



Science Group

Review of 2014



Helping animals through welfare science

www.rspca.org.uk/sciencegroup

Foreword

Sadly this will be my last contribution to the *RSPCA Science Group Review* since I retired in January 2015 after 25 years with the Society. During that time I have seen the RSPCA's four scientific departments – **Companion Animals**, **Farm Animals**, **Research Animals** and **Wildlife** – go from strength to strength as authoritative teams that combine science, ethics and practical considerations to underpin the Society's work for animals and make us such a unique and influential animal welfare organisation.

Our wide-ranging work includes developing welfare standards for farmed animals and the **Freedom Food** scheme, promoting practical ways of reducing suffering for laboratory animals, helping people understand and provide for the needs of companion animals in their care, and promoting thoughtful and humane interactions with wildlife.

The measured and constructive, yet challenging, approach of all four science departments makes the RSPCA a formidable force for animal welfare and the 'go to' organisation on animal welfare issues for a wide range of stakeholders both in the UK and internationally. This edition of the *Science Group Review* gives just some examples of the work that we do and our stakeholder engagement with government, industry, academia and the public.

It has been a great privilege to work for the RSPCA for so long. It is a truly amazing organisation and I wish the Science Group and the Society as a whole all the very best for the future.

Maggy Jennings, OBE, PhD
Chief Scientific Officer
RSPCA

2014

RSPCA Science Group – 2014 calendar highlights

January – March

Publication of *RSPCA welfare standards for farmed rainbow trout* – the first set of standards for a new species for 12 years.

Participated at Mammal Society conference on hedgehogs and harvest mice, Aberystwyth.

Invited to present at the Edinburgh University MSc Applied Animal Behaviour and Welfare careers day.



Welfare outcome assessments for dry sows and finishing pigs developed through the AssureWel project implemented in the Freedom Food scheme.

Participated in first Reptile Forum, held at Zoological Society of London.

Delivered a lecture on companion animal welfare at Sparsholt Agricultural College, Hampshire.

Met with the Home Office minister with responsibility for the regulation of research using animals in the UK.

Participated in a meeting of the Associate Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare on primates and other exotics kept as pets.

Participated at the Elephant Welfare Group meeting of the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums.

April – June

Participated at the annual British Small Animal Veterinary Association Congress.

Delivered training on *Ensuring good animal welfare* to the Association of Chief Police Officers Instructors' Course, Merseyside.

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Participated in a meeting at Monkey World to discuss marmoset rehoming project.

Hosted the first AssureWel International meeting with a selection of other European and international farm assurance schemes.

Presented the RSPCA/British Society for Animal Science (BSAS) award for innovation in animal welfare to Dr John Bradshaw at the BSAS annual meeting.

Presented on captive elephant welfare at the Animal Welfare and Sustainable Populations Conference, Blair Drummond Safari Park, Stirling.

Invited to the US to examine and evaluate the humaneness of a novel system for the killing of meat chickens.

Jointly convened (with the Laboratory Animal Science Association, the Institute of Animal Technology and the Laboratory Animals Veterinary Association) a workshop on good practice for ethical review of animal use.

July – September

Participated in the first Feline and fourth Canine Science Forum.

Delivered training for RSPCA animal centre staff on exotic animals, Sparsholt College, Hampshire.

Participated in a Defra badger vaccination workshop.

Participated at the ninth World Congress on Alternatives and Animal Use in the Life Sciences.

Launched the RSPCA 'roadmap' for ending severe suffering in laboratory animals.

Delivered presentations at the National Pet Show: *Getting a happy, healthy dog* and *Keeping your cat happy and healthy*, as well as an interactive session: *Back to bunny basics: rabbit care made simple* and *Have you got the eXotics Factor?*.

Presented RSPCA work on welfare assessment at an international conference in France: *Assessment of Animal Welfare at Farm and Group Level*.

Met with government agencies and NGOs regarding data collection during seabird pollution incidents.

October – December

Invited to present at the Director of Army Veterinary Remount Service Military Health and Welfare Study Period: *Military Working Dogs – compliance with the Animal Welfare Act 2006*.

Around 100 delegates attended the 2014 RSPCA/Universities Federation for Animal Welfare Rodent Welfare Group Meeting.

Published a revised version of the *RSPCA welfare standards for pigs*.

Participated at a meeting with stakeholders at Oil and Gas UK in Aberdeen to discuss national contingency plan for oiled wildlife.

Invited as speakers to an EC-funded training workshop on the regulation of animal experiments in Croatia.

Invited to present at National Association of Fleet Managers North East Regional Committee meeting: *Transporting working dogs – compliance with the Animal Welfare Act 2006*.

Met with Natural Resources Wales and other stakeholders regarding a code of practice for the use of snares.

Organised the 2014 RSPCA Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body Lay Members' Forum.

Participated at a meeting with British Divers Marine Life Rescue to discuss seal rescue and rehabilitation.

Delivered a training event to Bulgarian government officials on the regulation of animal experiments in Bulgaria.

Companion animals



Millions of animals in England and Wales are kept as pets, sporting athletes or working animals. Much of the RSPCA's work focuses on protecting and improving their welfare and the companion animals team helps to direct and support this work.

PROTECTING THE WELFARE OF ANIMALS IN RSPCA CARE

The RSPCA has 17 regional and 43 branch animal centres and at any one time we are caring for more than 3,000 dogs and 4,000 cats. Recent years have seen huge advances in the understanding of companion animal behaviour and welfare and it is vital that staff responsible for the care and rehabilitation of animals have access to this information.

In 2011, the RSPCA started updating the training materials provided to staff about dog behaviour and welfare to ensure the content was scientifically sound and based on the most current knowledge. **The companion animals team** worked with Julie Bedford, a certified clinical animal behaviourist, to develop a series of bespoke courses for RSPCA staff about understanding and

preventing aggression in dogs and understanding and meeting the welfare needs of dogs in RSPCA care.

In 2014, training on our legal obligations under dog control legislation and management of suspected prohibited types of dog has been revised and launched. We are also developing courses for staff on understanding and meeting

the welfare needs of cats and rabbits. The training provided to staff is underpinned by written care resources, with the companion animals team using the latest scientific findings, expert input from external consultants and our vastly experienced field staff to produce publications focusing on dogs and cats. This work is still continuing with documents being developed for rabbits and other small animals.



Dr Sam Gaines –
Head of Companion Animals

“Bringing together the latest scientific findings, practical experience from our field staff and the expertise of behaviour and welfare specialists ensures animals in RSPCA care experience a good standard of welfare.”

Commissioning research to improve dog and cat welfare

The longevity and mortality of owned dogs and cats in England, and the prevalence of disorders affecting owned dogs in England have been two of the areas of focus for an **RSPCA-funded VetCompass PhD project** with the Royal Veterinary College (RVC) and the University of Sydney. We commissioned the research in response to calls for an urgent need for a systematic way of collecting data on inherited diseases in order to address the welfare issues associated with selective breeding.

Medivet, who support VetCompass, have created three infographics to summarise the results of the research in a user-friendly way. The infographics were promoted via the RSPCA's Facebook and Twitter accounts and received an enthusiastic reception – the infographic on cat longevity reached over 209,000 people. It was also promoted by the RVC on Facebook and it was one of their most successful posts. Promoting the results of research in this format, via social media channels, provides a great opportunity to reach the wider population.

A further infographic on disease prevalence in cats is being developed and should be available early 2015.



There is more information about Vet Compass and this research project on the [VetCompass website](#).



