

EDITORIAL

With this issue, *Animal Welfare* enters its fifth year. The format has not changed since the journal was inaugurated in 1992: the material published is still essentially refereed scientific/technical articles and signed book reviews. There has, however, recently been an increase in the number of pages per issue. This enlargement not only means that the journal is better 'value for money', it is becoming necessary now that *Animal Welfare* is attracting a rising number of quality manuscripts.

The increase in size of the publication is being linked to a change in subscription charge structure. Individual annual subscriptions have been kept at £50 (£40 for UFAW members) but an institutional subscription rate of £70 has been introduced from 1996. Institutions which act quickly ie by the end of February do, however, have the opportunity to renew their 1996 subscriptions at 1995 prices.

Eight papers are included in volume 5(1). The first is by Bennett and considers people's willingness to pay for farm animal welfare. The paper describes the application of a technique, contingent valuation, to estimate in money terms the benefit that people perceive to be associated with specific measures to improve welfare. This is done by eliciting their willingness to pay extra for specified welfare friendly products.

There follows a contribution from Veasey, Waran and Young on using the differences between the behaviour of animals kept under zoo conditions and the behaviours shown by the same species in the wild, as a comment on the welfare of the zoo-kept animals. It is commonly assumed and perhaps correctly, that animals suffer if they cannot perform the behaviours seen in the wild. The Veasey *et al* study, however, suggests that behavioural differences used alone are probably not an objective assessment of animal welfare. A further study on the behaviour of wild animals kept in zoo-like conditions is described in Kessel and Brent's article on space utilization by captive-born baboons, after their environment had been enriched with suspended ladders and barrels. These devices changed the way in which they used the space: they spent much time on the hanging objects and their general behaviour was closer to that observed in the wild.

The third paper is by Wechsler and is an account of the use, on a commercial farm, of a modified version of the alternative method of rearing and fattening pigs (Family Pen System) originally designed and developed by Stolba and Wood-Gush. In this system piglets and fatteners grow up in groups that correspond to the normal social organization of the domesticated pig. It seems from this trial that the improved Family Pen System is indeed practicable on a commercial basis.

There is much interest in the welfare aspects of animal stress. Parrott, Lloyd and Goode in their paper on stress hormone responses of sheep to food and water deprivation show, somewhat surprisingly, that these animals can be deprived of both of these together for up to 48 hours and still not show signs of stress. Providing food but depriving the sheep of water for this period, however, was detrimental!

The paper by Best on the location of harpoon wounds on minke whales is based on observations made during commercial whaling operations in the 1978/79 Antarctic season. This material was originally brought forward in response to a 1992 request from the Humane Killing Working Group of the International Whaling Commission for information on the

areas of the body on which harpoon strikes were made. The data shows how unlikely it is that anything like humane killing of these large active creatures can be carried out under the practicalities of open sea conditions. This study relates to an earlier whaling paper by Kestin in *Animal Welfare* 4(1).

To improve animal welfare it is important to know what matters to an animal. Skelton, Waran and Young in their paper describe how they attempted to assess the motivation of lizards to seek shelter, by observing the time taken for these animals to run an alleyway to reach sand in which they could hide. It does seem that this technique might be developed into a method of 'asking' these animals what they consider desirable or distressing in their environment.

The final paper is the second-part of a contribution by Raj and Gregory (the first half was included in volume 4(4)) on the welfare implications of the gas stunning of pigs. This particular piece is on the stress of induction of the gas stun. The results indicate that exposure to 2 per cent oxygen in argon induced minimal respiratory distress and could be a very humane way to stun pigs.

There are, as usual, several *Reports and Comments*, a number of signed *Book Reviews*, a list of *Books Received*. There is also a letter from a veterinary surgeon suggesting that the use of alternative remedies (acupuncture, homeopathy etc) is not only effective, but could also have an indirect animal welfare benefit in that animals are not used to prove the safety or efficacy of most of the products and techniques.

This enlarged issue of the journal contains papers on the farmed species, on wild creatures and on zoo animals. The themes range from care and management to hunting and slaughter. All this is an indication of the type and variety of material which is considered as being of serious animal welfare interest and, if of substance, is eligible for publication in *Animal Welfare*.

February 1996

Roger Ewbank
Editor-in-Chief