

Reports and Comments

Conservation, education, research, and ethical review in zoos

The European Directive on zoos, which is promulgated in England and Wales through the The Zoo Licensing Act 1981 (Amendment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2002, includes provisions requiring zoos to implement the following conservation measures:

- participating in research from which conservation benefits accrue to the species, and/or training in relevant conservation skills, and/or the exchange of information relevant to species conservation and/or where appropriate, captive breeding, repopulation or reintroduction of species into the wild; and,
- promoting public education and awareness in relation to the conservation of biodiversity, particularly by providing information about the species exhibited and their natural habitats.

Since it came into force in 1981, the Zoo Licensing Act has required that licences to run zoos are dependent on regular inspections to satisfy local authorities that animal care and zoo management are satisfactory. The inspection process has now to include the audit of the conservation and education activities to ensure that zoos are implementing the new measures listed above (as specified in their more carefully drafted form in the ZLA 2002 Regulations). Furthermore, the most recent edition of the Secretary of States Standards of Modern Zoo Practice (March 2000, available at: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/gwd/zooprac/index.htm>) requires that zoos '*should establish ethical review processes or seek appropriate help in planning and implementing their conservation, education and research strategies*' particularly for '*...situations where the use of animals (eg acquisition, management or disposal for conservation, education or research) may be in conflict with the best welfare interests of the animal or animals involved.*'

In order to assist both zoos and zoo inspectors regarding the scope and scale of activities that might be judged to be appropriate to meet these new conservation provisions of the Zoo Licensing Act Regulations 2002, and regarding the establishment of suitable ethical review processes, the Zoos Forum has produced chapters on these subjects in its newly published 'Zoos Forum Handbook' (see details below).

The chapter on the ethical review process provides guidance on establishing and auditing ethical review processes in zoos. These review processes provide a mechanism for consideration of ethical dilemmas in order to provide advice to the zoo management. Advice is provided on the conduct of such reviews, suggested committee formats, and on issues that may need to be considered.

The second chapter of the Handbook expands on what zoos might consider doing to take forward their new legal obligations for conservation (which may or may not include research) and education. Many examples are provided of *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation activities that large and

small zoos have been involved in. The section on education discusses the development of suitable strategies and programmes appropriate for the size of zoo and the scale of the resources available.

This Handbook is likely to be helpful to, and to be more or less essential reading for, those responsible for zoo management, and for zoo inspectors in the UK. However, it is likely that it will be of interest and value more widely and especially to those concerned with zoo animal management around the world. The Handbook is produced in loose-leaf format to facilitate updating and the inclusion of further chapters on aspects of zoo and zoo animal management in the future.

Zoos Forum Handbook (November 2003). Produced by the Zoos Forum. 80 pp A4 ring file. Published by and available from DEFRA, Eagle Wing, Zone 1/16, Temple Quay House, 2 The Square, Temple Quay, Bristol BS1 6EB, UK. Available also at: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/gwd/zoosforum/handbook/index.htm>.

Welfare in animal sanctuaries, shelters and re-homing centres

There are a large, but unknown, number of enterprises in the UK which take in, look after, and try to re-home unwanted or otherwise displaced animals. This has been going on for a long time, for example: the Home for Lost and Starving Dogs, which later became the Battersea Dogs Home, was founded in 1861. Whilst many cater mainly for dogs and cats, others take in a wide range of species and some deal exclusively with sick and injured wildlife. Although the numbers of animals kept or passing through these enterprises each year are undoubtedly very large (tens or hundreds of thousands in the UK), there is no specific legislation setting out principles and standards for their operation. In response to 'general concerns about perceived variations in the standards of welfare' at such premises, the Companion Animal Welfare Council (CAWC) began, in 2001, a review of the animal welfare aspects of these sanctuaries, shelters and re-homing establishments. The report of this study was published in February 2004.

The report reviews the various types of sanctuary/shelter/re-homing centres and what they do, discusses principles of the animals' welfare and their needs, considers health and disease aspects and euthanasia, and makes many recommendations about management of these centres and about the need for regulation. Although its main focus is on companion animals, the report also includes a section on wildlife rescue/rehabilitation centres.

Among the major recommendations are:

- that it should be a duty for all establishments to maintain and update their knowledge concerning the needs of animals in their care,
- that establishments should have clear policies regarding the numbers of animals they can house, and their short-term and long-term care,