



SPCA 2026 Policy Recommendations

Protecting animals in line with the values of New Zealanders

Top ten actions for the next Government

Legislation:

-  Strengthen laws to reduce dog attacks and address roaming dogs P.04
-  Phase out the use of cages in farming, including farrowing crates P.05
-  Protect the ban on the export of farmed animals by sea P.06
-  Address the overpopulation of cats P.07
-  End greyhound racing and support greyhound rehoming efforts P.08
-  Ban the private sale, use and import of fireworks P.09
-  Reform the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee P.10

Funding:

-  Provide funding for desexing programmes for cats and dogs P.11
-  Provide funding for national animal welfare education in all schools P.11
-  Increase funding for enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act P.11

Why this matters

Animal welfare consistently commands strong public support across political, regional, and demographic lines in New Zealand. For elected leaders, it represents a rare area of enduring consensus: that animals deserve protection from unreasonable and unnecessary harm, and that government has a role in setting and enforcing those standards.



About **two thirds of households** in New Zealand share their home with at least one companion animal



14,381 animal cruelty complaints received by SPCA in 2024-25, increasing year on year



95% of New Zealanders agree that **farmed animal welfare is important** to them



Food and fibre **exports of \$62 billion per year** in the context of anticipated **increasing global demand for ethical production**



SPCA has desexed an average of **26,716 cats** and **4,830 dogs** each year since 2022



1,500 greyhounds requiring new homes due to the ban on racing in 2026



Every **\$1 invested in SPCA** creates **\$10.50** in social value, and SPCA brings approximately \$1 billion in environmental, economic and social benefit to the country



7,325 volunteers and fosterers support SPCA's work across regional op shops and centres



SPCA reaches a **newsletter database of over 165,000** people and a social media audience of more than **half a million followers** across 19 regional pages and multiple platforms



1,374 schools using the SPCA Teachers' Portal



95 million farmed animals benefiting from our animal welfare certification, SPCA Certified



Strengthen laws to reduce dog attacks and address roaming dogs

Review the Dog Control Act

The Dog Control Act 1996 is 30 years old and overdue for reform to reflect current evidence and best practice in reducing dog bite incidents and nuisance behaviour. Two 2025 petitions are before Select Committee calling for this outdated legislation to be updated.

Reforms need to include ending the classification of dogs as ‘menacing’ by breed or type by repealing sections 33C, 78A and Schedule 4 from the Dog Control Act. Decades of research has shown that breed specific legislation is not an effective means of reducing dog bites and is associated with welfare harms. Many countries have now repealed breed specific legislation.

In addition, mandatory breeder licensing to address poor breeding practices, national guidance for councils following dog bite incidents, improvements to data collection for dog bite incidents, and reform of destruction orders (to allow greater judicial discretion under section 57) must be considered.

Update the Code of Welfare: Dogs

Codes of welfare are issued under the Animal Welfare Act. New Zealand’s current Code of Welfare: Dogs is more than 15 years out of date and does not reflect modern science, best practice or community expectations - making it harder to protect dogs and enforce the Animal Welfare Act. SPCA, working with vets, animal management experts and sector partners, drafted and consulted an updated Code and handed it to the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, but the current Minister ordered a halt to this work. The next Government should prioritise finalising and issuing the updated code to give inspectors effective tools, ensure clearer standards of care, and better safeguard dogs across New Zealand.

Introduce regulations under the Animal Welfare Act for dog breeders

Irresponsible breeding of dogs is an animal welfare issue in New Zealand. Welfare challenges are significant and increasing. These include issues like uncontrolled breeding, inappropriate confinement, genetic disorders, roaming dogs, and hoarding situations. There have been multiple parliamentary petitions signed by thousands of New Zealanders calling for action to address unregulated breeding and the impacts of over population and roaming dogs. Regulation of dog breeding would ensure adherence to animal welfare standards and allow animal welfare inspectors to intervene earlier.





Phase out the use of cages in farming, including farrowing crates

Repeal the Animal Welfare (Regulations for Management of Pigs) Amendment Act 2025

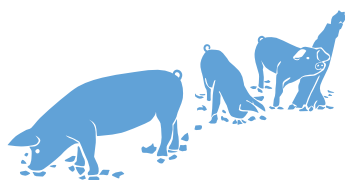
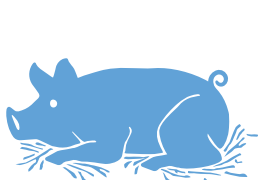
In 2025, the Government rushed through the Animal Welfare (Regulations for Management of Pigs) Amendment Act, overturning the planned phase-out of farrowing crates - cages that prevent mother pigs from turning around or expressing normal behaviour, like nest building. This amendment locks in a harmful confinement system despite a previous High Court judgement, clear scientific evidence and overwhelming public opposition. A new phase-out towards free farrowing practices must be negotiated, and if necessary, the government should provide support to ensure that farmers can meet or exceed phase-out dates.

