

Reports and Comments

FRAME launches new initiative: Perspectives in Laboratory Animal Science (PiLAS)

The Fund for the Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments (FRAME) is a charity dedicated “to the development of new and valid methods that will replace the need for laboratory animals in medical and scientific research, education, and testing”. FRAME works towards ultimately ending the use of all animals in laboratory research whilst recognising that it is not currently feasible to end the use of animals at present. Where animal use is necessary, FRAME advocates a Three Rs approach.

The Three Rs approach was originally put forward by William Russell and Rex Burch when working for UFAW in the 1950s. In 1959, their work culminated in the publication of the now world-renowned book, *The Principles of Humane Experimental Technique* in which they described the Three Rs philosophy: the Replacement of sentient animals in biomedical research where possible, Reducing the numbers of animals used to no more than necessary to achieve objectives, and Refinement of the care and techniques used on animals so as to minimise risks of harm to their welfare. The Three Rs have since been adopted internationally to improve the welfare of laboratory animals through changing the way in which laboratory animal experiments are designed and carried out.

One of FRAME’s latest initiatives is: ‘Perspectives in Laboratory Animal Science’ (PiLAS). PiLAS aims “to improve the quality of discussion about animal experimentation and alternative approaches, by offering bio-scientists in all relevant fields an opportunity to share their expertise, knowledge and ideas concerning these and other issues raised by laboratory animal use”. PiLAS will be circulated as a supplement in each issue of FRAME’s scientific journal, *Alternatives to Laboratory Animals* (ATLA) and the articles will also be freely available online at: www.atlaorg.uk.

Articles featured in the first edition of PiLAS include: A risk assessment approach to severity classification in animal research; Animal use in veterinary education – the need for a Fourth R: Respect; Automated homecage behavioural analysis and the implementation of the Three Rs in research involving mice; and, The concept, sources and incidence of inhumanity and its diminution of removal through implementation of the Three Rs.

As well as hosting a number of informative and interesting articles, the website also features sections on: Current dilemmas; Discussions; The wisdom of Russell and Burch; Points of view; News; and Comments and feedback. Users of the website are encouraged to offer feedback on articles and discussions published and comments may be submitted through an online form.

PiLAS welcomes articles for consideration and submissions may be sent by email to: susan@frame.org.uk, or by post to: Susan Trigwell, FRAME, Russell & Burch House, 96-98 North Sherwood Street, Nottingham NG1 4EE, UK.

Perspectives in Laboratory Animal Science (PiLAS) (2012). A stand-alone supplement to be published in each issue of the ATLA Journal published by FRAME and an online resource, website available at: www.atlaorg.uk.

E Carter,
UFAW

Improving farm animal welfare through innovation and market forces

The Raad voor Dierenangelegenheden (RDA, Council on Animal Affairs) is the body in The Netherlands which provides advice to the Minister and State Secretaries of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation on issues of animal welfare, animal health and animal ethics. The RDA’s latest Report (details below) addresses the role of market forces in progress in farm animal welfare. In her introductory letter to the Minister, the Chairperson, Frauke Ohl, says the aim of this opinion “is to give new impetus to the societal issue of animal welfare in livestock farming in The Netherlands”.

The RDA takes the position that “The future of the strongly export-oriented Dutch livestock sector does not lie in conventional bulk production for prevailing world market prices” but, “in finding, serving and expanding market segments that place greater value on sustainability, including a high standard of animal welfare”. To do this, the RDA concludes, will involve marketing innovative (high-welfare) products and stimulating new consumer perceptions about these and the need for them. It believes this will be best achieved by stimulating private initiatives in an open market, and lists ways in which the government can do this, including: “working towards the realization of one well-implemented hallmark for animal welfare, which subsequently can be developed further at the European level”.

The RDA clearly apportions tasks between government and industry. “Ideally, government will focus on promoting dissemination of knowledge and raising awareness among livestock farmers and consumers, among others, and... create an innovation-friendly environment in the area of animal welfare and the marketing thereof”. And, the agri-food sector’s role is to develop animal welfare-friendly products that “in an international context offer good economic prospects for all links in the production chain”. The report recognises the challenges, pointing out that animal welfare is not at present a major factor in what consumers purchase: “If two products differ only in price, the customer generally chooses the one that is least expensive” and discusses approaches to animal welfare education.

These issues are being grappled with in many countries around the world and, in addition to its role in The Netherlands, this Report is a valuable, interesting and upbeat contribution to the debate more widely.