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Our Commitment to Animal Welfare

At Scott Dunn, we believe travel should be a force for good—enriching lives while respecting and protecting the natural world. Animal welfare is a core part of this philosophy and underpins the experiences we create.

We recognise that animal encounters are popular in many destinations, and we ensure that any such experiences place animal welfare above all else. We work only with partners who share this commitment and follow the [ABTA Global Welfare Guidance for Animals in Tourism](#) and World Animal Protection standards.

We also support improved welfare practices by engaging with animal owners and carers across our destinations, acknowledging the impact of tourism on both animals and local livelihoods. Through clear guidelines and ongoing dialogue with our partners, we remain dedicated to promoting and upholding high standards of animal welfare.

The ‘Five Domains’

Our animal welfare standards are based on the **Five Domains Model** (Professor David J. Mellor, 1991). The Five Domains Model is used for assessing the welfare of both domestic and wild animals. It provides a comprehensive framework that can be applied to different species in various contexts, whether they are pets, farm animals, zoo animals, or wildlife. By addressing key aspects of nutrition, environment, health, behaviour, and mental state, the model helps to ensure that the welfare of all animals is considered and improved.

- **Nutrition**
Ensure animals have access to appropriate food and water, and that their diet meets their species-specific needs.
- **Environment**
Assess the quality of the physical and social surroundings, including shelter, living space, stimulation and conditions such as temperature and noise levels.
- **Health**
Confirm the absence of disease, injury, and pain. Consider active veterinary care, preventive measures, and treatment as necessary.
- **Behaviour**
Confirm the ability of animals to express normal and species-specific behaviours. Consider opportunities for exercise, play, exploration, and social interactions.
- **Mental State**
Assess the overall psychological wellbeing of animals, including emotions like pleasure, comfort, frustration, or distress. Reflects the animal's subjective experience as influenced by the other four domains.

Domestic & Non-Domestic Animals

Domestic	Non-Domestic / Wild
A domestic animal, is an animal that has been carefully bred and genetically shaped over generations to thrive alongside humans. The 3 categories of domestic animals are: 1. Companion Animals: These are pets kept primarily for companionship and enjoyment, such as dogs, cats, and small pets like hamsters and birds. 2. Livestock: These animals are raised primarily for agricultural purposes, including food, fibre, labour, and other products. Examples include cattle, pigs, sheep, chickens, and goats. 3. Working Animals: These animals are trained to perform specific tasks or provide essential services, such as horses used for transportation and farm work, dogs trained for herding, guarding, or assisting people with disabilities, and even some birds like pigeons used for communication.	A non-domestic animal, also known as a wild animal, is an animal that lives independently of direct human intervention and has not been selectively bred for compatibility with humans. These animals maintain their natural behaviours, diet, and life processes in their natural habitats, and their genetic makeup remains largely unaltered by human influence. A captive non-domestic animal is a wild animal that is kept in a controlled environment such as a zoo, wildlife sanctuary, research facility, or private collection. These animals are confined and have their living conditions and care managed by humans, but they retain their natural behaviours and genetic traits, not having been selectively bred for domestication. A ‘tame animal’ and a ‘domestic animal’ are different. A domestic animal is genetically adapted to living with humans. In contrast, a wild animal can be tamed to behave around humans but remains genetically wild. Taming techniques vary from one species to another but often involve force and trauma for the animal. We therefore consider tame animals non-domestic.

Marine Life

For the purposes of this policy and its application, marine life/mammals/animals/cetaceans are considered ‘non-domestic animals’ or ‘wildlife’.

We encourage marine life exploration but strongly discourage having physical interactions with marine life.

We do not endorse baited marine activities; this includes shark-cage diving or any activity where marine life is encouraged to act unnaturally with feeding incentives.

Protecting Non-domestic / Wild Animals

‘Recover, Rehabilitate, Release’

While wild animals should ideally live freely in their natural habitats, intervention is sometimes necessary due to injury, abandonment, or human interference.

Scott Dunn promotes captive facilities that prioritise animal welfare, with a clear focus on rehabilitation and reintroduction to the wild. We recognise that not all animals can be released, but we only endorse sanctuaries, refuges, or rescue centres that demonstrate every effort has been made to support the animal’s return to its natural environment.

