

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.

J Kirkwood

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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>.

J Kirkwood

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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.

J Kirkwood

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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