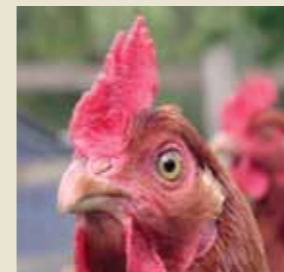




# Helping animals THROUGH WELFARE SCIENCE



Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

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The RSPCA helps animals in England and Wales. Registered charity no: 219099

The RSPCA only exists because of public donations.

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## SCIENCE GROUP REVIEW OF 2011

»» [www.rspca.org.uk/sciencegroup](http://www.rspca.org.uk/sciencegroup)

Published March 2012

# Editorial

One of the main goals of the RSPCA is to maintain and enhance public, institutional and governmental recognition of the Society as a leading provider of objective, scientifically-based animal welfare and veterinary advice. By setting such a goal the RSPCA recognises the importance of a sound scientific base with regard to policy, campaigning, its operational work and representational activity. The work of the RSPCA divides into four main areas: companion animals, farm animals, research animals and wildlife, and the key achievements for each area in 2011 are given in this review.

Examples of our work for companion animals include improving the welfare of pet rabbits which suffer considerable neglect, and working to improve the lives of pedigree dogs and cats through the systematic collection of data on the occurrence of inherited disease. We have issued new kennelling guidelines, launched a puppy campaign and, together with the British Veterinary Association Animal Welfare Foundation, produced a model contract for those thinking of purchasing a puppy in England. As regards our efforts in the area of veterinary science, we have used mathematical models to improve anaesthesia for use on kittens.

The farm animals department continues to lead the way with its ongoing development of RSPCA welfare standards. There are 10 sets of standards covering the nine major farm animal species. This has proved to be an enormously effective way of improving the welfare of hundreds of millions of farm animals.

In the research animals arena, our focus has been on the new law on animal experiments. European Directive (2010/63/EU) came into force on 9 November 2010 and the department has been heavily involved in advising on the transposition of the Directive into UK law and fighting against any reduction in the protection and provisions for research animals. Additionally we are determined to reduce the number of animals who experience severe suffering. This is within the context of our 3Rs programme and ethical review.

Finally, in the area of wildlife the RSPCA has renewed its focus on the international trade in wild animals because of the immense suffering that largely goes unchecked. We are working nationally and internationally through the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES) to give these wild animals a higher degree of protection than is currently the case. In addition, we have initiated and largely completed a number of research projects ranging from addressing the welfare implications of mole damage and control to the rehabilitation of hedgehogs.

By using evidence-based policy and practice founded upon rigorously conducted science we are determined to make significant progress towards achieving our vision of a world in which all humans live in harmony with other members of the animal kingdom.



John Rolls  
Director of Policy  
RSPCA

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# Companion animals

The RSPCA companion animals department is dedicated to improving the welfare of the millions of animals kept as pets, working or sports animals and helping them to benefit from their relationships with humans. Companion animals are an integral part of our society and their welfare is a clear measure of how we care for animals. The work of the RSPCA often focuses on companion animals, through work with governments, rehoming, veterinary practice and inspectors. The companion animals department helps to direct and support that work.

The department has a team of expert scientists, each with specialist knowledge and practical experience of key companion animal species, including dogs, cats, rabbits, mice and rats. The department generates, collates, reviews and disseminates science and good practice to provide evidence-based advice and authoritative opinions on how people can

ensure the needs of the companion animals for which they are responsible. The department is increasingly growing as an international source of scientific insight and policy advice.



Philip Toscano x3, Joe Murphy/RSPCA Photolibrary



## Improving the welfare of pet rabbits

Improving pet rabbit welfare continues to be a high priority for the RSPCA. Thousands of unwanted, neglected or cruelly-treated pet rabbits come into RSPCA care every year; often because their owners are not aware of how to meet their complex welfare needs. This lack of knowledge, together with traditional housing and husbandry practices, may have a negative impact on the welfare of a significant number of rabbits. Therefore, the RSPCA is developing a long-term rabbit campaign which aims to raise awareness and increase understanding of rabbits' welfare needs and change the attitudes and behaviour of owners to improve the welfare of companion rabbits.

### Scientific studies commissioned at the University of Bristol

#### Assessment of the state of rabbit welfare in the UK

This study will identify the issues which affect rabbit welfare the most, producing a prioritised list of all welfare issues. The study will ensure the RSPCA plans the most effective campaign to bring about a positive improvement for rabbit welfare. Tools developed during the study will be reproducible, allowing the state of rabbit welfare to be reassessed in the future.

#### Investigation into the spatial needs of socially-housed pet rabbits

This study will investigate the spatial needs of pair-housed rabbits, as the RSPCA

currently recommends that rabbits are housed in compatible pairs wherever possible. The study will assist the RSPCA in developing practically applicable, evidence-based housing guidance for pet rabbits.

Both studies are due for completion in 2012, when the RSPCA will communicate the studies' findings.

### Rabbit Awareness Week

In 2011 the RSPCA was an official partner of Rabbit Awareness Week (RAW). RAW is an annual week of events that aims to raise awareness of the welfare needs of pet rabbits. The week ran from 23rd-29th May and the focus was rabbit behaviour. The companion animals department liaised with partner organisations and RSPCA branches and assisted with developing the care advice materials for the week. Over 50 RSPCA branches took part in RAW, running educational events to advise owners on rabbit care and offering free health checks via local veterinary practices. The RSPCA engaged with rabbit owners during the week via social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook and produced a short video showing how happy, healthy rabbits should behave if given a spacious, interesting environment.

The RSPCA has also set up an online rabbit community, where anyone interested in learning more about rabbit care and the RSPCA pet rabbit campaign can sign up to receive emails:

[www.rspca.org.uk/rabbitcommunity](http://www.rspca.org.uk/rabbitcommunity).

## Vet Compass

To improve the welfare of pedigree dogs and cats, an urgent need for the systematic collection of data on the occurrence of inherited diseases has been identified.



Consequently, throughout 2011, the RSPCA companion animals department continued to fund a PhD research project with the Royal Veterinary College and the University of Sydney, collecting primary vet practice data to estimate the prevalence of inherited and acquired disorders in dogs and cats and identify breeds at greatest risk of specific conditions. By the end of 2011, VetCompass held clinical data on over 100,000 cats and 110,000 dogs.

More information is available on the VetCompass project website: <http://www.rvc.ac.uk/VetCOMPASS/>



# Equines

## Hot branding

In 2010 we commissioned an independent report into the hot branding and microchip implantation of horses and ponies by the independent equine welfare expert Dr Mark J Kennedy at Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge. The report used direct observation of moorland ponies being hot branded and microchipped, a review of the scientific literature and thorough consultation with people who are involved in looking after moorland ponies, other experts such as vets, and various industry stakeholders.

### The report made the following conclusions.

- Hot branding of horses and ponies is likely to cause significant pain. This pain is unnecessary, because there are effective alternative means of identification available which cause less suffering. The practice of hot branding should end.
- Where a visible means of identification of horses and ponies is required or desirable, for example to deter potential theft, freeze marking may be considered, although it should be noted that this is unlikely to be pain-free and may still cause suffering. Freeze marking is not suitable for semi-feral, little-handled moorland ponies.
- Microchip implantation is not pain free, but inflicts less pain and suffering than hot branding. Microchipping is required by law for all horses and ponies born after 1 July 2009 (with specified derogations for moorland ponies in designated areas). All horses and ponies should be microchipped.
- These conclusions suggest that owners of horses and ponies should have their animals microchipped. Where owners are concerned about the possibility of theft, they may consider freeze marking. Owners of moorland ponies should have them microchipped and use a collar with a permanent numerical, alphabetical, or symbolic marking if they require visible temporary identification.

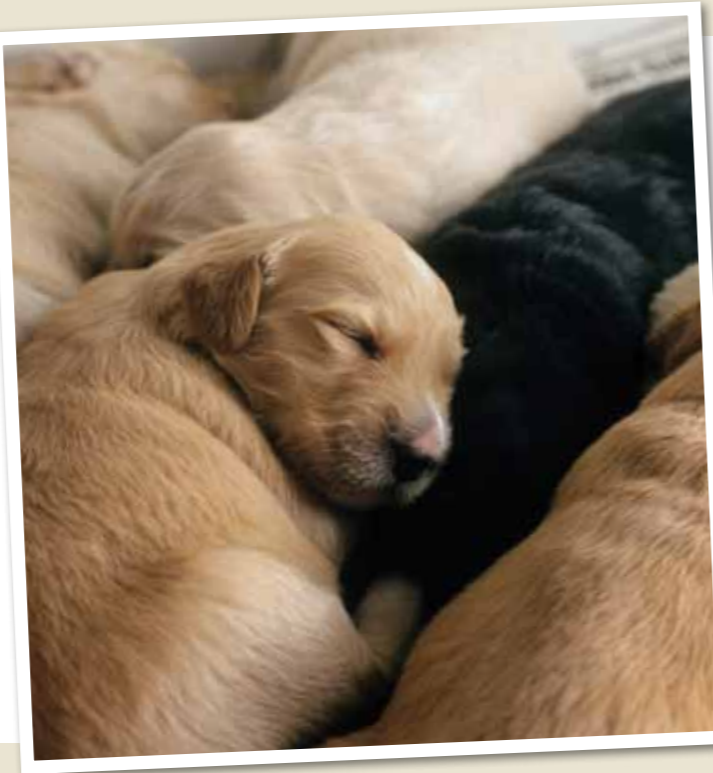


These findings have been used to inform RSPCA policy and disseminated via the website and mailings to interested parties, with a very constructive response. The RSPCA will work towards ending the practice of hot branding horses and ponies and should promote the microchipping of all horses and ponies including moorland ponies.

## Puppy sales contract

The companion animals department has been collaborating with the British Veterinary Association Animal Welfare Foundation (BVA AWF) to develop documentation that will enable the public to make properly informed decisions when buying a puppy. The proposed Puppy Information Pack (PIP) in England will contain information on the puppy and its parents, which will be tied into a simple contract including a warranty from the seller that the information in the PIP is true and complete. An accompanying guidance document will explain the relevance of the information in the PIP to the welfare of the puppy.

The BVA AWF and the RSPCA have been continuing to work on the development of these documents throughout 2011. This has included commissioning experts to author information for the PIP and guidance document.



