



The OIE is the unique global intergovernmental organisation in charge of intergovernmental standard-setting in the field of animal welfare. Animal health is an essential component of animal welfare. In the absence of a global normative framework to promote animal welfare and at the request of its Members, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) has been developing international standards in this field since the early 2000s. These standards are, as all OIE international standards, science-based and adopted by consensus by all OIE Member Countries.

KEY FACTS

- Animal health is an essential component of animal welfare.
- Animal welfare is a multicultural and multidimensional issue.
- OIE's intergovernmental standards provide a common basis for animal welfare worldwide.

Animal welfare is a complex subject with scientific, ethical, economic, cultural and political dimensions.

Today, animal producers are increasingly taking animal welfare into account and some have come to see it as a characteristic of quality of their products. Consumer interest in animal welfare is growing and this is having an ever-increasing influence on world market data for animals and animal products.

A MULTICULTURAL WORLD

The perception of animal welfare and what does or does not constitute an act of cruelty to animals differs from one region and culture to another. The scientific basis of OIE animal welfare standards provides the foundation for creating a consensus amongst all OIE Member Countries to support their adoption.

Furthermore, animal welfare standards involve veterinary ethical concepts as well as technical and scientific analyses which demand specialised expertise. It is therefore a priority to integrate animal welfare as a core subject in veterinary education and to promote applied research as the scientific basis for animal welfare standards and legislation.

OIE'S SUPPORT TO COUNTRIES

Since 2004, the OIE has convened several Global Conferences on animal welfare. They have addressed the OIE's priority goal of helping all Member Countries implement adopted animal welfare standards, while taking into account the great variety of cultural and economic environments in the different regions and countries of the world.



Nowadays, one of the main tools of the OIE to support its Member Countries is the PVS Pathway (Performance of Veterinary Services), the global programme for capacity building and sustainable improvement of a

country's Veterinary Services' compliance with OIE intergovernmental standards of quality, including those on animal welfare.

Discussions have also highlighted the need for more research on animal welfare.

AN INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF EXPERTISE

Collaborating Centres

The OIE has designated four Animal Welfare **Collaborating Centres** or networks located in Italy, New Zealand/Australia, Chile/Mexico/Uruguay and the United States of America, to conduct applied research, training and capacity-building missions for OIE Member Countries requesting help in this field.

Cartography.

Working Group on Animal Welfare

To address all aspects of animal welfare, especially scientific issues, the OIE set up a permanent Working Group on Animal Welfare in 2002. Eight experts were selected for their scientific excellence and their representativeness of the geographical and cultural diversity of the OIE.

The group notably includes a member from the NGO named World Animal Protection (WAP), representing the International Coalition for Animal Welfare, and three industry sector representatives, from the global meat, egg and milk federations, respectively. On a 3-year rotation basis, one of these three industry sector representatives participates as a full member each year, while the two others participate as observers.

OIE animal welfare standards and the multilateral trade policy framework

This [paper](#) discusses the relevance and implications of the OIE animal welfare standards in the multilateral trade policy framework, i.e. the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreements, and in particular the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) and the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT). It also discusses the usefulness of OIE animal welfare standards as a basis to facilitate the concluding of bilateral agreements between Member Countries.

OIE national Focal Points for Animal Welfare

Each OIE Member Country nominates a national Focal Point for Animal Welfare under the responsibility of the national Delegate to the OIE. The Focal Point helps the Delegate to fulfil his/her obligations as an OIE Member and provides assistance with the procedure for adopting or revising and implementing OIE standards on animal welfare. The OIE keeps all national Focal Points constantly informed about standards and organises seminars for them in all regions of the world.





OIE STANDARDS ON ANIMAL WELFARE

With the support of its network of expertise, the OIE elaborates science-based standards for the welfare of [terrestrial](#) and [aquatic](#) animals. These standards are adopted by the 180 OIE Member Countries. They encompass general principles on animal welfare, as well as more specific issues:

Animal transport

The OIE provides standards related to the transport of terrestrial animals and farmed fish, by sea, land and air.

Killing for disease control purposes

The standards developed both for terrestrial animals and farmed fish are based on the premise that a decision to kill the latter has been made, on sanitary grounds.

Slaughter and killing for human consumption

These standards address the need to ensure the welfare of:

- animals slaughtered for consumption purposes, during slaughter procedures as well as pre-slaughter procedures.
- farmed fish, intended for consumption, during stunning and killing, and including transport and holding immediately prior to stunning.

Animal production systems

Several chapters address the welfare aspects of different animal production systems, including beef cattle and broiler chickens. The OIE is currently progressing on standards relating to dairy cattle, laying hens and pig production systems.

Use of animals in research and education

The OIE has adopted standards for Member Countries to follow when formulating a regulatory framework governing the use of live animals in research and education.

Stray dog population control

The *Terrestrial Code* Chapter on Stray Dog Population Control addresses methods that can be used for the control of dog populations and the prevention of important zoonotic diseases in these animal communities.

The scope of these recommendations is to deal with stray and feral dogs, which pose a serious risk to human health, animal health and animal welfare and have a socio-economic and environmental impact in many countries. Public health, including the prevention of serious zoonotic diseases, notably rabies and hydatidosis, is a priority. This is an essential component of [Article 8.12.2](#). 'Control of rabies in dogs'.

Work in progress also encompasses the development of standards for working equids and other animals, and disaster management and risk reduction in this context in relation to animal health and welfare and veterinary public health.

DEVELOPMENT OF OIE RECOMMENDATIONS ON VETERINARY EDUCATION: A MAJOR STEP FORWARD

At the 81st General Session, the OIE published and distributed to National Delegates and participants, the '*Veterinary Education Core Curriculum OIE Guidelines*', as a companion to the '*Competencies of graduating veterinarians (Day 1 graduates) to assure National Veterinary Services of quality*'. Animal welfare and ethology are included in this core curriculum of minimum knowledge expected of veterinarians around the globe.

CORE PROJECTS

Improved animal welfare programme (IAWP)

The IAWP began in June 2012 with the development of a strategy, action plan and budget for three years. The purpose of the programme is to improve the welfare of animals intended for human consumption during their transport and slaughter in several Member Countries of the Asia-Pacific and Middle East regions via in-country capacity building.

Since October 2012, over 400 participants have taken part in the training of trainers programmes in Indonesia, the Philippines Turkey, Vietnam, Thailand, Jordan, Oman, Iran, Korea (Rep. of) and Israel. Academics and representatives of industry and international non-governmental organisations were also present, with the aim of facilitating future cooperation between the newly trained trainers, veterinary educational establishments and industry (mainly slaughterhouses).

OIE Regional strategies on animal Welfare

Regional strategies for the implementation of OIE standards by Member Countries have been established in Asia, the Americas, and more recently the Middle-East. They address the specific needs of each region.

Since December 2013, a new regional platform has been established in Europe, focusing on the management of stray dog populations and conditions relating to the transport and slaughter of livestock. In the course of the programme of the platform, all the Veterinary Services of the 53 OIE Member Countries of Europe are expected to follow a common approach regarding animal welfare and develop adapted legislations and policies for the implementation of OIE standards.



For more information

- [OIE Portal on Animal welfare](#)
- [OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code \(Section 7\)](#)
- [OIE Aquatic Animal Health Code \(Section 7\)](#)
- [OIE Scientific and Technical Review: Animal welfare: focusing on the future](#), Vol. 33(1), April 2014