

BVA policy position on the use of animals in performance sport – Executive summary

BVA's view

[BVA's position on animal welfare](#) states that, wherever animals are used for human benefit, including for food, clothing, entertainment, sport, scientific research, education, transportation and companionship, this should be exercised responsibly, with compassion for the animals concerned and due regard for animal welfare, including decisions on breeding and selection. Animals in performance sports should be supported to have at least 'lives worth living' and preferably 'good lives'.

BVA's view is that all sports involving animals should actively promote positive experiences and minimise negative ones, to maximise each animal's opportunities for a good life. Some sports have made significant investment into providing animals involved with a good life, or at least a life worth living, while others have further to go in meeting these standards consistently.

This principle applies not only during an animals' moments of visibility in competition, but throughout their entire lives, from breeding and training to retirement and end-of-life. Safeguarding welfare requires a lifetime approach, and where challenges are identified, the veterinary profession has a key role in supporting and educating to ensure that welfare remains high priority at all levels of performance sport.

Key recommendations

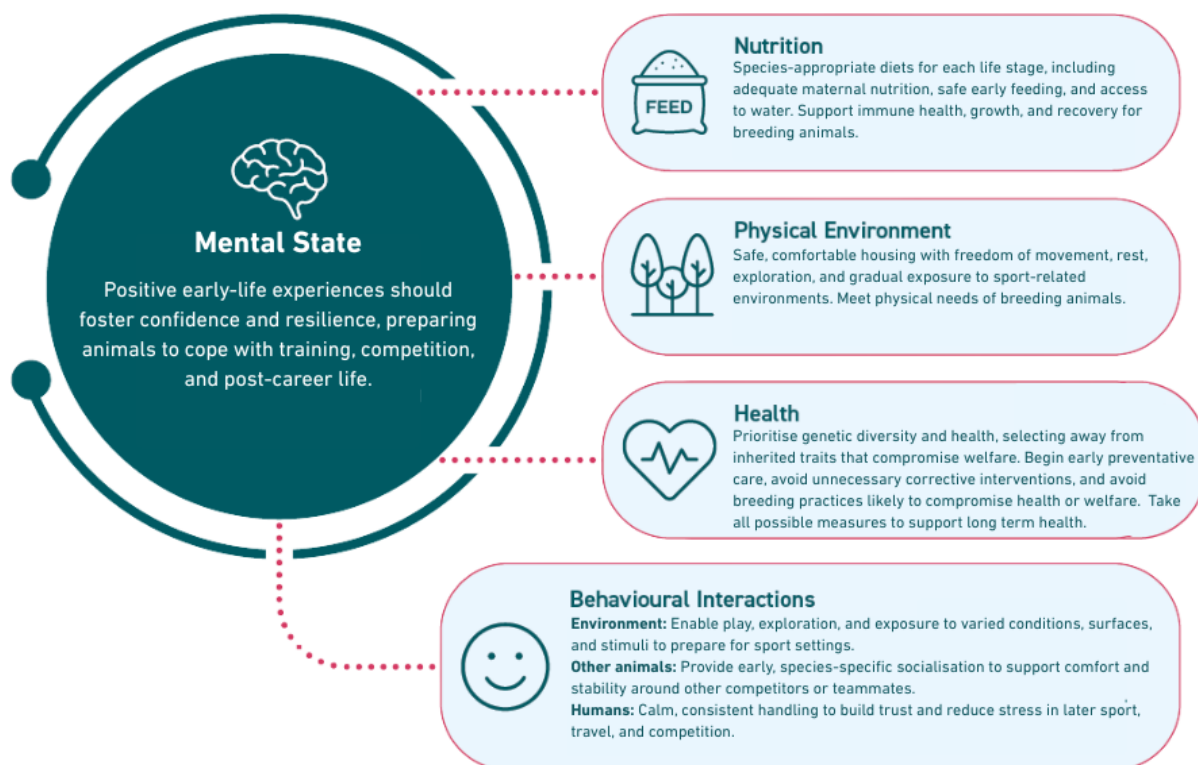
- All stakeholders involved in performance sports should formally recognise and share a collective, lifelong duty of care for every animal bred for sport, regardless of whether they compete.
- Long-term health and welfare should always be prioritised over performance goals, including in decisions on breeding and early life management, training, and competition.
- Training and competition should maximise positive experiences, minimising negative experiences and avoiding punishment or practices that cause fear, pain, or confusion.
- Planning for life after sport should begin at breeding, ensuring appropriate care, rehoming, or retirement.
- Animals leaving sport should be supported with individualised transitions reflective of their needs. Euthanasia may be appropriate if welfare cannot be ensured.
- A unified, digital, legally enforced, lifetime traceability system should be established.
- Vets should always have empowered roles in governance and decision-making, with sports fostering a culture where welfare is consistently prioritised.
- Vets should have access to essential traceability, medical, and performance histories for animals under their care.
- Governing bodies should set and enforce transparent, evidence-based welfare standards, with voluntary codes where no formal body exists.

