



Animal Welfare Policies

March 2020

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Animal Welfare Policies

Introduction

The USPCA animal welfare policies represent the considered position held by the USPCA on particular animal welfare issues. However, readers should be aware of the constraints placed by current charity law on all animal welfare charities. They cannot pursue policies which, while benefiting animals, would have a serious detrimental effect on humankind. Further they cannot oppose uses of animals for which there are no alternatives, but which may cause pain, suffering or distress and where there is an overriding benefit to humans. Accordingly, all policy statements which follow, should be read in that context.

The general principle on which the USPCA operates is based on the fact that vertebrates and some invertebrates feel pain and experience distress. The charity believes that, where there is doubt about whether or not animals are suffering, the benefit of the doubt should always be given to the animals.

There are many examples of practices involving animal use by humans in the UK and worldwide which cause significant pain and suffering. Many of these practices are referred to in the following pages. The USPCA will do all it can to reduce this suffering and through influencing legislative change, or the adoption of sound, well-monitored and enforced standards, will seek to improve the welfare of the animals concerned. The charity believes that it is important to protect the interests of individual animals and that the responsibility to ensure that this is the case lies with us, the human species.

1.0 Companion Animals

1.1 RESPONSIBLE OWNERSHIP

1.1.1

The USPCA discourages the keeping of companion animals by those who do not have the facilities, time, financial means or level of interest necessary to ensure a satisfactory standard of care for, and a long term commitment to their animals.

1.1.2

The Society is opposed to any degree of confinement which is likely to cause distress or suffering to the animals concerned.

Facilities at some homes are unsuitable for the keeping of certain animals and personal circumstances could make adequate provision for companion animals difficult if not impossible.

Responsible animal ownership should include ideally the provision of adequate insurance, personal identification and the application of a vaccination programme where appropriate.

Exotic animals such as snakes, lizards and terrapins are difficult to look after and will rarely be provided with adequate facilities.

1.2 ACQUIRING AN ANIMAL

The USPCA advocates that all animals should be acquired by the prospective owner from the place where they were born or from a reputable rescue organisation.

1.2.1

The display of animals in pet shops, pet supermarkets and garden centres can lead to impulse buying without proper regard for the responsibilities of animal ownership.

1.3 POPULATION CONTROL

1.3.1

The USPCA advocates the neutering of domestic cats and dogs and other domestic animals as an important part of responsible ownership.

Surgical neutering is a safe and effective way to prevent unwanted breeding of dogs and cats. It is not necessary, for behavioural or medical reasons, to allow females to have a litter prior to surgery. Veterinary surgeons can advise on the most appropriate timing and overall suitability of any operation for individual animals.

1.3.2

The USPCA is opposed to the breeding of animals which produces changes in bodily form or function, which are detrimental to their health or quality of life.

1.3.3

The Society is opposed to the irresponsible breeding of puppies or kittens (e.g. in puppy or kitten farms), other mammals and exotic animals in both private and commercial undertakings.

1.3.4

The Society is opposed to the method of drowning as a means of killing any animal e.g. puppies, kittens etc.

1.3.5

The USPCA believes that breeding establishments should be properly inspected and regulated, and that permanent identification of animals should be undertaken by breeders.

The excessive breeding of puppies and kittens is a prime component in creating the problem of stray or unwanted animals. The breeder must have primary responsibility for avoiding these problems, excessive breeding also causes suffering to both mother and offspring. Their removal from their mother and place of birth at an early age and their movement to dealers or other commercial premises such as pet shops inevitably increases the risk of disease and causes an unacceptable amount of distress. Excessive breeding also causes harm to bitches, the risk of the occurrence of eclampsia (hypo-calcaemia or 'milk fever'), other mineral imbalances and general debility is greatly increased. Furthermore, the risk of abnormal pregnancies or puppies is increased, as the bitch grows older.

1.4 SURGICAL MUTILATIONS

1.4.1

The USPCA is opposed to the mutilation of animals for cosmetic purposes and welcomes the fact that tail docking and ear cropping of dogs is now illegal.

The following procedures do not benefit the animals in any way and in many cases, can be detrimental to their health and welfare:

- Debarking of dogs
- De-clawing of cats

The same principle also applies to various surgical mutilations of other species.

1.5 ANIMAL TRAINING AIDS

1.5.1

The USPCA is opposed to the use of any aversive training method, to train and control companion animals and believes that reward based methods should be used instead.

1.6 QUARANTINE

1.6.1

The USPCA accepts the principle of controlled entry, without quarantine, of dogs and cats from those European Union and other countries that are recognised by the World Health Organisation as being free from rabies in those species. The charity believes that quarantine should remain for dogs and cats imported from countries which do not satisfy the criteria given above.

1.7 EUTHANASIA

1.7.1

The USPCA is opposed to the euthanasia of fit and healthy animals. Euthanasia is only acceptable on the grounds of ill health or in situations where the temperament and behaviour of the animal is a serious and unmanageable risk.

