EDITORIAL

Animal welfare in the EU: celebrating the past, preparing for the future

Animal welfare has a long and proud tradition in the European Union. In fact, the first European animal welfare legislation was adopted in the mid-1970s – some 40 years ago. It was a great personal honour for me to have headed the very first animal welfare unit of the European Commission back in 2000, and now it is a similar honour to be able to celebrate with many stakeholders this important anniversary.
Certainly, this is a perfect occasion for us to take a journey back in time to see how far we have come. I invite you to read through the various testimonials and acquaint yourself with the views of colleagues who have played a crucial role in the achievement of the high animal welfare standards that apply today across the European Union.

Indeed, over the years, animal husbandry in the EU has built up a strong and deserved reputation for having the highest welfare standards in the world and EXPO 2015 provides a great opportunity to reflect on the contributions made by animal welfare to the theme of ‘Feeding the planet, Energy for life’.

One thing is certain – none of this would have been possible without the efforts, dedication and commitment of many civil servants across the European Institutions and the Member States, together with the valuable input of many key stakeholders. Let us not forget that animal welfare laws are of little value without the commitment of farmers, veterinarians, transporters, public enforcement officers, retailers, researchers, educators and of course citizens.

On the occasion of this 40-year anniversary, we can take pride in our progress to date. Yet this is not a signal for us to sit back and relax. A backward look also stirs and inspires us to take a forward look – to see what we can aspire to in the future. There is still a lot of work for us to do, in many areas, following a common and holistic approach.

As we have done over the last 40 years, we need to continue to act together – because ‘everyone is responsible’.

Bernard Van Goethem, Director for Veterinary and International Affairs of the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety

Animal welfare becomes mainstream

MEP Marit Paulsen explains how animal welfare has, after decades of pressure, finally found its place at the heart of policy making and politics.

Finally, reality is knocking on the door. After decades of hard work by those committed to the cause, animal welfare now receives the political attention it deserves. Matters such as the illegal yet routine tail-docking of pigs are now broadly discussed, for instance, in the European Parliament’s Committee on Petitions, following complaints from concerned citizens and consumers.

In anticipation of the European Animal Welfare Law, which the European Parliament has repeatedly called for, very important science-based legislation is being developed as we speak. One example is the new Animal Health Regulation, for which I am the EP rapporteur. Not only would this be the first time on the European level that a law expressly states – in black and white – that there is a clear link between animal welfare and animal health, it would also address the crucial matter of antimicrobial resistance. For far too long, veterinary medicines have been used as an “umbrella” to allow for bad animal husbandry.

This will have to stop, and it might very well happen. Problems like lack of enforcement are now being discussed in terms of “unfair competition”, a language understood by most decision makers. And with the World Health Organisation (WHO) now ranking antimicrobial resistance as one of the major global threats to public health, the “One Health approach” is no longer regarded as just a way of imposing new animal welfare requirements, to the supposed disadvantage of farmers. Today, more and more people finally realise that a happy pig is a healthy, tasty and profitable pig.

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Marit Paulsen is a Member of the European Parliament
Animal Welfare in Europe: 1974 to 1999

John Wilson, one of the first European Commission officials to occupy a post dedicated to animal welfare, traces the history of animal welfare legislation in the EU from 1974-1999.

In 1974, my colleague, the late Brian Hogben, steered a Directive on the stunning of animals before slaughter through the Council. This was the first European legislation on animal welfare and it was followed by Directive 77/489/EEC on the protection of animals during international transport. Brian took the legal text almost verbatim from the Council of Europe Convention on the same subject.

The next subject on the agenda, battery cages, was a far more difficult topic and it wasn’t until 1986 that we managed to get a text adopted in the Council. It was then annulled for legal reasons and re-adopted in 1988.

On 20 February 1987 the Parliament adopted its Resolution on Animal Welfare. As a result, the Commission created the post for animal welfare that I was fortunate enough to occupy for the next ten years.

Those years were the most interesting and challenging of my professional career. I was dealing with a subject that was scientifically and politically both fascinating and controversial. I was privileged to work directly with Commissioners, Ministers and Members of Parliament. I dined with the Aga Khan and Brigitte Bardot and represented the Commission on animal welfare around the world. I was the first Commission official to be elected to a Council of Europe Committee, and I signed and ratified a European Convention on behalf of the European Community (they were expecting Jacques Delors and thus were not delighted when I turned up).

I managed to get the proposals on the welfare of calves and pigs through the Commission, with difficulty, and through the Council, with even more difficulty. They broke new ground because although they set only the bare minimum of standards, there was no going back. They have since been massively improved.

