Dear Colleagues

Please take a moment to read the following important massage and information.

ANIMAL WELFARE

The South African Veterinary Council seeks, through the statutes of the Veterinary and Para-Veterinary Professions Act, 1982 to

- serve the interests of the people of South Africa by promoting competent, efficient, accessible and needs-driven service delivery in the animal health care sector;
- protect the health and well-being of animals and animal populations;
- protect and represent the interests of the veterinary and para-veterinary professions;
- regulate the professional conduct of the veterinary and para-veterinary professions; and
- set and monitor standards of both education and practice for the veterinary and para-veterinary professions.

Council wishes to remind all registered veterinary and para-veterinary professionals that they have a professional responsibility to adhere to Animal Welfare Legislation, specifically the provisions of the Animals Protection Act, Act 72 of 1962.

It is furthermore, important that registered members keep in mind their professional-, ethical- and leadership responsibilities and duties to uphold the standards of veterinary professions when dealing with the well-being and welfare of all animals.

In addition, the veterinary professions subscribe to the five freedoms for animals as per the directives of the World Animal Health Organisation [OIE] namely:

- freedom from hunger, thirst and malnutrition;
- freedom from fear and distress;
- freedom from physical and thermal discomfort;
- freedom from pain, injury and disease; and
- freedom to express normal patterns of behaviour.

Veterinary and para-veterinary professionals are the ultimate custodians of animal welfare. Abuse of- or cruelty to animals and /or advice contrary to acceptable and recognised animal welfare principles are regarded as unprofessional conduct and will be viewed as a serious offence by the SAVC.

Regards

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Article 7.1.1.

Animal welfare means how an animal is coping with the conditions in which it lives. An animal is in a good state of welfare if (as indicated by scientific evidence) it is healthy, comfortable, well nourished, safe, able to express innate behaviour, and if it is not suffering from unpleasant states such as pain, fear, and distress. Good animal welfare requires disease prevention and veterinary treatment, appropriate shelter, management, nutrition, humane handling and humane slaughter/killing. Animal welfare refers to the state of the animal; the treatment that an animal receives is covered by other terms such as animal care, animal husbandry, and humane treatment.

Article 7.1.2.

Guiding principles for animal welfare

1. That there is a critical relationship between animal health and animal welfare.
2. That the internationally recognised ‘five freedoms’ (freedom from hunger, thirst and malnutrition; freedom from fear and distress; freedom from physical and thermal discomfort; freedom from pain, injury and disease; and freedom to express normal patterns of behaviour) provide valuable guidance in animal welfare.
3. That the internationally recognised ‘three Rs’ (reduction in numbers of animals, refinement of experimental methods and replacement of animals with non-animal techniques) provide valuable guidance for the use of animals in science.
4. That the scientific assessment of animal welfare involves diverse elements which need to be considered together, and that selecting and weighing these elements often involves value-based assumptions which should be made as explicit as possible.
5. That the use of animals in agriculture and science, and for companionship, recreation and entertainment, makes a major contribution to the wellbeing of people.
6. That the use of animals carries with it an ethical responsibility to ensure the welfare of such animals to the greatest extent practicable.
7. That improvements in farm animal welfare can often improve productivity and food safety, and hence lead to economic benefits.
8. That equivalent outcomes based on performance criteria, rather than identical systems based on design criteria, be the basis for comparison of animal welfare standards and recommendations.

Article 7.1.3.

Scientific basis for recommendations

1. Welfare is a broad term which includes the many elements that contribute to an animal’s quality of life, including those referred to in the ‘five freedoms’ listed above.
2. The scientific assessment of animal welfare has progressed rapidly in recent years and forms the basis of these recommendations.
3. Some measures of animal welfare involve assessing the degree of impaired functioning associated with injury, disease, and malnutrition. Other measures provide information on animals’ needs and affective states such as hunger, pain and fear, often by measuring the strength of animals’ preferences, motivations and aversions. Others assess the physiological, behavioural and immunological changes or effects that animals show in response to various challenges.
4. Such measures can lead to criteria and indicators that help to evaluate how different methods of managing animals influence their welfare.