

REPORTS AND COMMENTS

Recommendations and minimum standards for the welfare of ostrich and emu

This most recent of the *Code of Recommendations* series of the New Zealand Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC) deals with standards for farmed ostriches and emus (the management of these birds in zoos is covered elsewhere in AWAC code No 14 *Code of Recommendations for the Welfare of Exhibit Animals and Information for Animal Exhibit Operators*). In New Zealand, as in many other countries, this decade has seen the development of commercial interest in these species as sources of meat, feathers and other products. The first point to make about this code is that the fact that it exists at all is an encouraging sign of the times. AWAC deserves recognition for drawing attention to and tackling existing and emerging animal welfare problems in New Zealand in a constructive and methodical way. New Zealand is, of course, not the only country to have such a system but there remain plenty that do not.

The purpose of this code is to provide guidance to people responsible for the welfare, husbandry, transport and slaughter of these ratite birds reared in captivity. It sets out standards briefly and clearly, using 'shall' to indicate statutory requirements, 'must' to mean a minimum standard, and 'should' for recommendations. The code covers legal responsibilities and inspectors' powers; quality assurance system (recommendations on the development of written procedures which ensure that the conditions of the code are met); stock management; housing, fencing and yards; and a summary of minimum standards. The largest section is that on stock management. This provides brief outline information on safe handling of birds, food and water, breeding and rearing, a few common diseases, transport, slaughter, and emergency euthanasia.

This publication serves its purpose of setting out various conditions and recommendations for management. One limitation is that, although many other publications must have been consulted in its development, the code includes no list of references or of further reading. Presumably this policy has been adopted in the interests of brevity and perhaps to avoid any risk of ambiguity of interpretation which might arise through citing publications which provide conflicting advice or opinion. However, the absence of reference material is a drawback. It is emphasized that in stock management, 'common sense should prevail and that previous experience with stock should be utilised to the full extent...' but no mention is made of the very important additional need for specialist knowledge – and no advice is provided as to how this might be acquired. It seems odd that it is considered worth providing details of two diseases (impaction of the proventriculus and leg rotation) whilst providing no information at all about where even to find out about other diseases. This is a relatively minor grumble however – the code is certainly a valuable contribution to the management literature.

New Zealand ostrich and emu farmers will need this publication, but it will also be of interest to ratite keepers and those involved in the setting and regulation of farm animal welfare standards in other countries.

Code of Recommendations and Minimum Standards for the Welfare of Ostrich and Emu. New Code of Animal Welfare No 21. Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (1998). 21pp. Paperback. Obtainable from Animal Welfare and Environment Section, MAF Regulatory Authority, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, PO Box 2526, Wellington, New Zealand (ISBN 047807476X, ISSN 1171-090X). Free.

Farm animal welfare issues compendium

There is a need in the United States, apparently, for Country and State Co-operative Extension personnel, who act widely as local advisers to the animal agriculture industry, to be able to comment constructively on the animal welfare issues which occur (or are believed to occur) in some animal production enterprises. This compendium of 14 discussion papers has been produced, under the auspices of the US Department of Agriculture, to help satisfy this need. All