Philip Toscano x2, E.A.Janes, Andrew Linscott/RSPCA Photolibrary



## Kennelling guidelines

Every year thousands of dogs are seized by enforcement bodies under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 and the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

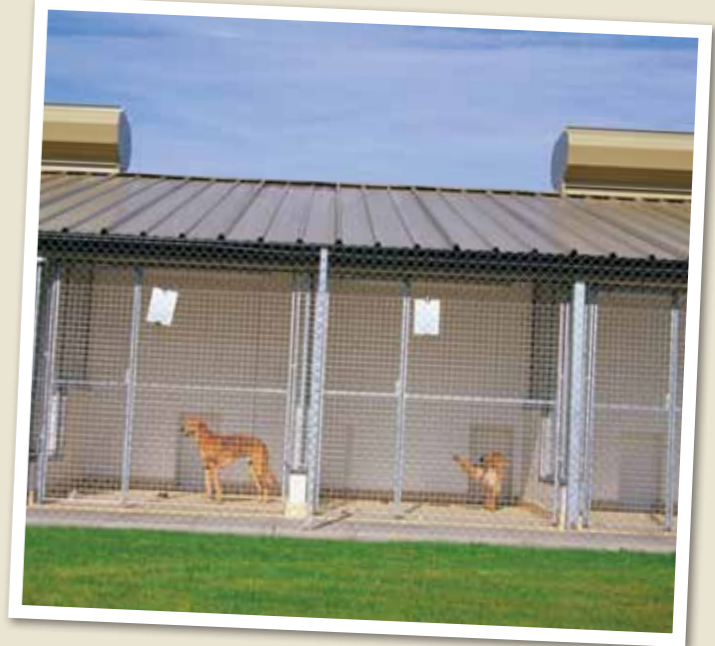
Following seizure, many of the dogs will spend a period of time in a kennel environment. Research focussing on dogs kennelled for a variety of reasons has shown that many find kennel life challenging and experience poor welfare as a result<sup>1</sup>. Research has also shown that there are specific aspects within the kennel environment that, if inadequate or inappropriate, make it difficult for dogs to cope.

For example, small kennel sizes and restricted exercise may influence dogs' behaviour patterns and can limit their ability to explore and investigate, while limited contact with people and other dogs can impact upon social interactions<sup>2</sup>. Based on these findings, it is likely that dogs seized and kennelled by enforcement bodies may struggle to cope with kennel life and, for some, their welfare will be compromised.

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- 2 Gaines, S.A., 2008. Kennelled dog welfare – effects of housing and husbandry. University of Bristol, PhD Thesis.

Following the *Status Dogs Summit* in 2010, the RSPCA companion animals department, in conjunction with frontline enforcers from the police and local authorities, has written a good practice guide which provides advice to kennel managers/owners about ensuring the welfare needs of kennelled dogs seized under the above Acts. They set out the minimum standards to make certain compliance with current law.



## Puppy campaign

The RSPCA companion animals department has previously commissioned experts at the University of Bristol to write a 10 step guide to choosing a puppy. This covers key points that potential puppy buyers should consider from the moment they consider buying a puppy, through to how to choose the right puppy to suit their lifestyle and advice on how to find a reputable breeder.



This guide was used to underpin the RSPCA's *Get Puppy Smart* campaign which launched in February 2011. The campaign aims to provide potential owners with the information they need to make properly informed decisions when choosing a happy, healthy puppy. It also aims to change the behaviour of buyers – from making decisions based solely on appearance to prioritising behaviour, health and welfare instead. The *Get Puppy Smart* website is at: [www.getpuppysmart.com](http://www.getpuppysmart.com)






Later in 2011, the companion animals department provided technical input into the second phase of this campaign, which aims to address the welfare issues associated with the selective breeding of pedigree dogs. The *Bred For Looks, Born to Suffer* campaign was launched in December 2011 and more information is available on the RSPCA's campaign website at: [www.rspca.org.uk/borntosuffer](http://www.rspca.org.uk/borntosuffer)

## Canine welfare in practice

Veterinary surgeons have a duty to ensure their patients' welfare, both legal (under the 2006 Animal Welfare Act) and professional (under the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons Guide to Professional Conduct). To fulfil this responsibility, veterinary surgeons need to be aware of common and serious welfare problems that affect dogs, which they can address, of the harms that veterinary treatment might cause, and of ways to make better treatment decisions.

In 2011 the RSPCA companion animals department published a paper *Dog welfare from a veterinary perspective* in *The Veterinary Journal* to help vets understand and plan for dog welfare. This paper reviewed the existing evidence-base using a systematic search strategy of published papers, alongside qualitative and quantitative reviews of the papers' themes, based on the five needs described in the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

### FIVE WELFARE NEEDS.

1.  The need for a suitable environment.
2.  The need for a suitable diet.
3.  The need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns.
4.  The need to be housed with, or apart from, other animals.
5.  The need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease.

## Influencing decision makers

Scientific staff from the RSPCA's companion animals department promote the RSPCA's policies, aims and objectives through advocacy to statutory bodies, industry, academia and other organisations. Below are some of the examples of our work with animal welfare stake holders.

### Membership of committees and working groups

- The Cat Group.
- Model Licence Conditions Kennel and Cattery Group.

### Meetings and events

- Feline Advisory Bureau Cat Group meetings.
- Feline Advisory Bureau Annual Conference, Basingstoke.
- Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors Feline Conference, Northants.
- Rabbit Welfare Fund *Rabbit health matters* Conference, Birmingham.
- Rabbit Awareness Week – partners' planning meeting, Cambridgeshire.
- British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) Congress, Birmingham.
- Companion Animal Behaviour Therapy Study Group (CABTSG) workshop: *Common behavioural problems with small furries*, Bracknell.
- CABTSG study day, Birmingham.
- University of Liverpool Human-Directed Dog Aggression Systematic Review Seminar, Liverpool.
- Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors (APBC) Annual Conference 2011: *Training and Behaviour, the harmonious approach*, Kettering.
- Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and RSPCA co-sponsored conference: *The Purebred Paradox*, Washington D.C.
- British Veterinary Association Animal Welfare Foundation (BVA AWF) discussion forum (speaker).
- BSAVA Congress (Chair).
- Europäische Akademie Seminar on Large Animal Research Models (speaker).
- First Asian Conference on Animal Welfare, Ethics and Law (speaker).
- First International Conference on Veterinary and Animal Ethics (speaker and evening speaker).
- Hong Kong Public Lecture: *Companion animal ethics* (speaker).
- Lancaster veterinary students forum (speaker).
- Meeting with Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra) about Animal Health and Welfare Board for England.

- Meeting with Defra about Dangerous Dogs legislation.
- Meeting with Defra officials about PET Scheme changes.
- Meeting with the Advisory Council on the welfare issues of dog breeding to discuss breeder assurance schemes.
- Meeting with the Kennel Club.
- Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW) conference. *Animal welfare and Economics* (speaker).
- Associate Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare.
- All Party Parliamentary Group for the Horse.

### Responses to consultations included the following:

- Welsh government, consultation on The Animal Welfare (Breeding of Dogs) (Wales) Regulations 2011.
- Wokingham Council, consultation on License Conditions for Home Boarding (Dogs).
- Defra PET Scheme.
- Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons Code of Conduct.

### External funding

- Rabbits projects.
- Equine ID report.
- VetCOMPASS.

### Scientific publications

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# RSPCA animal hospitals

Our four RSPCA animal hospitals and five clinics treat pets in need of preventative medicine or welfare treatments belonging to members of the public who can't afford private veterinary fees. Throughout 2011, RSPCA animal hospitals have been using mathematical models to improve anaesthesia in kittens.

## Bodyweight or surface area?

In veterinary medicine, the amount of a drug that is required for treatment is most often calculated directly from the patient's bodyweight. A linear relationship exists such that the dose rate may be expressed in milligrams of drug per kilogram of patient mass. (GRAPH 1)

In some situations this system is refined for greater precision – for example cytotoxic agents (cellular 'poisons' used to preferentially kill cancer cells rather than patient cells) with narrow therapeutic indices (the ratio of therapeutic to harmful dose) may be calculated according to patient body surface area. (GRAPH 2)

In 1932, Max Kleiber expressed the metabolic activity of mammals as an exponential function of bodyweight – for example, per unit of mass, a mouse has a higher metabolic rate than an elephant. This may be explained by the elephant possessing a greater proportion of structural tissue which may not significantly contribute to metabolic activity. Also, the surface area to volume ratio is greater for small animals – this effectively increases body cooling and the requirement for an individual to compensate by generating more metabolic heat.

Another practical application of exponential dosing has been developed at the RSPCA Greater Manchester Animal Hospital. The age at which neutering has been carried out is gradually lowering at the hospital – a common procedure is neuter/microchip/second vaccination – particularly in kittens. From practical experience, low bodyweight and young animals require relatively larger dose rates of anaesthetics to induce anaesthesia, yet make rapid and uneventful recoveries. The corollary is that older and heavier animals have lengthy recoveries from similar dose rates. When anaesthetic agents are dosed according to body surface area, recoveries appear to be more uniform for all weights of cat. Furthermore, this technique improves the reliability of injectable intramuscular anaesthetic combinations. Low bodyweight kittens achieve an appropriate plane of anaesthesia and larger cats recover more rapidly. The quality of pain relief afforded by such anaesthetic combinations has been established using behavioural scoring and mechanical nociceptive measurements (the application of a sensitive probe to the periphery of wounds).

Important benefits from this relatively simple mathematical process include:

- a significant reduction in injectable anaesthetic cost for cats over approximately 2.5kg (GRAPH 3)
- reduced and predictable recovery time in larger patients – this reduces inpatient time and attendant nursing costs
- improved reliability for kittens – reducing the need for supplementary ('top-up') dosing.

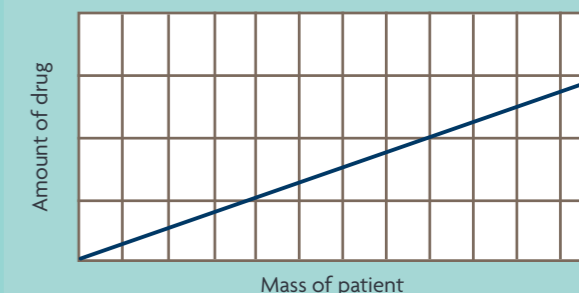
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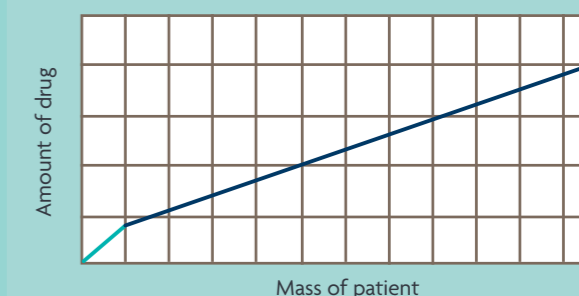
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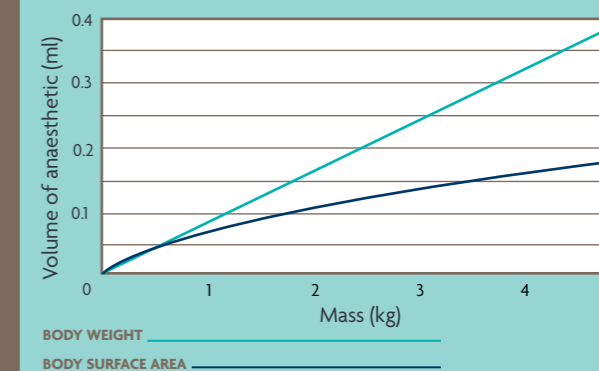
GRAPH 1: Dose calculated from body weight



GRAPH 2: Dose calculated from body surface area



GRAPH 3: Feline anaesthesia





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# Farm animals

Hundreds of millions of farm animals are reared each year in the UK. The majority are reared, transported and slaughtered/killed in ways that the RSPCA does not believe meet their behavioural and physical needs, although legally permitted. The RSPCA is working to improve the welfare of as many farm animals as possible, at every stage of their lives.

