



Animal Welfare  
Institute



# ABOUT AWI

advocating for animals

[AWIONLINE.ORG](http://AWIONLINE.ORG)



## THE ANIMAL WELFARE INSTITUTE'S AIMS

Since 1951, the Animal Welfare Institute (AWI), a nonprofit charitable organization, has been alleviating the suffering inflicted on animals by humans. Through engagement with policymakers, scientists, industry representatives, consumers, teachers, animal care technicians, veterinarians, and others, AWI seeks to:

*Abolish factory farms, support high-welfare family farms, and eliminate inhumane practices in the slaughtering of animals raised for food;*

*Improve the housing and handling of animals in research, and encourage the development and implementation of alternatives to experimentation on live animals;*

*End the use of steel-jaw leghold traps and reform other brutal methods of capturing and killing wildlife;*

*Preserve species threatened with extinction, and protect wildlife from harmful exploitation and destruction of critical habitat;*

*Protect companion animals from cruelty and violence, including appalling conditions in commercial trade; and*

*Prevent injury and death of animals caused by harsh transport conditions.*

# FARM ANIMALS

Half a century ago, family farms were prevalent. Animals grazed on pasture, breathing fresh air and feeling sunshine on their backs. In contrast, the rearing of farm animals today is dominated by industrialized facilities that maximize profits by treating animals not as sentient creatures, but as production units. Laying hens have part of their beaks cut off and are packed together so tightly in wire cages they cannot spread their wings. Chickens raised for meat are housed by the tens of thousands in massive, darkened, windowless sheds. Cattle are warehoused in cramped, filthy feedlots and are fed unhealthy and unnatural grain instead of grass. Pregnant

pigs are confined to crates so narrow they cannot turn around. During transport and slaughter, these animals endure additional brutal handling, fear, distress, and pain.

AWI seeks to replace these cruel practices with compassionate husbandry and humane transport and slaughter methods. We advocate for stronger voluntary and legal standards for farm animal treatment and for better enforcement of current laws and regulations. AWI also monitors the use of animal welfare claims on food products, and works to ensure that individuals who choose to consume animal products can purchase them from farmers who provide their animals the opportunity to express natural behaviors. To give all farm animals the opportunity to experience a life worth living, AWI encourages the public to eat less meat, dairy, and eggs.





## WILDLIFE

Wildlife face many human threats, from habitat encroachment to cruel trapping, harassment, incidental poisoning, and culling. AWI works to safeguard wild animals and their habitats, and minimize or eliminate the impacts of detrimental human activities. We advocate for increased funding for and better enforcement of wildlife protection laws, as well as humane solutions to human-wildlife conflicts.

AWI campaigns to protect the right of wild horses in America to roam free rather than endure brutal Bureau of Land Management roundups and confinement to holding facilities. AWI also seeks to end the use of the non-selective and highly destructive steel-jaw leghold trap, which—despite having been banned in over 80 countries around the globe, including the entire European Union—is still the most common type of trap used to catch millions of furbearing animals each year in the United States. Through its Christine Stevens Wildlife Awards, AWI provides grants to support innovative and creative research on humane, nonlethal tools and techniques for wildlife management and research.

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN WILDLIFE

Each year, millions of creatures are killed to satisfy the worldwide demand for their body parts or are captured live for the pet trade, the entertainment industry, or to be sadistically “farmed” to extract substances from their living bodies. Elephant populations in Africa have been devastated by the global ivory trade. Tiger bone, rhino horn, and bear gall bladders and bile are used in folk medicines and cosmetics. Reptile skins are used to create expensive purses, shoes, and belts. An array of animals, including highly endangered primates such as bonobos and chimpanzees, are killed as “bushmeat” for human consumption.

AWI works to prevent commercial exploitation of threatened and endangered species by clamping down on poachers and illegal animal dealers, and to reduce harm to all animals who are traded—whether legally or illegally. We participate in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and other multilateral agreements, and fight to maintain strict implementation of the US Endangered Species Act, one of the strongest laws on the planet for protecting imperiled animals.



# MARINE LIFE

When AWI launched the Save the Whales campaign in 1971, our primary goal was to stop the annual killing of tens of thousands of whales by whaling nations. Thanks in part to the efforts of AWI, the International Whaling Commission (IWC) instituted a moratorium on commercial whaling that came into force in 1986. Nevertheless, the world's whales are still under immediate threat. AWI works through the IWC and other channels to close loopholes that allow for continued commercial slaughter of whales. AWI champions the cause of smaller cetaceans, as well, exposing the cruelty behind drive hunts and leading efforts to ban the keeping of cetaceans in captivity for entertainment purposes. In 2016, under pressure from AWI and others, SeaWorld announced that it is phasing out its use of captive orcas by ending its orca breeding program.

Marine animals from cetaceans to sea turtles face mounting anthropogenic threats. These include bioaccumulation of toxic chemicals, increased ship traffic, ocean noise, climate change, depletion of prey species, and destructive and wasteful fishing practices—such as the barbaric practice of shark finning, which has pushed many shark species to the brink. AWI is committed to protecting all marine species and their habitats by educating people, working to influence public policies, and campaigning vigorously for measures to safeguard ocean ecosystems.



