

health, business, government, and animal welfare. The concerns are centred, according to the information flyer about the initiative, on “emergence of food-borne diseases, antibiotic-resistant bacteria, air and water contamination from animal waste, shifts in social structure and the economy of many farming regions, as well as issues of animal health”. Animal welfare is not included explicitly in this list but, presumably, falls within the scope of the Commission’s inquiry as an aspect of animal health.

US National Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production 2006. Information is available from the Commission at 1900L Street, NW, Suite 312, Washington DC 20036, USA. www.ncifap.org.

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UK Farm Animal Welfare Council’s Strategic Plan 2006-2010

The UK’s Farm Animal Welfare Council has published its strategic plan outlining aims, objectives and work programme from 2006 to 2010. New topics for inquiry during this time are:

- economics of farm animal welfare (to start 2007).
- communication of knowledge about farm animal welfare (to start 2008).
- animal welfare and disease (to start 2009).

These topics were selected taking into account: rationale for the investigation (including numbers of animals involved and duration and extent of any suffering), legislation and regulation, and implementation of recommendations (including potential difficulties foreseen and solutions identified). The three topics selected were chosen by FAWC following a survey of stakeholders and discussions of short-listed topics with government ministers, chief veterinary officers and animal health and welfare stakeholder groups in England, Wales and Scotland.

Also, as part of FAWC’s strategy, three standing committees have been established to maintain watching briefs on welfare issues relating to ruminants; pigs, poultry and fish; and ethics, economics, education and regulation.

The estimated publication dates of topics currently under review by FAWC are: lamb castration and tail docking – Spring 2007; stockmanship and farm animal welfare – Spring 2007; and a long-term strategy for farm animal welfare - Winter 2007/Spring 2008.

UK Farm Animal Welfare Council’s Strategic Plan 2006-2010. October 2006. Farm Animal Welfare Council. 17 pages, A4. Available from the FAWC Secretariat, Area 511, 1a Page Street, London SW1P 4PQ and <http://www.fawc.org.uk>.

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Report of the ACLAM Task Force on Rodent Euthanasia

In response to growing concerns and controversy about rodent euthanasia techniques, the American College of

Laboratory Animal Medicine (ACLAM) set up a task force in 2002 to undertake a review. This group focused on three issues: foetal and neonatal euthanasia, the use of carbon dioxide, and the impact of euthanasia method on data collected from carcasses post mortem. The preliminary findings of the Task Force, based on a literature review, have been published (see details below) because: (i) the authors judged that “the information already accumulated would be of immediate utility to stakeholders” and (ii) as a consultation document to invite comment (to the ACLAM Board of Directors) from all interested parties en route to preparation of a more definitive version in due course. The publication is thus part information resource, part guidance and part consultation.

Regarding the use of carbon dioxide for rodent euthanasia, it is noted in the Report that: “The current peer reviewed literature does not establish consistent requirements for CO₂ euthanasia and or even provide a clear definition of what constitutes a humane death” and that, therefore, the acceptability of its use must re-evaluated if new data become available. It is concluded that using a “fill-rate of 20% of chamber volume per minute should be appropriate to ... fulfill the objectives of rapid unconsciousness with minimal distress to the animals”. The Report includes quite an extensive list of the effects of various euthanasia methods on a range of physiological (eg blood electrolyte and hormone levels) immunological (eg increased mitogen lymphocyte proliferation), and physical (eg tissue oedema, muscle degeneration) variables.

The aim of the Task Force is to produce a resource for laboratory animal veterinarians, ethical review committee members, regulatory bodies and research scientists.

Report of the ACLAM Task Force on Rodent Euthanasia. January 2006. James Artwohl, Patricia Brown, Brian Corning and Susan Stein. 8 pages A4. Published in the Journal of the American Association for Laboratory Animal Science Volume 45, pages 98-105.

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FAWC Report on Welfare Labelling

The FAWC Report on Welfare Labelling investigates issues associated with the labelling of livestock-based food products and considers the case for the welfare labelling of food and the effectiveness, benefits and practicalities of such. FAWC makes various recommendations about the desirability and implementation of such labelling, the most important of which is its support for the adoption of a European wide single, accredited, mandatory welfare labelling scheme for all animal-based products and development of standardised welfare indicators.

