

## XI

# Animal welfare in Asia: specific flaws and strengths, future trends and objectives

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## Abstract

The Asian continent with many developing nations with half the world's population and animals had in the past been regularly reporting many cases of pets, livestock and wildlife being treated cruelly. This includes animals suffering from malnutrition, overloading, ill-treatment and animals not being slaughtered in a proper manner. This condition prevailed due to the lack of knowledge and understanding of animal welfare amongst most stakeholders. Several countries already have laws related to animal welfare but suffered poor implementation or enforcement. Others were lacking in policies and regulations. In many countries the priorities, funding and personnel are lacking to ensure improved animal welfare. Non-governmental organisations have been playing an important role where there is nascent or little emphasis from the government. Poverty, starvation, disease and environmental disasters remain as potential welfare threats to animals.

Lately concerns on animal welfare have been gaining traction. The inclusion of animal welfare in the third strategic plan (2001-2005) by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) recognised the increasing public awareness and the need for governmental leadership in the development of animal welfare policies and guidelines. In 2008, Australia spearheaded the development and formation of the Regional Animal Welfare Strategy for Asia, Far East and Oceania (RAWS) based on the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy to improve animal welfare.

RAWS with membership from several countries like Malaysia, Bhutan, China, Indonesia, Republic of Korea and Thailand lead the changes and improvements on animal welfare. Malaysia for example had laid down a National Strategic Plan for Animal Welfare since 2012 and the Animal Welfare Act 2015 has successfully been gazetted on 29 December 2015. Other countries have also improved through new or improved legislation, training and public awareness program. Experiences from these countries are shared with other countries through direct interactions and through digital media. All these efforts have proved to be positively reinforcing with tangible improvements in animal welfare in the region.

In moving forward there needs to be further concerted efforts to deliver clear goals. These strategies must be shared through each country's OIE Animal Welfare Focal Point. The strategies include improving communication, education, training, skills, knowledge, improvement of legislation, obtaining high-level support, sustainable improvements on animal welfare, cooperation with NGOs, international organisations and key trading partners.

## Introduction

Asia is the largest and most populous continent in the world. It covers almost 30% of Earth's land area. The population in 2018 stood at 4.55 billion people ([www.worldometers.info/world-population/](http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/)) which accounts for 60% of the world population. Animals whether as pets, for food

production, as work animals, strays and wild animals are found in large numbers in this continent. In addition the number of people involved with animals is also large. Hence ensuring high standards of animal welfare in this context will be a daunting task.

### **Animal welfare issues**

If one were to travel in this continent one would be able to notice a number of different kinds of animal welfare issues in each country whether from poor animal ownership to abusing animals arising from cultural and perceived religious practices and lack of care for animals when used for pleasure/entertainment/work.

Food producing animals are an important source of protein and many countries are giving emphasis and priorities to feed their people. Organised farming is becoming important but the vast majority are still farmed in a traditional manner where there are deficiencies with respect to how the animals are reared or farmed. Animals are poorly housed or in many instances not housed and subjected to the vagaries of the climate from high to low temperatures, high humidity, draught and floods. Poor feeding of animals results in the animals being in poor condition and lowered productivity. Animal health services are lacking for the animals with frequent disease occurrence which causes death and zoonoses. Poor management practices often compound it further and this arises from the lack of knowledge. For the purpose of identification, animals are marked cruelly. When they are ready to market they are transported in cages or vessels which are cramped and cause suffering. Cattle break their legs while being moved into lorries or made to walk long distances to the slaughterhouse. Poultry die from suffocation. Once they arrive at the slaughterhouse the animals are handled poorly and are slaughtered in violation of animal welfare consideration, examples being the slaughter of animals in front of other animals, blunt and short knives being used for slaughter. Most of the time stunning is not practised.

Stray animals cause huge problems to humans. Animals as well die when stray animals are involved in accidents. Rabies and a host of other zoonotic diseases are present in stray dogs. In India, it is estimated that there are 30 million stray dogs roaming the street. Strays arise from poor understanding of animal ownership and responsibility. It can also be attributed to low knowledge level of animal welfare (knowledge that animals can suffer as humans when not properly cared for) and business interest (not housing animals for food production).

