The Model Animal Welfare Act: supporting legislation to implement the OIE animal welfare standards

Janice H. Cox1 Sabine Lennkh2 Jessica Bridgers3 & Wim de Kok4

1 Co-founder and Board Director, World Animal Net, P.O. Box 851, 6560 Wilderness, South Africa
E-mail: jancox@talktalk.net,

2 Legislative Advisor, World Animal Net, Kaltenbachstraße 50, 4820 Bad Ischl, Austria
E-mail: s_lennkh@hotmail.com,

3 Executive Director, World Animal Net, P.O. Box 855, Golden, CO 80402, USA
E-mail: jessica@worldanimal.net,

4 Co-founder and Board President, World Animal Net, 25 Chestnut Square, Boston, MA 02130, United States of America
E-mail: wdekok@yahoo.com

There is a growing body of science-based international standards on animal welfare which have been agreed by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) member states. However, successful implementation of these standards cannot be achieved without codification of animal welfare into each country’s legal system, and the creation of appropriate structures and systems for the application and enforcement of animal welfare. The OIE recognises that legislation in many countries is outdated and inadequate. A recommendation from its third Global Animal Welfare Conference encouraged member countries to create or update their national legal framework with provisions for national animal welfare programmes. To support this process, it has a Veterinary Legislation Support Programme under its Performance of Veterinary Services (PVS) Pathway. Many countries now recognise the need to update their legislative systems, but require further guidance to do so. World Animal Net’s Model Animal Welfare Act (MAWA), produced, reviewed, and lauded by global experts in animal law fills this knowledge gap. The MAWA has been drafted using an extensive comparative law exercise, taking into account ‘best practice.’ It contains comprehensive information on effective structures and systems, in addition to legislative provisions, and is intended to be used as a tool and guidance which can be adapted to suit various national situations and legislative systems. Among the many accolades received on the MAWA is the following from Dr Vallat, former Director General of the OIE: ‘We commend the commitment to animal welfare demonstrated by the extensive time and effort that must have been associated with such an undertaking and the resulting product will no doubt serve as a useful tool for the consideration of some countries undertaking to introduce or revise legislation.’ The MAWA can assist those tasked with updating animal welfare provisions with the aim of effective implementation of the OIE’s animal welfare standards.