

Beyond Property, Towards Personhood: Legal Protection of Animal Rights in Nigeria

Helen U. Agu*

Edwin C. Arum**

Abstract

Animal rights refer to the moral and legal entitlements attributed to non-human animals, often based on their cognitive, emotional, and social complexity, as well as their ability to feel physical and emotional sensations. The protection of animal rights has gained increasing recognition worldwide, reflecting a shift in societal attitudes towards animals as sentient beings deserving of ethical consideration and protection from harm. Nigeria, a country rich in biodiversity and wildlife, has also embraced the importance of safeguarding animal welfare through its legal and ethical frameworks. This paper, using doctrinal methodology, and drawing upon a comprehensive review of relevant legislation, judicial decisions, and scholarly literature, examined the complexities of animal rights jurisprudence in Nigeria, highlighting key aspects such as the legal landscape, global standards, challenges, and opportunities. The findings of this study will enhance an understanding of the nuances and complexities surrounding animal rights protection in Nigeria and propose actionable legal and policy recommendations aimed at enhancing viable legislation, enforcement mechanisms, and public awareness regarding animal rights in Nigeria. This discourse contributed to advancing the dialogue on animal welfare, conservation, and ethical treatment of animals in Nigeria in line with global best practices.

Key words: Specimen, Fauna, Animal Rights, Wildlife, Sustainable Development

1. Introduction

In recent times, the world has accorded recognition to the need to protect the rights of animals, this is an improvement from the previous perception of animals as mere properties to perceiving them as beings with feelings deserving of protection from harm. Nigeria being one of Africa's richest in biodiversity and wildlife has also utilized the instrumentality of the law to ensure the protection and welfare of animals within its region. ¹

The protection wildlife is still a growing area of law in Nigeria as the country now pays attention to the inherent value of animals and the necessity for their care and protection. In furtherance of this, Nigeria has enacted several laws and statute which cover several areas of wildlife protection which include animal brutality, control of animal diseases, and the preservation of endangered species. Very essential laws that afford these protections are the Animal Diseases (Control) Act 1988, the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1960, and the Endangered Species (Control of International Trade and Traffic) Act of 1985. The enactment of these laws signifies Nigeria's determination to conserve its wildlife species. ²

The concept of animals' rights entails those entitlements afforded animals in law due to their ability to feel, remember, and interact socially. ³ many propositions and opinions have arisen since the emergence of animal rights, all trying to determine the extent of animal rights, these propositions were motivated by diverse philosophical, legal, scientific, religious, and ethical considerations in respect of the relationship between animals and their human counterparts. The concept of animal rights emerged in the 1970s and since then, several debated have enveloped

* **Helen U. Agu** PhD, Department of International & Comparative Law, University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus, Enugu State, Nigeria. helen.agu@unn.edu.ng

** **Edwin C. Arum** PhD, Department of International and Comparative Law, University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus, Enugu State, Nigeria. edwin.arum@unn.edu.ng Phone: 08068177705.

¹ Abigail Adeyonu, Alabi Olayinka, Oghenerobor Akpor, 'Animal Rights Policy in Nigeria: The Way Forward'(2019) 14 (22) *ARPJ Journal of Engineering and Applied Science* < <https://doi.org/10.36478/jeasci.2019.8368.8372>> accessed 1 April 2024.

² Olufemi M Alabi, Sabainah O Akinoso, 'Animal Welfare and Its Science In Nigeria; Past and Present Outlook'(2020) 98 (4) *National Library of Medicine* <<https://doi.org/10.1093/jas/skaa278.578>> accessed 1 May 2024.

³ Steven M. Wise, 'Animal Rights' (Encyclopedia Britannica 24 February 2024) < <https://www.britannica.com/topic/animal-rights> > 28 April 2024.

the concept. It has been expansively argued within the sphere of applied ethics, which uses normative ethical theories to interrogate and solve practical challenges.⁴ Impressive efforts have also been made at the international terrain as several conventions, treaties, and agreements on animal protections have been agreed by many countries. Prominent among these efforts are the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), and the Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare (UDAW), the Universal Declaration on Animal Rights 1978⁵ when the efforts made by Nigeria is placed side by side with the efforts already made globally, profitable lessons could be drawn from the similarities and differences of strategies, highlighting areas for Nigeria's improvement. Although Nigeria has done noble in the enactment of laws for wildlife protection, however, the implementation of those laws has remained a big challenge. Other challenges hindering proper implementation include poor funding, lack of public enlightenment, and the necessity for capacity building within institutions⁶ solving these challenges require leveraging on international partnership with other global organizations and countries in areas of knowledge sharing, and the adoption of innovative strategies.⁷

This study provides a divergent but comprehensive understanding of the intricacies around the legal protection of animals in Nigeria. It also aims to offer all-encompassing results which include providing a detailed assessment of the existing legal and institutional framework for animal protection in Nigeria alongside their effectiveness. It also amplifies areas of improvement where needed. The study also sees to add to the ongoing discussions on animal welfare by comparatively highlighting the efforts and challenges of animal protection in Nigeria, finally, the study aims to proffer implementable policy recommendations that enhance laws and policies, enforcement mechanisms, and public enlightenment on the conservation and preservation of animal rights in Nigeria.

2. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

2.1 The Concept of Animal Rights

The concept of animal rights has evolved exponentially over several decades. The dynamic societal perceptions, advancement in science, and ethical considerations propelled this progressive evolution. The crux of animal rights is advancing ethical treatment and considering non-human animals, appreciating their intrinsic value and right to exist independent of cruelty, abuse, and wasteful exploitation. This move towards the understanding and advocacy of animal rights has crisscrossed centuries with several individuals over the years advocating and campaigning for the protection of animal life and dignity across the globe. These efforts over several years have come to shape our current conservative perception of animals and their value in the world.

Before the championing of animal rights, animals were perceived as mere properties for human use, items for recreation and entertainment, while some communities due to their cultures and religion revered them as sensitive beings deserving of honor and worship. For instance, some

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Lyle Munro, 'The Animal Rights Movement in Theory and Practice: A Review of the Sociological Literature'(2012) 6 (6) *Sociology Compass Australian University* < <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2012.00462>> accessed 28 April 2024.

⁶ Olufemi M Alabi, Sabainah O Akinoso, 'Animal welfare and its Science in Nigeria; Past and Present Outlook'(2020) 98 (4) *National Library of Medicine* < <https://doi.org/10.1093/jas/skaa278.578>> accessed 1 April 2024.

