

REPORTS AND COMMENTS

Recommendations and minimum standards for the welfare of ostrich and emu

This most recent of the *Code of Recommendations* series of the New Zealand Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC) deals with standards for farmed ostriches and emus (the management of these birds in zoos is covered elsewhere in AWAC code No 14 *Code of Recommendations for the Welfare of Exhibit Animals and Information for Animal Exhibit Operators*). In New Zealand, as in many other countries, this decade has seen the development of commercial interest in these species as sources of meat, feathers and other products. The first point to make about this code is that the fact that it exists at all is an encouraging sign of the times. AWAC deserves recognition for drawing attention to and tackling existing and emerging animal welfare problems in New Zealand in a constructive and methodical way. New Zealand is, of course, not the only country to have such a system but there remain plenty that do not.

The purpose of this code is to provide guidance to people responsible for the welfare, husbandry, transport and slaughter of these ratite birds reared in captivity. It sets out standards briefly and clearly, using 'shall' to indicate statutory requirements, 'must' to mean a minimum standard, and 'should' for recommendations. The code covers legal responsibilities and inspectors' powers; quality assurance system (recommendations on the development of written procedures which ensure that the conditions of the code are met); stock management; housing, fencing and yards; and a summary of minimum standards. The largest section is that on stock management. This provides brief outline information on safe handling of birds, food and water, breeding and rearing, a few common diseases, transport, slaughter, and emergency euthanasia.

This publication serves its purpose of setting out various conditions and recommendations for management. One limitation is that, although many other publications must have been consulted in its development, the code includes no list of references or of further reading. Presumably this policy has been adopted in the interests of brevity and perhaps to avoid any risk of ambiguity of interpretation which might arise through citing publications which provide conflicting advice or opinion. However, the absence of reference material is a drawback. It is emphasized that in stock management, 'common sense should prevail and that previous experience with stock should be utilised to the full extent...' but no mention is made of the very important additional need for specialist knowledge – and no advice is provided as to how this might be acquired. It seems odd that it is considered worth providing details of two diseases (impaction of the proventriculus and leg rotation) whilst providing no information at all about where even to find out about other diseases. This is a relatively minor grumble however – the code is certainly a valuable contribution to the management literature.

New Zealand ostrich and emu farmers will need this publication, but it will also be of interest to ratite keepers and those involved in the setting and regulation of farm animal welfare standards in other countries.

Code of Recommendations and Minimum Standards for the Welfare of Ostrich and Emu. New Code of Animal Welfare No 21. Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (1998). 21pp. Paperback. Obtainable from Animal Welfare and Environment Section, MAF Regulatory Authority, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, PO Box 2526, Wellington, New Zealand (ISBN 047807476X, ISSN 1171-090X). Free.

Farm animal welfare issues compendium

There is a need in the United States, apparently, for Country and State Co-operative Extension personnel, who act widely as local advisers to the animal agriculture industry, to be able to comment constructively on the animal welfare issues which occur (or are believed to occur) in some animal production enterprises. This compendium of 14 discussion papers has been produced, under the auspices of the US Department of Agriculture, to help satisfy this need. All

the traditional farm species (ie cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, rabbits and domestic fowl) are covered – as are horses, farmed fish and pen-reared game birds.

The papers are written by some 24 eminent authors – all from the animal science/extension service community – and were doubly reviewed by a panel of ‘individuals from many points within the ideological spectrum of animal welfare/rights’. The authors, however, retained the right to make final corrections and decisions regarding the contents of their papers.

Most of the material deals with the problems associated with individual species of farm animals. There is, however, a substantial and well-written general review, with some 155 books, papers and videos mentioned in its reference and supplementary reading lists, on the scientific, social and ethical aspects of animal welfare, and there are brief but very informative pieces on animal exhibits, shows and fairs and on the handling of crippled and non-ambulatory livestock. Some papers, such as that on farmed fish, cover in detail many aspects of the husbandry of the species; others such as that on game birds reared for shooting mainly concentrate on the problems associated with this welfare-fraught but little-discussed areas of animal production.

Many of the individual species papers are constructed round a series of issues/questions which are likely to be advanced by the critics of the particular production system. This is not to say that the papers are just ready-made replies which can be used to rebut attacks. Most of the issues are fully discussed – often, but not always, with a full acceptance that there are, at times, real problems with some aspects of some husbandry methods.

This collection of discussion papers has a use well beyond the immediate needs of the US Country and State Co-operative personnel. It should be read and thought about by all scientists, technologists, teachers and extension workers involved in farm animal production and by animal welfare workers in general.

Animal Welfare Issues Compendium. A Collection of 14 Discussion Papers. Facilitated by Reynnells R D and Eastwood B R (1997). USDA: Washington, DC. 141pp. Paperback. Obtainable from Animal Welfare Information Centre, National Agricultural Library, Fifth floor, 10301 Baltimore Blvd, Beltsville, MD 20705, USA. Free

Ethical approaches to animal-based science

There is currently a move towards a more self-regulatory system for animal research in the UK, with the requirement for establishment of local ethical review processes to complement the external regulation by the Home Office. In contrast, in New Zealand, the current system is based largely on self-regulation through local animal ethics committees but, in this volume, Mr Andrew McCaw of the Office of the Ombudsman, New Zealand, argues that greater external surveillance would be beneficial and would help to promote the 3Rs most effectively. This and the other papers presented in this Proceedings of the 1997 conference, jointly organized by the Australian and New Zealand Council for the Care of Animals in Research and Teaching (ANZCCART) and the National Animal Ethics Advisory Committee (NAEAC), provide an interesting insight not just into current debate about the ethics of the use of animals in research in New Zealand, but also into the history of the approaches this country has evolved to try to resolve conflicts in this field.

This is an interesting collection of high-quality papers from an international authorship, edited and presented to a high standard. Most of the contributions are concerned with ethics, public perceptions, and the operation (and refinements in the operation of) animal ethics committees, but there are also some papers addressing more technical matters within sections on humane end points and researching vertebrate pest control methods. The final section includes papers from