

"Animal Welfare should be an integral part of the undergraduate curriculum" Prof. J. Webster

FVE-TAIEX Conference on animal welfare

Meeting helps Balkan countries reflect on EU animal welfare challenges

How can animal owners, children, the media and even veterinarians learn more about animal welfare? How do European attitudes to animal welfare change? How can new animal welfare legislation in the Balkans be enforced? These and other questions were discussed recently at an animal welfare conference in Belgrade, organised by the FVE in cooperation with DG Enlargement (TAIEX) and attended by over 100 participants from Central and Eastern Europe. Aim:

to discuss how best to help veterinary surgeons in non-EU Balkan countries to familiarise themselves with European animal welfare legislation and the challenges of its transposition, implementation and control. "Animal welfare faces similar challenges across all these countries", said Gordana Blitva, veterinary practitioner from Serbia. "On the one hand, citizens need to be more informed about animal welfare principles, for which veterinarians would be the best source of information. On the other, animal welfare is rarely included in the very demanding veterinary education syllabus, making this conference an excellent tool for training and increasing awareness in the veterinary profession in the region".

³ http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_252_en.pdf

Animal welfare and veterinary training

Professor John Webster (University of Bristol, UK) recommended that animal welfare be an integral part of the veterinary undergraduate syllabus in both pre-clinical and clinical training for both farm and companion animals. He also presented a distance-learning package developed in Bristol in association with the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA).

FVE Deputy Executive Director, Nancy De Briyne suggested the creation of a European College of Animal Welfare according to the principles of the European Board of Veterinary Specialisation (EBVS) and that animal welfare research should increase in veterinary faculties. "This would allow the education of more veterinary experts in animal welfare", she added.

Participants agreed that animal welfare education should not only be part of veterinary studies but also of related degrees such as agricultural sciences. Similarly, citizens, pet owners and especially children need an education in animal welfare. Furthermore, the media in the region should also be trained in animal welfare principles as a way of generating public awareness. "The Council of Europe could develop a strategy to tackle the problem of stray dogs faced by many Balkan countries to ensure that humane killing of stray dogs was enforced", Gordana Blitva suggested.

EU citizens' concern

Regarding the implementation and enforcement of animal welfare legislation, such legislation is either very recent or non-existent in this region. Legislation without effective enforcement is futile, highlighting the need for a more efficient cooperation between all bodies in charge of supervision. "Eighty-two percent of EU citizens say we have a duty to protect animals whatever the cost", recalled Cornelius Rhein, of unit D2 (Animal Welfare and Feed) of DG Sanco during his presentation, referring to the Eurobarometer survey. Regarding the treatment of the various livestock species, "58% consider laying hens' welfare as bad". Animal welfare, concluded Mr Rhein, was no longer an option, but an obligation. But although legislation could achieve a lot, humanity and courage were sometimes called for, according to John Webster. "We should act according to what is right, not simply that which is regulated". Other speakers at the Belgrade conference included Dil Peeling (Eurogroup for Animal Welfare), Jasmijn de Boo (WSPA), Paul Bours (Ministry of Agriculture, the Netherlands) Gianluca Frinzi, (Food and Veterinary Office), and Birte Broberg (Danish Veterinary and Food Agency).

Community Action Plan on the Protection & Welfare of Animals

EU Parliament calls for stricter animal protection and welfare rules

On 12 October, Parliament adopted by a large majority a report calling for stricter animal welfare rules in the EU. The report, written by Elisabeth Jeggle (EPP-DE), welcomes the Community Action Plan on the Protection and Welfare of Animals 2006-2010, which for the first time translates the Protocol on protection and welfare of animals (annex of the Amsterdam Treaty) into an integrated approach to developing animal protection in Europe.

