The Veterinary Voice for Europe's Animals



FVE animal welfare strategy: a summary

FVE
Federation of Veterinarians of Europe

Introduction

From reducing the risk of pandemics to helping meet the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), animal welfare is crucial to improving not only animals' wellbeing, but people's health and our environment.

Under six headings, FVE's animal welfare strategy sets out our vision of the European veterinary profession's role in this important area. It also details how we're going to work towards making our vision a reality between now and 2025.

Our policy is based on extensive feedback from our Board, General Assembly, Sections, member organisations and external stakeholders.

1

Animal welfare assessment

OUR VIEW

To protect, advocate and enhance animal welfare, the welfare of sentient animals must be assessed using up-to-date concepts and scientific approaches.

OUR AIMS

- To disseminate information about contemporary animal welfare concepts, animal welfare assessment frameworks and findings from animal welfare science to member associations, policy-makers and the public.
- To ensure animal welfare science informs FVE policies.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM STAKEHOLDERS

- Good physical health is an important part of animal welfare, but mental health is equally important. FVE should do more to promote awareness of this.
- Veterinary associations play a valuable role in promoting the importance of positive welfare and the Good Life framework (which promotes kept animals having a Good Life or, at least, a Life Worth Living). The profession at all levels should increase its communications on what a Good Life requires for different species.
- Reliably assessing quality of life is important for ethical and end-of-life decision-making. Consultees highlighted the importance of having the option to euthanise animals, to serve their best interests in certain circumstances.





- The profession has a critical role in pain assessment and management and veterinarians should continue to increase their understanding of this.
- Where technology is used to assist with animal health and welfare assessment, it should be subject to appropriate testing and validation before authorisation for widespread use.
- FVE should help keep members updated about the latest animal welfare science findings; promote the use of evidence- and outcome-based welfare indicators and assessment protocols; promote further research into practical welfare assessment; and continue to emphasise the importance and relevance of animal sentience to the veterinary profession and wider society.

FVE ACTIONS

Up until 2025 we plan to:

- Promote quality of life assessment tools to support decision-making in clinical veterinary practice and other veterinary settings.
- Promote tools to assist with pain assessment and management.
- Promote the Good Life framework and related resources to assist with interpretation and implementation through veterinary work.
- Facilitate Europe-wide regulation of animal behavioural services to improve standards.

2

Ethics

OUR VIEW

Deciding a justifiable way forward on, for example, a treatment intervention or veterinary policy decision, requires ethical reasoning.

Ethical appraisal should take a structured approach that identifies and considers the interests and values of different stakeholders (including animals).

OUR AIMS

- To provide veterinary professionals with advice, guidance and support on ethical decision-making in veterinary practice, to improve the quality and consistency of decisions, and help improve veterinary wellbeing by reducing the stress associated with ethical dilemmas.
- To promote the principal animal welfare-focused ethical duty of veterinarians, recognising that veterinarians' duties to animals, clients and the businesses they work for may sometimes conflict.
- To promote consensus on how to identify and appropriately weigh up the interests of stakeholders (including animals) in making policy, for example, by using ethical frameworks.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM STAKEHOLDERS

- When deciding if using sentient animals is ethically justifiable, there are broadly two perspectives. An animal rights-based view generally advocates that humans don't have the right to exploit animals as, for example, a food source. An animal welfare-based view accepts humans using animals for their benefit, so long as the animals have a good quality of life and humane death. The veterinary profession largely adheres to an animal welfare-based view.
- Some veterinarians may have different personal ethical perspectives (for example, animal rights-based views). FVE and other veterinary associations should respect these views.





- The veterinary profession has a duty to advocate the best interests of animals under the care of individual veterinarians, and to advocate changes and solutions to address the root causes of animal welfare problems.
- Veterinarians' ethical duties towards animals, clients and the veterinary businesses they work for may sometimes conflict. Promoting positive relations with clients and ensuring that veterinary businesses are viable will both help to achieve our primary objective of improving animal welfare.
- Veterinarians frequently encounter stressful ethical dilemmas, which can contribute to poor wellbeing, for example convenience euthanasia (a healthy animal being euthanised because they are no longer wanted).
- FVE support with ethical decision-making for veterinary practitioners would be valuable.

