

Reports and Comments

Report of the Animal Procedures Committee for 2005

The Animal Procedures Committee is established by the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 in order to provide advice to the Secretary of State on the use of animals in scientific procedures. In 2005 the APC provided advice on project license applications referred to the committee, allegations made by the BUAV about the use of marmosets at Cambridge University, and on overseas primate-supply establishments. It has also worked on criteria for the approval of overseas breeding establishments seeking to supply primates to the UK and a review of methods of humane killing listed in Schedule 1 of the Act.

A major component of the Committee's work for 2005 has been a review of the process by which annual statistics on scientific procedures are collected and presented. The Committee's report contains 34 recommendations aimed at enhancing the transparency and accountability of the process. The working group charged with carrying out the work on behalf of the committee drew attention to the current lack of information in the statistics that is directly relevant to the harm caused to animals in scientific procedures, as well as on progress that has been made within the 3Rs. It recommended that consideration should be given to including a summary report on the work of the NC3Rs and that, wherever feasible, recent advances in this area should be correlated with the published statistical data. In recent years, the statistics have shown an upward trend in the numbers of animals used in experimental procedures, which seems to be largely due to the increase in research involving genetically modified animals. Some have argued that the trend is misleading, as many genetically modified animals show no apparent adverse effects, and not all are used in regulated procedures. The working group charged with addressing these issues was split on the solution. However, one option that received some support from the working group, was to continue accounting and reporting these animals but to exclude from the annual totals those which appeared to suffer no adverse effects. They considered that this would provide transparency whilst at the same time meeting concerns about inflation of the annual figures. A similar area of controversy is whether animals bred, but not used to in procedures, should be counted and reported in the statistics. Again there was a divergence of views within the working group but there was agreement that the issue should be kept under review.

With respect to achieving high standards of housing and care for animals used in research, the Committee identified a problem of perception between applicants to grant funding bodies, who thought that they could not always ask for money to improve animal care, and the funding bodies themselves who expect high standards for the work they fund, and would consider offering funding to achieve this. The APC has therefore suggested that the Home Office

should liaise with the funding bodies to encourage the funding bodies to clarify the standards that they expect for animal care, and to make clear what they would fund and what they would expect the institution to fund.

Currently only one species of cephalopod is protected under the Act, which to some has seemed either strange that other species are not included or anomalous. The committee considered 3 options that could be adopted with respect to the protection of cephalopods:

- A) Removal of *Octopus vulgaris* from the protection of the Act;
- B) Extension of the Act to those cephalopods most likely to have the ability to feel pain distress or lasting harm;
- C) Extension of the Act to protect all octopus, squid and cuttlefish.

There was no support in the Committee for option A, however it considered that options B and C both had merit. Option B would be an evidence-based approach to draw a line, whilst option C would be a pragmatic solution that would prevent the need to extend protection in a piecemeal fashion. The Minister noted that the Committee was split on the issue and responded to the committee's advice by saying that he did not believe it to be right to further extend the protection of the 1986 Act at present. Instead he was minded to defer a final decision until the European Commission completed its review of Directive 86/609/EEC. The Minister did, however, undertake to forward the evidence presented by the committee to the European Commission for information.

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UFAW

US National Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production

An independent National Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production has been established recently in the USA with funding from the Pew Charitable Trust to the John Hopkins School of Public Health. The Commission will conduct an assessment of the impact of the animal production industry on public health, the environment, farm communities and animal health.

About 10 billion farm animals are reared for slaughter each year in the USA. One of the questions posed in a flyer about this initiative is: "The efficient mass production system of raising farm animals provides consumers with affordable food, but could there be underlying costs that may prove to be more costly for Americans in the future?" The project will be carried out over two years.

The 19 commissioners come from the fields of veterinary medicine, animal science, economics, agriculture, public