⁷ GA Taiwo, 'A Competitive Analysis of Human and Animal Well-being in Nigeria ' (2023) 67 (15) *International Journal of Science and Research Analysis* PL 23.

communities like the ancient Mmaku kingdom in Awgu Local government area of Enugu State, Nigeria revere green snakes as their matriarch hence the honor and preservation of the species from killing and undue exploitation. However, some other animals do not benefit from this fair treatment as others are regarded as items for sacrifice and die in a very horrible way mostly by wriggling their heads off their necks.

The foundational roadmap for ethical consideration of animals were laid by philosophers like Pythagoras and Aristotle who recognized the ability of animals to feel pain and propagated the need to show empathy while dealing with them.⁸

After the traditional days came the era of enlightenment. This era brought about an enhanced philosophical and scientific perception of animals which signaled a shift from the traditional perception of animals. The Enlightenment era had thinkers like Jeremy Bentham and Immanuel Kant interrogate the moral reasoning behind the domination of animals by humans by propounding theories that countered the status quo.

Bentham legendarily opined, "The question is not, Can they reason? nor, Can they talk?but, Can they suffer?" – a sopiness that would reverberate profoundly within the expanding animal rights campaign.⁹

The crusade for animal rights advanced in the 20th century as there arose a better understanding of animal cognition, emotions, and social behaviors. Advancements in scientific research also amplified the complexity of the inner lives of animals by expounding on their intelligence, communication, and empathy.

Moreover, ethologists like Jane Goodall and Dian Fossey expanded the discourse by offering extraordinary insights into the social crescendos and emotive fullness of non-human primates, also questioning the reason for human dominance.¹⁰

By the 1960s the recognition of animal rights started evolving into legal issues occasioning legislative ingenuities. This could be seen from the enactment of the Animal Welfare Act in 1966 which protected animals used in research and exhibition. Other laws that came after focused on eliminating animal cruelty, proscription of dangerous and suspicious animal testing, and protecting endangered species, etc, hence an improvement on society's perceptions and behaviors towards animals.¹¹ By the 21st century, animal rights campaigns had already progressed through public enlightenment, media campaigns, and legislative support. Some organizations are also instrumental to the exponential advancement of these campaigns against the inhumane treatment of animals in several industries both in factory farming and entertainment these organizations include PETA, the Humane Society, and Animal Equality.

Notwithstanding, the challenge of animal cruelty persisted these challenges include, ethical intricacies of animal research, industrial agricultural advancement, and the faceoff amid cultural traditions and animal welfare ideals.

⁸ Ryder Richard D, 'All beings that feel pain deserve human rights' (The Guardian, 6 August 2005) <<https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2005/aug/06/animalwelfare>> accessed 3 April 2024.

⁹ Bentham Jeremy, 'Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation' (Econlib Books, 5 February 2018) <<https://www.econlib.com/uk/2005/aug/06/animalwelfare>> accessed 3 April 2024.

¹⁰ Goodall Jane, *The Chimpanzees of Gombe: Patterns of Behaviour* (Cambridge Core 1986) 673.

¹¹ Fossey Dian, *Gorillas in the Mist* (Heriner Books 1985) 326.

The development of animal rights is evidence of man's pursuit of empathy, justice, and moral progress. This concept has exponentially evolved from ancient philosophies to modern-day crusading, the expedition has been manifested by a mounting recognition of animals as emotional beings worthy of sympathy and attention. As we circumnavigate the densities of coexistence with other species, the ideologies of animal rights serve as a roadmap guiding us toward a more principled and compassionate future.

2.2 Theoretical Foundations of Animal Rights Protection

To appreciate the intricacies of animal rights requires a comprehensive study of several philosophical viewpoints that inform ethical thoughts and moral responsibilities. From utilitarianism's stress on abating suffering to deontology's emphasis on inherent rights, several philosophical backgrounds offer diverse perceptions of the moral status of animals and the ethical quandaries regarding their treatment.

a) Utilitarianism:

Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill are the major proponents of the utilitarian concept of animal rights. According to their works, the morality of every action should be decided based on its consequences, precisely, the intensification of complete happiness or well-being. Peter Singer's has also made striking foundational contributions to utilitarian theory within the sphere of animal rights and ethics in his work "Animal Liberation" in 1975 which catalyzed the burgeoning crusade encouraging improved animal welfare across the United States and Europe.¹² The concept of utilitarianism ranks actions aiming to amplify total happiness or well-being for the utmost number of individuals, Singer's perceptions have helped propagate this concept. Notwithstanding the importance of this concept, it faces some criticisms, which include challenges associated with the contemplation of the interests of emotional beings, the ambiguity enveloping outcomes, and the inability to recognize innate rights and esteem due to all individuals, irrespective of species. Singer challenges these evaluations by encouraging the equitable addition of animal interests together with human interests. He contends that equality is not just a realistic observation but an ultimate moral principle.¹³ Singer presents the "Principle of Equal Consideration of Interests," advocating for the equitable treatment of all beings affected by ethical choices, irrespective of their species. This principle underlines the essence of allowing equal moral contemplation to the welfare of all living things with feelings especially animals in ethical deliberations, hence promoting a more comprehensive and sympathetic tactic to moral reasoning.¹⁴ The Utilitarians propound the entitlement of animals to moral consideration on the foundation of their ability to experience pain and pleasure. As noted earlier, Bentham articulated this concept of utilitarianism in the following rhetoric, "The question is not, can they reason? nor, can they talk? but, can they suffer?"¹⁵ hence, utilitarian ethics simply proffers that the ethical treatment of animals is founded in the reduction of suffering and the enhancement of optimum existence, notwithstanding the species.

b) Deontology:

Deontological ethics, as propounded by Immanuel Kant, put emphasis on moral obligations and values resulting from reason rather than consequences. Whereas Kant himself believed that

¹² Singer Peter, 'Do Animals Feel Pain?' (1991) 66 (3) *Philosophy*, 25.

¹³ Singer Peter, *Practical Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 1.

¹⁴ Regan T and Singer Peter, *Animal Rights and Human Obligations* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1989).

