



USPCA

policies on

animal welfare





USPCA

Policies on...

Animal Welfare

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THE SOCIETY AND ITS WORK

The USPCA is the world's second oldest animal welfare organisation. It was established in 1836 and is a charity supported entirely by voluntary donations. Its purpose as given in its Constitution, is to promote kindness and to prevent or suppress cruelty to animals. The Society's work extends to caring for all animals in all circumstances.

The USPCA's Welfare Officers, staff and volunteers work round the clock to help animals in distress. The Society acts to have the law enforced in relation to animal welfare and the Welfare Officers investigate alleged cases of cruelty.

The Society's Sanctuaries receive and treat companion animals, equines and wildlife. A major part of the work of the Society is to place unwanted animals into new and caring homes.

The USPCA campaigns both in the UK and throughout Europe to achieve legal and social reform in animal welfare.

The Policies in this booklet represent the considered position held by the USPCA on particular issues. However readers should be aware of the constraints placed by current charity law on all animal welfare charities. They cannot pursue policies which, while benefiting animals, would have a serious detrimental effect on humankind. Further they cannot oppose uses of animals for which there are no alternatives but which may cause pain, suffering or distress and where there is an overriding benefit to humans. Accordingly, all policy statements which follow, should be read in that context.

INTRODUCTION

THE OBJECTS OF THE SOCIETY

The charitable objects of the USPCA are to promote kindness and to prevent or suppress cruelty to animals and to do all such lawful acts as the Society may consider to be conducive or incidental to the attainment of those objectives.

MISSION STATEMENT

The USPCA as a charity will, by all lawful means, prevent cruelty, promote kindness to and alleviate suffering of animals.

The Society intends to achieve its mission by:

- * operating a strong and effective national, organisation dedicated to providing a public service, delivering effective relief of animal suffering and liaising with law enforcement agencies.

- * working tirelessly to reduce the harmful impact of human activities on animals

through education and campaigning

- * maintaining, as an organisation, the highest levels of efficiency and effectiveness.

THE SOCIETY'S VISION

To work for a world in which all humans respect and live in harmony with members of the animal kingdom.

INTRODUCTION GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The general principle on which the Society operates is based on the fact that vertebrates and some invertebrates feel pain and experience distress. The Society believes that, where there is doubt about whether or not animals are suffering, the benefit of the doubt should always be given to the animals.

There are many examples of practices involving animal use by humans in the UK and world wide which cause significant pain and suffering. Many of these practices are referred to in the following pages. The Society will do all it can to reduce this suffering and through influencing legislative change, or the adoption of sound, well-monitored and enforced standards, will seek to improve the welfare of the animals concerned. The Society believes that it is important to protect the interests of individual animals and that the responsibility to ensure that this is the case lies with us, the human species.

THE SOCIETY'S POLICIES

Within this booklet the Society's policies are listed and, where necessary, explanations are given about why the USPCA holds particular views. These explanatory notes appear as shown here. The use of the word 'animal' (except where otherwise specifically defined by its context) is a generic one including birds, reptiles, fish etc. The Society emphasises that it attaches equal importance to the welfare of the animals described in each section of this booklet.

1.0 COMPANION ANIMALS

1.1 Responsible Ownership

1.1.1

The USPCA discourages the keeping of companion animals by those who do not have the facilities, time, financial means or level of interest necessary to ensure a satisfactory standard of care for, and along term commitment to their animals.

1.1.2

The Society is opposed to any degree of confinement which is likely to cause distress or suffering to the animals concerned.

Facilities at some homes are unsuitable for the keeping of certain animals and personal circumstances could make adequate provision for companion animals difficult if not impossible

It is a matter of particular concern that many birds and small mammals are kept in cages that are too small and barren for the species concerned. It may be contravening the terms of the Wildlife IN. Ireland) Order 1985 not to provide a cage which allows a bird to stretch its wings in all directions.

Responsible animal ownership should include the provision of adequate insurance, personal identification and the application of a vaccination programme where appropriate.

1.2 Acquiring an Animal

The USPCA advocates that all animals should be acquired by the prospective owner from the place where they were born or from an USPCA Animal Sanctuary (or other reputable rescue organisation).

1.2.1

The display of animals in pet shops, pet supermarkets and garden centres can lead to impulse buying without proper regard for the responsibilities of animal ownership.

Exotic animals such as snakes, lizards and terrapins are difficult to look after and will rarely be provided with adequate facilities.

1.3 Population Control

1.3.1

The USPCA advocates the neutering of domestic cats and dogs and other domestic animals as an important part of responsible ownership.

Using modern anaesthetic techniques, surgical neutering is a safe and effective way to prevent unwanted breeding of dogs and cats (British Veterinary Association statement, May 1990). It is not necessary, for behavioural or medical reasons, to allow females to have a litter prior to surgery. Veterinary surgeons can advise on the most appropriate timing and overall suitability of any operation for individual animals.

Hormonal control methods are available for female dogs and cats, but prolonged use may carry the risk of unwanted side effects and there are sometimes practical difficulties regarding dosage and timing of administration.

1.3.2

The USPCA is opposed to the breeding of animals which produces changes in bodily form or function, which are detrimental to their health or quality of life.

1.3.3

The Society is opposed to the irresponsible breeding of puppies or kittens (e.g. in puppy or kitten farms), other mammals and exotic animals in both private and commercial undertakings.

1.3.4

The Society is opposed to the method of drowning as a means of killing any animal e.g. puppies, kittens etc.

1.3.5

The USPCA believes that breeding establishments should be properly inspected and regulated and that permanent identification of animals should be undertaken by breeders.

