Terms Of Reference

The Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC) is an independent advisory body established by Government in 1979.

Its terms of reference are to keep under review the welfare of farm animals on agricultural land, at market, in transit and at place of slaughter; and to advise Ministers in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales, of any legislative or other changes that may be necessary.

The Council can:

- investigate any topic falling within this remit
- communicate freely with outside bodies, the European Commission and the public
- publish its advice independently

Website: www.fawc.org.uk

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Readers of this Review will get an impression of the significant business which has occupied FAWC during the past twelve months. Significant not only in the sheer volume of work, but also in the increasing importance of animal welfare in the eyes of Government and the public.

The increasing importance of welfare is signalled in the topics on which we have provided our advice. The Animal Health & Welfare Strategy marks a new direction for Government in its relationship not only with the farming industry but also with consumers, retailers, and all who have an interest in food production. FAWC’s key concern has been that, whilst the early versions of the Strategy addressed issues of animal health quite effectively, there was no realistic appreciation of the importance of animal welfare. During this year; therefore, we have provided advice essential to making this Strategy truly address the vision of animal welfare alongside animal health. We have reproduced sections of some of our detailed submissions elsewhere in this Review.

Similar concerns have arisen in relation to the Strategy for enhancing Veterinary Surveillance. FAWC was an early supporter of improved veterinary health surveillance and we recognised the need for this in our 2002 Report on Foot and Mouth Disease. However we also recognise the equal importance of welfare surveillance. It is inarguable that disease can be the cause of very great suffering in animals. However there are many other, non-disease related, causes of poor welfare, sometimes associated with selective breeding, which result in considerable suffering of large numbers of animals. Surveillance for such problems is essential to their early recognition and thus prevention. We accept the need for prioritisation in surveillance. However priorities for welfare surveillance must be considered alongside those of endemic and exotic disease surveillance.

Many of the issues related to welfare surveillance are also considered in our new Report on the Welfare Implications of Animal Breeding and Breeding Technologies in Commercial Agriculture. In this Report we make a key recommendation that a Standing Committee be established within the framework of FAWC to consider the welfare and ethical questions raised by such developments in commercial agriculture. This will represent a significant workload for such a Committee and thus cannot readily be absorbed within FAWC’s existing capacity. Nevertheless, we recognise that there is widespread public concern about issues related to genetic manipulation, as well as conventional selective breeding, and we believe this Committee will go a long way towards addressing that concern.

A further major tranche of advice provided by FAWC during the period of this Review was our Report on the Welfare of Red Meat Animals at Slaughter published in June 2003. This report attracted considerable media attention but, regrettably, only for its comments regarding stunning prior to slaughter. I hope therefore that all those with an interest in this subject will now take time to read this report thoroughly and to act upon the richness of its many recommendations. In particular, the Government’s initial consultation on our report was published in April 2004 and deserves thoughtful response.

A further and exciting, development during this last year has been the growing recognition by the Office International des Epizooties (OIE) that welfare is a critical international issue meriting consideration alongside its more traditional area of management of epizootic disease. This culminated in an international conference in Paris in February 2004 where, representing FAWC, I was most impressed by the range of nations represented as well as the harmony of views. It is clear that FAWC’s advice, primarily through its published reports, is valued widely and impacts on welfare standards throughout the world. I am very encouraged by this OIE initiative which I believe has the potential to advance animal welfare globally.

FAWC, as is normal for all publicly funded bodies, has recently undergone an audit of all its operations, carried out on behalf of Defra. Many of you contributed evidence to the consultants and the resulting report was extremely positive and has led to an increase in the staffing of the FAWC Secretariat. This is particularly welcome since, looking forward to the coming twelve months, I see an impressive workload in front of the Council. We have plans to produce major reports on Markets and Other Gatherings and on Farm Assurance in addition to the Breeding Technologies report already mentioned. Also we will report on Stockmanship as it relates to welfare, as well as producing short reports on mutilations in sheep and on Welfare Labelling. This last will build on the philosophy we have advocated for several years that the interest of many consumers is increasingly to know the welfare provenance of the food they eat. We are looking at a range of issues which relate to how this message can be conveyed through effective labelling. A consultation exercise will be held over the summer.

