

REPORTS AND COMMENTS

Are there lessons to be learned from the unilateral raising of welfare standards? The case of the UK pig farming industry

As provided for by the *Welfare of Pigs Regulations (1991)*, the UK unilaterally raised standards in its pig farming industry in 1999. Unlike its main competitors in the European Union (EU) at present, the UK prohibited the tethering of pigs and the use of stalls for dry breeding sows. This report from the RSPCA investigates the alarming downturn in the UK pig farming industry that was seen alongside the implementation of these bans and tries to determine whether there are any lessons for others wishing to act unilaterally on animal welfare issues in the future.

The first point the report makes is that the rise in standards (and the relatively short capital write-off time allowed to pig farmers) was only part of the cause of the downturn – other major contributing factors being the implementation of measures to control BSE and the strong pound. The report primarily investigates the effect of the bans by comparing and contrasting the fortunes of the UK pig industry with its main competitor for the UK market – the Danish. Many useful facts and figures are given. The report concludes that there is a financial cost to improving welfare standards for farm animals, an underlying 7 per cent decline in pre-ban margins, but that other factors specific to the UK market meant that the costs of implementation were higher in this country and that these costs were borne primarily by the producers, initiating the crisis that followed.

Profit with Principle: Animal Welfare and UK Pig Farming. RSPCA (2000). RSPCA: Horsham. 19pp. Paperback. Obtainable from the publishers, Causeway, Horsham, West Sussex RH12 1HG, UK; and <http://www.rspca.org.uk> (Pub No Z-3045). Price £3.00.

New bibliography for the husbandry and veterinary care of animals in zoos

Produced in response to a request from the Research Group of the Federation of Zoological Gardens of Great Britain and Ireland, this bibliography brings together published information regarding the husbandry and management of captive (wild) animals. As such, it is a first attempt to collate such information and present it in a readily accessible form. The information is listed alphabetically by author, and subdivided into the following categories: general topics, invertebrates, amphibia, reptiles, birds, fish and mammals. This bibliography is aimed not only at keepers, biologists and veterinarians actively caring for captive animals but also at librarians. The compilers note that when collecting the information they were surprised to find that no single library or institution collects and holds such publications – making it very hard for educational establishments, the public, policy-makers and the media to access the material. In the light of this finding, they recommend that any zoo or organization publishing such material in the future should ensure it is sent to national reference and lending libraries, to universities teaching veterinary and/or biology students, and to international libraries with an active interest in the area.

The bibliography is very much a ‘work in progress’ document and the intention appears to be that it should be regularly updated; areas where information is incomplete are highlighted and the compilers request that they be notified of omissions and of the publication of new husbandry manuals (the address and format for such information are detailed below). One suggestion that would make a second edition easier to use, would be the inclusion of an index of authors, species and subject, and a clearer indication of where each section starts and finishes. It is to be hoped that the bibliography continues to grow and develop as it is a much needed resource.

(Additional husbandry references should be submitted to the publishers, marked for the attention of the Conservation Coordinator, in the following format: author name – last name,

first name; date; title; edition; complete information on where published; page numbers; ISBN/ISSN and web address.)

A Bibliography of References to Husbandry and Veterinary Guidelines for Animals in Zoological Collections. Compiled by Alastair A Macdonald and Nicola Charlton (2000). The Federation of Zoological Gardens of Great Britain and Ireland: London. 61pp. Paperback. Obtainable from the publishers, Zoological Gardens, Regent's Park, London NW1 4RY, UK; and conservation.fedzoo@zsl.org (ISSN 1470-7322). Price details on application.

The use of animals in research, testing and teaching

The *Animal Welfare Act 1999*, recently enacted by New Zealand, legislates for the prevention of ill-treatment and inadequate care of animals (see, *Animal Welfare 9*: 208-209 for further comment on the Act). Part 6 of the new Act relates to the use of animals in research, testing and teaching (for the purposes of the Act, an 'animal' means any vertebrate and any octopus, squid, crab, lobster or crayfish). As is now accepted practice, the 3Rs of reduction, refinement and replacement inform Part 6 of the Act and this Guide to it – which aims to assist those individuals and organizations whose activities fall within the remit of Part 6.

The Guide gives advice on the processes by which a Code of Ethical Conduct (basically a licence) can be developed and approved and how the Animal Ethics Committees (AECs), required by the Act to scrutinize and approve all procedures and projects, should operate. This includes how the AECs must be formed and monitored. It is now a requirement under the new Act that AECs must be satisfied that the benefits of the procedure outweigh any harm before they allow work to start and that at least three members of the committee must come from outside the organizations under consideration. The Guide instructs which procedures are covered by the new Act, and which can be regarded as exempt. It also deals with the exceptions that apply to non-human hominids (ie gorillas, chimpanzees, bonobos or orangutans). For these animals, any assessment of benefit must be confined to the individual or species – benefits to humans cannot be taken in to account when deciding whether a procedure is acceptable are not. This is a first for a piece of national legislation. Finally, the text of Part 6 of the Act is listed. The Guide is undoubtedly essential to anyone working in this area in New Zealand, and will prove of interest to those in other countries who are involved in amending their own legislation and drafting guidelines.

The Use of Animals in Research, Testing and Teaching. Users' Guide to Part 6 of the Animal Welfare Act 1999. Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Policy Information Paper 33. Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (2000). 58pp. Paperback. Obtainable from, The Information Bureau, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Head Office, ASB House, 101-103 The Terrace, PO Box 2526, Wellington, New Zealand; and www.maf.govt.nz/AnimalWelfare (ISBN 047820065x/ISSN 1171-4654). Free.

UK Government activity and targets in farm animal welfare

In line with the UK Government's commitment to greater transparency and openness, both the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) and the Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC) have recently published the second of their annual reports on their activities and future targets. The *MAFF Business Plan* lists the aims and objectives of the government department and its progress with the delivery of the 10 objectives. Objective 8 for MAFF is 'To ensure that farmed animals and fish are protected by high welfare standards and do not suffer unnecessary pain or distress'. To this end, MAFF reports that it has reduced the incidence of unnecessary pain or distress by investigating 94 per cent of reports of poor farm animal welfare within one working day. The second target they list, which they are still working towards, is to introduce a new system for monitoring farm animal welfare and to use it to target cases of poor welfare.