

BVA position on animal welfare

Executive summary

Recognising animals as sentient beings provides the basis for our moral concern for the welfare of animals. Animals are living beings with the capacity to have feelings, including pain and pleasure.¹

<https://www.vet.org> Enhancing, protecting and securing the health and welfare of animals is the fundamental purpose of the veterinary profession. Animal welfare is a rapidly evolving social concern, and the veterinary profession plays a leading role in an interdisciplinary community seeking to promote the best interests of animals and improve their treatment, wherever they are used or impacted by people.

The importance of animal welfare for veterinary surgeons is conveyed in the declaration that each veterinarian
ALL, my constant endeavour will be to ensure the health and welfare of animals committed to my

The veterinary profession has a crucial role to play in advancing of animal welfare at individual, community, national and international levels. The [Veterinary Surgeons \(Regulation\) Act 2010](#) provides a framework to help vets advocate good animal welfare outcomes for all animals.

With developments in animal welfare science, we are now better able to characterise animal welfare, and frameworks for assessing and managing animal welfare have evolved.² Historically, animal welfare assessment and management has centred on identifying and minimising negative effects on animal welfare. More recently, animal welfare science has shifted towards models that strive not only to minimise negative welfare effects but also to maximise positive welfare effects. Such approaches

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In light of these advances in understanding, in this position we set out how key stakeholders can work together to protect, advocate and enhance animal welfare. Our recommendations cover:

- Defining and assessing animal welfare
- Human-animal interactions
- Animal welfare in UK legislation
- The role of the veterinary profession in advocating for animal welfare
- Veterinary training and education in animal welfare

¹ British Veterinary Association (2014) [Animal Welfare: A Guide for Veterinarians](#) (London: British Veterinary Association)

