

In this contentious field, it is important that such valuable studies should be subject to the rigors of peer-review.

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*Welfare Aspects of Shooting Foxes* (June 2003) A study for the All Party Parliamentary Middle Way Group by N Fox, S Rivers, N Blay, A G Greenwood and D Wise. 48 pp A4. Published by and available from the All Party Parliamentary Middle Way Group, c/o Lembit Öpik MP, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

### **Proposed European Council Regulation on the protection of animals during transport**

On 16 July 2003, the European Commission in Brussels announced their proposals to improve the current rules regarding animal welfare during transport. The proposed Regulation aims to strengthen existing legislation covering the protection of animals during transport by addressing the quality of transport and changes in practice.

The proposals include new maximum journey times with a maximum of 9 h travelling followed by a minimum of 12 h rest, that specific temperatures should be provided according to species requirements, and that animals should have access to drinking water at all times. Another proposal is to remove the need for staging points since animals will rest in their vehicles to avoid unnecessary loading and unloading. New controls on the transport of very young animals are also detailed along with stricter controls on the transport of horses.

Improved space allowances are proposed based on species and length of journey, as are stricter controls regarding animal transport through registration of transporters. There is also a proposal for more detailed definition of unfitness for travel, for clarification of responsibilities, and for mandatory training for those dealing with animals during a journey. To improve enforcement, the regulation identifies the chain of individuals involved in animal transport and places greater onus on personal responsibility if infringements occur. Enforcement tools, such as checks via tachographs, will also be introduced.

The document also sets out stricter standards for road vehicles used for longer journeys and inspection and approval of these vehicles. If the Regulation is approved, there will be a requirement for the inspection and approval of livestock vessels. Finally, better procedures for cooperation between member states are proposed. Member states will also be encouraged to develop guides of good practice for operators.

The Regulation still requires approval from the Council of Ministers after consultation of the European Parliament; however, it is expected that this Regulation will be in force by the end of 2005.

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*Proposal for a Council Regulation on the protection of animals during transport and related operations* (July 2003) Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on the protection of animals during transport. Published by the Commission of the European Communities. 65 pp A4. Published in the Official Journal of the European Communities and available, free of charge, from the website: [www.europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/search/en/search\\_oj.html](http://www.europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/search/en/search_oj.html)

### **Cost–benefit assessment in the use of animals in research**

The role of the UK's Animal Procedures Committee (APC) is to provide Ministers with independent advice about the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 and their functions under it. It is a legal requirement that in determining whether, and with what conditions, to grant a licence to permit scientific procedures on animals, the Secretary of State weighs the likely benefits of the work against the likely adverse effects on the animals used. In response to concerns regarding how the cost–benefit assessment operated in practice, the APC decided in

1997 to review and to produce an extended statement on this procedure and established a working group to take this forward. The review, published in June 2003, includes chapters on moral issues, the scientific validity of animal experiments, the identification of costs and benefits, practical procedures for cost–benefit assessment, and a summary and conclusions.

In the review, the APC sets out some “... practical steps that we believe should be taken in order to avoid inertia in the application of the Act and, generally, help to ensure that strenuous and concerted efforts are made towards a change in areas of concern”. These particular recommendations were for: (i) negotiation by the scientific community of targets for implementation of best practice and, where possible, for phasing out procedures which are believed to cause the most suffering; (ii) the APC, in dialogue with others, to investigate further some particular problem areas (eg procedures involving death as an end point); and (iii) the Home Office to provide more information on current thinking within the Office’s inspectorate on ‘good practice’.

The review contains a number of more specific recommendations (scattered through the text — they are not drawn out and listed comprehensively anywhere in the report); for example: that project licence application forms are redesigned to encourage clearer and more overt descriptions of costs and benefits and information about the applicant’s own ‘weighing’ of their balance; and that in order to distinguish more clearly the wide range of levels of severity encompassed by the term ‘moderate’, this category be sub-divided.

Arguably, relatively little attention is given in this 106-page review to the issues of identifying and assessing the scale of costs. Although it is noted that “... it is important to recognise that a description of the costs of the study should not be simply a description of what will happen to the animals, but of what this will actually mean for the animals in practice”, there is little advice — considering the absolutely central importance of the subject — about how “what will happen” might be transduced into judgments of how the animals will be affected (in terms of pain, fear, and other unpleasant feelings), or of the difficulties and limitations of this process.

The difficulties with cost–benefit analysis are concisely summarised in the review: “... cost–benefit assessments under the Act must be regarded as judgments that are both contestable and interim, in that they should change over time — as new scientific information becomes available, understanding of animals and their welfare improves and refined or non-animal methods are found, for example — and also in response to changes in wider societal perspective.”

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*Review of cost–benefit assessment in the use of animals in research* (June 2003) The Animal Procedures Committee. 105 pp A4. Published by The Home Office, Communication Directorate. Available free of charge via the Animal Procedures Committee website: <http://www.apc.gov.uk>