Tactile interactions with non-domestic animals

To protect wild animals from unnecessary human interaction, we do not encourage guest experiences which involve **tactile interactions by guests with non-domestic animals** in captivity or their natural environment. This includes:

- Bathing animals in captivity
- Holding, stroking or touching animals for photographic purposes
- Riding non-domestic animals
- Hand feeding animals in captivity
- Feeding wild animals in their natural habitat

We recognise the necessity for captive non-domestic animals to be handled/fed by experts as part of their recovery, rehabilitation and release but believe these interactions should always be conducted by a trained expert and kept to a minimum. ‘Leave it to the expert’.

Where is this a challenge? In Southeast Asia and India, the movement towards ‘no-touch’/‘observation only’ elephant experiences is complex. Elephants have been a part of domestic culture in these regions for hundreds of years and the management of captive elephants has considerable environmental, veterinary and social complexities which must be considered.

We are working closely with our partners in these regions to emphasise the value of ‘no-touch’ elephant experiences and support experience providers to make this transition in a sustainable and economically viable way.

In Southeast Asia, we only work with elephant experience providers who have been certified by Asian Captive Elephant Standards ([ACES](#)).

Wild' animals in captivity

Scott Dunn does not endorse the following:

- Animal performances based on non-natural behaviours and shows where training methods compromise welfare.
- Animals on display in restaurants and entertainment venues (including animal cafes)
- Animal breeding or commercial trade in sanctuaries and orphanages, unless for the purposes of species protection under a certified conservation programme.
- Animals used as photographic props involving tactile interactions.
- Trophy or canned hunting
- Elephant polo or riding
- Ostrich riding
- Swimming with cetaceans in captivity
- Visiting cetaceans in captivity
- Unlicensed zoos
- Surgery or physical modification of the skin, tissues, teeth or bones of an animal, other than for the purposes of genuine medical treatment or species conservation.

Scott Dunn does not support unacceptable practices involving animals in cultural events and activities such as:

- Animals used for begging eg. Dancing bears, snake charming, primates.
- Animal fighting: Bull fighting and bull running, Bear baiting/Bear pits, cockfighting.
- Reptile farms
- Crocodile wrestling
- Tiger farms
- Rodeos and stampedes

Wild animals in their natural habitat

Scott Dunn does not support the following unacceptable practices involving free-roaming wild animals:

- Unregulated animal and plant collection from the wild.
- Direct contact with and feeding of free roaming animals (including marine life)
- Human initiated physical interaction with wild whales and dolphins.
- Trade and sale of endangered wildlife products.

- The purchase of unsustainable wildlife souvenirs: shells, coral, ebony, animal skins, animal horn, tortoise shell, spiders/butterflies/insects, traditional medicines using animal products.

‘Keep Fish Wet’

We promote the science-based ‘Keep Fish Wet’ Tips and request our partners follow these when running any fishing activities. Not only does using best practices increase survival rates of fish, but it also helps fish return to their normal behaviour as quickly as possible after release.

Protecting Domestic Animals

We believe that there is great emotional and physical value in interacting with domestic animals. By adhering to the Five Domains model (above) and implementing these animal welfare standards, we strive to ensure that all domestic animals are treated with respect, compassion, and dignity. We believe that responsible tourism not only enhances the experience for our visitors but also fosters a more ethical and humane interaction with animals.

Animal Cafes

Animal cafés, where domestic or wild animals are used for entertainment, often compromise animal welfare due to constant handling, unnatural environments, and limited ability to retreat or rest. These settings can cause stress, behavioural issues, and pose health risks to both animals and humans.

Scott Dunn does not support animal cafés, will not include them in itineraries, and advises our partners and guests to avoid them in line with our commitment to responsible and ethical wildlife practices.

Equine Welfare

Can you tell the difference between a healthy and an unhealthy equine (horse, donkey or mule)? Familiarise yourself with *The Brooke’s Happy Horses Holiday Code*, which offers 10 tips on helping to prevent animal suffering.

Why do we support horse riding but not camel riding?

Sadly, in too many places, practices for handling camels don't meet modern welfare standards (the Five Domains), leading to stress and harm of the animals. The standards and knowledge of

care for camels is considerably less advanced than equine welfare. Key issues include inadequate nutrition and hydration, poor living conditions, improper saddling causing injuries, lack of medical care, restricted natural behaviours, and harsh training methods leading to stress and fear. Therefore, camel riding needs stricter oversight and improved care practices to ensure humane treatment and align with animal welfare standards.

We recognise there is significant need for greater care and application of welfare standards for camels, and we will continue to work with our partners worldwide to identify operators which model best practice. However, at present, we have not identified any experiences we feel we could showcase.

