

There have been many calls in the past for a Royal Commission to investigate animal experimentation. The Select Committee seems to have carried out their review of this subject with commendable thoroughness and efficiency. Its proposals are valuable because they could improve animal welfare and reduce the risk of the export of research to countries with poorer welfare standards. However, there may be risks in accepting them uncritically. Some of the proposals may seem politically attractive, but they should not be initiated without further consideration of the detail of how they might be achieved in practice, and of their possible ramifications.

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*Select Committee on Animals in Scientific Procedures. Volume I — Report; Volume II — Oral Evidence; Volume III — Written Evidence.* 16 July 2002. Three A4 paperback volumes published by authority of the House of Lords, London, by The Stationery Office Limited. Available from The Stationery Office, P O Box 29, Norwich NR3 1GN, UK; [www.tso.co.uk](http://www.tso.co.uk). Volume I (HL Paper 150–I): 82 pp (ISBN 0 10 412102 5), price £13.00. Volume II (HL Paper 150–II): 411 pp (ISBN 0 10 411902 0), price £29.50. Volume III (HL Paper 150–III): 359 pp (ISBN 0 10 412002 9), price £26.50.

### **Code of recommendations for the welfare of meat and breeding chickens**

Under Section 3 of the UK's Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1968, the Secretary of State for the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), England, the Scottish Ministers and the National Assembly for Wales are empowered to produce codes of recommendations on the welfare of farmed livestock. On 22 July 2002, DEFRA published a code of practice for the welfare of broilers and broiler breeders in England. It is 15 years since the publication, in 1987, of the government's previous code on this subject.

The Code covers a wide range of aspects of broiler rearing and breeding including stockmanship and staffing, feeding, health inspections, mutilations, accommodation, stocking density, record keeping, catching and handling, transport and disposal. Information is presented clearly and in a logical way, with the legal provisions relevant to each section being first set out in boxes, which are followed by commentary and specific guidance.

The Code is introduced in a preface in which its legal status is explained, the Five Freedoms are listed and recommended as a logical basis for the assessment of welfare, and the aims of the publication are set out. The Code is intended to encourage all those who care for farm animals to adopt the highest standards of husbandry.

This Code is required reading for all those responsible for the care of broilers and broiler breeders in England (all stockmen are required by law to be familiar with and to have access to appropriate welfare codes), but will also be of interest to those in the broiler industry elsewhere in the world. Similar codes are being produced in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and until these are published the old, 1987, welfare code for domestic fowl will still apply in these regions.

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*Meat Chickens and Breeding Chicks: Code of Practice for the Welfare of Livestock.* July 2002. Published by the UK Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. 23 pp A4 paperback. Available from DEFRA Publications, Admail 6000, London SW1A 2XX, UK, and at <http://www.defra.gsi.gov.uk/animalh/welfare>.

### **Code of recommendations for the welfare of laying hens**

At the same time as publishing the code of practice for the welfare of broiler chickens and broiler breeder stock (see above), DEFRA has also published a new code for the welfare of laying hens. This covers the subject under more or less the same chapter headings as in the broiler code. In

the housing section, recommendations are provided on non-cage, conventional cage and enriched cage systems. There is also a section on animals with access to open runs.

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*Laying Hens: Code of Practice for the Welfare of Livestock.* July 2002. Published by the UK Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. 27 pp A4 paperback. Available from DEFRA Publications, Admail 6000, London SW1A 2XX, UK, and at <http://www.defra.gsi.gov.uk/animalh/welfare>.

### **Current status and future prospects for non-animal methods for testing chemicals**

On 13 February 2001, the European Commission adopted a paper which sets out proposals for toxicological testing of many substances that came into use prior to 1981 and which have never been subject to the rigorous toxicological testing required of chemicals put on the market since then. Although applying only to substances of which more than one tonne are sold per annum in the EU, it is estimated that implementation of this new policy will result in the need for testing over 30,000 compounds. There has been a great deal of concern about the possible animal welfare consequences of this programme. The Environment Council considered this matter at a meeting on 7 June 2001, and concluded that animal testing should be limited to only that necessary to meet the objectives of a high level of protection for human health and for the environment, that mechanisms should be established to ensure that there is no unnecessary duplication, and that adequate resources should be provided for the development of non-animal alternative methods.

It is envisaged that ECVAM, the European Centre for the Validation of Alternative Methods, will play a major role in validating these alternatives and the organisation has published a review (see details below) summarising the current status of alternative tests and making recommendations for further developments particularly with regard to the need for meeting the EU legislation on chemical testing. This review is published as a supplement to Volume 30 of *Alternatives to Laboratory Animals*. It comprises 12 chapters covering, amongst other topics: background; principles and procedures of validation; the scientific basis of chemical risk assessment; acute lethal toxicity; local toxicity; genotoxicity and carcinogenicity; reproductive toxicity; and endocrine disruption. The summary includes a forecast timetable which indicates the prospects for the completion of the validation of a range of alternative tests in the short-, medium- and long-term. It also includes a substantial list of subjects in which further research and development are recommended. This is a timely review that is likely to be helpful to EU and other funding agencies in helping to focus and prioritise funding for alternatives in toxicity testing.

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*Alternative (Non-animal) Methods for Chemicals Testing: Current Status and Future Prospects.* July 2002. A report prepared by ECVAM and the ECVAM Working Group on Chemicals. Edited by Andrew P Worth and Michael Balls. Published by the Fund for Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments, Russell & Burch House, 96–98 North Sherwood Street, Nottingham, NG1 4EE, UK, for the European Centre for the Validation of Alternative Methods, Ispra, Italy UK. *Alternatives to Laboratory Animals* 30: 1–125 (Suppl 1).

### **Annual Report 2001 of New Zealand's National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee**

The National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC) of New Zealand published its annual report for the year 2001 in May this year. The report contains an overview of the animal welfare infrastructure in New Zealand; it also provides information on the progress made to date in developing codes of welfare. Brief details on the main animal welfare issues considered during the year and a synopsis of research undertaken since the last annual report are presented. Furthermore, there is a short chapter about the NAWAC committee and its functions, and a