

STATEMENT OF POLICY

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NOTE: - Any reference to "The Council" in this document should be taken as meaning the National Council of Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (NSPCA), South Africa.

Attitudes of individuals, as well as of communities and Societies, change from time to time. Therefore what is considered to be an accepted practice to one generation may be condemned by another. Therefore, the following statements must be accepted as representing current thinking but do not bind the Council nor imply any variation from the SPCA Act No 169 of 1993. The subsections listed hereunder are not exhaustive and do not imply the limitation of the Council's concern in regard to matters not specifically mentioned. They represent an attempt to summarise, in an orderly and logical way, the activities of an organisation whose mission is the PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS.

Although these issues are considered in the South African context, the Council will seek to influence other countries where possible, and may give support to international campaigns for the protection of animals in South Africa and elsewhere in the world.

1 STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES AND BELIEFS

Every living creature has intrinsic value and is a sentient being.

Our primary and motivating concern is the prevention of cruelty to all living creatures. We are mindful that humans have been uniquely endowed with a sense of moral values. For this reason, we believe humans are responsible for the welfare of those animals that they have domesticated and those upon whose natural environment humans encroach. This responsibility, we believe, must be shared by all people. It does not matter if they benefit from the use of such domestic animals or participate in the alteration of environments supporting the life of other creatures. As the dominant and intelligent life form on earth, we are accountable as a species. Although it is recognised that animals are used in the service of humans, and although we are not opposed to the legitimate and appropriate utilisation of animals in such service, such utilisation gives humans neither the right nor the licence to exploit or abuse any animal in the process.

Our tools will be leadership, education and action. We will achieve this using such legal means as are most effective and are at our disposal. We shall endeavour to promote animal welfare in specific situations and strive to bring about new respect to all living creatures.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The NSPCA considers that the welfare of an animal includes its physical and mental state and that good animal welfare implies both fitness and a sense of well-being. The Council believes that an animal's welfare should be considered in terms of five freedoms which form a logical and comprehensive framework for analysis of welfare: -

- Freedom from hunger and thirst – by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.
- Freedom from discomfort – by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area
- Freedom from pain, injury or disease – by prevention, by rapid diagnosis and treatment.
- Freedom to express normal behaviour – by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind.
- Freedom from fear and distress – by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.

The Council considers that these freedoms will be better provided for if those who have care of animals practise: -

- Caring and responsible planning and management
- Skilled, knowledgeable and conscientious animal management
- Appropriate environmental design
- Considerate handling and transport
- Humane killing.

DEFINITIONS

- The term "animal" includes all vertebrates other than humans
- The term "suffering" includes stress, fear, pain, discomfort, injury, disease and behavioural distress.

2 FARM ANIMALS

2.1 FARMING PRACTICES / SYSTEMS

The Council is opposed to all forms of farming and animal husbandry practices which cause suffering or distress to animals, or which unreasonably restrict their movements or their behavioural patterns which are necessary for the well-being of the species concerned.

2.2 SLAUGHTER

- (a) The Council is opposed to the slaughter of any animals unless they are instantaneously killed, or rendered instantaneously unconscious and insensible to pain prior to the throat being cut and death supervening.
- (b) The Council is opposed to the transport of animals for slaughter using unsuitable methods / vehicles.
- (c) The Council advocates that food animals should be slaughtered as close to the point of production as possible, in a registered and approved abattoir.
- (d) The Council advocates that farm animals which have to be emergency slaughtered should be humanely and promptly destroyed, on site.

The Council is opposed to the use of any instrument, appliance or device on any animal that is not proved to be necessary and to the benefit of the animal, and which is undertaken without veterinary supervision or instruction/control.

2.3 SALE OF UNWEANED ANIMALS

The Council is opposed to the sale of unweaned animals.

2.4 EXPORT OF LIVE ANIMALS

The Council is opposed to the transport of live animals by sea.

2.5 PHYSICAL ALTERATIONS

The Council is opposed to mutilations or procedures which are performed for non-therapeutic reasons, especially those carried out in an attempt to 'adapt' animals to an inappropriate husbandry system, or overcome problems associated with inappropriate husbandry systems. In such cases it is the system, not the animal, which should be modified.

2.6 BRANDING

The Council is opposed to forms of branding which cause suffering, such as hot iron branding. Where branding is necessary, the Council advocates the use of freeze branding.

2.7 FOOD LABELLING

The Council advocates that the consumer should have the right to know how all animal products (including non-food products) are produced and that they should be labelled with the method of production.

