

Reports and Comments

A Guide for Lay Members of Animal Ethics Committees

This brief guide (see details below) gives an overview of Animal Ethics Committees (AECs) and the role of the lay member in these. In particular, it seeks to reassure concerns that lay members, especially those lacking experience in the area, may have about their importance and legitimacy in the ethical review process. After detailing the role of AECs under New Zealand legislation as it relates to the use of animals in research, testing and teaching, the guide then highlights four factors: independence, public representation, animal advocacy and the possession of a fresh perspective as the most important elements contributed by lay members to the review process. What follows is the now customary explanation of the principle of the 3Rs and how they underline the human use of animals in science and teaching, and then helpful suggestions as to questions and issues that a lay member should consider when assessing a proposal. Finally, a short glossary of terms and references are given. As a guide, it acts as a useful introduction for lay members, but anyone seeking to fulfill this role to the best of their abilities will want to utilise the references given to better understand the issues and concerns more deeply.

A Guide for Lay Members of Animal Ethics Committees

March 2007, pp 12 A4. Published by the Ministry for Agriculture and Forestry and National Animal Ethics Advisory Committee, New Zealand. This guide can be accessed at: <http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/files/animal-welfare/naeac/papers/2007-lay-members.pdf>

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FAWC Report on Stockmanship and Farm Animal Welfare

“Stockmanship is the single most important influence on the welfare of farm animals”, thus begins this report from the UK’s Farm Animal Welfare Council into the role and scope of stockmanship, as it pertains to ensuring high standards of animal welfare, and the provision of effective education and training for livestock farmers and stockmen within the UK.

The report highlights the small business nature of agriculture within Great Britain and the conditions under which many within the industry and the estimated 292,000 stockmen have to work. The majority of businesses are run by single operators (60%) with only 6% having 10 or more employees. This poses particular problems as it means that the burden of care falls onto individuals that may often have to work for long hours and have limited networks of support upon which to draw during times of financial hardship, stress or ill-health; all of which may negatively impact on the welfare of their animals. In addition, entry rate to farming is low (2% over the last five years) compared to the exit rate (18% over the same period); a state of affairs that the report attributes to the poor image and status of farming within the UK. Recruitment of suitably knowledgeable and

skilled employees — of which half are under 35 years of age — is also reported as being difficult as is their retention and the report notes that this has been quoted as one reason for business closures.

In an attempt to address such concerns, and a shrinking knowledge and skills base amongst stockmen, the report identifies attributes which it considers to be the ‘Three Essentials of Stockmanship’. These are:

- *Knowledge of animal husbandry.* Sound knowledge of the biology and husbandry of farm animals, including how their needs may be best provided in all circumstances.
- *Skills in animal husbandry.* Demonstrable skills in observation, handling, care and treatment of animals, and problem detection and resolution.
- *Personal qualities.* Affinity and empathy with animals, dedication and patience.

These, the report believes, should form the basis of education, training and motivational programmes for stockmen. An emphasis on these along with easier access to continuing professional development programmes, the report suggests, should facilitate the recruitment and retention of appropriate staff and ensure standards. The report also recommends that, as part of developing a responsible and more knowledgeable attitude towards farm animals and their products, and improving the image and status of the industry, basic elements of agriculture and the humane care of farm animals be incorporated into the national curriculum for pre-16 year olds.

The report then discusses the current provision of education and training within the UK, highlighting the need to ensure that the latest thinking and best practice is effectively communicated to those working with the animals, especially with respect to the understanding of animal behaviour and its interpretation as indices of physical and mental well-being. It notes that the preferred point of delivery of such courses is by in-house or on-farm training schemes that allow the training to be responsive to specific needs. Existing schemes, such as the Certificates of Competence qualifications in pig husbandry, are detailed and recommendations made to establish a central source of information about stockmen training, certification and funding.

The report considers but then rejects the concept of licensing of stockmen, preferring instead the development of improved accreditation schemes. It notes that vocational qualifications for livestock farmers and stockmen should be simplified so that training and certification can be largely undertaken on-site. If this is to occur, however, it requires sufficient numbers of suitably skilled trainers be available to deliver and assess such training and these are also in decline. The report recommends that relevant bodies such as the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and the livestock industry keep the provision of such husbandry and practical skills within higher level professional courses under regular review to ensure that the needs of the

industry are being met. Final recommendations include the need to review funding provision and the impact of proposed education and training initiatives to ensure that both public and private requirements on the education and training of stockmen are being met.

