

MIDDLE EAST REGIONAL ANIMAL WELFARE STRATEGY



Beirut – Lebanon

25/8/2014



PROPOSAL FOR ESTABLISHING A REGIONAL ANIMAL WELFARE STRATEGY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Background

Animal welfare was first identified as a priority in the OIE Strategic Plan 2001-2005. OIE Member Countries mandated the organisation to take the lead on animal welfare and, as the international reference organisation for animal health, to elaborate recommendations and guidelines covering animal welfare practices, reaffirming that animal health is a key component of animal welfare.

The OIE Animal Welfare Working Group was created during the 70th General Session in February 2002 with the first recommendations of the group adopted one year after its creation. The general principles of animal welfare were included in the edition of the year 2004 of the Terrestrial Animals Health Code (Terrestrial Code).

The OIE convened a First Global Conference on Animal Welfare in February 2004. As well as the Veterinary Services in OIE Member Countries, the Conference targeted livestock producers and actors in the meat sector, veterinary practitioners and international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) working in animal welfare. The main objective of the Conference was to raise awareness of, and to explain, the OIE's animal welfare initiative.

The Second OIE Global Conference on Animal Welfare entitled "Putting the OIE Standards to Work" was held in October 2008 in Cairo, Egypt. More than 400 participants, who came from all OIE regions and from all relevant sectors, including government, industry, academia, research and NGOs, strongly endorsed the fundamental importance of the active involvement of Veterinary Services and veterinarians for improving animal welfare. The most important outcome of the conference was the identification of key needs and tools to help OIE Members to strengthen their capacities, including good governance and relevant infrastructure, to implement the OIE standards.

Since May 2005, the World Assembly of OIE Delegates (representing the 178 Member) has adopted eight animal welfare standards in the Terrestrial Code, which cover:

- Transport of animals by land.
- Transport of animals by sea.
- Transport of animals by air.
- Animal slaughter for human consumption.
- Animal killing for disease control purposes.
- The use of animals in research and education.
- Animal welfare and beef cattle production systems.

The challenges

Animal welfare is a complex subject with scientific, ethical, economic, cultural, religious and political dimensions. Today, animal producers are increasingly taking animal welfare into account and some have come to see it as a standard of quality of their products. There is growing consumer interest in animal welfare worldwide, making it an economic and trade issue on the world market for animals and animal products.

The perception of animal welfare or of what does or does not constitute an act of cruelty to animals differs from one region and culture to another. The main challenge is to reach a consensus amongst all OIE Members, the sole common point being the exclusive use of a scientific basis to establish standards for adoption.

Furthermore, animal welfare involves veterinary ethical concepts which demand specialised expertise. It is therefore a priority to integrate animal welfare as a core subject in veterinary education and to promote applied research as the scientific basis for standards and regulations.

Notwithstanding the progress made to date, there are still many challenges and the OIE is progressing the development of standards and recommendations in new areas of importance to animal welfare.

As part of the Recommendations of the Third OIE Global Conference on Animal Welfare, held in Kuala Lumpur November 2012 the OIE was requested to support the development and implementation of OIE Regional Animal Welfare Strategies (RAWS).

Within the current capacity building framework, the OIE is likely to be able to obtain funds to train in-country teams of trainers to deliver training/learning programmes in best practice in transport, and in pre slaughter and slaughter in specified eligible countries in the region.



The RAWS in the Middle East

Countries of the ME recognized the need to prepare abroad-based regional strategy that would engage all key stakeholders and recognize the cultural, religious and socio-economic differences influencing animal welfare practices within the region.

The RAWS will provide OIE Member Countries with general guidance to help improve the welfare of animals through a range of activities such as education (notably of veterinarians), regulation, research, and development. The strategy also recognises the current activities of governments, industry and NGOs to improve animal welfare and develop sustainable production systems.

The development of a practical and applied Implementation Plan for the RAWS, and the ongoing support of governments, welfare organisations, practitioners, scientists and industry are necessary for the success of the RAWS for the Middle East.

For the elaboration of the RAWS Implementation Plan (IP), the creation of Coordination Group is proposed. The Coordination Group, under the authority of the OIE Regional Commission, will be held responsible for the formulation and supervision of an implementation Plan. This RAWS IP must be developed with the advice of the stakeholders.

