

## Reports and Comments

### Building a Better Future for England's Kept Animals

The England Implementation Group (EIG), an independent advisory body responsible for driving forward the implementation in England of the animal health and welfare strategy for Great Britain, has recently published its first annual report (details below). In 2004 the Animal Health and Welfare Strategy for Great Britain was published. The aim of this is to “develop a new partnership in which we can make a lasting and continuous improvement in the health and welfare of kept animals while protecting society, the economy and the environment from the effect of animal diseases”. According to the introduction in the EIG report, “more than anything else this strategy requires a fundamental shift in attitude by the main protagonists, including the livestock industry, other animal keepers, the veterinary profession, Government and its agencies, and the public, in order to ensure that those with the ability to effect change do so”. The EIG’s role, it goes on to say, is to investigate, stimulate and monitor this shift.

The report outlines the Group’s developing initiatives to set up ‘sector councils’ which will develop species-specific strategies and plans for farm animal health and welfare. An Annex is included which introduces a framework of indices, that is under development, with which to monitor progress against various aspects of the Animal Health and Welfare Strategy.

#### Building a Better Future for England's Kept Animals 2006.

The first annual report of the England Implementation Group (EIG) summarising progress being made in England on delivery of the animal health and welfare strategy for Great Britain. Available from EIG, Defra, Nobel House, Smith Square, London SW1P 3JR and at: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/ahws/eig/keydocs.htm>

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### Guidelines for Euthanasia of Non-Domestic animals

This useful review of euthanasia methods for non-domestic animals includes 24 short chapters in three parts. The first part covers general matters including criteria for humane euthanasia, physiology, personnel safety and regulatory matters (relating to the USA). In the second part there are taxon-specific recommendations for a wide range of groups including invertebrates, fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and ten groups of mammals (eg bats, marsupials, rodents and small mammals, marine mammals, hoofstock, carnivores and megavertebrates). The bulk of the third part of the booklet comprises an annotated table in which recommended methods, conditionally acceptable methods and methods that are generally unacceptable are listed for the various groups of animals covered.

These guidelines will be a helpful resource for those dealing with captive or free-living wild animals.

#### Guidelines for Euthanasia of Non-Domestic Animals 2006.

An official publication of the American Association of Zoo Veterinarians. 111 pages. Available from the American Association of Zoo Veterinarians. [www.aazv.org](http://www.aazv.org). Price \$75 plus postage (\$10 in USA, \$15 outside USA).

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### The Use of Non-Human Primates in Research

The central goal of the inquiry reported in the recently published, *The use of non-human primates in research* (see details below) was to examine the scientific case for the use of non-human primates for research, both near market and fundamental, into the treatment or prevention of disease in humans. The inquiry was undertaken by a panel of eight under the chairmanship of Sir David Weatherall.

It is noted in the report that it appears that some people find research involving animals more acceptable if it is related to a more immediate application than if it is of a more fundamental nature. The Group therefore considered this distinction but concluded that it is an outdated concept because modern biomedical research comprises a continuum from basic to applied studies. And that the use of non-human primates in research, regardless of where on the fundamental to applied continuum the research lies, should be judged on a case-by-case basis.

The report includes a review of the current position of medical-related research involving non-human primates, and into the scientific basis for the use of primates (including consideration as to whether this research could be replaced by work on humans), and then includes sections on particular research areas – infectious diseases, neuroscience and drug discovery and development. There are sections also on alternatives to use of non-human primates, welfare issues and ethics, followed by a discussion. Sixteen recommendations are listed, including: “Recommendation 1: There is a strong scientific basis for the carefully regulated use of non-human primates where there are no other means to address clearly defined questions of particular biological or medical importance” and “Recommendation 6: Retrospective reporting on the severity of procedures... should be introduced as soon as possible”. Amongst other recommendations are those which address improvements in continuous training of research workers in this field, acceleration of work towards improving and applying best-practice housing, and improving interactions between regulatory bodies and the scientific community.

In his covering letter, Sir David Weatherall draws attention to the report’s exhortation for all those involved to work

together in formulating a national strategic plan for the future of UK non-human primate research.

