

REPORTS AND COMMENTS

Genetic manipulation of animals

There is much concern nowadays over the possible animal welfare problems which may result from the application of non-classical biotechnology and especially genetic engineering to domesticated animals. The Dutch Society for the Protection of Animals has produced a short informative booklet (and translated it into English), arguing the case against the use of genetic manipulation for increasing production from farm animals. There are clear descriptions of the commonly employed techniques and their use is assessed against the general tendency in modern agriculture to force the maximum yield – whether it be of milk, eggs or meat – out of our farm stock.

The general tone of the booklet is that production animals should be kept in conditions that allow them to behave naturally and that genetic manipulation for the purpose of increasing their productivity should be stopped. The text points out that this somewhat negative approach will inevitably lead to a fall in animal production and a rise in the price of the final products to the consumer. It is suggested that it is our moral duty as human beings to pay this price.

No to Genethic Manipulation of Animals Produced and published by the Dutch Society for the Protection of Animals: The Hague (1993). 20pp. Paperback. Obtainable free of charge for 1–10 copies from the publishers, Bankastraet 100, 2585 ES Den Haag, The Netherlands.

Transport of live animals

Large numbers of farm animals are exported live from the United Kingdom (UK) for slaughter in mainland Europe. It has always been a puzzle to many people as to why there should be such a trade. It is cheaper to transport carcasses than live animals; carcasses don't bruise or die during the journey; a carcass trade does not incur the wrath of the animal welfarists. Why then does the trade persist?

In an attempt to find out some of the answers the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) commissioned Mr M J Sloyan of the Meat and Livestock Commission to look into the economic factors underlying the current UK export of live sheep and cattle for purposes other than breeding. *'Hook Versus Hoof'* is an account of his findings. It concentrates mainly on sheep export – the most rapidly expanding section of the trade – but does give some coverage to the cattle situation.

It appears that both sheep and cattle exports are largely the consequence of the interaction of several complex market forces. The report clearly explains the economic background to the live animal export trade. It does not offer any ready suggestions as to how this trade may be reduced or stopped but it does give the reader an understanding of the importance of the underlying economic factors. Understanding of a welfare problem is often the crucial forerunner to any real progress towards the solving of that problem.

The RSPCA is to be congratulated on commissioning and publishing this important report.

Hook Versus Hoof: the Drive Behind the Increasing Shipment of Live Lambs to the Continent Produced and published by the RSPCA: Horsham (1993). 18pp. Paperback. Single copies obtainable free of charge from the Farm Animals Department, RSPCA, Causeway, Horsham, West Sussex RH12 1HG, UK.