

# GUIDANCE FOR ANIMAL PROTECTION ORGANIZATIONS

## Engaging National Delegates and Animal Welfare Focal Points

of the World Organisation  
for Animal Health



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# Introduction

World Animal Net (WAN) has compiled this resource in response to inquiries from Animal Protection Organisations (APOs) about how to work with their country's World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) Delegate and Animal Welfare (AW) Focal Point to contribute to the development of animal welfare policy, capacity and activities. This guidance incorporates information about the roles of Delegates and Focal Points (including the latter's Terms of Reference), along with insights from experienced Focal Points.



We hope that this resource can assist in forming and strengthening the relationship between APOs and OIE Delegates and AW Focal Points in countries around the world.

There is also [general background about the OIE](#) and its work on the WAN website, with links to relevant pages of the OIE website.

## What are OIE Delegates?

There are 181 Permanent Delegates to the OIE, and these are often also the country's Chief Veterinary Officer – see [here](#) for your national Delegate. The OIE recommends that animal protection organisations make contact and develop a relationship with their Delegate before AW Focal Points.

The Delegate is assisted in his/her role by designated Focal Points, including an AW Focal Point.

# What are Animal Welfare Focal Points?

The OIE requires each member country to appoint a national AW Focal Point. These individuals should be important contacts for every APO, and – if their role is carried out effectively – the coordination point or hub of AW expertise and implementation planning in the country.

AW Focal Points are usually listed on the OIE's regional websites, which can be found [here](#).

## The Role of AW Focal Points

AW Focal Points have an important role in supporting the national Delegate in the development and effective implementation of the OIE's international AW standards. In practice, this means establishing networks of AW experts and stakeholders, including APOs, and carrying out consultations and knowledge-sharing. If the job is done well, it can lead to:

- Strengthened national understanding and awareness of AW, guided by the latest science.
- Enhanced national contributions and comments on draft AW standards.
- Improved implementation of AW standards and Regional AW Strategies (RAWS), including through enhanced national policy, legislation and enforcement; AW education and awareness campaigns; and practical AW programmes.

There is more about the work of OIE national AW Focal Points in this video of a [European Regional Seminar](#). As it stresses, AW Focal Points face many challenges. Indeed, our experience has shown that many find it difficult to understand and manage this complex role. Others have admitted to simply not knowing where to begin.

# AW Focal Point Training

The OIE does hold some AW Focal Point training sessions, but these are periodic (as they are costly). AW Focal Point trainings are delivered as part of the overall training of all Focal Points (there are 8 different focal points within a country, with AW being just one) and, like the majority of OIE capacity building activities, they rely heavily on donor support and on the priorities defined by the national Delegates. In terms of financial aid for these OIE activities, there are specific mechanisms for donors defined in the OIE World Animal Health and Welfare Fund.

This leaves some AW Focal Points in a position where they are appointed for several years before any training is available. Clearly, further help and support is needed in such cases, and it is in APO's interests to ensure that these important government contacts are indeed equipped for, and carrying out, the duties needed to develop AW in their countries.

APOs may be able to offer assistance to AW Focal Points in this situation. This could mean working collaboratively to identify training opportunities or reaching out to [OIE Collaborating Centres](#) for animal welfare to identify training or education possibilities. There is also a list of education and training opportunities in [WAN's Best Practice resource for AW](#).

# Terms of Reference for AW Focal Points

APOs supporting AW Focal Points should be aware of their allocated duties, as contained in their [Terms of Reference](#) from the OIE. We have analysed below the five tasks delegated to AW Focal Points in this document, together with some practical tips and advice on how these tasks could be tackled. This may help APOs in their discussions with AW Focal Points and subsequent co-operation and support.

## **1. To establish a network of animal welfare experts within the country or to communicate with the existing network.**

A tried and tested way of establishing such a network is through the establishment of an Animal Welfare Committee. There is more about this in [WAN's Model AW Act](#).

This may need to be supplemented by other specialist committees, which feed into the work of the Animal Welfare Committee (for example, a scientific committee).

APOs should consider forming a national policy/advocacy alliance in order to maximise the effectiveness of their representation (both in this forum and other AW consultations and advocacy). But they also need to ensure that they are represented in the Animal Welfare Committee, and included in all consultations!

## **2. To establish and maintain a dialogue with the Competent Authority for animal welfare in the country, and to facilitate cooperation and communication among several authorities where responsibility is shared.**

This may require the establishment of an inter-departmental AW coordination group within the government. This would necessitate a lead department and dedicated secretariat to ensure effective communication and organise meetings and follow-up.

It is vital that steps are taken to harmonise the government's approach to AW across departments (if more than one department is involved). The development of a national AW strategy/policy will help this process, as well as charting a course for the progressive development of AW in the country. The [Model AW Act](#) includes suggestions for what should be contained in a national policy. Where a Regional AW Strategy (RAWS) has already been prepared, whether by the OIE itself or by Regional Economic Communities, this will help, as a National Animal Welfare Strategy (NAWS – see below section on National Implementation of AW Standards) can be developed to ensure its implementation. Needless to say this must be prepared democratically, with full consultation.

