

Reports and Comments

Building a Better Future for England's Kept Animals

The England Implementation Group (EIG), an independent advisory body responsible for driving forward the implementation in England of the animal health and welfare strategy for Great Britain, has recently published its first annual report (details below). In 2004 the Animal Health and Welfare Strategy for Great Britain was published. The aim of this is to “develop a new partnership in which we can make a lasting and continuous improvement in the health and welfare of kept animals while protecting society, the economy and the environment from the effect of animal diseases”. According to the introduction in the EIG report, “more than anything else this strategy requires a fundamental shift in attitude by the main protagonists, including the livestock industry, other animal keepers, the veterinary profession, Government and its agencies, and the public, in order to ensure that those with the ability to effect change do so”. The EIG’s role, it goes on to say, is to investigate, stimulate and monitor this shift.

The report outlines the Group’s developing initiatives to set up ‘sector councils’ which will develop species-specific strategies and plans for farm animal health and welfare. An Annex is included which introduces a framework of indices, that is under development, with which to monitor progress against various aspects of the Animal Health and Welfare Strategy.

Building a Better Future for England's Kept Animals 2006.

The first annual report of the England Implementation Group (EIG) summarising progress being made in England on delivery of the animal health and welfare strategy for Great Britain. Available from EIG, Defra, Nobel House, Smith Square, London SW1P 3JR and at: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/ahws/eig/keydocs.htm>

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Guidelines for Euthanasia of Non-Domestic animals

This useful review of euthanasia methods for non-domestic animals includes 24 short chapters in three parts. The first part covers general matters including criteria for humane euthanasia, physiology, personnel safety and regulatory matters (relating to the USA). In the second part there are taxon-specific recommendations for a wide range of groups including invertebrates, fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and ten groups of mammals (eg bats, marsupials, rodents and small mammals, marine mammals, hoofstock, carnivores and megavertebrates). The bulk of the third part of the booklet comprises an annotated table in which recommended methods, conditionally acceptable methods and methods that are generally unacceptable are listed for the various groups of animals covered.

These guidelines will be a helpful resource for those dealing with captive or free-living wild animals.

Guidelines for Euthanasia of Non-Domestic Animals 2006.

An official publication of the American Association of Zoo Veterinarians. 111 pages. Available from the American Association of Zoo Veterinarians. www.aazv.org. Price \$75 plus postage (\$10 in USA, \$15 outside USA).

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The Use of Non-Human Primates in Research

The central goal of the inquiry reported in the recently published, *The use of non-human primates in research* (see details below) was to examine the scientific case for the use of non-human primates for research, both near market and fundamental, into the treatment or prevention of disease in humans. The inquiry was undertaken by a panel of eight under the chairmanship of Sir David Weatherall.

It is noted in the report that it appears that some people find research involving animals more acceptable if it is related to a more immediate application than if it is of a more fundamental nature. The Group therefore considered this distinction but concluded that it is an outdated concept because modern biomedical research comprises a continuum from basic to applied studies. And that the use of non-human primates in research, regardless of where on the fundamental to applied continuum the research lies, should be judged on a case-by-case basis.

The report includes a review of the current position of medical-related research involving non-human primates, and into the scientific basis for the use of primates (including consideration as to whether this research could be replaced by work on humans), and then includes sections on particular research areas – infectious diseases, neuroscience and drug discovery and development. There are sections also on alternatives to use of non-human primates, welfare issues and ethics, followed by a discussion. Sixteen recommendations are listed, including: “Recommendation 1: There is a strong scientific basis for the carefully regulated use of non-human primates where there are no other means to address clearly defined questions of particular biological or medical importance” and “Recommendation 6: Retrospective reporting on the severity of procedures... should be introduced as soon as possible”. Amongst other recommendations are those which address improvements in continuous training of research workers in this field, acceleration of work towards improving and applying best-practice housing, and improving interactions between regulatory bodies and the scientific community.

In his covering letter, Sir David Weatherall draws attention to the report’s exhortation for all those involved to work