HELPING OWNERS UNDERSTAND DOG AND CAT BEHAVIOUR

An animal's behaviour provides information about their needs, preferences and internal subjective state. However, not all those who come into contact or interact with animals are able to recognise or understand the behaviour which is being displayed and this can impact upon animal welfare and public safety. In 2014, we commissioned Lili Chin, an illustrator based in the United States, to develop a series of drawings for dogs and cats which shows how body language can differ depending on whether an animal is feeling pleasure, anxiety, threatened or angry. These illustrations will be used in a variety of different platforms including the RSPCA's website and published pet care guides.

We have already used the dog illustrations to produce resources for promoting safety around dogs which aim to reduce the dog bite risk to children.

In 2013, statistics from the Health and Social Care Information Centre found that the age group with the highest number of hospital admissions for dog bites was children aged between 0-9 years old.

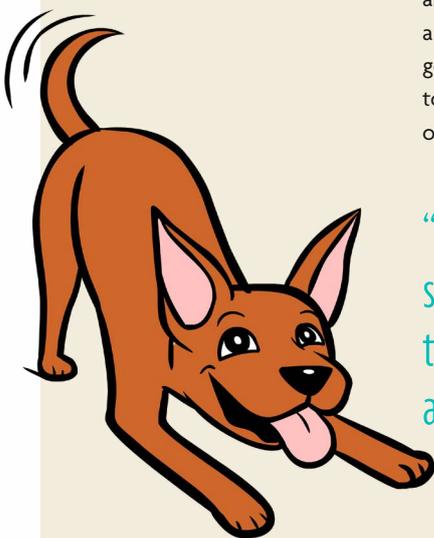
Additional hospital injury data also shows that young children are more likely to be bitten by a family dog than one they don't know. Reducing the number of children and adults that are bitten by dogs is likely to require multiple approaches but a key factor is understanding and

recognising dog behaviour and helping parents to keep their children safe around dogs.

To achieve this, we worked in partnership with internationally-acclaimed vet and animal behaviourist Dr Sophia Yin* to launch RSPCA materials which aim to teach children **how to interact safely around dogs**. We have published a **leaflet** which illustrates the different behaviour which dogs use depending on how they are feeling when 'happy', 'uncomfortable' and 'angry' and this is accompanied by a set of golden rules for parents to follow so that their children stay safe and their dogs stay happy.

The materials were launched ahead of the summer holidays – a time when dogs and children generally spend more time together and the frequency of dog bites increases.

“keeping children safe and teaching them how to behave around dogs.”



*In October 2014, Dr Sophia Yin died suddenly and unexpectedly. Her loss to the behaviour and veterinary world is profound. However she has left an extraordinary legacy and has improved the lives of many pets through her advice and knowledge and created many happy and harmonious pet-owner relationships as a result.

How kids SHOULD NOT interact with dogs

It's common sense. Just imagine how people should interact with each other.

<p style="font-size: x-small;">Avoid taking people's food.</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small;">Avoid bothering dogs when they are eating.</p>
<p style="font-size: x-small;">Avoid stealing other people's toys.</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small;">Avoid taking a dog's bones or toys.</p>
<p style="font-size: x-small;">Avoid putting your face right up to someone else's face.</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small;">Avoid putting your face right up to a dog's face.</p>
<p style="font-size: x-small;">Avoid bothering when asleep.</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small;">Avoid bothering animals when they are resting. Let sleeping dogs lie.</p>
<p style="font-size: x-small;">Avoid pestering.</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small;">Avoid grabbing tail/ears.</p>
<p style="font-size: x-small;">Avoid climbing on or trampling.</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small;">Avoid climbing on or trampling.</p>
<p style="font-size: x-small;">Avoid pinching.</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small;">Avoid hugging. Most dogs dislike it.</p>
<p style="font-size: x-small;">Avoid screaming around.</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small;">Avoid screaming and shouting. Use your 'inside' voice instead.</p>

in partnership with Dr Sophia Yin, DVM MS
www.rspca.org.uk www.drsophiayin.com
 Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
 Wilberforce Way, Southwester, Heston, West Sussex RH11 9RS
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How kids SHOULD interact with dogs

Use common sense.

<p style="font-size: x-small;">Be polite and kind to pets.</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small;">Learn to recognise when your dog is scared or anxious.</p>
<p style="font-size: x-small;">Play appropriate games with pets, such as:</p>	
<p style="font-size: x-small;">Fetch.</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small;">Training tricks (like roll over, shake, beg, etc.)</p>
<p style="font-size: x-small;">Walking and running with a dog.</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small;">Playing hide-and-seek.</p>
<p style="font-size: x-small;">Always remember:</p>	
<p style="font-size: x-small; color: red;">Supervise all interactions. Accidents can happen in a split second.</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small;">Train your dog to associate the kids with positive experiences so he'll be more likely to tolerate your child in case she accidentally interacts inappropriately.</p>

in partnership with Dr Sophia Yin, DVM MS
www.rspca.org.uk www.drsophiayin.com
 Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
 Wilberforce Way, Southwester, Heston, West Sussex RH11 9RS
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Advice and information for pet owners

This year the RSPCA companion animals team were invited to the London and National pet shows which provided us with a fantastic opportunity to meet and talk directly with pet owners.

Held at Earls Court and the NEC, the shows combined live animals and displays, with trade stands and advice sessions. There was a diverse mix of species represented at the shows including dogs, cats, various small mammals, reptiles and ponies. A wide cross-section of people was expected, ranging from the dedicated pet enthusiast to those looking for a family day out.

Attracting a combined audience of over 40,000 pet loving consumers, these shows offered an unprecedented opportunity to engage face-to-face with large numbers of current and prospective pet owners, and provide them with up-to-date, scientifically-based pet care advice and information.

RSPCA dog and cat welfare experts made presentations on *Getting a happy, healthy dog* and *Keeping your cat happy and healthy* at both events. Our rabbit welfare expert led an interactive session: *Back to bunny basics – rabbit care made simple* at the

National Pet Show. In addition to giving these talks, RSPCA welfare experts were available throughout the shows to answer questions from the public.



Dr Jane Tyson –
Scientific Officer

“Both pet shows gave us an exciting opportunity to disseminate current welfare advice, which will hopefully be used to enhance the lives of many animals”.

Influencing the veterinary profession

The companion animals team, alongside the RSPCA's Senior Campaigns Manager and veterinary staff from the RSPCA animal hospitals in Manchester and Birmingham attended the annual **British Small Animals Veterinary Association Congress** in April. This event provided the opportunity to raise awareness amongst vets of the crisis facing RSPCA centres and branches, as well as other charities.

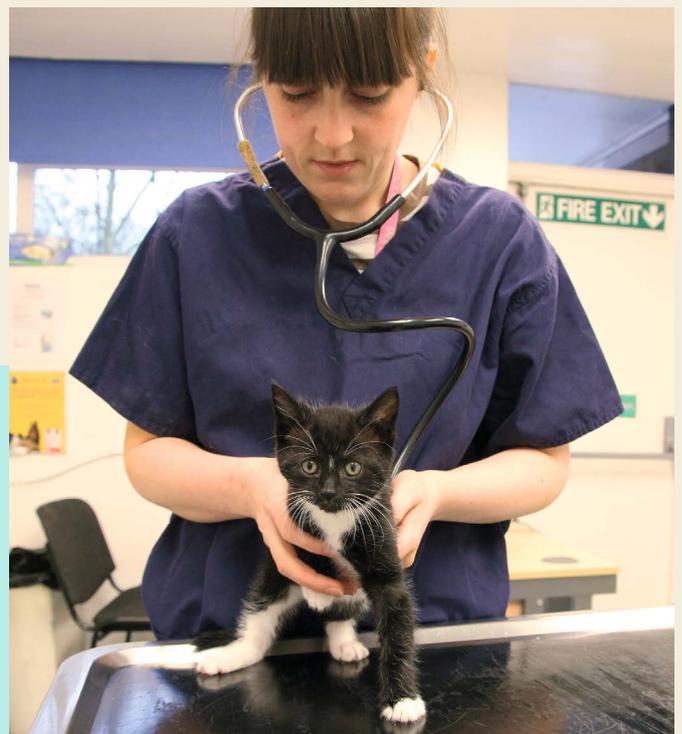
The numbers of cats admitted into the care of the RSPCA increased by eight percent in the period 2010-2012 – from 29,269 to 31,556. The RSPCA is full to capacity and having to rely heavily on private boarding establishments to house unwanted and abandoned cats – at considerable cost. The main focus of our attendance was to increase the awareness of timely (pre-pubertal) neutering in female cats as a means of reducing the overall cat population.