The RAWS Coordination Group (RAWSCG) is expected to involve 3 to 4 country representatives from Members from the Middle East region, 1 to 2 industry representatives, a non-government organisation representative, OIE representative from the Regional Representation (Beirut), and the OIE Animal Welfare Working Group representative. Observers will be able to join RAWSCG meeting when appropriate.

The function of the RAWSCG is:

1. To provide strategic advice and guidance to OIE through the Regional Commission for the Middle East on the further development and implementation of the RAWS.
2. To review the performance of the RAWS and to enable the assessment of improvements in animal welfare in the region.
3. To identify issues / new research / scientific knowledge of relevance to the RAWS and to seek independent scientific advice as necessary.
4. Focus on how to improve understanding of OIE policies and priorities, and the views of members and observers on current and future welfare matters;
5. Draft and review the RAWS IP and make recommendations on future priority actions;
6. Provide advice on the modus operandi of the RAWS CG and secretariat; and prepare regular reports of outcomes for the Regional Commission and OIE HQ.

The RAWS IP will be adapted into country plans with assistance, if necessary, from the OIE and the RAWSCG. The individual countries of the Middle East will be responsible for taking the implementation plan forward and implementing it in their country.

Engaging OIE delegates and animal welfare focal points will be critical to the success of the RAWS implementation, as they will be the main link between OIE and the member countries for reporting and monitoring the implementation progress.

The planning of activities included in the strategy shall be performed under the coordination of the OIE Regional Representation for the Middle East and under the supervision of OIE Headquarters.

Other RAWs CG activities will include:

- 1- The establishment of a secretariat within the OIE RR in Beirut to support the activities of the coordination group.
- 2- Translation of the RAWs into Arabic with copies provided to the relevant countries for further distribution.
- 3- Ensuring the RAWs is available on websites including the OIE site (www.oie.int), the OIE Regional Representation for the Middle East site (www.rr-middleeast.oie.int).
- 4- Establishing a RAWs news letter which is circulated on a quarterly basis and includes short information contributions from countries, NGOs and industry.
- 5- Development of an Action Plan to define and track activities under the RAWs.
- 6- Establishing a secure dedicated website (SharePoint) for RAWSCG members and participants to share information.
- 7- Undertaking a proof of concept' questionnaire of national animal welfare focal points.
- 8- Providing support and impetus for the delivery of practical animal welfare training courses in the region. The first course was held in Cairo in 2015.
- 9- Supporting the establishment of national animal welfare committees in the region.
- 10- Actively working with the OIE's national animal welfare focal points to promote RAWs initiatives.
- 11- Supporting search of fund/resources to cover the activities of the RAWs
- 12- Networking with OIE collaborating Centers and supporting initiatives relating to the twinning of regional universities and research centers.

This strategy shall be reviewed within a term of five (5) years so as to adapt its contents to the scientific progress and the experiences achieved and to the fulfilment of the objectives laid down.

The Scope of the RAWs in the Middle East

The priorities were identified at the OIE seminar for National Focal Points on Animal Welfare for Middle Eastern countries, held in Beirut Lebanon, 23 -25 November 2010.

The strategy will cover the OIE Standards on Animal Welfare, with an initial emphasis on farm animals. It will also cover animal transport, animal handling, animal slaughter for human consumption, animal killing for disease control purposes, control of stray dogs and the use of animals for research and education purposes and how to apply these standards in regulations and legislation.

The RAWs shall provide a framework to achieve sustainable science based improvements in animal welfare, also taking into account social, economic, bioethics and cultural aspects.

Countries should base their animal welfare situation on the result of the OIE PVS reports to identify their level of advancement and to follow the related recommendations:

<i>Levels of advancement</i>
1- There is no national legislation on animal welfare.
2- There is national legislation on animal welfare for some sectors.
3- In conformity with OIE standards animal welfare is implemented for some sectors (e.g. for the export sector).
4- Animal welfare is implemented in conformity with all relevant OIE standards.
5- Animal welfare is implemented in conformity with all relevant OIE standards and programmes are subject to regular audits.