I also got the revised Directive on welfare at slaughter adopted, regrettably without the ban on ritual slaughter without stunning which I had initially proposed.

My final success in animal welfare was the adoption of the Directive on the protection of animals kept for farming purposes, which put the Council of Europe Convention into European law.

I am heartened to see the progress that has been made since I left the field in 1999 and I am optimistic that it will continue.

John Wilson, European Commission official from 1979 to 2013, worked in the field of animal welfare from 1987 to 1997

‘I dined with the Aga Khan and Brigitte Bardot and represented the Commission on animal welfare around the world.’
Animal welfare gains international recognition

Alejandro Checchi Lang, former Director for Veterinary and Phytosanitary legislation at the European Commission, reflects on the EU’s role in raising awareness of animal welfare in the international community.

This year marks the fortieth anniversary of the beginning of legislation on animal welfare. As the Director for Veterinary and Phytosanitary Legislation from 1998 through October 2004, I remember those years as a time when the system of protection of animal health, hygiene and control at the borders was put to the test. Nowadays we can be satisfied that the major issues raised during that time have basically been addressed, and that society as a whole pays great attention to and values the correct application of the legislation that has been passed.

At a time when international relations were tense because of questions such as BSE, Dioxines, Foot and Mouth Disease, and other food chain issues, we can wonder how it was possible to simultaneously raise awareness within the international community.

During the last forty years, the European Commission and the European Parliament have made a very important contribution to raising the level of awareness and commitment to animal welfare issues.

I particularly value efforts to convince the international community of the importance of the issue. Some of the milestones along the way are: the inclusion of a special protocol in the Treaty of Amsterdam (1999), the Veterinary Agreement between the EU and Chile (2003), that includes a chapter on animal welfare and marks the beginning of the recognition of animal welfare issues at the international level. In 2005 the International Organisations for Epizoties issued the first standards for animal health. In 2008 the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) issued a rather important document produced by an expert group on capacity building to implement good animal welfare practices, with operational conclusions to guide FAO members.

Most of the members of the international community understand today that animal welfare, rather than being an isolated, ethical issue, is in addition a key part of the system of food production, and that it cannot be disentangled from questions of food safety, food security and sustainability.

All this brings winds of hope for the future for society as a whole for sufficient, accessible, safe and sustainable food. All those that contributed to this deserve gratitude and recognition. Now the work goes on, towards new and ambitious goals.

Alejandro Checchi Lang was a European Commission official from 1987 to 2009, and Director of Veterinary and Phytosanitary Legislation, including animal welfare, from 1998 to 2004.
Spreading awareness and cultivating know-how in new and existing Member States

Peter van Houwelingen, former European Commission expert, tells of the progress in animal welfare law and how it impacted the EU’s enlargement.

When I started to work for DG Agriculture, in a team together with John Wilson in 1989, animal welfare was a rather new policy area within the European Community. At that time priority was given to the preparation of the draft Directives with minimum standards for the protection of calves and pigs, and concerning the protection of animals during transport, in order to facilitate the completion of the internal market in animals and animal products in 1992. At the end of 1991, these Directives were adopted by the Council. Two years later, a Directive that set common minimum standards for the protection of animals at the time of slaughter or killing was also adopted.

For the development of an adequate EU animal welfare policy it was important that each of these Directives contained a provision stating that a certain number of years after adoption, the Commission had to submit proposals to the Council with a view to reviewing the standards, based on reports from the Scientific Veterinary Committee. This resulted in improved standards in the above-mentioned domains, including concerning the welfare of laying hens, for which the Council decided in 1999 to ban the conventional battery cages by 2012.

Negotiations with the Member States in the early 1990s were rather complicated. The main reason was that the notions concerning the level of the welfare standards for the different species of farm animals were vastly different between certain Member States. In addition, there was limited public awareness at that time in some Member States.

A major step forward in the development of the EU animal welfare policy was the adoption of an Animal Welfare protocol to the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997. In the past, animal welfare was mainly considered at Community level where national rules on the matter had the potential to disrupt trade. The Treaty of Amsterdam introduced a legally binding requirement to take animal welfare into consideration in the areas of Community policy specified in the protocol, namely: agriculture, transport, internal market and research.

Other improvements in the EU’s animal welfare policy during the nineties were: the involvement of the European Parliament that repeatedly expressed its desire that the Community adopt effective measures; the results of research as expressed in reports from the Scientific Veterinary Committee; and the different Council of Europe Conventions for the protection of animals. In addition, public awareness regarding animal welfare was growing in Europe during this period.

