

guiding principles



ifaw



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animals and people thriving together



preamble

In order to achieve IFAW's vision of animals and people thriving together, we follow key principles in our work.

Conservation policy should be based on sound science within an ethical framework that recognizes the intrinsic value of individual animals and species, and the welfare needs of animals as sentient beings.

Conservation decisions should be guided by full consideration of ecological sustainability, biological sustainability, and the precautionary principle.

Humans have a moral responsibility to provide for the needs of those animals who are dependent on them. This responsibility extends

to protecting wild animals and their habitats from human harm, whether caused intentionally or unintentionally. Responsible human behavior should prevent, avoid, or at the very least, minimize direct and indirect harm to all animals.



Section 1

statements of principle



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key principles

animal welfare

Animal welfare is both a science and a philosophical position. Animal welfare science endeavors to provide objective assessments of the physical and mental wellbeing of animals in relation to the quality and suitability of environments they are in. When justifying our treatment of and effect on animals, we must consider why an action is necessary and how it will affect the animals. An animal welfare philosophical position requires that any use of an animal must be justified and that justification must balance the ‘benefit’ to wider society against the ‘cost’ to the individual animal. There are limits to what we should do to animals

no matter what the perceived benefits might be, as outlined in the Banner Principles.

biological sustainability

In order to ensure biological sustainability, populations of living organisms should not be so heavily exploited or otherwise compromised that they decline to levels or conditions from which they cannot naturally recover.

ecological sustainability

Ecological sustainability is vital for the wellbeing of life on Earth and must be the foremost objective in conservation.

intrinsic value

The notion of intrinsic value is shared by many conservation and animal welfare communities.

- ▶ Conservation’s traditional concern is for the intrinsic value of species, habitats and ecosystems.
- ▶ Animal welfare’s traditional concern is about the intrinsic value of individuals.

IFAW believes that all life has intrinsic value. Individual animals, populations, species and the ecosystems in which they live all have worth, for their own sake, independent of their usefulness to humans.

precautionary principle

In the face of scientific uncertainty and contested information, IFAW applies a precautionary approach to making decisions about conservation and animal welfare interventions. IFAW believes that alternatives to potentially harmful actions must be identified and prioritized, with the burden of proof placed on those proposing a decision that may cause harm, whether by action or inaction.

science and ethics form the basis of policy

The process of science builds knowledge. Scientific knowledge, considered in an ethical framework, guides decision-making.

sentience

The quality of life and suffering animals experience is of moral concern. Animals are sentient beings and, as such, their welfare should be integrated when formulating and implementing policy. Good welfare (physical and mental wellbeing) is not the just the absence of pain and suffering, positive experiences and emotions are critical to ‘a life worth living’, one of the defining criteria for good welfare.

sustainable use

IFAW supports sustainable use, in principle, as long as it is truly ecologically and biologically sustainable, as well as equitable and humane and complies with the Precautionary Principle.



climate change community engagement

Climate change has profound implications for individual animals, populations and their habitats. In recognition of the magnitude of this threat, IFAW believes that the nations of the world have an obligation to endorse and implement the Paris Agreement and reduce greenhouse gas emissions to decrease effects of climate change. Individuals and communities can play their parts by reducing their carbon footprints through lifestyle changes to help alleviate pressure animals face due to climate change.

Through community engagement, IFAW aims to strengthen and nurture the relationships between humans and animals around the world.

The lives of communities, the animals in their care and the wildlife around them are inextricably linked through the habitats, shared resources and the interactions they have. IFAW is committed to respectful and inclusive engagement that empowers communities to identify opportunities to address important wildlife conservation issues while incorporating animal welfare considerations.



community animals

IFAW recognizes the value of the relationships people have with domesticated (community) animals for companionship and livelihoods, and the important role these animals play in human communities. The health and welfare of community animals is integral to the health and wellbeing of humans, our communities, wildlife and the environment. Community animals must be provided with the resources and care they need to safeguard their own wellbeing and to ensure they do not pose a danger to people, or wild and/or domesticated animals.

breeding of domesticated animals

The breeding of domestic animals comes with responsibility to ensure the wellbeing of the parent animals and the offspring. This applies to immediate care, individual welfare, and genetic health of the lineage or species.

