

AJP Policy Document

International Considerations

The shift in the international animal welfare and protection policy environment highlights the growing recognition of animal welfare as a critical issue on the global stage.

It is no longer viewed as peripheral but has become integral to discussions in regional and international policy forums.

This change is underscored by the emergence of an expanding framework of science-based standards, conventions, treaties, regulations, directives, and agreements.

Key trends in this evolving landscape include:

1. **Science-Based Frameworks:** Policy decisions are increasingly guided by robust scientific research, which ensures that animal welfare measures are grounded in evidence and best practices.
2. **Global and Regional Agreements:** International treaties and regional directives, such as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) standards or EU directives on animal welfare, set benchmarks for practices across borders.
3. **Integration into Broader Agendas:** Animal welfare is being linked with sustainability, public health, biodiversity, and climate change, ensuring it receives attention in broader policy contexts.
4. **Stakeholder Collaboration:** Governments, NGOs, scientists, and industry players are collaborating more actively to develop and implement welfare policies.

This evolving framework not only reflects a growing ethical commitment to animals but also acknowledges their role in sustainable development and human wellbeing. Global animal protection is, however, a complex challenge requiring collaboration across countries, cultures, and legal systems.

While there are various treaties, conventions, and agreements addressing specific aspects of animal welfare, there is no unified international instrument that broadly regulates animal welfare across all contexts and provides holistic animal welfare protections.

Key gaps include:

1. **Limited Scope:** Existing frameworks often prioritise conservation and biodiversity rather than the welfare of individual animals. This leaves many species, especially those not endangered or economically significant, without legal protection.
2. **Lack of Universal Standards and Jurisdictional Issues:** Countries have varying cultural, economic, and ethical views on animal welfare, making it difficult to establish universally accepted standards. International frameworks may conflict with national sovereignty, limiting their enforceability within domestic legal systems.
3. **Non-Binding Nature:** Many international standards, such as the WOA's animal welfare standards, are non-binding, leaving adoption and enforcement at the discretion of individual nations.
4. **Lack of Enforceability:** Even binding agreements like CITES face challenges with enforcement, as they rely on national governments to implement and monitor compliance.
5. **Species-Specific Gaps:** Many frameworks focus on specific species or groups (e.g., endangered species under CITES), leaving gaps in protection for other animals, such as farmed or laboratory animals, despite these being the largest groups of animals directly impacted by human activity.

Below is a proposed structure to guide the formulation of a policy to advocate for more comprehensive and enforceable global animal protection frameworks:

1. **Review of International Trade Law:** Review New Zealand's international trade law and policy instruments and challenge any provisions that undermine animal protection.

2. **Harmonising Standards:** Creating internationally accepted benchmarks that accommodate regional differences whilst maintaining high welfare standards for imported animal products. As New Zealand has some of the most robust animal welfare practices, compared to our trading partners, we have set the benchmark for our primary industry and a framework for continuous improvement in animal quality of life:
 - AJP will campaign for uniform standards when importing animal products.
 - AJP will continue to advocate for discussions with trading partners to improve practices or find alternative suppliers.
 - AJP will continue to push for a fairer and more equitable system.
 - AJP will use this issue as a global platform to advocate for animals used for agriculture.
3. **Developing Binding Agreements:** Evaluate international conventions and agreements, advocate for an international treaty on animal rights, and support a transition from voluntary guidelines to binding treaties with clear accountability mechanisms.
4. **Promoting Education and Advocacy:** Building public awareness and fostering a cultural shift toward valuing animal welfare globally.