Work animals like bullocks, horses, camels, mules and donkeys are routinely used in developing countries where mechanisation is not fully adopted due to its cost. Animal power is used for ploughing, carrying goods and pulling equipments/vehicles. Often the animals are not well fed as many of them have poor body scores and are over worked beyond their capacity.

Cruelty in wildlife occurs when wild animals are used for entertainment. They are beaten and harmed to perform various tasks like riding a wild animal (elephants), swimming with a captive wild animal, petting, holding (sea turtles) and hugging a wild animal, watching a wild animal dance (monkeys), play sport (elephants), perform tricks (bears). Wildlife are also poached and hurt to harvest body parts for supposedly medicinal values and as trophy.

Animals like horses are also used for recreational purposes in some parts of the continent. Some of these horses are over-used, under-fed and have poor feet due to bad farriery.

Animals used for research, testing and teaching benefit from few or no welfare standards as many countries still lack the proper regulation.

### **Challenges**

What then are the challenges facing the various countries in improving animal welfare standards?

The literacy level as reported in the Oceanic region was 71.3% and in South and West Asia at 70.2%. These low levels can contribute significantly to the poor understanding of animal welfare. Even countries with higher level of literacy rate suffer from poor knowledge of animal welfare evidenced by the number of non-conforming practices still prevailing.

A number of countries do not have a clear policy with defined strategies to undertake animal welfare activities and in some smaller countries even legislations are absent. This situation does not bode well for good animal welfare practices in these countries.

On the other hand, there are countries with legislation but which suffer from poor implementation due to limited resources, be it a lack of people to regulate or a lack of funding required for this purpose.

Most religions require that animals are treated well and their welfare is ensured. However, the religious requirements are perceived and poorly understood, which results in the animals being treated poorly, especially when animals are slaughtered for consumption.

Cultural practices in some countries may be seen as in contradiction to accepted animal welfare values. This is evident from the eating preferences (dog meat) of some communities.

The condition of working animals can be improved with better designed implements as well as ensuring the animals are properly fed. Better fed animals will be able to work more efficiently.

Poverty and low income can contribute to poor animal welfare practices when people's own welfare is threatened.

Many of these challenges can be overcome. Some countries can improve quickly with the right intervention but others may require longer period of time for improvements to take place.

It is important that fundamental changes be made to their economic wellbeing and this must be prioritised. In addition literacy and educational level needs to be tackled and when this happens it is often easier to influence the understanding on animal welfare with the right knowledge.

The wrong mindset or beliefs regarding animal welfare can be changed with education and training as seen in many countries which have embarked on such approaches.

Some countries require that more personnel and funding are committed to provide sufficient clout for the animal welfare standards to be regulated.

## **Catalyst for change**

### **Role of OIE**

Office International des Epizooties (OIE) or the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) realised that animal welfare must be given importance as it is crucial for the wellbeing of animals. So since 2000, it became an important component of animal health. Following this, animal welfare was recognised as a strategic priority in the 3<sup>d</sup> OIE Strategic Plan (2001-2005). In 2002, the General Assembly of National Delegates adopted a resolution leading to the creation of the Animal Welfare Working Group (AWWG). This was followed up with the adoption of the General Principles in Animal Welfare in 2003.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Global Conference on Animal Welfare was held in 2004 in Paris and 450 participants from 70 countries attended. The objective of the first conference was to share these values and practical realities in the field in order to make recommendations and establish international standards on animal welfare.

The first animal welfare standards were published in 2005 and since then, 14 standards have been published. It is regularly updated based on new information or knowledge. The OIE guiding principles on animal welfare is based on the universally recognised "Five Freedoms" published in 1965 which include freedom from hunger or thirst, freedom from fear and distress, freedom from

physical and thermal discomfort, freedom from pain, injury, disease, and freedom to express normal patterns of behaviour.

