

# RSPCA policies on animal welfare

Revised 2012



[www.rspca.org.uk](http://www.rspca.org.uk)

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## The RSPCA and its work

The RSPCA is the world's oldest and best-known animal welfare organisation. It was established in 1824 and is a charity supported entirely by public donations. Its purpose, is to promote kindness and to prevent or suppress cruelty to animals. The RSPCA's concern is for all animals in all circumstances, including wild, laboratory, companion and farm animals, and those used in entertainment, education and the workplace.

The RSPCA's inspectors, operational staff and volunteers work round the clock, throughout England and Wales, to help animals in distress. Well over a million enquiries are received from the public throughout the year. RSPCA inspectors investigate alleged cases of cruelty and enforce the law where possible, with more than 140,000 complaints of cruelty each year resulting in some 2,500 convictions. RSPCA staff and branch volunteers rescue abandoned, sick and injured animals. RSPCA animal hospitals, rehoming centres and clinics, together with those run by many of its branches, receive and treat companion animals, equines and wildlife. Over 70,000 animals are found new homes each year.

The RSPCA recognises that many people believe that those concerned about the cruel exploitation of animals might become vegetarian or vegan, and generally try to avoid using any products derived or tested on animals. The RSPCA respects such a personal commitment but takes the view that as long as millions of animals continue to be exploited, the Society must continue to campaign for the highest possible standards of animal welfare in all areas.

The RSPCA campaigns and lobbies governments in England, Wales, Europe and internationally. This is done by persuading politicians and other key stakeholders to support animal welfare by raising public awareness as well as by using scientific, public opinion and other expert evidence, together with sound legal argument. The Society's educational work extends into schools, universities and colleges throughout England and Wales. The RSPCA operates internationally through its targeted training programmes, by supporting a network of over 200 associate societies worldwide and by working through international bodies.

The RSPCA's operational, advocacy and campaigning work is supported and reinforced by its educational, legal, parliamentary, scientific, technical and veterinary professional staff who take a proactive role in the RSPCA's activities and who are experts in their own fields.

The policies in this booklet represent the considered position of the RSPCA on particular issues, but readers should be aware of the constraints placed by charity law on all animal welfare charities. The Society is advised that it can concern itself with any activity which adversely affects an animal. However, the law acknowledges that the benefit to be gained from ending such activities will, in some cases, be outweighed by a harm to the community. In those cases, the Society can only use its funds to promote more humane alternative activities. Accordingly, all the policy statements which follow should be read subject to that proviso. In some instances, the booklet refers to certain legal requirements but these references are not intended as a complete statement of the law applying to the subjects referred to.

# 1 Introduction

## Objects of the RSPCA

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The charitable objects of the RSPCA are 'to promote kindness and to prevent or suppress cruelty to animals and to do all such lawful acts as the RSPCA may consider to be conducive or incidental to the attainment of those objectives'.

(as written in the RSPCA Act 1932)

## The RSPCA's vision

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To work for a world in which all humans respect and live in harmony with all other members of the animal kingdom.

## The RSPCA's mission statement

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The RSPCA as a charity will, by all lawful means, prevent cruelty, promote kindness to and alleviate suffering of animals.

The RSPCA intends to achieve its mission by:

- effecting strong branch, regional, national and international operations dedicated to providing a public service, delivering effective relief of animal suffering and enforcing the law
- working tirelessly to reduce the harmful impact of human activities on animals through education, campaigning and the application of ethics, science and law
- striving for the highest levels of efficiency, effectiveness and integrity
- urging that, save where the public benefit requires, humankind should not intentionally cause suffering to any animal when it is not for its own benefit, or cause suffering by neglect. This applies whatever the animal, or the situation in which it finds itself.

## General principles

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The general principle on which the RSPCA operates, derived from extensive scientific evidence, is based on the fact that vertebrates and some invertebrates are sentient, and can feel pain and experience distress.

The RSPCA believes that, where there is doubt about whether or not animals are suffering, the benefit of the doubt must always be given to the animals. Such precautionary principles are widely accepted in international law.

Significant pain and suffering can be caused by injury, disease, thirst, hunger, malnutrition and inappropriate environmental conditions, genetics, and by boredom, fear and frustration. These effects are often intensified by keeping animals in cages and other threatening, restrictive, unnatural or under-stimulating environments.

Many of these practices are referred to in the following pages. The RSPCA will do all it can to reduce this suffering and through influencing legislative change or the adoption of sound, well-monitored and enforced standards, will seek to improve the welfare of the animals concerned. The RSPCA believes that it is important to protect the interests of individual animals and that the responsibility to ensure that this is the case lies with us, the human species. Within any particular area of concern, the RSPCA accords priority to those animals which suffer most. The RSPCA believes that for any issue the degree and duration of suffering for individual animals must be considered as well as the numbers that suffer.

## The RSPCA's policies

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Over the years the RSPCA's governing Council (the Trustees of the charity) have developed policies which guide the RSPCA's work. These policies, which are regularly reviewed, also set out for the world at large how the RSPCA views the way in which animals are treated. They are intended to provide guidelines for further action and to encourage a more compassionate attitude towards animals generally.

This booklet lists the RSPCA's policies and, where necessary, explains why the RSPCA holds particular views. These explanatory notes appear in **blue type**. The use of the word 'animal' (except where otherwise specifically defined by its context) is a generic one including birds, reptiles, fish etc. The RSPCA emphasises that it attaches equal importance to the welfare of the animals described in each section of this booklet.

The RSPCA publishes further information on many of the topics covered. If you are interested please contact the RSPCA at:

RSPCA Headquarters,  
Wilberforce Way, Southwater  
Horsham, West Sussex RH13 9RS.

Tel (UK calls): 0300 123 0100

Tel (International calls): +44 1403 793 0100

Website: [www.rspca.org.uk](http://www.rspca.org.uk)



## 2 Biotechnology

### 2.1 Genetic engineering

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- 2.1.1 The RSPCA is opposed to the manipulation of the genetic constitution of animals which may cause pain, suffering or distress.**

The RSPCA believes that the production of genetically modified animals for potential uses in science, medicine and agriculture has serious animal welfare and ethical implications. In particular, the RSPCA is concerned about the suffering caused to both the genetically modified animals themselves and the animals used in their production.

It is recognised that research into genetically modified animals and other organisms has been going on for many years and appears likely to increase rather than decrease in the foreseeable future.

The RSPCA strives to ensure where genetic modification or associated work occurs that full consideration and concern are afforded to the animal welfare and ethical aspects of producing and using genetically modified animals.

### 2.2 Patenting

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- 2.2.1 The RSPCA is opposed to the patenting of animals.**

The RSPCA believes that patenting an animal reduces the intrinsic value of that animal, demoting it merely to a 'scientific invention' and that this encourages the view that animals are merely laboratory tools rather than sentient beings capable of suffering.

Furthermore, the RSPCA believes that the financial incentives involved in patenting animals could override welfare considerations.

## 3 Companion animals

### 3.1 Responsible ownership

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- 3.1.1 The RSPCA believes that those who keep animals must have the facilities, time, financial means, knowledge and skills necessary to ensure a good standard of welfare and a long-term commitment to their animals. The Animal Welfare Act 2006 imposes a duty on people to take reasonable steps to ensure that the needs of any animals they are responsible for are met.
- 3.1.2 The RSPCA is opposed to any degree of confinement which is likely to cause distress or suffering unless it is short term and for the overall benefit of the animal concerned.

The Society believes that some animals do not make suitable pets because their welfare needs cannot be satisfied.

The RSPCA only supports the keeping of certain species by non-specialist keepers where there is evidence that such animals' welfare can be guaranteed, and that the keepers have access to appropriate information and veterinary care. Such keepers should adequately understand the animals' physiology and psychology, and show the commitment and ability to provide for the animals' long-term needs.

Evidence of best practice must include the availability of published accurate and adequate husbandry advice appropriate for the species of animal being kept. Where there is no evidence of best practice husbandry advice being available, the Society would oppose the keeping of such animals by all but specialists who have demonstrated their ability to provide a suitable diet, and an appropriate environment and care. The RSPCA defines a specialist keeper of a species or breed of animal as someone who has the knowledge, resources and proven commitment to keep those animals such that their physical and psychological welfare is maximised. Responsible specialists take steps to prevent the problems caused by breeding, selling and rehoming.

We also recommend that as advised under Section 9 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 an owner of an animal must take all reasonable steps to ensure that they meet the following needs of the animal:

- a) its need for a suitable environment
- b) its need for a suitable diet
- c) its need to exhibit normal behaviour patterns
- d) any need it has to be housed with, or apart from, other animals, and
- e) its need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease.

Responsible pet ownership should include the provision of adequate insurance, permanent identification, the application of appropriate veterinary prevention treatments, awareness of any associated health risk, and companionship with humans and with other animals of their own kind where appropriate.

The RSPCA believes that many companion animal problems are caused or exacerbated by oversupply and urges breeders to breed only if they can ensure that there are sufficient good and caring homes for the offspring.

