

Abstract:

Animal welfare is the physical and psychological state of an animal as regards its attempt to cope with the environment. An animal's welfare is compromised if it does not enjoy the five fundamental freedoms, namely: freedom from hunger or thirst; freedom from thermal or physical discomfort; freedom from pain, injury and disease; freedom from fear and distress and; freedom to indulge in normal behavior patterns. In recent times, animal welfare has developed into a science with growing amount of research whose outcomes have led to reforms in animal welfare legislation and improved conditions for production animals, research animals and those kept in captivity or as companion animals. Animal welfare abuse in Kenya results from: neglect; malicious physical injury; starvation; confinement; use of inappropriate modes of transportation/transportation facilities; manhandling during transportation; overcrowding; overloading; overworking; inhumane treatment at slaughter/slaughter facilities; inhumane treatment during capture; branding and; inappropriate working tools, among others. Animal welfare abuse in Kenya has been occasioned by: inadequate legal and policy provisions; inadequate capacity to monitor and minimize cruelty to animals; limited animal extension services and; inadequate training in animal welfare and supervision of service providers. Given that veterinarians influence how animals are treated at local, national and international levels, their training should include a good grounding in animal welfare education. The same should be extended to all other animal scientists. Through this, they can lead in bringing about improvements in animal welfare as well as helping to change attitudes towards animals. This paper looks at animal welfare issues in Kenya with respect to abuse, policy, legislation and education, and gives recommendations on the way forward.