China declares the importance of animal welfare in livestock farming, but the donkey skin trade is having a devastating social impact in developing countries.

The International Cooperation Committee of Animal Welfare (ICCAW) convened a World Conference on Farm Animal Welfare in the beautiful city of Huang Zhou, China, on 12, 13 October 2017. The Conference was supported by the Chinese Government, United Nations’ Food and Agriculture Organisation, RSPCA UK, Compassion in World Farming and a strong contingent of commercial organisations.
Mr Yu Kangzhen, Vice Minister of Agriculture, opened the Conference that was also the Fifth China Animal Welfare Forum on Quality and Safety of Meat and Poultry products.

The Minister said that the continuous improvement of human civilization was reflected in an increasing concern for life, resources and environment, and the growing importance attached to the harmonious development between humankind and nature. Over the past two centuries, human beings have gradually reached a consensus about promoting animal welfare. This is largely due to new stages of economic and social development, whereby more attention is paid to humane concerns, striving for green development and emphasis on food safety.

Promoting animal welfare has become not only an important choice for the green development of agriculture and a significant measure to ensure food safety and healthy consumption, but even more so an important embodiment of humane caring in modern society.

He stressed that it should not surpass a country’s current stage of economic and social development. Animal welfare does not mean opposing the use of animals, but rather using animals more scientifically, more safely and more humanely, thus bringing better benefits for human development.

He indicated the change from the 19th Century approach to prevent hunger and cruelty to animals to also promote treating animals with kindness in the 20th Century. In the 1970s, attention turned to the importance of freedom from pain and suffering. In the 21st Century, an animal’s psychological health and free expression of its natural behaviour have been gradually included as components of animal welfare.

He cautioned that a single standard or model should not be used to evaluate animal welfare conditions in different nations, countries and regions. More importantly, animal welfare cannot be elevated to an unconditional or unprincipled status that is above the welfare of humans, beyond the prevailing socio-economic stages, without regard for the realities of resource availability, cultural environment or other factors.

The Minister said that China was committed to the development of green agriculture. At the heart of this, was the improvement of both animal health and the quality and safety of livestock products. Systematic arrangements and considerations for animal welfare promotion had been developed and the concept of animal welfare had been fully reflected and implemented in production development and related policies and laws.

He said that it was a core task for all the stakeholders in the Chinese animal husbandry industry to promote animal welfare with an overarching plan in the process of China’s economic and social development. China is one of the world’s major developing countries and likewise has a major responsibility in the world’s peaceful development. We will align with the objective requirements of economic and social development and vigorously promote work on animal welfare.
He saw that China needed to accelerate work on technical standards, legislation and regulations and highlight farm animal welfare as an approach to promote the green and sustainable development of the farming industry. He also committed to enhancing international communication and cooperation.

Much of the leadership in animal welfare is being driven by Madame Xi Chunling, President, International Cooperation Committee of Animal Welfare and her team [http://www.iccaw.org.cn/plus/list.php?tid=71](http://www.iccaw.org.cn/plus/list.php?tid=71). The Minister and ICCAW realise that while the livestock companies are publicly committing and improving animal welfare, there is much work to be done to improve the transport and slaughter sector.

On a different matter, commercial companies in Shandong in the Chinese Medicine industry are creating havoc in Africa and other countries because of the greatly increased demand for donkey skins. The China donkey population has been reduced from about 11 million to an estimated 3.5 to 4 million. Donkeys are being killed in their thousands for their skins to extract a compound called Ejiao. This is used in beauty and health products and to increase sexual performance.
The social impact of losing donkeys in villages and communities is particularly being felt by women who use the donkeys as working animals. This has resulted in 13 countries now banning the export of donkeys and skins but the wildlife poachers are being used to smuggle products in a lucrative black market. Women who have donkeys stolen are now unable to replace them as the price of donkeys has trebled in many countries.
Report from Professor Peter Thornber, Director, Peter Thornber & Associates, Veterinary Director, International Animal Welfare Consultants, New Zealand

The Donkey Sanctuary is leading global efforts to highlight this problem in a report called ‘Under the skin’ available at https://www.thedonkeysanctuary.org.uk/under-the-skin/full-report

Ironically, other Chinese companies are breeding up the Shandong Black Donkey in large feedlots with up to 10,000 breeding mares and stallions in a single farm. Animals are purchased from small holders for approximately $AUD2000. Apparently, seventy percent of the value of the animal will be derived from meat which is a sought after produce and available in donkey meat restaurants. Thirty percent of the income will be for the skin. These companies want to work with The Donkey Sanctuary and World Horse Welfare to develop animal welfare standards for farmed donkeys and horses.

Other companies carry out transport and slaughter of donkeys and there are no standards or regulation.
Other Regional Activities

ASEAN Poultry Welfare Standards 2016

These ‘animal welfare’ standards include management considerations that lend themselves to being adapted for laws/regulations, Industry Quality Assurance and Audit and use for applying the ISO Technical Specification on Animal Welfare to demonstrate compliance with OIE Welfare Standards.

33rd World Veterinary Conference, Incheon, South Korea – 27 to 31 August 2017
A number of side meetings were held at Incheon, including a meeting of the Federation of Asian Veterinary Associations on 25 August. A Global Seminar on Animal Welfare was held on 29 August with a broad range of topics from dog meat farms to One Welfare [http://wvc2017korea.com/02_sci/download/All/16.All_GSAW.pdf](http://wvc2017korea.com/02_sci/download/All/16.All_GSAW.pdf)

South Korean Symposium on “OIE Animal Standard and One Welfare”
Seoul, 15 November 2017
The Animal and Plant Quarantine Agency (APQA) (MAFRA (Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs), Korea will host a symposium on “OIE Animal Standards and One Welfare” on 15 November 2017.

The object of the symposium is to introduce and discuss international animal welfare standards and One Welfare with animal welfare experts from various fields.

Development of a Toolbox of Resources to implement the OIE Welfare Standards for Working Equids
Professor Peter Thornber is leading a working group of experts from the International Coalition on Working Equids (The Brooke, The Donkey Sanctuary, World Horse Welfare and SPANA) to develop a toolbox of resources to assist implementing the OIE Welfare Standards on Working Equids. The approach has been to extract the issues within each of the OIE Standards/Articles and define ‘management considerations’ that lend themselves to regulation, education, training and inspection and audit.

Many resources already exist within the four ICWE partners and development of a toolbox will identify videos, manuals, etc that can be made publicly available through the four ICWE organisation websites. Stage I is expected to be completed by the end of 2017. The stocktake of existing materials will assist the identification of gaps and potential investment in new material and resources.
Report from Professor Peter Thornber, Director, Peter Thornber & Associates, Veterinary Director, International Animal Welfare Consultants, New Zealand