## **3.2 Acquiring an animal**

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- 3.2.1 The RSPCA strongly recommends that all companion animals should be acquired from an RSPCA centre, another reputable animal rescue organisation or from the place where they were born.**

The Society encourages anyone planning to have an animal as a companion to consider offering one of the thousands of animals rescued each year a good home.

Before acquiring any animal it is essential for the animal's welfare that the person responsible for their care is fully prepared for the undertaking, and understands the animal's long-term needs. It is advisable to see where the animal was born, to look at the condition and behaviour of other young and adult animals, particularly the parents and siblings, and to see how the animals have been kept. The RSPCA urges prospective owners not to purchase animals from breeders whose major motivation is breeding large numbers of animals for profit, such as those operations sometimes referred to as 'puppy farms'. If the species of animal is less commonly kept, such preparations can also help establish direct contact with someone who has experience of caring for that species of animal in this country and to fully appreciate how large the adult animal can grow and for how long it can live. This also allows time to find a vet experienced in the treatment of that species and to make the necessary

preparations to obtain the suitable accommodation, food and other essential equipment needed before taking the animal home. These preparations should be made no matter from where the animal is acquired.

The RSPCA is against the display for sale of animals for commercial gain and strongly recommends that all retail outlets should ensure that any display of animals does not entice prospective animal owners to purchase without an understanding of the full responsibilities of animal ownership as this may contribute to poor welfare and overproduction of animals.

Under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, all retail outlets must ensure that they can adequately provide for the needs of the animals they intend to display.

The RSPCA believes 'distance selling' or the acquisition of sentient animals through the exclusive use of the Internet, by mail-order or over the telephone does not provide adequate assurance for the welfare of the animals traded, if the animal is obtained without being previously seen by the buyer.

### **3.3 Population control and breeding**

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- 3.3.1**     **Save for where it is not appropriate for particular animals, the RSPCA strongly recommends that neutering cats, dogs, rabbits and other domestic animals as early as possible under veterinary advice is an important part of responsible ownership.**

Using modern anaesthetic techniques, surgical neutering is a safe and effective way to prevent unwanted breeding of dogs and cats. The RSPCA advocates neutering prior to rehoming to avoid these unwanted pregnancies. It is not necessary, for behavioural or medical reasons, to allow females to have a litter prior to surgery. Veterinary surgeons can advise on the most appropriate timing, and overall suitability, of any operation for individual animals.

Hormonal control methods are available for female dogs and cats but prolonged use may carry the risk of unwanted side effects and there are sometimes practical difficulties regarding dosage and timing of administration.

- 3.3.2 The RSPCA is opposed to the breeding of animals which produces changes in bodily form or function which may be detrimental to their health or quality of life.
- 3.3.3 The RSPCA is opposed to the hybridisation of wild species with domesticated animals for the purposes of creating new types of companion animals. Because of their wild ancestry, such hybrids may have different behavioural, nutritional and environmental needs which will be difficult to provide in a domestic situation.
- 3.3.4 The RSPCA regards as irresponsible and is opposed to the breeding of puppies or kittens (e.g. in puppy or kitten farms), and other animals in both private and commercial undertakings without regard to the availability of good homes for the offspring.
- 3.3.5 The RSPCA deplores the breeding of companion animals for export to countries lacking adequate animal welfare legislation or requiring journeys that compromise the animals' welfare.
- 3.3.6 The RSPCA believes that breeding establishments should be properly inspected and regulated and that where possible for that species, all animals should be microchipped prior to sale or rehoming.

The excessive breeding of puppies and kittens is a prime component in creating stray/unwanted animal problems. The owner of the dam must have primary responsibility for avoiding these problems. Excessive breeding may also cause suffering to both mother and offspring. Their removal from their mother and place of birth at an early age increases the risk of disease and may cause significant distress. Excessive breeding may also cause harm to dams. The risk of mineral imbalances and general debility is greatly increased. Furthermore, the risks associated with parturition are increased as the dam grows older.

#### 3.4 Dog registration

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- 3.4.1 The RSPCA is convinced that a properly financed and organised scheme to control unwanted and stray animals is part of government responsibility and should include provisions for the identification and registration of dogs nationally.

Dog licensing should include a permanent identification by microchip and is necessary if the responsibility for the welfare and control of dogs is to be put where it properly belongs – with the owner or keeper.

A dog licensing scheme would help in establishing the ownership of stray dogs and in investigating cases of cruelty e.g. abandonment, dog fighting. It would also assist in controlling future outbreaks of exotic disease should these be introduced through climate change or for other reasons

A differential licensing fee or a system of rebates should be an essential component of such a scheme to encourage neutering and would thus contribute to reducing the numbers of unwanted animals born each year.

Microchipping of cats and other companion animals is also considered to be desirable.

### 3.5 Dog/animal wardens

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#### 3.5.1 **The RSPCA welcomes local authority dog/animal warden schemes and encourages properly funded schemes for careful rehoming, neutering and microchipping of unclaimed stray dogs.**

Dog wardens should be responsible and compassionate people trained in welfare, law and first aid, who can act in an educational and advisory role towards dog owners as well as carrying out their duties in apprehending stray dogs.

Government should ensure such a service is properly funded so that sufficient resources are available. It is also important that such wardens work closely with their local police forces, Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and the RSPCA to develop comprehensive programmes tackling the many issues arising from poor animal welfare.

The RSPCA is concerned, however, that many schemes do not have sufficient cover that is considered essential by the RSPCA.

The RSPCA welcomes the expansion of dog warden schemes to animal warden schemes, including horses and other animals.

### 3.6 Surgical mutilations

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#### 3.6.1 The RSPCA is opposed to the mutilation of animals for cosmetic purposes.

The following procedures do not benefit the animal in any way and in many cases can be detrimental to the animal's health and welfare:

- tail docking of dogs
- de-barking of dogs
- ear-cropping of dogs
- de-clawing of cats.

The same principle also applies to various surgical mutilations of other species.

### 3.7 Quarantine

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3.7.1 The RSPCA accepts the principle of a controlled entry, without quarantine, of animals from those European Union and other countries that are recognised by the World Health Organisation as being free from rabies in those species. The RSPCA believes that quarantine should remain for animals imported from countries which do not satisfy the criteria given above.

3.7.2 The RSPCA believes that all necessary steps should be taken to ensure that the UK remains free from rabies. If implemented correctly, the RSPCA believes that a system comprising permanent identification through microchipping, vaccination and certification of blood testing will provide the UK with effective protection. It would also assist in reducing the risk of the importation of other exotic diseases.

The RSPCA regrets the stress caused to some animals during quarantine and has grave concerns about the conditions in certain quarantine kennels, all of which must comply with the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

### 3.8 Euthanasia

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- 3.8.1 The RSPCA is working for a world in which no rehomingable animal is put to sleep. Currently the RSPCA accepts, with great reluctance that in certain circumstances euthanasia may be necessary, when the animal is not rehomingable, because it is sick or injured, for behavioural reasons or occasionally because there are no appropriate homes available and the animal would therefore endure long-term suffering through deprivation of basic needs.

The RSPCA will continue to strive for a future where the euthanasia of fit and healthy animals will be unnecessary. Euthanasia is forced on the RSPCA by irresponsible ownership, overproduction, and inadequate enforcement of legislation. This may be because of indiscriminate breeding for profit, current trends in the marketing of animals, and problems caused by the effects of social circumstances including owners failing to neuter their pets.

Where euthanasia is carried out it must be by trained operators using approved methods. Approved methods in this context are contained within published RSPCA guidelines on euthanasia.

### 3.9 Use of animal organs for transplantation into animals

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- 3.9.1 The RSPCA is opposed to the killing or use of live animals for organ donation to other animals. The RSPCA and its branches will not provide animals as donors for such transplant surgery, except for blood transfusion as an emergency procedure.

### 3.10 Animal training aids

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- 3.10.1 The RSPCA believes that where training aids are used they should be used as part of a structured training programme and this should be made clear on accompanying literature and at the point of sale of such devices.
- 3.10.2 The RSPCA believes that no technical device should be used or offered for sale where an animal can be subjected to a painful stimulus at the direct instigation of a human or where a painful stimulus is delivered as a result of an animal's action from which it cannot retreat.



## 4 Education and animals

### 4.1 General considerations

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- 4.1.1 The RSPCA is opposed to the use of animals for education where distress or suffering is likely to be caused.
- 4.1.2 The RSPCA believes that animal welfare education is an entitlement to all. The prevention of cruelty and promotion of kindness to animals can best be achieved through both formal and non-formal educational activities.
- 4.1.3 The RSPCA believes that animals should not be kept in educational establishments except when the use of alternatives is impossible.
- 4.1.4 The RSPCA believes that the recognition and appreciation of animals as sentient beings is essential in the promotion and development of empathy towards them.

### 4.2 Schools

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- 4.2.1 The RSPCA strongly discourages the keeping of animals in schools.

The RSPCA believes that animal welfare can be taught in schools without keeping animals captive. Studying an animal in its natural environment should aim to cause minimal disturbance whilst maximising educational opportunity.

