

# Animal Welfare Act

Prior to the Animal Welfare Act, animal welfare law was largely reactive and action could only be taken once an animal had suffered unnecessarily.

The 2006 Act has introduced an important and new concept for pet owners and those responsible for domestic animals, e.g. breeders, those who have working animals or farm animals in England and Wales.

## Preventing animals suffering

This means enforcement agencies and our inspectors can now act by advising and educating owners before their pets suffer. If this advice is not followed or the animal's needs are not being met then action can be taken whether through a formal warning or in some cases a [prosecution](#).

### What does the law actually say?

Section 9 of the Animal Welfare Act places a duty of care on people to ensure they take reasonable steps in all the circumstances to meet the welfare needs of their animals to the extent required by good practice.

### What does this mean for those responsible for animals?

In short it means they must take positive steps to ensure they care for their animals properly and in particular must provide for the five welfare needs, which are:

- need for a suitable environment
- need for a suitable diet
- need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns
- need to be housed with, or apart, from other animals
- need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease.

Find out what your pet needs in [our advice and welfare pages](#).

## Further information

Further information about what this means in practice can be found in specific Codes of Practice produced by Defra (for England) and by the Welsh Government.

### Defra

- [Cats](#)
- [Dogs](#)
- [Horses, ponies and donkeys](#)
- [Privately kept non-human primates](#)

### Welsh Government

- [Cats](#)
- [Dogs](#)
- [Equines](#)
- [Rabbit](#)