The RSPCA farm animals department scientific staff and field staff interpret and 'translate' the latest scientific research and practical experience of farm animal welfare in order to inform development of the RSPCA farm animal welfare policies. As part of this strategy, the department develops RSPCA welfare standards for farm animals which aim to

represent best practice in the care and welfare of farmed livestock. The standards are widely used in the UK and overseas as a benchmark towards which to aim, and are also implemented through the RSPCA's higher welfare food labelling scheme, Freedom Food.

The department seeks to encourage improvements in farm animal welfare in a number of ways.

These include working with food and farming stakeholders such as governments (including in England, Wales and the EU), the farming and food industry, veterinarians and welfare scientists, as well as by raising awareness of farm animal welfare issues through media interviews, presentations, and the production of information resources and reports.

Andrew Forsyth/RSPCA Photolibrary, Freedom Food

## Developing standards

One key area of the farm animals department's work for farmed livestock is the development of the RSPCA welfare standards for farm animals. The standards aim to represent best practice in the care and welfare of farm animals, at every stage of the animals' lives, and go above and beyond standard UK production in a number of important areas. At present there are 10 sets of standards in total, covering the major farm animal species in the UK.

It is important that the standards remain at the limit of what is achievable in terms of animal husbandry and commercial viability. To help achieve this, the standards are informed by the latest scientific research and practical farming experience, as well as by consultation with key stakeholders. Each set of species-specific standards has its own technical advisory working group, which is consulted regularly. The groups consist of producers (usually Freedom Food members), specialist veterinarians, animal welfare scientists, a Freedom Food scheme representative and RSPCA farm animals department scientific and field staff. In 2011, the RSPCA published revised editions of the standards for meat chickens, laying hens and pullets, hatcheries, dairy cattle and farmed ducks, as well as issuing new standards requiring the installation of closed circuit television in abattoirs for all poultry, pigs and ruminants.

The standards are used widely to bring about changes to improve the welfare of farm animals – for example they have previously been used to inform the development of farm assurance schemes outside of the UK. The standards are predominately implemented through the RSPCA's own farm assurance and food labelling scheme, Freedom Food. Freedom Food approved farms, hauliers and abattoirs must implement all relevant RSPCA welfare standards and are assessed annually to check

compliance with the standards. As well as the annual Freedom Food assessment, members are also subject to monitoring visits from RSPCA Farm Livestock Officers (FLOs), the majority of which are completely unannounced.

These risk-based monitoring visits are carried out on a proportion of Freedom Food members each year, as an extra check of compliance with the standards. In addition, FLOs play a vital role in the further development of the standards by providing feedback and information on their application and efficacy in practice. FLOs also conduct Welfare Outcome Assessments (WOA) on a number of Freedom Food farms (see section 'AssureWel' for more information), providing the RSPCA with an idea of the level of welfare being achieved on-farm. The important role of the FLOs was recognised in 2011 by the donation of a grant given specifically to help strengthen the monitoring work.



## Support for future farm animal welfare work

In June 2011, the RSPCA farm animals department was awarded a £3.43 million grant by the Tubney Charitable Trust (TCT), in order to strengthen the RSPCA's work in this vital area.

The ten-year legacy grant from the TCT provides us with the opportunity to influence significant and far-reaching developments in livestock farming. The TCT has expressed the hope that as a result of this grant and a few others like it, farm animal welfare will move closer to the centre of the entire animal welfare movement, where it rightly belongs.

The grant will allow the RSPCA to develop further its existing initiatives and to expand into some new areas, with the potential to affect the welfare of large numbers of farm animals in the UK and beyond.

### Plans include the following:

- further development of the RSPCA's farm animal welfare standards, including the potential for new standards for additional farmed species not currently covered

- recruitment of more farm animal welfare scientists to enhance capacity and enable new programmes of work in key areas such as aquaculture and pig welfare
- enhanced corporate engagement with companies and organisations, including provision of an expert farm animal welfare consultancy service
- strengthening of expertise and capacity in important supporting areas such as social science/marketing and the economic aspects of improving farm animal welfare.



## The welfare of laying hens

### Range research update

Increased use of the outside area by free-range hens can help to improve bone strength and possibly reduce the incidence of feather pecking, but the number of birds using the range can sometimes be low. RSPCA-funded research looking into the factors affecting range use was completed by the University of Bristol in 2011. There are some interesting findings including the importance of vegetation cover close to the hen house, shelter from wind and access to the range from a young age. The results will be used to guide future development of the RSPCA welfare standards for laying hens to help encourage all hens to make full use of the outside area.



### Banning barren battery cages

In 2011 the EU was counting down to the ban on barren battery cages (EU Council Directive 1999/74/EC: *The Welfare of Laying Hens*), on 1 January 2012, after this was agreed 13 years ago. In March 2011, a representative from the farm animals department gave oral evidence to the House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) select committee. The committee was interested in the implications of the ban on the UK industry. The RSPCA voiced concerns that a number of countries were unlikely to be prepared for the changes, leaving millions of hens still facing life in barren battery cages. The RSPCA has been working closely with the UK industry to try to ensure that no eggs from hens kept in illegal systems are imported for use in the UK. This is imperative in order to prevent shoppers from unwittingly buying such eggs. It also sends a very clear message to non-compliant producers that the continued use of such cages, which would not meet even minimum welfare standards as prescribed in law, is wholly unacceptable.

The RSPCA has welcomed the move away from barren battery cages as a significant step forward for hen welfare and farm animal legislation, but continues to campaign against the so-called 'enriched' battery cages which will still be permitted. These cages offer hens only a little more usable space and limited facilities, meaning they are still unable to move around freely or carry out some important natural behaviours properly. The RSPCA would like to see all laying hens kept in barn and free-range systems, to RSPCA welfare standards.

## Assessing welfare outcomes

AssureWel is a five year project on 'welfare outcome assessment' led by the RSPCA, Soil Association and University of Bristol – funded by the Tubney Charitable Trust.

Welfare outcome assessment involves looking directly at the animals, in a consistent and objective way, to measure their health, physical condition and behaviour. Most of the RSPCA welfare standards for farm animals are essentially 'inputs' – requirements to provide animals with certain resources, such as space and feed. However, assessing the 'outcomes' – the real effects these resources are having on animals – can provide a more accurate and genuine picture of their welfare.

A main aim of the AssureWel project is to develop, field test and introduce a system of welfare outcome assessment into the RSPCA Freedom Food and the Soil Association farm assurance schemes and to encourage others, including other farm assurance schemes, to use our approach.

In 2010 the project started by developing and piloting measures for laying hens, which focus on key welfare areas, including feather cover, beak trimming and dirtiness. In 2011, these measures became part of all Freedom Food farm assessments and RSPCA monitoring visits. Assessment data is being analysed which will help us better understand the level of welfare being achieved on the schemes, enable comparisons between farming systems and assist the continued development of the RSPCA welfare standards. Feedback and advice is provided to farms to facilitate improvement. The project has already received significant interest from the industry, including producer groups requesting training for their field staff in assessing the measures. The project is also working with other farm assurance schemes, producer groups, retailers, farm advisors and researchers with the ambition to achieve industry-wide standardisation on assessing the key welfare measures.

In 2011 the project also began developing and piloting measurement of indicators of dairy cattle welfare, which include mobility, body condition, and measures of cow comfort. The project is working with the Red Tractor dairy scheme which aims to introduce some of the measures into its own scheme, which covers the majority of UK dairy farms. This has the potential to help the whole dairy industry focus on and address its most serious welfare issues. In future years the project plans to develop welfare measures for pigs, broilers, beef cattle and sheep.



Photos: Rachel Grandfield; RSPCA Farm Animals Department; RSPCA

## Farming Regulation Task Force review

In May 2011, the Farming Regulation Task Force delivered a report on 'better regulation in farming and food businesses.' The work of the Task Force involved reviewing current regulations and practices in the food and farming industries – including some affecting animal welfare – and recommending change including in areas the group believed posed 'unnecessary burdens'.

The farm animals department, which had submitted the RSPCA's views to the Task Force through verbal and written consultation, issued a response to the report, and a member of the farm animals department gave oral evidence at a Defra select committee hearing on the Task Force's recommendations. Key points we raised included:

- support, in principle, for an effective review of farming and food regulation to identify potential improvements in delivery of intended impact, but cautioning against compromising existing rules simply because they are challenging
- the need for decisions on changing the *status quo* to be based on thorough analysis of robust evidence, costs, benefits and risks to all stakeholders, rather than on perceptions

- the importance of government retaining an overarching and direct role in, and responsibility for, ensuring effective implementation and enforcement of regulations
- cautious support for a risk-based approach to enforcement of rules but highlighting the vital importance of ensuring that the criteria used to make judgements about risk are appropriate, and the information on which those judgements are based is robust and objective.

Defra has now issued an initial response to the report, in which Agriculture Minister, Jim Paice MP, highlighted a number of areas where the government hopes to 'reduce regulatory burdens on farmers, whilst still achieving high standards in environmental outcomes, health and welfare.' The farm animals department will continue to press for an evidence-based approach to underpin any decisions on changing rules on livestock welfare, including use of welfare outcome assessment whenever possible.

## Protection of animals during transport

Late in 2011, the European Commission issued its response to the report (December 2010) of its advisory body, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) on the welfare of animals during transport. This report had reviewed available information on the impact on welfare of the current EU regulations on the protection of animals during transport, and considered whether any changes should be made to the rules in order to safeguard welfare.

The Commission's response stated the intention not to make any changes to the current regulations. This was extremely disappointing as we believe current rules fail to take proper account of scientific information (a view also stated in the EFSA report) and practical experience and hence do not adequately protect animals during transport.