The RSPCA believes that there must be an explicit animal welfare education rationale for using animals in education, and legislation relating to animals must be considered in the development of programmes of study.

Where animals are kept in schools proper provision should be made for their physical and mental wellbeing. The necessary requirements for the physical and mental wellbeing of animals in schools and colleges are:

- that a named person is at all times responsible for the welfare and husbandry of the animals – this includes legal responsibility under the Animal Welfare Act 2006
- that a suitable environment is provided
- that provision can be made for suitable housing, husbandry and veterinary care at all times including term time, weekends and during holidays

- that any contact between pupils and animals is supervised and controlled
- that the animals are given adequate 'rest' periods away from disturbance
- that the species lifestyle is compatible with the school day
- that any animals kept are prevented from indiscriminate breeding

**4.2.2** The RSPCA believes that small invertebrates (minibeasts) should be studied in their natural habitats in preference to the classroom.

The RSPCA encourages the setting-up of wildlife areas within secure school grounds for the benefit of animals and to enhance and encourage educational study.

At all times, due regard must be paid to legislation relating to British wildlife.

**4.2.3** The RSPCA opposes breeding programmes in schools. This concern includes the use of incubators and artificial environments for animals.

It is difficult to guarantee the welfare of breeding animals under school conditions and the RSPCA believes that such programmes of study do not promote responsible attitudes to animal care and husbandry.

### **4.3 Further education**

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- 4.3.1** The RSPCA advocates that the standards laid down in the Sector Skills Council for Environmental and Land-Based Industries (LANTRA) resource document for colleges should be applied in all cases where animals are kept for educational purposes.
- 4.3.2** The RSPCA recommends that there should be a clearly defined animal welfare component in all vocational animal-related courses.
- 4.3.3** Where animal husbandry units exist, the RSPCA is opposed to any farm live stock being kept in conditions which cannot meet the 'Five Freedoms' as described in section 7.1.1.

## 4.4 Higher education

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- 4.4.1 The RSPCA is opposed to the use of animals in any course which either causes suffering or for which alternatives to animals are available.
- 4.4.2 The RSPCA advocates the inclusion of animal welfare components within higher education courses which enable students to explore the ethics of animal use.

For clarification of RSPCA policy on the use of laboratory animals, please see separate laboratory animals section. Where animals are kept under farm conditions, e.g. at veterinary schools, those animals should not be subjected to conditions which cannot comply with the 'Five Freedoms'.

The RSPCA encourages the view that students should be able to opt out of animal practicals on conscientious grounds without being penalised.

## 4.5 Educational visits

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- 4.5.1 The RSPCA does not support visits to animal-related venues which increase stress levels or cause unnecessary disturbance to animals. The animals' welfare must remain paramount.
- 4.5.2 The RSPCA believes that all educational visits should be part of a structured animal welfare curriculum.

## 4.6 Visiting animal and temporary loan schemes

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- 4.6.1 The RSPCA is opposed to all schemes that introduce animals into educational establishments which are detrimental to the welfare of animals.
- 4.6.2 The RSPCA is opposed to visitors taking animals into educational establishments where they are used largely for entertainment and are not part of a clearly defined programme of study.

## 4.7 Dissection of dead animals

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- 4.7.1 The RSPCA is opposed to the dissection of vertebrate and invertebrate animals in educational establishments, except for veterinary degree courses where no alternatives are yet available.
- 4.7.2 The RSPCA is opposed to any pupil being compelled either to perform or watch animal dissection.

The RSPCA believes that either taking part in or observing dissection can lead to desensitisation and a lessening of respect for life and that the methods involved in the rearing and killing of animals used for dissection may cause suffering. The views of students who wish to withdraw from dissection should be respected without penalty.

- 4.7.3 The RSPCA advocates the creation and use of educational resources which provide alternatives to dissection.

## 4.8 Behavioural experiments

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- 4.8.1 The RSPCA is opposed to behavioural experiments which are detrimental to the welfare of animals, including invertebrates.

Behavioural experiments that deliberately expose animals to less than ideal conditions can lead to a desensitisation and lessening of respect for life. The RSPCA believes that it is more educationally beneficial to observe animals in their natural environment, performing normal behaviour.

## 4.9 Technology

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- 4.9.1 The RSPCA is opposed to the use of animals in technology projects which cause suffering to animals. Projects which involve the enhancement of animals' lives and the improvement of the environment are to be encouraged.

## 5 Entertainment, sport and fashion

For issues under this heading specifically relating to equines please see section 6

### 5.1 General considerations

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- 5.1.1 The RSPCA is opposed to the infliction of pain and suffering on, or the killing of, any animal in the name of sport, entertainment or fashion.

### 5.2 Captive animals

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- 5.2.1 The RSPCA believes that animals should only be kept in captivity if good welfare can be assured.

Capture, transportation and acclimatisation of wild animals causes distress and suffering, which is unacceptable. As there are already large numbers of animals in captivity and more being bred, further importation should be prohibited.

Animals need to be kept in a way which is appropriate to the normal biological requirements of their species, in sufficient space containing the necessary shelter, cover and environmental stimulus so as not to cause distress or suffering. The RSPCA believes that for some species this may never be possible.

The RSPCA believes that there is sufficient evidence to show that cetaceans and elephants cannot be adequately looked after in dolphinariums, zoos and other such facilities.

Environmental enrichment for all captive animals is required to alleviate boredom and improve health thereby enhancing welfare. Such enrichment must be varied to reduce habituation.

- 5.2.2 The RSPCA is opposed to the feeding of live vertebrate prey to captive animals.

Leading zoo collections no longer regard the practice of live feeding as a necessity and many specialist texts recommend the feeding of dead prey. The feeding of live prey may be viewed as illegal under the provisions of the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

Apart from the distress caused to live prey the predator itself can be damaged in the process of catching and ingesting the prey.

- 5.2.3 The RSPCA is opposed to pet corners and animal encounter areas where welfare problems are caused by uncontrolled handling and feeding, a lack of adequate supervision and excessive disturbance.

Pet corners and animal encounter areas are defined as areas provided for the entertainment of visitors/customers by such establishments as zoos, garden centres, pet stores, city farms etc. including where pets are sold in supermarkets.

The RSPCA believes that such areas, when badly managed, lead to a desensitisation and lessening of respect for life.

### 5.3 Performing animals

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- 5.3.1 The RSPCA is opposed to the use of all animals of whatever species for any form of entertainment (including zoos) in any environment in circumstances where distress or suffering is likely to be caused.
- 5.3.2 The RSPCA is opposed to exhibitions or presentations of all animals, of whatever species, in circuses and travelling menageries.
- 5.3.3 The RSPCA is concerned that, whenever they are used in the making of films, television programmes, advertisements and in the theatre, animals shall not be caused any suffering or distress.

'Entertainment' is an inclusive term taking in all animal acts.

The RSPCA guidelines on performing animals should be adhered to by all staff, trustees, branches, volunteers and third parties when performing animals are used in RSPCA productions. Copies and advice are available from the RSPCA wildlife department (email: [wildlife@rspca.org.uk](mailto:wildlife@rspca.org.uk)).

Most circus animals are kept most of the time in close confinement, in abnormal social groups, in cramped conditions when travelling, in inadequate winter quarters and are frequently transported – all causes of distress. The RSPCA considers that because of their transient nature it will never be possible to keep animals in a circus in a way that will provide an acceptable standard of welfare.

Animals may often be subjected to forced training, performing to a timetable and performing acts which do not come naturally to them, as well as being exposed to ridicule and indignity.

Animals obtained from the wild undergo unacceptable suffering and distress caused by their capture, transportation and acclimatisation.

While circuses continue to use animal acts, the RSPCA will seek to improve welfare standards.

## 5.4 Rodeos

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### 5.4.1 The RSPCA is opposed to rodeos.

Rodeos involve horses and cattle, during which suffering is sometimes caused by the use of various devices such as the cinch strap and spurs which cause the animal to buck. The cinch strap, also called the bucking strap, is put around the animal's abdomen just behind its ribs and in front of the flap of skin where its hind leg appears to join its body; this is done in a 'crush box'. As the door of this box is opened to release the animal, its rider pulls the cinch strap tight, causing bucking. Considerable fear and pain can be caused by this procedure.

## 5.5 Dog racing

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5.5.1 The RSPCA is opposed to the racing and training of dogs where distress or injury result from the placing of excessive demands upon the animal.

5.5.2 The RSPCA is opposed to the operation of unlicensed 'flapping' tracks where veterinary surgeons are not present.

The RSPCA is concerned about the overbreeding of greyhounds for racing, the export of unwanted greyhounds for racing, research and other purposes and the recurrent difficulties in rehoming greyhounds once their racing career is over. The RSPCA advocates the raising of a levy on the industry to ensure the dogs' welfare in retirement and strict enforcement of rules on owners' responsibilities.

The RSPCA remains very concerned that there is no comprehensive system of regulation of greyhound racing 'from cradle to grave'. Current regulations only cover welfare whilst at the racing track and not at kennels or elsewhere where they spend the majority of their time.