control of community animal population

The wholesale killing of community animals such as cats and dogs is not an acceptable or effective method of population or disease control. Problems associated with population, behaviors and disease in these animals must be addressed through community-wide acceptance of responsibilities governing the existence, safety, and wellbeing of these animals. Research shows that spay/neuter and vaccination programs are far more effective than culling at controlling population and disease.

euthanasia

When it is apparent that the quality of life of an individual animal is, or will likely be, unacceptably compromised, and this cannot be remedied or prevented, euthanasia may be in the best interests of the animal.

mutilations of domesticated animals

IFAW opposes the mutilation of any body part of an animal when it is done for any reason other than the protection of the animal's health or for fertility control in cats and dogs. In such instances, the procedure must be performed by a skilled veterinarian who ensures best practices.

training of domesticated animals

IFAW supports positive training methods that reward animals for desired behaviors.

▲ As residents of the Philippines braced for the imminent eruption of the Mayon volcano, IFAW helped evacuate around 300 animals (water buffalo and cattle) from the danger zone to temporary shelters.



wild animals

culling and pest control

The cruel and inhumane treatment of animals under the guise of culling or pest control is not acceptable. If animals are considered a nuisance because they damage property or pose health or safety risks, humane alternatives that do not involve killing animals or putting them into captivity should be attempted first. If lethal means are deemed scientifically and ethically justifiable, these must adhere to the principles of euthanasia described in this document.

wild animals in captivity

IFAW maintains that, in principle, wild animals belong in the wild. Wild animals should not be kept in captivity unless the welfare requirements of those animals can be met and there is an ethical justification based on conservation and/or animal welfare. There are some species whose needs cannot be adequately met, and should

not therefore be kept in captivity because of their complex social or environmental requirements. In particular, the keeping of wild animals as pets can be especially problematic as it is largely unregulated, creates serious animal welfare, wildlife conservation, and human health problems and potentially contributes to the illegal trade of wild animals.

hunting of wild animals

Any form of hunting should be humane, justified and should not be indiscriminate or pose a conservation threat. The ethical justification for hunting wild animals must be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Unethical and inhumane hunting of wild animals for commercial purposes, including for food, fur, medicine, ornamentation, or oil should be prohibited. Commercial hunting incentivizes short-term

financial gains over the risk for rapid species depletion, as there is no inducement to preserve or sustain populations.

Animals should not be hunted for trophies, even if the animals killed are subsequently consumed. In addition to reducing wildlife to a status symbol, trophy hunting targets exceptional, genetically significant individual animals that can negatively affect the reproductive success of future generations. Furthermore, in many countries there is also no regulation over the actual killing of the animal so hunters, who may be inexperienced, can cause extended suffering to the animal through injuries or multiple ineffective shots. IFAW emphasizes the need for alternative land use models and a commitment to making them work. It is critical that the international community works to secure alternative sources of



conservation funding to replace existing income streams that rely on trophy hunting.

hunting imperiled species

IFAW advocates for protection for species, such as the harp seal, that are not currently classified as “vulnerable” or “endangered” but whose populations are under exceptional pressure from human related activity and are therefore imperiled. Imperiled species should not be hunted.

subsistence hunting

Where legal subsistence hunting is permitted, it is a management authority’s responsibility to ensure such hunting is conducted on an ecologically sustainable basis and all precautions taken to minimize the disruption of social structures and the infliction of pain and suffering on the animals killed. Decision-making, information sharing and the

determination of rights, powers and obligations in relation to resource allocation and management should be conducted within a co-management/ community-based management framework.

canned hunting

Canned hunting, also referred to as “put and take” hunting, involves the hunting of animals in an enclosure designed to prevent an animal any chance of escaping; hunting animals that are drugged or sedated, and/or; hunting human-habituated animals. IFAW opposes canned hunting.

commercial whaling and sealing

Commercial whaling (including so-called “scientific whaling”) and commercial sealing should be prohibited as they are inherently cruel, unnecessary, and can pose a serious threat to the survival of these species.

wild animals in sport and entertainment

Wild animals should not be used for sport or entertainment in any manner that is inherently distressing or cruel or that uses punitive training methods. The keeping of animals in captivity for the primary purpose of entertainment is not ethically justifiable.

