

The protection and welfare of animals for 2006-2010

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PURPOSE : [to adopt an action plan on the protection and welfare of animals 2006-2010.](#)

CONTENT : this present Community action plan on the protection and Welfare of Animals embodies the Commission's commitment to EU citizens, stakeholders, the European Parliament and the Council for a clear and comprehensive map of the Commission's planned animal welfare initiatives for the coming years. It also responds to the principles set out by the Protocol on Protection and Welfare of animals annexed to the EC Treaty by the Amsterdam Treaty.

The action plan will ensure that initiatives in the field of Animal Welfare take due account of their cross-cutting nature, their European and international dimensions and value, and the range of associated and inter-connecting competencies as distributed today among the Commission's various Directorates General. The Action Plan thus also contributes to better regulation by serving the consolidation of legislative instruments.

The primary objectives that the Commission wishes to achieve with the elaboration of this Action Plan are to:

- define more clearly the direction of Community policies on animal protection and welfare for the coming years;
- continue to promote high animal welfare standards in the EU and at the international level;
- provide greater coordination of existing resources while identifying future needs;
- support future trends in animal welfare research and continue to support the 3Rs principle: Replacement, Reduction and Refinement alternative approaches to animal testing;
- ensure a more consistent and coordinated approach to animal protection and welfare across Commission policy areas, also taking into account aspects such as the socio-economic impact of any new measures.

The five main areas of action identified are:

- upgrading existing minimum standards for animal protection and welfare in line with new scientific evidence and socio-economic assessments as well as possibly elaborating specific minimum standards for species or issues that are not currently addressed in EU legislation. A particular priority will be designing EU rules in order to secure efficient enforcement and to take account of rules governing international trade;
- giving a high priority to promoting policy-orientated future research on animal protection and welfare and application of the 3Rs principle: in order to respect the obligations under the EC Treaty Protocol to pay full regard to the welfare of animals in formulating and implementing these policies in parallel with enhancing the development, validation, implementation and monitoring of alternative approaches to animal testing;
- introducing standardised animal welfare indicators: to classify the hierarchy of welfare standards applied (from minimum to higher standards) in order to assist the development of improved animal welfare production and husbandry methods and to facilitate their application at EU and international levels. On this basis, options for EU labelling will be explored in a systematic manner;
- ensuring that animal keepers/ handlers as well as the general public are more involved and informed on current standards of animal protection and welfare and fully appreciate their role in promoting

animal protection and welfare. In respect of farm animals for example this could include working with retailers and producers to facilitate improved consumer trust and awareness of current farming practices and thus more informed purchasing decisions, as well as developing common initiatives in the field of animal welfare to facilitate the exchange of information and the application of best practices;

- continue to support and initiate further international initiatives to raise awareness and create a greater consensus on animal welfare, including engaging with Developing Countries to explore trade opportunities based on welfare friendly production systems. The Community should also actively identify trans-boundary problems in the area of animal welfare, relating to companion or farm animals, wildlife etc., and develop a mechanism to tackle them in a more timely, efficient and consistent manner.

The Commission states that continued and reinforced efforts are needed to ensure that Community legislation is drafted in a rational and comprehensible manner, thus facilitating uniform implementation and enforcement. Community animal welfare policies need to be founded on the best available scientific evidence as well as taking into account the concerns of civil society, socio-economic consequences and relationships with international trading partners and organisations. Specific legislative provisions should also be foreseen for species for which minimum protection standards are not currently outlined in Community legislation.

The Community will contribute to the ongoing evolution of animal welfare as a scientific discipline, through the funding of research, promotion of dialogue etc., thus facilitating a fuller exchange of views and expertise. The Commission will strive to ensure that full regard is paid to animal welfare in the context of related policy fields such as agricultural and research policies, animal health, food safety, chemicals testing/risk assessment.

Efforts will be made to incorporate specific measurable animal welfare indicators where available into existing and future Community legislation. Further investigations and research will be promoted for the development and application of such objective measurable indicators of animal welfare. Improved marketing, labelling and communication strategies will need to be developed and analysed to ensure that consumers are able to make more informed purchasing decisions.

In the international arena full support and Community coordination will be provided for the animal welfare activities of international organisations such as the OIE and Council of Europe. The Community will also press for the acceptance at WTO level of animal welfare as a non-trade concern in agricultural trade and will work with international trading partners having developed animal welfare policies in order to build a common understanding on the implementation of mutually agreed animal welfare standards, including in the context of specific EC multilateral and bilateral agreements.