## 5.6 Falconry

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- 5.6.1 The RSPCA is opposed to the hunting of wild animals by humans with birds of prey, and any practice of keeping, training, flying or displaying birds of prey where suffering is caused.

## 5.7 Bullfighting

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- 5.7.1 The RSPCA is opposed to bullfighting

The bull is encouraged to charge the horse and rider so that a pica may be driven into its withers, thereby damaging the muscles and ligaments, weakening the bull and reducing its ability to move its head. In the Spanish style bullfight many horses suffer extensive injuries and some are killed.

Although padded, the horse is often lifted bodily and then thrown on the ground. Four horses are usually used, often repeatedly, having to be blindfolded and temporarily deafened prior to entering the ring. All the bulls are killed after suffering extensive injuries from the picas, banderillas and the matador's sword. In the Portuguese style bullfight, although the bull is not killed in the ring, it still suffers considerably.

## 5.8 Fiestas

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- 5.8.1 The RSPCA is opposed to animals being used in fiestas and carnivals, including bull-running, where pain, suffering or distress is caused.

Bull-running fiestas often take place prior to a bullfight, with the bull or bulls being run down cordoned-off streets, lined with spectators. Large numbers of people run ahead of the bulls in a 'show of bravery'. At some fiestas, darts are thrown at the bulls to enrage them further; at others, oiled and tarred cloths are applied to the bull's horns, which are then set on fire for its run through the town. Unless the bull is run into the bullfighting arena, it is most likely to be killed in the streets.



Throughout the year, there are many other carnivals and fiestas that often involve suffering to animals. For example: young horseback riders try to decapitate live geese which have been strung up in the market square; blind-folded children try to kill chickens and turkeys with sticks; small animals such as squirrels and pigeons are suspended in pots which young children try to smash by throwing stones.

## 5.9 The giving of live animals as prizes

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### 5.9.1 The RSPCA is opposed to the giving of live animals as prizes.

The giving of prizes usually refers to fish and sometimes to such animals as ponies, puppies and pigs. Whatever conditions the prize-giver attempts to impose (if any) these are inadequate to secure the future well-being of an animal which comes to be owned by chance rather than as a result of deliberate decision.

## 5.10 Fur

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### 5.10.1 The RSPCA is opposed to the farming and trapping of fur-bearing animals.

The farming and trapping of fur-bearing animals are practices which cause considerable suffering and fur is traded almost entirely as an inessential luxury product.

## 5.11 Hunting

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### 5.11.1 The RSPCA is opposed to any hunting of animals with dogs or other animals.

Hunting is taken to include mink hunting, deer hunting, coursing, hunting of hares and rabbits, and fox hunting. The RSPCA does not believe that there is a need for control of the fox or hare population on a national basis or that hunting is ever an effective control or culling measure. The RSPCA does not believe the fox is a general pest. On the contrary, scientific evidence strongly suggests that foxes are a considerable economic asset for British arable farmers, saving them as much as £100 million each year by reducing the rabbit population.

The RSPCA is satisfied that the hunted animal experiences considerable suffering and welcomes the confirmation of this view by the Report of The Committee of Inquiry into Hunting with Dogs in England & Wales chaired by Lord Burns (June 2000). Suffering may also be caused to dogs and to non-target animals.

## 5.12 Shooting

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- 5.12.1      **The RSPCA believes that 'sport' does not justify the causing of suffering to birds and other animals, and therefore the RSPCA is opposed to shooting for sport.**

The RSPCA accepts that a 'clean kill' is the intention of those shooting for sport, but it is a fact that this does not always happen, and that therefore suffering does occur.

- 5.12.2      **The RSPCA is opposed to the use of air weapons or bows in the shooting of animals.**

Air weapons and bows are both dangerous weapons. A lack of adequate controls on the manufacture, sales and use of these weapons leads to their use in inappropriate circumstances which results in considerable animal suffering.

- 5.12.3      **The RSPCA is opposed to the pinioning, brailing and beak trimming of, and the use of spectacles or blinkers on, game birds kept in rearing pens.**

Pinioning involves the surgical removal of the tip of a wing permanently to prevent flying and brailing the taping of the bird's wing to render it temporarily flightless. Beak trimming involves removing the tip of the upper beak in order to prevent feather pecking and cannibalism. Using spectacles and blinkers involves the fitting of devices to restrict the bird's vision.

- 5.12.4      **The RSPCA is opposed to the killing of predatory animals solely because they may be considered a threat to game birds.**

- 5.12.5      The RSPCA is opposed to the use of lead gun-shot in circumstances where the spent pellets are likely to be ingested by, and hence poison, waterfowl.

Lead poisoning in waterfowl with ingested shotgun pellets has resulted in a number of countries phasing out the use of lead shot for waterfowl hunting. The RSPCA believes that alternatives such as steel, bismuth and tin shot should be used.

### 5.13      Angling

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- 5.13.1      The RSPCA believes that current practices in angling involve the infliction of pain and suffering on fish.

The Medway Report has proved to the satisfaction of the RSPCA that fish are capable of experiencing pain and suffering. The RSPCA advocates that those anglers who see fit to pursue their activities adopt a code of practice based on this report.

- 5.13.2      The RSPCA is opposed to the use of lead in angling in view of the suffering and death caused to waterfowl.

Lead weights used by anglers resulted in the deaths of large numbers of mute swans. In 1987 legislation was introduced in the UK to prohibit the sale and use of most sizes of lead weight.

## 6 Horses and donkeys etc.

### 6.1 General considerations

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- 6.1.1 The RSPCA discourages the breeding, keeping or use of horses and donkeys, for whatever purpose, by anyone who has not the facilities, skills, knowledge and resources to provide fully for the animal's welfare under all circumstances. Horses and donkeys have complex needs and require adequate access to farriery and veterinary treatment. Such provision may be more difficult to obtain for animals owned by members of the travelling community, but it is nonetheless essential.
- 6.1.2 There is widespread use of horses and donkeys as beasts of burden internationally, and the RSPCA is very concerned that the welfare of many of these animals is very poor. The Society urges that aid agencies prioritise resources to educate and support poor people to better care for their animals.

### 6.2 Tethering of horses and donkeys

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- 6.2.1 The RSPCA is opposed to tethering as a method of managing horses and donkeys

Tethering as a method of managing horses and ponies is unsatisfactory from many points of view. It is often used by people who regularly move from site to site and do not have access to fenced fields. In these circumstances, the Animal Welfare Act of 2006 should be adhered to. A constant supply of fresh water should be provided and every effort must be made to provide protection against extremes of weather and to provide adequate supervision.

### 6.3 Racing

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- 6.3.1 The RSPCA is opposed to methods and conditions at racecourses or during training that may cause injury.

The RSPCA is concerned about the excessive production of horses for racing, and the likelihood of future welfare problems for unwanted, retired or injured animals. The RSPCA believes the racing industry should make provision for the future well-being of these animals.

- 6.3.2 The RSPCA is opposed to the use of drugs which are administered with a view to altering the performance of an animal including by masking pain.

- 6.3.3 The RSPCA is opposed to the racing and training of horses where distress or injury result from the placing of excessive demands upon the animal.
- 6.3.4 The RSPCA is opposed to the use of whips which cause pain or suffering. The RSPCA believes that the only permissible whips should be those of proven shock absorbing designs.

Many whips used in horse racing are capable of causing excessive pain and injury to a horse. The rules governing the use of whips have been strengthened and better enforced by the Horseracing Regulatory Authority in recent years. The RSPCA advocates that the rules should further specify only whips based on shock absorbing designs be permitted. The design of such whips, while being perfectly adequate for all normal riding purposes, must minimise any pain and must not injure the horse.

#### 6.4 Show jumping, eventing and dressage

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- 6.4.1 The RSPCA is opposed to practices which can cause suffering in show jumping, eventing or dressage. This includes striking with the whip in a manner which causes distress or suffering; competition where obstacles are unreasonably difficult; the use of training methods which cause distress or suffering, and the use of drugs to alter the performance of the horse or to enable it to compete.

#### 6.5 Firing

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- 6.5.1 The RSPCA opposes the firing of horses for allegedly therapeutic purposes

Whilst this practice is illegal in the UK, it is carried out in some other countries and horses may be sent abroad to have the procedure carried out. The RSPCA believes that firing is a cruel and ineffective practice and should never be used.

#### 6.6 Donkey derbies and other horse rides

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- 6.6.1 The RSPCA opposes donkey derbies and poorly managed horse rides but, while they continue, will seek to ensure that procedures are followed which properly protect the welfare of the animals.

#### 6.7 Sales

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- 6.7.1 The RSPCA believes that the welfare of horses at many collective markets is poor.

The RSPCA believes that the welfare of the animals should be a primary consideration in all markets.

The RSPCA is concerned about:

- the use of unsuitable premises, untrained staff and poor market management
- the length of time horses stand in markets with neither food, water, nor bedding (this is particularly the case when the animals have to travel long distances to and from the market)
- the possibility that horses may be transported from one market to another without proper rest and care
- the lack of enforcement of the existing regulations in markets by the appropriate authorities.

