

Room to improve in government commitment to animal protection

Australia has work to do to improve its animal welfare policy and legislation standards, according to the newly-launched Animal Protection Index (API). Australia is ranked in the C category, the same as Brazil and India. The index is not based on animal welfare practice.

Launched at the Federation of Asian Veterinary Associations meeting in Singapore in November, the API gives a ranking of 50 countries on their commitment to protecting animals. Austria, Denmark, New Zealand and UK are all ranked A. UK and New Zealand had similar scores, except that UK was ranked E for the category of education on animal care and protection. The lowest are Algeria, Pakistan, Iran and Russia, which rank G overall.

It was designed by a working group, led by World Animal Protection, and included senior members from RSPCA, Eurogroup for Animals, International Fund for Animal Welfare, Humane Society International and Compassion in World Farming. According to their website, they also consulted various academic experts to ensure the suitability of the design, international applicability and adequacy of issues covered in the index. They

also consulted with the relevant chief veterinary officers before publishing the index.

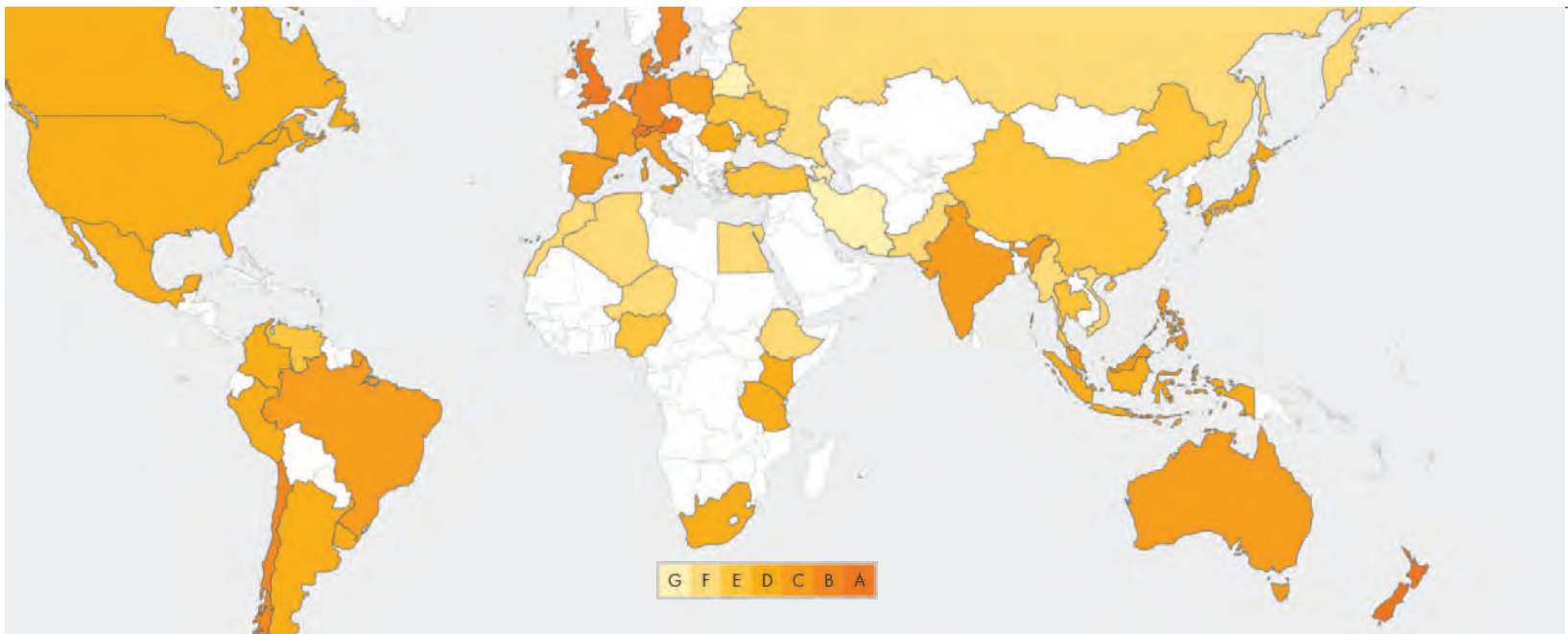
Australia's only A ranking is for protecting animals used in scientific research, which compares very unfavourably with New Zealand, which has a ranking of A in 9 categories, as shown in the table in green.

For Australia, there is most room for improvement in government support for the Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare (ranked G) and education on animal care and protection (ranked E). I find this disappointing, as this category addresses whether issues of animal care and protection are included in the national primary and secondary education systems, and also whether animal welfare issues form part of veterinary medicine education.

The indicators were designed to assess a country's commitment to animal protection issues. The API recognises positive examples and important steps taken by governments to improve animal welfare policy and legislation in their countries.

	Australia	India	USA	Indonesia	New Zealand
Overall ranking	C	C	D	D	A
Recognising animal protection					
Formal recognition of animal sentience	C	C	D	C	B
Support for the Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare	G	D	E	D	A
Laws against causing animal suffering	B	C	C	C	A
Protecting animals used in farming	C	C	D	C	A
Protecting animals in captivity	C	B	C	D	A
Protecting companion animals	B	B	C	D	A
Protecting animals used for draught and recreation	B	C	C	D	B
Protecting animals used in scientific research	A	C	C	E	A
Protecting the welfare of wild animals	C	C	C	C	B
Governance structures and systems					
Government accountability for animal welfare	B	B	B	D	A
Animal welfare standards					
Engagement with the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE)	D	D	C	D	C
OIE animal welfare standards	B	D	D	D	A
Reporting on progress	C	D	C	E	B
Providing humane education					
Education on animal care and protection	E	D	D	D	D
Promoting communication and awareness					
Consultation with stakeholders	B	B	B	C	A

Comparison of the rankings of Australia with India, USA, Indonesia and New Zealand



The findings are presented on an interactive website, above, at api.worldanimalprotection.org where you can explore countries and compare and contrast policy and legislation around the world. The website can be used to identify specific areas where improvements can be made, and to compare specific items between countries, as in the table shown here.

Although the API aims to highlight areas where countries can improve animal welfare policy and legislation, it may have wider, unforeseen implications. For example, in terms of protection for animals used for scientific purposes and for companion animals,

Belarus, Iran and Vietnam ranked G for both. This may have implications for assessment of any submitted journal articles, as veterinary journals that belong to the International Association of Veterinary Editors have a specific requirement that all experiments conform to animal welfare standards.

The next edition of the API will be in 2016. For more information, email api@worldanimalprotection.org.

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Editor in Chief

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