1.8 BREED SPECIFIC LEGISLATION

The USPCA opposes Breed Specific Legislation (BSL) that prohibits the possession of dogs based upon their breed or type. The USPCA believes that the application of BSL through is unjustifiable, ineffective and punishes certain types of dogs for the way they look and impacts on the welfare of many dogs whose behaviour poses no risk to human safety. Governments should adopt an approach that recognises that any individual dog, irrespective of breed or type, can display aggression towards people and equally can be well adjusted and friendly; responsibility for this lies with the owners.

1.9 FERAL CATS

The USPCA recommends that, where the welfare of feral cats can be ensured, the animals should remain at the site so long as they are healthy, neutered and identifiable as such. The USPCA supports Trap, Neuter and Release (TNR) programmes with veterinary support. Healthy cats should be neutered, ear-tipped and returned or, where appropriate, re-sited. Adult, truly feral cats should not be placed into domestic homes. Those cats which are seriously ill or which are injured to the extent that returning to the wild would result in suffering should be euthanised.

2.0 Horses and Donkeys

2.1 TETHERING OF EQUINES

2.1.1

The USPCA is opposed to tethering as a method of managing equines.

Tethering as a method of managing horses and ponies is unsatisfactory from many points of view, but if it is used, e.g. for travelling people who regularly move from site to site and do not have access to fenced fields, the requirements of the Welfare of Animals Act N. Ireland) 2012 should be adhered to. A constant supply of fresh water should be provided, and every effort must be made to provide protection against extremes of weather and to provide adequate supervision.

2.2 RACING

2.2.1

The USPCA is opposed to training practices, racecourse conditions or facilities that result in injury.

The USPCA is concerned about excessive production of horses and the disposal of unwanted and spent animals.

2.2.2

The USPCA is opposed to the use of drugs which are administered with a view to altering the performance of an animal including by masking pain.

2.2.3

The USPCA is opposed to races where distress or injury follow the placing of unreasonable or excessive demands upon the horse.

The USPCA believes that the racing of two year old horses as currently practiced results in unnecessary injury and premature wastage. The charity would prefer to see no horse raced under two years old i.e. 24 months from the birth of the horse as opposed to registration date.

2.2.4

The USPCA is opposed to the use of whips which cause pain or suffering.

Many whips used in horse racing are capable of causing excessive pain and injury to a horse. While the USPCA is encouraged that the rules governing the use of whips have been strengthened by the Jockey Club in recent years, it advocates that the rules should further specify only whips based on shock absorbing designs be permitted. The design of such whips, while being perfectly adequate for all normal riding purposes. minimise any pain and do not injure the horse.

2.3 SHOW JUMPING, EVENTING AND DRESSAGE

2.3.1

The USPCA is opposed to practices which can cause suffering in show jumping, eventing or dressage. This includes striking with the whip so as to cause distress or suffering; competitions where obstacles are unreasonably difficult, the use of training methods which cause distress or suffering and the use of drugs to alter the performance of the horse or enable it to compete.

2.4 DONKEY DERBIES AND OTHER EQUINE RIDES

2.4.1

The USPCA disapproves of donkey derbies and inappropriate equine rides but while they continue, will seek to ensure that procedures are followed which properly protect the welfare of the animals.

3.0 Food Animals

3.1 GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

3.1.1

The USPCA is opposed to all forms of farming that cause distress or suffering or deprive animals of the opportunity to indulge in their natural behaviour, and believes that farming practices should provide, as nearly as possible, natural lifestyles for the animals concerned.

The welfare of an animal includes its physical and mental state and the USPCA considers that good animal welfare implies both fitness and a sense of well-being.

The USPCA is concerned that the commercial mass production of food animals in the livestock industry causes suffering to a greater or lesser extent whether through the close confinement of some systems or through shortcomings in transport and slaughtering techniques. The Farm Animal Welfare Committee promotes the adoption of the Five Freedoms which define ideal states which should be aimed for. The Five Freedoms are:

- Freedom from hunger and thirst by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.
- Freedom from discomfort by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
- Freedom from pain, injury or disease by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
- Freedom to express normal behaviour by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind.
- Freedom from fear and distress by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.

These freedoms will be better provided for if those who have care of livestock practice:

- caring and responsible planning and management
- skilled, knowledgeable and conscientious workmanship
- appropriate environmental design considerate handling and transport
- humane slaughter

Many production systems provide a barren environment which encourages the development of aberrant behaviour in the animals so housed. The USPCA recommends that housing for livestock should be environmentally enriched and that attention is given to the alleviation of boredom.

3.1.2

The USPCA encourages the principle of planned herd or flock health management and encourages farmers and veterinary surgeons to work together to prevent, monitor and respond to existing and emerging farm animal welfare concerns.

3.2 POULTRY

3.2.1

The USPCA is opposed to the battery cage system, or variations of that system, for egg production.

3.2.2

The USPCA is in favour of laying systems in which the welfare of the bird is fully protected and in which a nest, scratching or dustbathing area and a perch are provided and where the stocking density and colony size is appropriate for the needs of the hens.

The USPCA is committed to the phasing out of the existing cage system for egg production which does not provide for the health and welfare needs of the hen. The charity is also concerned about the welfare of birds in many alternative systems in which the stocking density is at the maximum permitted by the European Union legislation or where the facilities are inadequate with respect to perches pop-holes, nest boxes and quality of management. The USPCA is opposed to the use of forced moulting to increase egg production.

3.2.3

The USPCA is opposed to many current production systems in which the welfare of broilers and turkeys is compromised.

The modern broiler chicken reaches its slaughter weight at the age of six to seven weeks. This rapid growth brought about by selective breeding programmes, nutritional and other management factors has resulted in serious welfare concerns. The most serious of these are widespread leg weakness and joint problems. The USPCA would like to see far greater attention being given to the health and fitness of birds during both breeding programmes and on-farm management with the target of eliminating leg and other problems.

3.3 CALVES

3.3.1

The USPCA is opposed to the use of individual crates for the rearing of calves except where calves need to be housed individually during veterinary treatment.

3.3.2

The USPCA recommends the use of loose housed or outdoor systems with a stocking density which allows free movement and the expression of normal behaviour.

3.3.3

The USPCA believes that all calves should receive a diet which allows normal physiological development and health and is opposed to the use of diets from which necessary nutrients have been excluded.

3.4 FISH

3.4.1

The Consensus arrived in the mid-2000s around science demonstrating high-level pain perception in fish, and examinations of fish behaviours are beginning to reveal a picture of fish as complex, social and emotional beings.

3.4.2

Fish should be included in the requirements of the Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 to ensure minimum welfare standards with regard the conditions under which animals are bred or kept.

3.4.3

The Food Safety Agency should be mandated to carry out risk assessments on the welfare aspects of specific husbandry practices, including housing and handling, as well as the application of treatments for disease and parasites.

3.4.4

The handling of fish, particularly handling out of water, should be minimised. Handling methods such as dry netting of fish (for transport, slaughter, application of treatments, movement on farm, or other) should be avoided.

3.4.5

Housing should cater to the welfare needs of fish, facilitating their natural behaviours to the greatest extent possible. Substrate and shelter appropriate to different species should be provided.

3.4.6

Killing and related operations should only be carried out by persons with relevant animal welfare training and appropriate competence.

3.4.7

Periods out of water prior to stunning should be avoided or minimised.

Legislative amendments should be made so that slaughter techniques render fish immediately unconscious and insensible to pain.

A mechanism should be established for certifying effective stunning and slaughter equipment.

Locations where fish are slaughtered should be incorporated in the definition of 'slaughterhouse' and have a designated animal welfare officer.

3.5 PIGS

3.5.1

The USPCA is opposed to systems of pig husbandry where no solid lying area and no form of bedding and environmental enrichment is provided. Straw should be provided to satisfy

rooting behaviours and eliminate some behavioural abnormalities, whilst straw or similar material should be used to provide a dry comfortable lying area.

3.5.2

The USPCA is opposed to the close tethering of pigs except for a temporary purpose, such as veterinary examination, and to the use of stalls for dry or pregnant sows in which they are kept permanently and are unable to turn around. The charity recommends that alternative systems are used which meet the animals' exercise and behavioural needs.

3.5.3

The USPCA is opposed to the weaning of piglets at an age that results in either behavioural or health problems.

Pigs are naturally active, intelligent and inquisitive. Their welfare can be properly accommodated in both outdoor and indoor systems, provided that management is of a high standard and they are given an environment which takes account of their behavioural and other welfare requirements. The UK ban on close confinement gestation stalls from the end of 1998 has provided an opportunity to move towards high welfare systems. The USPCA believes that, to provide comfort and opportunities for foraging, pigs should have bedding material at all stages of their growth. Unfortunately, many are still reared in systems which have ignored the pigs' needs, keeping them, for example, in barren pens. Virtually all outdoor and some indoor sows are put into a restrictive farrowing crate to give birth to their piglets. Farrowing crates protect piglets, but at considerable expense to the welfare of the sow, at a time when she would normally be highly active building a nest.

3.6 PRODUCTION SYSTEMS

3.6.1

The USPCA believes that new buildings should be constructed or existing buildings modified in away that allows a high standard of husbandry and welfare requirements to be met including relevant precautions against fire.

Totally slatted floors are unsuitable for all cloven hoofed animals and should be abolished. Where such floors are used, they should be designed, constructed and maintained so as to minimise discomfort, distress or injury. No animal should be permanently housed on totally slatted floors and all should have access to a bedded lying area. The USPCA believes, as a particular case of cattle and sheep management, that lameness and foot problems should be given special attention.

3.6.2

The USPCA is opposed to the introduction of animal production systems or changes to existing systems which are detrimental to the welfare of the animals involved.

Waste from some farm animal production systems has been responsible for causing environmental pollution. The charity is concerned about the effect such pollution may have on wildlife.

3.6.3

The USPCA is opposed to the selection of animals for accelerated growth rates where this may inhibit normal activity and cause metabolic or skeletal defects chronic lameness and pain.

3.6.4

The USPCA is opposed to the forced feeding of geese and ducks to produce foie gras, the intensive rearing of deer with no access to pasture in summer, the harvesting of antler velvet from live deer and to the intensive rearing of rabbits on wire-floored cages.

3.6.5

The USPCA is opposed to the administration of substances or application of techniques which are intended solely to enhance the production or performance of an animal and which cause or are likely to cause pain or suffering.

3.6.6

The USPCA is opposed to the use in farm animal production or biotechnological techniques which cause pain or suffering.

3.7 TRANSPORTATION

3.7.1

The USPCA advocates that, because of the inevitable distress and suffering caused to food animals during transport, all food animals should be slaughtered as near as possible to the point of production.

3.7.2

The USPCA believes that no journey for food animals destined for slaughter should last longer than eight hours, the journey time being taken from the time the first animal is loaded to the time the last animal is unloaded.

3.7.3

The USPCA is opposed to the trade in live animals between the UK and other European Countries, or world-wide, either for immediate slaughter or for further fattening and advocates the adoption of a carcass-only trade.

The USPCA believes that the enforcement of UK and EU legislation is vital to its proper implementation and supports adequate funding for this purpose including the establishment of national and international enforcement bodies.

3.7.4

The USPCA supports the establishment of a formal certification procedure for drivers of vehicles involved in road transportation of animals. Such certification should be based on the possession by the drivers of a practical knowledge about the husbandry of animals in their care, as per the Welfare of Animals (Transport) Regulations (N. Ireland) 2006.

3.8 SLAUGHTER

3.8.1

The USPCA is opposed to the slaughter of any food animal without rendering that animal insensible to pain and distress until death supervenes.

The Welfare of Animals (Slaughter or Killing) Regulations (N. Ireland) 1996, states that all animals slaughtered in a slaughterhouse or knackery yard must either be:

- instantaneously slaughtered by means of a mechanically operated instrument, or
- stunned by means of a mechanically operated instrument or an instrument for stunning by electricity provided that they are instantaneously rendered insensible to pain until death supervenes, or
- they may be slaughtered by any other means specified in the regulations, provided that the animals are again rendered insensible to pain until death supervenes.

The 1996 Act exempts the Jewish method of slaughter, shechita, and the Muslim method of slaughter, halal. While respecting individual religious practices, the USPCA strongly opposes these exemptions on welfare grounds. The meat from animals killed in this way should be clearly labelled.

Because of their temperament, farmed deer and other non-domesticated species such as ostriches, are not amenable to transportation or handling within normal licensed slaughterhouse systems.

3.8.2

The USPCA advocates the thorough training of slaughtermen and applauds the introduction of a licensing system based on the successful completion of a course of instruction together with the necessary practical experience.

3.8.3

The USPCA believes that all slaughterhouses should have a manager responsible for consistent and appropriate training, supervision and implementation of welfare provisions.

3.8.4

The USPCA is opposed to the use of cruel methods for catching, selling and killing lobsters, crabs, crayfish, octopus or squid for food.

There is scientific evidence that indicates that these creatures are capable of suffering. Killing by plunging the living animal into boiling water is considered by the charity as cruel.

3.9 CASUALTY ANIMALS

3.9.1

The USPCA advocates that farm animals which have to be destroyed due to physical injury or disease should be slaughtered on site out of the sight of the other animals and without delay.

4.0 Laboratory Animals

4.1 PAIN AND SUFFERING

4.1.1

The USPCA is opposed to all experiments or procedures which cause pain, suffering or distress.

Animal experimentation in the UK is controlled by The Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986. (as amended in 2012) Procedures can only be carried out after licensing by the Home Office of the institution, the researcher and the project. Under the Act, the benefits of the proposed work must be weighed against the costs to the animals involved before a license is granted.

It is important that, as long as animals continue to be used, every possible effort must be made to prevent suffering. Anaesthesia or other forms of analgesia cannot be considered satisfactory solutions to the problem. These are inappropriate, for example, to the problems of fear, hunger and other forms of distress. The whole complex question of the prevention of pain, the relief of suffering and the reduction of distress, must be kept under constant review by those responsible for authorising and carrying out experiments under UK legislation.

4.2 UNNECESSARY EXPERIMENTS

4.2.1

The USPCA is opposed to animal experiments which involve unnecessary repetitions, scientifically trivial ends, or techniques to which satisfactory alternatives not using living animals have already been developed.