## 6.8 Slaughter

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- 6.8.1 Where unwanted feral ponies are destined for slaughter, the RSPCA believes that they should not be subjected to sale through livestock markets (see also policy 7.5.1).
- 6.8.2 Where privately owned horses are to be put down, the RSPCA believes this should be done on site, wherever possible, to avoid the stress of transport. If through age or debility horses are no longer of use to their owner, they should never be subjected to sale through livestock markets.

## 6.9 Equine identification

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- 6.9.1 The RSPCA believes that moorland ponies should be identified using a microchip and should not be hot branded.

The RSPCA considers that the benefits of hot branding do not justify the use of hot branding on moorland ponies. Microchipping provides a guarantee of identity and appears to be significantly less painful than hot branding. The RSPCA accepts that horse owners may wish to freeze mark horses or ponies, in addition to microchipping, where theft is a significant risk.

Where hot branding or freeze marking are performed, animals should be given adequate pain relief and handled in a way to minimise distress.

## 7 Farm animals

### 7.1 General considerations

- 7.1.1 The RSPCA is opposed to all forms of farming that cause distress or suffering, or deprive animals of the opportunity to indulge in their natural behaviour, and believes that farming practices should provide natural or near-natural lifestyles for the animals concerned. The RSPCA supports the assertion of the Farm Animal Welfare Council that all farm animals should enjoy a good life and at a minimum they must live a life worth living.

The welfare of an animal includes its physical and mental state and the RSPCA considers that good animal welfare implies both fitness and a sense of well-being.

The RSPCA is concerned that the commercial mass production of food animals in the livestock industry causes suffering to a greater or lesser extent whether through the close confinement and/or barren nature of some systems or through shortcomings in transport and slaughtering techniques. The Farm Animal Welfare Council promotes the adoption of the 'Five Freedoms' which define ideal states which should be aimed for.

The 'Five Freedoms' are:

- **Freedom from hunger and thirst**  
by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.
- **Freedom from discomfort**  
by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
- **Freedom from pain, injury or disease**  
by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
- **Freedom to express normal behaviour**  
by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind.
- **Freedom from fear and distress**  
by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.

Freedom from boredom: the RSPCA recommends that accommodation for livestock should be environmentally enriched and that attention is given to the alleviation of boredom.

Many production systems provide a barren environment which encourages the development of stereotypic behaviour in the animals so housed.

These freedoms will be better provided for if those who have care of livestock practise:

- caring and responsible planning and management
- skilled, knowledgeable and conscientious stockmanship
- appropriate environmental design
- considerate handling and transport
- humane slaughter.

As well as other strategies, the RSPCA will seek to promote farm animal welfare through its published farm animal welfare standards and the operation of the RSPCA Freedom Food Scheme.

- 7.1.2      The RSPCA encourages the principle of planned herd or flock health management and encourages farmers and veterinary surgeons to work together to prevent, monitor and respond to existing and emerging farm animal welfare concerns.

## 7.2      Food labelling

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- 7.2.1      The RSPCA advocates that consumers should have the right to know how all animal products (including non-food products) are produced and that these should all be clearly and transparently labelled with information relating to animal welfare

## 7.3      Poultry

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- 7.3.1      The RSPCA is opposed to the battery cage system, or variations of that system, for egg production in domestic fowl and gamebirds.



- 7.3.2      The RSPCA is in favour of laying systems in which the welfare of the bird is properly protected and in which a nest, scratching/dustbathing areas and a perch are provided and where the stocking density and colony size is appropriate for the needs of the birds.**

The RSPCA is committed to the securing the abolition of all cage systems for egg production which does not provide for the health and welfare needs of the hen. The RSPCA is also concerned about the welfare of birds in many alternative systems in which the stocking density is at the maximum permitted by the European Union legislation and where the facilities are inadequate with respect to perches, pop-holes, nest boxes and quality of management. The RSPCA is opposed to the use of forced moulting to increase egg production.

- 7.3.3      The RSPCA is opposed to production systems in which the welfare of chickens (broilers), turkeys, ducks and other poultry is compromised.**

The modern chicken (broiler) reaches its slaughter weight at the age of five weeks. This rapid growth, brought about by selective breeding programmes, nutritional and other management factors, has resulted in serious welfare concerns. The most serious of these are widespread leg weakness and joint problems. A considerable body of scientific research shows that a significant proportion of broilers display walking abnormalities and that many of these will be experiencing pain. The RSPCA believes that far greater attention must be given to the health and fitness of birds during both breeding programmes and on-farm management with the target of eliminating leg and other problems associated with fast growth rate.

Farmed turkeys are often kept under very low light levels in order to overcome the problem of feather pecking. Scientific research has shown that such conditions may cause severe visual impairment in turkeys and, therefore, compromise their welfare. The RSPCA believes that alternative humane measures must be sought to address the issue of feather pecking in turkeys.

## 7.4 Calves

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- 7.4.1 The RSPCA is opposed to the use of individual crates for the rearing of calves except where calves need to be housed individually during veterinary treatment. Whilst they are now banned in the EU, they are widely used elsewhere.
- 7.4.2 The RSPCA recommends the use of loose-housed or outdoor systems with a stocking density which allows free movement and the expression of normal behaviour.
- 7.4.3 The RSPCA believes that veal calves should receive a diet which allows normal physiological development and health and is opposed to the use of diets from which necessary nutrients have been excluded.

Group rearing of calves does not in itself guarantee good welfare. Such systems must provide adequate space, access to fibre and water in addition to milk, bedding and a diet which keeps the animals in full health and vigour.

## 7.5 Livestock markets

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- 7.5.1 The RSPCA has many concerns about the sale of livestock at markets. The RSPCA believes that all farm animals which are sent for slaughter or are being transferred between rearing and finishing farms should be handled humanely and should be given as stress free and direct a journey as is possible. The RSPCA is opposed to the sale at livestock markets of animals destined for slaughter.

The RSPCA is concerned about the live auction system because it often imposes additional unloading and loading requirements, increased time between feeds, restricted access to water, increased exposure to other livestock and therefore disease, and the general stress of the market situation. This stress will be increased if untrained animal handlers are used. Market operators should ensure that animal handlers are appropriately trained and competent to handle animals in a positive and compassionate manner.

The RSPCA advocates that, wherever possible, all livestock should travel either direct from farm to farm or direct from farm to slaughter. However, the RSPCA is concerned about the potential for increased journey times and multiple pick-ups which can be associated with other livestock marketing systems such as electronic and satellite auctions.

For livestock destined for slaughter there are now tried and tested alternatives to sale at markets. However, for many traditional methods of beef and sheep production, where animals are transferred between rearing and finishing farms, alternatives to markets have yet to become widely established and a well managed livestock market serving local farmers can provide a method of linking rearer and finisher. Transfer of livestock via such markets can cause less suffering than farm to farm transfer involving multiple pick ups and drop offs.

## 7.6 Pigs

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- 7.6.1 The RSPCA is opposed to systems of pig husbandry where no solid lying area and no form of bedding and environmental enrichment is provided. Straw should be provided to satisfy rooting behaviours and eliminate some behavioural abnormalities, whilst straw or similar material should be used to provide a dry comfortable lying area.
- 7.6.2 The RSPCA is opposed to the close tethering of pigs except for a temporary purpose, such as veterinary examination, and to the use of stalls for dry or pregnant sows. The RSPCA recommends that alternative systems are used which meet the animals' physical and behavioural needs.
- 7.6.3 The RSPCA is opposed to the weaning of piglets at an age that results in either behavioural or health problems.

Pigs are naturally active, intelligent and inquisitive. Their welfare can be properly accommodated in both outdoor and indoor systems, provided that management is of a high standard and they are given an environment which takes account of their behavioural and other welfare requirements. The UK ban on close confinement gestation

stalls from the end of 1998 has provided an opportunity to move towards high welfare systems. Although illegal in the UK since 1999, until 2013 EU law still permits use of stall and tether systems, and many sows in Europe and other countries such as the USA continue to be kept in such conditions. The UK also imports pig meat from these countries which is not labelled with the method of production, so preventing consumers from making informed choices about which animal production systems they support through their purchases.

The RSPCA believes that, to provide comfort and opportunities for foraging, pigs should have bedding material at all stages of their growth. Unfortunately, many are still reared in systems which have ignored the pigs' needs, keeping them, for example, in barren pens. Virtually all indoor and some outdoor sows are put into a restrictive farrowing crate to give birth to their piglets. Farrowing crates can help protect piglets, but at considerable expense to the welfare of the sow, at a time when she would normally be highly active building a nest. The RSPCA believes that it is possible to give sows more freedom whilst still protecting piglets, and is supporting the development, commercial testing and on-farm use of alternative non-confining systems.

The RSPCA believes that, to provide comfort and opportunities for foraging, pigs should have bedding and appropriate environmental enrichment materials at all stages of rearing.