## **3. To receive from the OIE Headquarters copies of the reports of the Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission (Code Commission), including reports of the OIE Animal Welfare Working Group and other relevant reports.**

The AW Focal Point will need to ensure that reports/updates are made available to all relevant government departments and stakeholders. Then, where necessary, to organise inter-departmental consultation meetings, and other stakeholder consultation, to facilitate stakeholder and government implementation.



4. To conduct the in-country consultation process with recognised animal welfare experts on draft texts proposed in those reports as well as draft standards proposed by the Code Commission when dealing with animal welfare.

This duty requires wide and effective consultation. Governments are used to holding such consultation exercises. However, AW can be a new and difficult subject for some governments, and it is easy to make mistakes through lack of awareness of either the latest scientific knowledge or the day-to-day practical and ethical implications of certain approaches. For this reason, it is recommended that wide written consultations are scrutinised by subject-specific experts and the Animal Welfare Committee before finalisation. If there is difficulty finding subject experts on the standards, the [OIE Collaborating Centres](#) may be able to provide support and identify regional experts to assist.

It may be necessary to organise face-to-face meetings where contentious issues arise. Also, where documents relate to more than one department, an inter-departmental meeting may be necessary.

5. To prepare comments for the Delegate on each of the relevant meeting reports reflecting the scientific view and position of the individual OIE Member and/or the region, including comments on the proposals for new or revised OIE standards related to animal welfare.

This follows on from point 4 above. The AW Focal Point will need to brief the country's Delegate based on the advice given. This includes the provision of full comments on every draft [OIE AW standard](#) and any subsequent revisions.

# Key Issues Where APOs Can Take Action

## National Implementation of AW Standards and Strategies

The biggest challenge in any member country will be implementing the AW standards and RAWs once these have been agreed. The best way to start this process is by collaboratively developing a National AW Strategy (NAWS) to decide on the pathway

to successful implementation. Ideally this should be guided by the Regional AW Strategy (RAWS)/Platform, but adapted to take account of national priorities, challenges and opportunities. The potential for partnerships is a major opportunity for progress. The recent OIE Global Conference on AW highlighted a number of successful implementation partnerships and resources involving APOs and member countries. See, for example:

- [Partnerships and implementation: the International Coalition for Animal Welfare \(ICFAW\).](#)
- [Sector collaboration supports development and implementation of the OIE standard on the welfare of working equids.](#)
- [The Model Animal Welfare Act: Supporting Legislation to Implement the OIE Animal Welfare Standards.](#)
- [How partnering with a local NGO can lead to more sustainable and long term animal welfare in a fast growing and multicultural community in Mexico – IFAW.](#)
- [Practical guidance for monitoring and yes evaluating implementation of OIE's Stray Dog Control Standard.](#)
- [Strategic Partnerships Successfully Improving Donkey Welfare in Zimbabwe.](#)

WAN's [Best Practice resource](#) was prepared on the suggestion of the World Bank. We developed it to help with RAWS/NAWS implementation, with the format following the most used RAWS "pillars". It benefits from the input and expertise of the [International Coalition for Animal Welfare](#), which includes all leading international APOs. This should help with providing useful resources for each aspect of RAWS/NAWS implementation.

## Achieving Better Communication and Networking Between Focal Points

One way to improve effectiveness and networking for Focal Points is to look for other Focal Points who have more experience. The OIE may be able to help Focal Points or APOs identify these points of contact. Alternatively, APO networks may be able to assist.

The EU provides a great example of AW Focal Point networks. AW Focal Points in the EU have built contacts amongst themselves in order to exchange thoughts, ideas and expertise on different issues. Individual Focal Points are then able to ask questions of the group when they need help. There is a "high-level" group, which contains the Focal Points from Denmark, the Netherlands, Germany and Sweden. There are also ad-hoc contacts between Focal Points – for example, in cases where there is a problem with a live animal import consignment from another European country. Other regions, such as the Asia, Far East and Oceania (AFEO) are working towards an improved network for Focal Points that partners new Focal Points with experienced ones.



## Assistance for Developing Country Focal Points

On the other hand, we have heard that AW Focal Points from developing countries can have real challenges in fulfilling their role and mandate, especially in countries where AW is not yet considered a political priority (and often not a “funded mandate”). This is where there is even more of a need for partnerships and support. Some of the tips above may help, but we also suggest that more could be done institutionally to help these isolated Focal Points, for example:

- A “twinning” or “buddy” system with an experienced AW Focal Point with well-developed AW experience.
- Support from a RAWS/NAWS implementation partnership team, led by the OIE or development partners, and including experienced APOs.
- Coordinated support from OIE headquarters – for example, electronically (this could even be through support forums).

# Taking the Plunge

Engaging OIE Delegates and AW Focal Points on a country level is integral to ensuring that animal welfare standards and Regional and National Animal Welfare Strategies are implemented. We hope this briefing helps your organization begin taking steps towards this engagement, and are happy to provide advice as you begin this process.

Should you have any questions about OIE procedures, structures or operations as you begin, please feel free to contact us at [info@worldanimal.net](mailto:info@worldanimal.net).