

The *Difficult Choices* pack (for the 12 year-old plus pupils) has three units, *Animals in Society*, *The Cost of Life* and *Truth, Images and Attitudes*. Each of these units has Teachers' Notes, a Teacher Information Sheet, and Student Work and Information Sheets. The aim of this pack is to encourage students to look outside themselves at the way society uses animals and to look inside themselves at their own beliefs and moral standpoints. The role of animals in advancing medical knowledge is the main example used in the 2nd and 3rd units.

These packs are an excellent and structured way to introduce to school audiences and perhaps to others, the difficult, important and controversial concept that man's use (or misuse) of animals in biomedical research may pose an insoluble moral dilemma.

Animal Rights and Medical Research: Sixth Form Discussion Pack and ***Difficult Choices: PSE Discussion Pack***. Produced and published by Research for Health Charities Group (RHCG) (1994). For further details contact RHCG, PO Box 1417, Shepton Mallet, Somerset BA4 4YZ, UK.

Laying hens – the Swiss experience

In 1981 the Swiss *Animal Protection Act* came into force. It has become famous for its section on the housing of chickens. By prescribing sheltered, darkened nest boxes, perches or slatted grids for all hens and with a minimum area of 800cm² per bird on mesh floors, it effectively prohibited the battery cage – this made Switzerland the first country to impose such a ban. For practical economic reasons the legislation granted farmers a ten-year transition period, expiring at the beginning of 1992.

Consequently there has been a widespread adoption of aviary systems. Free-range production has only captured an estimated 20 per cent of the Swiss market. This represents 400 thousand free-range laying hens, which is considerably less than the 3.6 million birds in the UK.

Laying Hens: 12 years of experience with new husbandry systems in Switzerland is a 32 page report of the poultry working group of the Swiss Society for the Protection of Animals STS. It is clearly written, well presented, and contains a considerable amount of facts and details. Areas this report covers include: the keeping of laying hens in Switzerland, laws and regulations, the behaviour of fowls, new housing systems for laying hens, fold and free-range keeping of laying birds, economic aspects and health.

What makes this publication particularly attractive are the long lists of references – many, however, in German. This report is a must for anybody working in this important area of husbandry R and D.

Laying Hens: 12 years of experience with new husbandry systems in Switzerland. Produced and published by the Swiss Society for the Protection of Animals (1994). 32pp. Paperback. Obtainable from the publishers, Birsfelderstrasse 45, CH-4052 Basel, Switzerland. Price SwF15.

European hedgehog

This booklet gives the reader a brief insight into the lives of hedgehogs and their current status in Britain.

There are short accounts of: hedgehog structure and function; signs of the animals' presence; habitat; food; and even their own fleas! Behaviour is included under three headings:

the all important issue of hibernation; activity patterns; and breeding.

The section entitled *Legal status* points out the problem that the hedgehog, as for any wild animal, is not protected by cruelty legislation; however, because they are so easily caught and rarely bite, they are extremely vulnerable to acts of cruelty.

It is surprising to learn that despite its popularity and commonality little is known about hedgehog population size and density within the UK, with estimates ranging from 0.5 million to 2.5 million. However, determining the flux of the hedgehog population from the numbers killed by gamekeepers is too difficult, as there are many factors confounding the data available, including the decrease in the number of gamekeepers 'by about 80% this century'.

In *Predators and mortality* the author notes that the hedgehog's spines present such a good defence that 'No wild predator depends on . . . hedgehogs for a significant part of its diet'. It is man and his machines that, yet again, are the cause of huge numbers of deaths. These causes include motor vehicles, mowing machines, cattle grids, chemicals, ponds, netting, a change in farming methods from grassland to arable and the destruction of hedgerows. It seems inevitable that with an increasing human population and therefore human activity – especially the increase in the number of roads and the change of farmland – that hedgehog numbers will decrease. The author certainly paints a dismal picture for this well-known figure of the countryside.

Not all is lost, however, as the booklet finishes on a conservation note, with some practical advice on how the average person can contribute to hedgehog welfare. Rescuing and caring for sick or injured hedgehogs, or abandoned young, then releasing them back into the wild can indeed be very successful. Habitat management practices around the suburbs need to be altered slightly, for example the careful use of pesticides and grass cutting machinery. There are also thoughts for the wider picture of saving more hedgehog habitat and the strategies necessary.

The Hedgehog. Pat Morris (1994). The Mammal Society: London. 24pp. Paperback. Obtainable from the publishers, 15 Cloisters Business Centre, 8 Battersea Park Road, London SW8 4BG, UK (ISBN 0 906282 46 2). Price £3 including postage.

New Zealand slaughter standards

The New Zealand Animal Welfare advisory committee regularly produces codes of recommendations and minimum standards for the welfare of animals.

In July 1994 a code of standards was issued for the welfare of animals at licensed and approved slaughter premises. This code covers the welfare of animals from the point of unloading at a slaughter plant to the time they become permanently unconscious. It applies to all animals, excluding birds, destined for meat or by-products and is intended for all those responsible for the implementation of animal welfare in the abattoir.

In the first section the physiological needs of the animals, the design and construction of facilities and the handling of animals are considered. These sections are general rather than species-specific and on the whole cover the basic requirements well. However, given the important role that lairage staff play in the humane handling of animals, this particular subject could have been covered more comprehensively. For example outlining in detail what would be considered as the 'appropriate' use of electric goads.