

### **Computer-directed livestock farming**

The development of intensive livestock production systems over the last forty or so years has resulted in large numbers of animals being looked after by relatively small numbers of stockmen. This widening of the animal:man ratio has been made possible by the increasing use of mechanical and electronic (computer) devices to maintain, manipulate and monitor these intensively kept animals. Nowadays it is possible to warm/ventilate and clean out animal houses by means of carefully engineered control systems; cows can be automatically milked; pigs can be permitted/refused access to a 'help yourself' feeding station according to the identification code held within their neck collar; poultry can have their body-weights regularly monitored and the stockman can be informed when the flock's weight gain deviates significantly from a preset norm. There are many potential production and welfare advantages to be gained from the use of these mechanical and electronic devices - there are also potential disadvantages, for example reduction in the stockman's contact with the individual animal, the danger of power cuts.

The Dutch Society for the Protection of Animals (DSPA) has produced a most valuable report which looks at the application of information technology in livestock farming; assesses the ethical and economic implications and, in some detail, considers the role of computers, automation and engineering in the care and management of dairy cattle, veal calves and pigs. The publication draws together much information from scattered sources on the uses and limitations of computer-directed livestock farming. The DSPA is to be congratulated on this publication and for arranging the translation of the original document into English - if for no other reason than because much of the original work on livestock farm mechanization has been done in The Netherlands and is not readily accessible to non-Dutch speaking workers.

*Animal Welfare and Computer-Directed Livestock Farming: 12th Report of the Study Committee on Intensive Farming* Produced and published by the Dutch Society for the Protection of Animals (1992). English translation by Mrs Dorothy A Oswald and Mrs Caroline Vodden of the original Dutch report: 'Welzijn en computer - gestuurde veehouderij', January 1991. 86pp. Paperback. Obtainable from the publishers, Bankastraat 100, 2585 ES Den Haag, The Netherlands. Price Dfl 10.00.

### **Research in anthrozoology**

Anthrozoology, the study of interactions between man and animals is essentially an interdisciplinary science, involving specialists in biology, psychology, social sciences, medicine and veterinary science. The subject has emerged as a speciality over the last five years, seeing the initiation of for example its first peer-reviewed journal, *Anthrozoös*, and foundation of the International Society for Anthrozoology (ISAZ).

The University of Southampton (UK) has had an interest in anthrozoology since the inception of its Companion Animal Behaviour Studies Group in 1988. It founded the Anthrozoology Institute (AzI) in October 1992 to provide a more formal basis for this work, with funding from The Waltham Centre for Pet Nutrition. The Institute has a staff of nine research workers and a Board of Consultants which consists of experts both within the university and worldwide.