In drawing this message to a conclusion, I would like to express my personal thanks to all the members of Council, and many others, who have given so generously of their time during this past twelve months. Whilst FAWC bases its recommendations on sound science wherever this is available, we also lean heavily on the wisdom and experience of our membership, and those we consult, whose interests cover such a wide range of fields associated with farm animal welfare. I am most grateful to all who have guided and contributed to our advice.

Judy MacArthur Clark
May 2004
Current Membership (May 2004)

**Chairwoman**
Dr Judy MacArthur Clark, veterinary surgeon and adviser on biomedical science and ethics. Veterinary Director of BioZone Ltd. Past-President and currently a member of the Council of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and a former member of the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council.

**Members**

- **Ian Baker**, senior partner in the farm animal department of a large multidisciplinary veterinary practice in Buckinghamshire and past-President of the British Cattle Veterinary Association.

- **Rosemary Berry**, pedigree Texel sheep breeder, former National Vice-Chairman and Central Executive Member of the Women’s Farming Union with responsibility for animal welfare.

- **John Don**, livestock and arable farmer from Aberdeenshire. Chairman of the Scottish Rural Property and Business Association and a former Council Member of the National Farmers’ Union of Scotland.

- **Professor Peter English**, retired Professor of Animal Science and Husbandry at the Department of Agriculture and Forestry, University of Aberdeen. Also involved with research on the education, training and motivation of stockpeople or farm animal carers.


- **David Henderson**, retired Head of the Division of Farms and Clinical Studies at the Moredun Research Institute, Edinburgh and past-President of the Sheep Veterinary Society.

- **James Hook**, Managing Director of a firm in Oxfordshire specialising in broiler chick production. A chartered surveyor by training and currently Chairman of the British Poultry Breeders and Hatcheries Association.

- **Professor Alistair Lawrence**, research scientist who heads the Animal Behaviour and Welfare Department at the Scottish Agricultural College in Edinburgh.


- **Stephen Lister**, partner in a poultry veterinary practice in Norfolk and a Trustee of the British Veterinary Association Animal Welfare Foundation.

- **Gareth Lloyd**, Chartered Surveyor and livestock auctioneer, with practical farming experience. Regional Board Member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. Vice-Chairman of RICS Wales and member of RICS Rural Policy Panel. Member of the Lord Chancellor’s Panel of Agricultural Arbitrators.

- **Richard Maunder**, Operations Director of a meat and poultry wholesale company in Devon.

- **Professor John McInerney**, OBE, Emeritus Glanely Professor of Agricultural Policy and former Director of the Agricultural Economics Unit, University of Exeter.

- **Professor David Morton**, scientist and a laboratory animal veterinarian. Member of the European Food Standards Agency’s Scientific Panel on Animal Health and Welfare and the Board of Assured Food Standards.


- **Dr Martin Potter**, former Head of Farm Animal Department, Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

- **Reverend Professor Michael Reiss**, Professor of Science Education at the Institute of Education, University of London.

- **Barbara Smith**, a member of the Women’s Food and Farming Union, and past Chairman of its Dairy Committee, a member of the CBI Regional Council and European Union of Women. Past-Chairman of the Animal Welfare Committee of the National Council of Women and past County Chairman of the Cheshire NFU. Member of the Agricultural Land Tribunal.

- **Michael Vaughan**, retired partner in a mixed animal veterinary practice in Devon. Past-President of the British Cattle Veterinary Association.

- **Meryl Ward**, member of the British Pig Executive and a founder member and Chairman of Agskills Training Association. Also a Nuffield Selector and Council member, runs a large scale pig farm.

**The following member retired during 2003/04:**

- **Victoria Hird**, Policy Director of Sustain: the Alliance for Better Food and Farming. We would like to thank her for her contributions to the work of FAWC.
The Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC) is an independent advisory body established by Government in 1979. Its terms of reference are to keep under review the welfare of farm animals on agricultural land, at market, in transit and at the place of slaughter; and to advise Government of any legislative or other changes that may be necessary.

