

## Reports and Comments

### New Zealand Government publishes guidelines for writing codes of animal welfare

The New Zealand Ministry for Agriculture and Forestry (MAF), together with the National Animal Welfare Advisory Council (NAWAC), have recently published a new document providing guidance on how to write and review codes of animal welfare. Welfare codes play a key role in improving the care of animals by describing how best to keep and manage animals and by laying-out minimum standards. Codes also provide extra detail to areas covered by animal welfare legislation and, although not legally binding in themselves, may be used as evidence to support a prosecution for an offence under the relevant legislation.

MAF and NAWAC describe how and why codes are developed, provide a checklist of questions to be taken into account by individuals intending to write codes, and also give a general background of any legal issues to be considered. Appropriate language and format is also described, including the importance of a plain and clear writing style and the avoidance of overly proscriptive terms. Additionally, examples are given on how best to write minimum standards, which are considered the core component of codes of welfare.

Although intended for a New Zealand audience, *Guidelines for Writing Codes of Welfare* are likely to be of interest to anyone considering writing a Code of Practice or to those who review codes on a regular basis.

**Guidelines for Writing Codes of Welfare** (June 2009). A4. 20 pp. National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, New Zealand. The guidelines are available at the MAF Biosecurity website: <http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/animal-welfare/stds/codes>, or by emailing: [animalwelfare@maf.govt.nz](mailto:animalwelfare@maf.govt.nz).

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### Government response to UK Farm Animal Welfare Council report on castration and tail docking of lambs

The Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC) is an independent advisory body tasked with reviewing the welfare of UK farm animals and advising the Government on any legislative, or other, changes that may be necessary. FAWC first raised castration and tail docking as an area of concern in 1994 when it stated: "There is no doubt that lambs feel pain and distress as a result of castration and tail docking" (FAWC 1994). However, at the time of writing the 1994 report, little research had been carried out to assess castration or tail-docking methods or on the level and duration of distress caused by these procedures. Lack of scientific evidence therefore made it difficult for FAWC to define best practice.

Subsequent to the 1994 FAWC report, further research has been undertaken in this area and in 2008 FAWC published

a 36-page document on the welfare implications relating to the castration and tail docking of lambs. In this, FAWC discussed the reasons why castration and tail docking may be carried out and also the current legal methods. Twenty-seven recommendations concerning castration and tail docking were made and the overriding opinion of the report was that neither castration nor tail docking should be undertaken without strong justification. Additionally, it was urged that pain relief should be used where possible and that further research was required in areas such as: pain relief delivery methods; immunocastration and assessment and reduction of chronic pain associated with both castration and tail docking.

Since the publication of this report, the Scottish, English and Welsh Governments have considered FAWC's recommendations and have recently released their joint response. On the whole, the Governments concur with FAWC in many areas, although point out that in others they have limited authority (as with the recommendation by FAWC that Government, together with industry, should implement the authorisation of an approved local anaesthetic for sheep). The Government can encourage the veterinary pharmaceutical industry to develop a local anaesthetic for use in sheep but cannot require them to do so. The Government response did agree with the need for more research and indicated the intention to encourage further research in the following areas: pain relief delivery, the use of very tight rubber rings, and the aetiology of flystrike. Additionally, it was proposed that appropriate amendments to legislation and the *Code of Recommendations for the Welfare of Livestock: Sheep*, be made after suitable consultation.

### References

**FAWC** 1994 *The Welfare of Sheep*. Farm Animal Welfare Council. Defra; London, UK

**FAWC** 2008 *The Implications of Castration and Tail Docking for the Welfare of Lambs*. Farm Animal Welfare Council. Defra: London, UK

**Government Response to the FAWC Report on the Implications of Castration and Tail Docking for the Welfare of Lambs** (June 2009). A4. 5 pp. Joint response produced by the Scottish Government Rural Directorate, Defra Animal Welfare Team, Welsh Assembly Government. Available for download at: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/welfare/pdf/response-090529.pdf>.