¹⁵ Fossey (n11).

humans have direct moral responsibilities only to fellow humans, modern deontologists like Tom Regan contend that animals have intrinsic value and rights autonomous of their usefulness to human beings. The crux of Regan's theory of animal rights, is that animals possess a life worthy of respect and attention.¹⁶ The theory of deontology simply entails that the moral requirement to treat animals with respect and dignity stems from their inherent characteristics as emotional beings with feelings notwithstanding the benefits humans get from them. Therefore, the ultimate objective of deontological animal ethic is to proscribe the usage and exploitation of nonhuman animals for medical scientific research, agriculture, fun and amusements, the fur trade, and other fields. The aim is the complete prohibition instead of "reformation" of prevailing practices or "reduced" suffering. Solid theories of animal rights agree with the proposition of Regan on anti-welfarism that "you do not change unjust institutions by tiding them up," they insist that the best and only avenue to attain justice is the total abolition of any structure that condones humans to exploit animals as properties, including the "humane" treatment of nonhuman animals (such as "humane farms" or "humane zoos"). Regan advocates that nonhuman animals should be accorded with negative rights, whereas Francione is more concerned about according to legal rights to nonhuman animals, which qualifies as a "hands off" strategy of noninterference. It is strongly believed that nonhuman animals would be best preserved when they are completely protected from harm, suffering, and death occasioned by humans via such a strategy of noninterference. The Case for Animal Rights, Tom Regan ascribed as the father of animal rights proffers a deontological case for nonhuman animals. He postulated that all subjects-of-a-life, which comprises all mammals older than one, possess innate values (well, this is at least a necessary condition for being valuable) and should be accorded some respect. Strengthening this position, he confirmed the popular notion that every person is valuable in and of themselves.

He further posed the question, "What is it about humans that makes each one of us entitled to be treated as if they have inherent worth?" It is not rationality because some people are not rational, like newborns and people with mental and reasoning disabilities. In its place, he advocated that since all people are experiencing subjects-of-a-life, there is need to treat them with intrinsic value. He maintained that ALL subjects of a life must therefore have intrinsic value. He concluded that nonhuman animals must possess inherent value since some of them are subjects of life. Regan thus typifies his theory of animal rights as a reasonable expansion of a human rights ethic: he admits that, in light of the claim that all humans are eligible for some protections, nonhuman animals that are subjects of life should also be accorded similar protections. Respect is an essential principle that guides our relationships with subjects of a life, or beings with innate values, hence, we should not treat these subjects as nothing more than receptacles, or tools for human well-being. This entails that humans should not eat animals or use them for scientific or biomedical research, nor should animals be used for entertainment, education, clothing, biotechnology, etc.

c) Virtue Ethics:

Virtue ethics emphasizes on the character of the moral agent other than specific rubrics or consequences this is idea was birthed by Aristotle and subsequently amplified and strengthened by other philosophers like Martha Nussbaum who also emphasized the character of the moral agent rather than specific rules or consequences. Nussbaum expanded the dimensions of virtue ethics to accommodate animals, highlighting the engraining and adoption of sympathetic and

¹⁶ Regan Tom, 'The Case for Animal Rights' <<https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2005/aug/06/animalwelfare>> accessed 3 April 2024.

empathetic interactions towards all sentient beings.¹⁷ The proponents of virtue ethics insist that imbibing values like empathy, compassion, and justice guarantee an ethical disposition toward animals, as moral individuals certainly treat others respectfully and with due consideration. Virtue ethics simply advocates the cultivation of moral integrity, which could be achieved by inculcating a virtue-filled character. One might rightly ask, what precisely amounts to virtue? What actions is a moral person expected to take in required circumstances? and how can this be known? Are there areas of compatibility between virtue ethics and discrimination against nonhuman animals? It would however be problematic to employ virtue ethics to defend discrimination against nonhuman animals owing to the way it perceives ethical reasoning. Any reasonable virtue ethic perceives brutality and indifference toward the pains of others as iniquities. Likewise, it would also appreciate kindness, sympathy, and compassion as virtues. Virtue ethicists contend that the typical ways in which most humans treat animals, especially through animal exploitation and brutality are serious ethical transgressions. Looking at those who treat animals with virtues like kindness and compassion, at least when it comes to companion animals.¹⁸ People who are compassionate towards animals like those who care for sick or injured animals or those who rescue animals in danger are naturally considered compassionate. For example, Virtue ethicists revere brave firefighters who put jeopardy to their lives just to rescue animals from burning buildings.¹⁹ Notwithstanding, some believe that irrespective of the positivity of virtue ethics, it could still coexist with bias and brutality towards nonhuman animals. For example, it would not be considered wrongdoing to kill cows for food, but it would be considered inhumane when they are killed for pleasure or games if one supposes that cows serve to provide for human needs. Therefore, it is prejudice, notwithstanding, to assign any sentient being's life a purpose that serves us and not theirs. It could also be argued that it is a misuse of our comparative power. It is challenging to deem such a behavior best defined as abusive or impervious as virtue.²⁰

What does it entail to be virtuous, and what is the implication of relating with nonhuman animals? In the opinion of virtue ethics, being virtuous entails actualizing one's goals as wholesome moral beings. This stretches to non-human animals. Moreover, since irresponsiveness is not considered as virtue, it could be argued that it is most virtuous to endeavor to assist animals anytime occasion calls together with avoiding harm. Therefore, people are supposed to desist from exploiting animals and at the same time promote animal advocacy and catering for the needs of animals.²¹

d) Contractarianism:

Contractarian theories which were propounded by David Gauthier and Robert Nozick suggest that moral values result from hypothetical social contracts among logical beings. Although conventional contractarianism has been anthropocentric, some academics like Christine Korsgaard have looked at the prospect of including animals in the social contract. Korsgaard contends that the moral community should include animals as they are sentient entities capable of feeling pain

¹⁷ Nussbaum, Martha, *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership* (Harvard: Belknap Press of Harvard 2006) 55

¹⁸ G A Raak Van, 'The human, the Cat, and the Burning House: The Moral Status of Animals in Virtue Ethics', Master's Thesis (2020), Utrecht: Utrecht University.

¹⁹ A MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals* (Chicago: Open Court 1999) 256.

²⁰ S Knutsson and C Munthe, 'A Virtue of Precaution Regarding the Moral Status of Animals With Uncertain Sentience' (2017) 30 *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 213.

²¹ J Donovan and CJ Adams (eds.) *Beyond animal rights: A feminist caring ethic for the treatment of animals* (London: Continuum 2000).

and pleasure.²² From a contractarian point of view, the ethical treatment of animals is based on the mutual agreement among sensible people to honour the interests of all living entities. The view is that theories of the social contract cannot help to acknowledge the whole moral value of nonhuman creatures. Rawls and Scanlon both contend that their ideas of the social contract do not cover animals. Which elements of the theory cause some people to feel that it conflicts with treating nonhuman animals with full moral regard.

