

Concluding comments: OIE leadership, significant trends and future developments

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OIE leadership role and current trends

At the turn of the century, the Members of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) decided to include animal welfare in the OIE Strategic Plan for the period 2001 to 2005. This decision reflected the ever-increasing public, media, scientific and political interest in the subject over the previous 50 or so years. Global conferences on animal welfare, held in Paris (2004), Cairo (2008) and Kuala Lumpur (2012), have played a most important role in promoting dialogue between the various public and private-sector stakeholders, who have contributed, both directly and indirectly, to the impressive progress made since 2001 (1, 2, 3).

A total of 12 standards have now been adopted by the 178 OIE Members and included in the *Terrestrial Animal Health Code* (4) and *Aquatic Animal Health Code* (5). The 2005 OIE *Scientific and Technical Review* (Vol. 24 [2]), 'Animal welfare: global issues, trends and challenges' (6) and the 2008 OIE *Technical Series* (Vol. 10), 'Scientific assessment and management of animal pain' (7), have been important additions to the relevant literature.

Regular articles in the OIE *Bulletin*, plus expansion of the OIE website, and publication of the OIE *Vade Mecum*, have all contributed to the 'mainstreaming' of animal welfare, which has now become 'core' OIE business. This is further emphasised by the explicit inclusion of animal welfare in the OIE global mandate: 'the improvement of animal health, veterinary public health and animal welfare worldwide'. Implicit recognition is also part of the OIE mission statement, 'protecting animals, preserving our future'.

Strategic initiatives and activities have made important contributions to the ongoing momentum of the OIE animal welfare initiative, e.g. the development of OIE Collaborating Centres for Animal Welfare in Italy, New Zealand/Australia, Chile/Uruguay/Mexico and the United

States (8), the establishment of National Focal Points for Animal Welfare by all OIE Members (9), progress with development of Regional Animal Welfare Strategies (10, 11) and the contribution of welfare-dedicated funding to the Global Animal Health and Welfare Fund (12).

The veterinary leadership shown by the OIE, as an intergovernmental organisation, has been complemented by other significant public and private-sector activities, such as:

- the incorporation of an article on animal welfare in the 2009 Lisbon Treaty (13)
- the establishment of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations 'Gateway to Farm Animal Welfare' (14)
- the publication of scientific reports by the European Food Safety Authority (www.efsa.europa.eu)
- the implementation of training programmes such as Better Training for Safer Food (15)
- the Welfare Quality® project (www.welfarequality.net)
- the AWIN project (www.animal-welfare-indicators.net)
- the CALLISTO project (Companion animals multisectorial interprofessional interdisciplinary strategic think tank on zoonoses) (www.callistoproject.eu)
- the Coordinated European Animal Welfare Network project (www.euwelnet.eu).

Looking to the future

The progress made in animal welfare science, policy and infrastructure development, over recent decades, has created a solid platform from which to look forward confidently to similar progress being made in the future. Progress made, to date, can be thought of conceptually as the 'end of the beginning' and the papers in this publication give an indication of the breadth and depth of new areas of research, policy and opportunity.

The following selected areas are seen as likely to be of particular significance as OIE Member Countries, industry organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and policy-makers continue along the animal welfare 'journey'.

The implementation of standards

While the OIE undertakes the development of new standards for transparent consultation and democratic adoption, it will continue to address the formidable challenge of ensuring effective implementation of the standards that have already been adopted. This is a current priority for the OIE Animal Welfare Working Group, at the request of the OIE Director General and the Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission. It is envisaged that a mix of practical 'Train the Trainer' initiatives, plus the ready availability of relevant online resources, will continue to make a major positive contribution to the implementation of standards.

The development, by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), of Animal Welfare Management Technical Specifications (16), along with global private-sector leadership by organisations such as Safe Supply of Affordable Food Everywhere (SSAFE) will also be significant and will embed animal welfare into good practice processes. The OIE Collaborating Centres and National Animal Welfare Focal Points will also, undoubtedly, play a critical role.