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### UK Government amends licensing requirements for dangerous wild animals

During the 1970s, the keeping of wild animals by private individuals became increasingly fashionable and, in response to growing concerns over public safety, the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 (DWAA) came into force. The DWAA has remained relatively unchanged since its inception in 1976 and the primary purpose of the Act remains the same: to protect society from risks posed by

dangerous wild animals. DWAA achieves this aim by requiring all private individuals to obtain a dangerous wild animal licence from their local authority before keeping an animal listed in the Schedule of the Act and through detailing a number of conditions that must be satisfied before a licence may be granted. One requirement under the Act is for a veterinary surgeon to inspect the premises where a dangerous animal is to be kept. The inspection is to ensure that the property is of a type suitable to house the animal securely and that granting a licence would not go against the public interest on the grounds of safety, nuisance or otherwise. Also assessed are basic provisions concerning the suitability of animal accommodation, including the requirement that adequate food, drink and bedding materials are provided.

Over the past few years, the Government has undertaken several consultation exercises reviewing the DWAA and licensing arrangements, the latest taking place in 2008, and a number of modifications to update the existing legislation have now been agreed. These include:

- Removal of the mandatory requirement that a veterinary inspection is carried out when a licence is due for renewal;
- Extension of the validity of a licence from one year to two years;
- A change from awarding licenses by calendar year to allowing them to come into force immediately upon being granted.

A further amendment, to remove animal welfare considerations from the DWAA had also been put forward during consultation but was rejected following strong opposition from welfare organisations and veterinary associations. It was considered that the basic husbandry requirements covered within the DWAA were still necessary to help safeguard the welfare of dangerous wild animals.

The Government hopes that the changes will reduce administrative burdens on local authorities and animal keepers and enable local authorities to better target inspections of premises where wild animals are kept. The above amendments will come into force in October 2009.

Further information explaining the Dangerous Wild Animals Act and the agreed amendments is available on the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs website: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/protection/dwaa/>.

**The Legislative Reform (Dangerous Wild Animals) (Licensing) Order (2009).** Draft statutory order laid before Parliament in June 2009. Available at: [http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2009/draft/ukdsi\\_9780111480984\\_en\\_1](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2009/draft/ukdsi_9780111480984_en_1).  
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### **EFSA reviews Three Rs principle for animals in toxicology food safety experiments**

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) provides independent scientific advice and communication on risks associated within the food chain. In this role, EFSA

Scientific Committees, Scientific Panels and other expert Working Groups carry out work and deliver Scientific Opinions and advice on all issues linked to food and feed safety, nutrition, animal health and welfare, plant protection and plant health.

The majority of risk assessment projects undertaken by EFSA require some form of experimental work to be carried out to ensure high levels of food and feed safety and part of this process involves toxicological testing on animals. EFSA is required to take account of animal health and welfare during its work and is keen to promote animal welfare where possible. The Authority has therefore published a Scientific Opinion that reviews how the organisation incorporates the Three Rs ethical framework (Replacement, Reduction, and Refinement of animals in laboratory testing) when considering humane endpoints for toxicology studies. Toxicological investigations carried out by EFSA, include: toxicokinetic studies; acute toxicity testing; skin irritation and corrosion testing; skin sensitisation testing; eye irritation testing; testing for acute systemic and local toxicity; genotoxicity testing; repeated dose toxicity and reproduction and developmental toxicity studies.

Existing methods of replacement, reduction and refinement are discussed for each toxicological endpoint and recent and future possibilities for further development are considered. According to Professor Vittotio Silano, Chair of the EFSA's Scientific Committee: "This opinion is a thorough review of the guiding principles on the use of animals for experimental purposes. It summarises possibilities for replacement, reduction and refinement of animal testing within the different areas of EFSA's activities. We hope it will help in further developing a proactive approach to animal welfare in its risk assessment activities based on sound scientific principles."

It is recommended by the Scientific Committee that EFSA reviews the organisation's progress in relation to alternatives to animal testing in three year's time.

**Existing Approaches Incorporating Replacement, Reduction and Refinement of Animal Testing: Applicability in Food and Feed Risk Assessment (2009).** Scientific Opinion of the Scientific Committee on request from EFSA. The EFSA Journal (2009) 1052, 1-77. Available for download at: [http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa\\_locale-1178620753812\\_1211902559349.htm](http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1211902559349.htm).

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### **European Food Safety Authority issues six reports on dairy cow welfare**

Over a number of years, dairy production systems have increased in intensification, and the breeding of dairy cows has been highly-g geared towards achieving maximum milk yields. There has been a growing concern that the welfare of dairy cows has been adversely affected by these cumulative changes. It is therefore timely that, in a response to a request by the European Commission, the Animal Health and