

REPORTS AND COMMENTS

Research topics identified by New Zealand's Animal Welfare Advisory Committee

The role of New Zealand's national Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC) is to advise the Minister of Agriculture on all matters relating to the welfare of animals. Under its current mission 'to facilitate the development of animal welfare policy and practice for New Zealand', one of NAWAC's tasks is to advise on areas requiring further research. In their *Annual Report* for 1999 (published June 2000) NAWAC identified 21 specific areas for further research. These include the following:

Fundamental studies to develop techniques that allow the objective measurement of stress/distress in animals. This is needed to enable proper evaluation of effects of various management procedures, which may compromise welfare;

Evaluation of extensive, outdoor husbandry systems for livestock, with particular attention to welfare problems associated with nutrition, climate, disease, transport and handling;

Investigation of the welfare impact of various routine procedures such as beak and claw trimming in hens and the induction of parturition in cattle;

Research into the prevention of various specific diseases in pastoral farming systems including: ryegrass staggers, nutritional diseases and internal and external parasitism;

Development of strategies to control lameness in cattle;

Research into the possibility of post-stunning ventral shearing and washing of sheep as an alternative to stressful pre-slaughter washing;

Devising more effective and humane methods of vertebrate pest control especially for possums, rabbits, wild cats, ferrets, rats and mice;

Development of alternatives to the use of mice for bioassay of shellfish toxins;

Design of a database on alternatives to the use of experimental animals in research, testing and teaching;

The NAWAC *Annual Report* includes also notes on areas of current welfare concern in New Zealand.

In contrast to the situation in New Zealand, in the UK and other countries, responsibility for animal welfare is divided among government departments. In the UK for example, the Ministry of Agriculture is responsible for farm animal welfare and seeks advice from the Farm Animal Welfare Council; the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions is responsible for wildlife and zoos and seeks advice on the latter from the Zoos Forum; and the Home Office is responsible for laboratory animals and is advised by, among others, the Animal Procedures Committee. While this system allows for a detailed focusing on the specific issues in each field, it seems likely that there would be advantages in having an umbrella group that, like NAWAC, could assess national welfare priorities across all fields.

Animal Welfare Advisory Committee Annual Report 1999 (2000). Animal Welfare Advisory Committee: Wellington. 36pp. Paperback. Obtainable from: NAWAC, c/o Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, PO Box 2526, Wellington, New Zealand (ISSN 1173-4396). Free.

European Union enlargement and animal welfare

The European Union (EU) currently comprises 15 Member States. Moves are underway for its dramatic enlargement through the accession in coming years of 13 further applicant countries: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Turkey. Accession depends upon applicants being able to satisfy the required economic, political and legal obligations and criteria. Through this