Historically, the timing of neutering has been six months for owned cats. However, many cats reach sexual maturity at four months so the RSPCA believes **neutering** at this time is vital to reduce the number of unplanned litters. Whilst a proportion of veterinary practices already neuter cats at four months of age, there are many that don't. We also spoke with vets about other ways in which they could play a part in tackling the high population numbers, for example, by getting involved in community outreach to engage with the 15 percent of cat owners who are not currently registered with a veterinary practice.



Alice Potter –
Scientific Officer

“With our centres and branches full to capacity, we need to educate owners and work collaboratively with vets to increase timely neutering, prevent unplanned litters and reduce the cat population”.





Providing guidance for enforcement bodies

During 2014 the RSPCA has produced and contributed to a number of resources for practitioners working within enforcement bodies:

- **Contingency planning and animal welfare: a guide to good practice** – as well as providing guidance for local authorities and local resilience forums, this booklet highlights key principles that will help ensure good animal welfare in emergency planning. It also features practical examples of the importance of considering animals such as pets and livestock in contingency planning. An advice sheet on flooding and animal welfare for constituents was also produced.
- We provided information and advice to the Association of Chief Police Officers Vehicle Standardisation Project working group on the transportation welfare needs of police dogs to ensure compliance with relevant legislation. This has included the provision of guidance on the cage size, design, materials, ventilation and temperature systems.
- We have updated the **RSPCA's good practice guide for enforcement bodies** which provides advice to kennel managers and owners about ensuring the welfare needs of dogs seized under the

Environmental Protection Act (1990), the Dangerous Dogs Act (1991) and the Animal Welfare Act (2006). The guide sets out the minimum standards required to ensure compliance with relevant legislation as well as suggestions for best practice.

- **Dealing with irresponsible dog ownership: a practitioner's manual** (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) – the RSPCA has contributed to the content of this manual which provides guidance for those enforcing the **Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill (2014)**. This legislation, which came into force in May 2014, provides powers for dealing with dog-related incidents including prohibited types of dog, dogs that have bitten and those which stray. The RSPCA chaired a working group of representatives from the Canine and Feline Sector Council to ensure that the behavioural and welfare information within the manual, and specifically **Annex B**, which relates to the powers available for dog related incidents, is evidence-based and protects, wherever possible, dog welfare and public safety.

IMPROVING STANDARDS WITHIN THE GROOMING INDUSTRY

The grooming industry is unregulated at present, and there have been several recent cases that have highlighted the need for owners to think particularly carefully when choosing a groomer. Dogs have suffered severe burns in grooming establishments which has resulted in prosecutions under the Animal Welfare Act (2006). To ensure that the health and welfare of animals is protected whilst at a grooming establishment, the RSPCA has started working on an accreditation scheme which will be launched in 2015.

A set of brand new rigorous standards developed by the RSPCA's Head of Companion Animals and the RSPCA Chief Veterinary Officer is at the core of the scheme. The standards cover everything from intake,

handling, grooming, washing, drying and accommodation to protect an animal's health and welfare. The standards take into account legislation, animal welfare codes of practice, scientific research, veterinary advice and the knowledge and practical experience of those in the grooming industry.

In addition to the standards, we have also developed a series of assessments for the establishment owner or manager and the staff. Staff must undergo RSPCA tests of competence which will test their knowledge about health and welfare in relation to the grooming environment. Each establishment will also be inspected by an RSPCA officer. As well as improving standards within the grooming industry, the scheme will provide confidence to owners about the knowledge, ongoing training and the care provided for their pets.

DEVELOPING WELFARE FRIENDLY PRODUCTS

Pet owners looking for cat toys, dog beds or even pet insurance can shop online at the [RSPCA's store](#). The RSPCA believes it is important to sell and promote products that help owners to meet the needs of their pets and the companion animals team play an essential role in achieving this. Working closely with RSPCA Enterprise, the companion animals team review products and labelling to ensure they are safe, act in accordance with law and do not contravene RSPCA policy or compromise welfare.

As well as reviewing existing products ranging from food enrichment toys for dogs to comfortable hiding places for cats, the companion animals team have also provided advice on the development of the [RSPCA pet food](#) products and have provided technical information and advice to external companies who are considering which pet products to manufacture.

These are some of the products we have worked on this year:

Motorola Scout 83 HD camera

With a recent study showing that 85 percent of dogs may show some kind of reaction when they are left alone, being able to monitor your pet's behaviour when you are not at home is a valuable tool for pet owners. If an owner knows their dog is not coping when they are left alone, they can then take steps to help them feel more relaxed. A licensing partnership with the RSPCA and Motorola's Scout 83 HD camera was an excellent opportunity for the companion animals team to help owners meet their pets' needs and make sure they are able to cope if they have to be left alone for short periods. Four videos promoting the camera and different aspects of pet care were promoted via social media in December 2014.

HarperCollins pet care guides

Our understanding about companion animal behaviour and welfare has advanced greatly in recent years, so we welcomed an opportunity, alongside RSPCA Enterprise, to update the RSPCA range of HarperCollins pet care books on caring for puppies, kittens, rabbits, hamsters and guinea pigs.

Pet ownership can be incredibly rewarding and studies have demonstrated the benefits it can provide. For example, growing up with pets offers health benefits and caring for an animal can help improve a child's social skills – encouraging the development of compassion, understanding and a respect for living things.

Having a pet is, however, a huge responsibility and requires long-term commitment in terms of care and finances. There is a legal

requirement under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 for owners to care for their pets properly, and an important part of the work of the companion animals team is to provide owners with the information they need to be able to do this.

The books are based on up-to-date knowledge of companion animal behaviour and contain information on the biology and behaviour of the species, and information and advice to help owners meet the welfare needs of their pets. There is also advice on things to consider before getting a pet and how to source a happy, healthy animal. These updated guides will be published in early summer 2015.



Lisa Richards –
Scientific Officer

“Being able to offer a range of products that allows dogs and other pets the opportunity to play, interact with their owners and perform other natural behaviours is a positive way for us to be able to improve the lives of many animals.”



motorola



In the media spotlight

A key role of the companion animals team is representing the RSPCA's views on companion animal welfare in press, radio and television interviews.

This year we have provided views and advice on a range of companion animal issues including the suitability of small

breed pigs as pets, providing for a rabbit's welfare needs, the welfare of pedigree dogs, dealing with aggressive dogs, how best to train dogs, poisoning of cats and dealing with abandoned animals. Interviews have been featured on Radio Two, Radio Wales, many local radio stations and ITV Meridian news.



Farm animals

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

The farm animals team works to achieve positive changes in practices and attitude in all sectors of the food chain, including via encouraging application of the RSPCA welfare standards for farm animals.

ASSUREWEL: WELFARE OUTCOME ASSESSMENT

AssureWel, a collaborative project led by the RSPCA, the Soil Association and the University of Bristol, moved into its fifth year. The primary aim of the project is to improve farm animal welfare via development of practical, scientifically informed welfare assessments, to be implemented within the RSPCA's Freedom Food and the Soil Association's farm assurance schemes.