Modern social contract theories, like other ethical theories, reject speciesism and the moral exclusion of nonhuman creatures. Still, Peter Carruthers shows that some speciesist attitudes are supported by an appeal to contractarianism. These points of view, however, are not required to endorse social contract theories; doing so would involve embracing an antiquated type of contractarianism, like Hobbes' which most people today find unacceptable. This implies that activities that help people, but damage animals should be disregarded. People would not accept the moral guidelines that should direct the society if they were selecting them without understanding if they would lead to conditions similar to those of the animals or else.²³ Modern ideas of the social compact should thus inspire the criticism of such speciesist behaviour. Modern contract theories can thus provide grounds for support of veganism. Furthermore, this point of view would result in a stance towards assisting animals comparable to human beings. If in a situation like that of animals in need that is, animals suffering in the wild who can be helped in many circumstances but usually are not—humans would want to be helped. Modern social contracts would lead to assistance for the above-stated purposes.

e) Environmental Ethics:

Although environmental ethics takes moral position of non-human entities inside the larger ecosystem, it is not totally focused on animal rights. Advocates of a biocentric viewpoint that acknowledges the inherent worth of all living entities including animals' philosophers like Aldo Leopold and Holmes Rolston III. They emphasise the interdependence of all living entities and the need of maintaining biodiversity. This emphasis is based on an environmental ethics perspective. Moreso, ethical treatment of animals is entwined with more general ecological issues since the integrity and health of ecosystems depend on the well-being of the animals.²⁴ Every one of these philosophical stances presents different angles on the moral position of animals and the moral issues related to their treatment. From utilitarianism's emphasis on minimising suffering to virtue ethics' focus on developing compassionate virtues, these several approaches help to provide a comprehensive knowledge of animal rights and welfare. Through interacting with various philosophical systems, we can negotiate the complexity of our moral responsibilities towards non-human creatures and endeavour towards a more moral and compassionate connection with the natural world.

2.3 Property vs. Person: Should Animals Have Legal Rights?

Law is necessary for the peaceful coexistence of people in any given society. Notwithstanding challenges facing the implementation of laws, they are still essential tools for both the preservation and change of society.²⁵ In this current dispensation, laws should not only govern the peaceful co-existence of people but must be extended to the coexistence of humans and non-human animals.

²² Korsgaard, Christine, *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* (Cambridge University Press 2012).

²³ P Vallentyne (ed.), *Contractarianism and Rational Choice*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991).

²⁴ Leopold Aldo, *A Sand County Almanac* (Oxford University Press 1946) 15.

²⁵ Raymond Wacks, *Law: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press 2008) ii-iii.

Though most animals live in the wild, many of them stay so close to have interactions with humans, hence animals should also be subject to laws.²⁶ Therefore, society would have to consider animals when laws are made so that they may be given proper respect and value in the whole scheme of things.²⁷ Consequently, there has been discussion on how far animals should be given such legal recognition. Since Man is assumed to be the most intellectual, sentient creature known on Earth, legal efforts are mostly for the defence of human rights instead of animal rights or welfare.²⁸ Man's utilization of his surroundings clearly shows this intellect; thus, it is commonly believed that his rights and comfort must come first over those of all other non-human entities. Animal rights advocates' ideas of "speciesism" and "anthropocentrism," which represent Man's attitude of domination towards other creatures, based on the knowledge of man being the superior of the species, mirror this viewpoint.²⁹ Therefore, when it comes to providing rights and liberties, humans are said to deserve more or stronger rights than non-human animals. This viewpoint only suggests that human life and only human life, is sacred.³⁰

Notwithstanding, campaigns for animal rights and welfare have progressively taken the stage in recent years with the concept of animal sentience, which is an animal's capability not only for suffering but also for pleasure.³¹ Though a vague idea, animal welfare refers to the physical and psychological status of an animal with respect to its living and death circumstances and usually denotes a moral concern about man's responsibility of treatment towards animals.³² By formally declaring animal consciousness, a hypothesis still under controversy that indicates humans are not unique in having the neurological underpinnings for consciousness,³³ a group of eminent scientists recently gave further weight to the possibility of animal sentience in 2012. The declaration was meant to legally acknowledge animals as entities having a sense of "self," and so "consciousness" about their existence.³⁴ This proclamation gives animals, not as objects of "property" or resource, but a movement towards "personhood" worthy of legal protection credibility.³⁵ Apart from the obvious threat and risk of extinction of some animal species, there is an ethical perspective that regards Man as morally obligated to treat all animals decently since the two groups have different power and intelligence.³⁶

²⁶ Hannatu Adamu 'Animal Welfare And Control: A Call For Regulation in Nigeria' (2020) 1 (1) *UDUS Law Journal* 286.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Stijn Bruers, 'Speciesism' in Andy Butterworth (ed), *Animal Welfare in a Changing World* (CAB International 2018) 182.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Andy Butterworth (ed), *Animal Welfare in a Changing World* (CAB International 2018) 2.

³³ John Webster, *Animal Welfare: Limping Towards Eden, A Practical Approach to Redressing the Problem of Our Dominion over the Animals* (Blackwell Publishing 2005) 2.

³⁴ The Cambridge Declaration on Consciousness was made at the Francis Crick Memorial Conference held at Cambridge, England on 7 July 2012.. See Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (2016) Animal Consciousness, <<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/consciousness-animal/>> accessed 23 May 2024.

³⁵ Marian Stamp Dawkins, 'Through Animal Eyes: What Behaviour Tells Us' [2006] (100) *Applied Animal Behaviour Science*, 4. See also Matt Cartmill, 'Animal Consciousness: Some Philosophical, Methodological and Evolutionary Problems' [2000] (40)(6) *American Zoologist*, 835.

³⁶ List Of Species Believed To Be Endangered <https://www.worldwildlife.org/species/directory?direction=desc&sort=extinction_status> accessed 23 May 2024.

