

## **Animal Welfare**

### **Veterinarians have a special duty to protect animal welfare and to alleviate animal suffering**

1. All veterinarians must be familiar and comply with the Animal Welfare Act 1999 and the relevant Codes of Welfare. In making decisions or taking actions that affect animals in the course of their work, veterinarians must have considered and taken all reasonable steps to protect the needs of those animals in relation to the five freedoms:
  - Proper and sufficient food and water;
  - adequate shelter;
  - the opportunity to display normal patterns of behaviour;
  - appropriate physical handling; and
  - protection from, and rapid diagnosis of, injury and disease

This obligation is qualified however, as the needs in each individual case are assessed according to what is appropriate to the species, environment and circumstances of the affected animal(s).

2. In the course of their work veterinarians must be satisfied that their clients and their co-workers are aware of the relevant provisions of the Act and relevant Codes of Welfare.
3. When aware of unreasonable or unnecessary animal suffering or distress, or possible violations to animal welfare legislation, veterinarians must immediately bring this to the attention of the owner or the person in charge of the animal(s) and advise that person what is required to resolve the problem. Where the problem is ongoing, or where there is a legal obligation to do so, the veterinarian must report the situation to the appropriate legal authority.
4. Veterinarians must act to relieve unreasonable or unnecessary pain and suffering affecting animals in their care as soon as possible. In situations where an animal's owner is not known or cannot be contacted, veterinarians must exercise their duty under section 138 of the Animal Welfare Act to euthanise severely sick or injured animals responsibly.
5. Veterinarians must not perform medically unnecessary surgical procedures unless Animal Welfare legislation or Codes of Animal Welfare permit otherwise.
6. Veterinarians must give sound genetic counselling and management advice to the client in the best interests of the animal and its progeny where a client's animals are found to carry inherited defects that compromise their welfare or that of their prospective progeny.
7. Veterinarians must carry out necessary or justifiable euthanasia as humanely as possible.