

AJP Policy Document

Regulatory Oversight and Enforcement

AJP believes that animal welfare and protection is a social justice issue intrinsically linked to other areas where the vulnerable are exploited, for example, human rights, labour rights and environmental justice.

There are several Commissions and Commissioners in New Zealand dedicated to improving these societal issues, such as the Human Rights Commission, the Climate Change Commission and the Children's Commissioner. They provide independent information and recommendations to the Government.

Currently the regulation of the welfare of animals is the responsibility of the Minister of Primary Industries and the Minister of Agriculture. New Zealand does not have a Commissioner for Animals who is independent to the Government and who can advocate independently on animal welfare and protection issues.

Many New Zealanders have already expressed their desire to see the establishment of a Commissioner for Animals to advance the welfare needs and legal protection of animals.¹

It is envisaged that the Commissioner will have legal jurisdiction over animal wellbeing and protection, undertake monitoring of all sectors, and have the authority to undertake comprehensive reviews of, and propose changes to, legislation and the enforcement mechanisms of the current legal system, working to repeal and amend any Codes of Welfare that contradict the Animal Welfare Act 1999.

Below is a proposed structure for regulatory oversight and enforcement that could guide the formulation of such a policy:

1. Reform the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee

¹ <https://commissionerforanimals.nz/>

2. Legislative reform that prohibits inhumane farming practices and establishes a more robust monitoring and enforcement system in all animal farming operations, including:
 - Regular MPI inspections
 - Specialised training for animal protection officers
 - Journey documentation requirements
 - Mandatory incident reporting
 - Increased penalties for violations
 - Public reporting
3. Establish a Commissioner for Animals to:
 - Oversee administration and enforcement of animal protection legislation
 - Provide national leadership on animal protection
 - Undertake a comprehensive review of the enforcement provisions and penalties of the Act and recommend improved deterrence measures that better protect animals
 - Undertake a comprehensive review of the Codes of Welfare
 - Update the national animal welfare strategy (created in 2013)
 - See separate policy *Commissioner for Animals*
4. Establish a specialised animal welfare unit within the New Zealand Police, removing prosecution and enforcement responsibilities from the SPCA New Zealand ²

² University of Auckland. (2025, February 27). *Study Reveals Flaws In Animal Protection Laws*.
<https://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/AK2502/S00726/study-reveals-flaws-in-animal-protection-laws.htm>
SCOOP Regional. [Press Release]