

The *Medical Research Modernization Committee* – a New York based, non-profit organization made up of health care professionals – has now produced a 3rd edition of its booklet *A Critical Look at Animal Experimentation*. This publication concludes that the value of animal experimentation has been grossly exaggerated by those with a vested economic interest in its preservation, and that the massive financial resources so used would be better employed on clinical and epidemiological research and public health programmes. It might be argued that this booklet is somewhat selective in its evidence, but many practical, scientific and ethical arguments are put forward in a serious attempt to force a reconsideration of some of the assumptions underlying the use of animals in biomedical research.

A Critical Look at Animal Experimentation. Prepared by Kaufman S R, Cohen M J, Cramer M, Contard P C, Hahner K and Todd B (1995). The Medical Research Modernization Committee: New York. 17pp (112 references). Paperback. Obtainable from the publishers, PO Box 2751, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163-2751, USA. Price US\$0.50.

Use of animals in research

Each year the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) holds an Animal Welfare Forum. The papers presented at this annual event are published in the *Journal of the AVMA* and are collectively reprinted as a 'proceedings of the meeting'. In 1994 the Forum met in Rosemont, Illinois and the subject was *Veterinary Perspectives on the Use of Animals in Research*. The following seven papers were given and are now published, together with a brief 'Opening remarks' by the then President Elect of the AVMA in the February 15th issue of the AVMA journal.

An ethical perspective on animal research. *Carl Cohen*.

The role of attending veterinarians in laboratory animal welfare. *Fred W Quimby*.

Innovations in research animal care. *Denna M Benn*.

Development of a natural-habitat breeding facility for nonhuman primates. *William R Morton et al*.

Private practitioner's perspective on animal research. *Thomas E Vice*.

Consistency in treatment and moral concern. *Nedim C Buyukmihci*.

The future of animal research. *Bonnie V Beaver*.

This collection of well-written and calmly presented essays is essential reading both to veterinary surgeons involved with biomedical research, and to others interested in new thoughts and developments in this important animal welfare area.

AVMA Animal Welfare Forum: Veterinary Perspectives on the Use of Animals in Research (1995). Reprinted from the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* 206(4): 457-482.

The killing of wild animals in Britain

Each year very large numbers of wild mammals and birds are killed by man. Some of this killing is for sport; some is for pest control; and some is accidental. A report based on an investigation carried out by N C Fox on behalf of the Hawk Board – a component body of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee of the Department of Environment – into the nature and extent of animal suffering caused by current methods of pest control and field

sports, has now been published. The data presented have been derived from the literature and contributions from, and extensive consultations with professional specialists. Some fascinating if unusual 'facts' are put forward: humans driving cars probably kill up to 220 million vertebrates each year; domestic cats probably account for some 210 million more. These figures are in contrast to the small number of animals taken by falconers (c 60,000) and hunts (c 35,000 foxes, hares or deer). It is also argued that the use of gazehounds (ie greyhounds, lurchers, whippets) and raptors is probably the most humane method of killing wild animals in that the catch-to-kill time is short, and the prey are either caught and quickly killed or they escape largely uninjured.

All this may sound as special pleading on behalf of certain field sports but there can be little doubt that this report presents some most interesting, often unexpected and, at times, disturbing facts and speculations about the suffering caused by the killing of animals for sport or in pest control.

Aspects of Killing Wild Animals in Britain. N C Fox (1995). The Hawk Board: Stroud. 12pp. Paperback. Obtainable from the publishers, phone or fax 01267-233864. Price £2.

Research ethics

It is probably true that most of the general public would confess to a general lack of understanding of biotechnology, and many would not be clear as to what techniques are included in the term. This is unfortunate as it means that they also do not have a good understanding of the methods by which their food is produced, and of the ethical principles involved. There is therefore a good argument that to improve the standards of decision making in this area there should be more education. This volume contains papers presented at a conference organized by Norwegian and Swedish ethical organizations. The conference brought together scientists and participants from non-governmental organizations (NGOs). None of the discussions are reported but the editors do provide a summary of the conference, from which it is clear that there was some polarization of opinion between the scientists and the NGOs.

The papers cover a wide range of areas such as decision forming, biotechnology developments and even a paper that asks whether ethics applies to vegetables – the answer was yes! However, many of them read as transcripts of spoken presentations rather than as separate papers written for publication, and this sometimes results in contributions that do not seem to have much 'meat' to them.

The editors conclude their summary with four recommendations which map out a suggested future for the ethical assessment of biotechnology in Norway and Sweden, and which draw attention to the Danish and Dutch experiences. The UK Government has recently published a report on this subject but it is clear that most European Governments have much work to do to ensure that informed decisions can be made by the electorate.

Studies in Research Ethics No 5 Ethical Aspects of Modern Biotechnology: Proceedings from a conference 10–11 November 1993. Editors Matthias Kaiser & Stellan Welin (1995). Produced and published by Centre for Research Ethics: Göteborg. 141pp. Paperback. Obtainable from the publishers, Brogatan 4, S-413 01 Göteborg, Sweden (ISSN 1102 0458, ISBN 91 97 16 72 4 X).