

## Reports and Comments

### Wild Animals in Travelling Circuses: The Report of the Chairman of the Circus Working Group

In June 2006 an independent Parliamentary Circus Working Group was established. Its remit was to provide and consider evidence relating to the transportation and housing needs of non-domesticated species of animals in travelling circuses and to evaluate which species welfare needs could not be satisfactorily met in these establishments. This was in response to a number of Parliamentary statements that the UK Government was intending to introduce a ban on such species. Further guidance was given to the Working Group that any evidence it considered should have a sound scientific base, and preferably be based upon the findings of peer-reviewed studies, and that anecdotal or photographic or video evidence should not be taken into account.

In October 2007, the report presenting the conclusions of the Chairman of the Working Group, and the findings of an Academic Panel that had considered the evidence submitted by the members of the Working Group — who were drawn from those working with animals in travelling circuses and welfare organisations opposed to this practice, was published. In his foreword, the Working Group Chairman Mike Radford stated that the conclusions drawn in the report were unlikely to satisfy supporters of either point of view. Nonetheless they are of interest, both because they have implications for the continuing use of non-domesticated animals in circuses across Europe and because they demonstrate how the scientific approach to animal welfare can inform legislation, specifically with respect to the duty of care and other provisions in the recently introduced UK Animal Welfare Bill.

The major finding of this report is that the Academic Panel, advising the Group, concluded “that there appears to be little evidence to demonstrate that the welfare of animals kept in travelling circuses is any better or worse than that of animals kept in other captive environments”. Given this, the report concludes that the scientific argument for change had not been made and that, therefore, any move towards banning the use of non-domesticated species would, accordingly, be unlawful, falling foul of “the principle of proportionality”. However, the Chairman also points out that “the *status quo* is not a tenable option” either, as Ministerial statements have already indicated that some regulation of circuses is intended and that the circuses themselves have accepted the need for further legal clarification of their status. Radford argues that if a lawful ban or statutory regulation of the area is to be achieved in England then further primary legislation is required, as existing legislation does not appear to suffice given the findings of the Working Group. This also likely to be the case for Wales and Scotland. In this instance, he concludes, science cannot provide guidance on policy, and any future regulation in this area will have to be based entirely upon political considerations.

For anyone with an interest in how science can inform legislation, and specifically its role in shaping secondary legislation under the Animal Welfare Bill and its limitations, this report makes for recommended reading.

**Wild Animals in Travelling Circuses: The Report of the Chairman of the Circus Working Group.** October 2007. Published by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and available from Defra, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London SW1P 3JR and at the Defra website: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/welfare>

*S Wickens*  
UFAW

### Welfare Quality®: Project Update

Welfare Quality® is a European research project concerned with integrating animal welfare into the food quality chain: from public concern to improved welfare and transparent quality. The scheme, which began in 2004 and involves the participation of 44 institutes and universities, hopes to have achieved the following aims by the end of 2009:

- to develop practical strategies/measures to improve animal welfare
- to develop a European on-farm welfare assessment standard
- to develop a European animal welfare information standard
- to integrate and interrelate the most appropriate specialist expertise in the multidisciplinary field of animal welfare in Europe

Four principles form the basis of the animal welfare measurements used within Welfare Quality®: ‘good feeding’, ‘good housing’, ‘good health’ and ‘appropriate behaviour’. Currently the testing of nine different assessment systems is underway for: sows and piglets, fattening pigs, dairy cows, beef cattle, dairy heifers and calves, veal calves, laying hens, broiler chickens and buffalo. It is hoped that the systematic approach to the development and testing of these species-specific assessment systems will result in reliable, repeatable and sensitive animal welfare assessment methods for all of these animals. Although carrying out each assessment during the trial phase is currently requiring a full day’s work it is expected that the final systems will take a manageable two-to-four hours and will be useful in a number of situations, including: as a research tool to evaluate the welfare of animals housed under various conditions, to help define a minimum level of animal welfare that is acceptable for voluntary or compulsory labelling and, as a self-assessment management tool for farmers or processors to help identify welfare problems or risks.

The project is also working towards implementation studies on pig, poultry and cattle farms across Europe, enabling farmers to see how the welfare of their animals relates to their own systems and practices. It will also provide farmers

with a 'benchmark' and allow for meaningful comparisons across farms. Other work includes: the establishment of web-based information resources for farmers, advisors, researchers and policy-makers; further investigation into consumers and their view of animal welfare and recognition of the value and retail dynamics involved with marketing animal welfare-friendly food products.

