

REPORTS AND COMMENTS

The IAHAIO Prague Guidelines on Animal-Assisted Activities and Animal-Assisted Therapy

In September 1998, the International Association of Human-Animal Interaction Organisations, IAHAIO, held its 8th international conference in Prague, Czechoslovakia entitled 'The Changing Roles of Animals in Society'. Eight hundred delegates from 42 nations attended this three-day event. At its annual business meeting, just prior to the congress, IAHAIO national members unanimously passed the *IAHAIO Prague Guidelines on Animal-Assisted Activities and Animal-Assisted Therapy* (reproduced below), designed to protect the persons receiving such services, the programmes offering them and, in particular, the animals involved.

Preamble

There is much research now available to prove that companion animals can add to the Quality of Life of the humans to whom they may provide practical assistance or therapy.

IAHAIO members believe that those who train the animals and deliver the service to others must ensure the Quality of Life of the animals involved. Programmes offering animal-assisted activities or animal-assisted therapy for the benefit of others should be governed by basic standards, regularly monitored, and be staffed by appropriately trained personnel.

IAHAIO members have therefore adopted four fundamental guidelines at their General Assembly held in Prague in September, 1998. IAHAIO urges all persons and organisations involved in animal-assisted activities and/or animal-assisted therapy, and all bodies governing the presence of such programmes in their facilities to consider and abide by the following points.

Guidelines

1. Only domestic animals which have been trained using techniques of positive reinforcement, and which have been, and will continue to be, properly housed and cared for, are involved.
2. Safeguards are in place to prevent adverse effects on the animals involved.
3. The involvement of assistance and/or therapy animals is potentially beneficial in each case.
4. Basic standards are in place to ensure safety, risk management, physical and emotional security, health, basic trust and freedom of choice, personal space, appropriate allocation of programme resources, appropriate workload, clearly defined roles, confidentiality, communication systems and training provision for all persons involved.

Organisations adhering to the above four guidelines will be invited to join IAHAIO as Affiliate Members.

Copies of the document are currently available in the following languages: English, French, German, Japanese and Czech from AFIRAC, 7 rue du Pasteur Wagner, F-75011 Paris, France.

The welfare of broiler breeders

In August 1998, the UK's Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC) published its most recent report: addressing the welfare of broiler breeders. Some 780 million broiler chicks are produced annually in the UK and at any one time the national population of broiler breeder hens that produce these chicks is about 6 million. Professor Sir Colin Spedding in his letter (reproduced on page iii of the report) introducing the report to the Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Food, points out that broiler breeders are relatively valuable birds and that there is a strong commercial incentive to ensure they receive careful husbandry. However, commercial forces do

not always pull in the same direction as welfare considerations and they have led to some particular dilemmas in the welfare of broiler breeders.

Broilers have been selected for many years for very rapid growth to slaughter weight and currently reach this weight (about 2.1 kg) in 40 days. However, the growth rates of the birds used as parent stock has to be considerably restricted because such rapid growth rates result in a poor survival and a variety of welfare problems in birds which survive beyond 40 days. Growth is kept in check in these birds by limiting food intake and one of the major concerns in broiler breeder welfare is that restricting food intake to well below appetite levels in these birds may give rise to suffering through chronic hunger. A similar problem occurs with the elite pedigree stock (the great-great-grandparents of the parent stock). They are allowed to feed *ad libitum* and grow rapidly for the first 6 weeks of their lives at which time they are selected for breeding as pedigree stock on the basis of a suite of measures of performance and fitness. The growth rate of those selected has then to be strictly controlled by food restriction so that the birds will be fit for breeding when they reach about 18 weeks. These are potential welfare challenges peculiar to the broiler industry. FAWC accepts that some degree of food restriction is essential for the welfare of the parent stock – but recommends that birds should be allowed to grow at not less than 7 per cent a week and that, as a matter of urgency, research should be carried out to establish the point at which feed restriction creates hunger that birds cannot cope with, and to explore ways to alleviate hunger. With regard to the elite pedigree stock, FAWC's recommendations include companies finding the best means of minimizing the number of birds subject to detailed performance selection testing; and giving consideration to the need for the process.

Other matters considered in the report include: stockmanship, housing and the environment, stocking density, genetics, mutilations, health and disease, and catching and transport. Some 50 recommendations are made, including five on topics for future research and development. Apart from the previously mentioned recommendations concerning hunger assessment and how it may be avoided, these include recommendations for studying environmental enrichment, research into the prevention of injurious pecking, and into the improvement of welfare (particularly the problems of prolonged hunger) through selection. These are important issues some of which, providing the necessary funds become available, will represent considerable challenges for the research community.

This report maintains FAWC's standards of clarity and presentation. While of particular importance to those in the industry, these reports deserve to be read by a much wider community.

FAWC Report on the Welfare of Broiler Breeders (1998). Farm Animal Welfare Council: Surrey. 38pp. Paperback. Obtainable from the publishers, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food (MAFF), Government Buildings, Hook Rise South, Tolworth, Surbiton, Surrey KT6 7NF; or from MAFF Publications, Admail 6000, London SW1A 2XX. Free.

Refining laboratory mouse husbandry

The available statistics suggest that some 7 million mice are used annually for scientific procedures in the European Union. More mice are used than any other species. There has been a great deal of attention given to application of the '3Rs' (replacement of animal use, reduction of numbers used, and refinement of techniques) in scientific procedures but there may be room for considerable further improvement in the quality of animals' lives through improved husbandry. In view of this, about 10 years ago, the British Veterinary Association Animal Welfare Foundation (BVAAWF), the Fund for the Replacement of Animals in Medical