

## EDITORIAL

This issue of the journal contains, for the first time, a Guest Editorial. This type of contribution, which is to be an occasional feature of the journal, is written at the invitation of the Editor-in-Chief and allows eminent outsiders to pass informed comment on current and controversial animal welfare problems. The first of these Guest Editorials is by David Bowles, the European Officer of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), and describes the background to and the present situation re the attempt by the European Community to ban the importation of furs obtained by the use of the leghold (gin) trap. He paints a somewhat gloomy picture of what happens when European animal welfare interests fall foul of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) obligations.

The main body of the journal contains seven refereed articles. The first by Stafleu, Grommers and Vorstenbosch is an account of how attempts to define animal welfare in operational terms, so that it can be measured, unfortunately often lead to a loss of the moral concepts that should be inherent in any true definition. The second is by Kirkwood and Sainsbury and is on the problems which may result from man's interference in the health and welfare of wild animals. It is suggested that while it may be desirable to intervene when there is a threat to the welfare of wild creatures which man is managing in some way ie under man's stewardship, it is not always justifiable on purely welfare grounds to treat sick or injured free-living wild animals.

Cooper and Nicol then present a paper on stereotypic behaviour in wild caught and laboratory bred bank voles. They came to the conclusion that the absence of stereotypic behaviour in some cage confined bank voles (and presumably in animals in general) should not be used as an indicator of good welfare, without taking into account the animal's previous experiences. In the case of the bank vole, early experience of a cage was the important factor for the development of stereotypic behaviour.

In their paper on handling, bruising and dehydration of cattle at the time of slaughter, Jarvis, Messer and Cockram make the point that cattle from markets and especially those which have travelled more than 64km (40 miles) to the slaughterhouse, would benefit from greater access to water and from improved methods of handling.

Environmental enrichment is the theme of the Williams, Waran, Carruthers and Young paper on the behaviour of cheetahs in a zoo enclosure. They found that the use of a moving bait device allowed cheetahs to perform 'natural-looking' hunting in captivity.

There has always been a conflict in the husbandry of laboratory rodents between the need to have simple, easy-to-clean cages and the need to provide the animals with as natural an environment as possible. Sherwin's paper on the preferences of laboratory mice to defecate in already soiled sites in their cage, demonstrates that the standard commercial mouse cage is not designed to allow the occupants to select discrete soiling sites. The welfare of the mice in these cages is therefore likely to have been compromised.

Man's building and developing activities frequently interfere with or destroy the habitats of wild creatures. In some cases it is possible to move the animals to a new site. The study reported by Brown and Cheeseman shows that it is indeed possible to translocate badgers, but they state that this technique must only be used as a last resort, not least due to the possibility of disease (tuberculosis) spread.

Following the refereed articles there are a number of *Reports and Comments* on selected items of animal welfare literature, the signed *Book Reviews*, the list of *Books Received* and two *Letters*. The first of these letters is a plea for a serious risk analysis and full economic audit, of the need (or otherwise) for the six-month rabies quarantine requirement on the importation of dogs and cats into the UK. It should perhaps be read in association with the review (p329) of *The BMA Guide to Rabies*. The second letter is on the whaling problem. It notes some of the whaling papers published in previous issues of *Animal Welfare* but goes on to argue that we should not just be discussing the humaneness or otherwise of the various killing methods, but should be striving to ban completely the harvesting of whales.

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