The excessive breeding of puppies and kittens is a prime component in creating the problem of stray or unwanted animals the breeder must have primary responsibility for avoiding these problems, excessive breeding also causes suffering to both mother and offspring. Their removal from their mother and place of birth at an early age and their movement to dealers or other commercial premises such as pet shops inevitably increases the risk of disease and causes an unacceptable amount of distress. Excessive breeding also causes harm to bitches, the risk of the occurrence of eclampsia (hypo-calcaemia or 'milk fever'), other mineral imbalances and general debility is greatly increased. Furthermore, the risk of abnormal pregnancies or puppies is increased, as the bitch grows older.

1.4 Dog Registration

1.4.1

The USPCA is convinced that a properly financed and organised scheme to control unwanted and stray animals is part of local government responsibility and should include provisions for the permanent identification and registration of dogs nationally.

Dog registration is necessary if the responsibility for the welfare and control of dogs is to be put where it properly belongs - with the owner.

A dog registration scheme would help in establishing the ownership of stray and abandoned dogs.

A differential registration fee or a system of rebates should be an essential component of such a scheme to encourage neutering and would thus contribute to reducing the numbers of unwanted animals born each year.

1.5 Dog Wardens

1.5.1

The USPCA welcomed the introduction of local authority dog warden schemes and encourages properly funded schemes for careful rehoming, neutering and microchipping/tattooing of unclaimed stray dogs.

o Dog wardens should be responsible and compassionate people trained in welfare, law and first aid, who can act in an educational and advisory role towards dog owners as well as carrying out their duties in apprehending stray dogs.

o The USPCA is concerned, however that many schemes do not have the 24-hour cover that is considered essential by the Society.

1.6 Surgical Mutilations

1.6.1

The USPCA is opposed to the mutilation of animals for cosmetic purposes.

The following procedures do not benefit the animals in any way and in many cases, can be detrimental to their health and welfare:

- * Tail docking of dogs
- * Debarking of dogs
- * Ear cropping of dogs
- * De-clawing of cats.

The same principle also applies to various surgical mutilations of other species.

1.7 Quarantine

1.7.1

The Society accepts the principle of controlled entry, without quarantine, of dogs and cats from those European Union and other countries that are recognised by the World Health Organisation as being free from rabies in those species. The Society believes that quarantine should remain for dogs and cats imported from countries which do not satisfy the criteria given above.

1.7.2

The USPCA believes that all necessary steps should be taken to ensure that the UK remains free from rabies. If implemented correctly, the Society believes that a system comprising vaccination, certification of blood testing and permanent identification through microchipping will provide the UK with effective protection.

The Society regrets the stress caused to some animals during quarantine and has grave concerns about the conditions in certain quarantine kennels. The Society also believes that further research is needed to assess whether the period of quarantine could be reduced safely.

The Society believes that government should commission a full scale risk assessment and economic audit to determine the costs and benefits of implementing an alternative system and maintaining the UK's rabies-free status.

1.8 Euthanasia

1.8.1

The USPCA is opposed to the euthanasia of fit and healthy animals. The Society nevertheless accepts, with great reluctance, that in certain circumstances it may be necessary particularly in the case of unwanted or stray animals for which good homes are not available.

The Society will continue to strive for a future where putting down fit and healthy animals will be unnecessary. Euthanasia is forced on the society by irresponsible ownership. Contributory factors may be indiscriminate breeding for profit, current trends in the marketing of animals and problems caused by the effects of unemployment.

Where euthanasia is carried out, it must be under the direction of and strictly in accordance with the Euthanasia Rules and Guidelines of the Society.

1.9 Use of Animal Organs for Transplantation into Animals

1.9.1

While the USPCA accepts that organs may only be transplanted from animals which will die imminently from natural causes to appropriate recipient animals, with the explicit approval of both owners, and where there is a good chance of clinical success, the Society will not itself carry out such procedures.

2.0 HORSES AND DONKEYS

2.1 Tethering of Equines

2.1.1

The USPCA is opposed to tethering as a method of managing equines.

Tethering as a method of managing horses and ponies is unsatisfactory from many points of view, but if it is used, e.g. for travelling people who regularly move from site to site and do not have access to fenced fields, the requirements of the Welfare of Animals Act (Ireland) 1972 should be adhered to. A constant supply of fresh water should be provided and every effort must be made to provide protection against extremes of weather and to provide adequate supervision.

2.2 Racing

2.2.1

The USPCA is opposed to training practices, racecourse conditions or facilities that result in injury.

The USPCA is concerned about excessive production of horses and the disposal of unwanted and spent animals.

2.2.2

The USPCA is opposed to the use of drugs which are administered with a view to altering the performance of an animal including by masking pain.

2.2.3

The USPCA is opposed to races where distress or injury follow the placing of unreasonable or excessive demands upon the horse.

The USPCA believes that the racing of two year old horses as currently practiced result in unnecessary injury and premature wastage. The Society would prefer to see no horse raced under two years old (ie. 24 months from the birth of the horse as opposed to registration date).

2.2.4

The USPCA is opposed to the use of whips which cause pain or suffering.

Many whips used in horse racing are capable of causing excessive pain and injury to a horse. While the USPCA is encouraged that the rules governing the use of whips have been strengthened by the Jockey Club in recent years, it advocates that the rules should further specify only whips based on shock absorbing designs be permitted. The design of such whips, while being perfectly adequate for all normal riding purposes, minimise any pain and do not injure the horse.

2.2.5

The Society advocates the use of a cruelty free alternative for patients requiring oestrogen under hormone replacement therapy. The use of pregnant mare urine (PMU) from which an oestrogen substitute - Premarin is extracted, is seen as senseless cruelty, unless the patients medical condition does not allow the use of a synthetic oestrogen replacement.

