

Summary of recommendations

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s life.

Recommendation 2: To protect, advocate and enhance animal welfare, the welfare of sentient animals should be assessed using up-to-date concepts, tools and scientific approaches. This includes awareness and assessments of behaviour as both a welfare indicator and welfare determinant, and assessment of mental wellbeing.

Recommendation 3: Animal health and welfare should not be unnecessarily compromised to address human want or need. Wherever animals are used for human benefit, including for food, clothing, entertainment, sport, scientific research, education, transportation and companionship, this should be exercised responsibly, with compassion for the animals concerned, and due regard for animal welfare, including decisions on breeding and selection.

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Five Domains

We support the Five Domains model for animal welfare assessment.¹³ The model outlines the key elements that should be considered when assessing welfare, the importance of positive welfare states and mental wellbeing, and how the actions of humans directly impact animal welfare.

Since its inception in 1994, the model has evolved to consider developments in animal welfare science. The most recent 2020 model¹⁴ centres on the following five domains:

1. Nutrition
2. Physical Environment
3. Health
4. Behavioural Interactions (including interactions with the environment, interactions with other animals, and interactions with humans)
5. Mental/emotional state

the animal arising from these factors (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Basic structure of the 2020 Five Domains Model¹⁵:

Domains 1-3 largely focus on animal-care based inputs and internal survival-related factors, eg. internal imbalances or disturbances which had nutritional, environmental and health origins. Domain 4 focusses on external situation-related factors and the behavioural outputs animals demonstrate in response to their external conditions, eg. external restrictive confinement or restraint, or otherwise unusual space availability and/or negative impacts of the presence or absence of other animals

¹³ Mellor, David H.; Beetz, Heidi; Nisato J.; Littlewood, Katherine E.; McLean, Andrew N.; McGreevy, Paul D.; Jones, Bidda; Wilkins, Cristina. 2020. "The 2020 Five aF aF e a.44leW*nBT/7 841.8 reW*nBT/F2 9 Tf1 0 0 1 233.63 127.27 Tm0.4 0

(including humans).¹⁶ Crucially, the model emphasises that what matters to animals in terms of welfare is their subjective experiences, and that physiological mechanisms and affective (emotional) responses interact dynamically.

One of the key strengths of the Five Domains model is the clarity it provides that merely minimising or resolving negative physical or mental states does not necessarily result in positive welfare, but may only provide, at best, a neutral state.¹⁷ need more than this; they must have the opportunity to have positive experiences, such as physical health, satiation and opportunities for positive environmental and social interactions.

Recognition of mental wellbeing and the importance of positive welfare states has subsequently been widely accepted and adopted across other welfare assessment models and tools, for example the [Animal Welfare Assessment Grid](#), _____, and the _____ approach.

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Human-animal interactions

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environments in which we keep animals under human care, and also the environmental impact humans have on the habitat of wild animals through climate change, pollution, and incursion into habitats. In addition, human interactions with animals (eg proximity to animals, behaviour towards animals) have the potential to cause welfare-enhancing or welfare-compromising effects.¹⁸

When humans interact with animals it is therefore extremely important that they are equipped with the appropriate knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour to minimise negative experiences; assess behaviour as an indicator of mental state; encourage positive experiences and work towards positive welfare outcomes for the animal(s) concerned.

Wherever animals are used for human benefit, including for food^{19, 20}, clothing, entertainment²¹, sport, scientific research, education, transportation²² and companionship, this should be exercised responsibly, with compassion for the animals concerned and due regard for animal welfare, including decisions on breeding and T/F3 10.2 Tf1 0 0 1 314.1 514.55 Tm0 0.353 0.388 rg1 514.55 Tm0 0.353 0.388 nw 0 595.28

Where humans control wildlife to preserve public health and safety, protect property and land, or conserve other wildlife and animals, these controls should predictably and effectively cause the least animal welfare harms to the least number of animals. We support the seven consensus principles for ethical wildlife control, as described by Dubois et al. (2017)²³ as valuable tools for assessing the ethical considerations associated with wild-life control methods and their impact on animal welfare.