**Welfare Quality®: Project Update 7.** November 2007. An electronic newsletter available from the News section of the Welfare Quality website at: <http://www.welfarequality.net/everyone>

*E Carter*  
UFAW

### Animal Welfare Delivery Strategy

In 2004 the Government and devolved administrations published the Animal Health and Welfare Strategy for Great Britain (AHWS) which broadly describes a strategy for improving the health and welfare of animals in Scotland, England and Wales over the next 10 years. In support of the AHWS a second document, the Animal Welfare Delivery Strategy (AWDS), has recently been published by Defra which expands on the animal welfare component of the AHWS and outlines plans to achieve improved animal welfare in England. The Scottish Executive and National Assembly for Wales are considering their own initiatives and Northern Ireland will be covered by a separate animal health and welfare strategy. Delivery of the AWDS will be monitored by a sub-group of the England Implementation Group (EIG), an independent advisory body.

The scope of the AWDS is wide and, as with the Animal Welfare Act 2006, covers vertebrate animals for which humans have responsibility or that are under human control. Improving the welfare of these animals is a long-term project and one that requires the commitment of everyone involved. The AWDS opens with the following statement: "All those who are responsible for animals must ensure good standards of welfare for them and, those who have contact with, or benefit from, animals must pay due regard to their welfare". A theme of partnership, responsibility and independent accountability is set throughout, and brief roles and responsibility are outlined for: owners and users of animals; consumers and users of animal products; central government; local authorities; and stakeholders. Five strategic goals, and the actions required to achieve them, are described and cover the following:

- ensuring that those involved with animals have the necessary animal welfare skills and knowledge
- the need for animal welfare policy to be based on sound scientific and practical experience
- transparency of economic markets which allow customers to make informed choices
- effective enforcement of welfare legislation without placing unnecessary burdens on animal keepers
- acceptance of animal welfare standards at a global level and inclusion of these agreed standards within international legislation

The next step, which is currently underway, is the development of a detailed Implementation Action Plan by Defra and relevant stakeholders which will set out the short, medium and longer term objectives of the AWDS. It is expected that the Implementation Action Plan will be published shortly.

**Animal Welfare Delivery Strategy.** October 2007. Animal Welfare Delivery Strategy Team, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Defra, London. A4. 18 pp. Available at: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/ahws/pdf/awdelivery-strategy.pdf>

*E Carter*  
UFAW

### The Welfare State: Measuring Animal Welfare in the UK

For the second year running the UK's Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) has published its review of the status of animal welfare in the UK. The report covers 35 different issues that the charity believes may be used as indicators for assessing the state of animal welfare and year-on-year change.

The indicators are grouped into five categories: generic, farm animal, pet animal, research animals and wildlife. Topics covered are varied and range from: the proportion of FTSE 100 companies with animal welfare improvements in their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies to the numbers of cetaceans killed through by-catch. Each indicator is introduced with an explanation as to why it was selected and the background of the issues surrounding the topic is outlined. This is then followed by the RSPCA's findings and figures taken from a range of sources. The report uses a traffic light system to give an 'at a glance' impression of the RSPCA's assessment as to whether welfare issues have improved (green), remained relatively unchanged (amber), worsened (red), or to indicate if there are insufficient data on which to make a judgement (grey). The traffic light does not reflect the absolute level of animal welfare but the direction of change.

The report is designed for a wide readership and provides an interesting introduction to a variety of current matters of concern. The RSPCA hopes that this document will become an annual publication.

**The Welfare State: Measuring Animal Welfare in the UK 2006.** 2007. Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. A4. 98 pp. Available from: External Affairs, RSPCA, Wilberforce Way, Southwater, Horsham, West Sussex, RH13 9RS, UK or at: [http://www.animalwelfarefootprint.com/the\\_report/](http://www.animalwelfarefootprint.com/the_report/)

*E Carter*  
UFAW

### Report of the Animal Procedures Committee for 2006

The Animal Procedures Committee — the body responsible for overseeing the implementation of the UK law on the use of animals in scientific procedures — published its Annual report for 2006 in November. The report itself is fairly short, but this is because there are a number of annexes that