The Main Objectives of the strategy:

1. To ensure the implementation of OIE Standards on animal welfare at national level through a coordinated regional approach.
2. To spread and promote animal welfare knowledge within the region by means of effective coordination, communication, education and capacity building.
3. To achieve sustainable improvements in animal welfare based on the development of regional and international research.
4. To develop sustainable mechanisms for the coordination and promotion of animal welfare programs in accordance with the national, regional priorities of the countries.
5. To establish alliances amongst key parties to facilitate the implementation of OIE standards.
6. Endorsement of the RAWs implementation plan by the OIE Regional Commission as well as the OIE World Assembly of Delegates.

Benefits:

The expected benefits from the RAWs include:

1. A clear regional direction on animal welfare.
2. Optimum sustainable welfare outcomes and indicators.
3. Readily identifiable and clearly defined regional standards and guidelines.
4. Focus and guidance on future resource decisions to protect and promote sustainable animal welfare.
5. Reinforced societal values and sustainable livelihoods.
6. Improved identification of research priorities for the region, taking in to account relevant international developments.
7. Improved animal health.
8. Improved animal handling and care by animal owners.
9. Recognized animal welfare-friendly products.
10. Exploration of previously unavailable international marketing opportunities as a result of investment in animal welfare (eg niche markets, accreditation/certification schemes).



Key targeted issues and expected results:

- Political and high-level leadership support within OIE Member Countries.
- Resources and access to technical expertise and scientific information are available, and partnerships and collaborating activities with partner organisations are developed.
- Stakeholders, including farmers, industry, NGOs, academia, religious authorities and the veterinary profession actively involved in the process.
- Implementation approaches consistent with the general policies and standards of the OIE, as well as the outcomes of the 3rd Global Conference on Animal Welfare held in Malaysia.
- demonstration of the social and commercial benefit of improving animal welfare in the region
- Effective and professional coordination and communication between countries in the region via the RAWSCG.

Factors driving the region's approach to improving animal welfare

- a- Science
- b- Values
- c- Ethics
- d- Traditions and Culture
- e- Education and Awareness
- f- Economics and livelihoods
- g- Research and development
- h- Regional and international developments



General Goals of the RAWs: Objectives and activities

Goal 1:

An enhanced regional approach and commitment to ensure high standards of animal welfare based on a legislative framework and standards consistent with the OIE Animal Welfare Guidelines.

Objectives	Activities
1.1 To ensure administrative, legislative and planning mechanisms support effective management of animal welfare in the region.	1.1.1 Review current animal welfare legislation and legislative instruments (laws, regulations, decrees, edicts, government directives).
	1.1.2 Participate in a workshop, to review the official regulations for animal welfare within the Middle East countries to be compatible with the OIE guidelines on animal welfare.
1.2 To ensure effective and timely implementation and monitoring of the Strategic Plan	<p>1.2.1 Develop an implementation plan to identify lead responsibility for the monitoring, review and reporting on progress under the Strategic Plan.</p> <p>This Plan will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate specific action plans and use the expertise of lead agencies to integrate the plans into each of the GCC countries. • Identify any additional resources and funding required delivering the Plan. • Provide a basis for regional coordination and reporting on implementation progress.
1.3 Develop ME wide Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with livestock trading partners consistent with OIE guidelines.	1.3.1 Build on existing bilateral agreements, signed by ME members, to deliver a ME wide Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on livestock exports with key trading partners that underpins the trade and ensures the health and welfare of animals are protected.

Goal 2:

The provision of funding, coordination and evaluation, to support improvement in animal handling systems.

Objectives	Activities
2.1 Funding is prioritized regionally to achieve best value for money in improving animal handling systems.	2.1.1 The ME, with assistance from key trading partners, will identify regional priorities for funding improvements in animal handling systems and appropriate funding sources.
2.2 Activities relating to improvements in animal handling systems are coordinated amongst member countries to achieve regional consistency in animal handling outcomes.	2.2.1 The ME coordinates member country activities to improve animal handling systems, with assistance from the OIE Middle East Regional Commission and key trading partners.
2.3 To demonstrate progress in delivering animal welfare outcomes consistent with OIE guidelines and the goals of the strategic plan.	2.3.1 Identify appropriate indicators for recording animal welfare performance standards in the region and use this to benchmark current performance and measure change in animal handling practices over time.

Goal 3:

The provision of training and development in: Animal handling, requirements for facilities, product quality and disease management, animal production and health in both Government and private industry.