The Council can also investigate any topic falling within this remit, communicate freely with outside bodies, the European Commission and the public and publish its advice independently.

Our members are drawn from a wide range of disciplines and occupations and serve in a personal capacity, not as representatives of any organisation or interest group.

A key element is our ability to act independently; we may pursue any topic we regard as important to the welfare of farm animals.

When embarking on a new investigation, we consult a wide range of interest groups. We carefully consider written advice and take verbal evidence from those with specific expertise. Wherever possible, we use relevant scientific evidence to aid us. This is carefully balanced with information gained from industry experience, visits by members of FAWC to farms and other agricultural businesses and guidance from experts. Where there is insufficient scientific knowledge, we may recommend funding of research and development.

### What does the Council Do?

In considering the welfare conditions under which farm animals are kept, we are guided by ideals that have become known as the **Five Freedoms**:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Freedom</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. FREEDOM FROM HUNGER AND THIRST</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2. FREEDOM FROM DISCOMFORT</strong></td>
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<td>- by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3. FREEDOM FROM PAIN, INJURY OR DISEASE</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>4. FREEDOM TO EXPRESS NORMAL BEHAVIOUR</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal’s own kind.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>5. FREEDOM FROM FEAR AND DISTRESS</strong></td>
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<td>- by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.</td>
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Council’s advice


FAWC responded to Defra on 16 April 2003 with its considered views on the proposed strategy. The main thrust of that response was FAWC’s concern that the strategy should recognise the importance of animal welfare in its own right, and not just because of its links to animal health and disease prevention. The text of that response is on the FAWC website at: www.fawc.org.uk.

The Council has kept in touch with officials developing the strategy which encompasses Great Britain. FAWC’s letter of 15 December 2003 regarding the strategy is on the FAWC website.

Dr Judy MacArthur Clark, Chairwoman of FAWC was one of the external members of the Interim Strategy Steering Board responsible for overseeing the preparation of the Animal Health & Welfare Strategy, due to be launched in June 2004.


A. What should the Implementation Plan deliver in terms of welfare?

1. The Implementation Plan should deliver a cohesive and clear means, through the Strategy, to recognise and address animal welfare needs in their own right rather than as an adjunct to the disease prevention elements of animal health. If welfare is to form a meaningful component of the Strategy, the Implementation Plan should focus on specific objectives: reflect on identified needs or problems and describe how the targeted outcomes are to be achieved.

2. The role and responsibility of animal keepers is currently described entirely in terms of disease. The Strategy should outline the basic framework that safeguarding animal welfare requires awareness of animal needs and both caring and careful efforts on the part of those involved. Particular requirements include:

- the recognition of animals as sentient beings;
- informed, skilled and conscientious stockmanship;
- caring, responsible management;
- the responsible use of genetic selection and other technology;
- appropriate living conditions; and
- considerate handling at all times (at market during transport and slaughter).

3. Similarly, commitment to welfare should form an integral part of the role and responsibility of Government if the concept of a health and welfare strategy is to be taken seriously. FAWC’s role as the Government’s advisory body on farm animal welfare should be underlined and the resources available in FAWC put to good use in ensuring delivery of welfare objectives.

4. We also feel that the Strategy is too focussed on exotic diseases to the detriment of endemic diseases and welfare. While animal welfare undoubtedly suffers during a major outbreak of exotic disease, the welfare effects of endemic disease are widespread and often long term. In addition, there are significant welfare issues which merit attention such as lameness and mastitis in the dairy herd. More emphasis should also be placed on the part played by good animal welfare standards in disease prevention and enhancement of productivity.

5. The Five Freedoms are a well established set of propositions which provide a core framework encompassing an animal’s basic needs, whether on farm, in transit, at market or at the place of slaughter. They provide widely accepted guidelines to all concerned with keeping livestock as to how they may fulfil their obligations to the animals they use at every stage of production. The welfare of any animal is dependent on the overall balance of factors contributing to its physical and mental state.