▲ A 4 year old tigress takes a morning walk through her forest territory, while her mate is resting nearby.

◀ IFAW has campaigned since 2011 to stop the shooting of seals around Salmon farms in Scotland. In 2020, IFAW welcomed new animal welfare legislation which finally banned the shooting of seals.



food and farmed animals

intensive farming of animals

Intensive farming involves industrialized facilities utilizing confinement systems with high stocking densities that deeply compromise the welfare of animals and pollute the environment. Buying local, humanely raised food from sustainable sources and reducing the consumption of animal products lessens the harmful impacts on animals and the environment.

treatment of farmed animals

Farmed animals, including fish, raised and slaughtered for food or other purposes are entitled to positive experiences and protection from distress and suffering during their lives by ensuring the animals' physical and emotional needs are met, including contentment and control over their environment.

the farming of wild animals

IFAW is opposed to the farming of wild animals, as it is very unlikely that their biological and psychological needs can be met in this commercial environment. Some wild farming practices create serious animal welfare issues, increase risk of disease and parasite transmission as well as habitat degradation and exclusion. IFAW believes farming wild animals stimulates the market and incentivizes poaching and the illegal trade in native wildlife, as well as creating an incentive for farmers to capture additional animals from the wild.

wild animals as food

The development of new markets for, and growing trade in, wildlife for human consumption is resulting in practices that are neither humane nor ecologically sustainable. Furthermore, this growing trade brings great risk of zoonotic pathogen transmissions due

to interactions with animals throughout the chain of human custody, particularly when unsafe/unsanitary practices are involved. Understanding that wild animals are an important source of protein for many people, IFAW believes that the hunting of wild animals for food should be conducted in a manner that is humane and ecologically sustainable.

▲ A Maasai man with his cattle at the Lekilesi Canyon in the Kitenden Corridor just outside of Amboseli National Park. The corridor ensures that a favoured route that elephants have used for millenia to move across the Tanzanian border, is secured from habitat fragmentation and potential conflicts with local communities.



working animals

domesticated species used for work

Working animals are used for activities such as carrying goods, agriculture, law enforcement and therapy. The daily care of these animals must meet all requirements for physical, behavioral and mental health. Animals must not be forced to exert themselves to excess, work under harsh conditions where these cause undue stress or injury, or be trained or motivated by punitive means. Equipment must be comfortable and not cause pain or injury. Animals must be allowed adequate rest and opportunities to relax and exercise natural behaviors.

Military search and rescue and therapy animals in particular must also be ensured outlets for coping with the emotional burdens that they absorb through their work.

the use of animals in science and in medical and non-medical preparations

animal experimentation

The use of animals in scientific research should be minimized and alternatives should be pursued based on the principles of the 3 'Rs' – Refinement of procedures to eliminate suffering, Reduction in the numbers of animals used, and Replacement of animals with non-animal alternatives when these exist.

wild animals in medicinal and non-medical preparations

Wild animals and their parts and derivatives should not be used in medicinal and non-medicinal preparations because the trade has proved to be inhumane and unsustainable. Alternatives made of non-endangered herbal and synthetic materials should be sustainably used instead.

invasive alien species

prevention and control of invasive alien species

The presence of alien species is not necessarily harmful. However, ecological conditions sometimes favor their survival to the point they become invasive and threaten biodiversity and related ecosystem services. IFAW promotes policies that prioritize precaution and prevention and that are humane as well as ecologically sustainable.

▲ Benin sniffer dogs work to detect animal parts including elephant ivory, and pangolin to disrupt and stop illegal wildlife trade.