FVE ACTIONS

Up until 2025 we plan to:

- Promote the concept of an animal welfare-focused veterinary profession and the profession's aim 'to make the world a better place for animals'.
- Facilitate discussions about ethical issues and dilemmas affecting veterinary professionals.
- Promote tools and approaches to help with ethical decision-making in clinical veterinary practice, veterinary policy-making and other veterinary settings.

3

Legislation

OUR VIEW

Veterinarians must have a working understanding of animal welfare legislation and must play a role in education and enforcement.

OUR AIM

* To support and guide members on European animal welfare legislation, for example, communicating when legislation is updated and disseminating resources to support implementation and enforcement.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM STAKEHOLDERS

* Some veterinarians with animal welfare enforcement responsibilities would benefit from additional resources, tools and training. Resources, guidance and guidelines should be coupled with an expectation that prosecutions for animal welfare breaches will be pursued when appropriate.
* The value of employing veterinarians in government policy departments should be promoted. National veterinary associations should be supported in fostering relationships between veterinary practitioners and Official Veterinarians.
* Guidance on reporting suspected animal welfare breaches, including non-accidental injury (link between abuse of animals and people), would be beneficial.
* FVE should lobby for changes to legislation that's inadequate for promoting good animal welfare. This should involve legislation being drafted in



consultation with veterinarians, and allocating sufficient resources to authorities to enable proper implementation and enforcement.

* Actions for improving animal welfare should be incorporated within the regular veterinary visits required under the EU Animal Health Law.

FVE ACTIONS

Up until 2025 we plan to:

* Work with the European Association of State Veterinary Officers (EASVO) to establish where support with animal welfare legislation for Official Veterinarians would be beneficial.
* Promote guidance on reporting suspected animal welfare breaches, including suspected non-accidental injury.
* Promote the need for sufficient financial and human resources to be put into national legislative and control-performing entities relating to animal welfare.



4 Advocacy

OUR VIEW

Promoting good welfare for the animals directly under our care is essential. But veterinarians must also advocate good animal welfare on a societal level, challenging the status quo of animal keeping and use, to address the root causes of animal welfare problems.

OUR AIMS

- To continue developing evidence- and ethics-backed policy positions, to raise awareness of priority animal welfare problems and make recommendations for improvements.
- To develop animal welfare policy positions and campaigns collaboratively with European species-specialist veterinary associations whenever possible.
- To use these policies and campaigns to help ensure animal owners, governments and others understand the animal welfare harms associated with animal use.
- To support European veterinarians to be effective animal advocates.
- To help ensure the public recognises veterinary leadership and advocacy.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM STAKEHOLDERS

- FVE and the European veterinary profession should speak up on animal welfare, taking a clear and strong leadership role to stimulate and inform public debate.
- Being animal welfare-focused applies to both veterinary practice and policy-making.
- Practices should collaborate with each other, and with local authorities, to improve animal welfare in their communities, for example coordinating care provided to stray animals.
- FVE should support veterinary practices to promote animal welfare.
- Veterinary communication strategies should help citizens understand the relationship between improvements to animal welfare, the (moderate) increase in production costs and different ways to meet these costs.
- FVE should advocate solutions to real-world animal welfare problems, through directly lobbying and influencing European decision-makers, and through supporting national veterinary associations to lobby in their own countries.



