

### WSAVA animal welfare guidelines

The World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA) represents more than 200,000 veterinarians across 105 associations. The mission of the WSAVA is: “To advance the health and welfare of companion animals worldwide through an educated, committed and collaborative global community of veterinary peers.”

Recently, the WSAVA published: *WSAVA Animal Welfare Guidelines – for Companion Animal Practitioners and Veterinary Teams*. It is hoped that the guidelines will “assist companion animal veterinarians throughout the world in their understanding of contemporary animal welfare concept and science, and provide guidance on addressing potential animal welfare problems, navigating some more common ethical issues, and promoting good animal welfare through effective communication, both within the veterinary clinic and beyond.”

There are six chapters in total: Chapter 1: Animal welfare — recognition and assessment; Chapter 2: Measurement and monitoring of animal welfare; Chapter 3: Welfare needs surrounding the veterinary visit; Chapter 4: Ethical questions and moral issues; Chapter 5: Communication with owners regarding animal welfare; and, Chapter 6: Outreach — welfare beyond your clinic.

Each chapter includes a list of WSAVA recommendations, some background of the topic under discussion, various section(s) providing further information, a set of conclusions and a checklist of suggested actions. For example, Chapter 1 (Animal Welfare — recognition and assessment) describes what the WSAVA considers to be the definition of animal welfare, discusses animal sentience and the science and ethics of animal welfare, and also considers the role of veterinarians and society. The chapter closes with a checklist of eight items including: ‘Are you up to date with scientific advances in understanding and assessing animal welfare?’ ‘Do you have a written animal welfare charter outlining the principles of your clinic’s or association’s commitment to protecting animal welfare?’ ‘Does your approach to animal welfare always strive to promote positive welfare states?’

A handy toolkit is included at the back of the guidelines providing links to various useful information resources, for example the AVMA, BVA and IFAW *Guidelines on Euthanasia*.

**WSAVA Animal Welfare Guidelines for Companion Animal Practitioners and Veterinary Teams** (2018). A4, 80 pages. Available at: [https://www.wsava.org/WSAVA/media/resources/Guidelines/WSAVA-Animal-Welfare-Guidelines-\(2018\).pdf](https://www.wsava.org/WSAVA/media/resources/Guidelines/WSAVA-Animal-Welfare-Guidelines-(2018).pdf).

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### Animal welfare in the EU

The European Union (EU) Animal Welfare Strategy 2012–2015 was published in 2012 and sought to improve the welfare of animals within the EU, whether on farms, in zoos, used for experimental purposes, or kept as pets.

Each Member State is responsible for implementing EU legislation at a national level and the European Commission is, in turn, responsible for ensuring that Member States enact EU rules appropriately. In November 2018, the European Court of Auditors (ECA) published a special Report reporting on how the actions of both the Commission and Member States have contributed to achieving EU animal welfare objectives. Specifically, the ECA focused on the welfare of farm animals with respect to two actions originally detailed in the strategy: 1) Develop tools, including where relevant implementing plans, to strengthen Member States’ compliance; and 2) Optimise synergistic effects from current Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) (the CAP facilitates improvements in animal welfare through cross-compliance whereby a number of CAP payments made to farmers are linked to meeting minimum standards of animal welfare).

The ECA visited five Member States (Germany, France, Italy, Poland and Romania) between September 2017 and June 2018. The auditors looked at how animal welfare legislation was implemented and examined official inspections for the period from 2012 to early 2018.

The auditors considered that, generally, good progress had been made in improving animal welfare on-farm with regards to the group housing of sows (individual stalls were banned in 2013) and banning unenriched cages for laying hens (implemented in 2012). However, compliance was poor on-farm in relation to the routine tail-docking of pigs. There were also concerns over the welfare of animals during transport (especially long-distance transport and the transport of unfit animals) and at slaughter (the use of the derogation for slaughter without stunning and inadequate stunning procedures). The auditors concluded that: “there are still some significant discrepancies between the animal welfare standards established in the EU legislation and the reality on the ground.”

Overall, the ECA made a number of recommendations under four main headings: ‘Strategic framework for the Commission’s animal welfare policy’; ‘Commission’s enforcement and guidance in the area of compliance’; ‘Improve co-ordination between official inspections and cross-compliance’; and ‘Using rural development support to achieve animal welfare objectives.’

The response of the European Commission to the Special Report of the European Court of Auditors is included at the back of the Report.

**Animal Welfare in the EU: Closing the Gap Between Ambitious Goals and Practical Implementation (Pursuant to Article 287[4], Second Subparagraph, TFEU)** (2018). A4, 68 pages. Special Report No 31, European Court of Auditors. Available: [https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR18\\_31SR\\_ANIMAL\\_WELFARE\\_EN.pdf](https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR18_31SR_ANIMAL_WELFARE_EN.pdf).

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