The report points out that "animal protection and animal health impact closely on each other." It therefore calls on the Commission to "take greater account of animal protection aspects in the fight against animal diseases." MEPs also noted that, "in practice, EU rules on the transport of animals [...] are frequently disregarded." In order to strengthen incentives for better treatment of animals, the report supports the development of "animal protection labelling" as well as voluntary private labels that would guarantee even higher standards of animal protection. However, the Parliament also considered that new rules and labeling requirements could "lead to a decline in the competitiveness of Community production," and to "animal protection dumping" by third countries. For this reason, the report "urges the strengthening of animal protection within the framework of the WTO" to raise animal welfare standards all over the world.

MEPs also expressed their regret that "the focus of European policy on animal welfare has so far been almost exclusively on the welfare and protection of farm animals." The report suggests widening the scope of EU legislation on animal testing, calls on the Commission to make permanent the ban on EU imports of wild birds, and to also ban seal and 'cruelty products' imports. The report furthermore calls on the EU to bring an end to dog and cock fighting, although a similar plea to end bull fighting was rejected by MEPs during the vote. Earlier this year, the Commission adopted the Action Plan with the aim to "aims to ensure that animal welfare is addressed in the most effective manner over the coming years, in all EU sectors and through EU relations with Third countries".

Welfare Quality© project

FVE appointed member of the Advisory Committee

FVE has just been approved as member to the Advisory Committee of the Welfare Quality® project⁴. Welfare Quality® is an EU-funded project on the integration of animal welfare in the food quality chain: from public concern to improved welfare and transparent quality. A total of 39 institutes and universities with specialist expertise from 13 European countries participate in this integrated research project. The primary aims of the Welfare Quality® project are:

- To develop practical strategies/measures to improve animal welfare
- To develop a European on-farm welfare assessment standard
- To develop a European animal welfare information standard.
- To integrate and interrelate the most appropriate specialist expertise in the multidisciplinary field of animal welfare in Europe

Cloning of farm animals

Stricter regulations for ethical reasons?

"Cloning in Public" is an initiative that aims to facilitate a public debate on the ethical and societal consequences of farm animal cloning, and to make recommendations on the regulation and applications in this field⁵, held a workshop in Brussels, on 5 and 6 October. The meeting was the last of its kind and conclusions of previous research were presented. The meeting examined the various applications for cloning, which can be divided into basic research; medical use and reproductive purposes in farm animals. Regarding the latter, it was recalled that a clone is not simply a copy of the original, but actually can differ greatly from the original animal. A clone of an extremely successful racehorse, for example, will not necessarily have the same potential. Even though so far "there is no evidence that products from cloned animals or their progeny constitute a risk to human health", the cloning of animal gave rise to "serious concerns regarding animal welfare". Developmental abnormalities, neonatal mortality, a limited lifespan and obesity are only a few of the negative aspects

often observed in cloned animals. Although these problems are likely to decrease as the technology develops, there is currently no knowledge about the long-term effect of cloning in farm animals. This raised ethical questions on the

boundaries of the use man can make from animals. Farm animals are already highly selected genetically and cloning could well be seen as the next step of "industrialising" animals, participants suggested. The project "Cloning in Public" was organised under the 6th Framework and coordinated by the Danish Centre for Bioethics and Risk Assessment (CeBRA), involving five European institutions as partners.

⁴ <http://www.welfarequality.net>

⁵ <http://www.sl.kvl.dk/cloninginpublic/>

Mortality of captive birds during import can reach 60%

During its meeting on 2 October, the FVE Board decided to support the British Veterinary Association's (BVA) position statement⁶ on the import of captive live birds. The statement calls for a permanent ban on captive wild bird import from countries outside the EU, based on concerns for the welfare of the birds during capture and transit. Mortality rates associated with the trade can be as high as 60% before they reach the pet shops.

In addition to calling for a ban on the wild bird trade, the position statement urges tighter controls on the import, quarantine and identification of captive bred birds for the pet trade, as there is "an urgent need for improved border controls across the EU to stop illegal trade from third countries".