The farm animals department has been heavily involved in providing scientific and practically-based information to drive improvements in the welfare of transported livestock for many years,



and in the run up to the Commission's communication, worked with both Eurogroup for Animals (an umbrella organisation, based in Brussels, for EU animal welfare bodies) and governments to raise issues of concern and recommend areas for improvement.

Our recommendations, informed by scientific research and practical experience, included:

- limiting all journeys of livestock destined for slaughter or further fattening to eight hours
- insisting rules reflect best scientific and practical knowledge of animals' needs
- the urgent need for amendments/ additional provisions concerning transport of horses, rabbits, dogs, cats

and fish, space allowances, deck heights and temperature requirements

- the importance of ensuring more robust enforcement – an issue also acknowledged by the Commission as being a priority.

This work to improve live transport regulations was undertaken against a back-drop of continuing transport from the UK to the Continent of sheep and young calves. The latter are potentially destined for rearing on veal units under conditions that would be illegal in the UK. This adds to the welfare concerns associated with long distance transport by road and sea of animals as young as two weeks of age, a process that research indicates can cause serious short and longer-term health and welfare problems.

## Pig welfare

Tail docking and confinement during farrowing are key welfare issues for pigs to which the RSPCA has been seeking solutions for some time. Tail docking is carried out to reduce tail biting, a behavioural problem indicative of physical and/or behavioural stress. In the UK, the majority of sows farrow (give birth) in farrowing crates which, whilst designed to reduce levels of piglet crushing, severely restrict the sow's movement and natural behaviour.

In 2010 the RSPCA farm animals department received a grant from the Tubney Charitable Trust to gather information on current practices and initiatives in relation to indoor alternatives to the farrowing crate and the avoidance of tail docking and tail biting. This project culminated in January 2011 with a conference where we were able to share this information and engage with a wide audience, including government, the pig industry, individual producers, retailers and academic researchers.

In addition, we commissioned researchers from the Scottish Agricultural College and Newcastle University to investigate the marketplace for higher welfare pork products. Key findings include the resilience of consumers that buy Freedom Food products, who are less likely to decrease the amount they purchase when faced with a price rise, compared with consumers of other types of pork products.

Work will continue in 2012 with the incorporation of key findings from the project into the RSPCA welfare standards for pigs. The British Pig Executives' (BPEX) new Health and Welfare Strategy, developed with input from the farm animals department and launched in August 2011, also lists these two issues as priorities. We will be exploring ways of moving forward on these issues with the pig industry, involving all those within the supply chain, from producers through to retailers.



In addition to discussions on pig welfare at the strategic level, including via the BPEX Health and Welfare Council, during 2011 we continued to engage with individual producers and companies as well as their continental counterparts.

In November, a member of the department was invited to give a presentation and participate in a panel discussion at the Suffolk Pig Discussion Group on the topic of tail biting and tail docking, whilst December afforded the opportunity to address the national conference of the Young National Pig Association on a number of key welfare issues, including the topical subject of 'sustainable intensification' (see page opposite). Presentations to the US National Pork Board and representatives of the Dutch pig industry enabled us to explain the work of the RSPCA, along with the RSPCA welfare standards for pigs and the role of Freedom Food, to an international audience.

## Duck research update



In 2007, the RSPCA's farm animals department secured funding from The Tubney Charitable Trust to help progress our work on duck welfare. Part of the funding went towards commissioning a three-year research project to help evaluate and identify practical ways of providing farmed ducks with an open source of water. The research, conducted by the University of Cambridge in conjunction with the UK duck industry, aimed to identify a commercially viable way of providing ducks with an open source of water that would allow them to perform key water-related behaviours.

The project concluded in September 2011 when a summary of the results was presented at the final RSPCA Duck Stakeholder meeting in London. The research primarily consisted of three parts. Firstly, using small groups of ducks at commercial stocking densities, the effects of different open water facilities on duck health and behaviour were investigated. Secondly, the preference of ducks for different depths of water was assessed. Finally, a trial was designed to assess the effect of various open water resources on duck welfare and production under commercial conditions. This commercial study took into account water quality parameters as well as water usage, for the different facilities offered.

So far, the research has culminated in presentations at seven conferences worldwide and the publication of two papers in peer-reviewed scientific journals, with a further one in press and three currently in preparation. All the research, including that published by other institutions, will now be fully reviewed and discussed with industry experts, including producers, vets and academics, with a view to strengthening, where relevant, the RSPCA welfare standards for domestic/common ducks. An economic assessment is also planned to determine the cost of implementing and managing the preferred open water source according to the new standards developed.

Andrew Forsyth - RSPCA Photolibrary

## Farm size and animal welfare

The last few years have seen an increase in the number of planning applications for large-scale or 'mega farms' and a resultant groundswell of concern about the growth of large farms in the UK, and fear that larger farms automatically mean lower animal welfare standards. While we understand these concerns, current scientific evidence and practical experience shows that the size of a farm is not necessarily linked to the level of welfare to be found on that farm. The important thing is whether the welfare needs of each individual animal are met.

Our clear position is that 'intensive' farms – where the environment and management prevents the performance of normal behaviours by the animals to such an extent that their welfare is compromised – are unacceptable and the planning process must take account of this. In May 2011 the RSPCA wrote to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to highlight the need for animal welfare to be a 'material consideration' in applications and, where appropriate, we have submitted our concerns about specific applications to the relevant local authority.

## Influencing decision makers

### Examples of membership of committees and working groups

- British Pig Executive Health and Welfare Council.
- England Cattle and Sheep Health and Welfare Council.
- European Animal Welfare Platform (EWAP) – Poultry Cluster and Fish Cluster.
- Farm Animal Welfare Forum.
- Beyond Calf Exports Forum.
- Poultry Welfare Forum.
- Seal, aquaculture and salmon working group.
- Eurogroup live transport working group.
- Assured Dairy Farms technical advisory committee.
- Soil Association agriculture and aquaculture technical committees.
- Dairy 2020 Forum for the Future working group.

### Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)

- Live transport expert groups: pigs and ruminants
- Core stakeholder group for the post implementation review of the EU Broiler Directive.
- Beak Trimming Action Group.
- Greenfood Project.
- Drafting group for new slaughter regulation.

### Welsh government

- Animal Health and Welfare Strategy Implementation Group.

### Universities/research institutes/research projects

- University of Newcastle and Scottish Agricultural College: PigSAFE project steering group (farrowing).
- AssureWel Project Board and associated sub-groups.
- Scientific research discussion group, Cambridge University, on provision of an open water source for farmed ducks.
- Bristol University, reducing injurious pecking in laying hens (funded by Tubney Charitable Trust) project steering group.
- Scottish Agricultural College gamebird housing project steering group (funded by Defra).
- BPEX Real Welfare Project steering group.

### Examples of key meetings/events in 2011

- Provided oral evidence to the Environment Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) Select Committee on the implications of the laying hen Directive on the egg industry.

- Visited Chung-hsin University, Taiwan, to discuss chicken production and welfare issues, including visits to chicken producers and processing plants.
- Provided oral evidence to the EFRA select committee on farming related regulation.
- Participated in a Eurogroup for Animals seminar to exchange information regarding EU-based assurance scheme initiatives.
- Participated in and provided proposals for the broiler growth rate project meeting on protocols for trials to determine the health and welfare characteristics of broilers.
- Participated in a Humane Slaughter Association (HSA) workshop on automated electrical stunning for poultry.
- Participated in European conference on alternatives to surgical castration of pigs.
- Participated in a Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation meeting on fish welfare.
- Participated in a FSA Board meeting to present RSPCA views on the installation of CCTV in abattoirs.

### Examples of responses to consultations included:

- Assured Food Standards consultation – pig section.
- EconWelfare consultation.

### Defra

- 2011 EFSA opinion on live transport and proposed changes to EU transport regulations.
- Amendments to The Welfare of Animals (Slaughter or Killing) Regulation 1995.
- Electronic Reporting of Pig Movements in England.

### Welsh government

- Electronic Reporting of Pig Movements in Wales.

### EAWP

- Pork cluster feedback.
- Fish cluster feedback.

### World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE)

- Draft beef standards.
- Animal welfare and broiler chicken production draft recommendations.

### Examples of presentations during 2011:

- US National Pork Board and members of the national pig industry of the Netherlands, highlighting the benefits of the RSPCA welfare standards for pigs.
- International workshop on fish welfare, Madrid.





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## Research animals

Animals are used for many different purposes in research and testing and each area of use raises specific ethical, welfare and scientific issues. The RSPCA adopts a constructive, practical approach, judging every issue individually, critically questioning the necessity and justification for animal use and arguing the need to reduce the conflict between the interests of animals and of science. Our aim is the replacement of animal experiments with humane alternatives worldwide. Until this can be achieved, we work to help ensure that the minimum numbers of animals are used and that they experience the minimum suffering and have the best possible quality of life.

**The Society liaises with those involved in animal use in government, industry and academia to promote initiatives that:**

- **develop effective processes of ethical review**
- **lead to fuller implementation of the 3Rs\***

\* The 3Rs are: **replacement** of animals with humane alternatives, **reduction** of animal use, and **refinement** of husbandry and procedures to reduce suffering and improve welfare throughout the animals' lives.



Andrew Forsyth/RSPCA Photlibrary x3

## New animal experiments law for UK

Since a new European Directive on the Protection of Animals used for Scientific Purposes (2010/63/EU) came into force on 9th November 2010, the UK government has been making preparations to transpose its requirements into UK law. The new EU controls represent a significant advance in the regulation of animal experiments for many Member States and should lead to improvements for tens of thousands of animals across Europe. However, in many areas the standards fall short of what we have had in the UK for a number of years.

Under Article 2 of the Directive, the UK has been given some freedom to maintain current UK standards where they are higher. However, the RSPCA and many other stakeholders, have been concerned that the UK government might simply choose to adopt the new minimum baseline regulations set by Europe. This could have serious implications for the welfare of animals, for the quality of science undertaken, and for public confidence that this use of animals is being appropriately controlled. It would also go against the express declaration of the House of Lords European Union Committee that there should be 'no weakening of standards in the UK'<sup>1</sup>.

Home Office Minister, Lynne Featherstone MP, has acknowledged<sup>2</sup> that a number of the provisions in the new European law are 'potentially less stringent' than current UK regulations<sup>4</sup>. In practical terms, it could mean that some animals may be allowed to suffer long-lasting unrelieved 'severe' pain, suffering or distress – something the Lords' committee stated would be 'unacceptable'. Minimum cage and pen sizes for some animals may also be reduced – affecting both the space available to move around and the capacity for caregivers to provide appropriate environmental complexity. In addition, there could be a significant decrease in the number and frequency of visits and inspections of laboratories by a depleted Home Office inspectorate.