Introduce regulations to phase out the use of colony cages for hens

Colony cages confine hens in barren environments that severely restrict normal behaviours such as perching, nesting and dust-bathing. While conventional battery cages have been banned, colony cages continue to permit lifelong confinement for millions of hens and fall short of public expectations for humane treatment. It's time for a clear, time-bound phase-out of colony cages.

Support the Animal Products (Closing the Welfare Gap) Amendment Bill

Phasing out some of the most inhumane farming practices, yet still allowing the import of products made using systems that would be illegal here, would undermine animal welfare standards, disadvantage local producers, and weaken New Zealand's reputation for high-quality, ethical food. Legislation has already been drafted to close this loophole by requiring imported animal products to meet equivalent welfare standards. Aligning imports with domestic rules would support New Zealand farmers, protect our trade reputation, and uphold animal welfare – and the evidence suggests it wouldn't materially increase cost-of-living pressures.

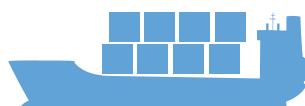
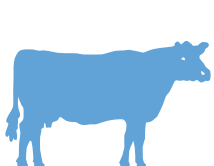




Protect the ban on the export of farmed animals by sea

Do not repeal the Animal Welfare Amendment Act 2022, or enter into coalition agreements to resume the export of farmed animals by sea

Surveys commissioned by SPCA show only 17 % of New Zealanders support resuming live export, and just 12 % trust the industry - even among farmers, most back the ban. With 57,000 signatures, the petition to protect the ban was one of the largest before Parliament this term. Animal welfare standards cannot make live export humane - long voyages by sea inevitably expose animals to heat stress, lameness, disease, and other serious welfare harms. Successive reviews, including the 2019 MPI review and the 2020 Heron Review, confirmed that animal welfare risks are systemic and can't be adequately managed. In addition, the industry is already in terminal decline globally; the value of the trade is negligible compared to the value of New Zealand's wider animal product exports put at risk by the potential damage to our reputation.





Address the overpopulation of cats

Progress the Domestic Cat Microchipping Bill

New Zealand needs national cat legislation that provides for comprehensive, consistent, effective and humane management of all cats and supports a national approach to protecting cats, wildlife, farmed animals, and communities. The Domestic Cat Microchipping Bill awaits enough support from Members of Parliament or be selected from the biscuit tin to progress through Parliament. The Bill requires companion cats to be microchipped and registered, which is an important first step for humane cat management. SPCA supports mandatory microchipping and registration because this helps ensure companion cats make it home to their families should they become lost or stolen or injured. To further advance humane cat management, SPCA advocates for the Bill to require that cats are desexed by 4 months of age with reasonable exemptions for breeding animals or for health concerns.

Update the Code of Welfare: Companion Cats

The Code of Welfare: Companion Cats has not been substantively updated for nearly two decades, leaving minimum standards lagging behind current good practice and scientific evidence. SPCA completed consultation and passed a draft updated code to the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee in 2023, ready to progress; yet work has been paused, and cats remain without protections that match contemporary understanding of their needs. The next Government should urgently advance the updated cat code to ensure that minimum standards keep pace with both animal welfare science and community expectations.

Ensure Predator Free 2050 includes investment into humane and effective cat management

Feral cats have been included in the Predator Free 2050 Strategy as of 2025. SPCA views this as an opportunity to increase funding and resources for managing feral cats more humanely and preventing their populations from reestablishing. For example, uncontrolled breeding of companion and stray cats can be an ongoing source of feral cat populations in the future, which undermines the goals of reducing or eradicating feral cats. Therefore, efforts to control feral cats need to also promote desexing and microchipping of companion and stray cats to help reduce future contributions to feral cat populations.





End greyhound racing and support greyhound rehoming efforts

Continue the implementation of the Racing Industry (Closure of Greyhound Racing Industry) Amendment Bill

The greyhound racing industry in New Zealand has a demonstrated history of being unwilling or unable to adequately address significant animal welfare concerns. A survey commissioned by SPCA found that 75 % of New Zealanders would vote to ban greyhound racing in a referendum – this is an activity which has lost its social license, and it must be wound down as soon as possible to provide certainty to participants and rehoming agencies.

SPCA strongly supports the Racing Industry (Closure of Greyhound Racing Industry) Amendment Bill and the legislative closure of commercial greyhound racing in New Zealand. SPCA supports the draft Bill's three-stage framework, the establishment of the Greyhound Racing Transition Agency, and the fixed end date of greyhound racing by 1 August 2026, which provides certainty while allowing time for a managed transition that prioritises greyhound welfare. Our organisation stands ready to provide support to the established rehoming agencies to ensure all remaining greyhounds are successfully rehomed as soon as possible after the closure of the industry.