2.3 Show Jumping, Eventing and Dressage

2.3.1

The USPCA is opposed to practices which can cause suffering in show jumping, eventing or dressage. This includes striking with the whip so as to cause distress or suffering; competitions where obstacles are unreasonably difficult, the use of training methods which cause distress or suffering and the use of drugs to alter the performance of the horse or enable it to compete.

2.4 Donkey Derbies and Other Equine Rides

2.4.1 The USPCA disapproves of donkey derbies and inappropriate equine rides but while they continue, will seek to ensure that procedures are followed which properly protect the welfare of the animals.

3.0 FOOD ANIMALS

3.1 General Considerations

3.1.1

The USPCA is opposed to all forms of farming that cause distress or suffering or deprive animals of the opportunity to indulge in their natural behaviour, and believes that farming practices should provide, as nearly as possible, natural lifestyles for the animals concerned.

The welfare of an animal includes its physical and mental state and the USPCA considers that good animal welfare implies both fitness and a sense of well-being.

The USPCA is concerned that the commercial mass production of food animals in the livestock industry causes suffering to a greater or lesser extent whether through the close confinement of some systems or through shortcomings in transport and slaughtering techniques. The Farm Animal Welfare Council promotes the adoption of the Five Freedoms which define ideal states which should be aimed for. The Five Freedoms are:-

- * 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 or 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.

These freedoms will be better provided for if those who have care of livestock practice:-

- * caring and responsible planning and management
- * skilled, knowledgeable and conscientious workmanship
- * appropriate environmental design considerate handling and transport
- * humane slaughter

Many production systems provide a barren environment which encourages the development of aberrant behaviour in the animals so housed. The Society recommends that housing for livestock should be environmentally enriched and that attention is given to the alleviation of boredom. Refer to Welfare of Livestock Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1998.

3.1.2

The Society encourages the principle of planned herd or flock health management and encourages farmers and veterinary surgeons to work together to prevent, monitor and respond to existing and emerging farm animal welfare concerns.

3.2 Food Labelling

3.2.1

The Society 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.

3.3 Poultry

3.3.1

The Society is opposed to the battery cage system, or variations of that system, for egg production.

3.3.2

The USPCA is in favour of laying systems in which the welfare of the bird is fully protected and in which a nest, scratching or dustbathing area and a perch are provided and where the stocking density and colony size is appropriate for the needs of the hens.

The USPCA is committed to the phasing out of the existing cage system for egg production which does not provide for the health and welfare needs of the hen. The Society is also concerned about the welfare of birds in many alternative systems in which the stocking density is at the maximum permitted by the European Union legislation or where the facilities are inadequate with respect to perches pop-holes, nest boxes and quality of management. The USPCA is opposed to the use of forced moulting to increase egg production.

3.3.3

The Society is opposed to many current production systems in which the welfare of broilers and turkeys is compromised.

The modern broiler chicken reaches its slaughter weight at the age of six to seven weeks. This rapid growth brought about by selective breeding programmes nutritional and other management factors has resulted in serious welfare concerns. The most serious of these are widespread leg weakness and joint problems. The USPCA would like to see far greater attention being given to the health and fitness of birds during both breeding programmes and on-farm management with the target of eliminating leg and other problems.

3.4 Calves

3.4.1

The USPCA welcomes and endorses the requirements with regard to calves contained within the Welfare of Livestock (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1998.

3.4.2

The Society is opposed to the use of individual crates for the rearing of calves except where calves need to be housed individually during veterinary treatment.

3.4.3

The USPCA recommends the use of loose housed or outdoor systems with a stocking density which allows free movement and the expression of normal behaviour.

3.4.4

The USPCA believes that all calves should receive a diet which allows normal physiological development and health and is opposed to the use of diets from which necessary nutrients have been excluded.

3.4.5

For transportation - see 3.8.1

3.5 Livestock Markets

3.5.1

The USPCA is opposed to the sale of livestock at markets.

The USPCA is concerned about the live auction system because it often imposes additional unloading and loading requirements, increased time between feeds, increased exposure to other livestock and therefore disease, and the general stress of the market situation. This stress will be increased if untrained animal handlers are used. Market operators should ensure that animal handlers are appropriately trained and competent to

handle animals in a positive and compassionate manner. The USPCA advocates that, wherever possible, all livestock should travel either direct from farm to farm or direct from farm to slaughter. The Society is monitoring closely the development of alternatives to markets, such as electronic or satellite auction systems, which allow livestock to be sold at their farm of origin and transported directly to the purchaser.

3.6 Pigs

3.6.1

The Society is opposed to systems of pig husbandry where no form of bedding is provided. Straw or similar material should be used to reduce injury and eliminate some behavioural abnormalities.

3.6.2

The Society is opposed to the close tethering of pigs except for a temporary purpose, such as veterinary examination, and to the use of stalls for dry or pregnant sows in which they are kept permanently and are unable to turn round. The Society recommends that alternative systems are used which meet the animals' exercise and behavioural needs.

3.6.3

The Society is opposed to the weaning of piglets at an age that results in either behavioural or health problems.

Pigs are naturally active, intelligent and inquisitive. Their welfare can be properly accommodated in both outdoor and indoor systems, provided that management is of a high standard and they are given an environment which takes account of their behavioural and other welfare requirements. The UK ban on close confinement gestation stalls from the end of 1998 has provided an opportunity to move towards high welfare systems. The USPCA believes that, to provide comfort and opportunities for foraging, pigs should have bedding material at all stages of their growth. Unfortunately many are still reared in systems which have ignored the pigs' needs, keeping them, for example, in barren pens. Virtually all outdoor and some indoor sows are put into a restrictive farrowing crate to give birth to their piglets. Farrowing crates protect piglets, but at considerable expense to the welfare of the sow, at a time when she would normally be highly active building a nest. The USPCA is urgently seeking an answer to this dilemma and is supporting the development and commercial testing of alternative non-confining systems

3.7 Production systems

3.7.1

The Society believes that new buildings should be constructed or existing buildings modified in away that allows a high standard of husbandry and welfare requirements to be met including relevant precautions against fire.

