

There was particular concern over the number of animals involved in racing and what happens to them before, during, and after retirement. It was accepted that racing injuries can lead to early retirement and, although there has been considerable research, some significant findings are not being acted upon quickly enough. It was considered that although welfare is being given a high priority by both the governing bodies of the industries and by the Government, concerns remain.

It was acknowledged that most welfare problems are due to inappropriate management by the people concerned and that improved understanding of, and reference to, the emotional well-being of these animals could be given high priority.

A regulatory inspectorate is necessary to ensure that guidelines are applied appropriately, for inspections, the reliability of welfare assessments could be improved by regular testing and further research.

Improved methods for individual identification and better record-keeping are required and are being instituted by the governing bodies. Ideally, these records will be collected and analysed to permit statistical evidence to be easily available for public scrutiny and for research.

The 'safety net', provided by the retired animals' trusts, was considered necessary, as is continuing support for these organisations from all participants in the racing industries.

Sir Colin Spedding summed up the discussions by emphasising that any actions designed to improve animal welfare should not conflict with scientific evidence. He considered that definition of terms and choice of words is important and offered "meeting the needs of the animal" as a concise definition of animal welfare that everyone might accept. He noted that winning will continue to be paramount and that the performance of racing animals will be improved by selective breeding. He suggested, however, that it will be necessary to look carefully at the physical and ethical problems of selecting for single traits, since they can lead to other problems. He considered that although workshops, like this one, raise many questions for discussion, they can leave a residual feeling of "what should be done?" To make further progress, he said, work should be encouraged on some soluble issues, for example, an optimal design for race tracks with the welfare needs of the racing animal in mind.

**Scottish Centre for Animal Welfare Sciences Workshop on Animal Athletes: Welfare of Animals in Sport (Racehorses and Greyhounds) 2008.** Presentations from Carrie Humble (Thoroughbred Rehabilitation Centre), Denis Beary (Canine Sports Medicine Clinic), Peter Webbon (Animal Health Trust), Ian Strachan (Animal Welfare, The Scottish Government), Mark Johnston (MJRacing), Peter Laurie (British Greyhound Racing Board), Chris Laurence (Dogs Trust), Joe Collins (University College Dublin), Mark Kennedy (Anglia Ruskin University), Tim Parkin (Glasgow University Veterinary School) and an extended report on the 'Concerns' and 'Solutions' are available on the BSAS website at [http://www.bsas.org.uk/Meetings\\_&\\_Workshops/Past\\_Meetings/](http://www.bsas.org.uk/Meetings_&_Workshops/Past_Meetings/)

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## **UK Farm Animal Welfare Report on the welfare of farmed gamebirds**

This is a short report (a FAWC Opinion) on the welfare of pheasants and partridges reared for shooting in the UK. FAWC estimates that about 40 million gamebirds are released each year in Great Britain for shooting and that about half the pheasants and 90% of the partridges reared are imported (a large proportion as hatching eggs from France, but some from outside Europe). Gamebirds are excluded from the protection of European Directive 98/58/EC, which sets standards for farmed animals, as this Directive does not apply to animals intended for use in, amongst other things, cultural or sporting events or activities. However, as animals under human control, they are protected under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 although it is unclear if this extends to when they have been placed in open release pens. Because the remit of FAWC is restricted to farmed animals; after release, although these birds may continue to be actively managed (including being provided with food, water and shelter) and despite the large anthropogenic influence on their fates, they are not 'farmed' and their welfare is outside FAWC's scope (although the Report does mention that mortalities post release due to various factors including being shot and injured are significant). Nor does FAWC take an interest in the associated issue of the control of predators (foxes) that is often a part of gamebird production. If FAWC had been created more recently perhaps it would have been the AWC rather than FAWC — dividing the subject up by rather arbitrary sectoral interests seems a bit of an anachronism at times.

Various contentious issues are mentioned. These include: use of bits and spectacles (devices fitted to the beak to reduce injurious pecking of cage mates and egg eating), beak trimming, stockmanship, transport, availability of licensed medicines, biosecurity and acclimatisation of birds to outdoor conditions. Reliable data on performance, mortality, and other indicators of welfare are not readily available but the Report indicates that mortality rates of 5–20% up to release have been suggested.

The Report observes that there is little official surveillance. Because gamebirds are not considered 'farmed animals' under the legislation, 'premises are not selected for risk-based or random inspection by Animal Health', although Animal Health would respond to welfare complaints under the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

In a section entitled 'Critical issues' FAWC states that it is particularly concerned about the development of raised cages for breeding pheasants and the long-term use of small raised cages for partridge pairs because it was judged that these were unlikely to satisfy the birds' needs. FAWC also commented that 'the use of management devices such as bits, spectacles and brailles (a loop of material around one wing to prevent flight): 'often appeared to relate more to tradition than to a justified requirement for specific systems or enterprises'.

