

It is suggested that these problems may be in part due to the complexity, ambiguity and inconsistency of the veterinary regulations, in part due to lack of funds to provide appropriate expertise at border posts, and in part due to some member states assigning the issue a low priority.

A number of recommendations are made. Among these are that all ports of entry for CITES animals are checked to ensure the facilities for proper veterinary checks, to restrict imports to those from specified countries only, and to perform a thorough risk analysis of the possibility of introduction of infections.

The Veterinary Control in the European Union of Imported Pet Birds and Mammals of CITES and non-CITES Species. 2000. D W Van Liere and N Teesing. Published by Nederlandse Vereniging tot Bescherming van Dieren. ISBN 90-70272-59-8. 48pp. Paperback. Available from the publishers, Postbus 85980, 2508 CR Den Haag, The Netherlands.

Broiler Leg Health

In 1992 the UK Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC) published a report on the welfare of broilers. In this, FAWC concluded that the prevalence of leg problems was unacceptable and considered that it was the industry's responsibility to make significant improvements. In response, the British Chicken Association established a wide-scale survey to monitor improvements in gait scores; it was hoped that the necessary improvements would be achieved through a range of genetic, nutritional, housing and management changes. The study was completed in June 2000 and representatives of the industry presented their findings to FAWC the next month.

FAWC gave credit to the industry *'for accepting its central role in improving broiler welfare'* but was unimpressed by the results. In a letter to the Parliamentary Secretary for the Ministry of Agriculture (which was published at the FAWC website in December 2000), the Chairman expressed her disappointment with the lack of progress, stating that the survey findings *'provide no convincing evidence that measurable improvements in leg health have been achieved over the seven years of the study'*. In view of this, FAWC has urged the Government to initiate a definitive study on the current state of leg health in UK broilers. It is recommended that this study should, in addition to using existing methods for measuring leg problems, include abattoir examination of leg pathology.

FAWC also calls for rigorous application of welfare codes through inspections and for effective enforcement of legislation. It is hoped that this might encourage producers to slaughter birds a little earlier which would significantly reduce the incidence of leg problems. The letter continues: *'Retailers must also be made fully aware of the welfare implications of their demand for birds at the current marketed weights and encouraged to seek the benefits they could claim from providing consumers with slightly younger/lighter birds'*. The letter concludes by reinforcing the concerns first expressed in 1992 about the welfare problems of lameness in broilers. In response to this firm call for action, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has confirmed that it will be positively addressing the enforcement of welfare codes and legislation and has also made a proposal to conduct a major study aimed at identifying the causes of leg weakness problems.

Broiler Leg Health. December 2000. An open letter, dated 25th October 2000, from Judy MacArthur Clark, Chairman of the Farm Animal Welfare Council to Mr Elliot Morley, Parliamentary Secretary UK Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. 4pp. Available at www.maff.gov.uk/animalh/welfare/fawc.