

Health and Welfare Strategy published by the UK's Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

In addressing this area, the approach taken by the report is to categorise based upon areas of activity, eg distinguishing between commercial and voluntary sector services, such as boarding, livery animal homes, sanctuaries and quarantine facilities, between companion animal retail and private ownership, etc. This is because they believe that welfare is affected by risks and that similar areas of activity have similar risks. This, in turn, leads to a recommendation that areas of service activity need to develop organisational representation which can implement identified strategies for improving welfare. They also recognise that species-specific bodies have a role to play in helping these bodies to achieve this, as does the Government. Overarching this, they also recommend the establishment of a supervisory body which could be tasked to ensure the proper development and application of welfare assessment protocols for each species.

The report itself is split into several sections; the two largest being 'Companion Animal Welfare Assessment', and the 'Application of Welfare Assessment to Companion Animals'. The former considers why animal welfare is important, how it can be assessed and how these assessments can be used to support regulation and makes recommendations regarding the development of codes of practice. The latter section explores the range of behavioural and physiological indicators that can be used to assess welfare and how these might be used on a national basis to practically assess and monitor welfare and the responsibilities of service providers with regard to such activities.

For anyone interested in developing a more structured and objective approach to addressing welfare issues in companion animals in the UK, this report is to be welcomed. What is to be regretted is that the future vision and approach laid out in this report, and the advice regarding the development of Codes of Practice, has been overtaken by events with the consultation on, and recent or imminent publication of, species-specific codes of practice for dogs, cats and equines in Wales, Scotland and England already having occurred. The challenge to all is to ensure that the structures and actions envisaged in this report are implemented so that they stay abreast of events and can proactively guide all future developments in this area.

**Companion Animal Welfare Assessment** (February 2009). A4, 60 pages. Published by the Companion Animal Welfare Council, UK. Copies are available at [www.cawc.org.uk/reports](http://www.cawc.org.uk/reports)

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### **Welfare of meat chickens — EU and UK rules**

In June 2010, the European Council Directive 2007/43/EC will come into force. The aim of this Directive is to protect the welfare of chickens raised for meat (commonly known as broilers) from the time they arrive at production sites until the time they leave for slaughter. The Directive is the

first piece of Community legislation to lay out baseline conditions specifically relating to the rearing of meat chickens and will apply to all holdings with 500 or more broilers, throughout the European Union. Holdings with fewer than 500 meat chickens, parent flocks, hatcheries, extensive indoor, free-range and organic chicken systems will all be excluded from the Directive.

In order to enact this Directive in England, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has drafted the Welfare of Farmed Animals and Mutilations (Permitted Procedures) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2009. These Regulations are currently undergoing consultation and, once finalised, will also come into effect in June 2010. The Welfare of Farmed Animals and Mutilations (Permitted Procedures) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2009, will be made under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and will amend the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2007 and also the Mutilations (Permitted Procedures) (England) Regulations 2007.

These Regulations make provision for an outcome-based feedback mechanism (collecting data from slaughterhouses) for assessment of welfare on a more individual basis and also to help identify producers who are failing to operate at a suitable level of welfare. Additionally, it is proposed that special approval will be needed if birds are to be kept at the highest of the three stocking-density categories defined: 33 kg m<sup>-2</sup>, 39 kg m<sup>-2</sup> and 42 kg m<sup>-2</sup>. The issue of maximum permitted stocking density is controversial as the European Union's Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare stated that behaviour and leg disorder studies have shown "that the stocking density must be 25 kg m<sup>-2</sup> or lower for major welfare problems to be largely avoided and that above 30 kg m<sup>-2</sup>, even with very good environmental control systems, there is a steep rise in the frequency of problems". An encouraging inclusion in the draft Regulations is the recognition of the importance of stockmanship; it is proposed that a Level 2 NVQ in Livestock Production (Poultry) is the minimum qualification that stock-keepers working on broiler units should hold.

Along with the draft Regulations, a number of other documents associated with the welfare of meat chickens are also currently under review by Defra, including a Code of Recommendations for the Welfare of Livestock: Meat Chickens and Breeding Chickens.

**Consultation: Welfare of Farmed Animals and Mutilations (Permitted Procedures) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2009 and Associated Documentation** (26 January 2009 for comment by 20 April 2009). Available at: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/broiler-welfare/index.htm>.

**The Welfare of Chickens Kept for Meat Production (Broilers). Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare for the European Commission** (2000). A4, 149 pages. Available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/food/fs/sc/scah/out39\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/food/fs/sc/scah/out39_en.pdf).

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