

together in formulating a national strategic plan for the future of UK non-human primate research.

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New Animal Welfare Legislation for England and Wales

The Animal Welfare Act 2006 came into effect in England and Wales on 6 April 2007. The Act is the result of 5 years of public consultation and debate about the nature of a new Act and intense examination of over 20 pieces of existing legislation.

Some of the preceding animal law was drafted in the 19th Century and this was thought to provide insufficient protection for animal welfare in today's society. The aim of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 was to simplify and modernise animal welfare legislation for farmed, companion and captive wild animals into a more coherent and functional piece of legislation. Some existing legislation will need to be repealed (such as the Abandonment of Animals Act 1960 and Protection of Animals [Amendment] Act 2000) and other Acts may be altered and brought into line with the 2006 Act (for example, the Welfare of Farmed Animals Act 2000).

It is hoped that the Animal Welfare Act 2006 will provide a flexible framework which, whilst laying out a set of core standards and principles, will also allow for further, supporting legislation to be introduced at a later date. Allowing secondary legislation and regulations to be developed over time will enable the Act to deal more comprehensively with specific areas and also to keep up-to-date with the continuing advances being made in animal welfare science and society's changing ethical considerations.

Additionally, it is intended that codes of practice, like those already in use in the farming industry, will be developed and implemented for non-farmed species, eg dogs, cats, horses and primates. It will not be a statutory requirement to adhere to codes of practice, but where an offence has occurred, failure to comply with the provisions of codes may be used to establish liability.

The Act itself is made up of 69 sections under headings such as: prevention of harm; promotion of welfare; licensing and registration; codes of practice; animals in distress; enforcement powers; prosecutions and post conviction powers.

Perhaps the most significant addition is the introduction of a 'duty of care' responsibility upon all owners and keepers

of vertebrate animals. It will now be necessary for individuals to understand basic husbandry requirements of the animals for which they are responsible and to take reasonable steps to ensure that their basic needs are met. Following on from this, failure to provide for the needs of an animal will now be considered an offence. The Act also gives police and local authorities greater powers and will allow enforcement agents to intervene much more quickly in situations where an animal's welfare is likely to be compromised; it will now not be necessary to wait for suffering to have actually occurred before action can be taken. Additionally, the Act has strengthened legislation relating to animal fighting and increased available penalties. For the most serious offences (cruelty and animal fighting) it will now be possible for courts to impose a prison sentence of up to 51 weeks and/or a maximum fine of £20,000 (as opposed to previous maximum sentences of 6 months imprisonment and £5,000 fines).

Further innovations include: increasing the minimum age at which a child may buy an animal from 12 to 16 years of age, and making it an offence for a pet to be given as a prize to a child younger than 16. Furthermore, under the new Act, all mutilations will be banned apart from those specifically exempted, such as neutering cats and dogs or ear tagging cattle.

The Animal Welfare Act 2006 represents the most major overhaul of animal welfare law in the United Kingdom in the past 100 years. There is now an emphasis not only on preventing unnecessary suffering through either cruelty or neglect, whether by a deliberate act or a failure to act, but also on promoting a higher standard of knowledge of animals and their care and welfare.

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New BVAWF Leaflet Helps Owners Understand Their Duty of Care

The British Veterinary Association Animal Welfare Foundation (BVAWF) has recently produced a helpful leaflet entitled '*What makes my pet happy?*' The publication is designed with the new Animal Welfare Act in mind to help inform pet owners of their legal responsibility to take reasonable steps to ensure that the needs of an animal for which they are responsible are met. All animal owners now have a 'duty of care' towards their pets.

The leaflet approaches the issues of an owners 'duty of care' and of meeting an animals' needs by asking owners to consider whether their pet is happy. After explaining what is meant by happy, and why it is even important, it then goes on to describe what issues an owner should be aware of. In the same way as the Animal Welfare Act, the leaflet uses the *Five Freedoms* as a basis for assessing an animal's needs. After describing what the *Five Freedoms* are, it goes on to build a case-study around them to show how an owner can judge whether their pet, in this case a female parrot, is happy. A question, answer, action format is used where the

Five Freedoms are used as questions and the leaflet provides answers and actions. For example:

Question: Is she free from pain, injury and disease?