Objectives	Activities
3.1 Recognizing the obligations of both government and private sector, enhance the attitudes, skills and knowledge of animal careers and handlers and people whose actions have a potential effect/impact on animals by developing, where appropriate, certified training competencies and standards.	3.1.1 Promote consultation and the dissemination of information on animal care and encourage the adoption of best practice standards in all situations where there is potential for human to animal interaction.
	3.1.2 Develop sector specific animal handling standards for the commercial livestock supply chain.
3.2 Stimulate interest in improving animal welfare standards by clarifying the link between animal handling practices and the economic value of food, fibre and other products derived from animals.	3.2.1 Train animal handlers to understand the link between animal health and product quality.
	3.2.2 Communicate the economic loss caused by morbidity, handling stress and nutritional stress to the commercial livestock supply chain.
3.3 Improve the design of animal handling systems to promote efficient, minimal stress movement of livestock and enhance employee safety.	3.3.1 Provide access to advice and training resources on the design of animal handling systems.
	3.3.2 Improve employee safety and animal welfare through training in animal handling techniques.

Goal 4:

Sustainable improvements in animal welfare based on regional and international research and development.

Objectives	Activities
4.1 To ensure that new knowledge gained through research on animal welfare is broadly communicated and adopted into regional animal welfare standards.	4.1.1 Develop a process for identifying research and development needs and establish regional animal welfare research priorities.
	4.1.2 Monitor and review future updates by OIE to their guidelines on animal welfare and incorporate these into this Strategic plan where relevant.
	4.1.3 Develop a process for reviewing and incorporating international research findings on animal welfare into this Strategic Plan where relevant.
4.2 Seek effective input from industry, ME member governments and other stakeholders across the spectrum of the use of animals in the region.	4.2.1 Encourage the commitment of ME member states and all users to implement animal welfare standards in accordance with the OIE Animal Welfare guidelines, in particular 3.7.2.1 (Sea Transport) and 3.7.3.1 (Land Transport).
4.3 Learn from international experience in animal welfare programs.	4.3.1 Develop close relationships with countries implementing animal welfare programs to share experiences and assist in development of policies and programs.

Goal 5:

Effective communication, education and training to promote an improved understanding of animal welfare.

Objectives	Activities
5.1 To promote ownership and responsibility by the whole of the community of the benefits of the Strategic Plan.	5.1.1 Publicise the existence and content of the Strategic Plan, including animal welfare legislation, model codes of practice, position statements, standards and guidelines utilizing appropriate media.
5.2 Involve religious scientists in the communication of animal welfare activities and initiatives under the strategic plan.	5.2.1 Work with religious scientists in the implementation of specific action plans to remind industry and the public of religious obligations to the treatment and handling of animals.
5.3 Enhance the skills and knowledge of animal handlers by developing training competencies and standards.	5.3.1 Where necessary, develop, promote and deliver appropriate education and training as part of quality assurance programs for animal care, production, use and management that comply with relevant OIE guidelines.
5.4 Raise the profile of animal welfare and animal handling systems in the education sector.	5.4 Raise the profile of animal welfare and animal handling systems in the education sector.

Identified key players

- Governmental agencies and allied entities including religious references, CVO, OIE National Focal Points (FP) etc.
- People in charge of animals and animal users
- Industries
- The veterinary, animal science and agricultural professions
- Livestock producers, processors and transporters
- Researchers and animal technicians
- Educational facilities
- NGO, animal welfare bodies
- Research centres or experts in the field of AW
- Other stakeholders and potential donors

Membership of the RAWS coordination group (CG)

- The President and two vice president of the Regional commission
- Coordinator: Prof. Hassan Aidaros
- Secretariat: Dr G.Yehia (OIE regional representative)
- Representative from NGO: WSPA
- Representatives from industry and potential donors: transport, slaughter, livestock and livestock products traders + Islamic bank and Arab funds, EU + contacts by the secretariat of the CG (OIE regional Representation for ME)
- OIE National Focal Points: Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Jordan

Possible constraints

- Budget: it is the responsibility of the Secretariat, in conjunction with the RAWS CG to find suitable financing for this initiative (contacts with national, regional and international organisations, NGOs, other foundations, and Islamic institutions)
- Human resources: availability and competencies
- Sustainability of activities
- Turnover of the FP: transfer of information should be ensured

This proposal is submitted to the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle at the OIE 83 General Session 2015 for formal endorsement.
