



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

AUSTRALIA

UNESCO: Traditions vs. Animal welfare *Delegate: Carlos Contreras. UAB Research Group. Animals, Law and Society*

Protection of Australia's environment is important for all Australians and for the welfare of our unique and diverse native wildlife. Animals play an important role in Australian daily life due to:

- An increased community recognition that animals have an intrinsic value
- The important role of animals in Australia's history and development as a nation
- Australia's diverse and unique native animals, many of which figure prominently in indigenous culture.
- The strong cultural and sporting significance of animals, including the use of animals as a subject across the arts and as icons for our sporting teams

The Australian Animal Welfare Strategy – AAWS, covers the humane treatment of all animals in Australia. The Strategy's vision is that: *"The welfare of all animals in Australia is promoted and protected by the development and adoption of sound animal welfare standards and practices."* The Strategy provides direction for the development of future animal welfare policies, based on a national consultative approach and a firm commitment to high standards of animal welfare. There is also a lot of animal welfare self-regulation by industries such as the horse and greyhound racing industries, the meat and livestock industries, and the dairy and poultry industries. And we can't forget the impact of such organisations as Animals Australia and the Australian Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals has been immense.

The Goals of AAWS are to achieve: [1](#) an enhanced international approach and commitment to ensure high standards of animal welfare based on a concise outline of current processes [2](#) sustainable improvements in animal welfare based on national and international benchmarks, scientific evaluation and research, taking into account changes in whole of community standards, and [3](#) effective communication, education and training across the whole community to promote an improved understanding of animal welfare. The goals, objectives and activities outlined in the AAWS are based on science, national and international benchmarks, and social and economic considerations, and has been developed to provide both national and international communities with an appreciation of animal welfare arrangements in Australia. It also outlines the future direction and improvements to animal welfare in Australia. The Strategy establishes a framework for sustainable animal welfare outcomes based on scientific evidence, in order to meet the expectations of the Australian community with a focus on achieving a balance between education, extension and regulation.

Australia recognises that animal welfare is a complex issue. Science and ethics are both essential. Science provides the body of evidence about animals that is used for moral and ethical judgements about their welfare. At the same time, decisions about animal welfare are influenced by cultural, social, economic and occupational health and safety considerations.

It is true, that in Australia Animals are used in traditional practices like: Bull Riding, Calf/steer roping, Team roping, Steer wrestling or bulldogging, Bareback and saddle bronc riding and Rodeos. For many people Rodeos are a cruel spectator sport, condemned by all animal protection organisations, in which bulls, horses and sometimes other animals are physically provoked into displaying 'wild' behaviour by the use of such devices as spurs, electric prods and flank straps. Rodeo animals suffer many kinds of injuries, and are sometimes killed or have to be destroyed. Due to cruelty, rodeos are completely banned in Britain and in parts of Europe and United States. It is time for us to move in this direction.

Australia recognises that all animals have intrinsic value. The Australian approach to animal welfare requires that animals under human care or influence are healthy, properly fed and comfortable and that efforts are made to improve their well-being and living conditions. Australia's approach to animal welfare, through adoption of the Strategy, is to ensure that due consideration is accorded to a multitude of factors (including science, practicability, culture, economics, ethics, societal values of the whole community, education and awareness, innovation and international developments). These considerations are relevant to the establishment and promotion of sound animal welfare standards.

Australia emphasises in the importance of the care, uses and direct and indirect impacts of human activity on all sentient species of animals. A sentient animal is one that has the capacity to have feelings and to experience suffering and pleasure. Sentience implies a level of conscious awareness. This includes animals used in research and teaching, animals used for the production of food and fibre and other products, companion and guide animals, animals used for recreation, entertainment and display, native and introduced wildlife and feral animals. The Strategy builds on the current animal welfare framework in Australia.

Australia embraces a broad vision for the humane treatment of all sentient animals and with the AAWS provides a framework for sustainable improvements in animal welfare outcomes, based on scientific evidence and social, economic and ethical considerations. It reflects the high regard Australians place on the value, care and the well-being of animals. Australia wants to develop a communication plan to increase international community awareness and recognition of the importance of sound animal welfare standards and practices.

The [AAWS](#) highlights the need for domestic and international benchmarking of animal welfare outcomes, as currently being discussed by the [World Organization for Animal Health](#). Australia has been actively engaged in the establishment of national benchmarks for animal welfare and will continue to promote these Australian standards in relevant international forums and organisations like this one. Australia conforms with all international conventions on endangered species, including the [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora](#) which covers trade. Australia has also been working with other international bodies such as the [World Society for the Protection of Animals](#) on issues such as the development of a Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare.

Scientifically based animal welfare standards are currently being developed by the OIE in line with the following agreed *OIE Guiding Principles* for animal welfare, that:

- there is a critical relationship between animal health and animal welfare
- the internationally recognised 'five freedoms' (freedom from hunger, thirst and malnutrition; freedom from fear and distress, freedom from physical and thermal discomfort, freedom from pain, injury and disease, and freedom to express normal patterns of behaviour) provide valuable guidance in animal welfare
- the internationally recognised 'three Rs' (reduction in numbers of animals, refinement of experimental methods and replacement of animals with non-animal techniques) provide valuable guidance for the use of animals in science
- the scientific assessment of animal welfare involves diverse elements which need to be considered together, and that selecting and weighing these elements often involves value-based assumptions which should be made as explicit as possible
- the use of animals in agriculture and science, and for companionship, recreation and entertainment, makes a major contribution to the wellbeing of people
- the use of animals carries with it a duty to ensure the welfare of such animals to the greatest extent practicable
- improvements in farm animal welfare can often improve productivity and hence lead to economic benefits
- equivalent outcomes (performance criteria), rather than identical systems (design criteria), be the basis for comparison of animal welfare standards and guidelines.

Australia is taking these into account in developing its vision, international policies and input to relevant international goals for animal welfare.