Recommendation 3: Animal health and welfare should not be unnecessarily compromised to address human want or need. Wherever animals are used for human benefit, including for food, clothing, entertainment, sport, scientific research, education, transportation and companionship, this should be exercised responsibly, with compassion for the animals

With this mind, the UK governments should reconceptualise characterisations of animal welfare in legislation. Management of welfare should not be limited to mitigating negative consequences but also promoting positive experiences and enhancing welfare. Animal welfare should therefore be defined in UK legislation in line with the Five Domains model.

It is also important to recognise that over the last 50 years, novel scientific methods have been employed to help determine how animals perceive the world, and to better understand their needs, preferences, pleasures and pains. This new knowledge has shown that the abilities and functioning of non-human animals are more complex than had previously been assumed. This is an active research area, and knowledge of sentience in different species continues to grow. Therefore, it is appropriate to use a definition of animal within legislation that is based on existing evidence as well as providing a mechanism to allow changes reflecting new and emerging research.

To achieve this, we recommend in the [BVA position on the recognition of animals as sentient beings](#) that there should be a named individual within government, who would be tasked with regularly engaging with research and declaring when the evidence suggests sentience exists. This would ensure that sentient species are afforded appropriate legislative welfare protections. For example, this would provide an appropriate route for species such as bees, where emerging evidence suggests a complex central nervous system and highly sophisticated units within bee colonies with an abundance of homeostatic mechanisms.

Recommendation 5: UK governments should reconceptualise characterisations of animal welfare in legislation. Management of welfare should not be limited to mitigating negative consequences but also promoting positive experiences and enhancing welfare. Animal welfare should therefore be defined in UK legislation in line with the Five Domains model.

Recommendation 6: A named individual within government should be tasked with regularly engaging with research and declaring when the evidence suggests species are sentient. This would ensure that sentient species are afforded appropriate legislative welfare protections.

The role of the veterinary profession in relation to animal welfare

Enhancing, protecting and securing the health and welfare of animals is the fundamental purpose of the veterinary profession. On a day-to-day basis veterinary surgeons lead the diagnosis and treatment of injury and disease in the animals under their care. Veterinary surgeons also form part of an interdisciplinary community seeking to promote the best interests of animals and improve their treatment, wherever they are used or impacted on by people. Indeed, veterinary surgeons in the UK

health and welfare of animals comm

It is recognised that neither sentiments nor economic factors can be entirely divorced from animal welfare considerations, yet they should never be paramount in its consideration. It is important to emphasise that there is a limit to acceptable animal welfare compromises associated with each area of animal use. If these limits are reached and cannot be adequately addressed, the veterinary profession will oppose that use or practice.

The veterinary profession should therefore demonstrate strong and visible leadership on animal interests at individual, community, national and international levels:

Individual level - through direct contact with animal keepers and owners;

Community level - veterinary practices offering animal welfare expertise through local media and educational outreach activities;

National level - through veterinary associations formulating policies and lobbying; and

International level - through policy formulation and advocacy, effective partnerships between national and international veterinary associations, and other international bodies and institutions.

Overall, the veterinary profession has a dual duty to advocate for the best interests of animals under the care of individual veterinary surgeons (at individual level), as well as to advocate for changes and solutions to address the root causes of animal welfare problems (at community, national and international levels).^{28,29}

To support vets to provide strong and visible leadership on animal welfare, BVA has developed a dedicated animal welfare strategy [\[link\]](#) which provides a framework to help vets advocate good animal welfare outcomes for all animals at each of these levels.

As well as animal welfare, vets also need to take into account as all three are interlinked. By working with their clients and ensuring that veterinary activities are economically viable, veterinary surgeons are able to achieve their primary aim of improving animal welfare.

Vets often face conflicting duties to animals, clients, employers and their own needs. Consequently, ethical reasoning is an integral part of navigating these ethical challenges. Therefore, it is important that awareness and training in animal welfare, science, ethics and law (AWSEL) is integrated across undergraduate curricula, as well as understanding of how to communicate these considerations to the wider public. Similarly, for the veterinary profession to position itself as animal welfare focussed, awareness and training in animal welfare advocacy at undergraduate and postgraduate level should be strengthened.

Recommendation 7: Improving animal health and welfare should be the veterinary visible leadership on animal welfare at individual, community, national and international levels.