Answer: As far as I know. But she hasn't had a check-up with the vet recently and her food might be bad for her.

Action: I'll book an appointment.

The leaflet uses straightforward language and a simple but well-illustrated layout to get its message across. It is important that all owners realise how the new Animal Welfare Act applies to them and that there is more to ensuring an animal's needs are met than perhaps originally thought, especially where 'freedom to express normal behaviour' is concerned. '*What makes my pet happy?*' provides an excellent starting point for this and also reminds owners that their vets are a valuable resource for basic animal care and welfare issues as well as simply health.

These leaflets are likely to be useful as hand-outs at pet shops and at veterinary practices. Hard copies are available from the BVAAWF, email: bva-awf@bva.co.uk or telephone: 020 7636 6541. Alternatively the leaflet may be downloaded from the BVAAFW website: www.bva-awf@bva.co.uk/resources/leaflets. If multiple copies are required (50 or more), please contact Ten Alps Publishing Ltd, email: louise.walpole@tenalpspublishing.com or telephone: 020 7878 2307.

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Education in Animal Welfare Science on the Web. The Cambridge e-learning Institute's Certificate in Animal Welfare

The Cambridge e-learning Institute is a private institution, founded by Dr Annabela de Pinto - a member of the animal welfare group at Cambridge University, to deliver on-line education. Amongst the courses offered by the Institute are those in animal welfare, animal behaviour, animal ethics and environmental enrichment. The animal welfare course consists of 13 separate units, that address subjects such as 'What is animal welfare?', 'Responses to stress', 'The welfare of farm animals', 'The welfare of animals used for human entertainment' and 'Animals, ethics and society'. The rationale behind the provision of these on-line courses is to offer all those who work with animals and want to learn about the latest scientific discoveries easy access to information and education.

The courses offer two options for learning: on-line or distance learning. The course materials offered to both sets

of learners are the same - downloadable text for each unit, powerpoint presentations, and supporting information provided by a range of animal welfare organisations including pdf documents of relevant book chapters, journal papers, codes and recommendations and video footage. The difference between the two learning routes is the means by which understanding is assessed and the students' ability to interact with others.

Those who opt for the on-line route join a cohort of students who have access to a 'virtual campus environment' to engage in weekly programmes of activity. This alternates between reading and discussion (or forum) weeks; for a 36 week period. Forum weeks address understanding of the topic covered in the reading week through question(s) posed by the on-line tutors. Students are required to post replies to these questions by the middle of the week and to also comment on at least one of their fellow students' replies through an on-line 'forum'. The tutors check the 'forum' and post their feedback and comments on these at the end of week. Students are then asked to write a short summary of their learning, their 'journal', at the end of each unit. Course assessment is equally based on an assessment of participation in and contribution made to at least 8 out of the 10 forums and completion of a 5,000 word assignment on one of the issues raised in a forum.

Students who undertake the distance learning programme are able to register at any time. Each is assigned a tutor, who they have a one-on-one relationship with, but do not have access to the virtual campus and thus interaction with fellow students. Assessment is based on periodic questions sent by the tutor and a final assignment. Fees are higher for this option than for online courses because of the exclusive availability of the assigned tutor.

Whilst English is the predominant language of the provided course material, a particular strength of these courses is to support those for whom it is not a first language. This is because tutors are drawn from academic institutions around the world and an effort is made to match student with tutor. For on-line learners who speak Spanish or Portuguese there is the additional option to participate in a group - the 'Grupo Portunhol' - whose 'forum' discussions are in both Spanish/Portuguese.

Anyone interested in finding out more about these courses and their start dates should visit the Institutes webpages - www.cambridge-elearning.com.

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