

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.



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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 healthy and productive oceans



Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)

Increasingly, Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are being used as a tool for conserving ocean ecosystems and resources, and the people and economies they sustain. MPAs also protect the health and welfare of the marine animals living within them.

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) can address a number of interacting threats to the health of oceans, including through limiting the threat to marine animals of:

- overfishing (including illegal, unreported, and unregulated – IUU – fishing) – 90% of large fish species (such as sharks, tuna and swordfish) have disappeared globally over the last few decades¹
- entanglement in fishing gear (both active and derelict)
- marine debris (e.g. plastics and other synthetic materials).

The protection that an MPA offers has been shown to enhance the biodiversity and therefore the health of the ocean areas covered by the MPA. Healthy, bio-diverse oceans also provide significant tourism opportunities and associated economic benefits. For example, in 2012, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, off the coast of Australia, generated Aus\$5.7 billion.²

Measuring ocean health through animal health

Monitoring the health and welfare of marine animals at higher trophic levels – at both the individual and population level (for example, whales, seals, turtles and large fish) – can provide a good barometer of ecosystem health and an early warning system to highlight any problems. It allows monitoring of trends in health and productivity caused by anthropogenic impacts (e.g. bioaccumulation of pollutants). If steps are taken to protect top marine predators from poor health and welfare caused by people, benefits can be achieved across their ecosystem/habitat, safeguarding ocean biodiversity and improving productivity.

Human health and welfare

Many of the issues affecting marine animals and their environment are also threats to people. Current and predicted detrimental social and economic impacts of climate change are well documented.^{3,4} Many pollutants that pose a risk to marine animals also pose a risk to human health. Overfishing poses a risk to future human food supply as well as to the food supply of marine animals. Marine debris can present a risk to human health and safety as well as that of marine animals. Ultimately, the health of the marine environment is as vital to the health and survival of people as it is to that of marine animals.

Humans are dependent on the oceans and the health of the animals within them. As well as driving our climate and supplying food, healthy oceans play a critical social and economic role. Many coastal and island populations are strongly dependent on marine resources. Yet our oceans, and the marine animals living within them, are facing an onslaught of threats, many of which are directly linked to increasing levels of human activity in the oceans.

For a future with healthy and productive oceans and seas

The welfare of animals contributes to maintaining a bio-diverse and healthy ocean environment. More specifically, the degree to which the welfare and health of marine animals is secured is a key indicator of the health of our oceans and seas. It is also a determinant of the sustainability of the social and economic services oceans deliver to people.

To reflect the positive link between animal welfare and healthy and productive oceans, WSPA recommends that the United Nations and its Member States:

- **support** a significant increase in the critical ocean habitats that are protected through the establishment of a global network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)
- **acknowledge** that the health of marine animals functions as a barometer of the health of our oceans and seas
- **make good** on their commitment to significantly reduce the incidence of marine debris by 2025 – as highlighted in *The Future we Want*, paragraph 163
- **consider** how the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and their targets and indicators, can most effectively ensure the health and sustainable productivity of the world's oceans and seas, including through consideration of the welfare of marine animals.

1 <http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v423/n6937/pdf/nature01610.pdf>

2 <http://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/a3ef2e3f-37fc-4c6f-ab1b-3b54ffc3f449/files/gbr-economic-contribution.docx>

3 Stern Review: The Economics of Climate Change (2006) http://mudancasclimaticas.cptec.inpe.br/~rmclima/pdfs/destaques/sternreview_report_complete.pdf

4 Oxfam: Suffering the Science: Climate Change, People and Poverty (2009) http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/policy/climate_change/downloads/bp130_suffering_science.pdf

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