

# THE FIVE FREEDOMS OF ANIMAL WELFARE EXPLAINED



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The World Organization for Animal Health (O.I.E.) has documented in its Terrestrial and Aquatic Codes a series of scientifically-based guidelines for the humane treatment of animals. The areas covered include transport by land, sea and air, slaughter procedures for human consumption and disease control, animal production systems, stray dog control, and research and educational use. Member countries are encouraged to enact and enforce laws and regulations to support the implementation of these guidelines.

All procedures stem from the declared “Five Freedoms” of Animal Welfare (<http://www.wspa.ca/food/The-five-freedoms.aspx>) which are as follows:

1. **Freedom from thirst and hunger** - by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour. It is our responsibility to provide proper nutrition to the animals in our care, whatever type they may be from fish to horses.

2. **Freedom from discomfort** - by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area. An animal should not, for example, be confined in the blazing sun with no shaded area, or in a dirty enclosure full of faeces or urine deposits.
3. **Freedom from pain, injury, and disease** - by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment. Health care for animals is as essential as it is for humans. Leaving an illness untreated causes suffering, and in some cases can threaten our own health.
4. **Freedom from fear and distress** - by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering. Slaughter procedures for food animals and training practices for dogs are examples. For the former, right up to the point of stunning, stress CAN be kept to a minimum. For the latter, modern operant conditioning can teach wanted behaviours with no need for punishment.
5. **Freedom to express normal behavior** - by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind. This has its limitation in the extent to which the behavior may have negative implications. For example, dogs and cats that reproduce without limitation can result in negative welfare and societal consequences. Hence, spaying and neutering does not constitute a breach of this freedom.

Happy, comfortable, well nourished animals are by far healthier, more productive and bring much more satisfaction to us humans.