

### **Welfare Quality Project launches new electronic newsletter**

March 2005 saw the first edition of 'Welfare Quality Update', the new electronic newsletter of the Welfare Quality Project, an EU-funded research project concerned with farm animal welfare at all stages of the food chain. The aim of the project is to "accommodate societal concerns and market demands, to develop reliable on-farm monitoring systems, product information systems, and practical species-specific strategies to improve animal welfare". At the present time, 39 universities and institutes in 13 European countries participate in this integrated research project. The newsletter is intended to keep interested parties informed as to the scientific progress of the project, forthcoming events and other relevant research and projects that might be taking place.

The newsletter begins with an introduction by the Project co-ordinator, Dr Harry Blokhuis, in which the aims of the project are outlined. There then follows a description of specific project objectives, which includes a link to the current research programme. A number of current research projects are then discussed in detail including a series of reports which outline how consumer beliefs, behaviour and attitudes to animal welfare, and responsibility in the food supply system, differ across Europe.

The next section, entitled 'Complexity in welfare-friendly consumption', details the work of Welfare Quality scientists in the development of a conceptual framework for analysing consumer concerns and practices, taking into account the complexity of welfare-friendly consumption,

and in particular, variations between countries and different approaches to consumption. Other sections of interest include a report on a project to investigate inherited genetic disorders affecting pigs and elucidate the genetic basis of problems such as leg weakness, and a report on research into the development of a behavioural test to determine the propensity for tail-biting in pigs. Another section reports on the initiation of a 'Training and mobility' scheme, which is primarily web-based and open to any researchers who are willing to carry out research on animal welfare, and to host institutions of the Welfare Quality Project. The aim of this scheme is to provide a database containing information on research expertise in the field of animal welfare in Europe, to assist researchers in assessing their own requirements and in finding grants from European or national initiatives, to provide information on administrative constraints for working abroad, and to help research groups and host institutions to express their needs and refine their job offers.

The newsletter also contains an 'Agenda' section which contains details of future workshops and meetings. For those requiring more detailed information on a particular subject, the end of each section contains a link to further details on the preceding discussion.

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