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Information on the Review of Part I of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 can be found at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/wildlifeact-part1/index.htm>

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Guidance on the slaughter of injured cattle in the EU

From 1 January 2006, new EU Hygiene Regulations come into force that change the way which animals slaughtered or killed because of concerns about their welfare can be dealt with. As only healthy and clean animals can now be accepted for slaughter, the new regulations mean that the ultimate destination of such animals, killed because of injury, disease or illness, will be determined by animal welfare and food safety considerations. Decisions will have to be taken both as to whether an animal that is injured or shows other signs of abnormalities fulfils public health conditions for slaughter for human consumption and whether it is fit to be transported to a slaughterhouse, or emergency slaughtered in situ and then transported. In many cases, the decision will be that such animals are not eligible for human consumption and must instead be dealt with as fallen stock.

The British Cattle Veterinary Association, with assistance from the Food Standards Agency, UK Rural Affairs Department and the Meat Hygiene Service, have produced guidance to help veterinary surgeons and farmers make such decisions and arrive at a course of action. Key to the guidance is the ability to demonstrate that any animal for human consumption is or was healthy prior to slaughter, or to the event that brought about the need for slaughter. This includes the need to ensure that the statutory withdrawal period for any veterinary medicine, including anthelmintics, has been observed for the animal. Confirmation of health status through both ante and post mortem inspection by a veterinary surgeon or OVS is now a necessity.

In addition, the guidance notes draw attention to the fact that in the UK, under the Welfare of Animals (Transport) Order 1997, unfit cattle may only be transported to the nearest available place for veterinary treatment or diagnosis, or to the nearest available place of slaughter, and only if the animal is not likely to be subject to unnecessary suffering by reason of its unfitness. The Guide seeks to further clarify this requirement and advises that any animal suffering pain, which cannot be loaded without undue force, or with severe wounds or protruding viscera, eg prolapsed uterus, must therefore not be transported. This advice similarly holds for any animal that is unable to bear weight on all four limbs, or that may suffer unnecessary pain during transport as a result of its lameness, or for which transport is likely to cause pain. If in any doubt, the guide advises, the animal is best not transported.

Once it has been determined that an animal cannot be transported, a decision has to be made whether the animal is

eligible for emergency slaughter outside a slaughterhouse for human consumption. The Guide indicates that a veterinary surgeon must be involved ante-mortem in this decision, and also must be present at the time of slaughter. It states that it is the veterinary surgeons responsibility to determine whether the slaughter is the result of an emergency (ie an event requiring immediate action) or accident (ie an unforeseen or unexpected event), whether it was healthy prior to the accident and whether it fulfils the ante-mortem conditions — including those that it be free of disease or conditions that may be transmitted to humans or animals through handling or eating the meat. They must also issue a declaration to accompany the animal to the slaughterhouse indicating that the animal was healthy and fit for consumption. For cattle over 24 months, there is also a requirement that a Brain Stem Sample has been taken for testing for BSE. Failure to do so, the Guide warns, will render the animal ineligible for inclusion in the food chain. The Guide then finishes by giving advice on methods of emergency slaughter, along with examples of the information that must accompany an animal for slaughter, that is known or suspected to be injured or showing abnormality including veterinary and owner declarations, and a decision tree on how to determine the appropriate action to be taken.

Some have expressed concern that the new rules may, because of associated costs of dealing with sick and injured animals, lead to delays and welfare problems in some cases as a result.

Guidance for Veterinary Surgeons and Farmers on the Slaughter of Cattle Which Are Injured Or Showing Signs Of Abnormalities (September 2005). Published by the British Cattle Veterinary Association. 24 pp. Copies are available on request from the BCVA Office, The Green, Frampton on Severn, Gloucestershire GL2 7EP, UK, or can be downloaded by BCVA members from their website: <http://www.bcva.org.uk>

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Implementation of the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy

The Australian Animal Welfare Strategy (AAWS), which received full Government support in May 2004 after 5 years in development by the National Consultative Committee on Animal Welfare (NCCAW), is now in the early stages of implementation. The Primary Industries Ministerial Council (PIMC) approved the Strategy in 2004, and in the 2005-06 Budget the Australian Government committed \$6 million over four years to fund a plan for its implementation. This is being coordinated by the Primary Industries Standing Committee (PISC), and in September '05 a national workshop involving 100 stakeholders agreed on a National Implementation Plan. In addition, six working groups for the six key sectors involved with animal welfare (livestock/production animals; animals used in research and teaching; aquatic animals; companion animals; animals used for work, sport, recreation or display; and animals in the wild) were agreed, which will develop Action Plans for each. The Strategy is based on the existing framework for animal welfare in Australia, but aims to refine it to ensure there is

clarity in the roles and responsibilities of individuals and organisations across all sectors that work with animals, consistency across Government and State legislation, and widespread community understanding of the importance of good animal welfare. The Strategy seeks to encompass all sentient animals, captive and wild, and emphasises the value placed on good welfare in Australia. A desire for excellent practices to be researched and employed, and for these to be recognised worldwide, is clearly evident. The Strategy is to form a national foundation on which future policies and improvements can be made, and 25 'areas of activity' are outlined, under three main goals.

