



ANIMAL WELFARE



MAF ANIMAL WELFARE PROFILE

WHY ANIMAL WELFARE IS
A KEY ISSUE

The way people feel about how we care for animals is constantly changing. There are many reasons for this, and a wide array of viewpoints, but concerns around the welfare of animals focus in four broad areas:

Agriculture

In the past half century, agriculture has become intensified in many countries. Changes in technology and methods of husbandry, coupled with genetic gains, have seen animal productivity quadruple during a period of 40 years. This rate of gain is accelerating.

At the same time, human populations have become more urbanised. First-hand experience of livestock farming is becoming less common. This has been accompanied by a growing awareness of animal welfare. In the public arena, these concerns are linked with food safety, environmental and sustainability issues.

Research, testing and teaching

Use of animals in research grew rapidly internationally during the 20th century, peaking around 1960. Although the number of animals used in research, testing and teaching (RTT) has continued to decline since then, public awareness and debate on the issue have intensified.

Animal use in RTT in New Zealand is comprehensively regulated and must be approved by animal ethics committees, which in turn must operate according to a code of ethical conduct. Above and beyond these measures, there are several initiatives involved in improving animal welfare in RTT, namely the New Zealand Three Rs Programme, which supports increasing efforts to replace, reduce and refine the use of animals in RTT.



Animal welfare infrastructure

Since the early 1980s a series of organisations, groups and initiatives have been developed to form a strong animal welfare infrastructure in New Zealand. MAF has played a pivotal role in this. Milestones have included:

1984	1987	1988	1991	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
National Animal Ethics Advisory Committee (NAEAC) established.	Codes of Ethical Conduct Regulations introduced.	Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (now NAWAC) formed.	Animal Behaviour and Welfare Research Centre (ABWRC) established.	Australian and New Zealand Council for the Care of Animals in Research and Teaching (ANZCCART) established.	Appointment to the Chair in Animal Welfare Science at Massey University.	Animals in Schools Education Trust established.	Animal Behaviour and Welfare Consultative Committee established.	Private Member's Animal Welfare Bill introduced.	Massey University Animal Welfare Science and Bioethics Centre (AWSBC) established. All Party Animal Welfare Group formed.	Animal Welfare Institute of New Zealand (AWINZ) formed. UNITEC commences first formal qualification for animal welfare inspectors. Animal Welfare Act passed into law.	Animal Welfare Institute of New Zealand (AWINZ) gazetted as an approved organisation.	Formation of OIE Permanent Working Group on Animal Welfare.	OIE member countries endorse animal welfare guiding principles recommended by Permanent Working Group on Animal Welfare.	Formation of Biosecurity New Zealand (formerly MAF Biosecurity Authority). As before, the Animal Welfare Directorate is an integral part of the new organisation.	UNITEC appoints Professor in Animal Welfare.	NZ Three Rs Programme established.	First meeting of the European Commission/NZ Animal Welfare Co-operation Forum. Massey University AWSBC recognised as an OIE Collaborating Centre.	NZ provided in principle support for Universal Declaration of Animal Welfare (UDAW).	Massey University OIE Collaborating Centre expanded to include AgResearch and three Australian Institutes. <i>Welfare Pulse</i> , the new stand-alone animal welfare publication, launched.



Recreation and entertainment

The way animals are used in recreation and entertainment – circuses, rodeos and zoos, for example – has also been placed under increasing scrutiny in recent years.

Companion Animals

New Zealanders are keen pet owners and there are large populations of horses, domestic dogs and cats. The welfare of companion animals in homes, pet shops and boarding establishments are all increasingly important and relevant to New Zealanders and MAF's animal welfare work.

THE THREE Rs

REPLACEMENT – replace the use of animals in research, testing and teaching with non-animal alternatives, or use less sentient animals or animal tissue.

REDUCTION – if you must use animals, reduce the number needed to the minimum required to still achieve a meaningful result.

REFINEMENT – in your use of animals, refine practices to minimise suffering (for example, use appropriate pain relief; euthanase when pain or distress is evident).

MAF'S
ROLE IN ANIMAL WELFARE

MAF leads and facilitates the management of animal welfare policy and practice in New Zealand.

MAF's **ANIMAL WELFARE MISSION** is to:

- support the expectations of New Zealand society for the welfare and humane treatment of animals;
- support the development of animal welfare standards;
- administer the Animal Welfare Act 1999 in an effective, responsible and fair manner;
- encourage voluntary compliance with animal welfare standards and, where necessary, to enforce the law;
- contribute to New Zealand's reputation as a trusted and sustainable producer of animals and animal products.

ACHIEVING
A BALANCE

While promoting animal welfare standards that meet animals' needs and the expectations of its stakeholders, MAF works to ensure that this does not put New Zealand producers at a disadvantage in overseas markets, and that scientific advances are not constrained. The focus is on animal welfare, not animal rights.

Simply, MAF aims at achieving a balance between ethical, commercial and scientific interests.

