

Reports and Comments

Animal Welfare welcomes the submission of items for this Reports and Comments section of the journal. These are accepted for publication at the discretion of the Editorial Office and are not peer-reviewed.

Scientific Procedures on Living Animals — Statistics for 2004

The annual report produced by the Home Office, on the use of living animals in scientific experiments and procedures, was published in December 2005 and reveals that during 2004 2.85 million procedures were carried out. This is an increase of 2.3% (63 thousand) on 2003 and is the highest number since 1992. Overall there has been a significant decline in procedures since 1976 but this has levelled off because of the increased use of genetically modified animals (see below). The report outlines all procedures by purpose and animal; toxicology and non-toxicology procedures are presented by animal, purpose and genetic status; and tree tables display information about procedures by animal group, particularly how the procedure and the target body system are related. Finally, historical trends are examined in a number of categories.

The main purposes of the procedures during 2004 were breeding (983 thousand or 34%), fundamental biological research (881 thousand or 31%), and applied studies into human medicine or dentistry (672 thousand or 24%). The vast majority (85%) of procedures were carried out using rodents, most of which were mice; the remaining procedures mainly involved fish and birds.

Overall, the use of genetically modified (GM) animals has increased by 5% on the 2003 figures to 32%. 68% of GM animals were used “solely to maintain breeding colonies”. Rodents accounted for 96% of the procedures that were recorded as using GM animals; there was an increase of 35% in the use of GM amphibians; and the use of GM fish doubled compared with 2003. In addition to the GM animals, 9% of all procedures in 2004 used animals that had a harmful genetic defect.

Non-toxicology procedures (85% of the total) were focused primarily on immunological research, with pharmaceutical research and development, cancer research, and anatomy being the next largest areas of interest. Toxicology procedures, and those involved in safety or efficacy evaluation, accounted for 15% of the total, which is a continuation of a decrease that has been evident for some years; the same category accounted for 25% of procedures in 1995.

Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals, Great Britain, 2004. Home Office, Crown Copyright 2005. Published by TSO (The Stationery Office), available online: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop; by email: book.orders@tso.co.uk; by telephone: 0870 240 3701; or by post: TSO, PO Box 29, Norwich NR3 1GN, UK. Price £14.50.

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UK Food Ethics Council Launches Bulletin

The UK Food Ethics Council has launched a new quarterly magazine for subscribers, which aims to cover “key developments in food and farming”. Of the ten articles in the first issue, one focuses directly on animal welfare and discusses some of the issues that surround chicken and egg production. It goes on to examine our role as consumers who have little or no understanding of the processes involved in producing our food. Other articles adhere to the overall theme of the issue — Negotiations — and examine world trade talks, policy making, and supermarkets and stakeholders, and the remainder look at fish farming and climate change. News, reading and upcoming events are going to become regular sections. The first issue is available to download free at www.foodethicscouncil.org/bulletin.

Bulletin of the Food Ethics Council. Spring 2006. Food Ethics Council, 39–41 Surrey Street, Brighton BN1 3PB, UK. Telephone: +44 (0) 1273 766 654; email: info@foodethicscouncil.org; website: www.foodethicscouncil.org

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Policy Statement from the Sheep Veterinary Society, UK

The UK’s Sheep Veterinary Society recently released a policy statement outlining the views of the Society with regard to the welfare of sheep. In the statement, the Society expressed concern about the forthcoming shift towards a market driven industry, and identified the reduction in number of local abattoirs as a particular problem because it necessitates transportation of animals over greater distances. Certification of competence is proposed to counteract the “continuing decline...in experienced shepherds”, and the new legislation in England, Scotland and Wales, which places a duty of care on to animal owners, is welcomed by the Society. A national campaign to eradicate sheep scab is also called for, after the success of local initiatives.

Welfare of Sheep in the UK; Sheep Veterinary Society.

The Policy statement is available in full on the Sheep Veterinary Society website: <http://svs.mri.sari.ac.uk/UKwelfare.htm>

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New Zealand Painful Husbandry Procedures Code of Welfare Published

The New Zealand Minister of Agriculture issued the Animal Welfare (Painful Husbandry Procedures) Code of Welfare No. 7 in December 2005. The document is intended to provide minimum standards and best practice recommendations relating to procedures carried out on farmed animals for “non-therapeutic reasons”. Specific chapters cover castration, tail docking, and disbudding and dehorning, but all painful procedures fall under the Code. Details are provided of other published guidelines where specific information