Section 2

key definitions



animal

Any member of the kingdom Animalia that has a sensory and nervous system that enables them to respond to stimuli and interact with its environment. For the purposes of this glossary, the use of the word ‘animals’ refers to those species that are recognized as sentient. However, in the spirit of the Precautionary Principle, in certain cases we give the benefit of the doubt to the possibility of sentience even when broad acceptance and scientific data are lacking.

animal welfare

The physical, behavioral, and mental wellbeing of animals; physical, physiological and behavioural measurements are used to assess animal welfare.

animal welfare frameworks

A number of animal welfare frameworks have been developed to create benchmarks and a common international understanding of the language of animal welfare. These include the Five Freedoms, the original and best known; Fraser’s Three Approaches (Natural Life, Emotional and Physical Wellbeing); the Quality of Life framework; and Morton’s Five Domains framework. Each has a practical application and choice of framework will depend on circumstances. As well as the practical applications to improve animal welfare, it is important to adhere to key principles as well. There are limits to what we should do to animals no matter what the perceived benefits might be, as outlined in the Banner Principles.

banner principles

The Banner principles are as follows: (i) Harms of a certain degree and kind ought under no circumstances to be inflicted on an animal. (ii) Any harm to an animal, even if not absolutely impermissible, nonetheless requires justification and must be outweighed by the good which is realistically sought in so treating it. (iii) Any harm which is justified by the second principle ought, however, to be minimised as far as is reasonably possible.

biodiversity

The variability among living organisms from all sources, including terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems.



biological sustainability

The capacity of a biological system to endure in all processes that identify that system, e.g. reproduction, diversity, population, productivity, and resilience in the event of disaster.

climate change

Climate change refers to persistent (typically decades or longer) alterations in the state of weather patterns within a defined region, including temperature, humidity, wind, and amount and type of precipitation. Climate change may be due to natural internal and external processes such as variations of the solar cycles, volcanic eruptions and persistent anthropogenic changes in the composition of the atmosphere or in land use. The Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) makes a distinction between climate change attributable to human activities that directly or indirectly alter atmospheric composition (e.g. increase in fossil fuel emissions leading to global warming) and climate variability attributable to natural causes, observed over comparable time periods.

community

A group of people who live in the same place or share a common characteristic or interest (e.g. profession, values, socio-economic factor).

community animals

Community animals are domesticated species with which communities or members of the community have individual and interdependent relationships. Examples would be dogs, cats, chickens, goats and cattle of small-hold farmers. Large herds of cattle do not usually meet this definition.

community engagement

The process by which IFAW builds relationships and partnerships with the individuals closest to animals and their habitats for the purpose of applying a collective vision for the benefit of animals, humans and the environment.

companion animals

Companion animals are domesticated pet animals that have been habituated to humans and are able to form close bonds with human beings and are therefore not typically caged, or otherwise closely confined (e.g. cats, dogs, horses).

conservation

The principle of protecting an ecosystem, wildlife habitat, or species from damage or irreversible loss.

cruelty

Behavior which causes physical or mental harm to another individual, whether intentional or not.

- ▲ Community members plant tree saplings during the Bangalow Koalas planting event. As these saplings grow and corridors become connected, a once-fragmented habitat will one day provide habitat ensuring a healthy koala population into the future.
- ◀ The ZEN Project - a landmark public-private partnership with support from the Forestry Commission of Zimbabwe that secures a vast expanse of former hunting ground in the Panda Masuie Forest Reserve.



culling

Lethal or non-lethal removal of animals for the purpose of controlling or reducing the size of a population.

domestic animals

Animals who have been changed genetically through selective breeding over many generations by humans for the purpose of enhancing certain phenotypes desirable for human use, such as tractability, food, fiber, appearance, or work.

domesticated pet animal

An animal kept by people in, or near, human dwellings for the purpose of companionship, status or emotional and/or physical support.

domestication

A process through which humans change a species of animal genetically and phenotypically through selective breeding to serve a particular human purpose.

ecological sustainability

The ability of an ecosystem to maintain ecological processes, functions, biodiversity and productivity into the future, often measured using indicators for overall biological diversity or ‘carrying capacity’ for certain indicator species.

ecosystem services

The direct and indirect contributions of ecosystems to human wellbeing.



