

The main body of the guidelines explain in more detail what factors should be considered to protect the welfare of wild animal casualties under the following headings: Animal accommodation; Provision of food and water; Observation and record-keeping; Safety and security; Veterinary care; Transportation; Release; Staff and training; Education; and Independent ethical review.

Additionally, included within the Appendices, is a section covering the training and qualifications required for the legal treatment of wildlife casualties (including a useful summary table).

The guidelines provide a framework for good practice and should be a useful resource for both wildlife rehabilitation centres and veterinary surgeons.

Good Practice Guidelines for Wildlife Rehabilitation Centres (October 2016). A4, 42 pages. British Veterinary Zoological Society. Available online at: http://www.bvzs.org/images/uploads/BVZS_Good_Practice_Guidelines_for_Wildlife_Centres_011016_.pdf.

E Carter;

UFAW

House of Commons report on animal welfare in England

Last year (2016) marked the 10-year anniversary of the Animal Welfare Act 2006. The Act consolidated more than 20 other pieces of legislation and introduced a positive ‘duty of care’ towards animals. However, it did not provide detailed measures to protect animal welfare, but instead offered the means to introduce further, secondary, legislation to address areas of specific welfare concern where considered necessary (such as: riding schools; livery yards; animal [dog and cat] boarding; pet shops; pet fairs; mutilations; tethering horses; animal sanctuaries; greyhounds; and performing animals).

In February 2016, the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee launched an inquiry into the welfare of domestic pets in England, with the following Terms of Reference: “to examine the effectiveness of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 with regards to domestic pets; the Regulation surrounding the sale of domestic pets, including online sale and advertising; enforcement of current animal welfare legislation, including prosecution of offences by the police, local authorities, the RSPCA and others; and comparative approaches to enforcement in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales”.

The four main areas of interest when considering the Animal Welfare Act 2006, were: the use of secondary legislation under the Act; the role of the Act in protecting progeny; awareness of the Act; and enforcement of the Act.

Oral and written evidence was gathered from a number of sources (including: animal welfare charities; local

government; industry representatives; veterinary representatives; and academics; amongst others) and the Committee also visited a dog and cat home, a commercial breeder, and an animal rescue centre.

The bulk of the inquiry focuses on dogs, in particular the breeding and selling of dogs. The market for puppies in the United Kingdom is large and figures given in the report estimate that between 700,000 and 1.9 million puppies are sold each year, valued between £100 million and £300 million. There are various concerns about the breeding and selling of dogs, notably: unlicensed breeders; the regulation and enforcement of the licensing regime; outdated legislation that does not reflect current animal welfare knowledge; sales of dogs through third-party sellers; and internet advertising.

The report notes that: “Breeders have an important responsibility to provide for the social development and broader welfare requirements for puppies in their care. We recommend that the legislation governing the breeding of dogs should be updated with a licensing regime based on modern welfare standards”.

Importation of puppies from other countries via the EU Pet Travel Scheme (PETS) is another major concern. Figures given within the report show a large increase between 2011 and 2015 of dog imports from Lithuania, Hungary, and Romania — 761,850 and 2055%, respectively. The welfare of imported puppies is frequently poor due to inadequate breeding conditions, premature weaning, and excessive journeys (often over 1,000 miles). Importation of disease, falsified puppy passports and poor border controls at British ports are also a problem.

The report goes on to consider the breeding of cats. Unlike dogs, there is no legislation specifically protecting the welfare of breeding cats and consequently this section is much shorter. Welfare concerns centre around poor breeding conditions and irresponsible breeding. It is therefore recommended that “breeders of cats of two litters or more should be licensed, with welfare conditions attached”, and that “the Government undertakes further research on the sale of cats and proposes recommendations to improve the trade”.

Horse welfare is also briefly considered, specifically equine identification and traceability. Although all horses are required to have a passport for identification (since February 2005) and a microchip (if born after July 2009), there are over 60 Passport Issuing Organisations and they vary considerably in quality. Additionally, there is no central database to report to since the closure of the National Equine Database in 2012. This makes the reporting and enforcement of equine identification laws, and welfare concerns, difficult.

A more general look at the enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 is also discussed. One problem high-

lighted by the report is the fact that the Animal Welfare Act set out discretionary power for national and local authorities to appoint 'Inspectors', however approximately 40% of local authorities in England chose not to do so and, of those who did, a number are now withdrawing previously appointed Inspectors due to lack of finances. Inspectors under the Act are given certain powers, such as: permitted to serve improvement notices, powers of entry, and taking possession of a protected animal in certain circumstances. It is recommended within the report that "Government place a statutory duty on local authorities to enforce the Animal Welfare Act 2006. The Government must ensure that appropriate resources are made available to local authorities to support them in this extension of their statutory duties".

Finally, the role of the RSPCA is discussed, as well as Sentencing and the establishment of an Animal Abuse Register (something originally considered during the passage of the Animal Welfare Act). Such a Register could help in keeping

track of people who have been convicted of animal cruelty offences and who have been banned from keeping animals.

The report closes with 40 conclusions and recommendations under the following headings: Secondary legislation; Progeny of dogs; Awareness of Act; Breeding of dogs; Sale of dogs; Central reporting system; Breeding of cats; Sale of cats; Equine identification and traceability; Formal investigatory and enforcement powers – local government and police; Role of the RSPCA; Sentencing; and Animal Abusers Register.

Animal Welfare in England: Domestic Pets. Third Report of Session 2016-17 (November 2016). A4, 76 pages. House of Commons, Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee. Available at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/201617/cmselect/cmenvfru/117/117.pdf>.

E Carter,

UFAW