4.2.2

The Society is opposed to the use of animals in the testing of inessential substances, such as some household products and food additives.

4.3 ALTERNATIVES

4.3.1

The USPCA supports the development of techniques that will result in the replacement reduction or refinement of animal experiments, the concept of the '3 Rs'. The USPCA regards as an advance any technique which will completely replace the use of animals, reduce the numbers used or reduce suffering or otherwise improve laboratory animal welfare.

Examples of replacement techniques include cell, tissue and organ cultures, the use of human volunteers, the use of epidemiological surveys in human medicine, the use of inanimate models, the use of films and videos in teaching and more extensive computer analysis. More could be done to develop replacements for animals and such work merits greater investment and government support.

Techniques leading to reduction in the numbers of animals used include the setting up of centralised accessible data banks, adequate prior literature research together with improved experimental design including the use of appropriate statistical methods.

Examples of refinement include the use of analgesics and the abolition of death and extreme end-points in any biological study. The USPCA believes that refinement offers the best scope for alleviating laboratory animal suffering in the short term. However, this does not compromise the charity's long-term aim of completely replacing animals in laboratories with alternative techniques. The USPCA is concerned that laboratory animals often live in confined and barren conditions and urge that animals be provided with enriched environments allowing them to express natural behaviours.

4.4 LEGISLATIVE AND ETHICAL CONCERNS

4.4.1

The USPCA believes that it is of vital importance that all new experimental and testing protocols should be subject to extensive ethical review before licenses are applied for. This should include critical evaluation of the necessity and justification for animal use and implementation of the 3 Rs. The USPCA welcomes the requirement for local ethical review processes (known as Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Bodies, or AWERBs) at all research, breeding and supply facilities. The charity believes it is essential that these should contain a proper representation of both independent lay members and animal welfare specialists and that the processes be open and transparent.

4.4.2

The USPCA supports the provisions of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 that one or more persons be nominated to have overall responsibility for the day-to-day care of the animals in a scientific procedure establishment and that a veterinary surgeon must be appointed to monitor the health and welfare status of these animals. The USPCA believes that the Act can only operate effectively in the interests of animal welfare and as a reflection of public concern if the Government's Animal Procedures Committee (set up under the Act) uses its extensive powers to investigate project license applications and report publicly on these matters.

The importance of appropriate and rigorous training for prospective licensees cannot be overemphasised. The USPCA believes that the necessary training, not only in the techniques that are to be used in the recognition and alleviation of pain and suffering, (including analgesia, anaesthesia and euthanasia), but also in the ethical consideration of animal use, should take place before licenses are granted. Further training in the design of experiments such that the least number of animals is used is important.

4.4.3

The USPCA is opposed to the use of wild-caught animals of any species.

4.4.4

The USPCA is opposed to the use of Great Apes.

Great Apes have complex behavioural and social needs, which can never be satisfied adequately in laboratory conditions.

4.5 LABORATORY ANIMAL SUPPLY

4.5.1

The USPCA is opposed to the import and export of laboratory animals.

4.5.2

The Society is opposed to the import of all non-human primates.

4.5.3

The USPCA encourages the re-homing of laboratory animals where appropriate.

While animals continue to be used in procedures, the Society would wish, wherever possible, that the feasibility of rehoming laboratory animals once they are released from the controls of the Act, be investigated. The USPCA acknowledges the difficulties likely to be encountered but believes that where animals would be able to adapt to a new life, rehoming should be considered.

4.5.4

The USPCA is concerned that laboratory animals are often bred in excess of experimental requirements leading to unnecessary wastage of animals' lives. This may occur because of demands for a specific sex, age or weight of animals to be immediately available. The USPCA believes that the justification for such demands must be critically reviewed, and that breeding and research establishments should aim to reduce wastage substantially, in particular by improving forward planning.

5.0 Animals in the Wild

5.1 GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

5.1.1

The USPCA is opposed, in principle, to the taking or killing of wild animals, or the infliction of any suffering upon them.

5.1.2

The USPCA seeks to protect wild animals from any form of suffering, and strongly urges that they receive a far greater degree of protection under the law. The USPCA notes that interactions between humans and wild animals are affected by considerations of biodiversity, conservation and sustainability and does all in its power to ensure that such interactions cause the minimum of pain or distress to individual animals.

Humans kill wild animals for a variety of reasons ranging from sport, food, population control, the protection of life or property, the advancement of knowledge, and the production of materials (ivory, fur, oil etc), to conservation. In every case the USPCA challenges the justification for and proportionality of such killings, proposes humane alternatives where possible, and presses the welfare case using scientific, opinion poll, legal and other evidence.