The OIE animal welfare standards are science-based standards which are agreed globally (currently 180 member countries).

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Global Conference on Animal Welfare was held in 2008 in Cairo. The goal was to support the worldwide implementation of the OIE standards for sea and land transport of livestock, livestock slaughter for human consumption and killing for disease control. The conference was also intended to raise the profile of animal welfare and to encourage veterinarians and Veterinary Services to take greater responsibility for animal welfare. Nearly 400 participants were involved.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Global Conference on Animal Welfare was held in 2012 in Kuala Lumpur. This conference provided a global forum for discussion of the needs and priorities of the OIE Members with respect to the development and implementation of animal welfare standards in the five OIE regions. The aim is to improve animal health and welfare globally. This conference was attended by over 400 participants.

### **OIE Animal Welfare Standards**

Since May 2005, the World Assembly of OIE Delegates (representing the 180 Member Countries and Territories) has adopted ten animal welfare standards in the Terrestrial Code and four animal welfare standards in the Aquatic Code. Some of these standards are for assessing the degree of impaired functioning associated with injury, disease, and malnutrition. Other measures provide information on animals' needs and affective states such as hunger, pain and fear, often by measuring the strength of animals' preferences, motivations and aversions. While some others assess the physiological, behavioral and immunological changes or effects that animals show in response to various challenges.

- Introduction to the recommendations for animal welfare

Animal welfare as defined in Article 7.1.1 of the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code means how an animal is coping with the conditions it lives in. An animal is in a good state of welfare if it is healthy, comfortable, and well nourished, safe, able to express innate behaviour and not suffering from pain, fear and distress. Good animal welfare requires disease prevention and appropriate veterinary treatment, shelter, management and nutrition, handling and humane slaughter and killing. Animal welfare refers to the state of the animal; the treatment the animal receives such as animal care, animal husbandry and humane treatment.

- [Transport of animals by land, sea and air](#)

These standards describe various aspects which need to be taken into consideration before moving animals. It states the responsibilities, competence, on planning of the journey, documentation required, pre-journey period, loading, the travel, unloading and post-journey handling, actions in the event of refusal to travel and species-specific issues.

- [Slaughter of animals](#)

In Article 7.7.1 of the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code, it is stated that the need to ensure welfare of food animals during pre-slaughter and slaughter processes until they are dead in the slaughter houses. Animals slaughtered outside of slaughterhouses should be managed to ensure their transport, lairage, restraint and slaughter is carried out without causing undue stress to the animals.

- [Killing of animals for disease control purposes](#)

Killing of animals in a disease or emergency situation require that the welfare of the animals be given due consideration with respect to the handling, restraining and employing the appropriate method of killing.

- [Stray dog population control](#)

It is important that the strays are controlled to ensure that they do not pose human and animal health issues and specifically disease like rabies. In controlling the population, unnecessary animal suffering should be avoided. Different control measures can be employed to control strays.

- [Use of animals in research and education](#)

When animals are used for research and education it should be based on a set of requirements to ensure welfare. The regulatory framework must be in place with an oversight committee to scrutinise the need for animals for research and ensuring if animals are used to follow guidelines which are universally acceptable.

- [Animal welfare and beef cattle production systems, broiler and dairy cattle production systems](#)

These recommendations are specific for beef cattle rearing and covers various aspects like biosecurity and animal health, environment(heat and cold stress, lighting, air quality, noise, nutrition, flooring/bedding, social environment, stocking density and protection from predators), management (genetic, reproduction, colostrum, weaning, husbandry procedures, handling and inspection, personnel training, emergency plans, location, construction and equipment and humane killing).

## ***Regional Animal Welfare Strategy for Asia, the Far East and Oceania (RAWS)***

In addressing the issue of implementing OIE standards with respect to animal welfare a focussed effort was undertaken and the RAWS was conceptualised in 2008. Since then, the RAWS implementation plan was developed and approved in 2009 followed by a planning workshop.