Totally slatted floors are unsuitable for all cloven hoofed animals and should be abolished. Where such floors are used, they should be designed, constructed and maintained so as to minimise discomfort, distress or injury. No animal should be permanently housed on totally slatted floors and all should have access to a bedded lying area. The Society believes, as a particular case of cattle and sheep management, that lameness and foot problems should be given special attention.

3.7.2

The USPCA is opposed to the introduction of animal production systems or changes to existing systems which are detrimental to the welfare of the animals involved.

Waste from some farm animal production systems has been responsible for causing environmental pollution. The Society is concerned about the effect such pollution may have on wildlife.

3.7.3

The USPCA is opposed to breeding or breeding programmes which cause or are likely to cause suffering or damage to mothers and offspring. The deliberate breeding of farm cattle, which encourages enlargement of the muscles, particularly the hindquarters, resulting in a restricted birth canal and larger calves, inhibits the normal ease of calving and Lead to multiple Caesarean births from the same dam.

3.7.4

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

3.7.5

The USPCA is opposed to the mutilation of farm animals.

3.7.6

The Society is opposed to the castration of piglets or lamb destined to be killed before the age of sexual maturity, the amputation of pigs tails except for veterinary reasons and the beak-tipping of birds except where there is no alternative in order to prevent feather-pecking or cannibalism.

3.7.7

The Society is opposed to the docking of lambs' tails unless there is an unavoidable risk of fly strike and close, frequent inspection of each animal is not possible.

3.7.8

The USPCA is opposed to the development of systems for farming non-domesticated species e.g. ostriches, which involve suffering.

The USPCA views with great concern the development of the farming of ostriches and other species of animals not traditionally farmed within the UK. Such developments raise questions about the welfare of the animals involved within an environment to which they might not be well adapted. Since many of the species being farmed have had little or no history of domestication, there are serious questions as to their capacity to cope with a farming situation. It is the USPCA's view that there are already a considerable number of welfare problems to be addressed with conventional farm species, and the USPCA believes that the introduction of such 'exotic' animals will only introduce further problems.

3.7.9

The Society is opposed to the forced feeding of geese and ducks to produce 'foie gras', the intensive rearing of deer with no access to pasture in summer, the harvesting of antler 'velvet' from live deer and to the intensive rearing of rabbits on wire-floored cages.

3.7.10

The USPCA is opposed to the administration of substances or application of techniques which are intended solely to enhance the production or performance of an animal and which cause or are likely to cause pain or suffering. 3.7.11 The USPCA is opposed to the use in farm animal production or biotechnological techniques which cause pain or suffering.

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3.8.1 Transportation

The Society advocates that, because of the inevitable distress and suffering caused to food animals during transport, all food animals should be slaughtered as near as possible to the point of production.

3.8.2

The USPCA believes that no journey for food animals destined for slaughter should last longer than eight hours, the journey time being taken from the time the first animal is loaded to the time the last animal is unloaded.

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3.8.3

The Society is opposed to the trade in live animals between the UK and other European Countries, or world-wide, either for immediate slaughter or for further fattening and advocates the adoption of a carcass-only trade.

The USPCA believes that the enforcement of UK and EU legislation is vital to its proper implementation and supports adequate funding for this purpose including the establishment of national and international enforcement bodies

3.8.4

The USPCA supports the establishment of a formal certification procedure for drivers of vehicles involved in road transportation of animals. Such certification should be based on the possession by the drivers of a practical knowledge about the husbandry of animals in their care, as per the Welfare of Animals (Transport) Order (N. Ireland) 1997.

3.9 Slaughter

3.9.1

The USPCA is opposed to the slaughter of any food animal without rendering that animal insensible to pain and distress until death supervenes.

The Welfare of Animals (Slaughter or Killing) Regulations (N. Ireland) 1996, states that all animals slaughtered in a slaughterhouse or knackery yard must either be:-

* instantaneously slaughtered by means of a mechanically operated instrument, or

* stunned by means of a mechanically operated instrument or an instrument for stunning by electricity provided that

they are instantaneously rendered insensible to pain until death supervenes, or

* they may be slaughtered by any other means specified in the regulations, provided that the animals are again rendered insensible to pain until death supervenes.

The 1996 Act exempts the Jewish method of slaughter, shechita, and the Muslim method of slaughter, halal. While respecting individual religious practices, the Society strongly opposes these exemptions on welfare grounds. The meat from animals killed in this way should be clearly labelled.

Because of their temperament, farmed deer and other non-domesticated species such as ostriches, are not amenable to transportation or handling within normal licensed slaughterhouse systems.

3.9.2

The USPCA advocates the thorough training of slaughtermen and applauds the introduction of a licensing system based on the successful completion of a course of instruction together with the necessary practical experience.

3.9.3

The USPCA believes that all slaughterhouses should have a manager responsible for consistent and appropriate training, supervision and implementation of welfare provisions.

3.9.4

The Society believes that a Veterinary Officer should be present at times of unloading and slaughter.

3.9.5

The USPCA is opposed to the use of cruel methods for catching, selling and killing lobsters, crabs, crayfish, octopus or squid for food.

There is scientific evidence that indicates that these creatures are capable of suffering. Killing by plunging the living animal into boiling water is considered by the Society as cruel.

3.10 Casualty Animals

3.10.1 The Society advocates that farm animals which have to be destroyed due to physical injury or disease should be slaughtered on site out of the sight of the other animals and without delay.

4.0 LABORATORY ANIMALS

4.1 Pain and Suffering

4.1.1

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

Animal experimentation in the UK is controlled by The Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986. Procedures can only be carried out after licensing by the Home Office and, under the Act, the benefits of the proposed work must be weighed against the costs to the animals involved therefore a license is granted.

