

Priority animal welfare problems

In early 2017 we asked all our specialist divisions to submit up to ten animal welfare problems in their sector, considering the number of animals affected, the duration of suffering and the severity of the problem for affected animals. We also carried out a review of UK animal welfare problems, using a combination of peer-reviewed welfare prioritisation surveys, reports by independent advisory bodies, and websites and strategy documents of national UK animal welfare charities.

Using this information, we developed a list of the top UK animal welfare problems which the veterinary profession should take a leadership role in highlighting and addressing. In partnership with the specialist divisions we're working towards the development of pan-professional consensus policy positions on these problems.

Companion animals – dogs

- Inherited disease & exaggerated conformation
- Production of puppies (e.g. illegal importation, puppy farms)
- Inappropriate socialisation
- Undesirable animal behaviour
- Unrecognised or undertreated disease
- Obesity
- Inappropriate training (incl electronic pulse training aids) and unregulated behaviourists
- Social isolation & separation-related behaviour
- Inadequate exercise

Companion animals – cats

- Enforced group living with other cats
- Exaggerated conformation
- Obesity
- Inappropriate socialisation
- Undesirable animal behaviour
- Cat cafes
- Inappropriate environment (e.g. number & type of key resources – litter trays, scratching posts, food and water bowls etc)
- Toxicity (e.g. permethrin, lilies)

Companion animals – rabbits

- Solitary living
- Inappropriate living environment (e.g. small hutch, no run)
- Inappropriate diet
- Fear of handling
- Undesirable animal behaviour
- Inappropriate socialisation
- Unrecognised or undertreated disease (e.g. dental, ocular, flystrike)
- Exaggerated conformation

Companion animals – root cause

- Lack of pre-purchase research: low understanding of costs and legal responsibilities

Greyhounds

- Euthanasia of healthy animals no longer required for racing
- Inadequate kennelling facilities
- Injuries
- Poor prize money leading to insufficient investment in facilities
- Access to injury statistics

Equids

- Inappropriate stabling/turnout
- Obesity
- Inappropriate nutrition
- Delayed euthanasia
- Unresolved stress/pain behaviour
- Fly grazing/neglect
- Welfare at slaughter (long distance transport, CCTV)
- Training methods
- Tack fit (e.g. nosebands, bits, saddles)
- Regulation of paraprofessionals
- Availability of medications
- Biosecurity and disease surveillance
- Animal establishment licensing

Cattle

- Lameness
- Mastitis
- Cubicle design
- Live transport
- Calving management & bull selection (e.g. breeding oversized calves)
- Pain relief for routine procedures in calves
- Unwanted male calves
- Permanent housing
- Housing for beef cattle
- Calf management & mortality
- BVD & Johne's control

Sheep

- Lameness
- Castration
- Tail docking
- Parasites & parasiticide resistance
- Dog worrying
- Lamb mortality
- Dystocia
- Pregnancy toxaemia, nutrition, mastitis
- Lamb price

Goats

- Disbudding
- Unwanted male goat kids
- Ear tagging
- Foot lameness
- Permanent housing dairy goats/environmental enrichment
- Early separation of kids from mothers
- Morbidity/mortality of goat kids
- Vet undergraduate training on goats

Pigs

- Tail biting & docking
- Lameness
- Aggression
- Farrowing crates
- Provision of appropriate environmental enrichment
- Endemic disease
- Euthanasia

Fish – farmed, wild and in research

- Handling & transport
- Skin damage/fin erosion/gill health
- Water quality
- Sea lice infestation
- Viral disease
- Saprolegnia
- Predation
- “Cleaner fish” welfare
- Feed deprivation pre-slaughter
- Water quality
- Stocking density
- Laboratory fish welfare, esp. zebra fish
- Catch and release fisheries (e.g. repeated catch in angling)
- Commercially caught fish
- Crustacean welfare, e.g. market stalls, slaughter methods

Poultry

- Leg health & lameness, broilers (+ ducks & turkeys)
- Feather pecking/ cannibalism & beak trimming (layers & turkeys)
- Keel bone fractures & osteoporosis
- Broiler breeder hunger
- Open water access - ducks
- Selection for rapid growth (link to e.g. lameness, heart disease)
- Cages for layers
- Stocking density
- Provision of appropriate environmental enrichment
- Disease and parasitism (e.g. E.coli, avian ‘flu, red mites)
- Medicines availability

Welfare at slaughter

- Non-stun slaughter
- Group stunning pens
- Welfare during transport
- “Light stunning” poultry
- Poultry waterbath stunning
- CO2 pig slaughter
- On-farm emergency slaughter

Non-traditional companion animals (NTCAs), captive deer and wildlife

- Social isolation, primates
- Inappropriate diet, primates
- Husbandry and welfare of NTCAs
- Welfare of animals killed for exotic pet food
- Wild-caught animals for pet trade
- Abnormal & problem behaviour, e.g. parrots
- Performing animals, e.g. circuses, children’s parties
- Dangerous Wild Animals – keeping and zoo licence loophole
- Training of veterinary undergraduates in NTCAs and wildlife
- Free shooting badgers, bTB control
- Poisoning of wildlife from lead ammunition
- Wild rodent control, e.g. glue traps, anticoagulant rodenticides
- Inadequate winter feeding of park deer
- Smallholder reindeer management
- Chronic wasting disease (CWD)
- Need for fit-for-purpose TB test
- Drug availability, e.g. for tranquilising unhandled animals