

citizens with independent information about food, farming and farm animal welfare and ii) to establish market mechanisms that enable concerned consumers to make informed decisions about the welfare provenance of animal products, both home produced and imported.

For this new strategy to be effective, FAWC details eight conditions that must be fulfilled:

- i) The government acts as the guardian of farm animal welfare;
- ii) Standards for a good life to be defined by an independent body;
- iii) Minimum welfare standards to be defined by quality of life;
- iv) Stockmen to be educated and trained to a high standard about animal welfare;
- v) Welfare assessment to be valid, feasible and rigorous with independent audit;
- vi) The food supply chain to show due diligence with marketing claims verified;
- vii) Citizens to be educated about food and farming from childhood;
- viii) Animal products to be labelled according to welfare provenance to provide consumer choice.

Ten medium to long-term goals that relate to ensuring these conditions are met are also outlined, and FAWC states that it believes that it should be possible for the government and commerce to have policies in place to ensure their implementation by 2015. Finally, FAWC recommends that progress against these goals should be monitored independently and the results published.

Good though this report is, its true worth will ultimately depend on the UK government and regional assemblies response to it. It remains to be seen whether they will have the appetite to rise to the challenges it outlines but if they do then this report has the potential to take a place alongside the Brambell report as a key moment in the development of animal welfare policy in the UK.

Farm Animal Welfare in Great Britain: Past, Present and Future (2009). Farm Animal Welfare Council in the UK, A4, 70 pages. Available from the Farm Animal Welfare Council, Area 5A, 9 Millbank, c/o Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London SW1P 3JR and at <http://www.fawc.org.uk/reports.htm>

S Wickens

UFAW

Pedigree dog health and welfare: Findings of the APGAW inquiry

Anyone involved in the breeding of pedigree dogs in the UK has been living in interesting times of late. Since the screening of the documentary 'Pedigree Dogs Exposed' on BBC television in August 2008, which alleged that the 'ideal breed standards' set by the Kennel Club have resulted in inbred, unhealthy pedigree dogs suffering from significant health and welfare problems, breeder practice has been under scrutiny like never before. Numerous reports,

committees and press releases from a diverse range of organisations have all sought to further comment, either to defend current practice or to highlight concerns and recommend action. As a result, the UK government has been placed under considerable pressure to do something, to legislate and to regulate practice. This report, from the Associate Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare (APGAW) inquiry into the breeding of pedigree dogs is the latest of a long line of publications in this area, but one that marks a significant step in that it is one of two inquiries whose findings the government have stated they are awaiting before deciding upon their course of action (the other being the Bateson independent inquiry into dog breeding, published in January 2010).

The APGAW inquiry was set up in November 2008 with the remit of investigating welfare issues surrounding pedigree dogs in the UK, the identification of factors which may improve standards at all stages of dogs' lives, and to provide advice on potential measures suitable for secondary legislation concerning the issue under the Animal Welfare Act. Split into seven sections, the APGAW report, based on evidence from all interested parties, outlines the background to the inquiry and the severity and scale of the problem, and addresses, in turn, the dog breeding world, the veterinary profession, legal requirements, the sale of dogs and the consumer and the funding of change.

Perhaps the most notable finding was that there are indeed serious problems with the health and welfare of many pedigree dogs and that measures should be taken to improve these. These measures, which are then detailed, are numerous and specific. Amongst these are the imposition of restrictions on the breeding of closely-related dogs and the number of times a sire can be used for breeding. The development of specific breeding strategies for different breeds of dogs, based upon genetic advice aimed at reducing the occurrence of health and welfare problems, is recommended. To assist this, the report indicates that a national database to collect information on the occurrences and extent of heredity diseases and health and welfare concerns for each breed should be set up. The report calls for health testing of dogs by veterinarians to identify hereditary and other diseases prior to breeding to become standard practice, and a legal necessity when selecting sires and dams for commercial breeding.

A role for the Kennel Club (KC) in the provision of information on health problems of different breeds and in the listing of breeders following recommended practice regarding health tests is identified. The inquiry felt that recommended practice should be outlined in each dog breed club's Code of Ethics, which the inquiry also believed needed to be more rigorously policed, both by the clubs themselves and the KC. Indeed, in this whole area of enforcement of standards, the inquiry identified the KC as needing to be much more robust and active. The inquiry calls for the Kennel Club to make a decision as its primary role; that of the registration of dogs or of the promotion and improvement of dog health and welfare, with a clear steer given that APGAW believes it should be the latter.

