

## Improving companion animal management

The network will organise and support stray population survey work where public authorities are taking clear steps to implement humane animal control strategies. By measuring the efficacy of various strategies and disseminating its findings, the WBVN plans to contribute towards the creation of a practical and scientific approach to stray animal control in the region.

In this way it will be building on the considerable experience that the RSPCA has accumulated on this issue, delivering practical training and assisting in the development of tailored dog population strategies in the region. The network also hopes to translate and distribute the latest research and materials from forums such as the International Companion Animal Management Coalition.



MARTIN O'HALLORAN/RSPCA

## Western Balkans Veterinary Network for Animal Welfare



### Participating Institutions

#### Albania

Faculty of Veterinary Medicine,  
Agricultural University of Tirana

#### Bosnia-Herzegovina

Veterinary Office of Bosnia and  
Herzegovina, Ministry of Foreign  
Trade and Economic Relations  
Faculty of Veterinary Medicine,  
University of Sarajevo

#### Croatia

Ministry of Agriculture,  
Fisheries and Rural Development,  
Veterinary Directorate  
Faculty of Veterinary Medicine,  
University of Zagreb  
Croatian Veterinary Society  
PIK Vrbovec d.d.

#### Kosovo

Kosovo Veterinary and  
Food Agency  
Faculty of Agriculture and Veterinary  
Studies, University of Prishtina

#### Montenegro

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry  
and Water Management  
Veterinary Directorate, Government  
of the Republic of Montenegro

#### FYR Macedonia

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and  
Water Management  
Faculty of Veterinary Medicine – Skopje  
Agria Klanica, Veles.

#### Serbia

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and  
Water Management  
Faculty of Agriculture, University  
of Belgrade  
Faculty of Veterinary Medicine,  
University of Belgrade

#### United Kingdom

Animal Welfare Training, University  
of Bristol  
RSPCA International

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**International**

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the advancement of  
animal welfare through  
education, research and  
professional training*



**International**



## Animal welfare in central and eastern Europe and the Balkans

For the last decade RSPCA International has been helping countries in central and eastern Europe meet the demands of accession to the European Union (EU) by assisting with the implementation of EU and World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) standards on animal welfare. This work is currently focused on candidate and potential candidate countries in the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia).

To join the EU candidate countries will have to adopt and implement over 30 standard EU laws related to animal welfare, overcoming differences in production systems,

purchasing power, public awareness, tradition, consumer attitudes and general perceptions of animal welfare.

In response to this, the RSPCA and the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Skopje, Macedonia co-founded the Western Balkans Veterinary Network for Animal Welfare (WBVN). This is a unique platform for the advancement of animal welfare through education, research and professional training. It facilitates closer collaboration between key stakeholders and combines the research capabilities of seven major universities in the region with leading animal welfare research centres in Western Europe.

The network will enable smoother regulatory integration by providing public veterinary administrators with an improved understanding of the different veterinary frameworks operating within the EU and key developments in animal health and welfare. At the same time, the network will develop and deliver practical enforcement programmes to support state veterinary services as they begin to enforce OIE guidelines on stray management, slaughter and animal transport, and begin to regulate the use of laboratory animals in research and education. In so doing, the network will work to minimise transitional gaps during an exciting period of change in this region.

## Working to improve farm animal welfare

The network works to assess conditions and develop strategies that will improve animal welfare at all stages of the livestock production process including on the farm, during transport and at slaughter.

The network will take opportunities to incorporate qualitative animal welfare assessment techniques into assessment systems that are already in place on farms and, more generally, it will develop practical strategies to improve farm animal welfare in the region in the following ways.

- By delivering technical skills and knowledge to farmers and producers to improve animal welfare at all stages of the production process.
- By shifting the focus of livestock production from quantity to quality to meet the demand for higher welfare products and thereby secure the livelihoods of small-scale producers.
- By recognising good animal welfare practices within traditional farming methods and supporting the development of improved husbandry techniques, animal health and production levels.



## Providing sustainable solutions

The WBVN provides practical training and crucially, engages the veterinary profession alongside the wider farming community to produce sustainable solutions.

The network is already engaged in a Train-the-Trainer programme on welfare at slaughter developed and delivered by Animal Welfare Training, Department of Clinical Veterinary Science, University of Bristol. 'Welfare of food animals' is a professional training programme made up of eight modules that is being delivered to selected regional participants from state veterinary services, veterinary and agricultural colleges, and industry. It will culminate in the development of accredited national training programmes for the government and the meat industry as required under EU law.



## Better regulating the use of research animals

The network is currently conducting a comparative survey to analyse the use of laboratory animals and alternative methods in tertiary education across the region.

The results will be used to develop a database of available alternatives to animal use at member universities and propose selected alternatives for further trials. At the same time the network will examine the role and effectiveness of ethics committees at assessing the use of animals in experiments, as well as assessing standards of animal keeping, in all sectors of the economy.

The RSPCA will support the network by providing expertise on:

- EU regulations governing the welfare of animals used in research
- the concept of the 3Rs (the reduction, refinement and replacement of animals used in research)
  - the establishment of ethical review committees and the review processes
- licencing and authorisation.