© Prof Rudi van Aarde

euthanasia

The act of killing an animal to prevent or cease unacceptable pain and suffering. The act of euthanasia should induce rapid death in a humane manner that minimizes fear, distress, pain or discomfort in the process of dying or in the handling, restraint, and other conditions associated with the procedure. The method of euthanasia must produce rapid loss of consciousness, followed immediately by death, and must be irreversible.

exotic (non-native) animal

An animal that belongs to a species not indigenous to the geographical area where it lives or is kept.

exotic pets /wild pets

An animal of an undomesticated species maintained in captivity for the purpose of companionship, decoration, status, or emotional and/or physical support.

farmed animals

Animals bred for production of food, skin or fibre; hoofed mammals farmed for food, milk and leather; fowl; fish and animals farmed for their fur, skin, feathers and other body parts and derivatives.

feral animals

Domestic animals who live in a wild state, and who are poorly socialized to people and are fearful of humans. This condition is usually irreversible.

food animals

Animals kept, bred, or hunted for human food.

humane

Having or showing compassion and benevolence to people and animals.

imperiled species

Species at risk of extinction or extirpation; there are various international, national and regional classification schemes for imperiled species based on key criteria designed to identify vulnerable taxa, establish recovery plans, prevent further declines, and promote recovery.

intensive livestock farming

Breeding, holding, and transporting animals in large-scale, industrialized, confinement facilities with high stocking densities. Animals are managed for optimal growth and production at the cost of fundamental welfare requirements, without regard for quality of life. Industrialized livestock farming relies on industrialized, monoculture crop production and high use of pesticides and drugs.

◀ IFAW team stop at the Sagamok First Nation community to examine the roaming dogs and previously delivered doghouses.



inhumane

Lacking in compassion for suffering; cruel.

intrinsic value

The inherent value of something or someone, independent of its worth (or usefulness) to anyone, or anything else.

introduced species

The movement, as a consequence of human intervention, of a species outside its natural range.

introduced alien species

Alien species means any live specimen of a species, subspecies or lower taxon of animals, plants, fungi or micro-organisms introduced outside its natural range; it includes any parts, gametes, seeds, eggs or propagules of such species, as well as any hybrids, varieties or breeds that might survive and subsequently reproduce.

invasive animals

Non-native animals that have expanded or shifted their range, escaped or been introduced into an ecosystem and which displace, out-compete or cause harm to existing native populations when they move into or are introduced into a range that is non-native to them.

livelihoods

A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with, and recover from, stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base.

performing animals

Animals trained to perform a task primarily for the commercial purpose of human entertainment, either directly (e.g. circus performance, aquarium shows) or through an associated agency (e.g. advertising).

pest

An organism with characteristics that people deem to be damaging or unwanted.

pet animals

Pet animals are typically kept in the home for the emotional support they provide to people. When animals are confined indoors special attention must be paid to their physical, psychological and behavioral needs.

precautionary principle

A principle of science that prescribes caution or conservative action in the face of scientific uncertainty or lack of data in order to reduce or alleviate threats of harm to the wellbeing of humans, animals or the environment pending further scientific investigation.



sentience

The capacity of an individual to feel, perceive, or experience emotions, positive or negative states or conscious feelings. Positive feelings such as vitality, companionship, contentment, satiety, happiness, curiosity, exploration, foraging and play are integral to good animal welfare.

sustainable use of nature (including animals)

The use of nature, including animals and wildlife habitats, by humans for any purpose in a manner that is truly ecologically and biologically sustainable, as well as equitable and humane, and complies with the Precautionary Principle.

taming

A process by which a wild or feral animal's behavior becomes habituated to human handling. This is in contrast to domestication, which requires modification of a species' genetic characteristics by humans for the exaggeration of phenotypes that are desired for human use.

therapy animals

Domesticated animals used for the medical, psychological or physical support of people.

training animals

The process of teaching animals to perform behaviours that are desirable to humans.

unethical hunting

A form or method of hunting that cannot be justified in terms of rationale or compromises animal welfare or conservation.

wild animal

A wild animal is an individual of a species that is not domesticated and that retains its wild characteristics and its needs for a natural life.

working animals

Domesticated animals who have been trained to perform a task to assist humans.

▲ In Playa del Carmen, Mexico, IFAW along with our local partner Coco's Animal Welfare, has been promoting better care of dogs and cats, having been able to save, rehome, sterilize and assist more than a 30,000+ animals.

◀ The fluke of a North Atlantic right whale in the Bay of Fundy, New Brunswick, Canada.

International Fund
for Animal Welfare

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