

concern given the number of pest rodents trapped and killed each year, this Report is to be commended.

Guiding Principles in the Humane Control of Rats and Mice (February 2009). A4, 13 pages. Published by the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare, UK. Copies are available at <http://www.ufaw.org.uk/rodents.php>.

References

Daily Mail 2008 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1080944/Rats-rampage-Vermin-boom-blamed-cuts-refuse-collections.html>

NPTA 2008 <http://www.npta.org.uk/assets/documents/Massive%20Surge%20in%20UK%20Rodent%20Problems.pdf>

S Wickens,

UFAW

New regulations proposed to protect the welfare of greyhounds in England

Commercial greyhound racing first began in Britain during 1926 and, although it declined over the years (dropping from 151 racing tracks in 1960 to just 34 today), greyhound racing is still a common spectator sport and ranks third in popularity after football and horse racing (Donoughue 2007). However, during the last few years there has been increasing concern amongst the public that the welfare of racing greyhounds is not sufficiently protected. There is a perception that the conditions at greyhound race tracks are inadequate and that there is a lack of traceability of greyhounds, especially once they have finished their racing careers. The Associate Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare (APGAW) has estimated that the total average number of dogs racing in Great Britain each year is approximately 14,000 and they have calculated that, annually, a minimum of 4,728 dogs are unaccounted for after their racing careers have finished (APGAW 2007). Dogs begin racing at around 15 months and finish at between three and five years of age.

In 2006, the UK Government gave a commitment to introduce regulations to improve the welfare of racing greyhounds during the passage of the Animal Welfare Bill through parliament. Additionally, two major inquiries were carried out into the greyhound racing industry. The Associate Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare (APGAW) reported on the welfare issues surrounding racing greyhounds in England, and Lord Donoughue undertook a review of the current and future regulation of greyhound racing. Both reports have played a key role in how the greyhound racing industry has evolved since they were published in 2007.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is now consulting on a proposed set of regulations to protect the welfare of racing greyhounds and to improve the traceability of greyhounds during and following their racing career. A number of minimum standards have been put forward, including:

- The presence of a veterinary surgeon at all race meetings and trials;

- All dogs to be inspected by a veterinary surgeon before running;

- Appropriate facilities for a veterinary surgeon to allow administration of first aid, on-site;

- Adequate kennelling on-site for 20% of greyhounds present at the track;

- All racing greyhounds to be identified by both microchip and earmark and the details placed on a national database;

- All tracks to maintain records of dogs raced or trialed for 5 years and any injuries sustained by dogs for 10 years.

Tracks will be required to comply with the proposed minimum standards and to be licensed by their local authority. However, the majority of racing tracks (28) are regulated by the Greyhound Board of Great Britain (GBGB) and it is intended that the GBGB will be accredited by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) which will then give GBGB tracks an exemption from the licensing requirement. This is due to the GBGB having their own minimum standards which already meet the requirements of the Animal Welfare Act 2006. A few tracks are not licensed by the GBGB and are classed as 'independents'; it is these independent tracks that will be most affected by any new regulations and where the main benefits to animal welfare are expected to take place.

The consultation opened on 30 April and will close on 22 July 2009. The draft regulations, impact assessment of the proposed regulations and associated consultation documents may be accessed via the Defra website.

Consultation on Proposals for Welfare of Racing Greyhounds Regulations (2009). Defra, Animal Welfare Act Implementation Team. Consultation and associated documents available at: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/greyhound-welfare/index.htm>.

The Welfare of Greyhounds (May 2007). Report of the Associate Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare (APGAW) inquiry into the welfare issues surrounding racing greyhounds in England. Available at: <http://www.apgaw.org/reports.asp>.

Independent Review of the Greyhound Industry in Great Britain (November 2007). A report by Lord Donoughue of Ashton for the British Greyhound Racing Board and the National Greyhound Racing Club. Available at: <http://www.greyhounds-donoughue-report.co.uk/>.

E Carter,

UFAW

Scotland publishes new Code of Welfare for Equidae

The Scottish Government has recently published the first species-specific Code of Practice under the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006. The code covers all domesticated equidae (horses, ponies, donkeys, and hybrids) and came into effect in Scotland on 20 April 2009.

