

with a 'benchmark' and allow for meaningful comparisons across farms. Other work includes: the establishment of web-based information resources for farmers, advisors, researchers and policy-makers; further investigation into consumers and their view of animal welfare and recognition of the value and retail dynamics involved with marketing animal welfare-friendly food products.

Welfare Quality®: Project Update 7. November 2007. An electronic newsletter available from the News section of the Welfare Quality website at: <http://www.welfarequality.net/everyone>

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Animal Welfare Delivery Strategy

In 2004 the Government and devolved administrations published the Animal Health and Welfare Strategy for Great Britain (AHWS) which broadly describes a strategy for improving the health and welfare of animals in Scotland, England and Wales over the next 10 years. In support of the AHWS a second document, the Animal Welfare Delivery Strategy (AWDS), has recently been published by Defra which expands on the animal welfare component of the AHWS and outlines plans to achieve improved animal welfare in England. The Scottish Executive and National Assembly for Wales are considering their own initiatives and Northern Ireland will be covered by a separate animal health and welfare strategy. Delivery of the AWDS will be monitored by a sub-group of the England Implementation Group (EIG), an independent advisory body.

The scope of the AWDS is wide and, as with the Animal Welfare Act 2006, covers vertebrate animals for which humans have responsibility or that are under human control. Improving the welfare of these animals is a long-term project and one that requires the commitment of everyone involved. The AWDS opens with the following statement: "All those who are responsible for animals must ensure good standards of welfare for them and, those who have contact with, or benefit from, animals must pay due regard to their welfare". A theme of partnership, responsibility and independent accountability is set throughout, and brief roles and responsibility are outlined for: owners and users of animals; consumers and users of animal products; central government; local authorities; and stakeholders. Five strategic goals, and the actions required to achieve them, are described and cover the following:

- ensuring that those involved with animals have the necessary animal welfare skills and knowledge
- the need for animal welfare policy to be based on sound scientific and practical experience
- transparency of economic markets which allow customers to make informed choices
- effective enforcement of welfare legislation without placing unnecessary burdens on animal keepers
- acceptance of animal welfare standards at a global level and inclusion of these agreed standards within international legislation

The next step, which is currently underway, is the development of a detailed Implementation Action Plan by Defra and relevant stakeholders which will set out the short, medium and longer term objectives of the AWDS. It is expected that the Implementation Action Plan will be published shortly.

Animal Welfare Delivery Strategy. October 2007. Animal Welfare Delivery Strategy Team, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Defra, London. A4. 18 pp. Available at: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/ahws/pdf/awdelivery-strategy.pdf>

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The Welfare State: Measuring Animal Welfare in the UK

For the second year running the UK's Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) has published its review of the status of animal welfare in the UK. The report covers 35 different issues that the charity believes may be used as indicators for assessing the state of animal welfare and year-on-year change.

The indicators are grouped into five categories: generic, farm animal, pet animal, research animals and wildlife. Topics covered are varied and range from: the proportion of FTSE 100 companies with animal welfare improvements in their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies to the numbers of cetaceans killed through by-catch. Each indicator is introduced with an explanation as to why it was selected and the background of the issues surrounding the topic is outlined. This is then followed by the RSPCA's findings and figures taken from a range of sources. The report uses a traffic light system to give an 'at a glance' impression of the RSPCA's assessment as to whether welfare issues have improved (green), remained relatively unchanged (amber), worsened (red), or to indicate if there are insufficient data on which to make a judgement (grey). The traffic light does not reflect the absolute level of animal welfare but the direction of change.

The report is designed for a wide readership and provides an interesting introduction to a variety of current matters of concern. The RSPCA hopes that this document will become an annual publication.

The Welfare State: Measuring Animal Welfare in the UK 2006. 2007. Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. A4. 98 pp. Available from: External Affairs, RSPCA, Wilberforce Way, Southwater, Horsham, West Sussex, RH13 9RS, UK or at: http://www.animalwelfarefootprint.com/the_report/

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Report of the Animal Procedures Committee for 2006

The Animal Procedures Committee — the body responsible for overseeing the implementation of the UK law on the use of animals in scientific procedures — published its Annual report for 2006 in November. The report itself is fairly short, but this is because there are a number of annexes that

contain most of the work of the committee. One of the responsibilities of the Primates Sub-Committee is to advise on the acceptability of overseas establishments that supply primates for use in the UK. There is no legal requirement for the APC to undertake this process, but in practice the committee is nearly always asked for its advice. The Sub-Committee has reviewed and published the criteria which it plans to use in its consideration of these applications, in addition providing eight recommendations to the Minister. Most of the recommendations were either accepted, or broadly accepted, however the Minister's answers to the recommendation relating to Home Office Inspectorate visits to the sites were tempered by her emphasis that visits should be judged using a risk-based approach.

The Minister has also responded to an APC report that recommended updating the list of permitted techniques for the humane killing of animals, protected by the Act. One of these recommendations was a proposal, supported by the Royal Society, to include decapitation of non-precocial rodents up to seven-days old. However, the Minister took the view that as there was some evidence that there could be a welfare cost, and because it is a technique used for research rather than husbandry purposes, there should be further consultation on the impact of the proposal. The Minister also proposes to consult on a number of other recommendations, including: altering the bodyweight

threshold for cervical dislocation for rats and Guinea pigs, removing CO₂ as a method for birds, and the use of appropriate gas mixtures for birds. CO₂ is widely used for killing laboratory rodents however there has been increasing concern about its use based on the gas's potential to be aversive or even cause pain at certain concentrations. However, discussions on the matter are constrained by the lack of evidence that alternative gases or gas mixtures are more humane, and the Minister agreed with the APC that further research was needed on the use of CO₂ for killing rodents. Other advice provided by the committee, included an advisory document that compared the revised Appendix A recommendations for housing and husbandry with the existing UK codes of practice. Finally, the Minister responded to a report from the Education and Training Committee on modular training. The Minister's view was that the committee's recommendation for a learning-based approach for modules 1–4 was welcome but that further consultation was needed on the impact of such an approach, as, if adopted, establishments would have to commit more resources to training.

Report of the Animal Procedures Committee for 2006. November 2007, 59 pp A4. Available from The Stationery Office, London or online: www.apc.org.uk. Price £13.90.

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