Goal 1 is to "achieve an enhanced national approach and commitment to ensure high standards of animal welfare based on a concise outline of current processes". This includes the implementation of standard codes of practice which are to be employed by animal welfare units in each jurisdiction. Emphasis on consultative processes in policy development demonstrates the commitment of the NCCAW to the idea that stakeholders should have 'ownership' of the AAWS.

Goal 2 is to "achieve sustainable improvements in animal welfare based on national and international benchmarks, scientific evaluation and research, taking into account changes in the whole of community standards" and this focuses on strengthening what is already in place in terms of legislation. Scientific research is of utmost importance, and the identification of research opportunities and the funding and investment required to support them is a further area of activity. Other areas look at assessing Australia's animal welfare in terms of national statistics, and contributing to international debate on animal welfare by promoting their current standards to international bodies, as well as continuing involvement with the World Organisation for Animal Health.

Goal 3 is to "achieve effective communication, education and training across the whole community to promote an improved understanding of animal welfare" and here emphasis is placed on the education of all those involved directly with animals through their work, as well as throughout the general community, through effective distribution of animal welfare information, and the inclusion of animal welfare education in appropriate curricula.

The Strategy looks at animal welfare in a holistic way, placing it in the context of both science and ethics, and recognising that cultural and societal values and economics also play major roles in defining what makes good animal welfare practicable. The value of animal life in Australia is described with reference not only to livestock, research and companionship, but also to the history and heritage of the country, the value of particular animals to some indigenous groups, and the growing value of wildlife in tourism. One of the first areas that PISC is going to provide guidance on is how implementation of the Strategy may have economic impacts, and how any issues such as these can be addressed. Having outlined its vision, goals and objectives, benefits and implementation, the last section of the Strategy describes the existing animal welfare legislation in Australia.

Australian Animal Welfare Strategy. Published by the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, 2005. Available online at <http://www.daff.gov.au/content/output.cfm?ObjectID=3C9C4ACE-B85B-465C-9C508C771F08C87E>

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Australian Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Cattle

The first edition of the Australian Model Code of Practice for Cattle was published in 1992. The aims of the second edition, which incorporates the latest knowledge in this field, are stated to be:

- "to promote humane and considerate treatment of cattle, and the use of good husbandry practices to improve the welfare of cattle in all types of farming enterprises";
- "to inform all people responsible for the care and management of cattle about their responsibilities";
- and "to set a minimum industry standard by defining acceptable cattle management practices".

The book is set out clearly, with aspects of cattle care in many farming environments dealt with comprehensively and methodically. There is some unavoidable repetition, ensuring that by referring to just one section one would be given full information about the topic. In many cases only general guidance is given, and details about where specific information can be obtained for particular age, size or breed classes of cattle is provided. Occasions where a veterinarian's advice or expertise must be sought, and where legislation varies between States, are also highlighted. In all cases unacceptable treatment or levels of care are made clear. For example acceptable and unacceptable use of goads and appropriate and inappropriate tethering practices are outlined.

The book begins with 'Basic Welfare Needs', with adequate conditions regarding food and water, space and social contact, and protection from disease and predation being outlined. It is stated that 'the importance of competent stockmanship in animal welfare cannot be over-emphasised', and this sentiment is reiterated throughout the book in a number of sections where it is underlined that good welfare relies to a great extent on the capabilities of those responsible. This can take the form of early diagnosis of health problems, good practice in transportation, or methods of humane destruction, for example.

The second section looks at 'Intensive Cattle Systems', providing extensive guidance on the 'Australian Code of Practice for the Welfare of Cattle in Beef Feedlots'. Management issues such as personnel responsibilities and training, cattle handling procedures, and transportation are described. Health inspection and management is looked at next, with details of which aspects of a feedlot should be under regular surveillance. Feed levels, feeding frequency, and diet are detailed in the 'feed management' subsection. The next, on yard management, concerns the size and physical design of the cattle pens, including flooring and bedding, water troughs, and drainage. The final subsection relates to climatic conditions and protection from climatic extremes.