Reports and Comments

New code of welfare for animal transport in New Zealand

The New Zealand Ministry for Agriculture and Forestry (MAF), together with the National Animal Welfare Advisory Council (NAWAC), has recently published a new code of welfare which outlines the legal minimum standards when transporting any live animal (terrestrial and aquatic) within New Zealand The code does not cover animals exported from New Zealand to other countries and the welfare of exported animals is instead catered for by the International Air Transport Association (when transported by air) or MAF transport standards (when transported by sea).

Thirteen minimum standards are covered under ten headings: responsibilities, competency and stockmanship; equipment; journey planning and documentation; preparation and selection of animals for the journey; loading and unloading; the journey; special requirements; transport in emergencies; emergency humane destruction; and quality management. Each section follows a similar format that includes a general introduction, the relevant minimum standard(s), example indicators that could be used to signal that the minimum standard(s) is being met, and a section describing what is currently considered to be best practice. Most sections finish with further general information and links to helpful guidelines. The appendices include an animal welfare check list, a list of interpretations and definitions of terms used within the code and a section on legislative requirements.

The welfare codes are not legally binding in themselves but they may be used as evidence to support a prosecution for an offence under the relevant legislation. It is a requirement that all codes are reviewed at least every ten years.

Animal Welfare (Transport within New Zealand) Code of Welfare 2011 (September 2011). A4, 41 pages. National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, New Zealand. ISBN: 978-0-478-38702-5 (print) 978-0-478-38703-2 (online). The guidelines are available at the MAF Biosecurity website: http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/regs/animal-welfare/stds/codes, or by emailing: animalwelfare@maf.govt.nz.

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Use of the whip in horse racing

The use of the whip in horse racing is a controversial topic which there has been some public concern about. In November 2010, the British Horseracing Authority (BHA), which is the main organisation that regulates horse racing in Great Britain, began considering the effectiveness of the current rules governing the use of the whip. This proved to be a timely debate due to two high profile cases of whip misuse occurring in the first half of 2011 at two popular race meetings: the John Smith's Grand National and the Prince of Wales Stakes at Royal Ascot. The winning jockey of the Grand National was suspended for five days following over-use of the whip on his horse, Ballabriggs, on which the whip was used 17 times (exceeding the then recommended maximum of 15 strokes). Another incident followed shortly when a jockey received a nine-day suspension for using his whip 24 times at Royal Ascot when riding the winner, Rewilding, to the finishing line.

Horse racing is a popular pastime in Great Britain and ranks the second most attended sport following football: in 2010, there were over 5.8 million attendees at race meetings. The BHA is keen to ensure that the public has a positive perception of horse racing and that people continue to visit racetracks. In June 2011, the BHA Board agreed the terms of reference for a review: 'To review the use of the whip in Horseracing in Great Britain'. The review process involved the following: a consultation with relevant stakeholders; a statistical analysis of breaches of the whip Rules; consideration of current academic research on the use of the whip and its effect on horses; the design and manufacture of whips; and public opinion research into the public's perception of the use of the whip in racing, which was undertaken by SMG/YouGov, a sports research agency. The results of the Review were published in September 2011.

The Review discusses why and how a whip may be used in horse racing. It is considered acceptable to use the whip for safety (for both horse and jockey) and for encouragement (to ensure that the horse is performing at its best). Only a whip that is of an energy-absorbing, cushioned design may be used during racing and, when used correctly, it is thought that the whip does not cause pain or injury to the horse. In 2010, there were 92,025 runners in 9,566 races and the total number of horses that ran was 20,123. According to figures in the BHA review, there would have been approximately 20 occasions when a weal was observed during 2010.

However, although the opinion of the Review Group overall was that the whip is still considered to be necessary in horse racing, it was also made clear that the current Rules and penalties are not effective: there were over 5,202 breaches of whip Rules between January 2004 and April 2011. The BHA is keen to be seen to be taking horse welfare seriously and the Review Group therefore put forward 19 recommendations to provide greater incentive for jockeys to ride within the Rules and to bring about lasting change in behaviour and attitudes.

All 19 recommendations were approved by the BHA Board and the new Rules came into force on 10th October 2011. However, following their introduction, the Professional Jockeys Association (PJA) raised a number of concerns and the Rules were amended on 21st October. Additional amendments were then made on 11th November following further disagreement between the BHA and the PJA.