2.8 SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT

The Council is opposed to the development of systems for farming non-domesticated species which cause or are likely to cause or involve suffering or stress.

2.9 ENHANCEMENT OF PRODUCTION / PERFORMANCE

The Council is opposed to the administration of substances or application of techniques which are intended to enhance the production or performance of an animal and which cause or are likely to cause pain or suffering.

2.10 ACCELERATED GROWTH / PRODUCTION

The Council is opposed to the selection or breeding of animals for accelerated growth rates or enhanced production capacity where this may inhibit normal activity and cause metabolic or skeletal defects, chronic lameness or pain.

2.11 ELECTRO-IMMOBILISATION

The Council is opposed to the electro-immobilisation of animals.

2.12 SHEEP TAIL DOCKING

The Council is opposed to the unnecessary docking of tails of lambs.

The tail docking of lambs is a traditional and routine procedure on many farms. It is widely considered to help reduce the level of faecal soiling and fly-strike. The tails of some breeds are also docked traditionally for appearance. Tail docking should only be undertaken on the advice of a veterinarian who provides a certificate with reasons for the docking and the long-term advantages the procedure will hold for the sheep.

3 COMPANION ANIMALS

3.1 RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP

The Council discourages the keeping of domestic animals by those who do not have the facilities, time, financial means or level of interest necessary to ensure a satisfactory standard of care and husbandry for their pets.

Since the Council is opposed to any degree of confinement which may cause distress or suffering or which may result in an animal being unable to display or indulge in natural behaviour, inadequate standards for cages commonly accepted for animals – notwithstanding their legality – are discouraged and opposed.

The Council opposes pet animals being offered as gifts or being given as prizes.

The Council opposes the informal sale (hawking) of domestic animals.

3.2 POPULATION CONTROL

The Council advocates the sterilising of animals as early as possible unless there are overriding veterinary reasons to the contrary. The Council advocates the sterilisation of cats and dogs at eight weeks.

3.3 BREEDING

The Council is opposed to the breeding of animals which may produce change in bodily form and/or function which is detrimental to their health or quality of life.

The Council is opposed to uncontrolled private and commercial breeding of puppies, kittens and other animals.

3.4 EUTHANASIA

The SPCA National Council is opposed to the euthanasia of fit and healthy animals but accepts the reality that humane destruction is necessary. Euthanasia must be carried out by qualified personnel using approved and humane methods and with the greatest compassion.

3.5 FERAL CATS

On sites where the welfare of colonies of feral cats is ensured and their presence is accepted by the owners of the site, the Council advocates the sterilisation of such cats, provided that instructions concerning humane procedures are followed, as may be prescribed by the Council.

3.6 PET SHOPS

The Council is opposed to the donation or sale of all live animals to pet shops or similar outlets / operations. The Council opposes the sale of live animals by pet shops, through the means of the Internet and by any long-distance "brokering".

3.7 SURGICAL MUTILATIONS

The Council is opposed to the unnecessary mutilation of animals: - for cosmetic, sporting, entertainment or convenience purposes - including but not limited to tail-docking, ear-cropping, de-barking, de-clawing and myotomy.

The Council takes the identical standpoint relating to the various surgical mutilations of other species.

4 ANIMAL EXPERIMENTATION

4.1 PAIN AND SUFFERING IN EXPERIMENTS

The Council is opposed to all experiments or procedures which cause pain, suffering or distress.

4.2 UNNECESSARY EXPERIMENTS

The Council is opposed to animal experiments which involve unnecessary repetitions or are for scientifically trivial ends or which involve techniques to which satisfactory and humane alternatives have already been developed. The Council is also opposed to the use of animals in the testing of inessential substances such as cosmetics.

4.3 HUMANE ALTERNATIVES

The Council supports the development of techniques that will result in the replacement, reduction or refinement of animal experimentation (the concept of the "3 Rs"). The Council regards as an advance any technique that will completely replace the use of animals, reduce the numbers used or reduce suffering.

4.4 LABORATORY ANIMAL SUPPLY

The Council is opposed to the import and export of laboratory animals.

The Council is strongly opposed to the use of wild-caught animals of any species regardless of their conservation status.

5 TRANSPORT OF UNACCOMPANIED ANIMALS

5.1 The Council is opposed to any animal being posted / mailed and opposes the transportation of animals in containers or vehicles unsuitable to the animal(s). The Council advocates that no animal shall be transported in any manner or under such conditions that may cause suffering.

