

# REPORTS AND COMMENTS

## **Animal health and welfare strategy for Great Britain**

Following a recent consultation on preparing an animal health and welfare strategy for Great Britain, the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Scottish Executive and Welsh Assembly Government have published an outline document that provides an early indication of the scope, key principles and core messages that the completed strategy document is likely to contain when it is published in Spring 2004. This provides an opportunity for those who wish to make further comments to do so.

The overall aim of the project, which has been developed in response to calls for a comprehensive and more strategic approach to animal health and welfare following the recent BSE and foot-and-mouth disease epidemics in the UK, is: “to improve the health and welfare of animals kept by man, and protect the public from animal disease”.

In the document the following are proposed as the ‘strategic outcomes’ against which the final strategy should be judged:

- a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities
- a new partnership approach
- promotion of animal health and welfare: prevention better than cure
- a clearer understanding of costs and benefits of animal health and welfare
- effective delivery and enforcement

In pursuit of this, 16 new initiatives are proposed (from [i]: development of disease profiles on which to base the assessment, prioritisation and resolution of animal health and welfare problems, through to [xvi]: developing indicators and targets for success). Much of the report concerns the background and rationale for these initiatives. The report includes sections entitled: The vision for the future; Roles and responsibilities; Where are we now?; A new approach; and Measuring success.

Some might find the quotes scattered through the text (eg “children are the consumers of the future”) rather facile, uninformative and a distraction from analysis of the more substantive matter. A more important criticism is that the overall aim makes no mention of the need to protect the health and welfare of wild fauna from anthropogenic threats. Government certainly has an important part to play in this (and already plays an important part) and so the basis for this omission is unclear.

The review and strategy development process of which this is a part is a welcome and valuable exercise.

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*Outline of an animal health and welfare strategy for Great Britain* (July 2003) Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Scottish Executive and Welsh Assembly Government. 64 pp A4. Published by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Product code PB 8481. Available, free of charge, from DEFRA Publications, Admail 6000, London SW1A 2XX and on the DEFRA website: [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)

## **New Zealand Code of Welfare for Broiler Chickens**

On 1 January 2000 the New Zealand Animal Welfare Act 1999 came into force; the Act established, in general terms, the fundamental obligations relating to the care of animals. The detail relating to the Act is found in codes of welfare which set out minimum standards and recommendations concerning all aspects of the care of animals.

The codes provide for the physical, health, and behavioural needs of animals. These needs include proper and sufficient food and water, adequate shelter, opportunity to display normal patterns of behaviour, physical handling in a manner which minimises the likelihood of