- FVE plays a valuable role in agenda-setting at national level, through identifying priority animal welfare problems, stimulating debate, building consensus, and making recommendations. Policy positions support individual veterinarians to advocate for animal welfare when they might otherwise be afraid to speak up. Veterinary students also use them to stimulate debate.
- It's important to communicate FVE positions to national veterinary associations, the public and policy-makers. It's also vital for FVE to provide resources to promote their implementation and to monitor their impact.
- FVE should support European species-specialist associations to drive grass-roots policy implementation through their members. It's important to work collaboratively with partners with aligned goals, such as animal welfare NGOs.
- Animal welfare advocacy should be explicitly incorporated within an FVE communications strategy.

FVE ACTIONS

Up until 2025 we plan to:

- Maintain a list of animal welfare problems in Europe, developed and agreed through consultation with key stakeholders.
- Continue to publish position papers and develop campaigns on priority animal welfare problems in Europe, jointly with European species-specialist veterinary associations whenever possible.
- Develop a communications plan to launch new position papers.
- Agree approaches to assess the impact of FVE animal welfare position statements and campaigns.
- Disseminate resources to assist veterinary practices with developing their activities in animal welfare and ethics.
- Promote public recognition of veterinarians' animal welfare advocacy.
- Clarify the status and purpose of FVE policy documents and their target audiences, and use appropriate language that reflects animal sentience and animals' needs.
- Motivate and assist national veterinary associations to develop their own animal welfare strategies.

5

Education

OUR VIEW

For veterinarians to fulfil their animal welfare leadership roles they must receive adequate undergraduate training in animal welfare science, ethics and law (AWSEL).

Postgraduate studies and reflective practice should be promoted and should apply and expand AWSEL training.

Sharing good practice animal welfare approaches across the veterinary profession is also important to contribute to continuing education and levelling up of animal welfare standards within and between countries.



OUR AIMS

- To continue working to ensure European veterinary educational establishments teach AWSEL adequately.
- To act as a focal point for proactive sharing of good animal welfare practices between member associations.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM STAKEHOLDERS

- AWSEL teaching has increased over the past decade, but more progress is needed.

In 2013, FVE and the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE) agreed on a model curriculum for AWSEL. We also did surveys looking at AWSEL teaching in faculties in 26



European countries. At that point only 45% of schools were teaching the model curriculum in full.

In 2019 follow-up surveys found that AWSEL teaching had progressed, with around 75% of schools now implementing the model curriculum – still leaving a quarter needing to improve their teaching in this area.

- FVE has an opportunity to foster harmonisation of veterinary approaches to animal welfare advocacy and leadership, using our relationships with member associations to establish and share how veterinarians and veterinary bodies are taking positive actions. Sharing successes and good practice contributes to education and inspiration for veterinarians in other regions.
- European countries have different priority animal welfare problems and differing degrees of cultural support for animal welfare. FVE should continue providing support in ways that allow for regional implementation.
- FVE should continue to encourage the European institutions to make minimum training compulsory in all areas where animals are handled professionally.

FVE ACTIONS

Up until 2025 we plan to:

- Continue work with EAEVE to ensure all European vet schools are implementing the model curriculum, particularly focusing on ethics teaching.
- Work through the European Coordinating Committee on Veterinary Training to enhance training on ethical dilemmas relating to animal welfare in veterinary undergraduate curricula.
- Understand which FVE member associations have a dedicated animal welfare and ethics committee or working group, and to increase two-way communication with those groups, and good practice sharing, on priority animal welfare topics.

6 International

OUR VIEW

As well as its role in supporting veterinary animal welfare leadership across Europe, FVE has relationships and opportunities that enable us to similarly assist with advancing veterinary animal welfare leadership globally.

OUR AIMS

- To collaborate, coordinate and exchange knowledge with other international veterinary associations, to advance animal welfare progress and veterinary animal welfare leadership globally.
- To advocate animal welfare advancement within the SDGs agenda – both out of respect for the intrinsic value of animals and in recognition of the contributions that healthy, content animals make to human society.
- To assist veterinarians to work towards this through local, national and international One Health and One Welfare partnerships.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM STAKEHOLDERS

- Consultees re-iterated many of the points we made in our 2016 paper *Veterinarians' Contribution to the UN SDGs*, which highlighted how animal health and welfare, and the contributions of the veterinary profession, are central to achieving the SDGs.

