

Reports and Comments

Report of the Animal Procedures Committee for 2005

The Animal Procedures Committee is established by the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 in order to provide advice to the Secretary of State on the use of animals in scientific procedures. In 2005 the APC provided advice on project license applications referred to the committee, allegations made by the BUAV about the use of marmosets at Cambridge University, and on overseas primate-supply establishments. It has also worked on criteria for the approval of overseas breeding establishments seeking to supply primates to the UK and a review of methods of humane killing listed in Schedule 1 of the Act.

A major component of the Committee's work for 2005 has been a review of the process by which annual statistics on scientific procedures are collected and presented. The Committee's report contains 34 recommendations aimed at enhancing the transparency and accountability of the process. The working group charged with carrying out the work on behalf of the committee drew attention to the current lack of information in the statistics that is directly relevant to the harm caused to animals in scientific procedures, as well as on progress that has been made within the 3Rs. It recommended that consideration should be given to including a summary report on the work of the NC3Rs and that, wherever feasible, recent advances in this area should be correlated with the published statistical data. In recent years, the statistics have shown an upward trend in the numbers of animals used in experimental procedures, which seems to be largely due to the increase in research involving genetically modified animals. Some have argued that the trend is misleading, as many genetically modified animals show no apparent adverse effects, and not all are used in regulated procedures. The working group charged with addressing these issues was split on the solution. However, one option that received some support from the working group, was to continue accounting and reporting these animals but to exclude from the annual totals those which appeared to suffer no adverse effects. They considered that this would provide transparency whilst at the same time meeting concerns about inflation of the annual figures. A similar area of controversy is whether animals bred, but not used to in procedures, should be counted and reported in the statistics. Again there was a divergence of views within the working group but there was agreement that the issue should be kept under review.

With respect to achieving high standards of housing and care for animals used in research, the Committee identified a problem of perception between applicants to grant funding bodies, who thought that they could not always ask for money to improve animal care, and the funding bodies themselves who expect high standards for the work they fund, and would consider offering funding to achieve this. The APC has therefore suggested that the Home Office

should liaise with the funding bodies to encourage the funding bodies to clarify the standards that they expect for animal care, and to make clear what they would fund and what they would expect the institution to fund.

Currently only one species of cephalopod is protected under the Act, which to some has seemed either strange that other species are not included or anomalous. The committee considered 3 options that could be adopted with respect to the protection of cephalopods:

- A) Removal of *Octopus vulgaris* from the protection of the Act;
- B) Extension of the Act to those cephalopods most likely to have the ability to feel pain distress or lasting harm;
- C) Extension of the Act to protect all octopus, squid and cuttlefish.

There was no support in the Committee for option A, however it considered that options B and C both had merit. Option B would be an evidence-based approach to draw a line, whilst option C would be a pragmatic solution that would prevent the need to extend protection in a piecemeal fashion. The Minister noted that the Committee was split on the issue and responded to the committee's advice by saying that he did not believe it to be right to further extend the protection of the 1986 Act at present. Instead he was minded to defer a final decision until the European Commission completed its review of Directive 86/609/EEC. The Minister did, however, undertake to forward the evidence presented by the committee to the European Commission for information.

Report of the Animal Procedures Committee for 2005. October 2006. London: Published by The Stationery Office and available at the Committee's web site www.apc.org.uk

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UFAW

US National Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production

An independent National Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production has been established recently in the USA with funding from the Pew Charitable Trust to the John Hopkins School of Public Health. The Commission will conduct an assessment of the impact of the animal production industry on public health, the environment, farm communities and animal health.

About 10 billion farm animals are reared for slaughter each year in the USA. One of the questions posed in a flyer about this initiative is: "The efficient mass production system of raising farm animals provides consumers with affordable food, but could there be underlying costs that may prove to be more costly for Americans in the future?" The project will be carried out over two years.

The 19 commissioners come from the fields of veterinary medicine, animal science, economics, agriculture, public

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