‘Negotiations with the Member States in the early 1990s were rather complicated … notions concerning the level of the welfare standards for the different species of farm animals were vastly different between certain Member States.’

In 1999 I started to work for TAIEX (DG Enlargement); at that time, in particular, to assist the Candidate Countries (from Estonia to Malta) with the transposition of the EU veterinary legislation into their national legislation. There was a lot of work to do, as several of the countries in Eastern Europe were not familiar with the welfare of farm animals, and in many of these countries there was no general animal welfare code, or if one existed it focused only on pet animals.

In addition to the legal process, we were also involved in these countries in the implementation of the legislation. TAIEX developed training programmes, not only for staff of the Veterinary
Services, but also for farmers, transporters and slaughter house workers. Furthermore, we stimulated the development of a national animal welfare policy together with all parties involved, in particular with the national animal welfare organisations and the agriculture industry concerned. After the accession of the Candidate Countries in May 2004, other countries, like the western Balkan States and the northern part of Cyprus, also received TAIEX assistance, including concerning animal welfare. This assistance has enormously stimulated the transposition of EU animal welfare legislation, and the implementation and enforcement of this legislation.

Peter van Houwelingen was a European Commission expert (DG Agriculture and DG Enlargement - TAIEX) in the field of animal welfare and animal health from 1989 to 2005

Banning battery cages: a major milestone

Sikko Beukema, a former European Commission animal welfare expert, takes us through the journey he took to help ban battery cages for hens in the EU.

Forty years of animal welfare. Nowadays animal welfare is a normal discussion and research item, 40 years ago, however, only a few people were concerned about animal welfare.

I had the opportunity to write a proposal for the housing of laying hens in order to replace the system of battery cages. Cages in which there was 300 cm² per hen. A political wish of Commissioner Fischler.

From the very first moment I had to deal with a lot of people. NGOs, representatives of the agricultural sector from all Member States, scientists, the European Parliament and Committees, like Ecosoc and the Committee of the Regions. And of course the internal services of the European Commission and the cabinets of the other Commissioners. Exciting work, if you like it. And I did. But it also gave me opportunities that I never had before.

I had to explain and to defend the position of the Commission. It always gave me a boost when I discovered that my message and explanation was clear, although mostly my agricultural public did not agree with the vision. I remember the exciting discussions and meetings with many groups from Bretagne, in Brussels and in Bretagne itself. Visiting farms in February 1998, together with the only member of Bretagne in the European Parliament, in Bretagne. Standing in the snow speaking with journalists from local newspapers in French, not my mother tongue, and explaining the Commission’s position again.

My nephew, living in Bretagne, told me later that the message was clear. Animal welfare is and will be an item for all of society for years to come. And the proposal of Mr Franz Fischler was adopted; a ban on cages for laying hens in the European Union is now in force.

‘It always gave me a boost when I discovered that my message and explanation was clear, although mostly my agricultural public did not agree with the vision.’

Sikko Beukema was a European Commission animal welfare expert from July 1996 to July 1999. Previously, he was the Dutch delegate in working groups on animal welfare of the Commission and the Council of Europe.

http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/index_en.htm
Health and welfare: two sides of the same coin

Jim Moynagh, former scientific secretary to the scientific committee on animal health and welfare, shows how animal welfare and animal health are inextricably linked.

Although we might work in the fields of animal health, nutrition or trade, the issue of animal welfare was always taken into account. Prior to the establishment of the European Food Safety Agency (EFSA), the Commission sought expert advice on animal welfare from a group of scientists and I was fortunate to be charged with this responsibility. The Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare, which existed from 1997 to 2003, was the first time that advice on animal health and animal welfare was unified under a single umbrella. The Committee, along with others dealing with topics such as veterinary public health and food, was managed by a very small team within the Commission. Though many were sceptical at the outset, this committee worked very well and allowed health and welfare to be seen as two sides of the same coin. Input of health experts on welfare and welfare experts on health was of synergistic value. The committee became part of EFSA in 2003 and they have continued this structure. The Committee produced many important reports that have formed a basis for EU policy and legislation on topics as diverse as animal transport, slaughter methods, broiler and beef production. On a personal level, I would highlight the opinion on the use of bovine somatrophin in dairy cows, as a result of which this compound is not used in our already very hard working dairy cows in Europe on animal welfare grounds. For me it was a fascinating, intellectually stimulating and fulfilling period.

Jim Moynagh joined the European Commission in 1992 and was scientific secretary to the scientific committee on animal health and welfare from 1997 to 2003.

‘Input of health experts on welfare and welfare experts on health was of synergistic value.’

Discussions: moving from the symbolic to the scientific

Eric Van Tilburgh Head of the Animal Welfare Division of the Belgian Federal Public Service of Public Health, discusses how animal welfare policy has moved from more symbolic measures to science-backed policymaking.

I started to work on animal welfare on the international scene in 1988, attending the Council of Europe (COE) meetings and the EU meetings. In the first years the COE was clearly taking the lead on animal welfare policy, producing Conventions and Recommendations on all hot topics such as animal slaughter and transport, and providing detailed standards for the species that were intensively kept for farming purposes. The COE documents were at that time a source of inspiration when drawing up and discussing EU Directives such as the ones for pigs and for calves. Contacts between the veterinary experts dealing with animal welfare were at that time frequent, because of the meetings in Strasbourg that lasted a full week and the frequency of the meetings in Brussels, and led to international friendships that without any doubt contributed to a better mutual understanding and inspiration! A kind of Erasmus for civil servants.
The COE started to deal with less common farmed species such as fur animals, sheep and goats, ducks and geese and ratites and the EU began to dominate the discussions in the COE, finally taking over the leading role with as a final result that the meetings in Strasbourg came to an end.

Looking back on this very interesting period, I see a very important switch from symbolic discussions, like the one on the dimensions of battery cages for laying hens, to scientific supported discussions and decisions taking into account species’ specific needs, such as the group housing of calves and sows. The role of animal welfare associations has also increased, as they have discovered retailers as key players and often as fellow combatants.

It was a pleasure to be part of this move ahead, and I will be glad to witness the next forty years of progress.

Eric Van Tilburgh is Head of the Animal Welfare Division of the Belgian Federal Public Service of Public Health and a member of the Eurogroup’s Advisory Board on companion animals and of the EU Expert Group on alternatives to surgical pig castration.

‘Animal welfare is a complex and multi-faceted issue that involves scientific, ethical, economic, cultural, social, religious and political dimensions.’

World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE): A mandate to improve animal health and welfare worldwide

Dr Bernard Vallat, Director General of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), outlines the OIE’s pioneering role in pushing animal welfare issues onto the international agenda.

Animal production systems, transport and slaughter of animals: these are examples of situations where the perception of animal welfare differs from one region and culture to another, from one person to another. Animal welfare is a complex and multi-faceted issue that involves scientific, ethical, economic, cultural, social, religious and political dimensions. Over the last decades, it has been of growing concern, in our society and has become a priority area in the work of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE).

In the early 2000s, in the absence of any regulatory global framework to promote it, OIE Member Countries mandated the organisation to take the lead internationally on animal welfare and to elaborate science-based standards in this field. Animal welfare has been, since then, identified as a strategic priority in OIE’s activities. This had led the organisation to strengthen its international network of expertise on the matter, with the constitution of a dedicated working group and the inclusion of new Collaborating Centres.
The first OIE international standards on animal welfare were published in 2005. All standards have been adopted by consensus by the World Assembly of OIE national delegates. These standards cover the welfare of terrestrial and aquatic animals in key areas such as production, transport and slaughter, and laboratory animals, and are constantly updated. All 180 OIE Member Countries commit to endorse them at the national level, irrespective of their cultural practices or economic situation.

Provided that veterinary services play a central role in preserving both animal health and welfare, the OIE is constantly striving to help Member Countries in progressing in this field, supporting them with the implementation of OIE’s standards and with the improvement of animal welfare within veterinary education. In this framework, the OIE has developed several capacity-building programmes for its Member Countries. These include specific training programmes targeting the 180 OIE animal welfare Focal Points and the development of regional strategies: in Europe, the regional platform for animal welfare, created in 2013, focuses on the management of stray dog populations and conditions relating to the transport and slaughter of livestock.

In close collaboration with the European Commission, the OIE has also convened a cycle of Global Conferences on animal welfare which started in 2004, in order to address its priority goal of helping all Member Countries implement adopted animal welfare standards, while taking into account the great variety of cultures in the different regions and countries of the world.

Notwithstanding the progress made over the last decades, there are still many challenges to achieve jointly. The OIE is currently working on the development of standards and recommendations in new areas of importance for animal welfare.

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**Dr Bernard Vallat** is Director General of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE). His first five-year term in office began on 1 January 2001. In May 2005 and 2010, the Organisation’s 180 Member Countries elected Dr Vallat for second and third five-year terms.

The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) is an intergovernmental organisation with a mandate from its 180 Members to improve animal health and welfare worldwide. It is responsible for ensuring transparency of the animal disease situation worldwide, including diseases transmissible to humans, as well as safeguarding the sanitary safety of world trade in animals and animal products under World Health Organisation/Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement and ensuring food safety.
The EU and animal welfare policy: an NGO perspective

Sonja Van Tichelen, Regional Director for the International Fund for Animal Welfare, reflects on her time campaigning for improvements in animal welfare and the work still to be done.

I have had the privilege of working on European animal welfare campaigns for the last 20 years and during this time the EU policy on animal welfare has evolved significantly with many new laws protecting animals on farms, in research, wild animals and wildlife in captivity.

Over the years I’ve seen a growing interest from the public, politicians and even the business community followed by a bigger investment in animal welfare science, training and education. That growing interest is really encouraging.

I remember cooperating in the first EU funded animal welfare projects; Consumer concern for animal welfare and Welfare Quality as well as the European Animal welfare platform, around the turn of the century. It became very clear to me how important it is to develop robust scientific arguments and to ensure people understand what constitutes good welfare.

An important aspect of campaigning is cooperation with like-minded stakeholders and these can come from very different sectors. These alliances clearly demonstrate that good animal welfare has many advantages for animal health, consumer protection, for businesses and for sustainability. The European Parliament has been supporting many welfare issues over the years as they are on the receiving end of requests from their constituents. MEPs have often said that they receive more letters on animal welfare than on any other societal issue.

The work of an NGO does not stop at the adoption of new legislation. The next and most crucial step for animal welfare is ensuring that these laws are properly implemented and enforced. I think everyone realises that enforcement is very uneven among the member states, and that it must be improved in order for Europe’s leading legislation to have a real impact.

The EU has made good progress on animal welfare. But that still leaves many animals without legal protection and patchy enforcement is seriously problematic. Citizens and NGOs expect the EU to continue to take leadership on animal welfare within the EU and at an international level.

Sonja Van Tichelen is the Regional Director for the International Fund for Animal Welfare and former Director of the Eurogroup for Animals.

‘... alliances clearly demonstrate that good animal welfare has many advantages for animal health, consumer protection, for businesses and for sustainability.’
Animal Welfare in Chile and trade agreements with the EU

At the time the EU/Chile agreement was signed, I was an official at the beginning of my career at the Commission.

This particular trade agreement is the first that included animal welfare requirements for the slaughter and transport of animals.

Contributing to the activities on animal welfare related to the agreement was certainly a high point and an enriching experience. It opened the door to further cooperation by the EU with third countries that became a reality years later.

In addition, it was a great occasion to meet people from outside Europe who are passionate about animal welfare and to forge friendships which continue today.

Andrea Gavinelli, Head of Animal Welfare Unit

The Sanitary and Phytosanitary agreement between the European Union and Chile constitutes a pioneer advancement in animal welfare issues by incorporating them in a commercial agreement.

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Better Training for Safer Food Program (BTsf) and also expert visits aimed at carrying out research and workshops that have been crucial in raising the awareness of stakeholders and society. Such developments are reflected in the current Chilean category (B) in the Animal Protection Index (API) of the World Animal Protection (WAP), which is well established in the Americas.

The Agricultural and Livestock Service, SAG, is the official Chilean State body responsible for supporting the development of Chile’s agriculture, forestry, and livestock industries by protecting and enhancing plant and animal health.

http://www.sag.gob.cl/ambitos-de-accion/bienestar-animal
40 Years of Animal Welfare

**MILESTONES**

- **1974**: First EU legislation on protection of animals in slaughterhouses
- **1977**: European Convention on animal welfare
- **1978**: Protection of pigs, protection of calves, protection of laying hens
- **1986**: Protection of pigs, protection of calves, protection of laying hens
- **1999**: Protocol to the Treaty of Amsterdam: “...animals are sentient beings...”
- **2003**: Veterinarian agreement incl. animal welfare (EU-Chile)
- **2004**: First global conference on animal welfare (EU-OIE)
- **2005**: First set of global standards (OIE)
- **2007**: Ban on animal testing for cosmetics, Article 13 Lisbon Treaty: “...animals are sentient beings...”
- **2009**: Ban on the sale & import of cat & dog fur
- **2012**: Ban on conventional cages for laying hens, Memorandum of understanding (EU-Brazil)
- **2013**: Memorandum of understanding (EU-Brazil)

**Breach of EU Law**

- **200** WARNING LETTERS
- **21** COURT CASES