Welfare assessments have been developed for laying hens, dairy cattle, finishing pigs and dry sows and are being fully implemented

within both schemes. The assessment results can be used to evaluate and monitor the welfare of the animals farmed under the schemes and to inform future standard development decisions.

In 2014 the project has been developing welfare assessments for beef cattle, sheep and meat chickens. Development incorporates a literature review, industry consultation and on-farm piloting to ensure the measures and protocols are both robust and practical.



Sophie Butcher –
Scientific Officer (Welfare Outcomes Assessment)

“Welfare outcome assessment provides us with a better understanding of the impact that the resources provided are having on the animals.”

staff in action

Encouraging adoption of welfare assessment

A key goal of the AssureWel project is to encourage other schemes in the UK and internationally to adopt the AssureWel approach and embed welfare assessments within their own schemes.

In April the farm animals team and **RSPCA International** colleagues hosted the first *AssureWel International* workshop, which was attended by several like-minded farm assurance schemes from within

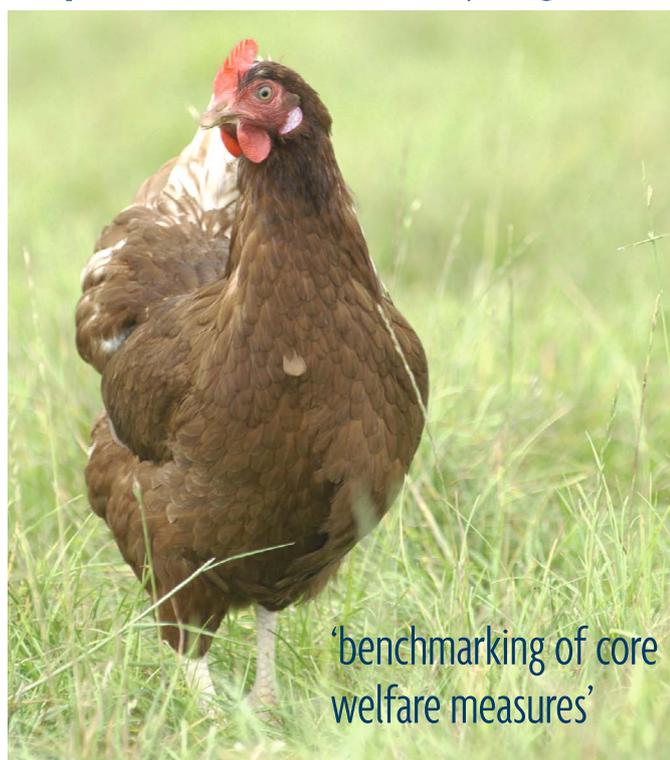
the EU and beyond. The workshop facilitated sharing of best practice between the schemes on developing and implementing welfare outcome assessments on-farm to improve farm animal welfare.

Reaching an international audience

In September we attended the Assessment of Animal Welfare at Farm and Group Level (WAFL) international scientific conference and presented work carried out as part of the AssureWel project.

The conference was attended by around 350 delegates, including welfare scientists and other interested stakeholders, providing an excellent platform to discuss developments and exchange information regarding the assessment of farm animal welfare. Our presentation focused on how Freedom Food assessors and RSPCA farm livestock officers can use welfare assessments to engage positively with farmers and encourage them to make changes on farm to improve animal welfare.

Improvements for laying hens



‘benchmarking of core welfare measures’

Welfare assessments have been undertaken on Freedom Food and Soil Association approved laying hen farms for the last three years.

Using data collected during this time, we have seen feather loss reduce by approximately a third for laying hens within the schemes. Benchmarking of feather loss data has enabled farmers to see where they score for certain welfare measures compared to their peers, and is one communication tool used on-farm to encourage improvement. Future plans include introducing benchmarking of core welfare measures for other species within the AssureWel project.

www.assurewel.org

WORKING WITH THE FOOD INDUSTRY

An important aspect of the team's work is liaising with companies and individuals within the food industry, a crucial sector in the food chain which can be very influential in driving change in the treatment of farm animals. Major retailers

and other large food companies source from a wide range and large number of suppliers in the UK and overseas, so working constructively with them provides the RSPCA with the opportunity to reach a huge number of farm animals.

Many food industry companies are increasingly aware of the importance to their consumers of the welfare of the animals producing the goods they sell. They also appreciate the value of taking account of scientific and other evidence when developing

their policies and standards. These companies often seek the advice and involvement of the RSPCA in this area of their work, and the department's work with retailers and other food companies during 2014 focused on several areas including the following:

- on-farm research and development trials assessing the welfare of different breeds of meat chicken in collaboration with a major retailer and one of their chicken production company suppliers
- liaison with several major retailers exploring opportunities to work together on development of on-farm and slaughterhouse-based welfare outcome assessment measures and protocols
- information gathering from, and provision to, food companies during review of the RSPCA farm animal welfare standards' development and communication process
- exploring opportunities to help food companies' suppliers move towards membership of the RSPCA's **Freedom Food** scheme.

Welfare in aquaculture:

advising on farmed salmon

A member of the farm animals team was invited to visit Tasmania to provide technical animal welfare advice to an Australian salmon farming company. This consultancy trip included visits to the hatchery

right through to the harvesting of fully grown six kilogram fish and allowed us to observe how they deal with wildlife interactions on the farm, notably Australian and New Zealand fur seals.

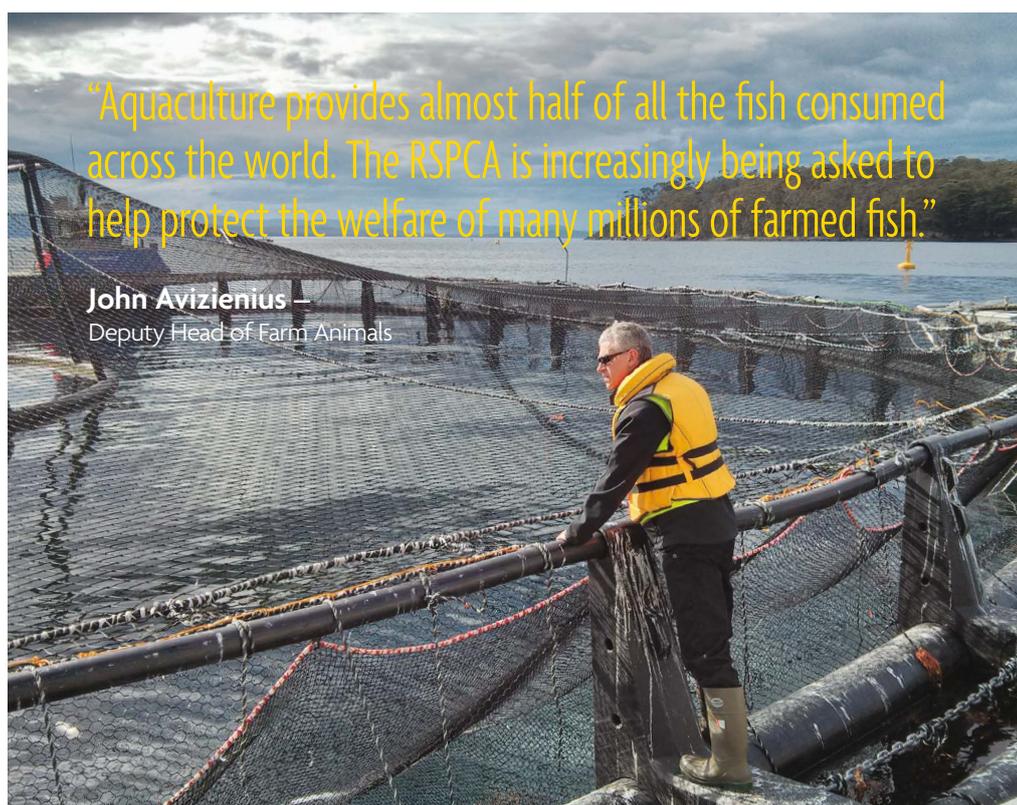
During the visit we also advised colleagues from **RSPCA Australia** on the development of their own farmed salmon standards, for use in their **Approved Farming Scheme**, which operates throughout Australia.

