The Report concludes with 16 recommendations including:

• Research is needed to define and cater for physical and behavioural needs.

• Better surveillance of welfare.

• Barren raised cages should not be used (if industry does not phase them out 'then Government should act to ban them within 5 years of the publication of this report').

• Farmers purchasing hatching eggs or day olds from abroad should satisfy themselves that the health and welfare of breeding stock meet the standards required in Great Britain.

Finally FAWC includes a reminder to itself for when next formulating a work plan, to consider undertaking a major investigation into the welfare of farmed gamebirds.

Opinion on the Welfare of Farmed Gamebirds November 2008. Farm Animal Welfare Council. A4. 15 pages. Copies available from FAWC, Area 5A, 9 Millbank, c/o Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London SW1P 3JR and available online at: www.fawc.org.uk

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Assessing the humaneness of pest animal control methods

The New South Wales Department of Primary Industries' Vertebrate Pest Research Unit, have developed a model, under the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy, for assessing the relative humaneness of pest animal control methods (see details below). Every year hundreds of thousands of pest animals (including mice, rats, foxes, cats, birds, kangaroos, goats and pigs) are "trapped, poisoned, shot or otherwise destroyed" in Australia in defence of agriculture and the environment. The rationale for this report is that although society generally finds the control of pest species to be acceptable, providing it is done humanely and with justification, "many of the methods used for control of pest animals in Australia are far from being humane", and that, in pursuit of improvements, there is a need for process to enable identification of the most humane methods.

This report includes quite an extensive review of methods of animal welfare assessment and looks specifically at methods that have been advocated for laboratory animals, production animals and free-living wild animals. From this it goes on to explain the rationale for the method proposed.

Very briefly, the proposed method looks at the welfare impact of each pest control method, in relation to five domains. The first five domains address physical aspects: water and food deprivation; environmental challenge; injury, disease and functional impairment; and behavioural, interactive restriction. The fifth component is an assessment of how the animal experiences these physical challenges, in terms of subjective feelings, including anxiety, fear, pain, distress, hunger and thirst. The latter domain represents an overall welfare assessment (from the animals' viewpoint) based on the other four assessments. Welfare impact is categorised as none, mild, moderate, severe or extreme, for each of these domains. In addition, the welfare of the killing method used is specifically assessed and the score for this and for the previous part of the assessment are combined to give an overall score for humaneness. The method enables comparisons between, that is, assessments of the relative humaneness of, various methods.

The Report concludes that it is possible to assess humaneness: "So, in response to the question: 'can we achieve overall assessment of humaneness of pest animal control methods?' The answer is yes, but with some limitations since the information we need to make such an assessment is not always going to be objective- or science-based". However, it is a little disappointing to find that, although there is a section that takes the reader through, step-by-step, showing clearly how the method could be used, the Report does not include any actual worked examples or conclusions made, using the proposed methodology, of the relative humaneness of currently used methods.

A model for assessing the relative humaneness of pest animal control methods 2008. A4. 45 pp (ISBN 978-0-646-50357-8). By Sharp T and Saunders G, Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Canberra, New South Wales, Australia. Available at http://www.daff.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/929888/humaneness-pest-animals.pdf.

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Proposed revised European Directive on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes

Eight years after the European Commission announced its plans to revise Council Directive 86/609EEC "on the approximation of laws, regulations and administrative provisions of the Member States regarding the protection of animals used for experimental and other scientific purposes" the European Commission adopted a draft on November 5 and published it as a formal proposal. The text will now go through the European Co-decision procedure by which the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers agree a final version. The EC requires that Directives should be implemented in national legislation so the proposals for a new Directive will be looked at with interest by those involved in animal research its regulation and laboratory animal welfare.

The preamble to the proposed Directive states that the revision was necessary "to enhance the protection of animals and also to redress the current situation where some states had implemented considerably more rigorous national legislation than was required by the Directive". The UK was certainly one of those countries and the proposed new Directive bears some striking similarities to existing UK legislation. Nonetheless, it is not identical and is still, very clearly, a draft that requires tidying up. This is particularly evident in a number of discrepancies between the explanatory memorandum at the start of the document, and the actual Articles of the Directive.