6. When identifying welfare problems it is necessary to consider both the extent of poor welfare and its duration. Welfare assessment concerns individual animals. However, where there are indications of poor
welfare, we consider that the more animals that are affected, the more serious is the problem. Although one single measurement can indicate that welfare is poor, welfare assessment should involve the use of a range of indicators. Furthermore, FAWC considers that welfare standards which are acceptable in the UK (generally considered to be those in Welfare Codes) or their equivalents should apply not only to home-produced farm animals but also to those produced in any other country which are then used as food or ingredient source for domestic consumption.

**B. What is a pragmatic approach to welfare?**

7. FAWC believes that farm animal welfare can be safeguarded so long as ‘acceptable welfare standards’ are set, adequately monitored and rigorously enforced. The vision of the Strategy should be that the provisions of the Welfare Codes are enforced as this acceptable standard. (It can be considered that legislation sets minimum standards below which animals may suffer and therefore no system should go below this level. Acceptable standards – what the public would find acceptable – are generally above this minimal level, are described in Welfare Codes, and are what the Strategy should target). Equivalent provisions should apply equally to all food we eat, including imported livestock products, and should take the entire process into account (from birth to slaughter including transport conditions, markets, and slaughter practices). An effective labelling system should be developed to identify food produced in compliance with these Welfare Codes (for example, be simply labelled with a ‘welfare friendly’ kite-mark). This could be a voluntary labelling system but the absence of such labelling on some goods (imported or domestic) may be assumed by informed consumers as non-compliance with these Codes or their equivalents.

8. References to ‘high’ or ‘higher’ or ‘enhanced’ standards are not helpful without an explanation of what they actually mean and a reference to the baseline for the purpose of comparison. Thus ‘enhanced welfare’ labelling should describe the production system in greater detail than the more simple “welfare friendly” labelling system described above.

9. The aims and objectives of the Animal Health and Welfare Strategy should be closely linked to the Veterinary Surveillance Strategy which in turn should incorporate welfare surveillance as an essential element. An effective mechanism is required to coordinate the wide range of veterinary surveillance data (of both health and welfare criteria) that is collected by various central and independent sources and ensure its effective analysis and communication. This would result in better utilisation of the information gathered and more efficient deployment of resources.

**C. What is FAWC’s vision of where welfare should be in 5 years time?**

10. FAWC’s 5 year vision embraces all the features outlined in the “pragmatic approach to welfare” described above. In addition, we consider the following to be important concepts for debate and development over the coming five years.

   (a) A robust system for monitoring and enforcing

Enforcement of current welfare regulations and Codes tends to be both inconsistent and inadequate. Problems of inconsistent enforcement apply to entire industries (e.g. the acceptance of transporting severely lame broilers to slaughter when this is not permitted for other species such as sheep) as well as to specific situations (e.g. particular farms where significant welfare problems may be present and yet effective prosecution is not pursued). We would look to the new Animal Welfare Bill to address some of the problems with such enforcement.

It can be argued that basing the surveillance and enforcement responsibilities within the same department that is responsible for agricultural production creates an unacceptable conflict of interest. Nevertheless, there should be a national system of welfare surveillance throughout the food chain and better enforcement of the existing legislation. The mechanism by which this is achieved efficiently needs further debate. However there can be little doubt that a system of registration of livestock holdings is an essential administrative requirement to underpin such enforcement action and should be introduced. The possibility of a single welfare inspectorate acting throughout the food chain to undertake this surveillance and enforcement role is worthy of consideration.
(b) Improved professionalism in the farming industry

Stockmen and women should be required to demonstrate competence with the species of livestock they keep and the systems within which those animals are managed. Likewise, the rewards of such a skilled labour force should be performance related, both in terms of monetary and social recognition. Training is vital to develop this competence. Continuing professional development, and personal training plans (in the spirit of the Investors in People scheme) should be actively encouraged. There should be recognition of appropriate standards of competence achieved through professional qualifications. Quality Assurance (QA) Schemes should monitor each individual’s competence as well as the processes in place to validate his or her capabilities. The development of on-farm indicators of welfare will help to facilitate the objective assessment of welfare outcomes at farm level in terms of stock quality. Such indicators should become part of routine QA on all livestock farms.