Furthermore, some research establishments could be able to opt to water down the role and membership of their local Ethical Review Process (ERP). This is despite the importance of ERPs, as acknowledged by the Minister<sup>5</sup>, in 'ensuring no relevant replacement, reduction or refinement measure has been overlooked'

and the significant contribution they have made to reducing animal use and improving welfare over the past decade.

The government seems to be aware of the poor public reaction which would greet any move to weaken UK animal welfare standards since, in recent months, it has sought to make some encouraging noises about the desirability of maintaining current provisions. For instance, Home Office Minister Lord Henley said<sup>6</sup> that he could give 'an absolute and categorical assurance that we will not be dropping our standards in any way whatever', whilst Lynne Featherstone announced<sup>7</sup> that 'what we do not want to do is weaken United Kingdom standards of animal welfare and protection'.

However, as in so many cases, the devil is in the detail, and there are conflicting opinions amongst different stakeholders as to what might actually constitute a 'weakening' or 'reduction' of standards. The transposition process comes at a time when economic arguments against the continuation of various regulatory 'burdens' and for a 'level playing field' in Europe are being sympathetically received. The government has stated that it will use the transposition process to review current UK controls in order to reduce bureaucracy – despite there being little convincing evidence in our view to substantiate that this is indeed a significant problem.

The RSPCA has been monitoring events closely, liaising with concerned MPs, members of the public, and the scientific community, taking every opportunity to argue the importance of maintaining current UK standards. We submitted a comprehensive response<sup>8</sup> to the public

consultation from the Home Office which ran from July to September, and throughout the year have had various meetings to make our case with Home Office officials, the Minister and others.

It is likely that a formal guidance document to accompany the new legislation, and which will describe how the new UK law should be implemented in practice, will be finalised during the second half of 2012 with the new law itself coming into force on 1st Jan 2013.

Given the plethora of statements made by the current and previous governments and by many in industry and academia that everything in the UK is done 'to the highest possible standards' and that 'animal welfare is a top priority', it would be disingenuous – and in our view completely unacceptable – for measures to be adopted that would see protection and provisions for animals reduced.



### FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 European Directive on the Protection of Animals used for Scientific Purposes -2010/63/EU. Brussels. See: [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/chemicals/lab\\_animals/legislation\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/chemicals/lab_animals/legislation_en.htm)
- 2 The revision of the EU Directive on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes - Volume 1: Report. House of Lords European Select Committee - 10th November 2009. [www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200809/ldselect/ldselect/164/16402.htm](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200809/ldselect/ldselect/164/16402.htm)
- 3 Written answer to Parliamentary Question 38791 - 10th February 2011. [www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm110210/text/110210w0001.htm#11021062000273](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm110210/text/110210w0001.htm#11021062000273)
- 4 The Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.
- 5 Written answer to Parliamentary Question 53687 - 18th May 2011. [www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm110518/text/110518w0002.htm#11051892002921](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm110518/text/110518w0002.htm#11051892002921)
- 6 Animals: Experimentation - Question for Short Debate - 24th October 2011. [www.theyworkforyou.com/lords/?id=2011-10-04a.1013.0&s=scientific+procedures#1015.4](http://www.theyworkforyou.com/lords/?id=2011-10-04a.1013.0&s=scientific+procedures#1015.4)
- 7 Written answer to Parliamentary Question 82709 - 28th November 2011. [www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2011-11-28a.82709.h&s=animal+experiments+section%3Awrans](http://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2011-11-28a.82709.h&s=animal+experiments+section%3Awrans)
- 8 Available at: [www.rspca.org.uk/getinvolved/campaigns/laboratory/uklabanimallaw](http://www.rspca.org.uk/getinvolved/campaigns/laboratory/uklabanimallaw)

## The 'Bateson Review' of primate use

The use of primates in medical research raises profound ethical questions and is a matter of great concern to the RSPCA and the public. Many in the scientific community consistently maintain that primate use is essential for understanding serious human diseases and valuable in discovering treatments for them. However, an enquiry into primate use in medical research reported<sup>1</sup> in 2006 that actual evidence of the value of primate research was 'anecdotal'. The report called on the major organisations funding primate research (the Medical Research Council (MRC), Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) and the Wellcome Trust) to undertake a systematic review of the outcome of the research they had funded over the preceding decade, to establish how valuable the research actually was.

It seemed astonishing to the RSPCA, given the emphatic nature of statements about the value of primates in medical research, that the supporting evidence was not already available. The RSPCA was also appalled that research funders did not appear to critically review the outcomes of the research they funded – in the case of the MRC and BBSRC, with public money. The review was eventually started in 2009, three years after the original recommendation; during this time the RSPCA wrote several times to the funding bodies asking about the delay. The review panel was chaired by Sir Patrick Bateson and the panel's report was published<sup>2</sup> in July 2011.

The panel admits that 'assessments of medical and other benefits were made with difficulty' and often could be no more than 'informed guesses.' However, it would appear that for a number of research projects, a scientific finding might have been achieved but this had

not actually led to any particular medical benefit, or that the benefit achieved may not have justified the harms actually caused to the animals involved. Of particular concern were the nine percent of the research projects where it was stated that neither a scientific, medical or social benefit had emerged.

The report identifies many questionable aspects of individual research projects in terms of planning, approval, conduct and exploitation for scientific and medical benefit. It makes recommendations which, if implemented immediately and assiduously, should make a real contribution to ensuring that the potential benefit of proposed research is assessed more rigorously, and that the numbers of primates used in research and the level of suffering they experience are minimised.

The first recommendation, for example, underlines the need for rigorous review of grant applications with regard to scientific value, probability of benefit, availability of

alternative approaches and likely animal suffering. The second calls on funders to critically examine the choice of primates as test species, and the possibility of using alternative methods. We have been repeatedly told over many years that such rigorous review is standard practice. It is therefore disturbing – and telling – that the Bateson Panel felt it necessary to restate these requirements.

The RSPCA welcomes the report and believes it should provide a driving force for change – but only if it is taken seriously by the research community. It is important that these issues have been raised and made public in such an authoritative forum. The recommendations must be pursued and implemented without delay, and we will be following this up with the research funders and other appropriate bodies.



### FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 *The use of non-human primates in research. A working group report chaired by Sir David Weatherall FRS FMedSci.* December 2006. The Academy of Medical Sciences/Medical Research Council/The Royal Society/Wellcome Trust. London. [http://royalsociety.org/General\\_WF.aspx?pageid=9115&terms=weatherall](http://royalsociety.org/General_WF.aspx?pageid=9115&terms=weatherall)
- 2 *Review of research using non-human primates. Report of a panel chaired by Professor Patrick Bateson FRS.* July 2011. BBSRC/MRC/NC3Rs/Wellcome Trust. London. [www.bbsrc.ac.uk/organisation/policies/reviews/funded-science/1107-review-research-using-nhps.aspx](http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/organisation/policies/reviews/funded-science/1107-review-research-using-nhps.aspx)



## World congress on alternatives

The 8th World Congress on Alternatives and Animal Use in the Life Sciences took place in Montreal in August

2011. This important event, held every third year, brought together people from 52 countries to discuss progress in the development and implementation of the 3Rs. Over 800 delegates attended, representing governments, regulatory bodies, pharmaceutical and chemicals companies, academia and animal protection organisations. RSPCA scientific staff co-chaired a scientific session on ethical review, and also provided presentations<sup>1</sup> on:

- applying the 3Rs to challenge assays used in vaccine testing
- guidance on the severity classification of procedures involving fish
- ethical review of animal experiments – current practice and future challenges
- facilitating the role of lay members in ethics and animal care and use committees
- openness and public accountability – the why, who, what and how of it.

The 9th World Congress will be held in Prague in 2014.

### FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 The full Congress abstract booklet is available at: [http://www.wc8.ccac.ca/files/C17932\\_LivreCW8Abstract.pdf](http://www.wc8.ccac.ca/files/C17932_LivreCW8Abstract.pdf)

## Reducing severe suffering

Animal experiments are currently classified as mild, moderate or substantial (severe) in the UK depending on the amount of pain or distress that animals experience. The use of animals in procedures that have the potential to cause severe suffering are of particular and major concern. The RSPCA has therefore decided to increase its focus on achieving a reduction in the number of animals who experience severe suffering, within the context of our overall programme of work to promote the fullest implementation of the 3Rs and effective ethical review.

Animals can experience severe suffering when they are used to study conditions that cause severe pain or distress in humans or other animals, for example chronic arthritis, cancer pain, dementia or some infectious diseases. Many vaccine tests also involve severe suffering, as do some acute toxicity (safety) tests. At present, there is no single



source of information on which procedures cause severe suffering as this is not reported in annual Home Office statistics on animal use. (The new European Directive regulating animal experiments requires actual suffering to be reported<sup>1</sup>, but this will not take effect in the UK until 2013.)

The research animals department is currently researching the use of animals in severe procedures, through consultation, reviewing the scientific literature and project abstracts in the Home Office database<sup>2</sup>, and discussion with those who use and care for the animals involved. Further information on the nature and purpose of severe procedures will enable us to identify practical approaches to avoiding and reducing suffering within both industry and academia. The project aims to help achieve reduced levels of suffering so that it is no longer severe, and to facilitate more effective monitoring of animal suffering. A further objective is for severe procedures and models to be avoided; for example, by using alternative approaches such as use of 'biomarkers' instead of full disease models. As an initial step, the RSPCA research animals department held a workshop in autumn 2011 to explore ways of refining animal models of multiple sclerosis and epilepsy, with a view to producing guidelines for researchers in 2012.

### FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 See Article 54 (2) and Annex VIII of European Directive on the Protection of Animals used for Scientific Purposes -2010/63/EU. Brussels. Available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/chemicals/lab\\_animals/legislation\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/chemicals/lab_animals/legislation_en.htm)
- 2 Abstracts for 2011 can be viewed at: [www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/science-research-statistics/769901/animal\\_abstracts\\_for\\_2011/](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/science-research-statistics/769901/animal_abstracts_for_2011/)

## Ban on the use of animals to test household products

In line with a pledge made by the UK coalition government when it came to power, on 18th July 2011, Home Office Minister Lynne Featherstone announced a 'ban' on the use of animals to test household products. To enact this, the Home Office intends to add a condition to relevant animal experiment licences which will prohibit the testing of products intended primarily for use in the household.

The RSPCA has always campaigned against the use of animals to test products such as cosmetics, toiletries, and household cleaners, believing that there are more than sufficient available, and that there is no justification for causing animals to suffer to develop more. However, as the RSPCA has consistently pointed out, the proposed ban may sound good for the government, but will have very little impact. Out of 3.6 million animals used in experiments in the UK in 2010, just 24 were used for this purpose<sup>2</sup>, and zero were used the year before. Furthermore, defining 'household products' will be difficult, and the ban will therefore be easy to circumvent. It may apply only to 'finished' products, and not to their chemical ingredients, so it will still not guarantee that all household products are 'cruelty free'. The ban will therefore impress few people unless it is followed by more substantial progress in other areas of safety testing where tens of thousands of animals continue to suffer.



### FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 [www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/about-us/parliamentary-business/written-ministerial-statement/testing-animals-reduce-use-wms/](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/about-us/parliamentary-business/written-ministerial-statement/testing-animals-reduce-use-wms/)
- 2 [www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/science-research-statistics/research-statistics/other-science-research/spanimals10/](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/science-research-statistics/research-statistics/other-science-research/spanimals10/)

## Rodent welfare

The RSPCA and the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW) have jointly organised an annual meeting<sup>1</sup> on rodent welfare for the past 18 years with the aims of providing a discussion forum on new developments in the 3Rs for rodent care and use, and encouraging and promoting advances in rodent welfare.

The 2011 meeting focused on the application of technologies such as imaging (see right), biotelemetry and automated blood sampling in studies involving rodents. There can be both scientific and animal welfare benefits associated with the use of these techniques; for example, with repeated imaging animals can be used as their own controls, numbers can be reduced and endpoints refined. Telemetry facilitates the collection of data from freely-moving animals, and automated blood sampling removes the requirement for repeated capture, handling and needle insertions

However, there can also be additional harms associated with the application of these technologies to rodents. Some, such as automated blood sampling and telemetry,

can result in single housing of social animals, which is a major stressor. Repeated anaesthesia and scanning sessions, which can be for long periods, can also affect welfare. This can lead to a dilemma – the numbers of animals can be significantly reduced within projects by using these technologies, but there may be an increased negative impact on individual animals. Despite the perceived pressure to reduce numbers, it may be preferable to use more animals and reduce suffering instead.

The 2011 meeting explored these issues and enabled participants to discuss how these harms and benefits can be weighed against one another when making decisions about techniques and protocols. Over 80 delegates attended, including scientists, animal technologists and veterinarians from a range of establishments within industry and academia. An interactive discussion session enabled all to explore how they, and others, made decisions on the use of new technologies and provided some very useful insights into the range of views on the topic. The report from the meeting will be published in the journal *Animal Technology and Welfare* during 2012.



### FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> For more information about the RSPCA/UFAW Rodent Welfare Group and for free to download reports from past meetings, see: [www.rspca.org.uk/sciencegroup/researchanimals/implementing3rs/rodentwelfaregroup](http://www.rspca.org.uk/sciencegroup/researchanimals/implementing3rs/rodentwelfaregroup)

## Genetically altered animals – reduction and refinement

The creation and use of genetically altered (GA) animals continues to escalate worldwide. Mice and zebrafish are the two most common GA species used in research though technical developments published during 2011 mean a surge in the number of GA rats produced is expected over the coming years. Much of the growth in the number of GA animals is driven by a scientific demand for 'new or improved animal models' of disease. Unfortunately, these rarely replace existing ones and in practice become additional models, thus pushing up the number of GA animals further. Implementation of the 3Rs is therefore particularly important in this field and, to this end, the research animals department undertook a number of initiatives in 2011.

- As issues relating to the practical implementation of European Directive 2010/63/EU and its transposition into UK law have been discussed, the RSPCA has aimed to ensure that transparency on the use of GA animals, and opportunities for reduction and refinement are kept at the forefront of people's minds. Some people have suggested a change in the criteria for counting GA animals which could see dramatic reductions in the reporting of these animals in UK annual Home Office statistics<sup>1</sup>. The RSPCA argues for the inclusion of all animals used in the production, breeding and maintenance of GA animals so that meaningful information can be obtained relating to the true costs of applying genetic technologies – both in terms of animals' lives and any suffering experienced.

- In June, the RSPCA was invited to give a presentation on the 3Rs and animal welfare to an audience of senior animal technicians, animal unit managers, scientists and vets from across the UK and Europe. The presentation formed part of a three-day Wellcome Trust advanced training course *Managing mouse colonies: breeding, genetics and welfare*. This course follows on from a 3Rs training initiative organised by the RSPCA in 2010 and will run annually, having been given a regular place within the Wellcome Trust training program.
- In July, a training event *Genetically altered animals and the 3Rs - what's it all about?* was held for scientists and technicians with the aim of highlighting 3Rs opportunities. The meeting included a range of presentations and workshop sessions to illustrate current good practice in the production, breeding and care of GA animals, with the aim of minimising the number of animals created and used and the potential for them to experience pain, suffering or distress.

### FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> Potentially, vast numbers of GA animals created would no longer appear anywhere in the statistics. In addition, some argue that invasive techniques used to genotype animals, such as tail-tipping, ear notching or toe-clipping, should be re-categorised simply as 'husbandry' rather than as a 'scientific procedure'. Were this to happen, then this animal suffering (currently reported) would also be 'lost' from official figures.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on the above initiatives, see: [www.rspca.org.uk/sciencegroup/researchanimals/implementing3rs](http://www.rspca.org.uk/sciencegroup/researchanimals/implementing3rs)

MRC Clinical Sciences Centre

## Ethical review

### Ethical Review Process (ERP) Lay Members' Forum 2011

Delegates from over 40 establishments, representing both academia and industry, attended the meeting which focused on *Making difficult decisions* within the ERP.

An underlying theme was recent progress in the assessment of pain, suffering and distress in laboratory animals. Delegates heard about clinical signs and monitoring systems used to assess suffering in a number of animal 'models', including autoimmune disease and ageing studies. Questions that ERP members could raise about the severity of procedures and the scientific approaches to particular projects were also discussed.

The difficulty, at times, of balancing reduction and refinement was then highlighted through consideration of the application of new technologies, such as imaging (e.g. MRI scanning), biotelemetry and automated blood sampling, to animal research and testing. This led on to discussion of the concept of 'cumulative suffering' which aims to recognise and reduce suffering at every stage of the animals' life experience. Individual 'case studies' typical of industry and academia were provided.

The harms and potential benefits of research in behavioural pharmacology were then presented and the ERP's role in reviewing projects in this field was discussed. This touched on some current controversies

about the benefits of medicines that emerge from such research and whether or not it is appropriate to use medication to manipulate human behaviour.

Ethical review from a global perspective was then explored. This is increasingly important – both for multinational companies and for the academic community. To be effective and improve standards, the local ethical review process has to consider differences around the world in culture and legislation, along with standards of, and consideration for, animal welfare.

### FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> For more information regarding our work to promote effective ethical review, see: [www.rspca.org.uk/sciencegroup/researchanimals/ethicalreview/eventsandnewsletters](http://www.rspca.org.uk/sciencegroup/researchanimals/ethicalreview/eventsandnewsletters)

## Influencing decision makers

Scientific staff from the RSPCA's research animals department promote the Society's policies, aims and objectives through advocacy to statutory bodies, industry, academia and other organisations. They are members of many national and international committees and working groups, and also have expert input into a range of consultations, both to government and non-governmental bodies, on a wide range of laboratory animal issues. Staff have also produced papers on a variety of topics that have been published in peer reviewed scientific journals.

### Membership during 2011 included the following

- European Commission – expert working groups on statistical reporting, and retrospective severity assessment.
- European Partnership for Alternative Approaches to Animal Testing – Mirror Group.
- UK OECD Shadow Group.
- Animal Procedures Committee (APC) – including member of the sub-committee on Housing and Husbandry of laboratory animals; and member of the working group reviewing the revision of the European Directive on animals in scientific procedures.
- Laboratory Animal Science Association – Co-convener of section on Education, Training and Ethics.
- BVA(AWF)/FRAME/RSPCA/UFAW Joint Working Group on Refinement (the research animals department provides the secretariat for this initiative).
- The Boyd Group.
- UFAW 3Rs Liaison Group.
- Various ethical review processes in industry and academia.
- British Society of Toxicology and Pathology/Laboratory Animal Veterinary Association joint meeting: *All about the mouse – health and disease*.
- Fondazione Guido Bernardini International Scientific Conference on *Pain and Distress – Prevention, Assessment and Alleviation in Laboratory Animals*.
- Institute of Animal Technicians (IAT) Congress 2011.
- British Association for Zebrafish Husbandry (BAZH) – May Seminar.
- 3rd East Mediterranean ICLAS Symposium.
- British Association for Psychopharmacology – training course.
- Novo Nordisk 3Rs Award 2011.
- Laboratory Animal Science Association (UK) Winter Meeting.
- Society of Biology/Universities UK/Home Office (Animals in Science Regulation Unit) Workshop.
- Various NC3Rs events (e.g. Annual Science Review 2011; Joint NC3Rs/Society of Biology meeting; CRACK-IT funding scheme launch).

### Responses to consultations included the following:

- 8th World Congress on Alternatives and Animal Use in the Life Sciences.
- Joint CAAT Europe/ECOPA Workshop on *Implementation of the new EU Directive 2010/63/EU*.
- Home Office/Animal Welfare and Alternatives Stakeholder Group meetings on transposition of the European Directive.
- Home Office – Consultation on options for the transposition of European Directive 2010/63/EU on the protection of animals used for scientific procedures (August 2011).
- Home Office – Consultation on issues relating to the delivery of the coalition agreement commitment to end the testing of household products on animals (November 2011).



**Andrew Kelly BSc PhD**  
Head of department from 4.1.11

**Colin Booty BSc**  
Deputy head

**Adam Grogan BSc**  
**Ros Clubb BSc DPhil** (until 11.11.11)  
**Lisa Riley BSc MSc MRes MSc PhD**  
(from 1.11.11)  
Senior scientific officers

**Sophie Adwick BSc MSc**  
**Nicola Cunningham BSc MSc PGDip**  
(from 14.11.11)  
Scientific information officers

**Alison Charles VN**  
**Bel Deering BA MA PGCert(Res)**  
**Lee Stewart BSc MSc**  
**Peter Venn BA**  
RSPCA wildlife centre managers

**Sue Gallagher**  
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**Tash Faulding**  
Administrative assistant

## Fish used in beauty treatments

The last 12 months has seen a dramatic increase in the number of establishments offering skin treatments, such as pedicures, using *Garra rufa* (Dr. Fish)<sup>1</sup>.

During 2011 the Health Protection Agency (HPA) investigated human health risks posed by this practice, finding a minimal but existing risk of infection transmission between clients<sup>2</sup>. Interestingly, the practice is banned in at least 18 US states, partly because regulators believe it to be unsanitary<sup>3</sup>.

The RSPCA has received enquiries from members of the public, entrepreneurs and local authorities concerning the welfare of fish used in this way, and RSPCA inspectors have been called to visit and advise Dr. Fish establishments. We have initial concerns<sup>4</sup> – including water quality and temperature, effect of cosmetic products on fish, housing conditions, handling, disposal, feeding regimes and training of staff – but at present there is no scientific evidence on which to base an RSPCA (or indeed any other) policy on the practice.

