

twelve welfare criteria (between two and four for each principle) which, in turn, are scored for a range of welfare measures (between 30 and 50 measurements for each species).

The majority of welfare measures are animal-based, which is a key feature of the Welfare Quality® assessment method. Animal-based measures involve taking measurements directly from the animals themselves, such as behavioural or clinical observations, as opposed to the more traditionally-used resource or management-based measures, eg how much space does an animal have or what is the farm protocol for managing animals in a certain situation? For example, the welfare principle ‘good housing’ has three welfare criteria: comfort around resting, thermal comfort, and ease of movement. To assess these criteria in sows and piglets, the following animal-based measures are taken: bursitis and shoulder scores (sows); absence of manure on the body (sows and piglets); and panting and huddling (sows and piglets). Additionally, two resource measurements are taken: space allowance and assessment of farrowing crates. Each of these measures is described and a method of scoring given to create a criterion-score.

Once scores have been obtained for each criterion then these are, in turn, synthesised to give an overall score for the welfare principle. The four principles are then integrated to give the farm unit an overall classification into one of four categories: excellent, enhanced, acceptable, and unclassified.

Although the scoring system as a whole appears to be quite complicated on first viewing (and there has been a great deal of debate regarding the weighting and synthesising of various scores), the actual — on the ground — assessment has been deliberately kept as simple as possible and many measurements are scored using a straightforward binary or three-point scale. Additionally, the use of value judgements has been minimised where possible and veterinary expertise or specialist behavioural knowledge is not required to undertake the process. However, training is considered essential and Welfare Quality® state that “...no individual or organisation can be considered capable of applying these methods in a robust, repeatable and valid way without attending harmonised training approved by the Welfare Quality® consortium”.

It is hoped that the data gathered using the Welfare Quality® assessment protocols will provide pertinent information to farmers and unit managers regarding the welfare status of their farms compared to those of their peers and will enable them to monitor changes in welfare over time and assist with decisions when implementing welfare improvement strategies. It is also intended that the data will, in the future, help to inform consumers and retailers of the welfare status of the producers from whom they purchase products.

Although the Welfare Quality® project has reached the end of its five-year timeline, it is hoped that the connections between individuals and organisations made during the project will remain strong and that work will continue. The assessment protocols are regarded as ‘living documents’ to be updated and revised as new scientific knowledge comes to light.

Welfare Quality® Assessment Protocol for Cattle (October 2009). Welfare Quality® Consortium, Lelystad, Netherlands. A4, 182 pp ISBN: 978-90-78240-04-4. Price £5. Available at: <http://www.welfarequality.net> or from info@welfarequality.net

Welfare Quality® Assessment Protocol for Pigs (Sows, Piglets, Growing and Finishing Pigs) (October 2009). Welfare Quality® Consortium, Lelystad, Netherlands. A4, 122 pp ISBN: 978-90-78240-05-1. Price £5. Available at: <http://www.welfarequality.net> or from info@welfarequality.net

Welfare Quality® Assessment Protocol for Poultry (Broilers, Laying hens) (October 2009). Welfare Quality® Consortium, Lelystad, Netherlands. A4, 114 pp ISBN: 978-90-78240-06-8. Price £5. Available at: <http://www.welfarequality.net> or from info@welfarequality.net

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Revision process to update EU legislation protecting the welfare of laboratory animals continues

For more than twenty years, Council Directive 86/609/EEC has acted as the foundation for national legislation to regulate the use of animals in experimental and scientific procedures across the European Union (in the United Kingdom this Directive is enacted through the Animals [Scientific Procedures] Act 1986). Included within the Directive are minimum standards for the acquisition and care of vertebrate animals used in experiments and training of staff who handle animals or supervise scientific procedures.

Council Directive 86/609/EEC originally came into force to avoid disruption in trade between countries of the European Community as legislation to protect laboratory animal welfare varied between individual countries. Consequently, Council Directive 86/609/EEC emerged in November 1986 to ensure that protective animal welfare measures were “approximated so as to avoid affecting the establishment and functioning of the common market, in particular by distortions of competition or barriers to trade”.

In 2001, the European Commission noted that, since its adoption, the Directive had become increasingly outdated due to advances in animal welfare science and the evolution of new scientific procedures and technologies, such as cloning, transgenics and xenotransplantation. Additionally, the expansion of the European Union had presented a number of challenges regarding the implementation of regulations across member states. Other problems included: difficulties in collating and interpreting data, such as the exact number of animals used and the severity of experiments undertaken; limitations in the scope of the Directive with some animals currently excluded, eg animals used in educational training within institutions; and a lack of standardised training for individuals working with laboratory animals.

In November 2008, the European Commission published the first draft revision of the Directive. This included a number of measures that aimed to strengthen the existing legislation, significantly improve the welfare of animals used in safety testing and biomedical research, promote

the replacement, reduction and refinement of animals used in scientific procedures and harmonise the implementation of regulations, so improving the overall quality of research conducted. To achieve these aims, various new provisions were proposed, including: a ban on the use of great apes apart from in exceptional circumstances; restrictions on the use, breeding and acquisition of non-human primates; a widening of the scope of the Directive to include specific invertebrate species, foetal forms from last third of their development, and animals used in basic research, including education and training; minimum requirements for animal housing and care; and changes in inspection, monitoring and enforcement.

The European Parliament published a first reading of the revised Directive in May 2009 which tabled a number of amendments. In a parallel process, the revised Directive is now being discussed by the Council of Ministers, which comprises representatives from the Agricultural and Fisheries Council from each Member State. Within the UK, Sub-Committee D (Environment and Agriculture), of the EU Committee of the House of Lords, recently undertook an

inquiry into the revised Directive and a report was published in November 2009, to help inform the official UK position.

The European Commission, European Parliament and Council of Ministers will now continue the trilogue process until a consensus position is reached.

European Parliament Legislative Resolution of 5 May 2009 on the Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Protection of Animals Used for Scientific Purposes (2009). European Parliament 2009, Brussels. Available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P6-TA-2009-0343&language=EN&ring=A6-2009-0240>

The Revision of the EU Directive on the Protection of Animals Used for Scientific Purposes (2009). Volume 1: Report. House of Lords. European Union Committee. 22nd Report of Session 2008-2009. 2009. A4, 40 pp London: The Stationary Office Limited. Available at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200809/ldselect/lddeucom/164/16402.htm>

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