



# Animal welfare and euthanasia

Animal welfare can be both positive and negative.  
Animals' emotional needs are just as important as their physical needs.

## Five Domains of Animal Welfare

Every living being has a right to quality of life. This can be achieved by embracing the internationally accepted Five Domains of Animal Welfare:

1. Good nutrition – all animals deserve access to clean water and sufficient amounts of a well-balanced, nutritious diet.
2. Good environment – all animals deserve to live in an appropriate environment, with shelter and a comfortable resting area. Comfort is optimised by having access to an appropriate temperature, substrate, odour, surrounding noise and predictability.
3. Good health – all animals are entitled to good health. Good health is enabled through prevention and treatment of disease, injury and impairment and by having a good fitness level.
4. Good behaviour – all animals should have the ability to express their natural behaviour. This includes having access to sufficient space with room to retreat, having sufficiently varied conditions to provide enrichment and having the company of their own kind where appropriate.
5. Good mental state - An animal's mental state is dependent on the above four physical Domains. The mental wellbeing of an animal is paramount to their welfare. Merely minimising or resolving an animal's negative mental state does not necessarily result in positive welfare but may only provide a neutral state. Animals will benefit from experiencing predominantly positive states (such as pleasure, comfort and vitality) over negative states (such as fear, frustration, hunger, pain and boredom).

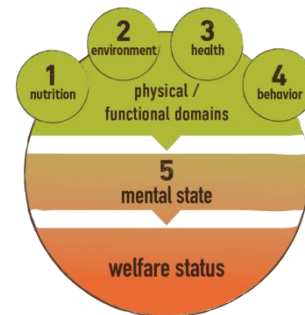


Image source: Earth Animal

**A positive mental state will result in a positive welfare status!**

## The importance of humane euthanasia

It is important to discuss euthanasia within an animal welfare organisation, because it is an emotive issue which can cause many diverging views.

SNIP International believes in a LOW KILL approach. It is important to consider humane euthanasia in individuals undergoing physical or mental suffering, when there is no alternative way in which their welfare status can be improved. Veterinarians can give an animal a calm and painless death by the administration of an overdose of anaesthetic.

When making a decision about euthanasia every aspect of an animal's health and wellbeing needs to be considered:

- Is the animal suffering from physical or mental distress?
- Could the suffering be managed or treated so that the animal is healthy enough to be released or adopted?
- Will the animal survive the treatment and is follow up care needed to manage the suffering?
- Finance – treatment of an illness that can be treated in an owned animal cannot necessarily be applicable to animals in a shelter environment due to logistics and costs.
- Are we fighting to save an animal because it's in his or her best interest, or because we are too involved emotionally and don't want to let him/her go?

It is advisable to make this assessment and decision as soon as possible in order to be able to remain as objective as possible.

**Euthanasia can be the greatest act of compassion we can give to a suffering animal.**