The "stakeholders" referred to here represent a diverse range of groups with widely differing expectations. They include the New Zealand public, livestock farmers, animal owners, the science community, overseas markets and consumers. Their perspectives are recognised, and inform MAF decision making.

MAF'S ANIMAL WELFARE FUNCTIONS

MAF's animal welfare mission is supported through the following activities:

- providing scientific and policy advice to the Minister of Agriculture on animal welfare and ethical issues;
- promoting policies for the humane treatment of animals;
- identifying areas of research and liaising with research providers within New Zealand and overseas;
- working with key partners and the public to communicate education programmes;
- investigating animal welfare complaints and taking appropriate action, ranging from providing advice to investigation and prosecution;
- developing and implementing measures to ensure animal welfare during national emergencies;
- maintaining international networks;
- managing MAF's relationship with voluntary providers of animal welfare services;
- supporting two independent Ministerial Advisory Committees: the National Animal Ethics Advisory Committee (NAEAC) and the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC);
- facilitating the development of animal welfare standards, published as codes of welfare;
- responding to enquiries about animal welfare and playing an education role through media.

A SCIENTIFIC BASE

The standards for animal welfare practices developed by NAWAC and MAF are based on available scientific research. To promote the use of science-based standards, the group works with veterinarians, animal welfare and behavioural scientists and other researchers.

Where information is lacking, the group identifies priorities and commissions operational research. These projects are usually quite specific – for example, animal welfare status and body condition score of dairy cattle, or poultry welfare indicators.



CODES OF WELFARE

Codes of welfare provide detail surrounding animal welfare requirements for different species of animal. They include minimum standards and recommendations for best practice to animal user groups and are seen as a “how to” guide for compliance with the Animal Welfare Act. Breach of a minimum standard is not an offence, but could lead to prosecution for breaches of the Animal Welfare Act.

NAWAC progressively reviews existing voluntary codes and recommends the Minister of Agriculture issue them as codes of welfare under the Animal Welfare Act. By early 2009 the Minister had issued nine codes of welfare with a further 13 under development. The codes last for 10 years before they have to be reviewed.

The full set of codes of welfare and those under development, including consultation periods can be viewed at: www.biosecurity.govt.nz/regs/animal-welfare/stds/codes

THE ANIMAL WELFARE ACT 1999

Core obligations

These include a requirement for owners and people in charge of animals to ensure that the physical, health and behavioural needs of animals are met, and that pain and distress are alleviated. In addition, certain types of conduct towards animals are prohibited.

The Animal Welfare Act requires a duty of care based on the internationally recognised “five freedoms”:

- proper and sufficient food and water;
- adequate shelter;
- opportunity to display normal patterns of behaviour;
- appropriate physical handling to minimise fear and distress;
- protection from, and rapid diagnosis of, injury and disease.



INTERNATIONAL ANIMAL WELFARE ISSUES

The welfare of animals is assuming a higher profile in an important international forum, the OIE (Organisation International des Épizooties – the World Organisation for Animal Health). Since 2001, the OIE has assumed an international leadership role in relation to developing international guidelines and standards, particularly in five key areas:

- slaughter for human consumption;
- killing for disease control purposes;
- land transportation;
- sea transportation;
- air transportation.

Recommendations and guidelines developed by the OIE assist the 174 member countries to advance animal welfare performance, and may be used when undertaking bilateral trade negotiations. With such a large part of New Zealand's export economy dependent on trade in animals and animal products, development of key guidelines is of major importance.

MAF also continues to work closely with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade to monitor international developments regarding the status of animal welfare as a trade issue.

Formal agreement was reached in 2007 to establish a European Commission/New Zealand Animal Welfare Co-operation Forum.

In 1997 the Amsterdam Protocol recognised animals as sentient beings within the European Union, and the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) is now seeking to achieve this recognition at an international level. The proposed Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare received formal in principle support from the New Zealand Government in October 2008.



MINISTERIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEES

The National Animal Ethics Advisory Committee (NAEAC) and the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC) comprise individuals with nationally and internationally recognised expertise and experience in the following areas:

- agricultural science;
- animal science;
- commercial use of animals;
- companion animals;
- ethical standards and conduct in respect of animals;
- animal welfare advocacy;
- the public interest in respect of animals;
- environmental and conservation management.

NAEAC is concerned with the welfare of animals used in research, testing and teaching, while NAWAC focuses on animal welfare issues in farming and recreation/entertainment. Both committees uphold the internationally accepted “five freedoms” (refer core obligations of the Animal Welfare Act 1999) and the “Three Rs” for the use of animals in research, testing and teaching: replacement, reduction and refinement.

Contact details for further information

Animal Welfare Directorate
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
PO Box 2526, Wellington 6140, New Zealand.

Email: animalwelfare@maf.govt.nz

Website: www.biosecurity.govt.nz/animal-welfare

To report a case of animal ill-treatment or cruelty, please telephone:

ANIMAL WELFARE COMPLAINT HOTLINE: 0800 008 333

