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The Old School, Brewhouse Hill, Wheathampstead,
Hertfordshire AL4 8AN, UK

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**Animal welfare: a complex international public policy issue: economic,
policy, societal, cultural and other drivers and constraints.
A 20-year international perspective**

ACD Bayvel, TJ Diesch and N Cross*

Animal Welfare Standards, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, PO Box 2526, Wellington 6140, New Zealand

* Contact for correspondence and requests for reprints: nicki.cross@maf.govt.nz

Abstract

The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) policy definition that “animal welfare is a complex international public policy issue with scientific, ethical, economic, cultural and religious dimensions, plus important trade policy considerations” clearly demonstrates the multi-faceted nature of animal welfare. Progress made is inevitably incremental and compromises often have to be reached between animal welfare and other important societal values. Recognition of the need for managed change over agreed time-frames, and involving full consultation with affected animal user groups, is essential. This paper draws on case studies involving intensive livestock agriculture, live animal exports for slaughter, religious slaughter and vertebrate pest control in both New Zealand’s domestic experience, gained over the last 20 years, and international (OIE) experience, gained over the last ten years. Case studies will also highlight policy considerations relating to animal health, food safety and the impact on the environment. Important drivers of animal welfare change will be discussed; as will the constraints to making changes. The paper will conclude by commenting on the direction, and rate, of animal welfare change and the impact of animal welfare being addressed, not only at the national and regional level, but now also at the international level.

Keywords: animal welfare, constraints, drivers, international, New Zealand, public policy