

## REPORTS AND COMMENTS

### Protection of animals during transport

The first European Community Directive on the protection of animals during transport was adopted in 1977. The Directive has since been amended twice, most recently in 1995 by Council Directive 95/29/EC. The latter introduced several changes. Transporters of animals were made responsible for implementation of the provisions and had to be approved by competent authorities in the member states, loading densities were set for farm animals, and it became a requirement for journeys in excess of 8 hours to be planned in relation to provisions concerning vehicles and travelling times. The Directive also set an obligation for review and reporting on the implementation of its provisions. Five years on from the adoption of the Directive, the Commission has now published its report (see details below). The conclusions are not good. The main findings listed in the summary include:

*'Member states have difficulties in applying the Directive. The Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) points to the low level of priority given by Member States in implementing the Directive.'*

*'Difficulties in collecting inspection reports from Member States and insufficient harmonization of the data transmitted limited their use.'*

*'The transport of horses from Central and Eastern European Countries to the European Union is a particular area of concern. Little long-term improvement has been secured.'*

The summary also includes in the list of main technical findings: inadequate road vehicles, illegal route plans and non-compliance with travel-time limits, negligence and poor handling of animals, and overloading.

In response to the problems identified, the report describes a variety of areas in which remedial action must be considered. Among these are: that Member States must allocate rapidly adequate resources to meet their obligations for this Directive, that specific procedures must be set up to facilitate checks on implementation of route-planning, that the Community should become a party to the European Convention for the Protection of Animals during International Transport, and that unloading and resting of horses passing through the border of the Union should become compulsory. The report also specifies that several aspects of the directive, notably relating to travelling times and loading densities, should be evaluated scientifically, and that measures to encourage the slaughter of animals near their farms of origin also merit examination.

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*Report from the Commission to the Council and European Parliament on the experience acquired by Member States since the Implementation of Council Directive 95/29/EC amending Directive 91/628/EEC concerning the protection of animals during transport. December 2000. Published by the Commission of the European Communities. 23pp. Available at <http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/index.html>.*

### Animal welfare assessment internet resource

A database of literature relating to the assessment of animal welfare compiled by staff of the Department of Laboratory Animal Science, Utrecht and the Animal Welfare Information Center at the USA National Agriculture Library has been made available on the internet. This comprises two lists of publications from the scientific literature, one on aspects of the assessment of welfare including pain and distress, the other on related literature. The lists are presented alphabetically by author and there is a facility for short-cutting to authors by surname by clicking on the initial of their surname. The lists are likely to prove helpful to persons new to the

field, providing they will be regularly updated. The references cannot be searched or sorted by subject.

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*Assessment of Animal Welfare and Animal Distress.* Website resource compiled by J D Kuiper of the Department of Laboratory Animal Science, University of Utrecht, Netherlands, and T Allen of the Animal Welfare Information Center, National Agricultural Library, USA. <http://www.vetifo.demon.nl/aw/index.html>.

### **UK Medical Research Council's position on the use of animals in medical research**

Recognizing public concern on the use of animals in research, the Medical Research Council (MRC) of the UK has produced a booklet which outlines its own position on experiments using animals. This sets out the MRC's principles including its active support for the development and dissemination of techniques for the '3Rs': reduction, refinement or replacement of animal experiments. The booklet includes sections on alternatives used by the MRC, past benefits arising from animal work, and how animal studies have advanced medicine. Seven examples of current research into disease are given and the role of animals in these programmes is outlined. Information is also provided on the species and numbers of animals used. There are notes on the legal controls on use of animals in scientific procedures and the booklet also sets out the MRC's expectations on the conduct of its scientists in promoting good practice in animal welfare over and above the requirements of the law. The booklet is clearly written and well produced with colour illustrations throughout.

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*Mice and Medicine: Animal Experiments, Medical Advances and the MRC.* July 2000. Published by the Medical Research Council. 36pp. Paperback. Available from the publishers, 20 Park Crescent, London W1N 4AL.

### **Health controls on pet animals imported into the European Union**

In 1998, the Dutch Society for the Protection of Animals undertook a preliminary investigation of the conduct of veterinary checks on animals imported into the European Union (EU) for the pet industry. This was prompted by concern for the health and welfare of these imported animals and concern also that they could introduce infectious diseases into the EU. The results suggested that import controls were unsatisfactory in some Member States. In view of this, the Society, in cooperation with the Eurogroup for Animal Welfare, initiated a more extensive inquiry.

The study was conducted by seeking information, via a questionnaire sent to the chief veterinary officers of the EU member states, on the extent and nature of checks on animals imported for the pet trade. This included, for example, questions on whether physical checks and quarantining were carried out, whether shipments of birds were screened for Newcastle disease and/or avian influenza, and whether mammals were screened for rabies. Detailed replies were received from 10 states.

The authors of the report concluded from the results '*that the practice of veterinary checks in the European Union gives serious reason for concern about the import of highly contagious diseases like rabies, Newcastle disease and avian influenza*'. They also concluded that current practice does not match up to the requirements set by existing EU legislation and that there are considerable differences between states in disease control procedures in imported animals. Because, apparently, ports of entry for CITES-listed animals (those covered by the international convention on trade in endangered species) in some states are not always border posts for veterinary inspections, the authors believe that some CITES-listed animals may be entering the EU with no veterinary checks.