Evaluating new meat chicken slaughter systems

In June the farm animals team was invited to observe a new system developed in the US for killing meat chickens at slaughter plants. We took the opportunity to learn about the development, operation and humaneness of the **Low Atmospheric Pressure System**, which is not currently legally permitted for use within the UK.

The system works by gradually withdrawing air available to the birds over a fixed period of time. As the air is withdrawn, the amount of oxygen available to the birds decreases, so the birds eventually lose consciousness and die. The system replicates ascent to high altitude and could potentially offer a very humane alternative to current methods of killing chickens.

Whilst we are cautiously positive about the potential of this development, more research is required to demonstrate the impact of the system on chicken welfare.



"Aquaculture provides almost half of all the fish consumed across the world. The RSPCA is increasingly being asked to help protect the welfare of many millions of farmed fish."

John Avizienius –
Deputy Head of Farm Animals

BETTER TRAINING FOR SAFER AND KINDER FOOD

The RSPCA was invited to participate in the EU's **Better Training for Safer Food** initiative – a series of training events for staff involved with official controls of food related laws, including farm animal welfare. This included the *Animal Welfare in Poultry Production* training events where a member of the farm animals team presented to poultry vets from across the EU.

As well as sharing our concerns about the **welfare of laying hens** kept in cages, we encouraged vets to make use of 'welfare outcomes' during their official inspections to assess the hens' physical, behavioural and mental well-being.

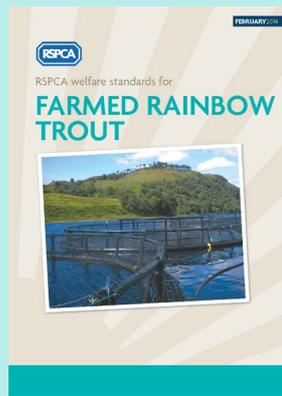
John Avizienius/RSPCA Farm Animals Department... Andrew Forsyth x2/RSPCA Photolibrary



Kate Parkes –
Senior Scientific Officer

“The standards cover every aspect of the pigs’ lives. They go above and beyond legislation in the UK in a number of key areas.”

staff in action



RSPCA welfare standards for farmed rainbow trout

We launched the first set of RSPCA welfare standards for a ‘new’ species of farm animal for twelve years in February. The RSPCA welfare standards for farmed Rainbow trout were developed after we were approached by Rainbow trout farmers and retailers to provide a set of welfare standards, building on the success of the existing welfare standards for farmed Atlantic salmon.

Following a two-year development period, the resulting standards cover the two distinct phases of trout farming – freshwater and marine farming – and take account of legislation, official codes of practice, scientific research, veterinary advice, recommendations of the **Farm Animal Welfare Committee (FAWC)** and the practical experience of the aquaculture industry.

RSPCA welfare standards for pigs

RSPCA welfare standards for farm animals are regularly reviewed in consultation with the farming industry, veterinary profession and welfare research sector, to ensure that they take proper account of the latest scientific research and practical innovation.

A new version of the RSPCA welfare standards for pigs was launched in November 2014. The revised standards include more information on the requirements for indoor free farrowing, biosecurity for transport vehicles and – for the first time – space allowances for cull sows during lairage. The standards and guidance on teeth clipping and tail docking – difficult issues for all within the pig industry – have also been strengthened.

Whilst it is accepted that, in a few exceptional cases, tail docking

may be necessary to reduce the pain and suffering caused by a serious tail biting problem on an individual unit, we are also working with pig producers in a number of ways to encourage a move away from this practice wherever possible.

The RSPCA standards require that permission must be sought from the RSPCA on a farm-by-farm basis before tail docking can be undertaken, and this permission will only be granted if farmers can show that they have implemented various additional actions known to help reduce the incidence of tail biting.

The new version of the standards sets additional rules relating to tail length and to uniformity of length – important considerations in reducing the welfare impact of tail docking and the likelihood of biting respectively.





20 YEARS OF FREEDOM FOOD

FREEDOM FOOD

July 2014 marked the 20th anniversary of the launch of the RSPCA's **Freedom Food** scheme.

Since then, there have been substantial changes in farming practices, food retailing and consumer behaviour, including a notable positive shift in approach and attitude towards the welfare of farm animals. Progress in scientific research has substantially increased knowledge of the physical and behavioural needs of different farmed species. Research and practical innovation have also enabled at least some of those learnings to be implemented in practice, including through the RSPCA's farm animal welfare standards.

The launch of Freedom Food, a concept initiated and developed by the RSPCA farm animals department, heralded a significant change of approach by the RSPCA. Along with other farm assurance schemes and similar initiatives, Freedom Food has forged an increasingly constructive and collective approach towards improving animal welfare in farming, linking welfare-concerned consumers, via food companies and processors, to farmers who rear their animals under

RSPCA standards. Such initiatives underpin the important concept that farm animal welfare is everybody's responsibility and that everyone can act to improve it. Freedom Food's new consumer branding in 2015, with its animal-focused logo and 'RSPCA Assured' certification mark on products, should help to strengthen still further consumers' understanding of the scheme's aims.

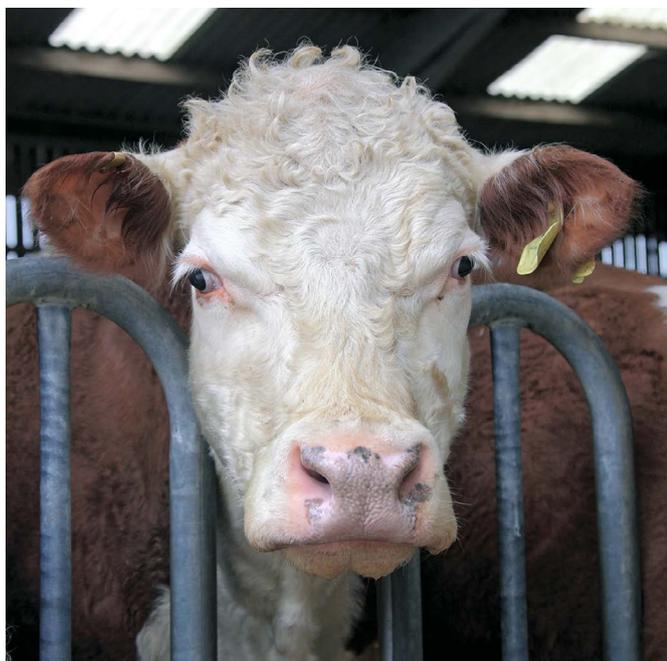
As our understanding of the welfare needs of farmed species grows over coming years, including through important new developments such as **welfare outcome assessment** (which is now being implemented in the Freedom Food scheme), it is likely that the challenges faced in acting upon that knowledge will become ever greater. Consequently, it is even more important that all relevant sectors in the food chain work constructively together to harness and implement collective knowledge and experience effectively. The RSPCA will continue to encourage and participate in collective working of this kind as, despite important progress over the past two decades, there is still a great deal to be done before all farm animals are provided with the potential to have a good life.



ENGAGING WITH AND INFLUENCING DECISION MAKERS

The farm animals team represent the RSPCA on a number of influential government, farming industry and scientific research project committees and working groups, enabling us to put forward our views and encourage improvements in farm animal welfare.