## 7.7 Livestock breeding programmes

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### 7.7.1 **The RSPCA is opposed to breeding or breeding programmes which cause or are likely to cause suffering or damage to mothers and offspring.**

The RSPCA is concerned about the destruction of unwanted offspring, including male chicks and dairy calves shortly after hatching/birth. The RSPCA recognises that the technology associated with producing sexed semen from livestock is now well proven in some species, particularly cattle, and in such cases the Society encourages its use. When used via artificial insemination (but not embryo transfer, which presents welfare concerns), it can result in welfare benefits including reduced numbers of unwanted male calves and fewer cases of difficult calvings.

The deliberate breeding of some cattle, which encourages enlargement of muscles, particularly the hindquarters, resulting in a restricted birth canal and larger calves, inhibits the normal ease of calving and leads to multiple caesarean births from the same dam.

The RSPCA recognises that the use of sorted sexed bovine semen to pre-select the gender of calves via artificial insemination (but NOT embryo transfer) of dairy cows could have a positive role to play in alleviating some of the welfare problems currently encountered in the dairy industry and has the potential to result in a number of benefits.

- 7.7.2      The RSPCA is opposed to the selection of animals for accelerated growth rates and other production enhancements.**

The RSPCA is opposed to the selection of animals for accelerated growth rates and other production enhancements (e.g. larger litter sizes) where this may inhibit normal activity, cause metabolic or skeletal defects, chronic lameness and pain, increased mortality or other welfare problems.

## **7.8          Production systems**

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- 7.8.1      The RSPCA believes that new buildings should be constructed, or existing buildings modified, in a way that allows a high standard of husbandry and welfare requirements to be met, including relevant precautions against fire.**

Totally slatted floors are unsuitable for all cloven hoofed animals. If such floors are used as part of the available space, they should be designed, constructed and maintained so as to minimise discomfort, distress or injury. No animal should be permanently housed on totally slatted floors and all should have access to a solid bedded lying area. The RSPCA believes, particularly in the case of cattle and sheep management, that lameness and foot problems should be given special attention.

- 7.8.2      The RSPCA is opposed to the introduction of animal production systems or changes to existing systems, which are detrimental to the welfare of the animals involved or to local wildlife.**

Waste from farm animal production systems has been responsible for causing environmental pollution. The RSPCA is concerned about the effect such pollution may have on wildlife.

- 7.8.3      The RSPCA is opposed to the mutilation of farm animals.**

- 7.8.4** The RSPCA is opposed to the castration of piglets or lambs destined to be killed before the age of sexual maturity, the docking of pigs' tails except for veterinary reasons and the beak-trimming of birds except where there is no alternative in order to prevent feather-pecking or cannibalism.

The RSPCA believes that these problems can often be significantly reduced through good husbandry and the RSPCA supports non-invasive research to help identify how such mutilations can be avoided.

- 7.8.5** The RSPCA is opposed to the docking of lambs' tails unless there is an unavoidable risk of fly-strike and close, frequent inspection of each animal is not possible.
- 7.8.6** The RSPCA is opposed to the development of systems for farming non-domesticated species, e.g. ostriches, which involve suffering.

The RSPCA views with great concern the development of the farming of ostriches and other species of animals not traditionally farmed within the UK. Such developments raise questions about the welfare of the animals involved within an environment to which they might not be well adapted. Since many of the species being farmed have had little or no history of domestication, there are serious questions as to their capacity to cope with a farming situation. It is the RSPCA's view that there are already a considerable number of welfare problems to be addressed with conventional farm species, and the RSPCA believes that the introduction of such 'exotic' animals will only introduce further problems.

- 7.8.7** The RSPCA is opposed to the forced feeding of geese and ducks to produce 'foie gras', the intensive rearing of deer with no access to pasture in summer, the harvesting of antler 'velvet' from live deer and to the intensive rearing of rabbits especially on wire-floored cages.

The harvesting of deer antlers in velvet is illegal in the UK except when a veterinary surgeon deems it necessary in the case of an emergency or for health reasons. However, it is undertaken on a large scale in some other countries for commercial reasons.

- 7.8.8** The RSPCA is opposed to the administration of substances or application of techniques which are intended solely to enhance the production or performance of an animal and which cause or are likely to cause pain or suffering.

- 7.8.9 The RSPCA is opposed to the use in farm animal production of biotechnological techniques which cause pain or suffering.
- 7.8.10 The RSPCA is opposed to the importation of any animal product from abroad which has been produced using practices which are illegal in the UK. The RSPCA also advocates that all animal products on sale in the UK should be produced to welfare standards at least as high as those required in the RSPCA's Freedom Food scheme (see also policy 10.2.2, International action).

## 7.9 Transportation

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- 7.9.1 The RSPCA advocates that, because of the inevitable distress and suffering caused to food animals during transport, all food animals should be slaughtered as near as possible to the point of production.
- 7.9.2 The RSPCA believes that no journey for food animals destined for slaughter should last longer than eight hours and for some classes of animals, scientific evidence suggests that it should be considerably less, the journey time being taken from the time the first animal is loaded to the time the last animal is unloaded.
- 7.9.3 The RSPCA is opposed to the trade in live animals between the UK and other European countries, or worldwide, whether for immediate slaughter or for further fattening and advocates the adoption of a carcass-only trade.

The RSPCA believes that the enforcement of UK or EU legislation is vital to its proper implementation and supports adequate funding for this purpose including the establishment of national and international enforcement bodies.

- 7.9.4 The RSPCA supports the establishment of a formal certification procedure for drivers of vehicles involved in road transportation of animals. Such certification should, among other things, be based on the possession and application by the drivers of an adequate knowledge of the husbandry of animals in their care. This is now a legislative requirement.

## 7.10 Slaughter

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The RSPCA believes that all farm animals should be killed humanely.

- 7.10.1 The RSPCA is opposed to the slaughter of any animal without rendering that animal insensible to pain and distress until death supervenes.
- 7.10.2 The RSPCA believes that fear should be kept to minimum levels prior to and during slaughter.

The Welfare of Animals (Slaughter or Killing) Regulations 1995 states that all animals slaughtered in a slaughterhouse or knacker's yard must either be:

- instantaneously slaughtered by means of a mechanically operated instrument or
- stunned by means of mechanically operated instrument or an instrument for stunning by electricity, provided that they are instantaneously rendered insensible to pain until death supervenes or
- they may be slaughtered/killed by any other means specified in the regulations, provided that the animals are again rendered insensible to pain until death supervenes.

The 1995 Regulations exempt the Jewish method of slaughter, Shechita, and the Muslim method of slaughter, Halal, from the requirement to stun prior to sticking (bleeding). While respecting individual religious practices, the RSPCA opposes these exemptions on welfare grounds. All meat from animals killed in this way should be clearly labelled.

Because of their temperament, non-domesticated species such as ostriches are not amenable to transportation or handling within normal licensed slaughterhouse systems.

- 7.10.3 The RSPCA advocates the proper training of slaughtermen and the introduction of a licensing system based on the successful completion of a course of instruction together with the necessary practical experience. These proposals include those involved in the field slaughter of deer.
- 7.10.4 The RSPCA would like to see an end to the employment of abattoir workers on a piece rate basis. Much suffering is caused to animals by hurried stunning and killing.



- 7.10.5 The RSPCA believes that all slaughterhouses should have an animal welfare officer responsible for consistent and appropriate training, supervision and implementation of welfare provisions.

The RSPCA calls for CCTV to be installed in every slaughterhouse and for the footage to be regularly reviewed by an independent panel, the media and the RSPCA; also for all slaughtermen to undergo a meaningful 'fit and proper person' test and thereafter ongoing training and assessment.

- 7.10.6 The RSPCA is opposed to catching, retail and killing methods that cause suffering and/or distress to lobsters, crabs, crayfish, octopus or squid for food. There is scientific evidence that indicates that these creatures are capable of suffering. Killing by plunging the living animal into boiling water is considered by the RSPCA to be cruel. The RSPCA believes that recently developed electrical stunning/ killing equipment has the potential to provide a more humane method of killing.

## 7.11 Casualty animals

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- 7.11.1 The RSPCA advocates that farm animals which have to be destroyed due to physical injury or disease should be euthanased on site without delay by a competent person. The RSPCA advocates that those involved in the handling and care of livestock and who may be placed in the position of euthanasing an animal should undergo appropriate training to ensure competency.

## 8 Laboratory animals

### 8.1 Pain and suffering in experiments

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#### 8.1.1 The RSPCA is opposed to all experiments or procedures which cause pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm.

Animal experimentation in the UK is controlled by the Animal (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986. Procedures can only be carried out after licensing by the Home Office and, under the Act, the likely benefits of the proposed work must be weighed against the likely harms to the animals involved before a licence is granted.

The RSPCA is particularly concerned about those procedures and projects carried out under the 1986 Act which are classified by the Home Office as being of substantial severity.

