare strategy.

MEASURING ANIMAL WELFARE PERFORMANCE

It is important that New Zealand measures and communicates the performance of its animal welfare system over time. There are three main reasons for highlighting this in the Strategy:

- measuring our animal welfare performance is the first step to understanding where improvements might be required;
- we must be able to back up our claims about good animal welfare; and
- we should develop our own systems before external consumers impose them.

The Government and the sectors will need to work together to agree measurement objectives and approaches. Challenges include establishing the baseline data against which performance can be measured, agreeing on performance indicators, and determining how the system overall can best collect and present measurement information.

5 Roles and responsibilities

The vision set out in the animal welfare compliance plan *Safeguarding our Animals, Safeguarding our Reputation* remains crucial: everyone taking responsibility for the welfare of animals. This vision derives from the Animal Welfare Act's obligations on owners and people in charge of animals to ensure the physical, health, and behavioural needs of their animals are met, and to ensure that their animals receive treatment that alleviates any unreasonable or unnecessary pain or distress.

The roles and responsibilities of all New Zealanders are to:

- understand and provide for the needs of animals in your care;
- improve practices and adopt better technology if necessary; and
- address animal welfare issues early before problems occur.

Sector and industry groups have a significant leadership role in the animal welfare system. These groups are responsible for helping to educate their members about welfare standards and best practice. They also play a key role in ensuring their members have the right support, skills, and experience to meet animal welfare standards. Increasingly, sector groups are taking responsibility for reaching out and engaging with consumers and the public about welfare practice in their sector.

The roles and responsibilities of sector or industry groups are to:

- recognise and build animal husbandry skills;
- implement industry schemes to assure welfare;
- educate members about best practice and meeting standards;
- replace, reduce or refine the use of animals in research, testing and teaching; and
- reach out and engage with the public and consumers.

There is a clear role for Government to set and update minimum animal welfare standards and to use a range of regulatory and other interventions to ensure these are met. Preventing unacceptable animal welfare practices will not be delivered by the market alone.

Above the minimum standard, there are choices for Government about the extent to which it intervenes. For example, the Government may choose to partner with sectors to promote better welfare practices, either to ensure compliance is maintained or to assist industries to achieve greater economic value, particularly if there is a market access barrier that only the Government can resolve.

At the very highest levels of animal welfare, the Government will not generally have a regulatory role. It may, however, choose to partner with the sectors to achieve significant and high-value market opportunities, for example by providing assurances to offshore markets about the animal welfare performance of production systems.

6 Implementation

The strategy is not a detailed action plan; instead it documents some of the essential features of New Zealand's animal welfare system and provides a focus for where improvements need to be made. The Ministry for Primary Industries will work with the sectors to agree the actions and work programmes necessary to deliver on the strategy's expectations.

The initial priorities for the Government will be to:

- Work with NAWAC, sector and interest groups to agree priority animal welfare issues and identify the best interventions for dealing with these.
- Implement changes arising from Animal Welfare Act amendments, including developing animal welfare regulations and creating a broader set of compliance tools and penalties.
- Continue to implement the joint Government/Industry animal welfare compliance plan *Safeguarding our Animals, Safeguarding our Reputation*.
- Review animal welfare communication tools to ensure that people in charge of animals, and other audiences, are getting the information they require in the form of most use to them.
- Continue to co-invest in research to inform animal welfare standards and guidelines, and to support improved technologies and practices.
- Continue to collaborate internationally on animal welfare and help to develop international animal welfare guidelines.