Some examples are outlined below:



Cattle Health and Welfare Group

The **Cattle Health and Welfare Group** is made up of a wide spectrum of cattle industry stakeholders; the RSPCA is the only welfare representative within the group. Amongst other things, the group coordinates a programme of focussed improvements in cattle health and welfare in Great Britain. Statutory bodies such as the Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra) seek advice from the group on initiatives that could potentially have an impact at

farm level, such as a national programme of Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) eradication.

The group is responsible for a number of other initiatives including production of the annual Cattle Health and Welfare report and implementation of the initiatives and annual reporting of the Dairy Cow Welfare Strategy, a ten-year initiative aimed at improving the health and welfare of the dairy cow in a number of priority areas, such as lameness, fertility and nutrition.

Beak Trimming Action Group

Defra is committed to reviewing its policy on beak trimming of laying hens in 2015 with a view to implementing a ban on the practice in January 2016. The RSPCA is a member of the **Beak Trimming Action Group**, which has been tasked with advising Defra on this review.

The RSPCA is working to ensure that the welfare of laying hens is at the forefront of any decision made, encouraging all stakeholders to work towards a shared goal of improving hen welfare through better management practices and a commitment to the eventual phase out of the currently permitted infrared beak trimming.



Pig Health and Welfare Council

The **Pig Health and Welfare Council (PHWC)** is a cross-industry alliance, with RSPCA representation, which aims to drive forward the delivery and strategic aims of the pig industry with regards to health and welfare. The **PHWC welfare sub-group**, facilitated by the RSPCA, aims to achieve consensus on important pig welfare issues, how to progress these, and the ultimate aims in each case. This year the sub-group sought to identify and implement some initial practical steps to deliver on the primary focus issues for farmed pigs that were agreed in 2013, including welfare at farrowing (prolificacy, management of outdoor sows, confinement at farrowing etc), tail damage, aggression and sick pig management (including euthanasia). Further details will be provided in the 2013-2014 report of the work of the Council which will be published in 2015.





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, aimed at developing more effective processes of ethical review and fuller implementation of the 3Rs*.

Our primary aim is the replacement of animal experiments with humane alternatives. Until this can be achieved, we work to help ensure that the minimum numbers of animals are used and that suffering is reduced or avoided altogether.

*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.

Research animals

Promoting an end to severe suffering

The level of pain or distress experienced by animals used in experiments in the UK depends on the nature of the research and is classified as 'mild', 'moderate' or 'severe'. Any level of suffering is a concern, but ending severe suffering is a top priority for us.

During 2014 we further progressed our groundbreaking **initiative** which involves working with the scientific community to promote innovative and challenging approaches towards ending severe suffering. There are currently two parallel activities within this project.

- Our *Road Map* sets out a step-by-step strategy for developing a culture within a research facility that accepts that ending severe suffering is both worthwhile and achievable, alongside a framework for tackling any severe procedures that are conducted. We have promoted this Road Map at key scientific and animal welfare meetings (e.g. see [poster](#)) and in September it was **published** in the journal ATLA¹.
- We have convened a number of Expert Working Groups, which include researchers, animal technologists and veterinarians from academia and industry, to discuss and propose evidence-based practical recommendations for how suffering can be reduced. During 2014, two of these groups produced procedure-specific guidelines – focusing on rheumatoid arthritis and sepsis research.



Dr Elliot Lilley –
Senior Scientific Officer

“Our ‘Road Map’ will both challenge and help the scientific community to do more to end severe suffering. It offers a clear strategy to achieve the goal that so many people tell us they want to see – no more animals experiencing the highest levels of pain or distress.”

staff in action

ASPECTS OF UK REGULATION

In February, the UK Government published *Working to reduce the use of animals in research – a delivery plan* for meeting its **Coalition Agreement** pledge to ‘work to reduce the use of animals in scientific research’. We welcomed the emphasis on the ethical and scientific importance of the 3Rs, recognition of the need for a cross-departmental governmental approach, and actions to reduce the most ‘severe’ animal suffering – the plan highlighted our own **initiative** on this.

However, we were disappointed that the plan did not address fundamental problems such as inadequate training of scientists, serious questions about the translatability to humans of much research using animals, and outdated thinking and entrenched views on what represents ‘good practice’. Furthermore, many of the proposed actions covered things that people should already have been doing. We set out our views in a written response to the Home Office and at a meeting with the Minister, Norman Baker MP.

Footnotes and references:

1. Lilley E, Hawkins P & Jennings M (2014) A ‘road map’ toward ending severe suffering of animals used in research and testing. ATLA 42, 267-272.

A 'road map' towards ending severe suffering
Elliot Lilley, Penny Hawkins & Maggy Jennings

Abstract
The impact of the EU Directive controlling experiments on animals has focused attention on the need to reduce animal suffering in scientific procedures. Classification of levels of suffering into mild, moderate and severe and the need to report actual levels of severity has provided added impetus to the drive to refine the most severe models and procedures, as has greater recognition that high levels of suffering impact on an animal's physiological responses, increasing variability of experimental data. Severe animal suffering is a miserable pain for scientific, ethical and legal reasons. This therefore an excellent time to look at the sources and nature of suffering within the research context, to perform a 'severe audit', to evaluate the effectiveness of current refinement practices and to seek more effective ways of avoiding or minimising all unnecessary pain and psychological distress experienced by animals. Central to the success of such an initiative is a complete institutional culture and a robust and challenging ethical review process. This poster will outline the key questions and practical considerations that establishments need to address to reduce suffering for all animals and towards ending severe suffering.

Analysis
Perform an in-house 'severity audit' of all protocols, procedures and 'models'. Establish where there is the potential for severe suffering (prospective assessment) and then what actual severity is experienced by individual animals (retrospective assessment).

Evaluation
For procedures where severe suffering occurs, ask:
1. Why the procedure is used and what factors contribute to it being severe?
2. Is severe suffering really necessary to achieve the scientific objective?
3. What proportion of animals in each protocol, procedure or 'model' experienced severe suffering?
4. What refinements are already in place, how effective are these and whether there is potential for further application of the 3Rs?

Define Obstacles
What are the scientific obstacles to ending severe suffering? Set these out clearly and assess the genuine impact of stopping severe protocols, procedures or 'models'.

The Road Map Process
Every establishment should ensure there is a process to achieve the following for severe 'models' or procedures:
1. Culture: Establish and maintain a progressive, open minded and caring research culture.
Analysis: Establish to what extent severe suffering occurs.
3. Evaluation: Look at why severe suffering occurs and what current approaches are used to avoid it.
4. Define obstacles: Establish what the impact of ending severe suffering would be.
5. Overcome obstacles: Set out a plan to overcome issues and to end severe suffering.

An institutional 'culture of care' is an essential prerequisite of effective implementation of the 'Road Map'. Components of such a culture include:
1. A collective responsibility and accountability for the welfare of animals, shared by all staff.
2. Demonstrable commitment to high standards of housing, care and welfare above the legal minimum from senior management.
3. Internal openness including the ability to raise, share and resolve concerns.
4. Support for 'Named Persons' (such as Animal Care and Welfare Officers, Veterinary Surgeons, Information and Training and Competency Officers).
5. A robust framework for training, assessment of competence and continued professional development of all staff.
6. Effective and well supported institutional ethical review of scientific work.
7. An effective ethics or animal care and use committee, e.g. the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB) in the UK.