**The Use of Non-Human Primates in Research** December 2006. A working report sponsored by The Academy of Medical Sciences, the Medical Research Council, The Royal Society and the Wellcome Trust. 147 pages A4. ISBN No. 1-903401-13-5. Copies are available from the Working Group Chair, Sir David Weatherall FRS FMedSci, The Academy of Medical Sciences, 10 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AH. [www.acmedsci.ac.uk](http://www.acmedsci.ac.uk).

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### **New Animal Welfare Legislation for England and Wales**

The Animal Welfare Act 2006 came into effect in England and Wales on 6 April 2007. The Act is the result of 5 years of public consultation and debate about the nature of a new Act and intense examination of over 20 pieces of existing legislation.

Some of the preceding animal law was drafted in the 19th Century and this was thought to provide insufficient protection for animal welfare in today's society. The aim of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 was to simplify and modernise animal welfare legislation for farmed, companion and captive wild animals into a more coherent and functional piece of legislation. Some existing legislation will need to be repealed (such as the Abandonment of Animals Act 1960 and Protection of Animals [Amendment] Act 2000) and other Acts may be altered and brought into line with the 2006 Act (for example, the Welfare of Farmed Animals Act 2000).

It is hoped that the Animal Welfare Act 2006 will provide a flexible framework which, whilst laying out a set of core standards and principles, will also allow for further, supporting legislation to be introduced at a later date. Allowing secondary legislation and regulations to be developed over time will enable the Act to deal more comprehensively with specific areas and also to keep up-to-date with the continuing advances being made in animal welfare science and society's changing ethical considerations.

Additionally, it is intended that codes of practice, like those already in use in the farming industry, will be developed and implemented for non-farmed species, eg dogs, cats, horses and primates. It will not be a statutory requirement to adhere to codes of practice, but where an offence has occurred, failure to comply with the provisions of codes may be used to establish liability.

The Act itself is made up of 69 sections under headings such as: prevention of harm; promotion of welfare; licensing and registration; codes of practice; animals in distress; enforcement powers; prosecutions and post conviction powers.

Perhaps the most significant addition is the introduction of a 'duty of care' responsibility upon all owners and keepers

of vertebrate animals. It will now be necessary for individuals to understand basic husbandry requirements of the animals for which they are responsible and to take reasonable steps to ensure that their basic needs are met. Following on from this, failure to provide for the needs of an animal will now be considered an offence. The Act also gives police and local authorities greater powers and will allow enforcement agents to intervene much more quickly in situations where an animal's welfare is likely to be compromised; it will now not be necessary to wait for suffering to have actually occurred before action can be taken. Additionally, the Act has strengthened legislation relating to animal fighting and increased available penalties. For the most serious offences (cruelty and animal fighting) it will now be possible for courts to impose a prison sentence of up to 51 weeks and/or a maximum fine of £20,000 (as opposed to previous maximum sentences of 6 months imprisonment and £5,000 fines).

Further innovations include: increasing the minimum age at which a child may buy an animal from 12 to 16 years of age, and making it an offence for a pet to be given as a prize to a child younger than 16. Furthermore, under the new Act, all mutilations will be banned apart from those specifically exempted, such as neutering cats and dogs or ear tagging cattle.

The Animal Welfare Act 2006 represents the most major overhaul of animal welfare law in the United Kingdom in the past 100 years. There is now an emphasis not only on preventing unnecessary suffering through either cruelty or neglect, whether by a deliberate act or a failure to act, but also on promoting a higher standard of knowledge of animals and their care and welfare.

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### **New BVAWF Leaflet Helps Owners Understand Their Duty of Care**

The British Veterinary Association Animal Welfare Foundation (BVAWF) has recently produced a helpful leaflet entitled '*What makes my pet happy?*' The publication is designed with the new Animal Welfare Act in mind to help inform pet owners of their legal responsibility to take reasonable steps to ensure that the needs of an animal for which they are responsible are met. All animal owners now have a 'duty of care' towards their pets.

The leaflet approaches the issues of an owners 'duty of care' and of meeting an animals' needs by asking owners to consider whether their pet is happy. After explaining what is meant by happy, and why it is even important, it then goes on to describe what issues an owner should be aware of. In the same way as the Animal Welfare Act, the leaflet uses the *Five Freedoms* as a basis for assessing an animal's needs. After describing what the *Five Freedoms* are, it goes on to build a case-study around them to show how an owner can judge whether their pet, in this case a female parrot, is happy. A question, answer, action format is used where the