FAWC Report on Stockmanship and Farm Animal Welfare June 2007, pp 34 A4. Produced and published by the Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC). Available free of charge from FAWC Secretariat, Area 511, 1A Page Street, London SW1P 4 PQ, UK and from the FAWC website: www.fawc.org.uk

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Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2007

The Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2007 have now been approved by the UK Parliament and came into force on the 1st October 2007. The Regulations cover all farmed animals in England and have been made under the Animal Welfare Act 2006. The 2007 Regulations replace the previous Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2000 (as amended), and additionally Part 1 of the Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1968 has been repealed. The changes bring farmed animal legislation into line with the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

Most of the 2007 Regulations are unchanged from those published in 2000 and they continue to implement European Community legislation. A general framework of the legislation protecting animals kept for farming purposes is laid out along with additional conditions covering laying hens in non-cage systems, laying hens in conventional cages, laying hens in enriched cages, calves confined for rearing and fattening, cattle, pigs and rabbits.

Perhaps the most notable area of change between the 2000 and 2007 Regulations includes the extension of the Regulations to protect animals farmed on common land as well as those farmed on agricultural land. It is estimated that 80,000 sheep are kept on common land therefore this is an important step towards ensuring the good welfare of all farmed sheep, regardless of where they are grazed. Few cattle or other species are farmed on common land.

Other slight differences between the 2000 and 2007 Regulations include a general modernisation of text and a more definite style of writing, for example 'shall' is replaced with 'must' throughout the document: 'Any animals which appear to be ill or injured must be cared for appropriately and without delay'. There are also some parts of the 2000 Regulations which have been removed to prevent duplication with the more recent Animal Welfare Act 2006. Certain provisions which previously applied to only farmed animals, such as the duty of care for owners and keepers, have now been extended to include all animals and are therefore incorporated by the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2007 July 2007, pp 19 A4. Published by The Stationary Office Limited. ISBN 0-11-099593-7. Copies are available from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (On Farm Welfare Team), 5th Floor, 1A Page Street, London SW1P 4PQ or for download at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/si/si2007/20072078.htm>

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APC Advisory Document on Differences Between UK and Revised European Codes of Practice for the Housing of Research Animals

Within the UK the Home Office sets standards for the care accommodation of animals used in research through inspection and through codes of practice.

On the 15th June 2006, the fourth Multilateral Consultation of Parties to the European Convention for the Protection of Vertebrate Animals used for Experimental and other Scientific Purposes (ETS 123) was held in Strasbourg. At this meeting the revised draft Appendix A to the convention, containing updated recommendations on the housing and husbandry of laboratory animals was unanimously accepted by the parties to the Convention, including the European Commission, and the revised Appendix A entered into force on the 15th June 2007. Within the European Community, the Commission is contracting a preliminary impact assessment on different options for the revision of Directive 86/609/EEC on the protection of animals used for experimental and other scientific purposes, and this, together with the changes to Appendix A of the Council of Europe Convention, will necessitate changes to the UK codes of practice.

The Housing and Husbandry Sub-Committee of the Animals Procedures Committee has produced a document aimed at bringing to the attention of laboratory managers differences between the current codes of practice for the housing of laboratory animals and the revised recommendations set out in Appendix A to the European Convention ETS 123. This document highlights areas where there are significant differences between the existing UK codes of practice and the revised Appendix, so that users can take steps to ensure that their housing reflects present knowledge and good practice. As the authors of the report write: "This will have immediate advantages in terms of animal welfare, may improve the quality of the science, and should help to ensure that decisions made now are likely to comply with future changes in UK legislation".

APC Advisory Document on Differences Between UK and Revised European Codes of Practice for the Housing of Research Animals August 2006, pp A4. Report by the Housing and Husbandry Sub-Committee of the Animal Procedures Committee. Published by the Animal Procedures Committee and available at the Committee's website www.apc.org.uk

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