Overcome Obstacles
Take an alternative approach e.g.:
Use a non-severe model
Re-frame the research question to avoid a severe model
Use a mechanism-based approach rather than a disease-model approach
Apply Refinement e.g.:
Refine every element of the lifetime experience of the animal
Establish, validate and implement humane endpoints

End Severe Suffering

research.animals@rspca.org.uk
Research Animals Department, Science Group, RSPCA, Wilberforce Way, Southwater, West Sussex, RH13 9RS

We liaised with the Home Office throughout the year as they developed various areas of policy. This included responding to a **consultation** on Section 24 (the 'confidentiality clause') of the **Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986** (ASP), and participation in a series of stakeholder meetings with senior officials. Topics of discussion at these meetings have included: the production of **Guidance** on the operation of the ASPA

aiming to help people implement the ASPA in practice, the **Code of Practice on care and accommodation of animals**, and advice on reporting the actual severity of scientific procedures. Resourcing for the Home Office Inspectorate, and how it operates its risk-based inspection strategy, have continued to be high on the agenda, in particular following an **exposé** alleging poor practices in the care and use of animals at a major UK research establishment.



On the global stage

Our research animals team was well represented at the **9th World Congress on Alternatives and Animal Use in the Life Sciences** which took place in Prague at the end of August.

The Congress, held every three years, is a major global gathering of those involved, or who have an interest in, the use, care and regulation of animals in research and testing. It provides a vital

platform for animal welfare experts, scientists and policy makers to come together and constructively exchange knowledge and ideas and promote 3Rs initiatives.

We were invited to co-chair sessions and to give a number of presentations on topics ranging from our **initiative** to end 'severe' suffering in lab animals; issues around openness and

transparency in animal research; how research establishments can develop a good 'culture of care'; the use of animals in education; assessing 'harms' and 'benefits' in animal research; the publication policies of scientific journals; and **research integrity** issues that can have an impact on animal use and welfare. The next **World Congress** will be held in USA in 2017.

Delivering international training

We have worked throughout the year with colleagues in **RSPCA International**, and partner organisations in east Asia and eastern Europe, to deliver training on legislation, animal welfare, the 3Rs and ethics outside the UK.

This included giving a number of presentations on ethical review and on assessing and reducing levels of suffering at a training **workshop** organised by the European Commission (**TAIEX**) to help Croatia implement the requirements of the **European Directive on the Protection of Animals Used for Scientific Purposes**.

We were also invited by the government ministry responsible for enforcing animal experiments regulations in Bulgaria, to organise and deliver a bespoke training event for government officials enforcing their new legislation, and for members of the Bulgarian National Committee on the Protection of Animals used in Science.

In China, we commissioned and worked with the Chinese Association for Laboratory Animal Sciences (CALAS) to produce a Chinese **version** of the online training resource **Procedures with Care** website. This defines practical approaches towards the adoption of good practice in commonly used procedures such as the administration of substances, and aseptic technique in rodent surgery. This is an important part of our work to reduce suffering while animal use continues. The project was assisted with co-funding by the UK NC3Rs. We helped CALAS to promote the new resource to the scientific community in China by organising and running a one-day satellite meeting on refining procedures and animal care, at the CALAS annual conference at the end of June.

Promoting effective ethical review

Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Bodies (AWERBs) have been high on the agenda again this year. With the change from local Ethical Review Processes to AWERBs, both of our guidance documents – the **RSPCA handbook for lay members** and the **Guiding Principles on good practice for Ethical Review Processes** that we produced jointly with the Laboratory Animal Science Association (LASA) – have needed updating. For the latter, we joined with LASA, the Institute of Animal Technology and Laboratory Animals Veterinary Association to organise workshops to develop ideas on how best to implement the AWERB tasks. A key focus was how to define – and ensure – the 'culture of care' now required under UK and EU legislation.

This year the European Commission has also produced **guidance** on how to set up and run the Animal Welfare Bodies now required across all member states. We were closely involved in the development of these, with our guidance documents used as a basis for much of the discussion around issues such as the AWB's role, tasks and membership.

Our annual **forum** for lay members was also a huge success with much of the day dedicated to the theme of assessing and weighing **harms and benefits**.

A presentation from the **Home Office** on how inspectors review projects was followed by an open discussion session which explored members' experiences within their own AWERBs. Other topics were: the sentience of fish; experimental design; the fate of animals; positive welfare and quality of life; and retrospective assessment in industry and academia. The day finished with an update on the latest guidelines on harm/benefit assessment, and related topics from the **European Commission**.



实验动物福利操作技术规范网站

Procedures With Care

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本网站中的技术资料是由英国纽卡斯尔大学 (Newcastle University) 编写, 同时动物技术研究所 (the Institute of Animal Technology) 和英国实验动物3R研究中心 (NC3R) 提供支持。

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FOCUS ON rodents

The vast majority of animals used in research and testing are rodents, including mice, rats, guinea pigs, hamsters and gerbils. According to Home Office statistics, 3.33 million rodents were used in UK facilities in 2013, accounting for 83 percent of the 4.02 million animals used overall in scientific procedures. Improving laboratory rodent welfare can therefore have a significant impact on laboratory animal welfare as a whole, which is

why the annual **Rodent Welfare Meeting**, which we jointly convene with the **Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW)**, has been one of our major events for over 20 years.

The 2014 Rodent Welfare Group Meeting attracted delegates from a wide range of universities and pharmaceutical companies throughout the UK. A speaker from World Animal Protection set the scene with a presentation on **animal sentience**, which was accompanied by talks

on reducing suffering during common procedures, assessing rodent health and welfare, and how to ensure the right decisions are made when providing 'environmental enrichments' such as running wheels. Delegates also heard about a new scheme for exchanging Named Animal Care and Welfare Officers between institutions, to promote information exchange about refinements to reduce suffering

and improve welfare. The day ended with a discussion on the 'Culture of Care' and how this can be recognised, promoted and maintained in practice. A report of the meeting, with recommendations to help readers improve practice at their own establishments, was submitted to the Institute of Animal Technology's journal *Animal Technology and Welfare* at the end of 2014.



FOCUS ON farm animals used in research

Around 150,000 domestic fowl, turkeys, pigs, goats, sheep and cattle are used in research and testing in the UK annually, often in the development and testing of vaccines for farmed animals but also in fundamental or applied biomedical research. This is a relatively small proportion (around four percent) of overall animal use, but farmed animals have specific requirements and the nature of some research – for example, if it requires animals to be kept according to commercial 'farm' conditions and challenged with diseases – can make it difficult to minimise suffering.

Recognising this, **Norecopa**¹ held an international meeting on **harmonising the care and use of agricultural animals in research** in September 2012, with participants from our research animals and farm animals departments. One recommendation was that there should be a forum for discussion of ethical issues, good practice and the 3Rs specifically for agricultural animals. In the UK, the RSPCA and the Animal and Plant Health Agency took this forward.

Two RSPCA/APHA² **meetings** for animal technologists, researchers, veterinarians and students have been held so far, in 2013 and 2014. Topics addressed at the 2014 meeting included refining endpoints in avian influenza studies, reducing farm animal numbers in research, pain management in pigs, housing refinements for singly housed pigs, the use of cortisol levels to predict farm animal welfare, promoting positive welfare for chickens and replacing ewes in education and training. A discussion session on recognising and encouraging positive welfare in farm animals concluded the programme. The meeting **report**³, with action points to help implement the 3Rs, was published in *Animal Technology and Welfare* in December 2014.



Footnotes and references:

1. Norecopa is the Norwegian consensus-platform for alternatives.
2. Formerly known as the 'Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency Scientific'.
3. Hawkins P, Brookes S, Parkin S, Clutton RE, Gade P, Lane J, Proctor H, Edgar J, Vincent I & Weyer U (2014). *Report of the second RSPCA/AHVLA meeting on the welfare of agricultural animals in research: Cattle, pigs, sheep and poultry*. *Animal Technology and Welfare* 13(2): 155-164.

FOCUS ON zebrafish

Between 1995 and 2013 the number of scientific procedures using fish reported in the Home Office annual statistics on animal use increased from 131,100 to 507,400. This means that fish are now the second most commonly used group of animals after rodents. Zebrafish alone accounted for 330,161 of the procedures undertaken in 2013.