The first RAWS Coordination Group (RAWS CG) meeting was held in April 2011. The RAWS CG members were from Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, China, Korea, Thailand, Indonesia and Bhutan. The Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) has supported the activities undertaken by RAWS CG.

The RAWS agreed vision is: “A region where the welfare of animals is respected, promoted and incrementally advanced, simultaneously with the pursuit of progress and socioeconomic development”. This vision presents both significant challenges and opportunities.

The factors driving the region’s approach to improving animal welfare is based on science, values, ethics, culture, education and awareness, economics and livelihood, research and development and regional and international developments.

Since its inception, RAWS CG has provided a number of recommendations to the OIE. In addition, other activities include the establishment of a secretariat within DAFF (Australia), translation of RAWS (Edition 1) into four languages and on the OIE website, establishing a RAWS newsletter circulated on a quarterly basis which reports on country status, NGO and industry initiatives, development of Action Plan and track activities, animal welfare training courses, establishment of national animal welfare committees in the region, actively working with the OIE’s national animal welfare focal points to promote RAWS initiatives, supporting OIE’s implementation of standards and networking with OIE Collaborating Centres, twinning of regional universities and research centres.

All these efforts are expected to:

- (1) increase the level of awareness on animal welfare through effective coordination, communication, education and training,
- (2) ensure the coordinated regional approach on the implementation of the OIE animal welfare standards,
- (3) achieve sustainable improvements in animal welfare and
- (4) develop sustainable mechanism to coordinate and promote animal welfare programs and priorities.

## **Animal welfare initiatives in selected countries in Asia**

### **Malaysia**

Historically, there has been written laws on animal care since the 15<sup>th</sup> Century as in the *Malacca Code* (1489-1511) and *Pahang Code* (1590-1614). Modern law on animal care was enforced since 5<sup>th</sup> December 1910 which was known as the *Enactment for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, 1910*. Malaysia had banned bull and cock fighting since 1953. Meanwhile state enactments were introduced. Subsequently all these legislations were consolidated into the Animals Act 1953 aimed for the prevention of cruelty to animals. Meanwhile the Penal Code (Section 377) gives protection by law to animals with a provision against buggery (carnal intercourse) with animals constituting a punishment of 20 years imprisonment, fine or whipping.

Malaysia has taken firm steps to improve animal welfare. When reviewing the legislation and from stakeholder feedback the imposition of fines under the Animals Act 1953 was deemed low. It was the equivalent of USD50 for cruelty offences. Hence, efforts were undertaken to rectify this low penalty and since 2013 the penalty for cruelty offences have been increased to USD 12,000 and the prison sentence enhanced from 6 months to one year.

Malaysia needs to inculcate a culture of caring and concern for animal welfare, like any other developed countries in line with the vision of attaining developed nation status by the year 2020. Hence, a clear national approach to ensure animal welfare can be upheld effectively has to be in place.

The National Animal Welfare Strategic Plan (NAWSP) was launched during the 3<sup>d</sup> OIE Global Conference on Animal Welfare in 2012. This document is comprehensive with thorough planning on animal welfare strategies to meet the needs of the country until 2020.

The vision of the plan states “Malaysia a Developed Nation with A Caring Society Concerned For The Welfare of Animals”. It aspires to execute international animal welfare standards, reinforced by universal human values. The NAWSP aims to establish a national animal welfare framework for each sector, ensures a comprehensive and consistent approach to various aspects of animal welfare to be implemented in an integrated manner, determines that the animal welfare needs are met by those responsible for it based on science, societal culture, values and religious obligations, ensures transparent and impartial information on animal welfare is accessible and sufficient, and ensures the governance of national animal welfare is carried out efficiently and effectively.

In strengthening the governance of animal welfare, the government had embarked on introducing a comprehensive Animal Welfare Act. The Animal Welfare Act 2015 was finally gazetted on 29<sup>th</sup> December 2015. It is an important milestone as this Act covers a wider scope to implement animal welfare requirement in the country. . The Act has provided important provisions for the purpose of promoting animal welfare and implementing animal welfare enforcement in the country. The Animal Welfare Act 2015 was gazetted on 29 December 2015 and the enforcement of

the Act was from 1 July 2017. Some provisions of the Act are already being used while awaiting regulations under the Act and the development of the Animal Welfare Code of Practices in various animal activities to strengthen the enforcement of the Act.