The communication of information about legislation and best practice to farmers is an important element in ensuring minimum welfare standards are maintained or surpassed. The presumption that IT solutions are the way forward may not be correct for farming communities. Demonstration farms should be developed to trial and demonstrate the effectiveness of new methods; local co-operation between farmers to benchmark welfare standards should also be encouraged as well as assisted access to veterinary advice related to welfare matters.

There should be investment into raising the farm animal welfare skills base of those responsible for livestock management in all production systems through better training, appropriate recognition of demonstrable stockmanship skills, and enhanced communication and delivery of advisory services.

FAWC is currently preparing a report on Stockmanship and its enhancement in relation to animal welfare.

(c) Enhanced herd/flock health and welfare plans

The concept of herd/flock health plans provides a context within which animal welfare can be evaluated and improved. Such a plan should not simply focus upon disease (although it is accepted that endemic disease is a major cause of poor welfare) but should also include criteria for important elements of welfare which are not directly connected with disease. Well developed welfare plans have the ability to show tangible benefits to producers. It is important that they are realistic and not simply a paper exercise. We see a significant role for the veterinary profession to work in genuine partnership with Government and producers in developing such welfare plans. Effective audit of such plans, based upon welfare and other outcomes, is critical.

(d) CAP reform and WTO

We strongly advocate making effective use of current opportunities for changes under CAP reform to enable support payments to be linked to implementation of Welfare Codes and to also encourage the development and offering of ‘higher’ or ‘enhanced’ welfare products. This should be complemented by continuing to push for welfare considerations to be included in WTO negotiations. Such a move should not be considered as anti-competitive since recognition would provide opportunities to all farmers, from all parts of the world, to seek to comply with openly defined welfare standards in a transparent manner which enables them to gain market advantage from such compliance.

Strategy for enhancing veterinary surveillance in the UK.

FAWC responded to Defra on 1 May 2003 with additional advice on a proposed strategy for veterinary surveillance of animal health and welfare. The text is reproduced below:

Council sees veterinary surveillance as part of the detailed implementation of the Animal Health and Welfare Strategy, which in turn has arisen directly from the recommendations of the Curry Policy Commission Report on Sustainable Farming and Food. As such, veterinary surveillance is a vital information gathering and monitoring tool on animal welfare and disease with which to inform both Government’s key strategies and those with responsibility for management and control of these issues.
Some areas of livestock production are better covered (and some less well) by veterinary surveillance that fully informs the centre with data that can be used to react to disease situations or plan future policy. For example, the poultry sector, while having fully adequate veterinary cover, directly employ many of these vets. Not all the useful information on non-notifiable disease or animal welfare issues will necessarily be reported to Government. Extensive sheep or beef production by experienced keepers may attract less veterinary attention than intensive production carried out by less experienced hands.

There are a wide range of central and independent sources of veterinary information on animal disease and welfare: the State Veterinary Service, private practice, LVIs, the Meat Hygiene Service, Veterinary Laboratory Agency and Farm Assurance veterinary visits to name a few. There is currently no mechanism for co-ordination of this potential mine of surveillance data. Better co-ordination will bring better value in terms of resources and information gathered.

Privatisation of the veterinary laboratories has led to a reduction in referrals of samples from private vets for reason of cost to their clients. This sample testing and post mortem work must previously have been a rich source of surveillance information, which is now reduced. More robust national surveillance should be augmented by data from private vets on farm. Indeed a State Veterinary Service reduced in size over the years will mean more reliance on private vets.

FAWC fully supports veterinary surveillance of exotic diseases because these lead to major welfare risks. However, it is important to ensure that endemic diseases are assessed as well as exotic ones. The former can lead to significant long term welfare problems for animals on the farm.

In addition to disease, some serious animal welfare problems can arise from selective breeding and the use of breeding technologies. Veterinary surveillance should pick these issues up early to ensure that selection strategies can be adjusted and techniques improved or regulated.