It is important that, as long as animals continued to be used, every possible effort must be made to prevent suffering. Anaesthesia or other forms of analgesia cannot be considered satisfactory solutions to the problem. These are inappropriate, for example, to the problems of fear, hunger and other forms of distress. The whole complex question of the prevention of pain, the relief of suffering and the reduction of distress, must be kept under constant review by those responsible for authorising and carrying out experiments under UK legislation.

4.2 Unnecessary Experiments

4.2.1

The USPCA is opposed to animal experiments which involve unnecessary repetitions, scientifically trivial ends, or techniques to which satisfactory alternatives not using living animals have already been developed.

4.2.2

The Society is opposed to the use of animals in the testing of inessential substances, such as beauty preparations, some household products and food additives.

4.3.1

The USPCA supports the development of techniques that will result in the replacement reduction or refinement of animal experiments, the concept of the '3 Rs'. The Society regards as an advance any technique which will completely replace the use of animals, reduce the numbers used or reduce suffering or otherwise improve laboratory animal welfare.

Examples of replacement techniques include cell, tissue and organ cultures, the use of human volunteers, the use of epidemiological surveys in human medicine, the use of inanimate models, the use of films and videos in teaching and more extensive computer analysis. More could be done to develop replacements for animals and such work merits greater government support.

Techniques leading to reduction in the numbers of animals used include the setting up of centralised data banks, adequate prior literature research together with improved experimental design including the use of appropriate statistical methods, or the use of films and videos in teaching.

Examples of refinement include the use of analgesics and the abolition of death and extreme end-points in any biological study. The USPCA believes that refinement offers the best scope for alleviating laboratory animal suffering in the short term. However, this does not compromise the Society's long-term aim of completely replacing animals in laboratories with alternative techniques. The USPCA is concerned that laboratory animals often live in confined and barren conditions and urge that animals be provided with enriched environments allowing them to express natural behaviours.

4.4 Legislative and Ethical Concerns

4.4.1

The USPCA believes that it is of vital importance that all new experimental and testing protocols should be subject to extensive ethical review before licenses are applied for. The Society encourages the setting up of local ethical committees whose membership should contain lay and animal welfare representatives in industry research establishments and at universities.

4.4.2

The USPCA supports the provisions of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 that one or more persons be nominated to have overall responsibility for the day-to-day care of the animals in a scientific procedure establishment and that a veterinary surgeon must be appointed to monitor the health and welfare status of these animals. The USPCA believes that the Act can only operate effectively in the interests of animal welfare and as a reflection of public concern if the Government's Animal Procedures Committee (set up under the Act) uses its extensive powers to investigate project license applications and report publicly on these matters.

The importance of appropriate and rigorous training for prospective licensees cannot be overemphasised. The USPCA believes that the necessary training, not only in the techniques that are to be used in the recognition and alleviation of pain and suffering, (including analgesia, anaesthesia and euthanasia), but also in the ethical consideration of animal use, should take place before licenses are granted. Further training in the design of experiments such that the least number of animals is used is important.

4.4.3

The Society is opposed to the use of wild-caught animals of any species.

4.4.4

The Society is opposed to the use of chimpanzees.

Chimpanzees have complex behavioural and social needs, which can never be satisfied adequately in laboratory conditions.

4.5 Laboratory Animal Supply

4.5.1

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

4.5.2

The Society is opposed to the import of all non-human primates.

4.5.3

The Society believes that breeding and supplying establishments designated under the 1986 Act should be open to inspection by the USPCA.

4.5.4

The USPCA encourages the re-homing of laboratory animals where appropriate.

While animals continue to be used in procedures, the Society would wish, wherever possible, that the feasibility of rehoming laboratory animals once they are released from the controls of the Act, be investigated. The USPCA acknowledges the difficulties likely to be encountered but believes that where animals would be able to adapt to a new life, rehoming should be considered.

5.0 ANIMALS IN THE WILD

5.1 General Considerations

5.1.1

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

5.1.2

The USPCA seeks to protect wild animals from any form of suffering, and strongly urges that they receive a far greater degree of protection under the law. The Society welcomed the passage of the Wildlife (N. Ireland) Order 1985. The USPCA notes that interactions between humans and wild animals are affected by considerations of biodiversity, conservation and sustainability and does all in its power to ensure that such interactions cause the minimum of pain or distress to individual animals.

Before exceptions to the principle of opposition to taking or killing wild animals can be considered, there must be:

* strong scientific evidence that there is a legitimate case for the taking and killing of wild animals in particular instances,

or

* a case for taking or killing particular animals for necessary food purposes, or

* where the question is one of control, evidence that control is necessary and that alternative methods of control are not

appropriate.

In all cases, methods of control and taking should cause the minimal of pain or distress to individual animals and wherever possible, non-harmful methods of deterrence should be developed and used.

Wild Animals in this context refers to species which are living free, together with all species which although previously imported have become feral i.e. those that live and breed successfully in the wild (e.g. grey squirrel, mink, coypu).

5.2 Snares and Traps

5.2.1

The USPCA is opposed to the manufacture, sale and use of all snares and any trap which causes suffering. The USPCA approves of live traps only when the trap is capable of restraining an animal without causing pain or injury and the trap is visited at least every 8 hours. Where animals are to be destroyed, a method of killing must be used that renders the animal insensible to pain and distress until death supervenes.

The term 'all snares' includes those using stops, ratchets, etc.

The Society recognises the necessity of capturing animals on a limited scale for a variety of reasons and, in such cases, live traps are acceptable provided that they are visited frequently the frequency varying from 8 hours depending upon the species and trap concerned. Those animals taken in a live trap for destruction must be immediately destroyed according to USPCA euthanasia guidelines.