Following on from this steer, the inquiry also states that KC breed standards should ensure that the confirmation they require ensure that a dog is 'fit for purpose' rather than simply meeting an arbitrarily set of standards based upon visual aesthetics. Further recommendations regarding which dogs are allowed to participate in KC dog shows and a requirement for health screening for involvement in these are also made, along with a greater role for the veterinarian in developing strategies to improve the health of dogs identified, through the issuing of health certificates. Puppy sale contracts to protect the consumer are called for and Defra is advised that it should take forward a public awareness campaign on the disadvantages of buying a puppy without careful consideration.

The inquiry was aware, however, that such voluntary calls and recommendations for action may not be sufficient to ensure the health and welfare of all dogs are adequately protected. In such a situation, the inquiry states that regulation of health and welfare standards will have to occur through the passing of relevant legislation, to include a code of good practice. The inquiry believes that the formation of an independent advisory body would be the best way to achieve this, which would provide advice and make recommendations through the KC to breed clubs and societies on the setting of breed standards and to advise the government on the need for further action. The timeframe that APGAW suggest for judging the success of the Kennel Club's efforts in taking forward these recommendations and setting its house in order is not long, only up to the next UK general election, which must occur before June 2010. The inquiry believes that this is all the time that is needed to allow these changes to be made, and that after the election a judgement should be made as to their effectiveness and the need for legislative control.

(NB: The Kennel Club response to the APGAW report can be found here: <http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/item/2768/23/5/3>)

A Healthier Future for Pedigree dogs. The Report of the APGAW Inquiry into the Health and Welfare Issues Surrounding the Breeding of Pedigree Dogs (November 2009). The Associate Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare, A4, 56 pages. Available to be downloaded from <http://www.apgaw.org/reports.asp>

S Wickens

UFAW

Project to develop animal welfare risk assessment guidelines on stunning and killing

In December 2005, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) held a scientific colloquium in Parma on 'Principles of risk assessment of food producing animals'. One of the conclusions was that there was no standardised methodology for animal welfare risk assessments. Since then various EFSA animal welfare reports have been published which include risk assessments but none of these addressed stunning and killing of farmed and laboratory animals. This is the subject of a report published in October 2009 (see details below).

Everyone would like there to be clear, unambiguous, scientifically-grounded methodology for animal welfare assessment but in the introduction the authors draw attention to the difficulties. "Definitions of animal welfare can hardly be defended scientifically. Instead they are formulated on the basis of the context and the goals one wants to achieve. Regardless of the definition chosen there will be alternative views on what is an appropriate definition. However, some definitions are more useful than others in a scientific context. From a risk management and communication perspective, the choice should also match the opinion of most people, or at least be understandable or acceptable."

The objective of risk assessment is to identify and characterise potential hazards (in this case to animal welfare) and to estimate the probability and magnitude of their effects. The application of risk assessment to animal welfare is relatively new and the development of methodologies is 'work in progress'. In Chapter 4, the authors review the use of the risk assessment approach in recent EFSA reports and discuss some of the difficulties in comparison with risk assessment approaches to food safety (which are, arguably, much more straightforward).

The Report includes a review of stunning and killing methods including electrical methods, captive bolt, free bullet, water jet, air jet, neck dislocation and decapitation and also considers public health implications of various methods. It then goes on to consider the welfare risks at stunning and killing and how these risks may be assessed. Lists of potential hazards were drawn from literature surveys and a 5-point scale was developed for categorisation of the severity of adverse effects. Based on the analyses, tables are presented of good stunning and killing practices and critical control points for various stages of the procedure. For example, for slaughter cattle: unloading to lairage, holding pens, passageway, during restraint and during stunning. For each potential hazard, these tables list 'dos' and 'don'ts'. For example, for use of captive bolts, the 'dos' are "no corneal reflex no rhythmic breathing" and the 'don'ts' are "do not continue if recovery signs present".

The Report ends with a recommendation that the commissioning of a risk question needs to be formalised and as limited as possible. It provides useful information and analysis and illustrates the challenges of developing welfare assessment methods.

Project to Develop Animal Welfare Risk Assessment Guidelines on Stunning and Killing (October 2009). Prepared by Algers B, Anil, H, Blokhuis H, Fuchs K, Hultgren J, Lambooi B, Nunes T, Paulson P, and Smulders F. Technical Report submitted to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). 88 Pages with an annex of 25 pages. Available at: http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1211902958022.htm

JK Kirkwood

UFAW