

*These notes refer to the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland)
2011 (c.16) which received Royal Assent on 29 March 2011*

Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

EXPLANATORY NOTES

COMMENTARY ON SECTIONS

Part 1 - Introductory

Section 1 – Animals to which this Act applies

The Act applies only to vertebrate animals, as these are currently the only demonstrably sentient animals. However, section 1(3) makes provision to extend the Act to cover invertebrates of any description in the future if the Department is satisfied on the basis of scientific evidence that these too are capable of experiencing pain or suffering.

Section 2 – Protected animals

Animals are “protected” if they are of a kind which is commonly domesticated in Northern Ireland or if they are under the control of man or not living in a wild state.

Section 3 – Responsibility for animals

While the owner is always regarded as responsible for an animal, a person who is in charge of an animal is also responsible for it. This includes a person who temporarily keeps an animal for any reason, for example, a veterinary surgeon taking responsibility for the animals kept in his surgery overnight, staff at boarding premises, and staff at animal sanctuaries.