There is no body-grip trap which does not cause unacceptable suffering.

5.3 Poisons

5.3.1

The Society is opposed to the use of poisons which cause animal suffering and is concerned about the widespread agricultural and commercial use of chemical substances which are potentially lethal to wild, farm and domestic animals.

The Society is particularly concerned about the use of strychnine for poisoning and the use of hydrogen cyanide against other animals. The Society believes these methods to be inappropriate, although approved under the poisons (N. Ireland) Order 1976, Wildlife Pesticide Incident Scheme, and urges that alternatives are found.

5.4 Feral Cats

5.4.1

The USPCA recommends that where the welfare of feral cats is ensured and their presence is accepted by the owners of the site, the animals should be humanely trapped whereafter veterinary advice should be sought regarding their health status and attempts should be made to re-home very young kittens or other cats which are not totally feral. Euthanasia should be carried out on those cats, which in the opinion of the veterinary surgeon are too sick or which are injured to the extent that returning to the site would be inadvisable and the remaining cats should be neutered where feasible. While under anaesthetic for such neutering, the left ear of the cat should be 'tipped' to enable the cat to be easily recognised as having been neutered and the neutered and identified cats should be returned to the site and any further suitable advice given.

The treatment against fleas and round and tape worms of all cats selected for rehoming or for neutering as above is considered necessary.

The permanent identification of all cats selected for re-siting or for neutering as above is considered discretionary.

'Tipping' means the removal of 6mm, by a straight cut, of the lip of the ear.

5.4.2

The USPCA recommends that, where the welfare of feral cats cannot be ensured or their presence is not accepted by the owners of the site, the contact should be told of the USPCA's policy given under 5.4.1. above and be given the opportunity to reconsider. If the welfare of the cats still cannot be ensured or their presence is still not accepted, then the advice should be that a cat trap may be obtained subject to:

- i. certain welfare conditions being guaranteed, and
- ii. euthanasia only being carried out by a veterinary surgeon who will then notify the Society of such action.

5.4.3

The Society recommends that where the presence of feral cats cannot be permitted because of legal reasons then a bona fide pest control firm must be utilised and the Society will endeavour to ensure proper and legal methods are used.

5.5 Conservation

5.5.1

The USPCA is concerned with the welfare of all wild animals and it deplores man-made changes in the environment which cause suffering to wild animals.

Changes to the environment may include interference with or the direct destruction of habitats e.g. the removal of hedgerows, destruction of wetlands or stubble burning.

Pollution of land, air or water by chemical substances, waste products etc. may cause either indirect suffering to wildlife or have a more direct effect through damage to the environment itself.

5.6 Trade in Wild Animals

5.6.1

The USPCA 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.

Exotic animals, including endangered species, are traded for various reasons such as for use in experimentation, keeping in zoos or as pets.

Opposition is based on evidence that the trade in wild animals causes distress, suffering and death to large numbers of animals and is, in most instances, against all principles of conservation. It is also generally found to involve the keeping of exotic pets by those who make insufficient provision for their satisfactory maintenance.

The risk of introducing diseases which are dangerous to human beings or other animals is increased considerably by importation

5.7 Whales and Seals

5.7.1

The USPCA is opposed to the hunting and killing of whales and seals for any reason other than to relieve their suffering.

There is no method of killing hunted cetaceans without causing prolonged and unnecessary suffering. There is no scientific evidence to demonstrate that seal populations have any significant detrimental impact on commercial fish stocks.

The USPCA is concerned at the welfare problems associated with the incidental capture by commercial fisheries of marine species which include whales, dolphins, sharks, turtles and seabirds.

6.0 ANIMALS IN ENTERTAINMENT, SPORT OR FASHION

6.1 General Considerations

6.1.1

The Society is opposed to the infliction of pain and suffering on, or the killing of, any animal in the name of sport, entertainment or fashion.

6.2 Captive Animals Including Those in Zoos.

6.2.1

The USPCA is opposed to any degree of confinement likely to cause distress or suffering.

Capture, transportation and acclimatisation of animals causes distress and suffering which are unacceptable. As there are already large numbers of animals in captivity, and more being bred, further importation should be prohibited.

Animals need to be kept in a way which is appropriate to the normal biological requirements of their species, in sufficient space containing the necessary shelter, cover and environmental stimulus so as not to cause distress or suffering.

6.2.2

The USPCA is opposed to the feeding of live vertebrate prey to captive animals. Leading zoo collections no longer regard the practice of live feeding as a necessity and many specialist texts recommend the feeding of dead prey. The feeding of live prey may be viewed as illegal under the provisions of the Welfare of Animals Act (N. Ireland) 1972.

Apart from the distress caused to live prey, the predator itself can be damaged in the process of catching and ingesting the prey.

6.2.3

The USPCA is opposed to pet corners where welfare problems are caused by uncontrolled handling and feeding, a lack of adequate supervision and excessive disturbance. Pet corners are defined as areas provided for the entertainment of visitors/ customers by such establishments as zoos, garden centres, pet stores, city farms etc. including where pets are sold in supermarkets. The Society believes that such areas lead to desensitisation and lessening of respect for life.

6.3 Performing Animals

6.3.1

The USPCA is opposed to the use of animals for any form of entertainment where distress or suffering is likely to be caused.

6.3.2

The USPCA is opposed to exhibitions or presentations of animals in circuses and travelling menageries.

6.3.3

The USPCA is concerned that whenever they are used in the making of films, television programmes, advertisements and in the theatre, animals should not be caused any suffering or distress.

'Entertainment is an inclusive term taking in all animal acts.

Circus animals are kept most of the time, in close confinement, in abnormal social groups, in inadequate winter quarters, and are continually being transported - all causes of distress.