It is intended that the code will provide practical guidance to people who own or manage equines by outlining a person's 'duty of care' and describing the welfare needs of

equines. Based on the five freedoms, basic advice is given on how to cater for an animal's welfare through considering the following needs: the need for a suitable environment; the need for an appropriate diet; the need to exhibit normal behaviour patterns; the need to be housed with, or apart from, other animals; and the need to be protected from suffering, injury and disease.

Also included within the code is information on horse passports and other applicable legislation, together with listings of publications relevant to topics covered within the code.

Code of Practice for the Welfare of Equidae (April 2009). A4, 32 pages. Published by the Scottish Government. Available for download from the Scottish Government website: www.scotland.gov.uk, or alternatively, hard-copies may be obtained by writing to the Rural Directorate, Animal Health and Welfare Division, Pentlands House, 47 Robb's Loan, Edinburgh EH14 1TY.

E Carter,
UFAW

Introductory leaflet to goat-keeping, launched by the BVA AWF

The British Veterinary Association Animal Welfare Foundation (BVA AWF) is an animal welfare charity which aims to improve animal welfare through applying the "knowledge, skill and compassion of veterinary surgeons in an effective way". The BVA AWF undertakes and funds a variety of projects in pursuit of this goal and one of these is the production of information leaflets, the latest of which is entitled: *An Introduction to Goat Keeping*.

It is hoped that the leaflet will provide useful guidance for people interested in keeping goats by outlining some factors important for meeting goats' welfare needs. Included within the leaflet is information on how to choose the right breed of goat for your own situation, the type of facilities required for goat-keeping, what to look for in a healthy goat, and the types of diseases which goats may suffer from. Relevant legislation is also listed and a number of sources of further helpful information provided.

Other information leaflets available in the BVA AWF information series include: *Caring for your Ferret*; *What Makes my Pet Happy?*; *Taking your Pets Abroad*; and *Pets and Poisons: Keeping your Pet Safe*.

An Introduction to Goat-Keeping (April 2009). 5 page leaflet produced by the British Veterinary Association Animal Welfare Foundation (BVA AWF). Available for download from the BVA AWF website: www.bva-awf.org.uk.

E Carter,
UFAW

European Union pledges formal support for the Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare

The 27 Agricultural Ministers of the European Council have all approved a number of conclusions adopted by the Council which highlight the importance of animal welfare at an international level and also invite Member States and the Commission to support, in principal, the Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare (UDAW).

UDAW is a voluntary agreement that people, organisations or nations, may support in order to show that they recognise animals are sentient beings, are capable of suffering and that animal welfare needs should be respected. The World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) originally launched the UDAW campaign in 2000 and now acts as the official Secretariat. A number of governments, veterinary associations and international animal welfare organisations have already pledged their support for the UDAW and ultimately the hope is that it will be accepted by the United Nations, thereby establishing animal welfare as a global concern and leading to the development of effective animal welfare standards worldwide.

Council Conclusions on a Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare (March 2009). Council of the European Union. 2934th Agriculture and Fisheries Council Meeting, Brussels. Available at: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/agricult/106877.pdf.

Further information on the Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare is available at the following website: <http://www.udaw.org/>.

E Carter,
UFAW

International agreement on validation of alternatives to tests involving animals

A Memorandum of Co-operation has been signed by four major government agencies responsible for co-ordinating validation studies on alternatives to animal test methods: the European Centre for the Validation of Alternative Methods (ECVAM), the Japanese Centre for the Validation of Alternative Methods (JACVAM), the National Toxicology Program Interagency Centre for the Evaluation of Alternative Toxicology Methods (ICCVAM, United States of America) and Canada's Environmental Health Science and Research Bureau. These organisations have supported the agreement in order to establish an International Co-operation on Alternative Test Methods (ICATM). The aim of the ICATM is to "expand and strengthen co-operation, collaboration, and communications among national validation organisations on the scientific validation and evaluation of new alternative testing methods proposed for regulatory health and safety assessments".

It is proposed that the ICATM will assist in the following five areas:

1. Further the optimal design and conduct of validation studies to support national and international regulatory decisions on the usefulness and limitations of alternative methods.
2. Further high quality independent scientific peer reviews of alternative test methods that incorporate transparency and the opportunity for stakeholder involvement.
3. Enhance the likelihood of harmonised recommendations by validation organisations on the usefulness and limitations of alternative test methods for regulatory testing purposes.
4. Achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness by avoiding duplication of effort and leveraging limited resources.