The Report concludes with 16 recommendations including:

- Research is needed to define and cater for physical and behavioural needs.
  - Better surveillance of welfare.
  - Barren raised cages should not be used (if industry does not phase them out ‘then Government should act to ban them within 5 years of the publication of this report’).
  - Farmers purchasing hatching eggs or day olds from abroad should satisfy themselves that the health and welfare of breeding stock meet the standards required in Great Britain.
- Finally FAWC includes a reminder to itself for when next formulating a work plan, to consider undertaking a major investigation into the welfare of farmed gamebirds.

**Opinion on the Welfare of Farmed Gamebirds** November 2008. Farm Animal Welfare Council. A4. 15 pages. Copies available from FAWC, Area 5A, 9 Millbank, c/o Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London SW1P 3JR and available online at: [www.fawc.org.uk](http://www.fawc.org.uk)

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### **Assessing the humaneness of pest animal control methods**

The New South Wales Department of Primary Industries’ Vertebrate Pest Research Unit, have developed a model, under the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy, for assessing the relative humaneness of pest animal control methods (see details below). Every year hundreds of thousands of pest animals (including mice, rats, foxes, cats, birds, kangaroos, goats and pigs) are “trapped, poisoned, shot or otherwise destroyed” in Australia in defence of agriculture and the environment. The rationale for this report is that although society generally finds the control of pest species to be acceptable, providing it is done humanely and with justification, “many of the methods used for control of pest animals in Australia are far from being humane”, and that, in pursuit of improvements, there is a need for process to enable identification of the most humane methods.

This report includes quite an extensive review of methods of animal welfare assessment and looks specifically at methods that have been advocated for laboratory animals, production animals and free-living wild animals. From this it goes on to explain the rationale for the method proposed.

Very briefly, the proposed method looks at the welfare impact of each pest control method, in relation to five domains. The first five domains address physical aspects: water and food deprivation; environmental challenge; injury, disease and functional impairment; and behavioural, interactive restriction. The fifth component is an assessment of how the animal experiences these physical challenges, in terms of subjective feelings, including anxiety, fear, pain, distress, hunger and thirst. The latter domain represents an overall welfare assessment (from the animals’ viewpoint) based on the other four assessments. Welfare impact is categorised as none, mild, moderate, severe or extreme, for each of these domains. In addition, the welfare of the killing

method used is specifically assessed and the score for this and for the previous part of the assessment are combined to give an overall score for humaneness. The method enables comparisons between, that is, assessments of the relative humaneness of, various methods.

The Report concludes that it is possible to assess humaneness: “So, in response to the question: ‘can we achieve overall assessment of humaneness of pest animal control methods?’ The answer is yes, but with some limitations since the information we need to make such an assessment is not always going to be objective- or science-based”. However, it is a little disappointing to find that, although there is a section that takes the reader through, step-by-step, showing clearly how the method could be used, the Report does not include any actual worked examples or conclusions made, using the proposed methodology, of the relative humaneness of currently used methods.

**A model for assessing the relative humaneness of pest animal control methods** 2008. A4. 45 pp (ISBN 978-0-646-50357-8). By Sharp T and Saunders G, Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Canberra, New South Wales, Australia. Available at [http://www.daff.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/929888/humaneness-pest-animals.pdf](http://www.daff.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/929888/humaneness-pest-animals.pdf).

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### **Proposed revised European Directive on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes**

Eight years after the European Commission announced its plans to revise Council Directive 86/609/EEC “on the approximation of laws, regulations and administrative provisions of the Member States regarding the protection of animals used for experimental and other scientific purposes” the European Commission adopted a draft on November 5 and published it as a formal proposal. The text will now go through the European Co-decision procedure by which the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers agree a final version. The EC requires that Directives should be implemented in national legislation so the proposals for a new Directive will be looked at with interest by those involved in animal research its regulation and laboratory animal welfare.

The preamble to the proposed Directive states that the revision was necessary “to enhance the protection of animals and also to redress the current situation where some states had implemented considerably more rigorous national legislation than was required by the Directive”. The UK was certainly one of those countries and the proposed new Directive bears some striking similarities to existing UK legislation. Nonetheless, it is not identical and is still, very clearly, a draft that requires tidying up. This is particularly evident in a number of discrepancies between the explanatory memorandum at the start of the document, and the actual Articles of the Directive.

The new proposals, including memorandum and tables, total ninety pages so it is only possible to draw attention to