It is important that, as long as animals continue to be used, every possible effort must be made to prevent suffering. Anaesthesia or other forms of analgesia are essential for the relief of pain but alone cannot be considered satisfactory solutions to many welfare problems such as fear, hunger, boredom, social isolation and other forms of distress. The whole complex question of the prevention of pain, the relief of suffering and the reduction of distress, must be kept under constant review by those responsible for authorising and carrying out experiments under United Kingdom legislation.

Set out in the remaining paragraphs are areas of laboratory animal use about which the RSPCA has particular concern.

### 8.2 Unnecessary experiments

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#### 8.2.1 The RSPCA is opposed to animal experiments which involve unnecessary repetitions, scientifically trivial ends, or techniques to which satisfactory alternatives not using living animals have already been developed.

The laws that control research on animals in both the UK and the European Union clearly state that living animals must not be used in experiments if there is a suitable alternative that can achieve the same aims, and the government has recently accepted that this is so even where regulators elsewhere take a different scientific view. However, where animal tests are done to satisfy existing regulatory requirements it is extremely difficult to gain acceptance for alternative methods. The RSPCA believes that the development and acceptance process for alternative tests should be streamlined and that government, international regulatory bodies, research funders and industry should be more prepared to challenge the need for animal use.

- 8.2.2 The RSPCA is opposed to the use of animals in the testing of inessential substances, such as cosmetics and toiletries, non-medical products such as garden chemicals, DIY products, pesticides, household products and food additives. The Society believes there should be some mechanism for questioning the need for the product as well as the test.

### 8.3 Alternatives

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- 8.3.1 The RSPCA supports the development of techniques that will result in the replacement, reduction or refinement of animal experiments, the principle of the '3 Rs'. The RSPCA regards as an advance any technique which will completely replace the use of animals, reduce the numbers used or reduce suffering or otherwise improve laboratory animal welfare. While welcoming any reduction in the number of animals used in research, the RSPCA places an even greater emphasis upon reducing levels of suffering of individual animals.

Examples of replacement techniques include cell, tissue and organ cultures, the use of human tissue and human volunteers, the use of videos, interactive computer technology in teaching and more extensive computer modelling. More could be done to develop replacements for animals and to explore alternative approaches that avoid animal use. Such work merits greater commitment and support from government, science and industry.

Techniques leading to reduction in the numbers of animals used include the setting up of well designed and comprehensive centralised data banks accessible to everyone, adequate prior literature research together with improved experimental design including the use of appropriate statistical methods.

Examples of refinement include the use of analgesics and the abolition of the use of severe adverse effects, including death, as endpoints in experiments on animals. The RSPCA believes that refinement offers the best scope for alleviating laboratory animal suffering in the short term. However, this does not compromise the RSPCA's long-term aim of completely replacing animals in laboratories with alternative techniques. The RSPCA is concerned that laboratory animals often live in confined and barren conditions and strongly promotes environmental enrichment for all animals that includes both good quantity and quality of space to allow them to express natural behaviour.

## 8.4 Legislative and ethical concerns

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- 8.4.1 The RSPCA believes that it is of vital importance that all new experimental and testing protocols should be subject to extensive ethical review. This should include critical evaluation of the necessity and justification for animal use and implementation of the 3Rs. The RSPCA welcomes the establishment of local ethical review processes at all research, breeding and supply facilities and believes it is essential that these should contain a proper representation of both independent lay members and animal welfare specialists and that the processes be open and transparent.
- 8.4.2 The RSPCA supports the provisions of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (ASPA) that one or more persons be nominated to have overall responsibility for the day-to-day care of the animals in a scientific procedure establishment and that a veterinary surgeon must be appointed to monitor the health and welfare status of these animals.

The RSPCA believes that far greater openness and transparency is required in the implementation and operation of the Act. There is only limited information published in the Home Office statistics and Animal Procedures Committee reports and it is not possible from this to assess how effectively the harms to animals are weighed against the perceived benefits of research within the licensing process. Neither is it possible to see how far animal use and suffering is reduced.

The RSPCA believes that more information should be made publicly available on the aims of research, the procedures and suffering involved, and the licensing process: for example there should be a strong presumption that project licence application forms should be made available in anonymised form prior to the grant of a licence and information should be made available on the decision-making process under ASPA, and on policy and decision-making in research funding bodies, regulatory authorities, and companies who develop and market products.

The importance of appropriate and rigorous training for all staff involved with the care and use of animals in research and testing cannot be overemphasised. The RSPCA believes that the necessary training, not only in the techniques that are to be used in the recognition and alleviation of pain and suffering, (including analgesia, anaesthesia and euthanasia), but also in the ethical consideration of animal use, should take place before licences are granted.

Further training in the design of experiments such that the least number of animals is used is important.

The RSPCA believes that sufficient funding and resources should be made available to the Home Office inspectorate to enable it to fulfil all its roles under the 1986 Act. Home Office inspectors perform a broad range of duties including assessing project licence applications and carrying out the harm-benefit analysis, assessing personal licence applications, visiting designated establishments, collecting the annual statistics on animal use, dealing with infringements and producing guidelines on best practice. Both the numbers of inspectors and the resources should be increased and they should include individuals with specific animal welfare expertise.

**8.4.3**      The RSPCA is opposed to the use in laboratories of wild-caught animals of any species.

**8.4.4**      The RSPCA is opposed to the use of Great Apes.

Great Apes have complex behavioural and social needs which can never be satisfied adequately in laboratory conditions.

**8.4.5**      The RSPCA believes that research using all species of cephalopod should be regulated under the 1986 Act and not just *Octopus vulgaris* as is currently the case.

## **8.5**      **Laboratory animal supply**

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**8.5.1**      The RSPCA is opposed to the import and export of laboratory animals, particularly non-human primates.

**8.5.2**      The RSPCA believes that breeding, supplying, research and testing establishments designated under the 1986 Act should be open to inspection by the RSPCA.

**8.5.3**      The RSPCA encourages the appropriate rehoming of laboratory animals.

While animals continue to be used in procedures the RSPCA would wish, wherever possible, that the feasibility of rehoming laboratory animals once they are released from the controls of the Act be investigated. The RSPCA acknowledges the difficulties likely to be encountered but believes that where animals would be able to adapt to a new life, rehoming should be considered.

- 8.5.4 The RSPCA is concerned that laboratory animals are often bred in excess of experimental requirements leading to unnecessary wastage of animals' lives. This may occur because of demands for a specific sex, age or weight of animals to be immediately available. The RSPCA believes that the justification for such demands must be critically reviewed, and that breeding and research establishments should aim to reduce wastage substantially, in particular by improving forward planning.

## 9 Wild animals

### 9.1 General considerations

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'Wild animals' in this context refers to species which are living free, whether indigenous, introduced (e.g. grey squirrels) or those that have become feral (e.g. mink, goats and pigeons).

- 9.1.1 The RSPCA is opposed, in principle, to the taking or killing of wild animals, or the infliction of any suffering upon them.
- 9.1.2 The RSPCA seeks to protect wild animals from any form of suffering, and strongly urges that they receive a far greater degree of protection under the law. The RSPCA notes that interactions between humans and wild animals are affected by considerations of biodiversity, conservation and sustainability and does all in its power to ensure that such interactions cause the minimum of pain or distress to individual animals.

Humans kill wild animals for a variety of reasons ranging from sport, food, population control, the protection of life or property, the advancement of knowledge, and the production of materials (ivory, fur, oil etc), to conservation. In every case the RSPCA challenges the justification for and proportionality of such killings, proposes humane alternatives where possible, and presses the welfare case using scientific, opinion poll, legal and other evidence.

Before exceptions to the principle of opposition to taking or killing wild animals can be considered there must be:

- strong scientific evidence that there is a legitimate case for the taking and killing of wild animals in this instance, or
- a case for taking or killing particular animals for necessary food purposes, or
- where the question is one of control, evidence that control is necessary and that alternative methods of control are not appropriate.

In all cases methods of control and taking should cause the minimum of pain or distress to individual animals and wherever possible non-harmful methods of deterrence should be developed and used.

The Society may accept culling\* if it is humane and if not to do so would cause greater individual suffering. Where this is not the case the RSPCA will challenge the cull's justification and methodology. A killing method can be classified as humane where no distress is caused and an immediate state of unconsciousness is achieved followed by rapid progression to death.

\* Culling involves the removal of animals from a population, by killing or by trapping and relocating, in order to reduce or control the numbers of animals in that population.

## 9.2 Snares and traps

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- 9.2.1 The RSPCA is opposed to the manufacture, sale and use of all snares, traps using live decoys and any trap which causes suffering.
- 9.2.2 The RSPCA approves of live traps only when the trap is capable of restraining an animal without causing pain, injury or distress and the trap is visited at least every 12 hours. Where animals are to be destroyed the method of killing must be humane.

The term 'all snares' includes those using stops, ratchets, etc.

The RSPCA recognises the necessity of capturing animals on a limited scale for a variety of reasons and, in such cases, live traps are acceptable provided that they are visited frequently, the frequency varying from one to 12 hours depending upon the species and trap concerned. Those animals taken in a live trap for destruction must be immediately destroyed according to RSPCA euthanasia guidelines.