Other strategies include improving the organisational structure in government department and agencies to carry out the new roles and requirements under this Act.

A database on animal welfare management and traceability is being created and the first step has been the implementation of the pet passport.

The education modules in the field of animal welfare will be improved in the universities and animal welfare education modules are to be incorporated at school level. Training programs for responsible pet and animal rearing are being implemented.

Public awareness campaigns with the introduction of animal welfare personality, organising animal welfare day and dialogues with different stakeholders are being pursued.

Two colloquiums on knowledge sharing discourse have been organised with the theme being Animal Welfare from the Islamic Perspective. Islam gives importance to animal welfare with many of the verses in Quran explaining its significance. Also the sayings (hadis) of the Prophet also gives due regard to animal welfare. Poor animal welfare is a product of misunderstanding and the poor implementation of what was stated or mentioned in the religion.

The government is also providing allocations to fund research on certain areas of animal welfare which can be used to introduce science-based standards. Networking of scholars in the field of animal welfare ensures continuous engagement.

Publication of guidelines, booklets, stickers and books have been undertaken to provide sufficient knowledge and awareness to different stakeholders. One interesting and important guideline is the “Guideline for the Slaughter of Cattle for Religious Purposes” which gives emphasis on proper restraint of cattle, proper slaughter techniques, handling the carcass and proper disposal of waste. This guideline was used to train the religious leaders and the public. This initiative was positively accepted and practised nation-wide.

The Animal Welfare Board is made of representatives from the Ministry, Department and government agencies for the purpose of governing the Act. In addition, a special committee called the Animal Welfare Consultative Committee was established at the national level led by the Director General of DVS Malaysia and membership from NGO and industry representatives to provide inputs and feedback to the Animal Welfare Board to highlight related issues with regards to animal welfare. The role of the NGOs to ensure improved animal welfare in the country is to be applauded. However, the efforts and activities have to be further intensified.

## **South Korea**

South Korea has shown good commitment to improving animal welfare. It introduced the Animal Welfare Strategy which outlines the various activities planned to be implemented. The Animal Welfare Act is in place to regulate animal welfare while the Korean Animal Welfare Advisory Committee functions to address animal welfare concerns and provide solutions to issues.

Awareness of animal welfare was given emphasis and the government engaged famous singers and actors as ambassadors for animal welfare. This has become an important tool in the dissemination of animal welfare concerns. Even the politicians were evaluated on their awareness on animal welfare or lack of it.

Other initiatives undertaken include the training of various stakeholders, and providing certification for farms which promote animal welfare. This certification will result in animal products carrying good animal welfare labels as certified by the government and being priced higher and receive a premium. This strategy has proven to be effective.

In trying to address the problem of strays and owners abandoning their pets, the government has introduced the national registration for companion animals.

## **Philippines**

Animal Welfare Act has been in place since 1998. In addition the rules and regulations on transport of animals by land, sea and air were introduced. Humane handling for slaughter was also regulated. These regulations have resulted in improved animal welfare in the country.

The country has been quite active in organising training, workshop and seminars for its officers, the public and the people involved with animals to increase the knowledge and awareness on animal welfare. Another noteworthy effort is the introduction of animal welfare subjects and creating awareness on animal welfare to children.

The national program for controlling of strays has showed very good progress and directly has impacted in the lowering of rabies cases among humans. The program is extensively carried out throughout the nation.

## **China**

Several legislations have been introduced to improve animal welfare. The Animal Husbandry Law of People Republic of China (2006) regulates the transportation of animals so as to ensure safety of livestock and to provide necessary space, food and water. The Pig Slaughtering Management Regulation (2008) mandates the slaughterhouses to conduct humane slaughter according to national standards. At the same time, the Management Regulations of Veterinarians Practitioner (No.18) requires a veterinary practitioner to love and protect animals and disseminate animal health care and welfare knowledge.

In May 2014, China introduced the Farm Animal Welfare Requirements for pigs (CAS 235-2014) and this was the first Farm Animal Welfare Standard in China. Following which the National Standard of The General Principles of Animal Welfare (AW) Assessment was completed and awaiting approval. It focuses on the welfare of various categories of animals including farm animals, and aims at raising the profile of AW within the livestock industry, and improving awareness and concern over farm animal welfare nationwide. Meanwhile the National Standard of Farm Animal Welfare Requirements for Beef Cattle and the National Standard of Farm Animal Welfare Requirements for Mutton Sheep have been drafted.

In improving animal welfare, dependence entirely on legislation was thought to be insufficient and the country decided to award good animal welfare practices. Good Pig Production Award, Good Chicken Production Award and Good Sheep Production Award were introduced. Companies will be selected based on their commitments to animal welfare, promoting animal welfare and the healthy and sustainable development of nationwide farming, and improving quality of animal products and the brand competitiveness. The 1st Farm Animal Welfare Production Award was launched on 20th of June, 2014.

In the education sector many universities are providing various courses about animal welfare. Examples of universities providing courses such as animal behaviour, animal welfare law and animal protection include China Agricultural University, Shanghai Jiatong University, Guangxi University and Nanjing Agricultural University.

## **India**

Regulatory aspect of animal welfare in India is under the purview of the Ministry of Environment & Forests which implements the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 (59 of 1960).



The Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) and Committee for the Purpose of Supervision and Control of Experiments on Animals (CPCSEA) were set to facilitate the implementation of the Act.

Training and education on animal welfare for the various stakeholders required the formation of the National Institute of Animal Welfare (NIAW) which is located in the state of Haryana. Workshops, seminars and conferences are organized there.

The Ministry also provides financial assistance through the Animal Welfare Board of India for the construction of animal shelter houses, clinics for strays. Grants are provided for ambulances & vehicles in connection with treatment and transportation of sick, injured and rescued animals. In addition funding is available for the sterilization of stray dogs. Funding is also available for the NGO's involved in animal welfare work.

## World animal protection ranking

The measures and efforts undertaken by various countries to improve animal welfare require quantitative analysis. This is where the World Animal Protection (WAP) Index although introduced recently can provide for some basis for evaluation. However, further quantitative and qualitative indicators need to be introduced to better evaluate animal welfare improvements.

The World Animal Protection (WAP) which was formerly called WSPA (World Society for the Protection of Animals) is a worldwide NGO operating in many countries with the belief to protect animals.

In 2014, WAP decided to introduce a ground-breaking Animal Protection Index which judges 50 countries on their policy and legislation for animals, identifying where improvements can be made. The Index was grouped from Group A to G with Group A being rated the best.

Countries listed in Group A like UK, New Zealand, Switzerland and Austria had the highest level of achievement based on the criteria set.

In the Asia and Oceanic region, Malaysia, India, Philippines were ranked in Group C with countries like France and Italy. This was encouraging as it means some countries in this continent are on par (at least from the policy and legislative aspect) with some developed nations.

Some countries are ranked in Group G which is the lowest such as Iran. Improvements can and should be continuously made so that animal welfare standards can be further raised.

## Conclusion

Asia with many countries with diverse culture, religion and language has shown improvements in raising animal welfare standards. The improvements are not similar but further efforts from these countries can improve animal well-being.

More initiatives, efforts, programs and activities are required towards this end. Some countries may require assistance in funding, some on technical expertise and others on proper guiding and mentoring.

The strategies include improving communication, education and training, upgrading skills and knowledge, improvement of legislation, obtaining high-level support, sustainable improvements on animal welfare, cooperation with NGOs, international organisations and key trading partners. These strategies must be shared through each country's OIE Animal Welfare Focal Point so that the implementation of animal welfare standards can be enhanced.

Given time most countries will be on the right track to achieve the level of animal welfare currently practised in the developed nations.

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