  Key points included the need for sustainable, economically viable and ethically acceptable animal husbandry to prevent climate change and biodiversity loss as global demand for protein increases. Animal production systems will need to be significantly modified over the coming decades.
- FVE should continue to proactively share policy recommendations with other global veterinary and animal welfare bodies, to help influence animal welfare policy across the world, and to similarly receive and disseminate ideas and resources from those bodies. This should be facilitated by ongoing strong relations and through regular contact with other associations.



FVE ACTIONS

Up until 2025 we plan to:

- Liaise with the animal welfare committees and working groups of other global veterinary associations, to increase two-way communication and good practice sharing on priority animal welfare topics.
- Further develop FVE's position on the sustainability problems associated with low-priced products of animal origin, and how the veterinary profession should advocate for economically viable solutions that properly value these foods.
- Work with the FVE Sustainability Working Group, to make and take opportunities to lobby for explicit inclusion of animal welfare as a sustainability goal.
- Support the Sustainability Working Group to increase the veterinary profession's actions and visibility on the climate and biodiversity crises.

Find out more

READ OUR FULL ANIMAL WELFARE STRATEGY HERE AT FVE.ORG

FVE members

Albania
Professional Order of Veterinary Physicians

Austria
Österreichische Tierärztekammer

Belgium
Union Professionnelle Vétérinaire (UPV)

Bosnia/Herzegovina
Veterinary Chamber of the Republic of SRPSKA

Bulgaria
Bulgarian Veterinary Union (BVU)
Union of the Veterinarians in Bulgaria (UVB)

Croatia
Croatian Veterinary Chamber
Croatian Veterinary Society

Cyprus
Pancyprian Veterinary Association

Czech Republic
Chamber of Veterinary Surgeons of the Czech Republic

Denmark
Danish Veterinary Association

Estonia
Estonian Veterinary Association

Finland
Finnish Veterinary Association

France
Ordre National des Vétérinaires
Fédération des Syndicats Vétérinaires de France (FSVF)

Germany
Bundestierärztekammer
Bundesverband Praktizierender Tierärzte e.V.

Greece
Hellenic Veterinary Association

Hungary
Magyar Állatorvosi Kamara (MAOK)

Iceland
Dyralæknafélag Islands

Ireland
Veterinary Council of Ireland
Veterinary Ireland

Italy
Federazione Nazionale degli Ordini Dei Veterinari Italiani (FNOVI)

Latvia
Latvijas Veterinararstu Biedriba

Lithuania
Lithuanian Veterinary Association

Luxembourg
Association des Médecins Vétérinaires du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg

Collège Vétérinaire du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg

Malta
Malta Veterinary Association

Montenegro
Veterinary Chamber of Montenegro

Netherlands
Royal Veterinary Association of the Netherlands

North Macedonia
Macedonian Veterinary Chamber

Norway
Norwegian Veterinary Association (DNV)

Poland
Krajowa Izba Lekarsko-Weterynaryjna

Portugal
Ordem dos Médicos Veterinários

Romania
The General Association of Romanian Veterinarians College of Romanian Veterinarians

Slovak Republic
Komora veterinárnych lekárov Slovenskej Republiky

Slovenia
Veterinarska Zbornica

Serbia
Veterinary Chamber of Serbia

Spain
Consejo General de Colegios Veterinarios de España (CGCVE)

Sweden
Swedish Veterinary Association (SVF)

Switzerland
Société des Vétérinaires Suisses

United Kingdom
British Veterinary Association (BVA)

Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS)

OUR SECTIONS

Veterinary practitioners **(UEVP)**

State officers **(EASVO)**

Food safety and veterinary public health **(UEVH)**

Veterinarians working in education, research and industry **(EVERI)**

OBSERVERS

Armenia
National Association of Veterinarians

Ukraine
Association of Veterinarians of Ukraine

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