Council sees a need for animal welfare surveillance as a distinct area of resourced activity and not just an add-on to disease inspections. Welfare issues, both related and unrelated to disease, need to be targeted by specific surveillance activity. Perhaps the strategy could have extra goals of protecting animal welfare through prevention of animal disease and of maintaining adequate standards of animal welfare through specific surveillance activity.

The information on animal welfare gathered by veterinary surveillance should be used to benefit the animal, the livestock industry, the providers of animal protection and the consumer. It is important that the data is quality assured to ensure it is usable but FAWC does not see the need for it to have 100% statistical reliability. Better that 100 conditions be assessed to 90% reliability than only 10 to 95%.

Farm assurance may be a tool for increasing levels of veterinary surveillance. FAWC strongly supports herd/flock health and welfare plans as requirements of farm assurance schemes. This would get a vet onto the farm at least once a year and provide a holistic and structured approach to health and welfare planning at the farm level. Data from these visits could add to the sum of knowledge provided by veterinary surveillance. Council has identified a need for specific training for vets taking part in whole farm assessments for health, welfare and disease prevention in order to make such visits efficient and complete.

FAWC has attended a number of meetings related to the proposed strategies on animal health and welfare and veterinary surveillance. It is useful for FAWC to be on platforms such as these to ensure that the animal welfare arguments are given prominence. Council hopes that it can continue to contribute to the development of these important initiatives.

Whilst supporting the principles of more effective veterinary surveillance (both for health and welfare problems) FAWC has expressed concerns regarding the sufficiency of resources to adequately implement the strategy; the lack of a clear approach to animal welfare surveillance; and the emphasis on exotic diseases to the detriment of endemic diseases and welfare.
Report on the Welfare of Farmed Animals at Slaughter or Killing - Part I: Red Meat Animals

The FAWC Report on the Welfare of Farmed Animals at Slaughter or Killing – Part I: Red Meat Animals was launched on 10 June 2003 to substantial media attention. The FAWC Report comprehensively considers the welfare of livestock from the time of arrival at the slaughterhouse until the point of death.

The Report looks in particular at the pre-slaughter handling facilities, at the equipment used for slaughter; at the competency and training of personnel and at the way in which unconsciousness is induced, including the guarantee of non-recovery. All these issues were evaluated against basic welfare parameters in making our recommendations.

The recommendation made on animal welfare grounds that all animals should be stunned prior to slaughter has been very newsworthy. It is hoped that this does not overshadow the many other important recommendations made in the report, many of which have the capacity to improve animal welfare very significantly. These include the need for a system of approval of slaughter equipment; the effective training and periodic re-assessment of those holding slaughter licences; the phasing out of the use of aversive gases as a means of stunning pigs; restrictions on the presentation of horned cattle at slaughterhouses; and the use of improvement notices as enforcement sanctions.

This report focuses on red meat animals, including deer, ostrich and wild boar. During the next year a working group will consider white meat species such as chickens and turkeys and make recommendations for the protection of their welfare.

Copies of the “Report on the Welfare of Farmed Animals at Slaughter or Killing - Part I: Red Meat Animals” are available, free of charge from the website (www.fawc.org.uk) or by contacting the Secretariat.

The Government published its draft response to this report, copies of which are available from the Defra website (www.defra.gov.uk). Council will consider this in detail before making any response.
Responses to consultation

Most of these responses are available on the Website: www.fawc.org.uk

Defra’s biosecurity guidance.

FAWC welcomes advice to farmers and others to remind them of the need for effective biosecurity. We would like to stress that this strategy should be followed in good times as well as bad; the biosecurity culture developed during Classical Swine Fever and Foot and Mouth Disease outbreaks should be maintained at an appropriate level. We should be prepared for the next significant disease outbreak but also use the strategy to reduce the effects of ongoing endemic diseases, many of which have severe welfare consequences. Biosecurity is not just for the major outbreaks.

The guidance should be presented and distributed in ways that are usable by each sector when they need it. For example, leaflets sent to all farmers, agricultural premises/contractors/suppliers, veterinarians and public servants liable to go onto livestock units and available to the public at relevant outlets (tourist offices, schools, etc.). We regret the relaxation of the requirement to cleanse and disinfect after delivery at markets and abattoirs.

