

Sheep for slaughter and calves for rearing in veal systems are, quite rightly, dealt with as separate issues. The larger part of the report is given over to calf exports and explores the reasons why calves are exported, the options for their use should exports cease (including expansion of British veal production), market and policy implications, and areas for action. The report looks at the potential effect should calf exports continue at their present rate, halve or cease altogether. Any reduction, it is concluded, will lead to an increased amount of poorer quality beef on the market. This will in turn cause lower prices and possibly undermine farmers' confidence to continue in beef production.

A significant reduction in sheep exports is examined in the same way, with a useful background section which explains clearly the different reasons why 20 per cent of UK sheep exports are in the form of live animals. It is emphasized that the number of sheep exported was on the decline before the ferry ban, and assumes that live sheep exports will fall by 70 per cent compared with the 1993 high of 1.9 million head. Areas for action which, it is suggested, could help to increase carcass exports as live animal exports decline, include improving the eating quality of the meat, maximizing the value of cuts and promoting the image of British Quality Lamb.

Although the benefits of reduced live exports for UK abattoirs (through increased throughput), and to consumers (through decreased price) are acknowledged, these are predicted to be short-term. The overall conclusion is that a reduction or cessation of live exports would lead to a fall in prices which could adversely affect farm incomes. This would be especially true in upland areas, where farmers are almost entirely dependent on livestock production. To counter this fall in income, measures are proposed which include safeguarding quality, developing new products, securing and expanding meat exports and amending agricultural policy.

This is a useful publication which explains very clearly the complex issue of live exports. For the majority of people this subject has long been oversimplified by the media and others. Its publication is also encouraging from the point of view that the industry has reacted quickly to the situation and is seriously looking at viable alternatives for the future, rather than burying its head in the sand and hoping that 'Middle England' will go back to its lawns and borders now that summer is here once again. However, the price of the publication makes one wonder who could *afford* to have this information at hand.

***UK Live Animal Exports: Future Options.*** Produced and published by the Meat and Livestock Commission: Milton Keynes (1995). 32pp. Paperback. Obtainable from the publishers, PO Box 44, Winterhill House, Snowdon Drive, Milton Keynes MK6 1AX, UK (ISBN 0 904650 43 X). Price £20.

### **Animal rights issues**

*Independence*, the education publishers based in Cambridge (UK), have produced a number of booklets which offer up-to-date information on important issues in society. These booklets are aimed at GCSE and A level students (14 to 18-year-olds) and each is essentially a collection of previously published information ie leaflets, press-releases and pieces from newspapers and magazines. They have been selectively gathered together with the intent of providing the reader with a balanced view of the subject.

It can be argued that animal experimentation and field (blood) sports – the subject of *Independence's Do Animal Have Rights?* booklet – are special cases in animal welfare in that

both are examples of man's use of animals where it is known that many of the animals are going to suffer pain and/or death. Animal experimentation and field sports certainly generate extreme views and these are mirrored in some of the pieces printed in the booklet. Some people will maintain that the selection is biased and in effect presents a one-sided case for a particular view. The accusation is perhaps inevitable in any publication of this sort.

The booklet will certainly provide background information and at times ammunition for class discussion. In the hands of well-informed teachers, it should prove a valuable aid in encouraging students to seriously consider the social and ethical issues involved in the use of animals in biomedical research and field (blood) sports.

Another booklet in the series, *The Vegetarian Choice*, was reviewed in *Animal Welfare* 4 (1995): 155.

*Do Animals Have Rights?* Edited by Craig Donnellan (1995). Independence: Cambridge. 40pp. Paperback. Obtainable from the publishers, PO Box 295, Cambridge CB1 3XP, UK (ISBN 1 872995 50 0). Price £5.95.

### **Welfare labelling of food**

It is widely held that one way to quickly improve the welfare of at least some farm animals is to label food on display in the shops with animal welfare criteria. This usually means identifying to the customer, products which have been produced in welfare friendly husbandry systems. The discerning and welfare oriented consumer can then purchase – often at an increased cost – the welfare friendly food and in effect discriminate against the non-welfare friendly products. Some critics have cynically suggested that this just allows the affluent middle classes to indulge in their fantasies of how animal agriculture ought to be. Practical experience with the somewhat flawed, free-range egg labelling system in the UK has suggested that the share of the market is only some 15–20 per cent, and even this low figure tends to fall when hard economic times hit the consumer.

The World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) has recently brought out a most timely and instructive report on the whole complex subject of animal welfare criteria for the labelling of food. The report examines labelling schemes in France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK; it discusses the relevant Economic Union (EU) legislation and it highlights the difficulties of welfare labelling in relation to 'free trade'. There is a summary of recommendations for the future development of this important welfare tool.

*Food Labelling Schemes with Animal Welfare Criteria*. Produced and published by the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA): London (1995). 37pp report. Obtainable from WSPA, 2 Langley Street, London SW8 1TJ, UK. Price £5.

### **Animal experimentation**

Criticisms of the use of animals in biomedical research come from many different groups in society. Particular attention has to be paid to these criticisms if they are put forward by physicians, research scientists and health workers. These are the very people who should have well-informed views about the value of animal experimentation. They should be the ones able to answer the question: does the knowledge so gained really help in reducing human and/or animal suffering?