Animals may often be subjected to forced training, performing to a time-table and performing acts which do not come naturally to them, as well as being exposed to ridicule and indignity.

Animals obtained from the wild, undergo unacceptable suffering and distress caused by their capture, transportation and acclimatisation. While circuses continue to use animal acts, the Society will seek to improve welfare standards.

6.4 Rodeos

6.4.1

The USPCA is opposed to Rodeos.

Rodeos involve horses and cattle, during which suffering is sometimes caused by the use of various devices such as the cinch strap and spurs which cause the animal to buck. The cinch strap, also called the bucking strap, is put around the animal's abdomen just behind its ribs and in front of the flap of skin where its hind leg appears to join its body; this is done in a 'crush box'. As the door of this box is opened to release the animal, its rider pulls the cinch strap tight, causing bucking. Excessive fear can also be caused by this procedure.

6.5 Dog Racing

6.5.1

The USPCA is opposed to the operation of unlicensed 'flapping' tracks where veterinary surgeons are not present.

The Society is concerned about the overbreeding of greyhounds for racing, the export of unwanted greyhounds for research purposes and the recurrent difficulties in rehoming greyhounds once their racing career is over. The Society believes retired greyhounds, in most instances, make good family pets.

6.6 Falconry

6.6.1

The USPCA is opposed to the practice of falconry under conditions where the birds used are likely to suffer pain or distress.

The USPCA recommends that all falconers, and others who keep hawks or owls, adhere to codes of practice which may be published from time to time by the Hawk Board - a voluntary body that, among other things, promotes adoption of high standards in falconry.

6.7 Bullfighting

6.7.1

The USPCA is opposed to bullfighting and fiestas.

The bull is encouraged to charge the horse and rider so that a pica may be driven into its withers, thereby damaging the muscles and ligaments, weakening the bull and reducing its ability to move its head. In the Spanish style bullfight, many horses suffer extensive injuries and some are killed. Although padded, the horse is often lifted bodily and then thrown on the ground. Four horses are usually used, often repeatedly, having to be blindfolded and temporarily deafened prior to entering the ring. All the bulls are killed after suffering extensive injuries from the picas, banderillas and the matadors sword. In the Portuguese style fight, the bull is not killed in the ring, but still suffers considerably.

6.8 The Giving of Live Animals as Prizes

6.8.1

The USPCA is opposed to the giving of live animals as prizes.

The giving of prize usually refers to fish and sometimes to such animals as ponies, puppies and pigs. Whatever conditions the prize-giver attempts to impose (if any) these are inadequate to secure the future well-being of an animal which comes to be owned by chance rather than as a result of deliberate or conscious decision.

6.9 Fur

6.9.1

The USPCA is opposed to the farming and trapping or fur-bearing animals.

The farming and trapping of fur-bearing animals are practices which cause considerable suffering and fur is traded almost entirely as an inessential luxury product.

6.10 Hunting

6.10.1

The USPCA is opposed to any hunting of animals with dogs or other animals.

Hunting is taken to include mink and otter hunting, deer hunting, coursing, hunting of hares and rabbits, and fox hunting. The USPCA does not believe that there is a need for control of the fox population on a national basis or that hunting is ever an effective control or culling measure.

6.11 Shooting

6.11.1

The USPCA believes that 'sport does not justify the causing of suffering to birds and other animals, and therefore, the USPCA is opposed to shooting for sport.

The USPCA accepts that a 'clean kill' is the intention of those shooting for sport, but is a fact that this does not always happen, and that therefore suffering does occur. The USPCA advocates that shooters who see fit to pursue their sport, adopt and adhere to a code of practice based on the recommendations of the Medway Report - a 1980 report produced by a Panel of Enquiry into Shooting and Angling chaired by Lord Medway.

6.11.2

The USPCA is opposed to the use of air weapons or bows in the shooting of animals.

Air weapons and bows of all types are lethal weapons. A lack of adequate controls on the manufacture, sale and use of these weapons leads to their use in inappropriate circumstances which may result in considerable animal suffering and the Society advocates a licensing system.

6.11.3

The USPCA is opposed to the pinioning, brailing and beak trimming of, and the use of spectacles or blinkers on, game birds kept in rearing pens. Pinioning involves the surgical removal of the tip of the wing to permanently prevent flying. Brailing involves the taping of the bird's wing to render it temporarily flightless. Beak trimming involves removing the tip of the upper beak in order to prevent pecking and cannibalism.

6.11.4

The USPCA is opposed to the killing of predatory animals solely because they may be considered a threat to game birds.

6.11.5

The USPCA is opposed to the use of lead gun-shot in circumstances where the spent pellets are likely to be ingested by, and hence poison, waterfowl.

Lead poisoning in waterfowl with ingested shotgun pellets has resulted in a number of countries phasing out the use of lead shot for waterfowl hunting. The USPCA believes that alternatives such as steel shot should be used.

6.12 Angling

6.12.1

The USPCA believes that current practices in angling involve the infliction of pain and suffering on fish.

The Medway Report has proved to the satisfaction of the USPCA that fish are capable of experiencing pain and suffering. The USPCA advocates that anglers who see fit to pursue their activities adopt a code of practice based on this report.

6.12.2

The USPCA is opposed to the use of lead in angling in view of the suffering and death caused to waterfowl.

Lead weights used by anglers resulted in the deaths of large numbers of mute swans. In 1987 legislation was introduced in the UK to prohibit the import and sale of most sizes of lead weight.

7.0 ANIMALS AND EDUCATION

7.1 General Considerations

7.1.1

The USPCA is opposed to the use of animals for education where distress or suffering is likely to be caused.

7.1.2

The USPCA believes that animal welfare education is an entitlement to all. The prevention of cruelty and promotion of kindness to animals can best be achieved through both formal and non-formal educational activities.