Ban the private sale, use and import of fireworks

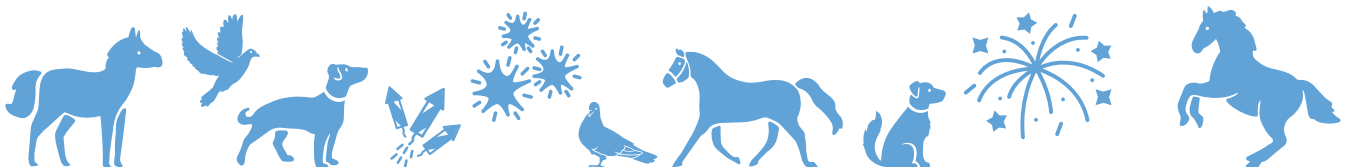
Progress the Fireworks Prohibition Legislation Bill

Firework noise has a serious negative impact on the welfare of many animals (including companion animals, wildlife, and farmed animals), causing significant fear and distress. The timing of Guy Fawkes sales (2–5 November) coincides directly with nesting for many New Zealand native bird species; in addition there were 106 firework-related fires in 2023 (a 58 % increase on 2022).

Public support for a ban on the private sale and use of fireworks is strong and consistent. A combined 95,354 people signed three separate petitions currently before Select Committee. 63% of New Zealanders support a ban on the private sale and use of fireworks. The Fireworks Prohibition Legislation Bill is in the biscuit tin and needs support from Members of Parliament to continue.

Despite assurances from a Select Committee report in 2021 that sales would continue to decline, imports of fireworks rose 52 % in 2023, alongside sharp increases in fires and police call-outs. The status quo is not sustainable. Internationally, New Zealand is an outlier. Most Australian states, Ireland, and many parts of the USA have far stricter controls or outright bans on private fireworks.

SPCA supports controlled, licensed, and notified public displays as a safe alternative, alongside modern options such as laser or drone shows. These enable cultural and community celebrations without compromising animal welfare.





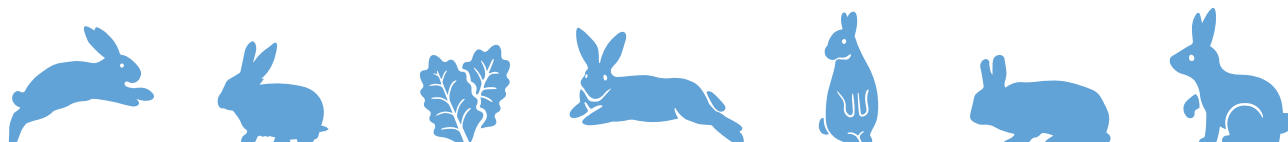
Reform the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee

Review the role, independence and support of the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee

The Ministry for Primary Industries both pursues export opportunities and sector productivity while overseeing animal welfare, creating an inherent risk of conflict and an increasingly visible risk - real or perceived - of regulatory capture. The National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, which is meant to provide independent advice to Ministers, remains embedded within MPI and reliant on it for resourcing, advice and administrative support, meaning it lacks the independence required to operate effectively. NAWAC must be reformed to be genuinely independent from MPI, with its own budget and staffing, to meet public expectations and maintain New Zealand's reputation.

Review the relevance and effectiveness of codes of welfare

Codes of welfare are issued under the Animal Welfare Act to provide guidance, minimum standards, and recommendations for best practice for people in charge of animals. Many codes of welfare are out of date with current science and best practice, even though the government promotes codes as being "flexible enough to be modified and improved as community expectations, good practice, scientific knowledge and technical advances allow". Progress on updating codes has slowed dramatically, contributing to regulatory gaps, legal challenges, and uncertainty for inspectors, industry and the public. In particular, the apparent inability of the Ministry for Primary Industries to progress any code of welfare relating to companion animals - including the long-overdue and straightforward code of welfare for rabbits - warrants attention.





Funding for desexing, education and enforcement programmes

Provide funding for desexing programmes for cats and dogs

Desexing reduces unwanted litters, improves animal welfare, and delivers wider benefits for community safety and the environment. In New Zealand, community desexing programmes are currently funded almost entirely by charitable donations with some support from local councils, despite their clear public benefit. These programmes must be scaled up to effectively address roaming dogs, dog attacks, and biodiversity impacts. Comparable jurisdictions, including New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia, fund desexing as a cost-of-living and public safety measure. New Zealand has done this before - in 2017, the Government approved \$850,000 to support desexing through local authorities - and this type of intervention is needed again.

Provide funding for national animal welfare education in all schools

Animal welfare education teaches our future change makers an ethical perspective, connection, and a personal sense of responsibility coupled with a compassionate and caring attitude towards other animals and the environment. SPCA's Education programme, including a children's dog safety programme, is aligned with the New Zealand Curriculum, already delivers proven resources in schools, and is ready to be scaled up nationally with government support.

Increase funding for enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act

Animals generate tens of billions of dollars in value for New Zealand each year, yet government investment in animal welfare enforcement, education and policy remains limited. SPCA's Inspectorate relies primarily on charitable donations to carry out frontline enforcement work that is fundamentally a public good. Enforcement is also a 'bottom of the cliff' response, acting only after harm has occurred: increased government funding would strengthen enforcement and allow charitable donations to be redirected toward earlier, preventative community interventions that stop harm before it happens.