# COMPANION ANIMALS

Sadly, companion animals, like people, sometimes are subject to terrible domestic abuse. Our “Animals and Family Violence” program creates resources to aid professionals in the field in their efforts to help human victims and their companion animals seek shelter. Dogs, cats, and other animals also suffer in horrible commercial breeding facilities such as “puppy mills”—where they may spend their entire lives confined in small, barren wire cages. AWI works directly with law enforcement agencies to stiffen legal sanctions against and strengthen prosecution of animal abuse, at home and in commerce.

Companion horses may fall victim to another form of cruelty: being hauled to slaughter. Though horse slaughter on US soil came to an end in 2007, tens of thousands of these animals are transported each year—often under grueling conditions—to inhumane slaughterhouses over the border in Canada and Mexico. Former owners who had hoped to give their horses a better home are sometimes duped by unscrupulous “killer buyers,” who hide their true intentions as they collect horses to sell for meat. AWI seeks to establish a permanent ban on the slaughter of American horses both in the United States and abroad.





## ANIMALS IN LABORATORIES

From the earliest days of the organization, AWI has worked to foster better care and handling of animals in research facilities by encouraging laboratory personnel to provide comfortable housing with other animals, veterinary treatment that includes appropriate pain relief, and the opportunity to engage in species-typical behaviors—while sparing them needless suffering.

AWI strongly supports Russell and Burch's "3 Rs": replacement of animals in research with alternatives; reduction in the number of animals used in experiments; and refinement of the care and treatment of the animals who continue to be used in research, testing, and education. AWI is a strong proponent of teaching animals to cooperate during routine procedures rather than

using stress-inducing removal from the home cage and forced restraint. AWI also provides funding to laboratory personnel to undertake studies focused on improving the housing and handling of animals in research.

Strict enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act, the major federal statute on the protection of animals in research, is one of AWI's primary goals. Our relentless advocacy made the law's enactment possible in 1966, and helped strengthen and broaden subsequent amendments. AWI remains committed to extending legal protection to all animals in research, including rats, mice, and birds. AWI also seeks to end the sale of dogs and cats by random source ("Class B") dealers to research facilities, as many such animals are acquired illegally and kept in squalid conditions.



## LEGISLATIVE & LEGAL ACTION

AWI's legislative program is unsurpassed in obtaining precedent-setting laws to benefit animals. We have helped win passage of the most significant animal protection laws in the country, including the Animal Welfare Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Humane Slaughter Act, the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and more than a dozen others. We continue to defend existing animal protection laws, oppose bills that threaten animals, and work for new protective measures—following through after such measures are enacted to ensure sound regulation and sufficient funds for enforcement.

### COMPASSION INDEX

AWI also created the online Compassion Index to rate the commitment of members of Congress to animal welfare legislation, and provide citizens an easy way to contact their legislators on these issues.

## ANIMAL WELFARE PUBLICATIONS

The highly informative *AWI Quarterly* magazine is sent to our members and others, including deans of medical and veterinary schools, public libraries, humane societies, law enforcement officers, members of Congress, veterinarians, teachers, and scientists.

AWI also publishes and distributes valuable materials on animal protection and conservation, including brochures (e.g., *Horse Slaughter* and *Whales and Dolphins in Captivity*), in-depth reports (e.g., *CITES and Climate Change: A Need for Integration* and *The Welfare of Birds at Slaughter in the United States*), and books (e.g., *Comfortable Quarters for Laboratory Animals* and *Pablo Puppy's Search for the Perfect Person*).

Most of our materials are provided free to those who can put them directly to use helping animals, and at cost for all others. For a complete list of available publications, please see our *Animal Welfare Publications* booklet.

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## THE ALBERT SCHWEITZER MEDAL

In 1951, AWI struck a medal in honor of Dr. Albert Schweitzer, to be presented for outstanding achievement in the advancement of animal welfare. In granting AWI permission to use his name, Dr. Schweitzer wrote, "I would never have believed that my philosophy, which incorporates in our ethics a compassionate attitude toward all creatures, would be noticed and recognized in my lifetime."

Medalists have ranged from well-known public figures such as Rachel Carson, Jane Goodall, Hubert Humphrey, and Robert Dole, to ordinary citizens such as Greg Fett, a tire shop manager who twice interceded to protect beleaguered horses being hauled to slaughter.

## MEMBERSHIP

We need your help to continue our battle to protect animals from pain and suffering. Please join us by making a membership donation. AWI member benefits include a subscription to the *AWI Quarterly* magazine and the opportunity to receive free AWI books as they are published. In addition, we will keep you informed of our progress through special mailings and an annual report. Members are invited to the Albert Schweitzer Medal presentation and reception in honor of its recipient. We use your tax-deductible contribution in direct defense of animals, with minimal overhead. AWI has consistently received top ratings from charity watchdogs in recognition of our wise allocation of funds.

## CONTACT US

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I am interested in writing letters to members of Congress and other elected officials. Please add me to the action alert list.

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