The majority of recommendations relate to the number of times that the whip may be used and the penalties that would be incurred for inappropriate use. Taking into account the recent amendments, jockeys may use their whip

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seven times in flat races and eight times over jumps. If a jockey exceeds these limits by one, two or three hits, then they will be suspended for two, five or seven days, respectively. If a jockey goes on to use the whip excessively a second time within a 12-month period then the suspension periods for a second offence increase and overuse by one, two, or three hits will incur a suspension of four, ten or fourteen days. However, this is at the discretion of the racing stewards and some hits may be disregarded by the steward after review of the race video footage and after hearing evidence from the jockey. Where a jockey receives a suspension of seven days or more then he will also forfeit any prize money.

The BHA consider that further scientific research into the use of the whip in racing is required and recommend that that the Authority should continue to support research in this area, and to incorporate any future changes in whip design or technological innovations that may enhance equine welfare. Additionally, the public opinion research showed a general lack of understanding of how and when the whip is used in racing and the BHA therefore recommend that the Authority should publish the results of the Review widely, and keep track of public perception by commissioning further opinion research in the future.

The training of jockeys is also targeted and the BHA recommends that current knowledge on animal welfare and behaviour is incorporated into jockey training. The BHA also proposes that the course content and structure for apprentice jockeys, conditional jockeys, and amateur riders at each stage of their career is revisited to ensure that teaching is effective in explaining the acceptable and correct use of the whip. Additionally, it is recommended that greater use is also made of remedial training for jockeys who are identified as having deficiencies in their riding and whip use.

Responsible Regulation: A review of the Use of the Whip in Horse Racing (September 2011). A4, 77 pages. British Horseracing Authority. British Horseracing Authority, 75 Holborn, London, WC1V 6LS. Email: info@britishhorseracing.com. The review is available online at: http://www.britishhorseracing.com/whip-review/WhipReview.pdf.

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The cost of improving farm animal welfare

Compassion in World Farming has recently published a report written by its Chief Policy Advisor, Peter Stevenson. The report considers the economics of livestock farming systems and, specifically, compares the cost of production between intensive systems and those which are thought to offer a higher standard of farmed animal welfare.

The Report reviewed a number of academic studies and these were used to demonstrate that the differences in production costs between the systems are, in some cases, quite low. For example, the on-farm costs of producing a free-range egg is considered to be only 2.08 pence more than a cage egg. It is therefore suggested that the average consumer could switch to eating free-range eggs for a moderate 7.48 pence extra each week (the average per capita consumption of eggs in the United Kingdom is 187 eggs per year). Similar figures are provided for cost comparisons of pig production systems, such as: sow stalls versus group housing; outdoor versus indoor; and various methods for keeping growing pigs.

It is suggested in the Report that systems with higher animal welfare often result in healthier animals, which may result in decreased production costs as a result, such as lower mortality, improved growth rates and lower feed-conversion ratios. It is noted that assessment of the profitability of milk production solely by measuring the conversion of feed into milk ignores a number of other important factors, including fertility, longevity, and milk yield losses and culling due to health problems, and the value of both cull cows and calves. The results of a study looking into the differences between a more robust dairy herd (in which cows are stronger, healthier, have lower milk yields per lactation but greater longevity) and a higher yielding herd concluded that the net margin for a robust herd was 20% higher per cow compared to a high yielding herd.

According to the Report, increased production costs associated with implementing higher welfare practices have a relatively small effect on final retail prices. This is because production costs are only part of the end price and other factors, eg slaughter, processing, packaging, distribution, marketing, also play a role. A study from the United States exemplifies this: it concluded that changing US pork production from sow stall to group-housing systems would result in a 9% increase in costs at the farm-level but only a 2% increase at the retail level. The same study concluded that changing from sow stall to free-range systems, would increase farm-level costs by 18% but retail costs by only 5%.

The Report then goes on to outline various economic drivers that could be used to stimulate higher welfare farming practices. It is proposed that all products should be labelled to indicate the method of production, enabling consumers to take these into account in their purchases, should they wish to do so. Subsidies could also be used to provide incentives for farmers to adopt higher welfare practices, eg via the EU Common Agricultural Policy. The Report considers that full account should be taken of indirect costs such as use of water, soil degradation, greenhouse gas emissions, control of food-borne diseases (eg *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter*), and possible effects on prevalence of non-communicable diseases that may be associated with meat consumption.

Reviewing the Costs: The Economics of Moving to Higher Welfare Farming (August 2011). A4, 23 pages. A report written by the Chief Policy Advisor, Peter Stevenson, at Compassion in World Farming. ISBN: 1-900156-55-5. Available online at: http://www.ciwf.org.uk/includes/documents/cm_docs/2011/r/reviewing_the_costs_august_2011.pdf.

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