Before exceptions to the principle of opposition to taking or killing wild animals can be considered, there must be:

strong scientific evidence that there is a legitimate case for the taking and killing of wild animals in particular instances,

or

a case for taking or killing particular animals for necessary food purposes,

or

where the question is one of control, evidence that control is necessary and that alternative methods of control are not appropriate.

In all cases, methods of control and taking should cause the minimal of pain or distress to individual animals and wherever possible, non-harmful methods of deterrence should be developed and used.

The USPCA may accept culling* if it is humane and if not to do so would cause greater individual suffering. Where this is not the case the USPCA will challenge the cull's justification and methodology. A killing method can be classified as humane where no distress is caused and an immediate state of unconsciousness is achieved followed by rapid progression to death.

*Culling involves the removal of animals from a population, by killing or by trapping and relocating, in order to reduce or control the numbers of animals in that population.

5.2 SNARES AND TRAPS

5.2.1

The USPCA is opposed to the manufacture, sale and use of all snares and any trap which causes suffering. The USPCA approves of live traps only when the trap is capable of restraining an animal without causing pain or injury and the trap is visited at least every 12 hours. Where animals are to be destroyed, a method of killing must be used that renders the animal insensible to pain and distress until death supervenes.

The term 'all snares' includes those using stops, ratchets, etc.

The USPCA recognises the necessity of capturing animals on a limited scale for a variety of reasons and, in such cases, live traps are acceptable provided that they are visited frequently the frequency varying from 12 hours depending upon the species and trap concerned. Those animals taken in a live trap for destruction must be immediately destroyed according to USPCA euthanasia guidelines.

There is no body-grip trap which does not cause unacceptable suffering.

5.3 POISONS

5.3.1

The Society is opposed to the use of poisons which cause animal suffering and is concerned about the widespread agricultural and commercial use of chemical substances which are potentially lethal to wild, farm and domestic animals.

5.4 CONSERVATION

5.4.1

The USPCA is concerned with the welfare of all wild animals and it deplores man-made changes in the environment which cause suffering to wild animals.

Changes to the environment may include interference with or the direct destruction of habitats e.g. the removal of hedgerows, destruction of wetlands or stubble burning.

Pollution of land, air or water by chemical substances, waste products, plastics etc. may cause either indirect suffering to wildlife or have a more direct effect through damage to the environment itself.

5.4.2

Regarding 'Invasive Alien Species', the USPCA believes that humankind must accept its responsibility for the consequences following the introduction of species into environments where they are non-native. As an animal welfare organisation, where possible we advocate solutions that place animal welfare considerations, for both the alien species and any affected native species, above conservation goals.

5.5 TRADE IN WILD ANIMALS

5.5.1

The USPCA is opposed to the trade in wild animals and to the trading of products derived from wild animals where distress or suffering may be caused.

Live wild animals, including threatened species protected on conservation grounds, are caught in the wild and traded for various reasons such as for use in experimentation, keeping in zoos and as pets. Animal products from wild animals are also traded for souvenirs, clothing, decorative objects, food and medicinal purposes. Opposition to the trade in wild-caught animals is based on evidence that such practices cause distress, suffering and death to large numbers of animals and are, in most instances, against all principles of conservation. The risk of introducing and transmitting diseases that are harmful to human beings and other animals is also increased when wild animals are traded

5.6 WHALES AND SEALS

5.6.1

The USPCA is opposed to the hunting and killing of whales and seals for any reason other than to relieve their suffering.

There is no method of killing hunted cetaceans without causing prolonged and unnecessary suffering. There is no scientific evidence to demonstrate that seal populations have any significant detrimental impact on commercial fish stocks.

The USPCA is concerned at the welfare problems associated with the incidental capture by commercial fisheries of marine species which include whales, dolphins, sharks, turtles and seabirds.

6.0 Animals in Entertainment, Sport or Fashion

6.1 GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

6.1.1

The USPCA is opposed to the infliction of pain and suffering on, or the killing of, any animal in the name of sport, entertainment or fashion.

6.2 CAPTIVE ANIMALS INCLUDING THOSE IN ZOOS.

6.2.1

The USPCA believes that animals should only be kept in captivity if good welfare can be assured.

Capture, transportation and acclimatisation of animals causes distress and suffering which are unacceptable. As there are already large numbers of animals in captivity, and more being bred, further importation should be prohibited.

Animals need to be kept in a way which is appropriate to the normal biological requirements of their species, in sufficient space containing the necessary shelter, cover and environmental stimulus so as not to cause distress or suffering.

6.2.2

The USPCA is opposed to the feeding of live vertebrate prey to captive animals. The feeding of live invertebrates should be done only when there is no alternative and it is considered absolutely necessary for the health and welfare of the animal.

6.2.3

The USPCA is opposed to pet corners where welfare problems are caused by uncontrolled handling and feeding, a lack of adequate supervision and excessive disturbance. Pet corners are defined as areas provided for the entertainment of visitors/ customers by such establishments as zoos, garden centres, pet stores, city farms etc. including where pets are sold in supermarkets.

