

### European Food Safety Authority's Scientific Panel on Animal Health and Welfare publishes its report on the welfare aspects of various systems of keeping laying hens

Under European Council Directive 1999/74/EC, which lays down minimum standards for the protection of laying hens, the European Commission is required to submit a report to Council regarding the various systems for keeping laying hens, based on current scientific opinion. Accordingly, the European Food Safety Authority's Scientific Panel on Animal Health and Welfare (AHAW) has produced a comprehensive 143-page assessment of laying hen welfare in these different systems, taking into account the "pathological, zootechnical, physiological and ethological aspects of the various systems, and of their health and environmental impact".

The report begins with an acknowledgement of the advances in the knowledge of welfare aspects of hen biology since the last such report, the 1996 Report on the Welfare of Laying Hens by the Scientific Veterinary Committee, Animal Welfare Section (SVC/EC 1996), in particular with regard to behavioural priorities, prevalence of injuries, and pain perception. The report discusses the current state of all aspects of laying hen welfare with regard to housing systems, including how animal health is affected by systems, the physiological indicators affected by systems, productivity related to systems, behavioural priorities (including the ability of systems to satisfy behavioural priorities), areas of concern/management of problems, food safety affected by different production systems, and finally a welfare assessment of the different systems.

For those requiring a more succinct version, the AHAW Panel has also produced an accompanying opinion on the report, in which the data contained within the report are assessed and conclusions and recommendations made. In summarising it identifies the most severe threats to bird welfare in the various systems as follows:

"In conventional cages:

- Low bone strength and fractures sustained during depopulation.
- The inability to perform some high priority behaviours including nesting, perching, foraging and dustbathing.

In small furnished cages:

- Feather pecking and cannibalism in flocks with non beak trimmed birds.
- Depending on lay-out, some high priority behaviours (eg foraging, dust bathing) can not be performed or are limited.

In large furnished cages:

- No data available on relevant issues like bone fractures, feather pecking and cannibalism.

In non-cage systems:

- Bone fractures sustained during lay.
- Feather pecking and cannibalism in flocks with non beak trimmed birds.

- If an outdoor run is provided for birds in non-cage systems, there is additionally a high risk of parasitic diseases."

In concluding, the opinion indicates particular areas where data are lacking and further research required. Included as high priority topics are:

Health and disease — in particular research into new, effective and feasible treatments for the control of endo- and ecto-parasites, the causes of fractures sustained during the laying period, and better methods of detection of fractures.

Injurious pecking and cannibalism — research into why particular birds start to show cannibalistic behaviour, the possible link between cannibalistic behaviour and commercially important traits, and selection against the damaging effects of pecking.

Foraging — research in order to more clearly define availability, qualities and amounts of foraging facilities appropriate to good welfare during rearing and laying.

Comfort behaviour — more research is required in order to define the qualities and space allowances of facilities required to satisfy dust-bathing motivation.

Rearing — research is required to understand the impact of how birds are reared on their ability to function well in different systems later in life.

Design — future research should focus on the provision and use of litter and occupational devices, space requirements, group size and stocking density, and lighting.

**SVC (Scientific Veterinary Committee — Section Animal Welfare) 1996 Report on the welfare of laying hens.** European Commission DG VI/BII.2

**Welfare aspects of various systems for keeping laying hens.** Scientific Report of the Scientific Panel on Animal Health and Welfare of the European Food Safety Authority on a request from the European Commission related to the welfare aspects of various systems of keeping laying hens (Question No EFSA-Q-2003-092). Adopted by the AHAW Panel on 14th and 15th September 2004. 143 pp A4.

**Opinion of the Scientific Panel on Animal Health and Welfare on a request from the Commission related to the welfare aspects of various systems of keeping laying hens.** 24 pp A4. Adopted by the AHAW Panel on 10th and 11th November 2004. Available at [http://www.efsa.eu.int/science/ahaw/ahaw\\_opinions/831\\_en.html](http://www.efsa.eu.int/science/ahaw/ahaw_opinions/831_en.html)

*K Parkes*

*UFAW*

### New European Council Regulation on the protection of animals during transport

On 22nd December 2004, the European Union launched Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 on the protection of animals during transport and related operations. The Regulation, which amends Directives 64/432/EEC and 93/119/EC and Regulation (EC) No 1255/97, is the result of detailed discussion of proposals first published by the Commission in July 2003. It will enter into force by 5th

January 2007 and will apply directly to each Member State, unlike the current Directive, which required implementation through national legislation. It will apply to the commercial transport of all vertebrate animals, although some requirements will apply only to farmed animals, horses, and poultry.

