

REPORTS AND COMMENTS

Lessons from the 2001 foot and mouth disease outbreak in the UK

During 2001, the Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC) was asked to provide advice on a number of issues relating to the foot and mouth disease (FMD) outbreak in the UK and the control of the disease. Although much of this is to be included in reports on the *Welfare of farmed livestock at slaughter* and the *Welfare of animals in livestock markets*, which FAWC aims to publish in the coming year, the Council has gathered together key aspects in a report entitled '*Foot and mouth disease 2001 and animal welfare: lessons for the future*'. The report includes a list of 28 recommendations which are largely aimed at ensuring that animal welfare is protected during any future comparable disease outbreak.

The report addresses a variety of aspects of the handling of the FMD epidemic including the state of preparedness for the disease outbreak, killing options and techniques, vaccination, movement restrictions, biosecurity, and restocking. The recommendations emphasise, amongst others things, the need for regular rehearsal of contingency plans for handling disease, regular audit of slaughtermen and equipment resources, development of detailed strategies for field killing operations, and review of biosecurity arrangements.

This report was produced by FAWC specifically to inform the Government's Inquiry on Lessons Learned, the Royal Society Inquiry into Infectious Diseases of Livestock and the Royal Society of Edinburgh Independent Inquiry into Foot and Mouth Disease in Scotland and to make the Council's advice more widely available.

Foot and mouth disease 2001 and animal welfare: lessons for the future (January 2002) Produced by FAWC and published by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. 21 pp. A4 paperback (PB 5797). Available from the FAWC Secretariat, DEFRA, 1A Page Street, London SW1P 4PQ and also at <http://www.fawc.org.uk>.

Food ethics post FMD

As stated in an introductory note accompanying the recent report from the Food Ethics Council (see details below), following the foot and mouth outbreak countless reports have appeared making proposals on how UK agriculture must be reformed. 'Countless' may not be strictly true, but those who have attempted to keep track of all this advice will agree it is near enough. The justification, we are told, for adding to the plethora with this report '*After FMD: aiming for a values-driven agriculture*' is that few, if any, of the others discuss the problems or their solutions in ethical terms.

In this report, a matrix, in which the principles of respect for well-being, autonomy and justice are applied to the interests of four groups (people in the agricultural and food industries, citizens, farm animals and the ecosystem), is used as a framework to assist in the careful scrutiny and consideration of the ethics of agriculture. A large part of the report concerns discussion of the issues raised in each box in this matrix and description of the benefits of respect for the ethical principles identified (the well-being, autonomy and justice interests of the ecosystem include discussions of conservation, biodiversity and sustainability, respectively). For example, the report includes among the benefits of respect for farm animals' welfare "preventing existing animal suffering", and the benefits of ecosystem sustainability as "increased use of sustainable resources". The aim of the matrix is to help ensure that in the pursuit of one ethical principle, another of perhaps equal importance is not overlooked, and to help in finding a way forward that best meets all ethical objectives.

The report concludes with the suggestion that respect for the full range of principles it has identified is "much more effectively achieved by adopting holistic, localised systems in which

reliance on agrochemical inputs is drastically reduced and there is emphasis on sustainability, diversification and rural regeneration”.

After FMD: aiming for a values-driven agriculture (2001) Published by the Food Ethics Council. 40 pp. A4 paperback. Available from the Food Ethics Council, Minster Chambers, Church Street, Southwell, Nottinghamshire NG25 0HD, UK (send stamped addressed A4 envelope with 84p or 66p stamp for 1st or 2nd class delivery, respectively). Food Ethics Council website: <http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~foodeth>.

Health screening of wildlife for translocation or release

The introduction of infectious agents into ecosystems from which they were previously absent has frequently had catastrophic results on the welfare of animals of indigenous wild species, the viability of their populations, or both. Translocations and releases of wild animals are being increasingly undertaken for conservation, welfare or other reasons, and it is most important that the concomitant risk of accidental release of any infectious agents they may carry is taken very seriously. To help address this problem, Michael Woodford, drawing on advice from many members of the Veterinary Specialist Group of the IUCN Species Survival Commission, has produced and edited a very useful book which sets out quarantine and health screening protocols aimed at minimising the potential disease risks associated with a wide range of vertebrate taxa.

Much of the world's animal health legislation was put in place to protect domesticated production animals and humans, and frequently the statutory controls that exist cannot be relied upon to provide solid protection against the risk of accidental introduction of wildlife diseases. This book, which covers (albeit somewhat unevenly) fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, marsupials, and various orders of eutherian mammals including artiodactyls, primates and carnivores, helps to plug this gap. Its protocols should be read and followed carefully, or further developed, by everyone involved in translocating or releasing wild animals. The introductory chapter includes a section on ethical considerations in which the need to consider the balance of welfare costs and conservation gains, and to minimise any risks of harm to welfare that may arise in conservation projects, is emphasised.

Quarantine and Health Screening Protocols for Wildlife Prior to Translocation and Release in to the Wild (2001) Edited by M H Woodford. Published jointly by the Office International des Epizooties, Veterinary Specialist Group/Species Survival Commission of the World Conservation Union (IUCN), Care for the Wild International and the European Association of Zoo and Wildlife Veterinarians. 104 pp. A5 paperback (ISBN 92 9044 520 3). Available from the Office International des Epizooties, 12 rue de Prony, 75017 Paris, France; <http://www.oie.int>.

Attitudes to alternatives among those working with experimental animals

In April 1998, the UK Government circulated guidelines on the introduction of an ethical review process (ERP) to all those involved in the use of animals in scientific procedures. One of the principal aims of the Government's requirement for each organisation to establish an ERP was to promote “the development and uptake of reduction, replacement and refinement alternatives in animal use, where they exist”, and to ensure “the availability of relevant sources of information”. Has the establishment of ERPs achieved these aims? Dr Iain Purchase, of the School of Biological Sciences and Institute of Medicine, Law and Bioethics at the University of Manchester, and Dr Maria Nedeva, of Policy Research in Engineering, Science and Technology, also at Manchester, have carried out a study addressing this question. One aspect of this work, on attitudes to alternatives among people working with experimental animals, has been published recently (see below).