

The use of animals in testing household products

Is it ethically acceptable to use animals in the toxicological testing of products designed for use in the household (eg detergents, washing powders, bathroom cleaners, air-fresheners, polishes, paints), when products that adequately perform these functions are already available? The Boyd Group (a UK forum for dialogue on contentious issues in laboratory animal use) has recently completed an enquiry into the issues surrounding the use of animals for such purposes. It concluded in paragraph 1 of its 'Statement of Principle' included in the report that "... when the cost benefit analysis required under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 is applied to the use of animals in testing finished products, there are strong ethical reasons to take into account not only to ensure the safety of products when they are marketed, but also the potential need for the products themselves". The Boyd Group also believes that it is unacceptable to use animals in developing and testing convenience products for which there is little need because products with adequate efficacy already exist.

This is a very thorough and informative review of the issues. It addresses the rationale for the use of animals in safety-testing of any new substances, clarifies the distinction between new substances and finished products made from combinations of substances that have already been tested, discusses the definition of household products, and provides data on the number of animals used in the UK for testing finished household products (in 1999, a total of 341 animals, all rats, were used).

The Group recognises that a ban on such testing in the UK "may not be the most effective practical means of safeguarding animals and enhancing their welfare" because unless such work is banned in other countries also, there is a danger that the testing will continue elsewhere. For this reason, the group suggests that the Government should vigorously encourage other states to adopt a similar stance.

The Report mentions that the Government has indicated that it is exploring "the feasibility of a ban on testing finished household products on animals". This report is likely to be very helpful to the Government and to anyone wishing to acquire a clear understanding of the issues involved.

The Use of Animals in Testing Household Products (December 2002) A Discussion Paper and Statement of Principle. Compiled and produced by the Boyd Group. Published by the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare. 22 pp A4 paperback. Available from the Boyd Group, P O Box 423, Southsea PO5 1TJ, UK, and at <http://www.boyd-group.demon.co.uk>.

Release of wildlife casualties after treatment

There has been a huge growth in interest in the treatment of wildlife casualties in Britain and in many other parts of the world. Veterinary technology has advanced such that many wildlife injuries and diseases can be effectively treated. However, there is still little information available on the fate of these animals after release. In October 2000, the British Wildlife Rehabilitation Council (BWRC) and UFAW organised a symposium at the Zoological Society of London to discuss issues relating to release. The proceedings of this meeting, edited by Dick Best and Marian Small, have now been published. Seven papers are presented in these proceedings, including "Health monitoring of casualties and potential threats posed to wildlife populations by released casualties" by Ian Robinson, "Habitat assessment for release schemes" by Adam Grogan, "Post-release monitoring — the practicalities" by Nigel Reeve, and "Survival rates of oiled guillemots — looking to the future" by Michael Toms.

In his concluding comments, Robert Atkinson asks: "How many animals have been turned out to God knows what fate, with the justification that 'at least it stands a chance of survival'? Well so it does. But it also stands a chance of pain, stress and a premature death." Judging what is best for the welfare of wildlife casualties can be very difficult. These proceedings are a valuable contribution in this data-sparse field.

Proceedings of the joint BWRC/UFAW Symposium, October 2000 (January 2003) Published by the BWRC. 68 pp A5 paperback. Available from BWRC, c/o The Wildlife Department, RSPCA, Wilberforce Way, Southwater, Horsham, West Sussex RH13 9RS, UK. Price £7.00.

The UK Government's reply to the House of Lords Select Committee Report on Animals in Scientific Procedures

In July 2002, the House of Lords Select Committee that was convened to address the use of animals in studies causing pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm published its report and recommendations (see *Animal Welfare 11*: 460-461). The UK Government has now published its response and there is a fair degree of agreement. The Government supports the Lords' recommendations for greater openness and debate about the use of animals in science, but argues that this must not be at the cost of jeopardising the safety of scientists or the protection of legitimate commercial and intellectual interests. There is also agreement that more needs to be done to advance the 3Rs by the biomedical scientific community. The Government's report emphasises the important role that industry has played in advancing the 3Rs but unfortunately does not also give credit to the considerable efforts that scientific and technical animal welfare organisations have made to stimulate the improvements to animals in laboratories that we see today. The Government argues that the majority of advances in the 3Rs have been made by biomedical scientists who work with animals. In terms of advances in alternatives to the use of animals, this may be true; however, refinements of housing have been largely developed from the work of field ethologists and zoo scientists, and adapted, tested and validated for laboratories by ethologists and laboratory animal scientists. It has, in fact, sometimes proved rather difficult to persuade biomedical scientists to accept these advances. It is also unfortunate that the footnote describing the 3Rs in the report refers to refinement only as refinement of *procedures*, and does not include refinement of housing and husbandry.

Some light is cast on the Government's thinking in terms of changes to Legislation. Openness is clearly one area under consideration; another concerns the re-use of animals and, in this case, the Government indicates that it intends to influence European legislation. There is also the suggestion that changes could be made to the way in which statistics on animal use are collected and presented.

There are some areas of disagreement with the Lords. For example, the suggestions that each designated site should be inspected by more than one inspector, and that 'lay' visitors should accompany inspectors, are both rejected.

The report indicates that the Government is in favour of exploring options for a new centre for the three Rs. It is to be hoped that any such exploration will be based on a close examination of what interested organisations are already doing in this area, identification of gaps, if any, and analysis as to whether a new centre would be the most cost-effective option to achieve the identified goals.

The Government Reply to the Report of the House of Lords Select Committee on Animals in Scientific Procedures Session 2001-2002 HL 150-1. Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for the Home Department by Command of her Majesty CM5729 (January 2003) Published by The Stationery Office, P O Box 29, Norwich NR3 1GN, UK. 14 pp A4 paperback. £5.00. Available at <http://www.official-documents.co.uk/document/cm57/5729/5729.htm>