European Commission’s proposed changes to current welfare during transport rules.

In October 2003, Council responded to a Defra consultation on what was then the latest draft of the EU’s proposed Regulation on animal transport. FAWC broadly welcomed the proposed changes and suggested potential solutions where areas of concern were identified. In early 2004, Council followed their initial response with a consideration of the Technical Rules (Annex I) contained in the proposed Regulation.

EU Ministers have since failed to reach agreement on the proposed changes. FAWC is disappointed that this opportunity to improve animal welfare during transport appears to have been lost for the time being.
Working Groups

The Council carries out detailed reviews in small working groups comprising a cross section of members. There is significant responsibility on these members to provide thoroughly researched and carefully considered advice for discussion and endorsement by Council.

Slaughter

Having completed its study of the welfare of red meat animals at slaughter and published its report in June 2003 (see page 8) the Group has now embarked upon a study of the welfare of white meat species. A consultation has been issued seeking views from a wide list of interested parties.

The species that the new study will cover will include broilers, turkeys, ducks, geese, end of lay hens, guinea fowl, quail, farmed game and rabbits. The study will concentrate on the welfare issues associated with slaughter or killing at the abattoir but culling of animals on - farm will also be considered.

The Group will be reviewing the literature, holding meetings with various stakeholders and will be visiting the main white meat slaughter systems over the next two years in order to inform itself and enable its members to draw conclusions and draft recommendations for endorsement by Council.

Strategy and Communication

The Group is responsible for organising FAWC representation at national as well as regional Agricultural Shows. Each year the Group is responsible for reviewing the content of the Annual Review and for the arrangements for the annual Open Meeting, which will be held this year on 30 June 2004.

The main focus of the Group during the last year has been on issues relating to good stockmanship. Some of the areas being considered are: existing knowledge and skills levels and the need to attract high calibre young people to livestock farming; educational opportunities; the availability, type and quality of training; utilisation of existing resources; opportunities for accreditation and Continuous Professional Development (CPD). FAWC has always considered that good stockmanship is vital to good farm animal welfare whatever the production system and the Group will make recommendations to Council for approval and publication as a report around the end of this year.

Markets and Transport

For the Markets and Transport Working Group, the production of the Report on the Welfare of Animals at Markets and Other Gatherings has been the priority this year. The group met with stakeholders early in March 2004 to discuss the main themes emerging from the report which is due for approval by Council and publication in the Autumn of 2004.

The Group has also monitored, on behalf of Council, the European Commission’s proposed changes to welfare during transport rules. Comments have been submitted to both Defra and directly to the Commission.
Finally, in the light of UK and European trials investigating the electronic identification of livestock, the Group has spent time considering potential welfare problems in this context.

Farm Assurance

The Farm Assurance Working Group has commenced drafting its second report on the welfare implications of Farm Assurance Schemes. The report will also consider the welfare implications of organic certification schemes. We expect to publish the report by Spring 2005.

FAWC recognises that food consumers have a growing interest in the provenance of their food. Their concerns are not simply about how animals are kept on UK farms but relate more widely to the welfare standards of livestock products consumed in this country. The forthcoming report will examine how and to what extent the framework of farm assurance schemes can help meet these concerns. We have written to the major retailers and food service sector organisations to further explore the role they play in ensuring that food animals are produced under appropriate welfare conditions.

We are also reviewing the evolution of welfare assessment and the role played by herd/flock health and welfare plans in delivering welfare benefits. The Group is looking at this issue against the backdrop of the Animal Health and Welfare Strategy for Great Britain.

Welfare Labelling

FAWC has set up a new Working Group to investigate the issue of welfare labelling as it pertains to the method of production, transport and marketing (where relevant) and slaughter. The Group is considering how and to what extent information on welfare standards can be conveyed to the interested consumer. The information issues are complex and welfare outcomes are not easily reflected simply by indicating the production system. We aim to produce a short report on this subject within the next twelve months.

Research and Development

Most significantly this year, the Research and Development Working Group has presented to Council a Report on the Welfare Implications of Animal Breeding and Breeding Technologies in Commercial Agriculture. This will be published in June 2004. Copies may be obtained from the Council Secretariat.