7.2 Animals in Schools and Colleges

7.2.1

The USPCA believes that there must be an explicit animal welfare education rationale for using animals in education.

7.2.2

The USPCA is opposed to the keeping of animals in schools unless proper provision is made for their physical and mental well-being.

The necessary requirements for the physical and mental well-being of animals in schools and colleges are:-

- * that a named person is at all times responsible for the welfare and husbandry of the animals

- * that a suitable environment is provided that provision can be made for suitable housing, husbandry and veterinary care at all times including term time, weekends and during holidays

- * that any contact between pupils and animals is supervised and controlled that the animals are given adequate 'rest' periods away from disturbance

- * that animals are kept only when the use of alternatives is impossible

- * that any animals kept are prevented from indiscriminate breeding.

Legislation relating to animals must be considered in the development of programmes of study.

7.2.3

The USPCA believes that animal welfare can be taught in schools without keeping animals captive.

7.2.4

The USPCA believes that small invertebrates (mini beasts) should be studied in their natural habitats in preference to the classroom.

Studying an animal in its natural environment causes minimal disturbance and maximised educational opportunity.

The Society encourages the setting up of wildlife areas within school grounds for the benefit of animals and to enhance and encourage educational study.

At all times, due regard must be paid to legislation relating to British Wildlife.

7.2.5

The USPCA opposes breeding programmes in schools. This concern includes the use of incubators and artificial environments for animals.

It is difficult to guarantee the welfare of breeding animals under school conditions and the Society believes that such programmes of study do not promote responsible attitudes to animal care and husbandry

7.3 Educational Visits

7.3.1

The USPCA does not support visits to animal-related venues which increase stress levels or cause unnecessary disturbance to animals. The animals' welfare must remain paramount.

7.3.2

The Society believes that all educational visits should be part of a structured animal welfare curriculum.

Educational visits should be structured to highlight and define animal welfare issues. Preliminary visits by Animal Welfare Officers are essential to assess standards of animal welfare at the site.

7.4 Visiting Animals and Temporary Loan Schemes

7.4.1

The USPCA is opposed to all schemes that introduce animals into schools which are detrimental to the welfare of animals.

7.4.2

The USPCA is opposed to visitors taking animals into schools where they are used largely for entertainment and are not part of a clearly defined programme of study.

7.5 Dissection

7.5.1

The USPCA is opposed to the practice of dissection of animals in schools, including invertebrates.

7.5.2

The USPCA is opposed to any pupil being compelled either to perform or watch animal dissection.

The Society believes that either taking part in or observing dissection can lead to desensitisation and a lessening of respect for life and that the methods involved in the rearing and killing of animals used for dissection may cause suffering. The views of students who wish to withdraw from dissection should be respected without penalty.

7.5.3

The Society advocates the creation and use of educational resources which provide alternatives to dissection.

7.6 Behavioural Experiments

7.6.1

The USPCA is opposed to behavioural experiments which are detrimental to the welfare of animals, including invertebrates.

Behavioural experiments that deliberately expose animals to less than ideal conditions can lead to a desensitisation and lessening of respect for life. The Society believes that it is more educationally beneficial to observe animals in their natural environment, performing normal behaviour.

7.7 Technology

7.7.1

The USPCA is opposed to the use of animals in technology projects which cause suffering to animals. Projects which involve the enhancements of animals' lives and the improvement of the environment are to be encouraged.

7.8 School and College Farms and Animal Collections

7.8.1

Managed ecosystems, including school farms and wildlife habitats, should be managed for the benefit of animals with minimum levels of interference.

7.8.2

Where animal husbandry units exist, the USPCA is opposed to any farm livestock being kept in conditions which cannot meet the Five Freedoms as described in section 3.1.1.

7.9 Vocational Education

7.9.1

The USPCA advocates that the standards laid down by the Department of Agriculture should be applied in all cases where animals are kept for educational purposes. See Welfare of Livestock Regulations (N. Ireland) 1995.

7.9.2

The USPCA recommends that there should be a clearly defined animal welfare component in all vocational animal-related courses.

7.10 Higher Education

7.10.1

The USPCA is opposed to the unnecessary use of animals in any course which either causes suffering or for which alternatives to animals are available.

7.10.2

The Society advocates the inclusion of animal welfare components within higher education courses which enable students to explore the ethics of animal use.

For clarification of USPCA policy on the use of laboratory animals please see separate Laboratory Animals section 4.1 - 4.5 inclusive.

Where animals are kept under farm conditions, e.g. all veterinary schools, these animals should not be subjected to conditions which cannot comply with the Five Freedoms. See section 3.1.1.

The Society encourages the view that students should be able to opt out of animal practicals on conscientious grounds without being penalised.

8.0 MISCELLANEOUS

8.1 *Transport of Unaccompanied Animals*

8.1.1

The USPCA believes that the transport of unaccompanied animals should be avoided wherever possible.

In order to protect the welfare of animals in transit, animals should be in good health and transported in suitable containers. No animals should be transported in a way which is likely to cause unnecessary suffering. Further, animals should not be transported in the last third of a pregnancy. All journeys should be as short as possible in terms of time and distance travelled. Advanced transit planning and proper labelling of vehicles and containers are essential. A degree of suffering may be associated with the necessary transportation of animal for veterinary treatment eg. in ambulances, and this is excluded from the general statement above.

8.2 *Genetic Engineering*

8.2.1

The USPCA is opposed, in principle, to manipulating the genetic constitution of animals.

It is recognised that research into genetically modified animals and other organisms has been going on for many years and appears likely to increase rather than decrease in the foreseeable future.

There may be some application of genetic engineering which could have a positive benefit for animals.

Genetic engineering is a rapidly advancing subject and the USPO\ keeps a watching brief on developments.