5.2 The Council is opposed to the transporting of companion animals in open bakkies.

5.3 The Council is opposed to animals being left in vehicles unattended.

6 ANIMALS FOR EXHIBITION, ENTERTAINMENT OR SPORT

6.1 CAPTIVE ANIMALS

The Council is opposed to any degree of confinement or the use of any animal in sport, entertainment or exhibition likely to cause distress or suffering or which may adversely affect the animal's welfare.

The Council is totally opposed to exhibitions or presentations of wild animals in circuses and travelling menageries.

6.2 ANIMALS IN PERFORMANCE OR EXHIBITION

The Council opposes the portrayal of any action depicting irresponsible behaviour towards animals, condoning irreverence or disrespect towards animals as perceived by the viewer.

The Council opposes the non-documentary depiction of any violation of the Animals Protection Act or any issue contrary to the Statement of Policy.

6.3 EQUESTRIAN DISCIPLINES

The Council opposes any practices that cause unnecessary suffering to equine albeit during training or during the actual event.

6.3.1 The Council opposes horse racing in any form.

6.4 HUNTING AND FISHING

The Council does not believe that sport justifies causing suffering to animals and therefore is opposed to the hunting or fishing of any animal for sport, recreation or entertainment.

The Council stands opposed to current practices undertaken by commercial fishing and seeks the development of more environmentally friendly and eco-sensitive fishing techniques. The Council is opposed to drift-net and gill-net fishing and the indiscriminate use of any fishing equipment which catches non-target species.

The Council opposes inhumane methods used to kill lobsters, crabs, crayfish, squid and octopus.

6.5 LIVE PREY

The Council opposes the feeding of live prey.

6.6 LIVE ANIMALS AS PRIZES

The Council opposes the practice of live animals being given as prizes in raffles and competitions or as fund-raising events.

6.7 RODEOS

The Council is opposed to rodeos and animal chases.

6.8 ANIMAL COMBAT

The Council is opposed to the use of animals in any form of combat whether against man or animal.

6.9 BLOOD SPORTS

The Council is opposed to any degree of pain and suffering or distress on any animal in the name of sport and / or human entertainment. The Council believes that sport does not justify the causing of suffering to animals and therefore the Council is opposed to shooting for sport.

6.10 ANIMAL RACING

The Council opposes animal racing in any form.

7 WILDLIFE**7.1 WILD ANIMALS**

The Council is opposed to the taking or killing of wild animals, or the infliction of any suffering upon them.

7.2 The Council is opposed to the unnecessary killing of wild terrestrial and aquatic animals.

7.3 The Council opposes the practice of removing offspring from parent(s) for the purpose of hand-rearing.

7.4 SNARES AND TRAPS

The Council is opposed to the manufacture, sale and use of all snares and any trap or trapping device or substance or form of animal control which causes or may cause suffering.

7.5 POISONS

The Council is opposed to the use of poisons and has specific concerns about the widespread agricultural and commercial use of chemical substances which are potentially harmful to animals.

7.6 WHALING

The Council is opposed to the killing of whales.

7.7 IMPORTING AND EXPORTING OF WILD ANIMALS

The Council is opposed to the trade in wild animals and to the trading of products derived from wild animals where distress or suffering may be caused.

7.8 HYBRIDS

The Council opposes the hybridisation of wild species with domesticated animals for the purpose of creating new breeds of companion animals and opposes the hybridisation of wild animals for the purposes of hunting.

7.9 BREEDING AND KEEPING AS PETS

The Council is opposed to the breeding and keeping of exotics and wild animals as pets.

8 ANIMALS IN EDUCATION

The Council is opposed to the use of animals for education if distress or suffering is likely to be caused or unless an explicit animal welfare rationale for keeping the animals can be demonstrated.

8.1 DISSECTION

The Council is opposed to the practice of dissection of vertebrate and invertebrate animals in schools.

8.2 BEHAVIOURAL EXPERIMENTS

The Council is opposed to behavioural experiments which are detrimental to the welfare of animals.

9 GENETIC ENGINEERING

9.1 The Council is opposed to the manipulation of the genetic constitution of animals which causes pain, suffering and distress.

The Council believes that the production of genetically modified animals for potential uses in science, medicine and agriculture has serious animal welfare and ethical implications. In particular, the Council is concerned about the suffering caused to both the genetically modified animals themselves and the animals used in their production.

9.2 The Council is opposed to the breeding and or manipulation of animals that results in patenting.

10 WORKING ANIMALS

The Council does not stand opposed to working animals subject to welfare standards being met.