From the perspective of animal welfare, the aim of labelling is to provide consumers with clear information about the welfare provenance of each product and thus to allow them to make informed purchasing decisions, should they wish to do so. Differing attributes of products, such as taste, nutritional value and appearance inform purchasing decisions

and contribute to a perception of the foodstuffs 'quality'. These are weighed against the price of the product and the time and money expended in purchasing it. Increasingly, the animal welfare provenance of the food plays a role in these decisions but, whilst consumers have indicated that they are willing to purchase 'quality' products that contribute to better animal welfare, identifying and sourcing such products can be difficult and time consuming.

To assist in decisions, the EU is currently considering whether to implement a specific harmonised mandatory labelling regime for meat products based upon compliance with animal welfare standards and the report considers the case for welfare labelling and the implication of the adoption of either a voluntary or mandatory scheme, including legal provision for such under the World Trade Organisation's rules on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT). It notes that moves by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) to establish guidelines on international welfare standards may assist acceptance of welfare labelling under Article XX of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

FAWC sees that the adoption of any agreed labelling scheme for meat and other farm animal, that at least indicates which meet EU minimum standards for production, would have a beneficial effect on animal welfare and that there is potential to compensate farmers, under the 'Green Box' allowance, for the additional costs of producing to higher welfare standards. The report notes that a mandatory labelling scheme is, in practice, unlikely to produce any noticeable difference from a voluntary one to prescribed standards. The adoption of either, it believes, would achieve the result of allowing consumers to differentiate between products on welfare grounds. The report states that this is because retailers are always likely to label those of their products that meet the minimum EU standard, and that only those imported products, that don't comply with the EU standards, would go unlabelled. This in effect means that the welfare provenance of all livestock products is shown. In addition, until agreement is reached with the WTO, voluntary schemes have the additional advantage of being less likely to face legal challenge.

This said, whilst FAWC argues for the adoption of voluntary labelling systems in the short-term, from the principle of which would bring the greatest benefit to farm animal welfare a long-term goal of mandatory labelling is supported. The implications of such labelling from the consumer's and food supplier's standpoint and for the trade in animal products are then considered.

FAWC Report on Welfare Labelling. 2006. Farm Animal Welfare Council. Copies of this publication are available from: FAWC Secretariat, Area 511, 1a Page Street, London SW1P 4PQ UK. Tel: +44 (0)20 7904 6534. <http://www.fawc.org.uk>

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Humane Endpoints in Laboratory Animal Experimentation: An interactive CD ROM for education and training purposes.

Intended for use by those working with laboratory animals professionally, the aim of this CD is to reduce and prevent possible pain and suffering to animals during research investigations through the implementation of humane endpoints. This said, whilst the general principles it outlines on the implementation of these endpoints are generally applicable, the examples used and specific guidance given is aimed squarely at those working with those species which accounted for 72% of laboratory animal procedures in the European Union in 2002 – rats and mice.

A 'humane endpoint' is the criterion by which a decision is made to humanely kill an animal or to alleviate pain, or to discontinue a painful or distressing procedure. This CD contains information, divided into eight sections, aimed at better determining these. It features sections covering normal behaviour (including biological parameters and normal values) and pain and distress and its alleviation via analgesia (which includes two self test on kinetics and rheumatoid arthritis). General and specific clinical signs are covered – sub-divided respectively into general changes in bodyweight, physical signs, quantifiable parameters and deviant spontaneous behaviour and those specific to cancer and toxicity studies, vaccine quality control and infectious and autoimmune disease models. Other sections include those concerned with pathological examination; humane endpoints; implementation of humane endpoints and regulations and guidelines. Considered in the latter section are the European Union Directive 86/609/EEC, Council of Europe, NIH health research extension act (USA), OECD, FELASA and Canadian guidelines. Throughout the different sections photos and video clips, which previously existed, are used to support and illustrate the points the text is making and the technical and other terms referred to in the text are helpfully hyperlinked to a glossary.

In addition, to assist reader understanding, there is an interactive testing section that relates to areas covered within the different sections, and allows individuals to apply and reinforce their knowledge of clinical signs and humane endpoints. For those starting work with rats and mice for the first time, or who wish to determine the currency of their knowledge, this CD-Rom is likely to prove very useful.

Humane Endpoints in Laboratory Animal Experimentation: An interactive CD ROM for education and training purposes. 2006. Netherlands Association for Laboratory Animal Science (NVP). Copies are available from: Netherlands Centre Alternatives to Animal Use, Department of Animals, Science and Society, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Utrecht, PO Box 80166, NL-3508 TD Utrecht, The Netherlands. I.Boumans@vet.uu.nl

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