Stricter identification and certification measures should be encouraged to allow traceability of individual birds and to ensure that buyers have confidence that they are actually purchasing captive bred birds and not illegally imported.

Dairy research barely alive in the UK, warn scientists

By Chris Mercer

20/10/2006 - **Dairy research and development in the UK has been systematically destroyed, warn two senior ex-officials, seriously damaging the potential for the country's industry to compete against foreign players.**

Funding crises, staff shortages and closures mean the UK's once highly respected [dairy research](#) base now barely exists, Donald Muir, an ex-research head told **DairyReporter.com**.

His words are the starkest warning yet that the UK dairy industry faces a research and development black hole, which could threaten its ability to compete in the future.

Muir's old research centre, the Hannah Institute in Scotland, closed down in spring this year to the concern of both unions and scientists.

Hannah's reputation in dairy R&D had been world-class, helping the industry in a range of areas from extending the shelf life of [milk](#) to cutting edge work on microbacteria and caseins. It also helped devise the means to make cream liqueurs, like Baileys.

Closing Hannah has heightened fears that the UK dairy industry will become increasingly reliant on foreign sources to keep up with changing market demand.

"It was the final nail in the coffin," said Muir, who retired from Hannah two years ago. *"Some of the bigger companies still have substantial R&D facilities, but these tend to be multinational firms with headquarters outside the UK."*

Research and development in UK dairy began suffering more than two decades ago, after the government cut funding and told centres to sell their research, another ex-industry researcher, Frank Harding, told **DairyReporter.com**.

"Research places like Hannah could not get enough cash from an industry that had good research for nothing and now had to pay for it," said Harding, who served on the consultative boards of both Hannah and the National Institute for Research in Dairying (NIRD) at Reading.

The NIRD has since been disbanded, despite being credited with developing ground-breaking technology like infra red microscope analysis. One single part of the Institute, the Centre for Dairy Research (CEDAR) at the University of Reading, now flies the flag for dairy research in the UK.

Harding and Muir are not the only two people concerned about a lack of fundamental research in the British dairy industry.

"Little or no opportunity exists for potential investors to try out new technologies without first making huge commitments," said a government report this year. It said the UK had missed opportunities by not investing in research on the genetic make-up of milk, as other countries had done.

The report called for a new central testing facility, and added not enough was known about gaps in R&D across the dairy sector and that domestic companies were not sharing enough knowledge.

"As dairy companies became larger and larger, they often wanted research to be confidential to them," said Harding.

He said this had led to greater emphasis on product development rather than pure R&D to underpin the industry, known as 'blue sky' research; helping to drive scientists out of the sector.

"There is no company I know of that invests in blue sky research. The industry used to attract scientists because of scientific interest in the business. As R&D dried up, many companies have become processing centres, so inevitably you get a shortage of scientists."

Shortages of food scientists have emerged across the food industry in recent years, and both Muir and Harding said they were concerned at a lack of technical expertise across the UK dairy sector.

"The government is not going to do anything in the current political climate. The industry has to be pro-active here, they have to see the long-term benefits," said Muir, who suggested introducing more industry sponsorships for science students.

Many UK companies simply do not have the funds to put into long-term 'blue sky' research programmes, however. Cost pressures have held down earnings across the sector, leaving little room for R&D projects that do not offer rapid returns on investment.

Calls for more industry-wide co-ordination on R&D have not yet been heeded, leaving some in the sector concerned for the future.

"There is no magic bullet, but we need an industry champion to help the industry speak with one, coherent voice," said Muir. *"Politically, if the industry does not speak with one voice, there is no way of having any influence."*

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Market Trends

Report: Organic meat to see strong growth in next five years

by [Alicia Karapetian](#) on 10/20/2006 for **Meatingplace.com**

A new report by research firm Mintel International Group estimates that the organic meat market will increase 71 percent in constant prices over the next five years.

According to the study, the organic meat sector grew 140 percent over the last two years, facilitated by the increased emphasis on organic products at traditional retailers.