The RSPCA is opposed to all body-grip, glue or drowning traps because they cause unacceptable suffering

## 9.3 Poisons

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- 9.3.1 The RSPCA is opposed to the use of poisons which cause animal suffering and is concerned about the widespread agricultural and commercial use of chemical substances which are potentially lethal to wild, farm and domestic animals.

The RSPCA was particularly concerned about the use of strychnine for poisoning moles and the use of hydrogen cyanide against other animals. These methods are no longer



permitted under European and UK legislation (Plant Protection Products and Biocidal Products Directives, and Control of Pesticides Regulations). Other, permitted substances remain a matter of concern, and the RSPCA urges that more humane alternatives are used.

## 9.4 Feral cats

- 9.4.1 The RSPCA recommends that, where the welfare of feral cats is ensured and their presence is accepted by the owners of the site, the animals should be humanely trapped whereafter veterinary advice should be sought regarding their health status and attempts should be made to rehome very young kittens or other cats which are not totally feral. Euthanasia should be carried out on those cats which in the opinion of the veterinary surgeon are seriously ill or which are injured to the extent that returning to the site would result in continuing suffering and the remaining cats should be neutered. While under anaesthetic for such neutering, the left ear of the cat should be 'tipped' to enable the cat to be easily recognised as having been neutered and the neutered and identified cats should be returned to the site and any further suitable advice given.

The treatment against fleas and round and tape worms of all cats selected for rehoming or for neutering as above is considered necessary.

'Tipping' means the removal of 6 mm, by a straight cut, of the tip of the ear.

- 9.4.2 The RSPCA recommends that, where the welfare of feral cats cannot be ensured or their presence is not accepted by the owners of the site, the contact should be told of the RSPCA policy given under 9.4.1. above and be given the opportunity to reconsider. If this fails to resolve the problem, or where the presence of feral cats cannot be permitted because of legal reasons, the RSPCA recommends that all cats are humanely trapped, treated and neutered, then rehomed or re-sited wherever possible and appropriate, or humanely euthanased.

The RSPCA cannot guarantee that animals trapped by pest control firms will be destroyed in accordance with methods approved by the RSPCA.

Further information concerning feral cats is available through local RSPCA regional HQs.

## 9.5 Conservation and the environment

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- 9.5.1      **The RSPCA is concerned with the welfare of all wild animals and it deplores man-made changes in the environment which cause suffering to wild animals.**

Changes to the environment may include interference with or the direct destruction of habitats, e.g. the removal of hedgerows, destruction of wetlands or stubble burning.

The RSPCA's concern is with the suffering of individual animals and not the conservation of species. Species themselves do not suffer although where a species is in decline, individuals may suffer particular welfare harm as a consequence. In most cases, conservation and welfare arguments coincide in supporting similar actions. Where they diverge, however, the RSPCA will question the ethical and factual premises of the conservation argument and press the case for welfare. Welfare concerns may arise in relation to the culling or other management of populations for conservation reasons, and the RSPCA will always give priority to animal welfare.

Pollution of land, air or water by chemical substances, waste products etc. may cause either direct suffering to wildlife or have a more indirect effect through damage to the environment itself.

- 9.5.2      **Regarding 'Invasive Alien Species', the Society believes that humankind must accept its responsibility for the consequences following the introduction of species into environments where they are non-native. As an animal welfare organisation, where possible we advocate solutions that place animal welfare considerations, for both the alien species and any affected native species, above conservation goals.**

The Society challenges, on a case by case basis, the activity of deliberate introductions, and feels that where this is being considered, those responsible should pay regard to possible future outcomes that may affect native species and be prepared to take responsibility for consequential problems. The Society treats the suffering of all animals equally, regardless of species or country of origin. Animals can naturally migrate across boundaries. It is not the fault of the animals themselves if they are relocated due to human action.

## 9.6 Trade in wild animals

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### 9.6.1 The RSPCA is opposed to the trade in wild-caught animals and products derived from them.

Live wild animals, including threatened species protected on conservation grounds, are caught in the wild and traded for various reasons such as for use in experimentation, keeping in zoos and as pets. Animal products from wild animals are also traded for souvenirs, clothing, decorative objects, food and medicinal purposes.

Opposition to the trade in wild-caught animals is based on evidence that such practices cause distress, suffering and death to large numbers of animals and are, in most instances, against all principles of conservation. The risk of introducing and transmitting diseases that are harmful to human beings and other animals is also increased when wild animals are traded.

### 9.6.2 The RSPCA is opposed to the trade in captive-bred wild animals and products derived from them, where there are grounds for believing that suffering may in practice be caused as a result of breeding, holding, transportation or use of the animal.

The RSPCA is opposed to the trade in captive-bred wild animals where it is reasonable to assume that suffering may be caused. In judging this, we take into account the whole life experience of the animal including:

- i) conditions at the breeding/holding centre;
- ii) how the animal is likely to cope with the journey in question; and
- iii) what is likely to become of the animal at its destination.

## 9.7 Whales and seals

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### 9.7.1 The RSPCA is opposed to the hunting and killing of whales and seals for any reason other than to relieve their suffering.

There is no method of killing hunted cetaceans without causing prolonged and unnecessary suffering.

There is no scientific evidence to demonstrate that seal populations have any significant detrimental impact on commercial fish stocks.

The RSPCA is concerned at the welfare problems associated with the incidental capture by commercial fisheries of marine species which include whales, dolphins, porpoises, sharks, turtles and seabirds.

## 9.8 Euthanasia

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- 9.8.1 Where wild animals have to be euthanased, either because they are unable to survive in the wild or because their suffering is severe and not readily treatable, this should be done according to current RSPCA guidelines. Noise and human proximity usually cause fear in wild animals. As a general principle, therefore, the handling of wild animals should be kept to an absolute minimum.

## 9.9 Wildlife rehabilitation

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- 9.9.1 The RSPCA believes that in most instances wild animals should only be held and treated in hospitals and rescue centres where it is believed that there is a good chance that they will be successfully rehabilitated back into the wild. Where an animal is expected not to survive, or to remain permanently disabled or otherwise unfit for life in the wild, then it should be euthanased as soon as possible to avoid further suffering. Exceptions to this policy may be considered where the quality of life of the animal in a captive or semi-captive environment can be assured.

The remedial treatment of wild animals should involve as little stress as possible; it should be borne in mind that contact with humans is itself distressing for most untamed wild animals. Transport and treatment should therefore seek to minimise pain and distress to conscious animals, and techniques of general tranquillisation, analgesia and anaesthesia should be applied wherever possible. Distressing sensory stimulation through noise, sight, smell or touch should be kept to a minimum.

The RSPCA believes that casualty wild animals should only be treated by those operating to acceptable standards of treatment and care, and would welcome the introduction of an independent licensing scheme to ensure that proper standards are applied at all wildlife treatment centres.

The Society supports the alleviation of the suffering of wild animals even when such suffering is caused naturally, except where this will create greater suffering.

## 10 Other provisions

### 10.1 Transport of unaccompanied animals

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- 10.1.1 The RSPCA believes that the transport of unaccompanied animals should be avoided wherever possible.

In order to protect the welfare of animals in-transit animals should be in good health and transported in suitable containers, according to all relevant guidelines such as IATA guidelines for air transport and CITES guidelines for transport. No animals should be transported in a way which is likely to cause suffering; rather, animals should be transported with no more than a minimal amount of discomfort. Further, animals should not be transported in the last third of a pregnancy. All journeys should be as short as possible in terms of time and distance travelled. Advanced transit planning and proper labelling of vehicles and containers are essential.

### 10.2. International action

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- 10.2.1 The RSPCA believes that International Conventions, Agreements, and other legal instruments that affect animals in any way should contain provisions relating to the welfare of those animals. The RSPCA endorses the principle of a Universal Declaration for the Welfare of Animals to be established under an international agreement e.g. at the United Nations.
- 10.2.2 The RSPCA believes that global animal welfare standards should be developed and adopted, such as those being developed by the OIE, to ensure that consistently high standards of animal welfare are practised throughout the world.
- 10.2.3 Within the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the RSPCA believes that free trade rules should enable a country to implement measures to ensure that high welfare standards are observed and not undermined by imports produced under lower standards.

Import restrictions can have a direct effect on raising animal welfare standards and maintaining existing standards. However, the rules governing trade under the WTO limit the ability of a country to prohibit imported goods, although not nearly to the extent that some people argue. The RSPCA has produced a number of potential solutions to this problem, such as including animal welfare concerns within the rules of the WTO; use of effective labelling; the ability to restrict imports according to the method of production; and allowing support for high welfare producers.

Scientific research clearly suggests that compromising the welfare of an animal is likely to affect adversely that animal's health: protection of animal health can be a justifiable reason for restriction of trade within the WTO agreements.

## 11 Sustainability and social responsibility

- 11.1 The RSPCA believes that animal welfare should be considered when organisations, across all sectors (public, private and third), are developing and implementing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) or Sustainability policies.

The RSPCA encourages acknowledgment that animal welfare has cross-over with the more conventional aspects of Corporate Social Responsibility.



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