Much of the new Regulation is concerned with accountability and enforcement. It more clearly identifies who is responsible for each particular aspect of the animal's journey and introduces stricter rules on responsibility. This means that in future anyone in the transport chain, including operators of markets and assembly centres, will be able to be held responsible for violations, not only transport companies. New and more efficient supervision and enforcement tools will also be introduced, including the use of satellite navigation systems on all vehicles used to transport horses (except registered horses) or farmed animals on journeys over 8 hours by road.

The new Regulation defines unfit animals more clearly and imposes a ban on transporting very young animals, unless the journey is less than 100 km. The Regulation allows for emergency measures to be taken in the event of non-compliance with this Regulation by transporters. There are also stricter rules for journeys of more than 8 hours, with provisions for checks to be carried out by the competent authority at any stage of a long journey. In addition, the Regulation introduces rules to deal with situations before and after transport, for example at slaughterhouses or at harbours, in recognition that most of the stress imposed on the animals occurs at loading and unloading. The new Regulation also imposes stricter requirements for the training of long distance drivers. Previously, only general requirements for training of drivers and attendants were necessary. There are also stricter regulations of compliance for approval certificates of transport vehicles to be granted, as well as limits on applications for authorisation.

Enforcement will be improved as the new Regulation is directly applicable in all Member States. This should improve information exchange and procedures for cooperation between Member States, in addition to avoiding inconsistent interpretations that were possible under existing Directives. In addition, details of all long distance transporters and their vehicles will be held on an electronic database which will be available to the relevant authorities in each Member State.

Although the more controversial aspects of transport are not referred to in the new Regulation, such as travelling times, rest periods, space allowances and loading densities, the EU Commission is required to review them by 2011, which could lead to a proposal for modifications of these procedures.

**Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 of 22nd December 2004 on the protection of animals during transport and related operations and amending Directives 64/432/EEC and 93/119/EC and Regulation (EC) No 1255/97.** Available at [http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/lex/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2005/l\\_003/l\\_00320050105en00010044.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/lex/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2005/l_003/l_00320050105en00010044.pdf)

*K Parkes*

*UFAW*

## **New Zealand's Codes of Welfare for Animals in Zoos and Circuses**

On 1st January 2005, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, New Zealand, issued the latest of its animal welfare codes, the Animal Welfare (Zoos) Code of Welfare 2005 and the Animal Welfare (Circuses) Code of Welfare 2005, which set out minimum standards and recommendations relating to all aspects of the care of animals.

The code of welfare for zoos contains 11 chapters: introduction; purpose and interpretation of the code; obligations of operators and persons in charge of animals and animal management; food and water; environments, facilities, equipment and housing; normal behaviour and stress; animal health and disease; animal rehabilitation centres; transport; euthanasia; and quality management. Within the code there are 16 'minimum standards' relating to the zoo operator, inspections, staff training, hygiene, animal reproduction, food and water, physical environments, social environments, facilities and equipment, housing and controlled environments, normal patterns of behaviour, fear and distress, illness and disease, wild animal rehabilitation, transport, and euthanasia.

The code for circuses contains chapters on the obligations of owners and persons in charge of animals; circus operation; food and water; shelter, accommodation and housing; environmental and behavioural enrichment; animal training and performances; species-specific standards; disease and injury control; transport; and quality assurance systems. There are 12 'minimum standards' relating to animal acquisition and holding; public access to circus animals; staff and staff training; food and water; shelter, accommodation and housing; exercise and behavioural enrichment; training and performances; lions; elephants; primates; disease and injury control; and transport.

Throughout both documents recommended best practice guidelines are presented, which set out ideal husbandry practice and standards of care and conduct over and above the minimum required to meet the obligations in The Animal Welfare Act 1999. Only minimum standards have legal effect; best practice guidelines are included for information and educational purposes only.

**Animal Welfare (Zoos) Code of Welfare 2005** (2005). 45 pp A4 paperback (ISBN 0 478 07817 X). **Animal Welfare (Circuses) Code of Welfare 2005** (2005). 38 pp A4 paperback (ISBN 0 478 07820 X). Both published by the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, ASB Bank House, 101–103 The Terrace, PO Box 2526, Wellington, New Zealand. Both available from the Executive Co-ordinator, Animal Welfare, MAF Biosecurity, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, PO Box 2526, Wellington, New Zealand; email: [animalwelfare@maf.govt.nz](mailto:animalwelfare@maf.govt.nz).

*K Parkes*

*UFAW*