

field, providing they will be regularly updated. The references cannot be searched or sorted by subject.

Assessment of Animal Welfare and Animal Distress. Website resource compiled by J D Kuiper of the Department of Laboratory Animal Science, University of Utrecht, Netherlands, and T Allen of the Animal Welfare Information Center, National Agricultural Library, USA. <http://www.vetifo.demon.nl/aw/index.html>.

UK Medical Research Council's position on the use of animals in medical research

Recognizing public concern on the use of animals in research, the Medical Research Council (MRC) of the UK has produced a booklet which outlines its own position on experiments using animals. This sets out the MRC's principles including its active support for the development and dissemination of techniques for the '3Rs': reduction, refinement or replacement of animal experiments. The booklet includes sections on alternatives used by the MRC, past benefits arising from animal work, and how animal studies have advanced medicine. Seven examples of current research into disease are given and the role of animals in these programmes is outlined. Information is also provided on the species and numbers of animals used. There are notes on the legal controls on use of animals in scientific procedures and the booklet also sets out the MRC's expectations on the conduct of its scientists in promoting good practice in animal welfare over and above the requirements of the law. The booklet is clearly written and well produced with colour illustrations throughout.

Mice and Medicine: Animal Experiments, Medical Advances and the MRC. July 2000. Published by the Medical Research Council. 36pp. Paperback. Available from the publishers, 20 Park Crescent, London W1N 4AL.

Health controls on pet animals imported into the European Union

In 1998, the Dutch Society for the Protection of Animals undertook a preliminary investigation of the conduct of veterinary checks on animals imported into the European Union (EU) for the pet industry. This was prompted by concern for the health and welfare of these imported animals and concern also that they could introduce infectious diseases into the EU. The results suggested that import controls were unsatisfactory in some Member States. In view of this, the Society, in cooperation with the Eurogroup for Animal Welfare, initiated a more extensive inquiry.

The study was conducted by seeking information, via a questionnaire sent to the chief veterinary officers of the EU member states, on the extent and nature of checks on animals imported for the pet trade. This included, for example, questions on whether physical checks and quarantining were carried out, whether shipments of birds were screened for Newcastle disease and/or avian influenza, and whether mammals were screened for rabies. Detailed replies were received from 10 states.

The authors of the report concluded from the results *'that the practice of veterinary checks in the European Union gives serious reason for concern about the import of highly contagious diseases like rabies, Newcastle disease and avian influenza'*. They also concluded that current practice does not match up to the requirements set by existing EU legislation and that there are considerable differences between states in disease control procedures in imported animals. Because, apparently, ports of entry for CITES-listed animals (those covered by the international convention on trade in endangered species) in some states are not always border posts for veterinary inspections, the authors believe that some CITES-listed animals may be entering the EU with no veterinary checks.