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Information on the Review of Part I of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 can be found at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/wildlifeact-part1/index.htm>

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Guidance on the slaughter of injured cattle in the EU

From 1 January 2006, new EU Hygiene Regulations come into force that change the way which animals slaughtered or killed because of concerns about their welfare can be dealt with. As only healthy and clean animals can now be accepted for slaughter, the new regulations mean that the ultimate destination of such animals, killed because of injury, disease or illness, will be determined by animal welfare and food safety considerations. Decisions will have to be taken both as to whether an animal that is injured or shows other signs of abnormalities fulfils public health conditions for slaughter for human consumption and whether it is fit to be transported to a slaughterhouse, or emergency slaughtered in situ and then transported. In many cases, the decision will be that such animals are not eligible for human consumption and must instead be dealt with as fallen stock.

The British Cattle Veterinary Association, with assistance from the Food Standards Agency, UK Rural Affairs Department and the Meat Hygiene Service, have produced guidance to help veterinary surgeons and farmers make such decisions and arrive at a course of action. Key to the guidance is the ability to demonstrate that any animal for human consumption is or was healthy prior to slaughter, or to the event that brought about the need for slaughter. This includes the need to ensure that the statutory withdrawal period for any veterinary medicine, including anthelmintics, has been observed for the animal. Confirmation of health status through both ante and post mortem inspection by a veterinary surgeon or OVS is now a necessity.

In addition, the guidance notes draw attention to the fact that in the UK, under the Welfare of Animals (Transport) Order 1997, unfit cattle may only be transported to the nearest available place for veterinary treatment or diagnosis, or to the nearest available place of slaughter, and only if the animal is not likely to be subject to unnecessary suffering by reason of its unfitness. The Guide seeks to further clarify this requirement and advises that any animal suffering pain, which cannot be loaded without undue force, or with severe wounds or protruding viscera, eg prolapsed uterus, must therefore not be transported. This advice similarly holds for any animal that is unable to bear weight on all four limbs, or that may suffer unnecessary pain during transport as a result of its lameness, or for which transport is likely to cause pain. If in any doubt, the guide advises, the animal is best not transported.

Once it has been determined that an animal cannot be transported, a decision has to be made whether the animal is

eligible for emergency slaughter outside a slaughterhouse for human consumption. The Guide indicates that a veterinary surgeon must be involved ante-mortem in this decision, and also must be present at the time of slaughter. It states that it is the veterinary surgeons responsibility to determine whether the slaughter is the result of an emergency (ie an event requiring immediate action) or accident (ie an unforeseen or unexpected event), whether it was healthy prior to the accident and whether it fulfils the ante-mortem conditions — including those that it be free of disease or conditions that may be transmitted to humans or animals through handling or eating the meat. They must also issue a declaration to accompany the animal to the slaughterhouse indicating that the animal was healthy and fit for consumption. For cattle over 24 months, there is also a requirement that a Brain Stem Sample has been taken for testing for BSE. Failure to do so, the Guide warns, will render the animal ineligible for inclusion in the food chain. The Guide then finishes by giving advice on methods of emergency slaughter, along with examples of the information that must accompany an animal for slaughter, that is known or suspected to be injured or showing abnormality including veterinary and owner declarations, and a decision tree on how to determine the appropriate action to be taken.

Some have expressed concern that the new rules may, because of associated costs of dealing with sick and injured animals, lead to delays and welfare problems in some cases as a result.

Guidance for Veterinary Surgeons and Farmers on the Slaughter of Cattle Which Are Injured Or Showing Signs Of Abnormalities (September 2005). Published by the British Cattle Veterinary Association. 24 pp. Copies are available on request from the BCVA Office, The Green, Frampton on Severn, Gloucestershire GL2 7EP, UK, or can be downloaded by BCVA members from their website: <http://www.bcva.org.uk>

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Implementation of the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy

The Australian Animal Welfare Strategy (AAWS), which received full Government support in May 2004 after 5 years in development by the National Consultative Committee on Animal Welfare (NCCAW), is now in the early stages of implementation. The Primary Industries Ministerial Council (PIMC) approved the Strategy in 2004, and in the 2005-06 Budget the Australian Government committed \$6 million over four years to fund a plan for its implementation. This is being coordinated by the Primary Industries Standing Committee (PISC), and in September '05 a national workshop involving 100 stakeholders agreed on a National Implementation Plan. In addition, six working groups for the six key sectors involved with animal welfare (livestock/production animals; animals used in research and teaching; aquatic animals; companion animals; animals used for work, sport, recreation or display; and animals in the wild) were agreed, which will develop Action Plans for each. The Strategy is based on the existing framework for animal welfare in Australia, but aims to refine it to ensure there is