6.3 PERFORMING ANIMALS

6.3.1

The USPCA is opposed to the use of animals for any form of entertainment where distress or suffering is likely to be caused.

6.3.2

The USPCA is opposed to exhibitions or presentations of animals in circuses and travelling menageries.

6.3.3

The USPCA is concerned that whenever they are used in the making of films, television programmes, advertisements and in the theatre, animals should not be caused any suffering or distress.

‘Entertainment is an inclusive term taking in all animal acts. Circus animals are kept most of the time, in close confinement, in abnormal social groups, in inadequate winter quarters, and are continually being transported – all causes of distress.

Animals may often be subjected to forced training, performing to a time-table and performing acts which do not come naturally to them, as well as being exposed to ridicule and indignity.

Animals obtained from the wild, undergo unacceptable suffering and distress caused by their capture, transportation and acclimatisation.

6.4 DOG RACING

6.4.1

The USPCA is opposed to the racing and training of dogs where distress or injury result from the placing of excessive demands upon the animal.

6.4.2

The USPCA is opposed to the operation of any race track which does not have a veterinary surgeon present.

6.4.3

The USPCA is concerned about the overbreeding of greyhounds for racing, the export of unwanted greyhounds for research purposes and the recurrent difficulties in rehoming greyhounds once their racing career is over. The charity believes retired greyhounds, in most instances, make good family pets.

6.5 FALCONRY

6.5.1

The USPCA is opposed to the practice of falconry under conditions where the birds used are likely to suffer pain or distress.

The USPCA recommends that all falconers, and others who keep hawks or owls, adhere to codes of practice which may be published from time to time by the Hawk Board – a voluntary body that, among other things, promotes adoption of high standards in falconry.

6.6 THE GIVING OF LIVE ANIMALS AS PRIZES

6.6.1

The USPCA is opposed to the giving of live animals as prizes.

The giving of a prize usually refers to fish and sometimes to such animals as ponies, puppies and pigs. Whatever conditions the prize-giver attempts to impose (if any) these are inadequate to secure the future well-being of an animal which comes to be owned by chance rather than as a result of a deliberate or conscious decision.

6.7 FUR

6.7.1

The USPCA is opposed to the farming and trapping or fur-bearing animals.

The farming and trapping of fur-bearing animals are practices which cause considerable suffering and fur is traded almost entirely as an inessential luxury product.

6.8 HUNTING

6.8.1

The USPCA is opposed to any hunting of animals with dogs or other animals.

Hunting is taken to include mink and otter hunting, deer hunting, coursing, hunting of hares and rabbits, and fox hunting. The USPCA does not believe that there is a need for control of the fox population on a national basis or that hunting is ever an effective control or culling measure.

6.9 SHOOTING

6.9.1

The USPCA believes that 'sport does not justify the causing of suffering to birds and other animals, and therefore, the USPCA is opposed to shooting for sport.

The USPCA accepts that a 'clean kill' is the intention of those shooting for sport, but it is a fact that this does not always happen, and that therefore suffering does occur.

6.9.2

The USPCA is opposed to the use of air weapons or bows in the shooting of animals.

Air weapons and bows of all types are lethal weapons. A lack of adequate controls on the manufacture, sale and use of these weapons leads to their use in inappropriate circumstances which may result in considerable animal suffering and the charity advocates a licensing system.

6.9.3

The USPCA is opposed to the pinioning, brailing and beak trimming of, and the use of spectacles or blinkers on, game birds kept in rearing pens. Pinioning involves the surgical removal of the tip of the wing to permanently prevent flying. Brailing involves the taping of the bird's wing to render it temporarily flightless. Beak trimming involves removing the tip of the upper beak in order to prevent pecking and cannibalism.

6.9.4

The USPCA is opposed to the killing of predatory animals solely because they may be considered a threat to game birds.

6.9.5

The USPCA is opposed to the use of lead gun-shot in circumstances where the spent pellets are likely to be ingested by, and hence poison, waterfowl.

Lead poisoning in waterfowl with ingested shotgun pellets has resulted in a number of countries phasing out the use of lead shot for waterfowl hunting. The USPCA believes that alternatives such as steel shot should be used.

6.10 ANGLING

6.10.1

The USPCA believes that current practices in angling involve the infliction of pain and suffering on fish.

The Medway Report has proved to the satisfaction of the USPCA that fish are capable of experiencing pain and suffering. The USPCA advocates that anglers who see fit to pursue their activities adopt a code of practice based on this report.

6.10.2

The USPCA is opposed to the use of lead in angling in view of the suffering and death caused to waterfowl.

Lead weights used by anglers resulted in the deaths of large numbers of mute swans. In 1987 legislation was introduced in the UK to prohibit the import and sale of most sizes of lead weight.

