

# Animals: helping us achieve the future we want



At the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA), we work towards the urgent international recognition of animal welfare as an essential element of sustainable development. Global adherence to animal welfare principles will have significant positive impacts on poverty eradication, food security, public health, climate change and the preservation of biodiversity. Simply put, helping animals helps people.

## Animals matter to people

Over 1 billion of the world's poor depend on animals for jobs, food, income, transport, social status and cultural identification. Good welfare practices improve animal survival, reduce production costs and increase profits, and so enhance the productivity of the poor's only productive asset and help eradicate poverty.

As the world's poorest people are the most vulnerable to disasters, it is also vital to integrate animal welfare into disaster resilience and emergency planning. This helps to prevent the unnecessary suffering of livestock and people and significantly enhances post-disaster recovery.

## Animals matter to sustainable development

Animal wellbeing impacts on the most pressing issues of our time. In just one key example, livestock is crucial to food security. Unfortunately, our collective response to the growing demand for animal protein has been the expansion of low-welfare intensive livestock production and farming practices. Choosing this unsustainable path has led to a number of unintended consequences affecting:

- **global food security**, as grains are diverted from people to livestock
- **greenhouse gas emissions**, as forests and pastures are replaced by arable land for livestock feed production
- the occurrence and global costs of **zoonotic diseases**, such as *Salmonella*, *E. coli*, *Campylobacter* and avian and swine flu
- **biodiversity**, as natural ecosystems and native animal habitats are destroyed and what remains is overexploited.

## Animal welfare offers answers

Making animal welfare a standard element for consideration in development areas such as disaster preparedness, wildlife protection, marine and dog management, and sustainable agriculture – for example by promoting sustainable livestock production that comprises animal welfare principles – represents an alternate and proven approach to achieving the Future We Want: one with food security, social stability, environmental sustainability and equitable economic growth.

## What is animal welfare?

Animal welfare refers to the physical and psychological wellbeing of an animal. The welfare of an animal can be described as good or high if the individual is fit, healthy, free to express natural behavior, free from suffering and in a positive state of wellbeing.



## The future we want is possible

To achieve it, the United Nations and all its Member States must:

- **acknowledge** that animals matter; that animal welfare is an important element of sustainable development; and that adherence to animal welfare principles will lead to positive impacts for poverty eradication, food security, public health, climate change and biodiversity
- **reflect** that acknowledgement by integrating animal welfare into the post-2015 sustainable development agenda.

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# Animal welfare: key to delivering disaster resilience



## Animals and food security in disasters

Re-establishing food security for affected people is a fundamental post-disaster response. Livestock and working animals play an indispensable role in all four pillars of food security<sup>1</sup> (availability, access, stability, and utilisation), be it through the production of meat, eggs and dairy or the employment and income derived from livestock production. To sustainably safeguard communities' food security and ultimate resilience, healthy, well-cared-for animals are a necessity to maintain life and prevent reliance on aid.

## Protecting animals in disasters secures livelihoods

The loss of animals in disasters can devastate livelihoods. The FAO recognises that, "The loss of livestock not only represents a loss of income for families, but also family savings and investment over many years. Livestock represents a safety net for many families and the loss of such productive assets will impact significantly on lives and livelihoods."<sup>2</sup> Animal-related income streams are critical to the economic and social well-being in the world's poorest regions, in both rural and urban settings.

Furthermore, including animals in disaster loss mitigation strategies is a secure and economical long-term investment. Evidence from a 2013 study in Kenya demonstrates that one dollar invested to protect animals in disaster risk reduction interventions generated \$2.74 of benefits in the form of avoided losses. If the time period is extended to three years, the benefit-cost ratio increased to \$6.69 in benefits for every \$1 spent as the cumulative effect of secured livelihoods is reflected.<sup>3</sup>

## Animals as an integral part of disaster preparedness and response

Livestock is owned by 70 per cent of the world's poorest people – also the group most vulnerable to the impacts of disasters – with many aspects of their income and diet derived from animals.<sup>4</sup> When humanitarian disaster planning and response does not include measures to protect animals, the sustainability of any post-disaster activity is compromised. Animals must be included in risk reduction and preparedness plans for communities whose livelihoods are reliant on livestock production as a form of long-term resilience. Disaster resilience management efforts should focus on saving livelihoods as well as lives.<sup>5</sup> Viewing animal welfare as a fundamental building block of regional and national disaster management planning helps create increasingly risk-resilient communities<sup>6</sup> and cities where animals and their outputs can be relied upon even when disaster strikes.

When a disaster strikes, the first response must be to safeguard and meet the immediate needs of those people whose lives have been affected. Providing the tools for recovery also forms a vital element of effective disaster management, enabling communities to rebuild in the medium and long term. With most of the world's poorest people heavily reliant on animals for their food security and livelihoods, protecting animals must be an integral part of any effective disaster response. Integrating animal welfare into disaster risk reduction, resilience and preparedness planning will significantly reduce suffering, facilitate and accelerate recovery and limit post-disaster aid dependency.

## For a future with disaster resilience

The welfare of animals plays a vital part in reducing the suffering in the immediate aftermath of a disaster and enhances the speed of recovery. Reflecting animal welfare's positive impact in creating disaster resilient communities and cities in the Post-2012 Sustainable Development framework will facilitate the achievement of most other goals – particularly the central goal of ending poverty.

To achieve this, WSPA recommends that the United Nations and its Member States:

- **acknowledge** that animals are a key productive asset of those most vulnerable to disaster and that protecting them is central to effective disaster response and recovery
- **include** animal welfare principles and the needs of animals, in disaster preparedness planning and policies to enhance community resilience and reduce disaster risk
- **consider** how the contribution of animals and animal welfare to disaster risk reduction and resilience can best be reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and their targets and indicators.

1 Food and Agriculture Organization (2011), *World Livestock 2011 – Livestock in food security*, Rome, FAO.

2 *FAO Questions and Answers, Pakistan Floods*, [http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/newsroom/docs/pakistan\\_qa.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/newsroom/docs/pakistan_qa.pdf)

3 *Cost-benefit analysis of WSPA's Mwingi Intervention in Kenya*. A report for The World Society for the Protection of Animals, Economists at Large, 2013, Melbourne, Australia

4 Campbell, R. & Knowles, F. (2011). *The economic impacts of losing livestock in a disaster, a report for the World Society for the Protection of Animals*. Prepared by Economists at Large, Melbourne, Australia

5 *The geography of poverty, disasters and climate extremes in 2030*, Overseas Development Institute, October 2013, <http://www.odi.org.uk/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8633.pdf>

6 Food and Agriculture Organization (September 29, 2012), *Livestock and livelihoods*, retrieved April 17, 2012 from [http://www.fao.org/ag/againfo/themes/en/protecting\\_livelihoods.html](http://www.fao.org/ag/againfo/themes/en/protecting_livelihoods.html)

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