



## IVSA Standing Committee on Animal Welfare

### Five Freedoms of Animal Welfare Policy

•

The Five Freedoms of Animal Welfare were originally developed in 1965 by the UK government after the Brambell Report, <sup>1</sup> and were released by the Farm Animal Welfare Council in 1979.<sup>2</sup> They focus on major aspects of animal welfare which can be controlled by humans and act as a fundamental basis when considering animal welfare for all species. Animal welfare can be thought of as the ability for an individual to live in an environment with appropriate standards of health, diet, and capacity to behave naturally.

They are:

- 1) Freedom of hunger or thirst by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health
- 2) Freedom from discomfort by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area
- 3) Freedom from pain, injury or disease by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment
- 4) Freedom to express normal behaviour by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and companionship
- 5) Freedom from fear and distress by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering

Since their development, the freedoms have been profoundly influential and have been adopted by many international organisations including the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), International Federation for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA). Adopting the Five Freedoms framework facilitates a shared dialogue about animal welfare on the international level.

The Five Freedoms can also be scaled up to look at animals on a herd health level. The framework helps to provide an objective support to subjective assessment of animal welfare and can be used repeatedly to re-assess and monitor improvement of animal welfare.

IVSA's Stance on the Five Freedoms of Animal Welfare:

Animal welfare continues to be at the centre of the IVSA's mission. In a world where there is demand of the livestock industry to provide enough food, increasing rates of pet ownership and more animals used for scientific research, we as a society must continually evaluate our stewardship of these animals.

IVSA believes that animals are sentient beings and have the right to not be subjected to poor welfare conditions. The Five Freedoms is a clear and simple framework and we think it should represent an essential requirement for basic welfare for all animals, regardless of their purpose or species. It is well known internationally and as such the IVSA can use it as a common framework to promote through the organisation globally.

IVSA thinks that every person, regardless of if they are directly involved in animal care, should be aware of the Five Freedoms and their importance in society. We believe that education from an early age is a critical tool to enable this.

We must also look at species inequities in the Five Freedoms and make sure that veterinarians, owners and people involved with animals are aware of specific welfare needs of all species.

Whilst the Five Freedoms outline basic animal welfare needs, animal welfare is a complex and multi-faceted issue. For an animal to live a healthy life, we must look at animal welfare not only with the scope of the Five Freedoms but also on a wider scale as well. We call for continued research into animal welfare, so that we can increase our depth of understanding on different animals' needs and their welfare can continue to be assessed on an evidence-based basis.

We feel that the Five Freedoms is the simplest framework to translate to the international scale and promote through the organisation.

Actions:

The IVSA will:

- Continue its work to promote the Five Freedoms to its Member Organisations by producing a related section on the Standing Committee for Animal Welfare's website.
- Collaborate with animal welfare organisations and other stakeholders on an international level to strive to ensure that the Five Freedoms are maintained globally for all animals by ensuring that programmes increase understanding of the significance of the Five Freedoms, especially in developing countries where animal welfare may be less of a priority.
- Lobby governments to have sufficient Animal Welfare laws and legislation in place, and that within this the Five Freedoms are addressed.
- Hold public awareness campaigns bringing attention to relevant current animal welfare issues compromising the Five Freedoms.
- Draw up specific guidelines for different species on the Five Freedoms to be disseminated throughout the network.

The IVSA also calls upon:

1) Member organisations to:

- Nominate an animal welfare ambassador who will liaise with the Standing Committee on Animal Welfare to help implement the above actions which the IVSA are going to put into place.
- Hold animal welfare events to promote positive animal welfare through the Five Freedoms; these should aim to reach as wide audience as possible and be relatable not only to veterinary students but the local community.
- Lobby for improved animal welfare education at your university, highlighting the importance of the Five Freedoms of animal welfare.

2) Veterinary schools to:

- Have a curriculum which covers the importance of animal sentience and the ethics of animal welfare in depth; not only in the veterinary medicine curriculum but other relevant courses such as zoology and animal science, with specific focus on the Five Freedoms.
- Ensure that all animals cared for by the school, including those used for research, have the Five Freedoms of animal welfare.

3) Veterinary students to:

- Ensure that they are fully educated on the Five Freedoms of animal welfare and the necessary actions to take if they are compromised.
- Maintain their position of responsibility for the maintenance of animal welfare through the Five Freedoms throughout their time at university and as a practicing veterinarian.
- Use their position as veterinary students to advocate for animal welfare and the Five Freedoms.

### References:

1: *Brambell, Roger (1965), Report of the Technical Committee to Enquire Into the Welfare of Animals Kept Under Intensive Livestock Husbandry Systems, Cmd. (Great Britain. Parliament), H.M. Stationery Office, pp. 1-84*

2: "[Five Freedoms](#)". *Farm Animal Welfare Council / Farm Animal Welfare Committee. Archived from [the original](#) on 2012-10-07*