Two points of view surround the present discussion on animal rights.³⁷ The first perspective points to abolitionists³⁸ or animal rights advocates³⁹ who insist on animals having an equal right to live with humans. Particularly ethical veganism, this radical group firmly supports the vegan philosophy and argues that animal use should be eliminated instead of controlled since it cannot be morally justified and so veganism should take front stage.⁴⁰ Whether food, object of research, sports, or specimen for research,⁴¹ animals have the right to receive considerate treatment from Man, who is bound not to exploit them as a resource.⁴²

On the other hand, animal welfare advocates hold a more realistic perspective; they merely want animals to be treated as humanely as possible regardless of their intended use.⁴³ This utilitarian perspective acknowledges the advantages of animals but advocates that their life be made more sustainable.⁴⁴ Like most of the developing world, Nigeria treats animals as properties that God has endowed upon us for our use.⁴⁵ Although no statute directly addresses the property status of animals, a few laws that identify animals as objects "capable of being stolen"⁴⁶ help one to deduce their state. However, a level of protection is granted to wildlife.⁴⁷

Currently, there is an unintentional movement towards granting animals the legal status of personality, and on this considered view, there is a need to defend these voiceless creatures from abuse and violence for reasons of ineptitude and corruption among public officials. Sometimes animals have been accused of embezzlement or theft. Alleged to have devoured some records of the Nigeria Social Insurance Trust Fund (NSITF) with expenses totalling N17.1 billion in 2022 were termites.⁴⁸ Following her revelation to auditors that a snake had consumed 36 million Naira profits from JAMB scratch card sales in 2018,⁴⁹ a sales staffer was suspended. A gorilla was accused in 2019 of consuming N6.8 million in the Kano Zoological Gardens.⁵⁰ Senate Shehu Sani said in February 2018 that monkeys at the leader's farm had consumed the N70 million allocated to the Northern Forum of Senators.⁵¹

³⁷ Hanatu Adamu (n27) 3.

³⁸ Marie Blosh, 'The History of Animal Welfare Law and the Future of Animal Rights' [2012] (Masters Thesis) School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, University of Western Ontario, Canada, 1 <<http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2089&context=etd>> accessed 23 May 2024.

³⁹ Tom Reagan, *The Philosophy of Animal Rights* (University of California Press 1983).

⁴⁰ A profound moral and political commitment to abolition on the individual level, extending beyond matters of food to the wearing and use of animal products.

⁴¹ Reagan (1975) (n40).

⁴² Represented by international groups such as the World Organisation for Animal Health, formerly Office International des Epizooties (OIE), Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), and the World Animal Protection (WAP), which all have consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council <<https://undocs.org/E/2016/INF/5>> accessed 23 May 2024.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Butterworth (n33) 80.

⁴⁵ Hanatu Adamu (n27) 5.

⁴⁶ Criminal Code Act Cap C38, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004 (CC) Section 383 and s.282 Penal Code Law, Laws of Northern Nigeria 1963, Cap 89 (PC)

⁴⁷ Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) ("the Constitution"). S. 20.

⁴⁸ The Nation, 'Termites, snake, other animals accused of 'swallowing' money', (August 17, 2022) <<https://thenationonlineng.net/termites-snake-other-animals-accused-of-swallowing-money/>> accessed 23 May 2024.

⁴⁹ Ibid

⁵⁰ Ibid

⁵¹ Ibid

3.1 International Protection of Animal Rights and Welfare

International legal frameworks like conventions and treaties have shaped the current perceptions and regulations on animal rights and protection across the globe. These treaties and conventions afford countries a framework for working together to solve problems relating to animals including animal care, conservation, and ethical use of animals in different situations. This part looks at important international instruments meant to protect animal welfare and emphasizes their importance and influence on global strategies in this discourse.

a. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

This Convention was established in 1975 and is recognized as the primary international convention for the protection of endangered wildlife species from exploitation, trafficking, and illicit international trade.⁵² To guarantee the protection of these endangered species, the convention controls the trade of some animal and plant species using a system of permits and certificates. Reducing illicit wildlife trafficking and advancing global conservation initiatives have been much aided by CITES.

b. United Nations Declaration on Animal Rights 1978

Universal Declaration of Animal Rights was solemnly proclaimed in Paris on 15 October 1978 at the UNESCO headquarters states that whereas all animals have rights; whereas disregard and contempt for the rights of animals have resulted and continue to result in crimes by man against nature and animals; whereas recognition by the human species of the right to existence of other animal species is the foundation of the co-existence of species throughout the animal world; whereas genocide has been perpetrated by man on animals and the threat of genocide continues; whereas respect for animals is linked to the respect of man for men; whereas from childhood man should be taught to observe, understand, respect and love animals,⁵³ it is hereby proclaimed that All animals are born with an equal claim on life and the same rights to existence;⁵⁴ All animals are entitled to respect. Man as an animal species shall not arrogate to himself the right to exterminate or inhumanely exploit other animals. It is his duty to use his knowledge for the welfare of animals.

All animals have the right to the attention, care and protection of man;⁵⁵ No animal shall be ill-treated or shall be subject to cruel acts. If an animal has to be killed, this must be instantaneous and without distress.⁵⁶ All wild animals have the right to liberty in their natural environment, whether land, air or water, and should be allowed to procreate. Deprivation of freedom, even for educational purposes, is an infringement of this right.⁵⁷ Animals of species living traditionally in a human environment have the right to live and grow at the rhythm and under the condition of life and freedom peculiar to their species. Any interference by man with this rhythm or these conditions for purposes of gain is an infringement of this right.⁵⁸ All companion animals have the right to complete their natural lifespan. Abandonment of an animal is a cruel and degrading act.⁵⁹

⁵² CITES, 'Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora' <<https://www.cites.org/>> accessed 10 April 2024.

⁵³ United Nations Declaration on Animal Rights 1978, Preamble

⁵⁴ Ibid, Art 1.

⁵⁵ Ibid, Art 2.

⁵⁶ Ibid, Art 3.

⁵⁷ Ibid, Art 4

⁵⁸ Ibid, Art 5

⁵⁹ Ibid, Art 6.

All working animals are entitled to a reasonable limitation of the duration and intensity of their work, to the necessary nourishment, and to rest. Animal experimentation involving physical or psychological suffering is incompatible with the rights of animals whether it be for scientific, medical, commercial, or any other form of research. Replacement methods must be used and developed.⁶⁰ Where animals are used in the food industry, they shall be reared, transported, lairaged and killed without the infliction of suffering.⁶¹ No animal shall be exploited for the amusement of man. Exhibitions and spectacles involving animals are incompatible with their dignity.⁶² Any act involving the wanton killing of an animal is a biocide, that is, a crime against life.⁶³

Any act involving mass killing of wild animals is genocide, that is, a crime against the species. Pollution or destruction of the natural environment leads to genocide.⁶⁴ Dead animals shall be treated with respect. Scenes of violence involving animals shall be banned from cinema and television, except for humane education.⁶⁵ Representatives of movements that defend animal rights should have an effective voice at all levels of government. The rights of animals, like human rights, should enjoy the protection of law.⁶⁶

3.2 Legislations on Animal Rights and Welfare in Nigeria

The changing attitudes of Nigerians towards the ethical treatment and protection of animals are shown in the history of animal rights legislation in the country.⁶⁷ From the traditional attitudes anchored in cultural values to contemporary legal systems shaped by international legal frameworks, Nigeria's path towards acknowledging and protecting animal welfare has been dotted with noteworthy events and obstacles.