Throughout 2011, the RSPCA wildlife department has been working to learn more about the practice and set-ups involved, gather expert opinion on the practice, and commission scientific welfare assessment of fish used in this way. This research is vital in order for the RSPCA to develop a science-based policy on the practice. We also responded to the Fish Spa working group's consultation on draft *Guidance on the Management of the Public Health Risks of Fish Pedicures*<sup>5</sup> and produced, on request, a briefing for local authorities outlining our current knowledge on the practice, welfare concerns and advice.



### FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 A spring 2011 survey amongst environmental health practitioners identified 279 'fish spas' in a third (119) of the UK's local authorities and at least 12 new companies established to import and supply fish spa systems and equipment. Cited in: *Guidance on the Management of the Public Health Risks from Fish Pedicures*. Fish Spa Working Group, June 2011.
- 2 Available at: [www.hpa.org.uk/webw/HPAweb&HPAwebStandard/HPAweb\\_C/1317131046498](http://www.hpa.org.uk/webw/HPAweb&HPAwebStandard/HPAweb_C/1317131046498).
- 3 *Guidance on the Management of the Public Health Risks of Fish Pedicures*. HPA (link below).
- 4 Concerns have also been voiced by the fish-keeping community (eg. [www.practicalfishkeeping.co.uk](http://www.practicalfishkeeping.co.uk)); the Ornamental Aquatic Trade Association (OATA) has stated that it will not accept beauty parlours as members despite being approached (pers. comm. August 2010).
- 5 Final report available at: [www.hpa.org.uk/webw/HPAweb&Page&HPAwebAutoListName/13171310999316](http://www.hpa.org.uk/webw/HPAweb&Page&HPAwebAutoListName/13171310999316).

## Wildlife

Despite growing public concern, the appreciation of the welfare needs of wild animals is often inadequate. The RSPCA wildlife department seeks to improve welfare provisions for captive and free-living wild animals. This is achieved through research, promoting an awareness of the requirements of animals, and an emphasis on a precautionary and humane approach to human interactions with wild animals.

### The international trade in wild animals

Every year millions of wild animals are taken from the wild or bred in captivity for the pet, skin and meat trade. The welfare of the animals involved is rarely, if ever, taken into consideration and many animals suffer as a result. The RSPCA is opposed to the trade in wild-caught animals and also to the trade in captive-bred wild animals if any animal suffers at any stage of the process.

Some species are afforded a level of protection by the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES) to which over 170 countries are signatories. CITES allows trade in listed species under certain circumstances. The RSPCA wildlife department engages with CITES in a number of ways, nationally and internationally. At the national level we work closely with other animal welfare and conservation non-governmental



Lewis Phillips/RSPCA Photolibrary, RSPCA

organisations (NGOs) to engage with the UK's CITES authorities to advocate for a higher level of protection for CITES listed species. At the international level, we are active members of Species Survival Network (SSN), a coalition of over eighty NGOs committed to the promotion, enhancement, and strict enforcement of CITES. Through scientific and legal research, education and advocacy, SSN is working to prevent over-exploitation

of animals due to international trade which is worth billions of pounds each year.

Through attendance at CITES meetings (Animals Committee, Standing Committee and Conference of the Parties), we are attempting to ensure that listed species are not over exploited and that the core issues related to animal welfare within CITES are adhered to by member states and enforced by the CITES authorities.

### Working for wildlife casualties

RSPCA inspectors are often the first part of the process of wildlife rehabilitation. They are called out to attend injured wild animals and make the initial decisions regarding their treatment. During 2011, our inspectors collected approximately 60,000 wild animals, while our four wildlife centres admitted nearly 16,700 sick or injured wild animals. Others were taken to independent wildlife rehabilitators.

Unfortunately, many more of the wildlife casualties found by our inspectors have to be put to sleep to prevent further suffering. This is normally done by using pentobarbitone sodium (PBS), but in September 2010, the RSPCA had to withdraw this drug from use by inspectors due to changes in the legislation regarding how the drug is stored and prescribed. This created a major welfare problem for the inspectors, who now had to take many wildlife casualties to vets to be humanely dispatched.

The RSPCA therefore applied for a group authority for its inspectors to use the PBS, arguing that all pieces of legislation relating to the protection or management of wildlife include defences that allow anyone to humanely dispatch a protected wild animal to prevent further suffering. Therefore the problem was not whether

RSPCA inspectors could make the decision to euthanase wild animal casualties when necessary; it was that they should have the most humane tools available to them to do the job.

The RSPCA was successful in arguing its case and in April 2011 the RSPCA obtained a licence from the Home Office for its inspectors to carry and use PBS for wildlife casualties only.



Joe Murphy/RSPCA Photolibrary, ©istock.com/Mandav

## Mole damage and control

With an estimated population of about 31 million, moles are one of the commonest animals in Britain yet their underground lifestyle means that they are seldom seen. The only visible signs of their presence in an area may be the mole hills they create with soil excavated from their system of tunnels. It is the tunnelling and mole hills that can be the cause of conflict and the perceived need for control in a range of situations.

The cruel poison strychnine was one of the main methods used to kill moles until it was withdrawn in 2006. The RSPCA therefore decided that this was an opportune time to commission research to establish the need for mole control and to determine the efficacy and welfare implications of the remaining mole control methods. This work was undertaken by the Wildlife Conservation Research Unit at Oxford University and consisted of a large-scale national questionnaire covering farmers, amenity managers and gardeners; visiting a sample of respondents to ground-truth replies and to conduct high resolution mapping of mole activity; and an examination of control methods.

The study included post-mortem examination of a large sample of moles killed by trappers. Subsequently it was agreed to extend the work to include measurement of the impact and clamp forces exerted by different mole traps. The research has now been completed and reports submitted to the RSPCA. The researchers are preparing papers for scientific journals and some aspects of the work will be presented at the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW) conference in June 2012 on *Recent advances in animal welfare science*.



## RSPCA wildlife centres review

The wildlife centres continue to strive for a better understanding of the casualties in their care. Numerous research projects are undertaken to investigate post-release survival in rehabilitated species. Techniques such as radio tracking are used, as well as simpler methods such as marking, e.g. ringing birds and relying on re-sightings for information on how long these animals survive and how far they have travelled.

Some of this work is carried out in conjunction with the wildlife department and has been promoted widely at various conferences and symposia. In addition, the wildlife department and centres continue to develop species rehabilitation protocols, based on best practice and sound science.



### RSPCA EAST WINCH WILDLIFE CENTRE

#### Post-release dive ability in rehabilitated harbour (common) seals (*Phoca vitulina*)

Every year the RSPCA rehabilitates and releases over 100 seals – the majority of these at RSPCA East Winch Wildlife Centre. In 2003, East Winch joined with the Sea Mammal Research Unit, based at St Andrews University, to tag and track six rehabilitated juvenile harbour seals alongside five wild adult seals that were being tagged as part of a separate research programme.

The rehabilitated seals had been recovered from locations in Norfolk and Kent. They were around two to three months old on admittance, suffering from a variety of complaints. The seals were released in February 2004, once they had reached a weight greater than 30kg and were free of all clinical symptoms. Prior to release each animal was fitted with Satellite Relay Data Loggers

(SDRLs, SMRU, UK), which relayed the seals' position and provided information on dive depth and duration.

The rehabilitated seals were tracked for a mean of 121 days (shortest: 100, longest: 175). There was no significant difference between rehabilitated and wild seals in this regard, suggesting that the rehabilitated group survived as well as the wild group. Dive durations varied between individuals, but there was no significant difference when seal mass was taken into account. There was no significant difference in the percentage dive times between the wild and rehabilitated seals. These results indicate that our rehabilitation of harbour seals is successful; this work has now been published<sup>2</sup>.



FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES  
 1 Fedak M, Lovell P, McConnell B and Hunter C (2002). *Overcoming the constraints of long range radio telemetry from animals: Getting more useful data from smaller packages*. Integrative and Comparative Biology 42:3–10.  
 2 Morrison C, Sparling C, Sadler L, Charles A, Sharples R, McConnell B (2011) *Post-release dive ability in rehabilitated harbour seals*. Marine Mammal Science DOI: 10.1111/j.1748-7692.2011.00510.x

Andrew Forsyth/RSPCA, Ros Shaw, WildCRU (mole), Dr. Sandra Baker, WildCRU (traps), David Couper, RSPCA, West Hatch Wildlife Centre



### RSPCA MALLYDAMS WOOD WILDLIFE CENTRE

#### Winter retention of rehabilitated hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*)

The hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* is the casualty most frequently brought into UK wildlife centres, most commonly when too small to hibernate (TSTH), with insufficient resources to survive hibernation. Traditional rehabilitation methods suggest retaining hedgehogs for four to five months in suitable indoor enclosures, while feeding daily to maintain weight in preparation for release in April/May. By mid-December/January the increasing number of animals retained creates the issue of providing adequate space for housing.

Observations at RSPCA Mallydams Wood Wildlife Centre concluded that keeping more than one hedgehog in a pen caused unrelated individuals to fight or dominate food and it was not possible to increase the number of pens. In 2006 the centre altered their protocol to encourage hedgehogs to hibernate in care. The animals were individually housed with decreasing ambient temperature, then placed in an unheated building in individual pens and provided with materials to encourage nesting behaviour.

Although successful, there were still limitations on the number of animals that could be comfortably held for several months, prompting the next phase – to release hedgehogs once they had entered hibernation. Hibernating animals were selected by torpidity and stable weight (above 550g – see Table 1) and taken to release sites during mild weather between December and March 2006-2011. The question remained whether the individuals would sustain hibernation or stay active during periods of depleted food sources and subsequently perish?

In 2010 Mallydams approached the University of Reading to engage in a joint project for three consecutive years, radio-tracking hedgehogs released during the winter months. The results will be used to further develop the RSPCA's hedgehog rehabilitation protocol.

