

The Report concludes with 16 recommendations including:

- Research is needed to define and cater for physical and behavioural needs.
 - Better surveillance of welfare.
 - Barren raised cages should not be used (if industry does not phase them out ‘then Government should act to ban them within 5 years of the publication of this report’).
 - Farmers purchasing hatching eggs or day olds from abroad should satisfy themselves that the health and welfare of breeding stock meet the standards required in Great Britain.
- Finally FAWC includes a reminder to itself for when next formulating a work plan, to consider undertaking a major investigation into the welfare of farmed gamebirds.

Opinion on the Welfare of Farmed Gamebirds November 2008. Farm Animal Welfare Council. A4. 15 pages. Copies available from FAWC, Area 5A, 9 Millbank, c/o Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London SW1P 3JR and available online at: www.fawc.org.uk

JK Kirkwood

UFAW

Assessing the humaneness of pest animal control methods

The New South Wales Department of Primary Industries’ Vertebrate Pest Research Unit, have developed a model, under the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy, for assessing the relative humaneness of pest animal control methods (see details below). Every year hundreds of thousands of pest animals (including mice, rats, foxes, cats, birds, kangaroos, goats and pigs) are “trapped, poisoned, shot or otherwise destroyed” in Australia in defence of agriculture and the environment. The rationale for this report is that although society generally finds the control of pest species to be acceptable, providing it is done humanely and with justification, “many of the methods used for control of pest animals in Australia are far from being humane”, and that, in pursuit of improvements, there is a need for process to enable identification of the most humane methods.

This report includes quite an extensive review of methods of animal welfare assessment and looks specifically at methods that have been advocated for laboratory animals, production animals and free-living wild animals. From this it goes on to explain the rationale for the method proposed.

Very briefly, the proposed method looks at the welfare impact of each pest control method, in relation to five domains. The first five domains address physical aspects: water and food deprivation; environmental challenge; injury, disease and functional impairment; and behavioural, interactive restriction. The fifth component is an assessment of how the animal experiences these physical challenges, in terms of subjective feelings, including anxiety, fear, pain, distress, hunger and thirst. The latter domain represents an overall welfare assessment (from the animals’ viewpoint) based on the other four assessments. Welfare impact is categorised as none, mild, moderate, severe or extreme, for each of these domains. In addition, the welfare of the killing

method used is specifically assessed and the score for this and for the previous part of the assessment are combined to give an overall score for humaneness. The method enables comparisons between, that is, assessments of the relative humaneness of, various methods.

The Report concludes that it is possible to assess humaneness: “So, in response to the question: ‘can we achieve overall assessment of humaneness of pest animal control methods?’ The answer is yes, but with some limitations since the information we need to make such an assessment is not always going to be objective- or science-based”. However, it is a little disappointing to find that, although there is a section that takes the reader through, step-by-step, showing clearly how the method could be used, the Report does not include any actual worked examples or conclusions made, using the proposed methodology, of the relative humaneness of currently used methods.

A model for assessing the relative humaneness of pest animal control methods 2008. A4. 45 pp (ISBN 978-0-646-50357-8). By Sharp T and Saunders G, Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Canberra, New South Wales, Australia. Available at http://www.daff.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/929888/humaneness-pest-animals.pdf.

JK Kirkwood

UFAW

Proposed revised European Directive on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes

Eight years after the European Commission announced its plans to revise Council Directive 86/609/EEC “on the approximation of laws, regulations and administrative provisions of the Member States regarding the protection of animals used for experimental and other scientific purposes” the European Commission adopted a draft on November 5 and published it as a formal proposal. The text will now go through the European Co-decision procedure by which the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers agree a final version. The EC requires that Directives should be implemented in national legislation so the proposals for a new Directive will be looked at with interest by those involved in animal research its regulation and laboratory animal welfare.

The preamble to the proposed Directive states that the revision was necessary “to enhance the protection of animals and also to redress the current situation where some states had implemented considerably more rigorous national legislation than was required by the Directive”. The UK was certainly one of those countries and the proposed new Directive bears some striking similarities to existing UK legislation. Nonetheless, it is not identical and is still, very clearly, a draft that requires tidying up. This is particularly evident in a number of discrepancies between the explanatory memorandum at the start of the document, and the actual Articles of the Directive.

The new proposals, including memorandum and tables, total ninety pages so it is only possible to draw attention to