Nigeria's attitude to animal rights legislation has been greatly shaped by its participation in treaties, conventions, and international collaborations.⁶⁸ Nigeria has committed to preserving biodiversity and safeguarding endangered species and the welfare of animals by signatory to international agreements including the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), and the United Nations Declaration on Animal Rights 1978. Legislative actions to control wildlife trade, fight poaching, and maintain ecosystems vital for the survival of many animal species and the defence of animal welfare and rights have been spurred by these global responsibilities. Among the significant enactments are the Endangered Species Act, 1965, the Criminal Code, Animal Disease Control Act of 2022, which revoked the ADA, 1965, and other state legislation.

a. Nigerian Criminal Code (1990)

The Nigerian Criminal Code (1990) which acknowledged the capacity of animals to suffer and to experience psychological states of being enraged and terrified, first attempts to domesticate these United Nations declarations. This code applies to domestic and captive animals, including birds,

⁶⁰ Ibid, Art 7.

⁶¹ Ibid, Art 8.

⁶² Ibid, Art 9.

⁶³ Ibid, Art 10.

⁶⁴ Ibid, Art 11.

⁶⁵ Ibid, Art 12.

⁶⁶ Ibid, Art 13.

⁶⁷ A O Ogunsanmi, 'Wildlife conservation and management in Nigeria: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives' (2015) In: *Environmental Law and Policy in Nigeria: A Critical Introduction* (pp. 139-162). Springer, Cham.

⁶⁸ Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). (2022). "Nigeria." Retrieved from <https://cites.org/eng/cms/index.php/component/cbd/?country=566>.

fish and reptiles, but not wild animals. More specifically, section 495 of the Nigerian Criminal Code (1990) forbids crimes of animal abuse. These include, under sub-section 1(a), severely beating, kicking, overloading, irritating or terrifying an animal, or as the owner, letting this happen. Section 1(b) forbids wantonly or unreasonably doing or omitting any act that causes needless suffering, therefore creating an offence of failure to act. This section also forbids transporting animals in a way that results in needless suffering (c), poison (d), surgical operations carried out without due care (e), and activity related with animal fighting (f).

Furthermore, guaranteed under sections 450, 456 and 495 of the Code is the wellbeing of agricultural animals, protection of animals used for draught (especially, prohibition of over-riding and over-loading) and recreation, protection of animals employed in scientific research and animals in captivity. Though food animals are not covered under section 495, the sole weakness in this regulation is that it makes no mention or specific reference to animals utilised in farming. Regarding the enforcement of the Criminal Code, there are many limits. It was not apparent what the definition or classification of animals as sentient entities meant. Despite the clauses of section 450, wild animal welfare was not specifically expressed as sentient beings. The general awareness of the Code was abysmally poor, among the people, as well as some law enforcement agents. The fines imposed on offenders became outdated over time (because of time value of money), became less punitive and could not serve as deterrents to prospective offenders. We could only refer to it as the benchmark or baseline, in the pursuit of animal welfare promotion in Nigeria

b. Animal Disease (Control) Act, 2022

The Animal Disease (Control) Act 2022 was enacted to fill in the gaps evident in the Criminal Code. The Act was enacted to be as all-encompassing as possible. It also repealed the 1965 Animal Disease (Control) Act. With specific penal measures for offenders, sections 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25 of the 2022 Act dedicated plenty of sub-sections to the advancement of animal welfare and avoidance of animal cruelty in one form or another. Comprising almost all subject areas about animal health, biosecurity, animal welfare, etc., the Animal Disease (Control) Act 2022 is a thorough legislative measure for Nigeria.

The need to safeguard animal welfare runs between sections 21 and 25. Section 21 (1) states that A person who has an animal in his possession or control shall, having regard to the animal's nature, type, species, breed, and development. Adaptation, domestication, physiological and behavioural needs and environment, and following established experience and scientific knowledge, take all necessary steps to ensure that:

The animal is kept and treated in a manner that (i) safeguards the health and welfare of the animal (ii) does not threaten the health or welfare of the animal or another animal; and All buildings, gates, fences, hedges, boundary walls, and other structures used to contain the animal are constructed and maintained in a manner so that they do not cause injury or unnecessary suffering to the animal. (2) A person who contravenes provisions of this section commits an offence and is liable on conviction:

(a) in the case of first-time offenders to a fine of at least N50,000 or imprisonment for a term of three months or both or (b) in the case of subsequent offenders to a fine of at least N150,000 or imprisonment for a term of six months or both. Section 22 (1) A person shall not: Beat, kick, override over-drive, over-load, torture, or otherwise treat any animal to subject it to unnecessary pain or suffering or other causes, or being the owner, permit any animal to be so treated.

c. The Endangered Species (Control of International Trade and Traffic) Act of 1985

In line with Nigeria's international obligations under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Endangered Species Act controls the trade and conservation of threatened species.⁶⁹ As required under various international treaties to which Nigeria is a signatory, the Act is Nigeria's domestic legislation to provide for the preservation of some of her endangered species at risk of extinction due to over-exploitation and the conservation and management of her wildlife.

This law represents a major step towards preserving biodiversity by enforcing strict policies meant to safeguard sensitive animal species. It lays out a thorough plan to handle the approaching threat of extinction some of the species on the First Schedule face. Reflecting a dedication to their preservation and recovery, all kinds of hunting, capture, or trade involving these critically endangered species are forbidden from the passage of this Act.⁷⁰ Moreover, the Act covers species included in the Second Schedule since it acknowledges their vulnerability to eventual extinction in case trade is not under control. Those who want to participate in hunting, capture, trading, or any other activity involving these animals have to have licenses in conformity with the legislative requirements.⁷¹ This dual-tiered strategy aggressively controls the trade of species that might endanger themselves as well as recognises their immediate need to be preserved.

