

OIE adopts rules for animal welfare

The World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) adopted a definition of animal welfare at its meeting in Paris, France, earlier this month.

OIE said "animal welfare means how an animal is coping with the conditions in which it lives."

Accordingly, OIE said an animal is in a good state of welfare if, "as indicated by scientific evidence, it is healthy, comfortable, safe, well nourished and able to express innate behavior and is not suffering from unpleasant states such as pain, distress or fear."

Furthermore, OIE said, good animal welfare requires disease prevention and treatment, appropriate management, nutrition and shelter and humane handling and harvesting practices.

Groups may comment on the language through the U.S. Department of Agriculture before the language becomes final.

OIE is recognized by the World Trade Organization (WTO) as the reference organization for animal health, and livestock and poultry trade groups said it is conceivable that OIE's animal welfare recommendations could be adopted by WTO or individual countries as standards for international trade.