

Reports and Comments

New Zealand Government publishes guidelines for writing codes of animal welfare

The New Zealand Ministry for Agriculture and Forestry (MAF), together with the National Animal Welfare Advisory Council (NAWAC), have recently published a new document providing guidance on how to write and review codes of animal welfare. Welfare codes play a key role in improving the care of animals by describing how best to keep and manage animals and by laying-out minimum standards. Codes also provide extra detail to areas covered by animal welfare legislation and, although not legally binding in themselves, may be used as evidence to support a prosecution for an offence under the relevant legislation.

MAF and NAWAC describe how and why codes are developed, provide a checklist of questions to be taken into account by individuals intending to write codes, and also give a general background of any legal issues to be considered. Appropriate language and format is also described, including the importance of a plain and clear writing style and the avoidance of overly proscriptive terms. Additionally, examples are given on how best to write minimum standards, which are considered the core component of codes of welfare.

Although intended for a New Zealand audience, *Guidelines for Writing Codes of Welfare* are likely to be of interest to anyone considering writing a Code of Practice or to those who review codes on a regular basis.

Guidelines for Writing Codes of Welfare (June 2009). A4. 20 pp. National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, New Zealand. The guidelines are available at the MAF Biosecurity website: <http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/animal-welfare/stds/codes>, or by emailing: animalwelfare@maf.govt.nz.

E Carter,
UFAW

Government response to UK Farm Animal Welfare Council report on castration and tail docking of lambs

The Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC) is an independent advisory body tasked with reviewing the welfare of UK farm animals and advising the Government on any legislative, or other, changes that may be necessary. FAWC first raised castration and tail docking as an area of concern in 1994 when it stated: "There is no doubt that lambs feel pain and distress as a result of castration and tail docking" (FAWC 1994). However, at the time of writing the 1994 report, little research had been carried out to assess castration or tail-docking methods or on the level and duration of distress caused by these procedures. Lack of scientific evidence therefore made it difficult for FAWC to define best practice.

Subsequent to the 1994 FAWC report, further research has been undertaken in this area and in 2008 FAWC published

a 36-page document on the welfare implications relating to the castration and tail docking of lambs. In this, FAWC discussed the reasons why castration and tail docking may be carried out and also the current legal methods. Twenty-seven recommendations concerning castration and tail docking were made and the overriding opinion of the report was that neither castration nor tail docking should be undertaken without strong justification. Additionally, it was urged that pain relief should be used where possible and that further research was required in areas such as: pain relief delivery methods; immunocastration and assessment and reduction of chronic pain associated with both castration and tail docking.

Since the publication of this report, the Scottish, English and Welsh Governments have considered FAWC's recommendations and have recently released their joint response. On the whole, the Governments concur with FAWC in many areas, although point out that in others they have limited authority (as with the recommendation by FAWC that Government, together with industry, should implement the authorisation of an approved local anaesthetic for sheep). The Government can encourage the veterinary pharmaceutical industry to develop a local anaesthetic for use in sheep but cannot require them to do so. The Government response did agree with the need for more research and indicated the intention to encourage further research in the following areas: pain relief delivery, the use of very tight rubber rings, and the aetiology of flystrike. Additionally, it was proposed that appropriate amendments to legislation and the *Code of Recommendations for the Welfare of Livestock: Sheep*, be made after suitable consultation.

References

FAWC 1994 *The Welfare of Sheep*. Farm Animal Welfare Council. Defra; London, UK

FAWC 2008 *The Implications of Castration and Tail Docking for the Welfare of Lambs*. Farm Animal Welfare Council. Defra: London, UK

Government Response to the FAWC Report on the Implications of Castration and Tail Docking for the Welfare of Lambs (June 2009). A4. 5 pp. Joint response produced by the Scottish Government Rural Directorate, Defra Animal Welfare Team, Welsh Assembly Government. Available for download at: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/welfare/pdf/response-090529.pdf>.

E Carter,
UFAW

UK Government amends licensing requirements for dangerous wild animals

During the 1970s, the keeping of wild animals by private individuals became increasingly fashionable and, in response to growing concerns over public safety, the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 (DWAA) came into force. The DWAA has remained relatively unchanged since its inception in 1976 and the primary purpose of the Act remains the same: to protect society from risks posed by