7.0 Animals and Education

7.1 GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

7.1.1

The USPCA believes that animal welfare education is an entitlement to all. The prevention of cruelty and promotion of kindness to animals can best be achieved through both formal and non-formal educational activities.

7.1.2

The USPCA is opposed to the use of animals for education where distress or suffering is likely to be caused.

7.2 ANIMALS IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

7.2.1

The USPCA believes that there must be an explicit animal welfare education rationale for using animals in education.

7.2.2

The USPCA is opposed to the keeping of animals in schools unless proper provision is made for their physical and mental well-being.

The necessary requirements for the physical and mental well-being of animals in schools and colleges are:

- that a named and suitably knowledgeable person is at all times responsible for the welfare and husbandry of the animals
- that a suitable environment is provided, that provision can be made for suitable housing, husbandry and veterinary care at all times including term time, weekends and during holidays
- that any contact between pupils and animals is supervised and controlled, that the animals are given adequate 'rest' periods away from disturbance
- that animals are kept only when the use of alternatives is impossible
- that any animals kept are prevented from indiscriminate breeding

7.2.3

The USPCA believes that animal welfare can be taught in schools without keeping animals captive.

7.2.4

The USPCA believes that small invertebrates (mini beasts) should be studied in their natural habitats in preference to the classroom. Studying an animal in its natural environment causes minimal disturbance and maximised educational opportunity.

The USPCA encourages the setting up of wildlife areas within school grounds for the benefit of animals and to enhance and encourage educational study.

At all times, due regard must be paid to legislation relating to British Wildlife.

7.2.5

The USPCA opposes breeding programmes in schools. This concern includes the use of incubators and artificial environments for animals. It is difficult to guarantee the welfare of breeding animals under school conditions and the charity believes that such programmes of study do not promote responsible attitudes to animal care and husbandry.

7.3 EDUCATIONAL VISITS

7.3.1

The USPCA does not support visits to animal-related venues which increase stress levels or cause unnecessary disturbance to animals. The animals' welfare must remain paramount.

7.3.2

The USPCA believes that all educational visits should be part of a structured animal welfare curriculum.

7.4 VISITING ANIMALS AND TEMPORARY LOAN SCHEMES

7.4.1

The USPCA is opposed to all schemes that introduce animals into schools which are detrimental to the welfare of animals.

7.5 DISSECTION

7.5.1

The USPCA is opposed to the practice of dissection of animals in schools, including invertebrates.

7.5.2

The USPCA is opposed to any pupil being compelled either to perform or watch animal dissection.

The USPCA believes that either taking part in or observing dissection can lead to desensitisation and a lessening of respect for life and that the methods involved in the rearing and killing of animals used for dissection may cause suffering. The views of students who wish to withdraw from dissection should be respected without penalty.

7.5.3

The USPCA advocates the creation and use of educational resources which provide alternatives to dissection.

7.6 BEHAVIOURAL EXPERIMENTS

7.6.1

The USPCA is opposed to behavioural experiments which are detrimental to the welfare of animals, including invertebrates.

Behavioural experiments that deliberately expose animals to less than ideal conditions can lead to a desensitisation and lessening of respect for life. The charity believes that it is more educationally beneficial to observe animals in their natural environment, performing normal behaviour.

7.7 SCHOOL AND COLLEGE FARMS AND ANIMAL COLLECTIONS

7.7.1

Managed ecosystems, including school farms and wildlife habitats, should be managed for the benefit of animals with minimum levels of interference.

7.7.2

Where animal husbandry units exist, the USPCA is opposed to any farm livestock being kept in conditions which cannot meet the Five Freedoms as described in section 3.1.1.

7.8 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

7.8.1

The USPCA advocates that the standards laid down by the Department of Agriculture should be applied in all cases where animals are kept for educational purposes. See Welfare of Livestock Regulations (N. Ireland) 1995.

7.9 HIGHER EDUCATION

7.9.1

The USPCA is opposed to the unnecessary use of animals in any course which either causes suffering or for which alternatives to animals are available.

7.9.2

The USPCA recommends that there should be a clearly defined ethics and animal welfare component in all higher education courses in the biological sciences with emphasis on understanding the needs of animals and human responsibility towards them and which should encourage students to explore the ethics of animal use.

8.0 Miscellaneous

8.1 TRANSPORT OF UNACCOMPANIED ANIMALS

The USPCA believes that the transport of unaccompanied animals should be avoided wherever possible.

In order to protect the welfare of animals in transit, animals should be in good health and transported in suitable containers. No animals should be transported in a way which is likely to cause unnecessary suffering. Further, animals should not be transported in the last third of a pregnancy. All journeys should be as short as possible in terms of time and distance travelled. Advanced transit planning and proper labelling of vehicles and containers are essential. A degree of suffering may be associated with the necessary transportation of animals for veterinary treatment eg. in ambulances, and this is excluded from the general statement above.