Castration and tail docking of lambs has also been on the Group’s agenda since it has been reconsidering some of the recommendations made in the 1994 Report on the Welfare of Sheep. The Group has met with UK research groups working in this area and will produce a short report on this for consideration by Council later in the year. FAWC intend to follow this with similar reports appropriate to other species.

Finally, 25 years after the formation of FAWC, the Group has begun an exercise to reconsider the value and application of the ‘Five Freedoms’.
Poultry Issues

The Poultry Issues Working Group resumed its work early in 2004 with an agenda of issues, some to complete and others to consider anew. The Group takes an active role in the Action Plan on Beak Trimming. The Group is also examining a novel method of beak tipping.

An outstanding issue of concern is that the analysis of the long-running industry study on broiler leg health, completed some 3 years ago, has still not been accepted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. This needs to happen for the findings to be considered scientifically robust. In the meantime we continue to monitor progress on the major Defra-funded research project being conducted by Bristol University in close collaboration with the broiler industry; this study promises to yield authoritative data on the prevalence, risk factors and management practices relating to leg weakness in broilers.

The Group intends to review FAWC’s 1997 Report on the Welfare of Laying Hens with a particular focus on the problems relating to skeletal health, and visits to research institutions and egg production facilities are planned. It will also consider the implications of the recently-published findings from the Oxford University study on broiler stocking density and welfare.
How the Council works

Membership and Appointments

Appointments to the Council are made according to procedures laid down in the Code of Practice produced by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

Register of members’ interests

The Council’s work covers a wide range of issues connected with the agricultural industry, animal welfare organisations, research bodies and the veterinary profession. In order to avoid any concern that members’ interests might adversely affect the advice given by Council, information about significant and relevant interests of the membership is kept on a register, copies of which are available from the Secretariat. This register is updated annually. In addition to information on commercial interests a record is kept of relevant non-commercial interests, such as membership of organisations whose work may overlap with the Council’s area of interest.

Guidance to members

On appointment, members receive a package of guidance about matters such as working procedures, guiding principles, working with the media, representing Council, networking, fees and expenses. Incorporated in the guidance is a Code of Practice for Members, which is written with full regard to the seven principles of public life identified by the Nolan Committee in its Report on Standards in Public Life and the recommendations made by the Phillips Inquiry Report relevant to advisory bodies.

Workload

During 2003/2004 Council and its Working Groups held 58 meetings and conducted 7 visits to various agricultural premises.

Costs

The work of the Farm Animal Welfare Council is financed by Defra, which also provides the Secretariat. During the financial year 2003/2004 the total expenditure on the Council by government was £412,654. This sum comprised £121,827 for member’s fees, travel and related costs; £237,676 for Secretariat salaries, travel and other costs; £32,151 for Defra advisers and consultants; and £6000 for printing and overheads.

Secretariat

The FAWC Secretariat is staffed by officials on secondment from Defra. The Secretary is Kumu Adhihetty and the other members of the Secretariat team are Richard Aram, Emma Harding, Barbara Silberstein, Janice Munday and Racquel Sinclair.

The Council welcomes approaches from organisations planning events such as conferences or seminars. The Secretariat can provide copies of FAWC materials on request. Many members carry with them a wealth of expertise about farm animal welfare, and if you would like us to be represented at appropriate events, please get in touch. The Council is keen to develop an effective partnership with the media, and we welcome press approaches, routed through the Secretariat.

Contact us

If you would like to be sent any of our reports, or to find out more about the Council please contact:

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Appendix

Publications


Report on the Welfare of Farmed Fish, 1996. PB 2765


Advice to Ministers on the Handling and Transport of Poultry, 1990. PB 0125


Advice to Agricultural Ministers on Transportation of Unfit Animals, 1988.


Advice to the Agriculture Ministers of Great Britain on the Need to Control Certain Mutilations of Farm Animals, 1981.


FAWC would like to express its thanks to the RCVS Trust for allowing us to use the Chairwoman’s photograph.