The new proposals, including memorandum and tables, total ninety pages so it is only possible to draw attention to

the more notable changes here. As one would expect, the New Directive pays due regard to Russell and Burch's Three Rs principles. They are mentioned both in the memorandum, as the basis for the new measures, and in the first Article of the Directive. The scope of species and developmental stages covered by the proposed Directive has been broadened. The previous Directive covered any live non-human vertebrate, including free-living larval and/or reproducing larval forms, but excluding foetal or embryonic forms. The new proposals extend this coverage to vertebrates including independently-feeding larval forms and embryonic or foetal forms from the last third of their normal development, as well as independently feeding cyclostomes, cephalopods and decapods.

Non-human primates receive some special attention. In the proposal, the use of non-human primates is permitted only for research on medical conditions with a substantial impact on humans (life-threatening or debilitating clinical conditions) or for research aimed at the preservation of the primate species. Research using great apes is allowed for such research where there is no alternative, but it requires a Commission decision. The proposed Directive also requires a move towards the use of F2 non-human primates; that is, animals that come from parents who were themselves born in captivity. In the case of macaques this must come into effect within seven years after transposition of the Directive.

The new Directive requires that member states should each designate a reference laboratory for the validation of alternative methods replacing, reducing and refining the use of animals within a year of the Directive entering into force. The Directive also requires that establishments should each have their own independent ethical review body and that each member state should set up a national animal welfare and ethics committee. Scientists may be concerned that project authorisation is for only 4 years. Currently many projects run for 5 years and the reduction will lead to an increased burden on both scientists and regulators with little apparent welfare benefit.

A number of issues remain to be clarified, not least the classification of severity of procedures. The proposal includes a category of 'up to mild' which would appear to have no lower limit. Moreover, the definitions of the three severity categories have yet to be decided. Article 15 states that the Commission should develop criteria, with stakeholder input, using existing severity classification schemes in place in Member States as well as those promoted by international organisations as the basis. Hence, the Directive could come into force with definitions of severity still undecided, and it is not clear how member states could implement such legislation. Even more disturbing is that Article 2 states that the Directive does not cover practices that are not invasive. If this Article is not corrected, procedures leading to mental states of suffering, as a result of hunger, thirst, noise, or fear would be unregulated. However, it does seem that this was not the intention of the drafters as the definition of procedures in Article 3 uses the terms: pain, suffering, distress, or lasting harm, which would include such procedures. It seems likely that confusions such as these will be tidied up during the next stages of the Directive's progress through the EU legislative process.

However, there are more serious concerns with the draft. The first of these relates to the tables and standards concerning care and accommodation. These tables are based on the recommendations adopted by the Commission in June 2007, which were in turn based on the revised Appendix A to the Council of Europe Convention ETS123. Unfortunately, the proposed Directive's care and accommodation tables and standards omit reference to most of the species-specific text, which was in both prior documents. This omission could result in a much-reduced quality of care. For example, the proposed tables seem to permit dogs to be housed, under procedure, singly in half the space normally required to house a pair. However, the text of the revised Appendix A to the Convention and of the June 2007 Commission recommendations make it very clear that pair housing is expected to be the norm and that separation should not be for more than four hours per day. Further concerns include Article 2, which appears to exclude clinical veterinary trials and possibly rodenticide trials. Such research should be regulated. Article 14.5 suggests that post-operative analgesia is only required where animals may experience considerable pain. Clearly, there are many situations when analgesia can and should be given before animals experience considerable suffering. Article 16 only permits reuse where the procedures are up to mild. Dependant on the definition of 'up to mild', this article could result in an unnecessary increase in the numbers of animals used, for example in the case of long-term surgical models.

It is clear that there is much work to be done and there will be many interested groups lobbying for various changes so the final form of the new Directive is still unclear. However, as long as the flaws can be satisfactorily resolved, and as long as the member nations equally implement the revised Directive, then it could result in higher welfare standards across the European Union. Providing that does not result in the export of research to non EU countries, then animals used in research should be better off.

Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Protection of Animals used for Scientific Purposes November 2008. Commission of the European Communities. A4. 90 pages. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/chemicals/lab_animals/home_en.htm

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Animal welfare in the UK 2007: RSPCA measures annual change

For the third year running, the UK's Royal Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) has published its review of the status of animal welfare in the UK. The aim of this Report is to track year-on-year change in areas that the Charity believes are of high animal welfare importance. Thirty-three areas are covered in one of five categories: generic, farm animal, pet animal, research animals and wildlife. Issues included range between those with an obvious impact on animal welfare, such as piglet mortality

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