

Guidance on humane slaughter of poultry for the small producer

There is growing interest in small-scale poultry-keeping in the UK to provide meat or eggs for the producer's own use or to supply specialist local markets. The Humane Slaughter Association has published a revised and updated guide to poultry slaughter aimed specifically at these small producers, but it is also relevant to anybody who may need to kill poultry. The aim is "to provide guidance to ensure the most humane and practical method of slaughter is chosen for the species, size and number of birds to be killed".

The relevant UK law regarding slaughter and the circumstances under which slaughterman's licences may or may not be required are outlined. There are also introductory sections on catching, handling and restraint. Basic principles of slaughter are described, including descriptions of the signs of effective electrical and concussion stunning. These and other methods of stunning and slaughtering are described and clearly illustrated, and recommendations are made as to their suitability for general or emergency use. Appendices include useful sources of further information (in the UK) and brief notes referring to other authorities on matters of food hygiene and carcass disposal.

This is a very valuable practical guide. With the exception of the sections on law, which specifically address the situation in the UK, the information provided is relevant to producers, and to the welfare of their birds, throughout the world.

Practical Slaughter of Poultry: A Guide for the Small Producer, 2nd Edition (2001) Published by the Humane Slaughter Association, The Old School, Brewhouse Hill, Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire AL4 8AN, UK. 30 pp. A5 paperback (ISBN 1 871561 16 7). Price £2.00.

Refining procedures for the administration of substances to laboratory animals

The fifth of a series of reports on refinements in laboratory animal research, written by the joint working group organised by the British Veterinary Association Animal Welfare Foundation, the Fund for the Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and UFAW, has recently been published. It addresses a wide range of issues relating to the minimisation of adverse welfare effects caused by administration of substances to animals for research or toxicity testing. The bulk of the text describes technical refinements for individual routes of administration, including intra-articular, intracerebral (currently being used extensively in studies of Creutzfeldt-Jacob and related diseases), intradermal, intraperitoneal, intravenous, intramuscular, subcutaneous and topical (dermal and ocular). There are also introductory sections on general principles of good practice and a section on special considerations for wild animals.

This report, compiled by D B Morton, M Jennings, A Buckwell, R Ewbank, C Godfrey, B Holgate, I Inglis, R James, C Page, I Sharman, R Verschoyle, L Westfall and A B Wilson, maintains the high standard of this series of publications on refinements in experimental procedures and husbandry of laboratory animals. It is a thorough and comprehensive review that should be studied by everyone whose work involves administration of substances to laboratory animals. It does not describe the detailed practicalities of the techniques involved but emphasises the need for training and practice before undertaking the procedures on live animals.

It is unfortunate that data on maximum volumes for intravenous injection appear to have been lost in the preparation of the manuscript (the caption for Table 5 refers to them but they are not presented). No mention is made of allometric scaling principles. Knowledge of the way in which rates of physiological processes tend to scale with size between species can be helpful in, for example, drawing comparisons in acceptable rates of intravenous infusion between species.