

### **Economics and food animal welfare**

In April 1996 the Animal Health Trust, the British Veterinary Association Animal Welfare Foundation and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals held the second of an annual series of joint one-day symposia on welfare problems of food animals and horses, entitled *The Economics of Food Animal Welfare*.

The Proceedings of this second symposium have now been published and take the form of a collection of papers from various organisations and persons involved in issues relating to food animal welfare and economics.

Organisations such as the National Farmers Union, the Meat and Livestock Commission and the Farm Animal Welfare Council are represented in the symposium and their papers outline how these organisations are working towards improving animal welfare in the UK and elsewhere in Europe. An example of the economic cost of welfare problems, such as, production-related disease in the dairy industry is given in a paper from the Department of Agriculture at Reading University. Redistribution of the Common Agricultural Policy ewe premium to fund 'veterinary welfare vouchers' is suggested in one paper, as a way to improve welfare in the sheep industry. Finally, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and Tesco supermarkets present papers on their joint animal welfare food-labelling scheme, 'Freedom Foods'. This is an initiative set up to improve animal welfare while meeting consumer demands for 'welfare-friendly' products.

Although many of the issues are discussed from each organisation's particular perspective, this publication gives an interesting insight into various issues relating to food animal welfare. Both the power of the consumer and the often conflicting pressure from the public to improve animal welfare without increasing food price are highlighted by many of the organisations. The conclusion is that, although more research is needed to provide the solid scientific foundations on which to base animal welfare recommendations, we are making steady progress towards improving food animal welfare.

---

*Welfare Problems of Food Animals and Horses 2. The Economics of Food Animal Welfare: Symposium Proceedings.* Suckling A, Higgins A J and Wade J F (eds) (1996). Published by the Animal Health Trust, the British Veterinary Association Animal Welfare Foundation and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. 29pp. Paperback. Obtainable from T G Scott, 6 Bourne Enterprise Centre, Wrotham Road, Borough Green, Sevenoaks, Kent TN15 8DG, UK. Price £10.

### **Humane killing of laboratory animals**

*The Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (Appropriate Methods of Killing) Order 1996* came into force in the UK on 1st March 1997. This sets out a revised Schedule 1 to the 1986 Act concerning appropriate methods of humane killing. To accompany this 1996 Order, the Home Office has issued a Code of Practice as guidance to the amended Schedule 1 (which is included in the Code of Practice as an appendix). The approved methods of killing laboratory animals are those which are used to kill animals at designated establishments for scientific purposes (other methods of killing, should there be a requirement for them, can only be used under licence from the Home Office). The revised Schedule 1 lists approved killing methods and secondary procedures which ensure that the animal is dead. These include the following: confirmation of permanent cessation of the circulation, destruction of the brain, dislocation of the neck, exsanguination, confirming the onset of *rigor mortis* or

(after confirming that the animal is insensitive) instantaneous destruction of the body in a macerator.

The Code of Practice is an informative and well-presented document which provides background, interpretation and advice on the matters outlined in the Schedule and on related subjects, such as carcase disposal. The Code is divided into sections on legislation, safeguards for humane killing, ensuring animals are dead, disposal of carcasses and appropriate methods of humane killing. The approved methods of killing for animals other than foetal, larval or embryonic forms include, with various provisos and caveats: overdose of anaesthetic agents (potentially for all species); exposure to rising concentrations of carbon dioxide (rodents, rabbits and birds up to 1.5kg); dislocation of the neck (rodents up to 500g, rabbits up to 1kg, birds up to 3kg); concussion of the brain by striking the cranium (rodents, rabbits, amphibians and reptiles up to 1kg, birds up to 250g, fish) and destruction of the brain by free or captive bullet (ungulates). The methods of killing listed for foetal, larval and embryonic forms are: overdose of anaesthetic (potentially all species); refrigeration, disruption of membranes, maceration or exposure to near 100% concentration of carbon dioxide (birds and reptiles); cooling of foetuses followed by immersion in cold tissue fixative (rats, mice and rabbits) and decapitation (mammals and birds up to 50g). This Code of Practice is a useful publication for all involved with research, care and welfare of laboratory animals and will be required reading for those working in this field in the UK.

---

*The Humane Killing of Animals under Schedule 1 to the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986: Code of Practice.* The Home Office (1997). The Stationery Office Limited: London. 10pp. Paperback. Obtainable from the publishers, The Publications Centre, PO Box 276, London SW8 5DT, UK and other usual HMSO sources. Price £3.45.

### **Ethics of Xenotransplantation**

In January 1995 the Nuffield Council on Bioethics set up a working party which produced a well-balanced report in March 1996 entitled *Animal-to-Human Transplants: the Ethics of Xenotransplantation*. In September 1995, the Government set up its own advisory group which has now produced its own report and this has been published together with the Government's response to the issue. There are many areas of agreement between the two reports but they do differ in emphasis and coverage of various topics. Significantly, both agree that protection under The Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 for animals bred for xenotransplantation purposes needs to be extended. Together, the two reports provide an extremely detailed investigation into the controversial issues involved in xenotransplantation.

The most important conclusion of the report by the Advisory Group to the Government is the recommendation that clinical trials should not proceed in the UK at present, as there is a risk that diseases might jump species barriers. However, it does concede that this situation might change in the future.

The report argues that it is unacceptable to use primates as source animals not only because of the health hazard due their phylogenetic closeness to humans, but also because they would be exposed to much suffering. It would, however, be acceptable to use them in research to develop techniques. The Government does not entirely accept the first recommendation and is consulting on this and other issues.