

OIE ANIMAL WELFARE STANDARDS AND MULTILATERAL TRADE POLICY FRAMEWORK

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With the mandate granted by its Member Countries, the OIE has taken a leadership role in setting global animal welfare standards and has achieved an impressive number of achievements. In addressing the then ‘new’ theme of animal welfare, the OIE built upon its existing standard setting framework with the establishment of a permanent Animal Welfare Working Group (70th OIE General Session, 2002). This provided a forum for interested industry and NGO sectors to sit ‘around the table’ with representatives of the scientific community, academia and the veterinary services. Based on recommendations from the Working Group to the Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission and with the consensual support of OIE Member Countries, the first recommendations on animal welfare were adopted in the OIE *Terrestrial Code* in 2004. The first guiding principle states that ‘there is a critical relationship between animal health and animal welfare’. Clearly the *Terrestrial Code* has general relevance to animal welfare, including, for example, recommendations on the quality of Veterinary Services; disease prevention and control and on specific diseases.

The 21st edition of the *Terrestrial Code* (2012) contains eight chapters with specific recommendations on animal welfare covering key topics relevant to livestock, stray dogs and animals used in scientific research and education. The 15th edition (2012) of the *Aquatic Code* contains four chapters, including guiding principles and specific recommendations on the welfare of farmed fish. All OIE standards are regularly updated to take account of latest scientific findings.

Under the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (the SPS Agreement), the imposition of measures ‘necessary to protect human, animal or plant life or health’ is subject to certain disciplines. Most animal welfare measures are not covered by the SPS Agreement but would seem to be within the scope of the WTO Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT Agreement).

This paper discusses the relevance and implications of the OIE animal welfare standards in the context of the WTO multilateral trade policy framework.

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