

and the Economic and Social Committee are also being consulted. Barring hold-ups or snags, the intention is for the Directive to proceed – requiring all member states to put all necessary laws and provisions for compliance in place by 1st January 1999.

Proposal for an EU Directive Laying Down Minimum Standards for the Protection of Laying Hens Kept in Various Systems of Rearing. Commission of the European Communities (1998). Office for Official Publications of the European Communities: Luxembourg. 12pp. Loose-leaf. Available from Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, L-2985, Luxembourg (Catalogue No. CB-CO-98-166-EN-C; ISBN 92-78-32088-9). Free.

Revision of the *Sheep Welfare Code*

The original *Sheep Welfare Code* was published by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) in 1983. In response to a number of recommendations in the Farm Animal Welfare Council's 1994 report on the welfare of sheep, MAFF, the Scottish Office Agriculture, Environment and Fisheries Department and the Welsh Office Agriculture Department have now drafted a revised edition and are consulting on this. As well as seeking to make the report more user-friendly, the authors have placed clearer emphasis on the need for written health and welfare programmes and the importance of good stockmanship; they have also provided detailed advice on some key welfare aspects, such as dealing with lameness and the value of condition scoring in good husbandry.

The Code sets out key points relevant to the husbandry and welfare of sheep under the following headings: stockmanship, feed and water, health, management, breeding techniques, pregnancy and lambing, artificial rearing, housing, hazards, and milk sheep. The largest sections are those on health and management. The range of topics covered seems well-judged and, although the document adheres to a formal Code format, enough background and detail is presented to help justify and explain the provisions where necessary.

Among the points included in the section on stockmanship, is that specific stockmanship skills are required by those caring for sheep. These skills may be developed on-farm by working with an experienced person, or through a suitable training course. However, the draft document states that the training should be of a type which leads to formal recognition of competence. A list of training organizations is to be included as an appendix. The draft Code states that a written health and welfare programme, covering the yearly production cycle, should be prepared for each flock. It should, at least, cover vaccination, parasite control, and foot care regimes; be developed with appropriate veterinary and technical advice; and be updated each year.

Following the consultation period, the Code will be subject to Parliamentary approval and adoption under the *Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1968*.

Draft Sheep Welfare Code. Draft for Consultation. Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1998). Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food: London. 39pp. Paperback. Available from MAFF, Government Buildings, Hook Rise South, Tolworth KT6 7NF, UK. Free.

Significance of countryside sports

This report, an update of one published in 1992, reviews diverse aspects of the countryside sports industry. It provides data on the number of people in the UK involved in various forms of hunting, shooting and fishing, on the economic value of these activities, and on their relevance to wildlife conservation. It is based on some original survey work but draws heavily on reports