

The Alastair Mews Memorial Trust recently held a seminar on welfare aspects of broiler production. Some 27 experts drawn from the broiler industry, from academia and from various welfare interests, met together at the Ammerdown Study Centre near Bath. They looked into the technical and social/economic aspects of broiler welfare with the intent, if possible, of finding consensus views on the causes of the problems and to suggest possible solutions.

It was suggested that the industry should act immediately to introduce nutritional regimes designed to minimize leg health problems. The evidence presented at this seminar suggests that this would be a cost-effective way of reducing the problem. Urgent action is also needed to eliminate chronic hunger in the broiler breeder flocks. It was also recommended that greater importance should be attached to health and welfare criteria within the genetic selection programmes.

The proposal was made that an independent economic analysis should be undertaken to indicate which groups in the broiler supply chain have the greatest financial flexibility, and are therefore best placed to invest in improvements in broiler welfare.

It can be argued that the consumer has benefited greatly from the increased efficiency of the broiler industry and that perhaps, in fairness, improvements in welfare should be at least partly funded by a modest increase in the price of the product in the market place.

The printed proceedings of this seminar will be of considerable use to all those who want to gain some understanding of the complexity of welfare problems associated with broiler birds in the UK.

Practical Approaches to Broiler Welfare. Edited by M Baxter, D B Morton and A C Mews (1995). 24pp. Paperback. Obtainable from the Department of Biomedical Sciences and Biomedical Ethics, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT, UK (ISBN 1 872166 58 X). Price £5.

Overpopulation of dogs and cats

In the USA the overbreeding of domestic dogs and cats with the subsequent problem of what to do with the largely unwanted offspring, is regarded as a substantial welfare issue.

Some of the puppies and kittens are retained by the breeders; some are sold; many are placed with animal shelters in the often vain hope that they can be found good homes; and some are abandoned, to die or to join the sometimes substantial populations of stray/feral dogs and cats.

In response to this welfare challenge a large number of small voluntary organizations, plus one or two larger regional/national groups have been set up to

- a. educate the general public of the problem
- b. encourage local government authorities to set up stray dog and cat control schemes
- c. run animal shelters to take in and home the unwanted animals. Unfortunately this often means humanely killing many of the animals – as good homes cannot always be found.
- d. establish low-cost dog and cat neutering schemes. This demands cooperation from the local veterinary profession but offers the only real long-term solution.

These organizations and groups are scattered across the United States and are often unknown to each other. This lack of contact means that local hard-bought experience and expertise is not shared as it should be. To overcome this communication barrier *The Fund for Animals* has published a substantial 268 page *Companion Animal Overpopulation*

Resource Guide. The guide is divided into seven chapters – Education, Public Relations, Outreach, Spaying/Neutering, Laws, Statistics and Studies, and Coalitions. Most chapters have subcategories.

This resource book will be most useful for the many animal welfare groups in the United States who are attempting to deal with the pet overpopulation problem. It will give them access to much useful information and experience. There are a number of items listed which are of relevance to the companion animal overpopulation problem in other parts of the world.

Companion Animal Overpopulation Resource Guide. Edited by Kim Sturla (1995). The Fund for Animals: Vacaville. 268pp. Paperback. Obtainable from the publishers, 808 Alamo Drive, Suite 306, Vacaville, California 95688. Price US\$10, computer disk (IBM compatible) US\$5.

Ferrets and ferreting

Over the past few years hunting and shooting organizations have been producing codes of practice covering various aspects of field sports. In this journal *The Code of Good Game Rearing Practice* was noticed and commented on in February 1995 (*Animal Welfare* 4: 61) and *The Code of Good Shooting Practice* was similarly covered in August 1995 (*Animal Welfare* 4: 255).

The National Ferret School in association with the Shooting Times and Country Magazine, the British Association for Shooting and Conservation and the British Field Sports Society have now issued a *Code of Practice for Ferreting*.

It is stated in the Introduction that practitioners of country sports have to consider public reaction to their activities, and that they should conduct themselves in a truly acceptable manner at all times. The ferreting Code attempts to outline the common-sense ways of causing as little disturbance to the environment as possible and of ensuring the well-being of both the animals, ie the ferrets, dogs and hawks, and the humans involved in the sport. Many animal welfarists, however, might not go along with the claim that ferreting is a humane method of rabbit control.

If field sports are going to survive then it will only be if they are carried out in what is perceived as a reasonable and disciplined way. The firm and consistent following of the recommendations put forward in this ferret code will at least give the sport a better image and, it has to be admitted, will to some extent improve the welfare of the animals involved.

Code of Practice for Ferreting. Produced and published by The National Ferret School, Shooting Times & Country Magazine, British Association for Shooting and Conservation, and the British Field Sports Society (1995). 12pp. Booklet. Obtainable from the British Field Sports Society, 59 Kennington Road, London SE1 7PZ, UK. Send sae.

Whales and whaling

Since 1971 the Animal Welfare Institute (AWI) of the United States has campaigned to save the great whales. Numerous articles on the whaling industry, whale hunting/killing and whale conservation have been published over the years in the *AWI Quarterly* (formerly the *Information Report*). Many of these articles are now reprinted in the 1995 edition of *Whales vs Whalers 1971-1995: A Continuing Commentary published by the Animal Welfare Institute*.