

## REPORTS AND COMMENTS

### Good shooting practice

In 1989 the British Association for Shooting and Conservation, the British Field Sports Society and The Game Conservancy Trust produced between them, *The Code of Good Shooting Practice*. This has now been reissued in a 1994/5 amended edition.

The Code is based on the principle:

'Rearing and releasing of game for shooting should only be done in order to provide a sufficient stock of healthy game, fully adapted to the wild, which can be sustained without damage to the environment or to the wild stock.'

And on the so-called Four Golden Rules which follow from this principle:

- 1 Game husbandry shall be conducted with all due consideration for the health and welfare of the birds concerned.
- 2 No more birds shall be released in an area of woodland, game cover, or pond than can be sustained without significantly damaging the environment, including farm crops, or leading to detriment in the health of the birds.
- 3 No birds shall be released after the start of annual shooting in the area concerned and they shall not be shot until they are fully adult and well adapted to the wild.
- 4 No bird previously released shall subsequently be caught up during its shooting season for re-release during that season.

It can be argued that it is perhaps inappropriate to use the word welfare when, for sporting purposes, animals are being reared, released and then shot. The shooters, however, maintain – not perhaps without some justification – that most game birds may have a better life and a cleaner, quicker death than many farmed poultry.

Field sports – if they are to continue – must be carried out in a reasonable and disciplined way. The close following of the recommendations in this Code should help to ensure that these requirements are met.

***The Code of Good Shooting Practice: (1994/95) edition.*** Produced and published by the British Association for Shooting and Conservation, British Field Sports Society and The Game Conservancy Trust. 12pp. Paperback. Obtainable from BFSS, 59 Kensington Road, London SE1 7PZ (send sae).

### Animals and medical research: discussion packs

Fifteen of the UK's largest medical charities have banded together to produce two discussion packs aimed at helping teachers to introduce the animal rights/animal welfare/biomedical research controversy to school discussion groups. One pack *Animal Rights and Medical Research* is directed towards sixth formers and other advanced students, whilst the other entitled *Difficult Choices* is intended for use with pupils aged 12 or older in their Research and Social Education (PSE) and/or English and Religious Education classes. Both packs are well produced and largely succeed in presenting their material in an interesting, straightforward and balanced manner.

The sixth form pack has five topic sheets covering *Ethics, Alternatives, Drug Side-Effects, Cures and Treatments, and Species Difference*. There is one page of Teachers Notes for the topic sheet on ethics and there is a list of contact addresses of organizations opposing or supporting medical research involving animals. UFAW is listed in the 'middle' *Animal Welfare Charities* section – the other two 'extreme' sections are the *Animal Rights Groups* and the *Medical Research and Patients Organisations*.

The *Difficult Choices* pack (for the 12 year-old plus pupils) has three units, *Animals in Society*, *The Cost of Life* and *Truth, Images and Attitudes*. Each of these units has Teachers' Notes, a Teacher Information Sheet, and Student Work and Information Sheets. The aim of this pack is to encourage students to look outside themselves at the way society uses animals and to look inside themselves at their own beliefs and moral standpoints. The role of animals in advancing medical knowledge is the main example used in the 2nd and 3rd units.

These packs are an excellent and structured way to introduce to school audiences and perhaps to others, the difficult, important and controversial concept that man's use (or misuse) of animals in biomedical research may pose an insoluble moral dilemma.

***Animal Rights and Medical Research: Sixth Form Discussion Pack and Difficult Choices: PSE Discussion Pack.*** Produced and published by Research for Health Charities Group (RHCG) (1994). For further details contact RHCG, PO Box 1417, Shepton Mallet, Somerset BA4 4YZ, UK.

### **Laying hens – the Swiss experience**

In 1981 the Swiss *Animal Protection Act* came into force. It has become famous for its section on the housing of chickens. By prescribing sheltered, darkened nest boxes, perches or slatted grids for all hens and with a minimum area of 800cm<sup>2</sup> per bird on mesh floors, it effectively prohibited the battery cage – this made Switzerland the first country to impose such a ban. For practical economic reasons the legislation granted farmers a ten-year transition period, expiring at the beginning of 1992.

Consequently there has been a widespread adoption of aviary systems. Free-range production has only captured an estimated 20 per cent of the Swiss market. This represents 400 thousand free-range laying hens, which is considerably less than the 3.6 million birds in the UK.

*Laying Hens: 12 years of experience with new husbandry systems in Switzerland* is a 32 page report of the poultry working group of the Swiss Society for the Protection of Animals STS. It is clearly written, well presented, and contains a considerable amount of facts and details. Areas this report covers include: the keeping of laying hens in Switzerland, laws and regulations, the behaviour of fowls, new housing systems for laying hens, fold and free-range keeping of laying birds, economic aspects and health.

What makes this publication particularly attractive are the long lists of references – many, however, in German. This report is a must for anybody working in this important area of husbandry R and D.

***Laying Hens: 12 years of experience with new husbandry systems in Switzerland.*** Produced and published by the Swiss Society for the Protection of Animals (1994). 32pp. Paperback. Obtainable from the publishers, Birsfelderstrasse 45, CH-4052 Basel, Switzerland. Price SwF15.

### **European hedgehog**

This booklet gives the reader a brief insight into the lives of hedgehogs and their current status in Britain.

There are short accounts of: hedgehog structure and function; signs of the animals' presence; habitat; food; and even their own fleas! Behaviour is included under three headings: