

REPORTS AND COMMENTS

Guidelines on the care and use of captive and free-living wild animals in research, teaching and testing

The title of a new set of guidelines published by the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC), 'Guidelines on the care and use of wildlife', could mislead those who reserve the term 'wildlife' for free-living animals only. These guidelines cover both free-ranging and captive wild vertebrates, excluding fish.

There is increasing research on wild animals. Although much of this is aimed at improved understanding of biology and ecology that is likely to be of benefit for wildlife management and conservation in the future, some involves interventions that are not in the best welfare interests of the animals involved. The CCAC's guidelines provide a useful review of the issues that should be considered before any use of wild animals in research, teaching and testing. They also have a great deal of relevance to the planning of interventions for wildlife management.

There are chapters on ethical issues, field studies, collecting of vertebrates, physical and chemical restraint, marking, medical and surgical procedures, moving and holding of wildlife, euthanasia, and human safety considerations. The key issues are distilled into 52 guidelines which are extracted and listed in the summary. The first of these, Guideline 1, reads: "The use of wildlife for research, management, teaching and testing is acceptable only if it contributes to the understanding of biological principles or to outcomes that can be expected to benefit humans, animals or ecosystems. Expert evaluation of proposals must attest to the potential value of studies involving wildlife." The second guideline requires that each project involving the use of animals for these purposes is described in a protocol and that these protocols are all approved formally by animal care committees before the work can begin. It is interesting to note that this system is strikingly different from that in the UK in which, less satisfactorily, responsibilities for various aspects of wildlife management and research are spread among a number of agencies.

These guidelines have been aimed in particular at researchers at universities, colleges and zoological parks and in government and non-government organisations, and at individuals involved in wildlife management. They will be of interest and value to those planning wildlife interventions for research or management reasons anywhere in the world.

The CCAC is preparing two other documents in this series: one on the care and use of fish in research, teaching and testing, and the other on the care and use of farm animals for these purposes.

Guidelines On: The Care and Use of Wildlife (May 2003) Published by the Canadian Council on Animal Care. 67 pp A4 (ISBN 0 919087 39 6). Available from the Canadian Council on Animal Care, 315–350 Albert Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1R 1B1, Canada (for ordering information, see <http://www.ccac.ca/english/publicat.htm>) and also at <http://www.ccac.ca/english/Gdlines/Wildlife/Wildlife.pdf>.

Code of Recommendations for the welfare of cattle in England

In April 2003, the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) of the Westminster Government published a new code of recommendations for the welfare of cattle. This replaces the previous 'Cattle Welfare Code', published in 1983, and takes account of developments in research, good husbandry and relevant legislation (notably the Welfare of Farmed Animals [England] Regulations 2000) since that time. The new code applies only in England (similar codes are being produced by the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland).