

EDITORIAL

This third issue of *Animal Welfare*, which some would regard as a make-or-break point for any new quarterly journal, maintains, and I hope confirms the same general pattern as the two previous ones. There are, again, five refereed *Articles* which have important animal welfare implications. These range from Beynen's paper on communication between laboratory rats of experiment-induced stress, to Poole's consideration of the special psychological needs of mammals.

The implication of Beynen's paper is that scientists may not be aware of the indirect effects of experimental procedures on control animals. This is important from the standpoint of welfare and also in identifying a possible shortcoming of scientific procedure. I would not wish to encourage frivolous repetition of the type of experiments quoted in Beynen's review, but there is a clear message that experimenters should realise that most mammals are capable of communicating with one another by olfactory and auditory signals which are either imperceptible to or are often disregarded by humans. The greatest care should therefore be taken to ensure that experimental animals do not communicate their reactions to their controls or indeed to other experimental individuals.

Poole's paper makes the point that mammals, with their highly developed neocortex, have psychological as well as simple ethological needs. He doubts whether birds, with their very small amount of neocortical brain tissue and long independent evolutionary history, can have developed such psychological needs. This raises a question which might be addressed by bird specialists. Whatever the outcome of such an investigation, increased concern to improve the welfare status of mammals should not reduce our efforts to create humane conditions for the other vertebrates, all of which certainly have ethological needs and are also capable of suffering pain and distress.

Wells, a UFAW Vacation Scholar, and Hepper report on the behaviour of stray and unwanted dogs in shelters in Ulster. It appears that despite the dog licensing legislation that applies in Northern Ireland, over 10,000 dogs per year continue to be taken in as strays, and thus the problem may still be irresponsible owners and overbreeding. Liere discusses the importance of dustbathing for chickens and shows that chronic deprivation of litter adversely affects the condition of the feathers and can reduce the welfare of the birds. Brent continues the theme of environmental enrichment for captive primates and describes work on the value of woodchip bedding in improving the well-being of laboratory chimpanzees. This is a technique which could well be employed in zoo enclosures.

There are then a number of interesting items in the *Reports* section including mention of the Meat and Livestock Commission's new leaflet on a head-restraint device for cattle being stunned by captive-bolt pistol; a somewhat late but nevertheless useful notice to slaughterers about changes in the law. The suggested device is quite different from the head-holder that was somewhat adversely portrayed in an article in the first issue of this journal. Also relevant to the subject of head-restraint and slaughter of cattle are two critical comments on previous articles, which are included in the *Letters* section together with responses from the challenged authors.

The criticism by Knowles and Warriss perhaps highlights the problems involved with field investigations and shows the practical difficulty of deciding which factor has seemingly influenced which result.

One certain way to improve the quality of a journal is for potential authors to know that their findings can be publicly challenged in this way. The authors of criticized articles must, in fairness, have the opportunity to respond. The Editor-in-Chief, of course, also has a duty to mediate in these matters and reserves the right to restrict the use of the *Letters* section to legitimate, constructive and civilized academic debate.

Having achieved a level of contributions of quality and also of subscription income above our original expectations, I am now confident that this new technical journal in the field of applied animal welfare will succeed where others have failed. Not that I am complacent, production is a treadmill and I am pleased to welcome Judith Kershaw as the new Editorial Assistant and Victoria Taylor who is helping to promote the journal. The aim remains the same, ie to produce a scientific and technical journal dealing specifically with factual aspects of animal welfare and particularly to record material of value that might not otherwise have been published. Workers in this field who are able to offer such contributions are encouraged to submit articles no matter how raw their data; they will be given all possible help to get their findings placed on record in this journal.

Roger Ewbank
Editor-in-Chief

July 1992

The Principles of Humane Experimental Technique

by

W M S Russell and R L Burch

This classic work was originally published in 1959 by Methuen & Co Ltd, London and has been out of print since 1967 when the Charles C Thomas, USA edition was exhausted. The elegant classification of humane technique pioneered by Russell and Burch - the 3Rs of *Refinement, Reduction and Replacement* - sought to stem the then explosive expansion of numbers of animals used in medical and veterinary research.

Now some 25 years later it is re-issued as a Special Edition by UFAW as a long overdue tribute to the authors and in response to the initiative of the Humane Society of the United States in establishing its *Russell and Burch Award* which recognizes outstanding contributions to the advancement of alternatives to the use of animals in research, testing or education.

It is important that this original work which is still relevant today should be readily available for the new generation of research scientists.

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