Stakeholder 'ownership'

Animal welfare is now firmly on the agenda of international industry organisations such as the International Meat Secretariat, the International Dairy Federation, the International Egg Commission, the International Poultry Council and the World Farmers' Organisation. Within the veterinary profession, animal welfare has been identified as a strategic priority by Veterinary Associations at the national level, but also at the regional level (e.g. Federation of Veterinarians of Europe, Federation of Asian Veterinary Associations, Pan American Association of Veterinary Scientists) and the global level (e.g. World Veterinary Association, World Small Animal Veterinary Association, Commonwealth Veterinary Association). In addition, the OIE guidelines for veterinary education stress the importance of including animal welfare in veterinary curricula, and much greater emphasis is being given to teaching the principles of animal welfare science and bioethics at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels (17, 18, 19). Individual veterinarians in clinical practice, academia and research are also expected to increasingly influence animal welfare developments in leadership roles. Moreover, the dramatic increase in the proportion of women within the profession arguably has the potential to enhance a compassionate ethos, further heightening interest in the subjects of animal welfare and ethics. Recent studies suggest that men and women have different attitudes to

welfare and different perceptions of pain (20, 21, 22, 23). For example, in a study by Paul *et al.*, female veterinary students rated themselves as having significantly higher levels of emotional empathy with animals, and in a study of perioperative analgesia, women assigned higher pain scores and were more likely to treat the pain with analgesics.

Private-sector initiatives and public/private partnerships

It is anticipated that private standards will continue to play an important role but that they will, increasingly, reflect and take note of OIE standards as international reference benchmarks. A number of NGOs, such as the World Society for the Protection of Animals and Compassion in World Farming, will also continue to exert a positive influence via various initiatives and projects, including:

- the proposed Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare (24)
- the Animal Protection Index project (to rank the animal welfare policies of national governments using a set of core indicators)
- Business Benchmarking for Animal Welfare (www.bbfaw.org).

Around the world, governments are encouraging public/private-sector partnerships (e.g. SSAFE), to enable more efficient and effective use of limited resources and to enable progress to be made on strategically important projects which otherwise might not advance. This is seen to be a very positive trend, with animal welfare presenting opportunities rather than threats to business profitability and sustainability.

Positive welfare states

The traditional focus of animal welfare science, management and policy on identifying, rectifying and ameliorating or avoiding negative welfare states will obviously continue (25, 26, 27). In addition to negative states, however, it is now recognised that animals may also have positive experiences (28, 29, 30, 31). Therefore, good animal welfare is increasingly being thought to be achieved both by minimising negative experiences and by providing opportunities for animals to have positive ones (27, 29, 31). Related to this, concepts such as 'quality of life' (26, 29) and a 'life worth living' (24, 32), as well as ethical analyses that focus attention more directly on the animals themselves (33, 34, 35, 36), are being evaluated. Ongoing research on animal-based indicators of welfare will, undoubtedly, have an important influence on how this trend in thinking is translated into practical and practicable on-farm practices.

Concluding comments

Animal welfare is increasingly being recognised as a critical element in wider international public policy issues concerned with poverty alleviation, climate change, sustainable agriculture and disaster management, and the 'mainstreaming' of animal welfare in this way is most encouraging.

Food safety and food security are recognised as major challenges for the global community and animal welfare is sometimes seen as an 'unaffordable luxury' in many parts of the world. The challenge, therefore, is to develop sustainable and humane livestock agriculture systems which meet societal needs and expectations, in both the developed and the developing world.

If adopted, the proposed Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare will reinforce the importance of animal welfare as a critical global societal value and it is envisaged that the corporate sector will, increasingly, see animal welfare as an important element in Corporate Social Responsibility policies.

Animal law will continue to develop, and debates concerning animal welfare versus animal rights, religious slaughter, the use of animals in science and the long-distance transport of live animals for slaughter will continue. In the area of international trade policy, it is anticipated that, as the desire to include animal welfare in World Trade Organization agreements is unlikely to be resolved in the short to medium term, there will be an increase in the number of trade agreements that are bilateral rather than multilateral.

The OIE is currently considering the merits of a Global Animal Welfare Strategy, to provide an agreed global strategic framework for its ongoing efforts and to complement the regional strategies already being implemented. Future developments may well include the emergence of a 'One World/One Welfare' concept and even an OIE name change to the World Organisation for Animal Health and Welfare.

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