

Reports and Comments

Council of Europe Revises Guidance on Accommodation and Care of Laboratory Animals

In May 1997, the member states who were parties to the convention ETS 123 agreed to revise Appendix A to the convention. This Appendix provides guidance on the minimum standards for housing, husbandry and care for laboratory animals, and while not legally binding has been an influential document in achieving some degree of standardisation across Europe. The Parties agreed to establish a Working Party composed of experts and representatives from the parties and observers. The Working Party met 8 times and drew up a revised draft appendix based on experience, current good practice and scientific findings obtained since the drafting of the original Appendix. The revision puts a greater emphasis on meeting the needs of the animals within their accommodation, and space allowances were drawn up taking into account enrichment provisions that might be necessary. The revision was supported by a number of background documents which provide a review of the literature and support for the revision, and they should prove to be a useful resource for the scientific community.

The Working Party agreed the final draft of the revised Appendix A at its 8th meeting on 22-24 September 2004 and submitted it to the Multilateral Consultation for adoption. The fourth Multilateral Consultation of the Parties to the European Convention for the protection of vertebrate animals used for experimental and other scientific purposes was held in Strasbourg on 15 June 2006, at which the draft appendix A was unanimously adopted by the Parties to the Convention. The appendix will enter into force twelve months after its adoption, ie 15 June 2007.

The Council of the European Union has announced the intention of the Community to incorporate the newly adopted provisions in Directive 86/609/EEC of 24 November 1986 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.

Draft proposal for the revised Appendix A – guidelines for accommodation and care of animals (final version for adoption). 6 December 2004. Council of Europe, Strasbourg. 109 pp. This document together with background information provided by the expert groups is available from the Council of Europe website: http://www.coe.int/T/E/legal-affairs/legal_cooperation/biological_safety_use_of_animals/Laboratory-animals/

R Hubrecht
UFAW

European Action Plan on the Protection and Welfare of Animals 2006-1010

This is an interesting, brief but broad, review by the European Commission of measures at the European

Community level for animal welfare, and a look at future strategy. It is presented under five headings concerning actions for the future. These are:

- upgrading existing standards for animal protection and welfare;
- giving a high priority to promoting policy-orientated future research on animal protection and welfare and application of the 3Rs principle;
- introducing standardised animal welfare indicators;
- ensuring that animal keepers/handlers as well as the general public are more involved and informed on current standards of animal welfare and fully appreciate their role in promoting animal protection and welfare; and
- continue to support and initiate further international initiatives to raise awareness and create a consensus on animal welfare.

Since 1974 when the EC's first piece of welfare legislation – concerning the protection of livestock animals at time of slaughter - was adopted, there has been a growing body of community legislation relating to animal welfare. This relates to farmed animals, animals used in scientific procedures, trapping of wild animals, and zoo animals. This action plan (see details below), looks across all these fields and identifies various actions for the future.

Among the ideas captured here are that, '*consideration will be given to the establishment of a European Centre or Laboratory for the protection of the welfare of animals.*' And that this body could be responsible for taking forward some of the key tasks outlined in this Action Plan, including: '*the standardisation/certification process for new welfare indicators*' and stimulation and coordination of research to upgrade existing standards.

Other quite striking ideas here are that: '*The Commission, with the support of Member States and relevant stakeholders should urgently define a proper strategy to communicate to citizens on the issues of animal protection and welfare.*' And consideration of: '*...the establishment of a specific Information Platform on animal welfare in order to nurture further dialogue and exchange of experiences between important stakeholders in the field of animal welfare.*'

This is a welcome overview of animal welfare priorities for the European Community. Its existence is testament to the remarkable increase in the importance afforded to animal welfare in the EC in recent years.

Commission Working Document on a Community Action Plan on the Protection and Welfare of Animals 2006-2010: Strategic basis for the proposed actions. (January 2006) Published by the Commission of the European Communities. 16pp. This report can be accessed at: www.ecopa.eu/doc/eucomm_aw_06-10_01.pdf

J Kirkwood
UFAW