

The *Code* does not provide a comprehensive guide to shelter practice, and anyone trying to implement any of the recommendations will need to consult a host of other material to find the necessary technical information. The failure to include a list of references in the *Code* complicates this procedure unnecessarily, although the detailed list of addresses of organizations active in the field does provide inquirers with a starting point for any search.

It is to be hoped that this *Code of Practice* is the first step towards a much-needed, comprehensive and authoritative single text on caring for cats and dogs within rescue organizations. Certainly, those organizations which belong to the Association of British Dogs' Homes (which include the RSPCA, Blue Cross, Cats Protection League, National Canine Defence League) are ideally suited to produce such a text. The challenge is now for them to flesh out the framework laid out by the *Code*.

Code of Practice for Animal Rescue Organisations: Caring for Cats and Dogs

Compiled by The Association of British Dogs' Homes (Undated). 16pp. Paperback. Obtainable from the compilers, c/o The Dogs' Home Battersea, 4 Battersea Park Road, London, SW8 4AA, UK. Free

Welfare aspects of foie gras production

The production of foie gras (fat liver) by force-feeding geese was described by Olivier de Serres in 1619 but the practice probably has very much earlier origins. In recent times most foie gras production has involved ducks rather than geese, and a hybrid of the muscovy duck, *Cairina moschata*, and domestic duck, *Anas platyrhynchos*, called a mulard, is the favoured bird. The males of these hybrids are used for foie gras production and the smaller females for meat. In 1995, 0.8 million geese and 18 million ducks were reared for foie gras in France. Smaller numbers of birds are reared in Belgium and Spain but there is also production in other parts of the world including Israel. Foie gras is eaten in many European countries and there is also a significant export market to Japan.

The production process involves force-feeding ducks twice a day for 12–15 days and geese three times a day for 15–21 days prior to slaughter using a high-energy diet. The food is administered mechanically or pneumatically through a 20–30cm feeding tube inserted manually into the oesophagus. During the force-feeding period, birds are kept in small groups or individually caged in small cages through which the head protrudes. In some countries, the procedure of force-feeding is prohibited. There have, however, been relatively few scientific publications on the welfare aspects of foie gras production and information is sparse.

A Working Group of the European Union's Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Welfare (SCAHAW) investigated the welfare aspects of foie gras production and reported avoidance behaviour during force-feeding, which suggested that the process was aversive. The Working Group also observed that birds with expanded livers had difficulty in standing and that their gait and ability to walk were severely impaired – however, there have been no studies of gross anatomical changes and their impact on locomotion. An investigation of various possible physiological indices of welfare status including heterophil/lymphocyte ratios and adrenal gland reactivity did not reveal differences to controls. However, investigation of the effects of force-feeding on the liver indicated that significant pathology (steatosis [ie fatty liver] causing impairment of hepatic function) was induced. The conclusion of a panel of pathologists asked to examine fat livers was that the degree of steatosis at the end of force-feeding was much more severe than any naturally occurring steatosis. Other differences with age-matched controls included: occurrence of loose faeces, 'wet neck', increased time spent sitting and increased incidence of bone fractures and liver lesions. The mortality rate during the 2 weeks of force-feeding ranged from 2–4 per cent, compared with about 0.2 per cent in comparable ducks.

The SCAHAW concluded in their report that 'force-feeding, as currently practised, is detrimental to the welfare of the birds and made a variety of recommendations, as follows. i) No process should be used that results in an increase in liver size such that its function is significantly modified or that it causes increased mortality, pain or distress. ii) No feeding procedure should be used that results in substantial discomfort. iii) All people involved should be properly trained and competent. iv) The use of individual cages should not be permitted. v) All flocks should be officially monitored and welfare indices recorded. vi) A range of research on health, feeding methods, housing and socio-economic aspects should be undertaken.

This report was adopted by the Committee on 16 December 1998. Since Article 3 of the Council of Europe's *Convention on the Protection of Animals Kept for Farming Purposes* (which all EU member states have ratified) states that 'animals shall be housed and provided with food, water and care in a manner which...is appropriate to their physiological and ethological needs...', it appears, on the basis of this Report, that some changes will be required.

Welfare Aspects of the Production of Foie Gras in Ducks and Geese (1998). Report of the Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare. EU Directorate General XXIV: Brussels. 89pp. Available at <http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg24/health/sc/scah/outcome-en.html>. Free.

Learning support books for Animal Care NVQs

The Animal Care and Equine Training Organisation (ACETO) produced these workbooks to support students studying for National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs). The books provide materials that aim to cover the range of knowledge needed to achieve the NVQs in Animal Care at Levels 2 and 3. (NVQs are UK qualifications which were devised to give those working within an industry the opportunity to gain accreditation for the skills they were using as part of their job. The NVQs are competency- rather than exam-based, and students need to demonstrate a range of practical skills and supporting background knowledge to claim the qualification.)

Animal welfare, and the concept of the Farm Animal Welfare Council's 'five freedoms', have been placed firmly at the heart of the Animal Care NVQs. The range of animal husbandry skills over which competency needs to be demonstrated is broad, especially for NVQ Level 3, and is reflected in the chapter titles of the workbooks – which include coverage of nutrition, maintaining animal health, transportation of animals, handling and restraint, animal accommodation and animal training. In addition, students must demonstrate skills associated with the correct handling of stock and customer care, as well as with the implementation of relevant health and safety legislation. The books attempt to provide this broad range of information, and related self-assessment tests, in fewer than 100 pages. Background knowledge is covered quickly and efficiently but the workbooks allow themselves little space for discussion. Lists of instructions and key measures are given in bullet point form, but justification as to why these are needed is, in the main, omitted. Where possible, overtly technical terms are avoided – but where they have to be used, a clear explanation of their meaning is sometimes lacking.

One weakness of the books is their strong focus on caring for dogs and cats; those seeking a broader perspective on animal care will be disappointed. Another, is their surprising failure to indicate to readers how the information being given relates to NVQ assessment criteria – something which is most apparent in the NVQ 3 workbook. This omission limits the usefulness of the workbooks and means that they are best used in close conjunction with an NVQ assessor. They should not be regarded as 'stand-alone' texts. However, the main weakness of the books arises from weaknesses inherent within the structure of the NVQs in Animal Care. Problems arise, because of the need to instruct and assess practically inclined students over the broad range of knowledge – much of which is technical and specialized – required for the care of animals.