Under the Act, the Minister has the power to specify the form of certificates and licenses given, therefore guaranteeing consistency and regulatory compliance.⁷² To properly control global trade, the Minister also has the authority to revoke and keep export or re-export certificates together with matching import permissions. Importantly, every consignment of imported, exported, or re-reported specimens under this Act requires a separate permit, therefore improving traceability and responsibility in trade operations.⁷³

The Act also gives the Minister a great responsibility to keep thorough records of all trading operations involving species listed in the First and Second Schedules. Monitoring trends, evaluating conservation initiatives, and guiding the next policy decisions meant to protect biodiversity benefit from this centralized data bank. This Act essentially offers a proactive and multifarious method of conservation, realizing the pressing need to save endangered species and simultaneously tackling the more general problems of unsustainable trading practices and habitat destruction. Strong legislative policies and international collaboration help to guarantee the long-term survival and resilience of Earth's priceless biodiversity for the next generations.⁷⁴

4. Challenges in the Implementation of Animal Rights Laws in Nigeria

The implementation of animal rights laws in Nigeria faces many difficulties and gaps owing to a complicated interplay between socio-economic, cultural, and institutional elements.

⁶⁹ Endangered Species (Control of International Trade and Traffic) Act, Cap. E9, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004.

⁷⁰ Endangered Species (Control of International Trade and Traffic) Act, Cap. E9, First Schedule.

⁷¹ ES Act 1985, s (2).

⁷² Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 'Endangered Species (Control of International Trade and Traffic) Act' < <https://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/en/c/LEX-FAOC120046/#:~:text=This%20Act%20makes%20provision%20for,veterinary%20practice%2C%20and%20infectious%20agents>> accessed 3 April 2024.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

Notwithstanding the existence of legal structures aimed at protecting animal rights and welfare, the effective implementation and realization of these laws encounter several obstacles that impede progress. This section examined the difficulties and shortcomings in the application of animal rights laws by examining important issues, underlying causes, and possible remedies to support efficient animal protection and care throughout Nigeria.

a. Socio-Economic Challenges

The paucity of funds or limited resources is one of the major factors impeding the implementation of laws in Nigeria including environmental and animal laws. The limited resources allocated to departments, including veterinary services and wildlife conservation programs hinder the ability of the concerned institutions to effectively execute inspections, investigations, and enforcement actions.⁷⁵

The socio-economic realities of poverty and livelihood dependence also aggravate challenges in the enforcement of animal rights laws, most especially in rural areas where communities depend on livestock rearing, hunting, and wildlife exploitation for survival and income. In such contexts, the enforcement of regulations may be perceived as a threat to livelihoods, occasioning confrontations and non-compliance.⁷⁶

b. Cultural and Traditional Practices

Culture plays an important role in shaping the practices and attitudes toward animals. Traditional beliefs, rituals, and customs always place priority on human interests over animal welfare, thereby, encouraging practices such as animal sacrifices, wildlife abuse, and killings for rituals. These cultural attitudes greatly hinder the effective implementation of animal rights laws, as they may run contrary to modern principles of animal welfare and conservation.⁷⁷

Traditional medical practices in Nigeria frequently entail using animal parts and products, leading to the exploitative use of wildlife and their derivatives for medicinal purposes. The illicit trade in wildlife blossoms as a result of the high demand for traditional medicine and cultural artifacts, these high demands also constitute great challenges to law enforcement efforts and biodiversity conservation.⁷⁸

c. Institutional and Legal Challenges

Most times, the lack of sufficient training, resources, and capacity to properly carry out their responsibilities impede the institutional prowess of enforcement bodies in Nigeria. These challenges also include limited personnel, outdated equipment, and logistical constrictions that hinder the implementation of regulations, which results in low prosecution rates and latitude for offenders.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ A S Abdullahi, 'Challenges and Prospects of Animal Welfare Enforcement in Nigeria.' (2021) 12(2) *Journal of Animal Law Enforcement* 4.

⁷⁶ F O Adeyemo and T O Ogunyemi, 'Poverty and Livelihood Dependence as Barriers to Animal Welfare Enforcement in Rural Nigeria' (2019) 39(4) *Journal of Rural Development Studies* 78.

⁷⁷ C E Okonkwo and N Ezeibunwa, 'Cultural Attitudes Towards Animals and Their Implications for Animal Welfare in Nigeria' (2018) 22(3) *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 345.

⁷⁸ K I Okeke and C G Okoli, 'Traditional Medicine and Wildlife Exploitation in Nigeria: Implications for Biodiversity Conservation' (2020) 14(2) *Journal of Traditional Medicine and Ethnobotany* 189.

⁷⁹ A A Lawal and others, 'Enforcement Challenges and Strategies in Implementing Animal Welfare Laws in Nigeria' (2017) 25(1) *Journal of Legal Studies* 112.

Although Nigeria boasts laws and rules meant to safeguard animal welfare, the legislative structure is not perfect. Certain laws might be out of current, insufficiently thorough, or improperly enforced, allowing abuse and exploitation through weaknesses. To remedy these gaps, present laws must be harmonised, and regulatory systems strengthened.⁸⁰

d. Environmental and Conservation Challenges

Rapid urbanization, deforestation, and land degradation add to habitat loss and fragmentation that compromises the existence of Nigerian animal species. Human invasion of natural environments raises human-wildlife conflicts that result in habitat degradation, retaliatory deaths, and biodiversity loss.⁸¹ Driven by demand for unusual pets, bushmeat, and traditional medicine ingredients, Nigeria is a transit route and destination for the illicit wildlife trafficking. Weak law enforcement, weak borders, and corruption help to ease the trafficking of threatened species, therefore compromising attempts at conservation and jeopardising wildlife numbers.⁸²

e. Awareness and Education

Apathy and indifference towards animal suffering and exploitation are caused in part by low public knowledge of animal rights and welfare. Many Nigerians might not know their rights and obligations towards animals, thereby sustaining negative attitudes and practices. Fostering a society of compassion and respect for animals depends critically on raising awareness of education and campaigns of change.⁸³ Efforts to advance animal rights and welfare are further complicated in Nigerian society by common misconceptions and prejudices around animals. Often perpetuating unfavourable preconceptions and attitudes towards animals, superstitions, folklore, and false information impede efforts to alter behavior and advance compassionate treatment.⁸⁴

From socio-economic restrictions to cultural views and administrative shortcomings, the application of animal rights laws in Nigeria confronts several complex issues. Dealing with these difficulties calls for a comprehensive strategy including public education, government intervention, community involvement, and international cooperation. Essential first stages towards realising efficient animal protection and care in Nigeria are strengthening enforcement mechanisms, raising financing for animal welfare initiatives, raising public awareness, and including animal rights education in school curriculum. Nigeria may open the path for a more sustainable and compassionate relationship between people and animals by overcoming these obstacles and striving for a shared objective of humane treatment and conservation.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study clarifies the complexities of animal rights protection in Nigeria. It found that although Nigeria has a legal framework meant to protect animal welfare, major obstacles and gaps prevent its efficient implementation and adaptability inside a fast-changing global terrain.

