

The authors acknowledged that the results might, in part, be related to the methodology of the study (the committees showed a bias toward harsher second opinions), but this effect did not fully account for the results. As the authors state, others have noted that “the regulatory structure of human and animal research depends upon the ability of IACUCs to make reliable judgements about which research to approve and which to disapprove”. Their results suggest that there may be low inter-committee agreement and they suggest that enhanced reviewer training and standardisation of the review process may be the way forward.

**Plous S and Herzog H** 2001 Reliability of protocol reviews for animal research. *Science* 293: 608-609

### **Report of the UK Animal Procedures Committee for 2000**

The function of the Animal Procedures Committee (APC) in the UK is to provide the Home Secretary — the government minister responsible — with independent advice about the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 and his functions under it. The members are experts from a wide variety of backgrounds. The Committee can set its own agenda but must also deal with questions referred to it by the Home Secretary, and the law requires that, in its deliberations, it must take account both of the legitimate requirements of science and industry and of the protection of animals against avoidable suffering. The work of the APC and its sub-committees during the year 2000 is outlined in the Report published on 19 July 2001 (see details below).

The Research and Alternatives subcommittee advises the Home Office about the allocation of grants to sponsor scientific work on the three Rs (replacement, reduction and refinement) and to develop and promote awareness and use of alternatives to animal procedures. The projects currently being supported are listed. The budget made available (£265,500) was a modest increase on that of the previous year. The Committee “strongly believes that the Government should not only maintain, but also substantially increase its financial support for these initiatives”. The Education and Training sub-Committee’s work was largely concerned with training for Named Care and Welfare Officers (NACWOs). A draft syllabus for a proposed compulsory introductory course for NACWOs is given in one of the Appendices. In December 2000, the Cost Benefit Working Group issued a public consultation paper. One of the aims of this Working Group is to produce an authoritative statement on the validity of animal experiments and to explore how the present cost-benefit assessment process might be improved. The Group hopes to produce its report in 2001.

Among the other issues considered by the APC during 2000 were ‘openness’ in the conduct and administration of research using animals (the balance of the advantages for better public understanding against constraints of personal security and commercial confidentiality), the use of primates in research, and solutions to the problem of over-production of animals for use in research.

**Report of the Animal Procedures Committee for 2000** (July 2001). Published by The Stationery Office Ltd, London, UK. 41 pp. A4 paperback. Available from The Publications Centre, PO Box 29, Norwich NR3 1GN, UK. E-mail: [book.orders@theso.co.uk](mailto:book.orders@theso.co.uk). Price £8.70.

### **The state of animal protection in North America and worldwide 2001**

‘*The State of the Animals 2001*’ (see details below) examines the way in which the welfare of animals has changed during the last 50 years. The editors, Deborah Salem, Director of the Humane Society Press, and Andrew Rowan, Senior Vice President for Research, Education and International Issues at the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), have gathered together a collection of 13 essays that provide a mine of information on animal welfare issues. Chapter