Refer to the [BVA policy position on the use of animals in performance sport](#) for the full recommendations and background information.

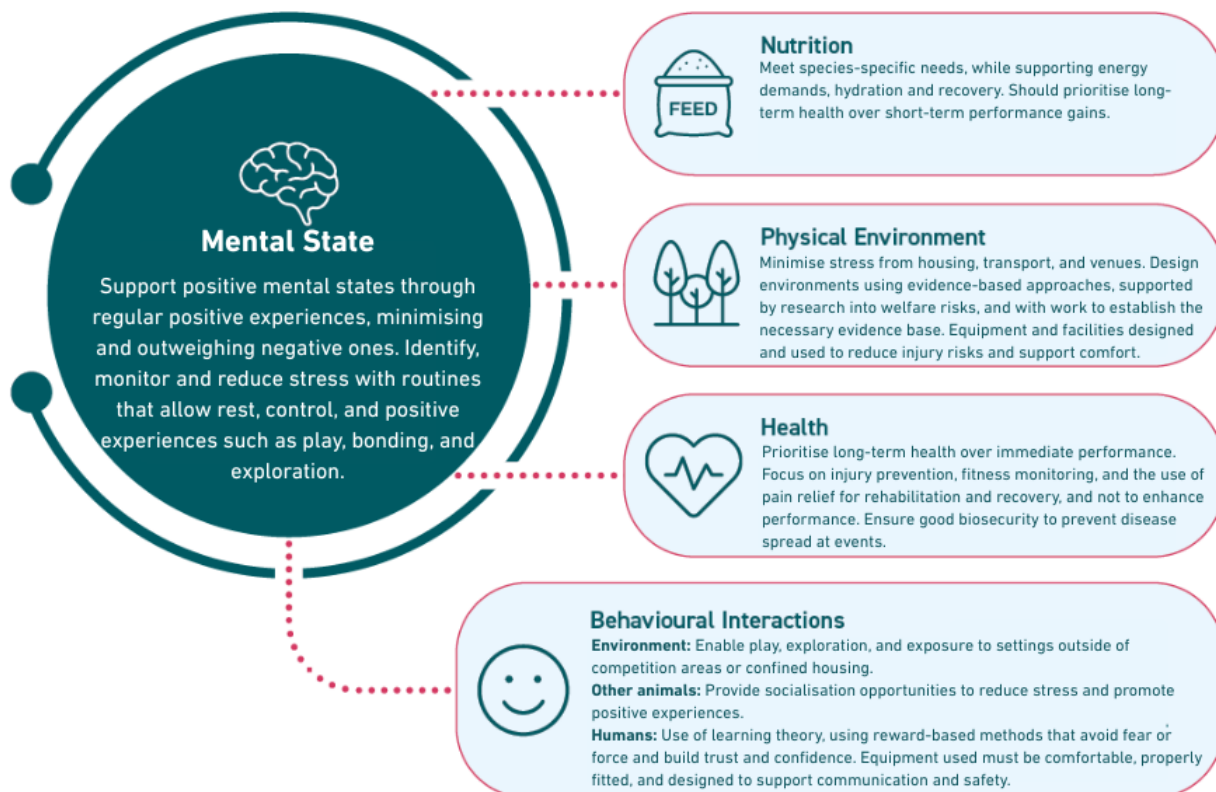
Welfare principles across life stages

The [BVA policy position on the use of animals in performance sport](#) sets out what should be considered to promote positive welfare in practice, applying the Five Domains welfare model across three key life stages. These key factors are not intended as prescriptive checklists, but as benchmarks that set out the standards of welfare that sports should meet, or be demonstrably working towards, if they are to fulfil their responsibilities.

Welfare principles for breeding and early life



Welfare principles for training and competition



Welfare principles for post-career