⁸⁰ A A Adesina and others, 'Assessment of Animal Rights Laws and Their Implementation in Nigeria: Gaps and Recommendations' (2019) 8(3) *Journal of Animal Rights Legislation* 210.

⁸¹ S A Adebayo and A S Olaniyan, 'Habitat Loss and Fragmentation: Implications for Wildlife Conservation in Nigeria' (2020) 5(1) *Journal of Environmental Science and Sustainable Development* 34.

⁸² M A Ibrahim and others, (2018) 'Illegal Wildlife Trade and Trafficking: Challenges and Solutions for Biodiversity Conservation in Nigeria' 16 (2) *Journal of Wildlife Conservation* 89.

⁸³ O O Ogunlade and O I Ajani, 'Promoting Public Awareness and Education for Animal Welfare in Nigeria: Strategies and Challenges' (2019) 11(4) *Journal of Animal Welfare Education* 167.

⁸⁴ N A Onyinyechi and E O Chukwuma 'Misconceptions and Myths about Animals in Nigerian Society: Implications for Animal Welfare Education' (2020) 18 (2) *Journal of Animal Welfare Studies* 201.

Nigeria's legal framework, comprising statutes such as the Animal Health and Production Laws, the Criminal Code Act, and the Animal Disease Control Act, represents a foundational step towards recognizing and protecting animal rights. However, the practical application of these laws faces formidable obstacles. Limited resources, inadequate training of law enforcement agencies, and pervasive corruption undermine enforcement efforts, leaving animals vulnerable to exploitation and cruelty. Moreover, the legal framework often struggles to keep pace with emerging issues, such as wildlife trafficking and the illegal pet trade, thereby exacerbating gaps in protection.

In contrast to global perspectives, a spectrum of approaches and interventions that have proven successful in bolstering animal rights protection. Countries with robust legal frameworks often supplement legislation with dedicated enforcement agencies or units tasked with monitoring and enforcing animal welfare laws. These specialized entities, equipped with resources and expertise, play a pivotal role in ensuring compliance and holding perpetrators of animal cruelty accountable. Additionally, public awareness campaigns and educational initiatives serve to cultivate a culture of compassion and responsibility towards animals, empowering citizens to advocate for their rights and report instances of abuse.

Drawing from these global insights, Nigeria stands poised to enhance its approach to animal rights protection by embracing innovative strategies and best practices. Establishing dedicated enforcement agencies or enhancing the capacity of existing bodies could bolster enforcement efforts and serve as a deterrent against cruelty. Concurrently, investing in public education and awareness campaigns can foster a societal shift towards greater empathy and respect for animals, thereby reducing instances of abuse and exploitation.

Furthermore, collaboration with international organizations and partnerships with countries that have successfully addressed similar challenges can provide invaluable guidance and support in refining Nigeria's approach to animal rights protection. By leveraging collective expertise and resources, Nigeria can cultivate a more comprehensive and effective system for safeguarding the welfare and rights of animals leading to a future where animals are treated with the dignity and compassion they rightfully deserve.

6. Recommendations for Strengthening Animal Rights Protection in Nigeria within the Global Context

Strengthening animal rights protection in Nigeria calls for a comprehensive framework including domestic laws as well as foreign collaboration. Based on lessons learnt and global best practices, the following suggestions provide directions for enhancing the welfare and rights of animals in Nigeria in the larger worldwide scene.

- a. **Legislative Reform:** Nigeria should implement thorough laws especially aimed at animal care, covering criteria for housing, transportation, killing, and scientific research including animals. International conventions and best practices should guide this legislation to guarantee congruence with world norms of animal protection.⁸⁵
- b. **Capacity Building:** Nigeria should also Invest in training and capacity-building projects for law enforcement agencies, veterinarians, and animal welfare groups to improve their

⁸⁵ World Animal Protection, 'Nigeria: Animal Protection' (2022) <<https://www.worldanimalprotection.org/our-work/animals-wild/nigeria>> accessed 16 January 2025,

knowledge and skills in enforcing animal welfare laws and using best practices in animal care.⁸⁶

- c. **Awareness and Education:** The change of perception towards animals cannot be effective without awareness and education, therefore emphasising the ethical and moral need of defending animal rights, start with public awareness campaigns and educational initiatives to foster sympathy and respect for them. Targeting media outlets, communities, and educational institutions, these projects should help to build an empathy and responsibility for animals' culture.⁸⁷
- d. **Collaboration with International Partners:** The preservation of the lives and dignity of animals transcends national boundaries, hence the need for international collaborations. To access technical knowledge, funding, and resources for carrying out animal welfare projects, Nigeria should forge alliances with foreign organisations including the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the World Animal Protection (WAP). Cooperation helps to promote information sharing and capacity building to handle shared animal protection issues.⁸⁸
- e. **Enforcement Mechanisms:** Establishing specialised units inside law enforcement organisations charged with looking into and punishing acts of animal cruelty and exploitation helps to strengthen enforcement processes. Furthermore, states in the country and indeed the country as a nations should create procedures for keeping an eye on and verifying compliance with welfare requirements in establishments housing, transporting, or using animals for business interests.⁸⁹
- f. **Research and Innovation:** There is also a need for a deep investment in research and innovation to create substitute approaches to animal testing and advance environmentally friendly techniques in food manufacturing, medical research, and agriculture, including the acceptance of technical developments that minimise animal damage include non-invasive research methods and alternate protein sources.⁹⁰

Following worldwide best practices, Nigeria can improve its dedication to animal rights protection by applying these suggestions, therefore supporting the development of ethical and sustainable methods that help the society at large as well as the animals.

⁸⁶ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United N), 'Animal Welfare' <<http://www.fao.org/animal-welfare/en/>> accessed 5 September 2024.

⁸⁷ United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 'Animal Welfare: Education and Awareness' , <<http://www.fao.org/animal-welfare/education-awareness/en/>> accessed 15 January 2022.

⁸⁸ World Animal Protection, 'Our Impact' <<https://www.worldanimalprotection.org/our-work/impact>> accessed 16 January 2022,

⁸⁹ United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 'Animal Welfare: Enforcement; <<http://www.fao.org/animal-welfare/enforcement/en/>> accessed 16 January 2022

⁹⁰ World Animal Protection, 'Our Work: Farming' <https://www.worldanimalprotection.org/our-work/animals-farming>> accessed 16 January 2022..