By comparison, equine welfare standards are more widely recognised and well-practiced. For this reason, we generally allow horse riding and interactions, unless we are made aware of an individual operation failing to meet the Five Domains standards (as witnessed by a member of our team, our in-country representatives or a guest).

We do not endorse any form of elephant riding, ostrich riding or riding of any other non-domestic animals.

Actions taken by the Scott Dunn Team

Planning and Delivery of Trips:

- **Research and Partnerships:**

We will collaborate only with suppliers and partners who share our commitment to ethical animal practices and align with [ABTA Animal Welfare Guidelines basic welfare requirements and unacceptable practices](#). This includes ensuring that wildlife experiences promote conservation, promote biodiversity, and do not exploit animals.

We provide our partners with our Animal Welfare Toolkit, which includes this policy and our additional Decision Tools.

- **Training and Awareness:**

Our Product Team will receive ongoing training on animal welfare practices and Nature Positive Tourism, ensuring they understand the importance of responsible animal interactions and the impact of tourism on wildlife and ecosystems.

All employees are provided with the SD Captive Wildlife Decision Tool and the SD Domestic Animal Decision Tool when partaking in FAM trips, to support them in identifying suitable animal experiences for our guests.

- **Itinerary Design:**

We will carefully select activities and excursions that respect animal habitats and welfare, as well as contribute positively to local ecosystems. This includes avoiding experiences that involve close interaction with wild animals, such as riding elephants or posing with wild animals in captivity.

- **Emergency Protocols & Feedback Mechanisms**

We have developed a [reporting system](#) for employees to address any concerns related to animal welfare during FAM trips and from guest feedback, ensuring prompt action and communication with relevant authorities.

We will encourage and facilitate feedback from guests regarding animal welfare experiences, using this information to continuously improve our practices and align with WTTC guidance on responsible tourism.

Actions for the Scott Dunn guest

Responsible Travel Practices for Animal Welfare:

- **Educate yourself:**

Before your journey, we encourage guests to learn about the local wildlife and cultural practices. Understanding the environment helps foster a greater appreciation for responsible tourism.

- **Observe from a distance:**

When encountering wildlife, respect their space. Observing animals in their natural habitat is a privilege; maintaining a safe distance is crucial for their well-being and yours.

- **Animals are not props:** Please do not break boundaries in order to get the perfect photo.

- **Keep your food to yourself:**

Please do not feed wild animals or birds – this can teach them to get dangerously close to humans and harms their ability to find food naturally, which can have a huge impact on their wellbeing and wider ecosystem.

Please do not feed domestic animals without express permission from their owner/carer.

- **Avoid Animal Exploitation:**

We discourage activities that involve direct interaction with wild animals or those that

support entertainment at their expense, such as animal shows or performances.

- **Riding animals:**

Please only ride domesticated animals such as horses or donkeys when the animal looks well cared for. Don't ride wild animals, such as elephants and ostriches – they've often been subjected to severe cruelty to make them subservient. We also strongly advise against riding camels (due camel welfare being unregulated and often poor).

Can you tell the difference between a healthy and an unhealthy animal? Familiarise yourself with *The Brooke's Happy Horses Holiday Code*, which offers 10 tips on helping to prevent animal suffering.

- **Fishing:** If taking part in fishing activities, please follow the '[Keep Fish Wet' Tips](#) to ensure fish can continue to thrive when caught and released, or do not suffer if caught for consumption.
- **Choose wisely:**
If you're booking an additional activity independently from your Scott Dunn travel advisor, opt for wildlife experiences that promote conservation and ethical treatment of animals.
- **Shop responsibly:**
Do not buy souvenirs that are made from wildlife products or other threatened natural materials including but not limited to turtle shells, feathers, exotic skins, horns, teeth and ivory. Many of these products support unsustainable practices such as poaching and are illegal under the [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora](#) (CITES).
- **Report Concerns:**
If you witness any practices that seem harmful to animals during your travels, please report your concerns to your Scott Dunn representative. We take these matters seriously and will address them appropriately.

By adhering to these guidelines, we aim to foster a culture of respect for animals and their habitats, ensuring that our travel experiences contribute positively to local communities and ecosystems. Together, we can create unforgettable journeys that celebrate the beauty of our planet while safeguarding its incredible animals.

Thank you for joining us in our commitment to animal welfare as we explore the world together. Safe travels!