Sales of all organic foods, including meat and poultry, grew 37 percent in the last two years in traditional channels, while sales were up 29 percent at natural retailers, the study said.

Wal-Mart's pledge to offer organic products priced only 10 percent more than traditionally processed products may also help boost organic growth. In fact, according to the Mintel study, 24 percent of consumers who purchase organic products do so at Wal-Mart. Sixty-five percent of the survey's respondents buy organic food in traditional channels while 45 percent shop for organics in the natural channel.

Encouraging results from Commission animal welfare training workshop

A European Commission workshop on animal welfare standards at slaughter took place in

Bristol on 27-29 September 2006. It focused on EU rules in humane stunning and killing techniques in slaughterhouse and disease control situations. Participants were mainly veterinary surgeons responsible for official checks on slaughterhouses. This activity is part of the Commission Health and Consumer Protection DG's Better Training for Safer Food initiative.

The workshop benefited from a wide geographical spread of participants. In all, 85 trainees, from 28 EU and candidate countries and 24 third countries, were present. In addition, 21 tutors, drawn from seven countries, gave presentations at the event.

EU animal welfare legislation

Presentations on the first day covered EU animal welfare legislation, the scientific basis for proper stunning and killing techniques, disease control techniques, and auditing of slaughter methods. These were followed by mini-sessions on aspects such as bio-security and environmental issues. The day was rounded off with a session on monitoring and enforcement of animal welfare requirements.

The morning of the second day was taken up by visits to slaughterhouses. These visits were followed by discussions on topics including possible new methods for assessing welfare standards. Further presentations were then given on animal welfare enforcement practices and the experience gained from disease epidemics.

The final day saw a session on evaluating animal welfare at slaughter and killing for disease control. This was followed by a final presentation on the development of internet learning facilities on humane slaughter and killing.

Highly relevant content

Forms were distributed to participants and tutors to evaluate the workshop, and questionnaires were provided to review the slaughterhouse visits. The overwhelming majority of delegates agreed that the purpose of the event was clear and that it fulfilled its aims. Almost all delegates were of the opinion that the content of the workshop was highly relevant for their work.

This is the only workshop to be held in 2006 dealing with animal welfare issues. Further

training in this area under the Better Training for Safer Food initiative will, however, be on offer in 2007.

'Holland should ban castration now'

UK - Now that the European Parliament has given a lead, there is nothing to stop the Dutch government banning castration of pigs without anaesthetic, says Dutch Socialist Party MEP Kartika Liotard, according to Digby Scott.

Last month the European Parliament agriculture committee voted to back a Socialist Party proposal to ban castration of piglets without prior anaesthesia, throughout the European Union.

Dutch agriculture minister Cees Veerman is in favour of a ban, but has argued that he must wait for an initiative from Europe. "We've provided him with this," said Liotard, "so now there's nothing to hold him back from banning this type of castration."

Speculating on the chances of the European Commission deciding in its current animal welfare review to introduce a Europe-wide ban on castration, she said, she had been told two years by Agriculture Commissioner Fisher-Boel that there was no possibility of such a measure - but now she would have no choice.

Liotard believes pig farmers would welcome a Europe-wide ban. "Farmers certainly don't want to perform castration without prior anaesthesia, but as things stand if they go it alone in using alternatives they price themselves out of the market. This should soon no longer be the case."

Two years ago the European veterinary committee undertook a study which demonstrated that castration without stunning was painful and unnecessary.

"An approach based on bigger sties, slaughter before transport and a selective breeding programme is better for the animal, better for the farmer and better for the consumer," said Liotard.

The Dutch pig industry is pretty sure a castration ban is on the way, and is considering chemical castration as an alternative.

More pig issues on:

<http://www.thepigsite.com/swinenews/12446/holland-should-ban-castration-now>

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NPA is active on members' behalf in Brussels & Whitehall, and with processors, supermarkets & caterers - fighting for the growth and prosperity of the UK pig industry.