

levels between birth and weaning, and indicators which have a less direct association, for example the number of relevant government advisory, non-departmental public bodies on which an animal welfare specialist is represented. The report uses a traffic light system to give an 'at a glance' impression of the RSPCA's assessment as to whether welfare issues have improved (green), remained relatively unchanged (amber), worsened (red), or to indicate that there are insufficient data on which to make a judgement (grey). The traffic light does not reflect the absolute level of animal welfare but the direction of change. This year, five areas affecting animal welfare are reported to have improved since the 2006 figures, including a substantial reduction in the number of wild-caught CITES-listed birds imported into the EU. Many areas show little change from last year and four are reported to be worse, two areas of concern being a large increase in the number of reports and convictions for animal fighting in the UK and an increase in the number of reptiles being imported into the UK.

The RSPCA hope that *The Welfare State: Measuring Animal Welfare* will provide a snapshot picture of animal welfare in the UK and allow comparison between years, thereby highlighting where more attention is required if animal welfare is to be improved, and also to illustrate where encouraging progress has already taken place. The report provides an interesting introduction to a varied set of issues affecting animal welfare today.

**RSPCA Report on the Welfare State: Measuring Animal welfare in the UK 2007** 2008. A4. 106 pp. Available from External affairs, RSPCA, Wilberforce Way, Southwater, Horsham, West Sussex RH13 9RS and at <http://www.animalwelfarefootprint.com/>

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### **European Commission launch website to track the development of alternative methods to animal testing**

A new website: Tracking System for Alternative test methods Review Validation and Approval (TSAR) has recently been set in motion by the European Commission. TSAR is managed by the Joint Research Centre's Institute for Health and Consumer Protection and has been designed to provide greater transparency of the review process for alternative test methods that replace, reduce and refine the use of animals in research (the 3Rs). It is anticipated that interested individuals will soon be able to track the progress of review from initial submission of a new method for pre-validation all the way through to approval and final adoption into EU legislation and/or related Guidance Documents.

The site is straightforward to navigate and offers clear, simple explanations of the development process, which has been broken down into two parts: i) Review and Validation, and ii) Regulatory Approval. To enable a rapid launch, some areas of the website are still under construction and currently only the area dealing with regulatory approval of methods in the field of chemicals is functional. Areas of animal testing where alternative test methods are being

developed, or are already available, include: skin irritation and corrosion, eye irritation, skin sensitivity, mutagenicity, acute system toxicity, reproductive toxicity and others. A drop-down menu allows users to display information on individual alternative methods which are colour coded according to where they are in the review process: test methods shown in green are those that are already incorporated within EU legislation or other regulatory use; orange indicates that the method is currently undergoing the process of being included in the EU regulatory context, and purple shows that no regulatory use has been identified.

TSAR will be of interest to both individuals working in the field, who will be able to consult the website to check for available alternative methods for use in their research, and also to individuals not active in research but interested in how the replacement, reduction and refinement of animals in laboratory testing is progressing. TSAR is a positive step forward in the advancement of laboratory animal welfare.

**TSAR: Tracking System for Alternative Test Methods Review, Validation and Approval in the Context of EU Regulations on Chemicals** November 2008. Managed by the Joint Research Centre's Institute for Health and Consumer Protection. Website available at: <http://ihcp.jrc.ec.europa.eu/tsar>

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### **UK Farm Animal Welfare Council Report on policy instruments for protecting and improving farm animal welfare (in the UK)**

The objectives of this FAWC Opinion is to advise the Government about the range of policy instruments available to it for protecting and improving farmed animal welfare and to identify where the application of these instruments should be considered further.

The Report identifies 14 categories of 'policy instrument', including primary and secondary legislation, inspections by relevant authorities, financial incentives, education and training, research, permit schemes and farm assurance schemes. The 14 types of instrument are outlined in the Report and examples provided of their current, past or potential use. During the development of this Opinion, FAWC undertook a consultation with a variety of stakeholders and key points arising from this are noted in the Report.

The first conclusion listed states that: "To achieve the levels of animal welfare that people want requires a co-ordinated approach to the use of policy instruments to achieve desired behavioural change..." In addition to the need for animal welfare legislation and enforcement, other instruments are important: "...serious consideration needs to be given to the provision of appropriate information to consumers to allow them to make informed choices... based on animal welfare provenance"; "There is a need for a nationally- or internationally-agreed system for welfare assessment..."; "The provision of balanced animal welfare educational teaching materials for schools should be facilitated and incorporated to best effect within the school and college curriculum".