

Animal welfare information

'*The Animal Welfare Handbook*', intended as an introductory guide to animal welfare and animal rights, has recently been published by Fourth Estate. It is a useful compilation of information on most, if not all, aspects of the welfare and rights of animals.

The book contains a large number of short but factual accounts of the ways in which man uses and misuses animals: it summarizes much of the relevant UK animal welfare law; lists a considerable number of books, journals and audiovisual material in its Resources chapter, and it gives the names, addresses, aims and methods of operation of some 160 UK animal welfare and animal rights societies. There is an Appendix listing other (ie non-animal welfare/non-animal welfare) organizations mentioned in the text and also an Index.

As is inevitable with a publication of this nature some of the material is slightly dated and, of course, some readers of the Handbook will suggest that the presentation of some of the material is not exactly as they (the reader) would like.

Nevertheless this book is a most valuable source of factual information. It fulfils a real need, and it is to be hoped that it will be updated and reissued on a regular basis.

The Animal Welfare Handbook Caroline Clough and Barry Kew (1993). Fourth Estate: London. 234pp. Paperback. Obtainable from the publishers, 289 Westbourne Grove, London W11 2QA, UK (ISBN 1 85702 047 2) Price £8.99.

Refinements in rabbit husbandry

The second report produced and published by the BVAAWF/FRAME/RSPCA/UFAW Joint Working Group on Refinement is on the husbandry of laboratory rabbits. The aims of the Working Group study were to identify the needs of domesticated rabbits and to present information on the ways in which the current systems of housing rabbits used in biomedical research could be improved for the benefit of all concerned: the animal, the scientist, the animal technician and the breeder. The conclusion of the majority of the members of the Working Group was that the standard size laboratory cage currently used for housing rabbits in the UK is inadequate to satisfy many of the physiological, behavioural and psychological needs of those animals. It was felt that the provision of group housing facilities in floor pens could significantly improve the physical and psychological welfare of the animals. It was accepted that in some circumstances group housing may not be suitable - in these cases housing in compatible pairs should be considered with the animals being kept in large cages and with the environment enriched in as many ways as possible.

Group housing systems can be more economical to set up and run; they should result in more 'physiologically normal' animals and could lead to a reduction in the numbers needed for statistically valid results to be obtained.

The Report has appendices on natural behaviour patterns carried out by rabbits and on research recommendations and there is a list of some 57 references.

Refinements in rabbit husbandry Second Report of the BVAAWF/FRAME/RSPCA/UFAW Joint Working Group on Refinement BVAAWF/FRAME/RSPCA/UFAW (1993). *Laboratory Animals* 27: 301-329. Reprints obtainable free of charge from RSPCA, Research Animals Department, Causeway, Horsham, West Sussex RH12 1HG, UK.