TABLE 1  
Average monthly hedgehog release weights: 2006-2011

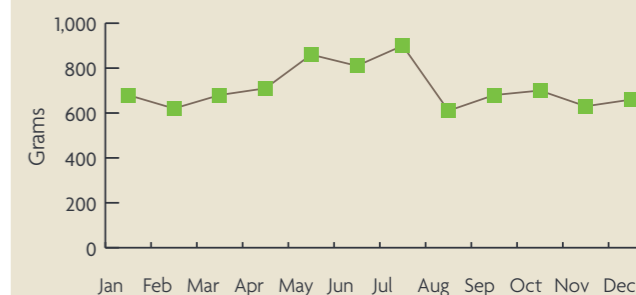
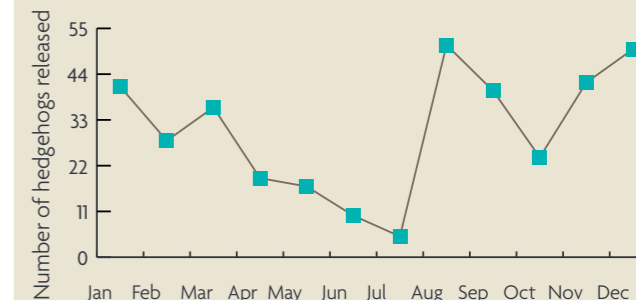


TABLE 2  
Average monthly hedgehog releases: 2006-2011



### RSPCA WEST HATCH WILDLIFE CENTRE

#### *Tetrameres* species parasites in tawny owls (*Strix aluco*)

*Tetrameres* species parasites were identified in seven tawny owls *Strix aluco* at RSPCA West Hatch Wildlife Centre on routine post mortem examination. There appear to be no previous reports of *Tetrameres* species parasites in tawny owls, and hence this is a new host record, and could be considered to represent an emerging infectious disease.

Adult *Tetrameres* species are parasites of the proventriculus (stomach) of birds. They are generally found in poultry. Heavy infestations may be fatal in chicks, but the parasite is usually present only in moderate numbers, and is well tolerated. Birds become infected by ingesting the intermediate host, which may be either aquatic crustaceans, or terrestrial insects or isopods containing the third-stage larva.

Tawny owls have a very varied diet, which includes small mammals, birds, amphibians, earthworms and beetles. They are therefore at risk of consuming the intermediate hosts for *Tetrameres* species.

Adult female *Tetrameres* worms are deep red in colour, and are typically found embedded in the gastric glands. The central part of the body is globular, having a diameter of approximately 5mm. The parasites can be seen on the serosal (outer) surface of the proventriculus, appearing like tiny grapes (as shown).

The parasite generally appears to be present in low numbers in tawny owls. One individual examined at post mortem had a high burden, and was emaciated. However,

this owl also had an extensive necrotic lesion of the oral cavity, and so it is not possible to comment on the significance of a heavy infection.





## RSPCA STAPELEY GRANGE WILDLIFE CENTRE

### 'Heal to fly' project – wing tear injuries in bats (*Pipistrellus spp.*)

The ultimate aim of our wildlife centres is to release casualties into the wild in a fit and competitive state and to avoid unnecessary holding of animals at the hospital if their chances of survival are minimal. Currently, based on existing scientific knowledge, the RSPCA's bat rehabilitation protocol recommends that bats with complete wing tears be euthanised. The 'heal to fly' project is looking at whether an alternative method of care could result in some of these bats being successfully rehabilitated and released.

200 bats were admitted in 2011 to RSPCA Stapeley Grange Wildlife Centre, including 144 pipistrelles; of these, nine were admitted with severe wing membrane injuries, largely thought to be caused by cats. The usual veterinary technique of stitching or gluing has been problematic with bats removing stitches or glue when grooming. Stapeley has looked to simplify the process by keeping bats in a warm and confined box, providing antibiotics and supplementing feeds with vitamins and minerals. This method has restricted their flight, giving them time to rest and heal.

Out of the nine bats that were admitted and eligible for this project over the past 15 months, five were returned to the wild, two were put to sleep and one died from other injuries not associated with wing tears. The remaining individual is being over-wintered in care. On average it has taken 49 days to reach an outcome.

Before being released, the bats were all flight tested extensively in both indoor and outdoor flight aviaries at Stapeley, a practice that has been proven to be important for their post-release survival.

\* Bat number 34389, before and after healing

REF NO	AGE/SEX	ARRIVAL	COMMENTS	OUTCOME	LENGTH OF STAY (days)
28576	J (A)	04/09/10	Amputation of distal wing	05/11/10 Released	62
28696	A (M)	10/09/11	Catted, extensive left arm/wing tear	12/03/11 Died in Care	182
29685	A (F)	11/12/11	Wire through arm/wing	19/02/11 Released	63
32060	A (F)	31/05/11	Catted, tears in both wings	28/07/11 Released	58
32443	A (M)	13/06/11	Catted, old and new tears	22/07/11 Released	39
33179	A (F)	10/07/11	Catted, missing large area left arm/wing and skin trauma to thorax	20/07/11 Euthanized	37
33742	A (F)	29/07/11	Catted, large left arm/wing tear and missing 1/2 fifth finger bone	Being over-wintered	-
34389*	J (F)	30/08/11	Catted, tight arm/wing tear	22/10/11 Released	53
34795	J (F)	24/09/11	Unknown – series of holes in right wing and trauma to the left carpal joint	25/11/11/ wintered	62

A: adult, J: juvenile



Photo: Wendy Northrop, RSPCA Stapeley Grange Wildlife Centre

## Influencing decision makers

Scientific staff from the RSPCA's wildlife department promote the Society's agreed policies, aims and objectives through advocacy to statutory bodies and other organisations at the highest level. They are members of many national and international committees and working groups and also have key input into a range of consultations, both to government and non-governmental bodies, on a wide range of wildlife issues.

Below is a small selection of the committees, meetings, events and consultations in which wildlife staff have participated during 2012.

### Representation on external committees

- Animal Welfare Network for Wales.
- British Wildlife Rehabilitation Council (BWRC) steering committee.
- Marine Animal Rescue Coalition (MARC).
- Species Survival Network (SSN) Board.
- The Deer Initiative.
- The Mammal Society.
- Whalewatch coalition.
- Wildlife and Countryside Link: Policy director; whale and wildlife trade working groups.
- World Conservation Union's otter specialist group.
- Zoos expert committee.

### Consultation responses

#### Defra

- Guidance to Natural England on the implementation and enforcement of a badger control policy.
- Rabies control strategy.

#### Other

- Oil spill treatment product approval review.
- National Contingency Plan (NCP) for Marine Pollution from Shipping and Offshore Installations.
- Guidance on the management of the public health risks of fish pedicures.

## Meetings and events

- Meeting at New Forest otter and owl park to discuss protocol for otter rehabilitation with the Environment Agency, and wildlife trusts.
- Dormouse conference, University of Greenwich. Presentation on the dormouse monitoring programme at RSPCA Mallydams Wood Wildlife Centre.
- Whaling welfare and ethics workshop: meeting of welfare experts to discuss welfare in terms of whaling and the International Whaling Convention (IWC).
- Mammal Society conference: presentation on post-release survival of rehabilitated badger cubs and juvenile pipistrelle bats.
- Invasive species meeting, Defra: to discuss development of the EU strategy and the work being undertaken in three working groups set up by the Commission.
- Deer Initiative partnership meeting and field visit to examine deer-related issues in East Anglia.
- British Veterinary Association (BVA) Animal Welfare Discussion Forum: presentation and panel discussion on the trade and welfare implications of keeping reptiles as pets.
- Meetings with experts to arrange regular health checks of Anne the elephant in order to monitor her progress in her new home at Longleat.
- BVA/RSPCA meeting to discuss Memorandum of Understanding and issues related to wildlife rehabilitation.
- Meeting with BVA, Humane Society International (HSI) UK, Born Free Foundation (BFF) and Care for the Wild (CWI) on the issue of wild animals in circuses in England.
- Bat lyssavirus meeting, Defra: an update on Defra's work on this topic.
- 25th Animals Committee meeting of Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES), July 18–22 in Geneva, Switzerland.
- Irish wildlife rehabilitation conference. Presentation by head of department on the importance of post-release studies for determining success in wildlife rehabilitation.
- International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council (IWRC) training at RSPCA Mallydams Wood Wildlife Centre. President of IWRC presented Basic Skills class to an invited group from the RSPCA and BWRC. This course is used to demonstrate ability when applying for a permit to rehabilitate wildlife in the US.
- RSPB meeting on oiled wildlife response to discuss co-operative working in the event of a major incident.
- First national bat carers' workshop. Presentation on the ethics of rehabilitating bats.
- Animal Welfare Network meeting for Wales. Discussion about finalising report on animal welfare establishments (sanctuaries) for presentation to the Welsh government.
- SSN Board meeting, Washington DC.

- IWRC symposium 2011. Presentation on the RSPCA's work on rehabilitating oiled guilemots.
- 50th anniversary conference of the British Veterinary Zoological Society (BVZS).
- Attended *Manchex*, Dover: an exercise simulating a collision between a tanker and ferry in the English Channel, which included an RSPCA representation to describe response for oiled wildlife.
- Meeting with Defra, Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), HSI UK and IFAW to discuss animal welfare provisions under CITES.

## External funding

- Research into the effect of tags on rehabilitated and released seabirds, Swansea University. Jointly funded by the RSPCA and Oiled Wildlife Care Network. Ongoing from 2010.
- Research into the survival of hedgehogs during hibernation, Reading University. The RSPCA has contributed radio transmitters for this project for tracking the hedgehogs. Ongoing from 2010.
- Review of the humaneness of rat, mouse and mole traps, Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU), University of Oxford. Reports being written up in 2011.
- Research into welfare and ethical aspects of wildlife reintroductions as a method of wildlife conservation, WildCRU.
- Research into rehabilitated badgers, through Knowledge, Ecology Skills Scholarship (KESS) with Swansea University.
- Research into the welfare implications for Garra rufa fish of being used to provide beauty treatments such as pedicures.
- Enabled representative from Burkina Faso to attend the 61st Standing Committee of CITES in Geneva, Switzerland.
- Practical workshop, organised by the Deer Initiative with the Police and East Sussex County Council, on dealing with deer vehicle collisions for volunteer deer wardens in East Sussex.

## Scientific publications

- Grogan A, Wilson RP and Vandabeele SP (2011). *Implications of fitting monitoring devices to wild animals*. *Veterinary Record* Dec 3rd 2011 doi: 10.1136/vr.d7782.
- Kelly A, Halstead C, Hunter D, Leighton K, Grogan A and Harris, M (2011). *Factors affecting the likelihood of release of injured and orphaned woodpigeons (Columba palumbus)*. *Animal Welfare* 20, 523-534.
- Morrison C, Sparling C, Sadler L, Charles A, Sharples R, McConnell B (2011). *Post-release dive ability in rehabilitated harbour seals*. *Marine Mammal Science* DOI: 10.1111/j.1748-7692.2011.00510.x
- Vandabeele SP, Wilson RP and Grogan A (2011) *Tags on seabirds: how seriously are instrument-induced behaviours considered?* *Animal Welfare* 20: 559-571.

For a full list of papers produced by or in conjunction with the RSPCA wildlife centres, please go to: [www.rspca.org.uk/sciencegroup/wildlife/currentresearch](http://www.rspca.org.uk/sciencegroup/wildlife/currentresearch)