As part of our work to reduce suffering and improve welfare, in 2011 we published [guidance](#) on the housing and care of zebrafish. Since then the number of zebrafish used in research has continued to climb as they have become the new model of choice for many researchers. There are many reasons for this, some scientific and others purely practical. To highlight and consider current ethical and welfare concerns the [RSPCA Transgenic Training Working Group](#) organised a one-day meeting that was hosted by the Wellcome Trust in London in May.



The focus of the meeting was on opportunities for better implementation of the 3Rs relating to the use of zebrafish in research. Around 70 participants attended a full day of invited expert talks, poster presentations and interactive question and answer sessions. Good colony management practices aimed at reducing the number of zebrafish used to breed genetically modified or harmful mutants (an issue of concern

shared with the rodent research community) were discussed.

There were also presentations and discussion around what zebrafish need in terms of food, water quality, environmental enrichment, housing and care. Emphasis was given to a theme of accumulative or 'marginal' gains' in which people can implement a series of small refinements which can add up to a significant overall welfare gain for zebrafish.

Footnotes and references:

1. <http://pilas.org.uk/refinement-lessons-from-the-2012-olympics/>

Raising concerns about laboratory animal welfare

Although some research and testing establishments have well-defined systems for identifying and reporting staff concerns about animal welfare, some recent, high profile exposés have shown that other facilities may have a problem. Welfare concerns include issues with a wide range of implications for both the animals and the establishment; from feelings that a potential refinement is not being implemented without a justifiable reason (e.g. not enough material provided for mice to make a proper nest), through to concerns that there may have been an infringement, and potentially even to concerns that cruelty has occurred.

An effective system for raising, investigating and resolving concerns is essential to help maintain good standards of both animal welfare and staff morale – and to prevent non-compliance with the law. It is also integral to achieving openness within the establishment, and appropriate documentation and feedback can contribute to transparency and public accountability.

With this in mind, a workshop on raising concerns about laboratory animal welfare was held at the Institute of Animal Technology (IAT) Congress 2014. Speakers from the Home Office, a designated establishment and an employer of animal technologists set the scene, before delegates reviewed some hypothetical 'test' cases that included welfare concerns. There was a lively and useful discussion about the legal responsibilities animal technologists would have in each case, and where they could look for support if they had concerns. We received very positive feedback about the workshop and a report has been published!

Footnotes and references:

1. Hawkins P, Ryder K, Mortell N & Patten D (2014). *Raising concerns about laboratory animal welfare: report of a workshop at IAT Congress 2014*. *Animal Technology and Welfare* 13(2): 81-86.





Improving application of the 3Rs to behavioural research

The RSPCA has some serious concerns about the use of animals in behavioural research, so we were pleased to be involved in the production of guidance on the 3Rs and ethical review in behavioural laboratory animal science.

Animal behaviour may be studied to assess the effects of genetic alterations, evaluate how potential new drugs have affected behaviour, or search for 'models' of human conditions. There is debate regarding the validity of behavioural laboratory animal science, for example whether animal 'models' of disorders like depression are genuinely useful in helping to develop new treatments, and whether animals kept in 'standard' laboratory housing develop a restricted range of behaviours, negatively affecting the quality of the science. There are also serious concerns about the suffering caused by some behavioural research protocols that involve inducing anxiety or fear.

These issues were tackled by a steering panel which, as well

as a member of our research animals team, included scientists, organisations involved in training researchers, the Home Office and the Laboratory Animal Science Association (LASA). We also participated in expert workshops which provided the framework for *Guiding Principles for Behavioural Laboratory Animal Science*¹, published at the end of 2013. The *Guiding Principles* facilitate informed decisions and good practice when conducting studies of animal behaviour, ensuring that the 3Rs are fully implemented and scientific validity is optimised. The resource is supported by LASA, the British Neuroscience Association, the British Association for Psychopharmacology and ESSWAP, a training organisation for pharmacologists.

Footnotes and references:

1. BAP, BNA, ESSWAP, LASA (2013) *Guiding Principles for Behavioural Laboratory Animal Science* First edition. <http://www.lasa.co.uk/publications.html>

Lifelong learning in ethical human-animal interactions

The RSPCA education department has a long history of successfully supporting school teachers in their activities to develop informed, responsible and active young citizens. We are now looking to build on this outreach by using the in-house expertise within our Science Group to develop a complementary programme on human-animal interactions within the tertiary education sector. By developing and delivering educational resources for colleges and universities across the UK, we hope to encourage the next generation of consumers, animal guardians, scientific researchers and others who work with or care for animals to think more critically and broadly about how their actions can affect animals and their welfare.

As an animal welfare organisation with a dedicated Science Group, the RSPCA is uniquely placed to include a diverse range of input into our educational programme, including all aspects of human-animal interactions. Specialists in our research, companion, farm animal and wildlife departments are providing information, materials and advice, with additional input from one of the RSPCA's regional wildlife centres.

Since this initiative began in mid-2014 we have developed materials for undergraduates and postgraduate research students (and their tutors and supervisors) which will soon be made freely available via the RSPCA website. We have also been working in collaboration with RSPCA Mallydams Wood Wildlife Centre to design an *Animals in Society* module for final year undergraduate students, which will be piloted at the University of Brighton from February 2015.

Our new postgraduate module *Animal Research: Critical, Challenging & Creative Thinking*, will also be launched for the first time in 2015 to doctoral and research students at University College London.



Dr Juliet Dukes – Senior Scientific Officer

“This new initiative complements the important work our education department undertakes, helping to provide a complete programme of lifelong learning in the ethics and welfare issues surrounding human-animal interactions.”



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

Wildlife



Oiled birds

The RSPCA has a long history of working to rescue and rehabilitate wildlife affected by marine pollution, starting with the Torrey Canyon oil spill in 1967 right through to the polyisobutene chemical spill in the English channel in 2013. The experience and knowledge we have gained through treating oiled wildlife in a variety of different situations is a

tremendous resource which is now being sought by wildlife groups further afield.

The RSPCA has been working with a group called [Sea Alarm](#) on developing oiled wildlife contingency plans both in Europe and across the world. Sea Alarm is based in Brussels and they have established a network of other oiled wildlife responders

in Europe to develop protocols for the rescue and rehabilitation of oiled birds. The first joint protocol on oiled bird husbandry was produced in 2014 and other documents will follow, covering other aspects of managing an oiled wildlife response. The development of joint protocols allows for better cooperative working between the groups, should they all be deployed to a

particular incident in Europe.

Next year will be the first of a two year project to develop a training package to increase the number of trained responders in Europe. Furthermore, the RSPCA and Sea Alarm are also collaborating on a similar project to develop a global oiled wildlife response system, with groups from Europe, USA, New Zealand, South Africa and South America.

Part B

Animal care during an oiled wildlife response



Adam Grogan –
Senior Scientific Officer

“The experience and knowledge we have gained through treating oiled wildlife in a variety of different situations is a tremendous resource.”



“In response to the increase in exotic animals being collected by the RSPCA, this year we recruited 11 exotics officers from the RSPCA inspectorate.”



Nicola White –
Senior Scientific Officer

“As well as our work to reduce the number of wild-caught animals being traded as pets, the RSPCA needs to address the number of exotic pet species coming into our care.”

staff in action



Exotic pets – issues and impacts

Dealing with reptiles and other exotic animals has become a priority for the RSPCA, given their increase in popularity as pets and subsequent welfare concerns.

In 2013 we received 3,980 calls about 8,300 reptiles, a four percent increase in number of reptiles from 2012. The RSPCA collected 1,642 of these reptiles and the majority are boarded with external establishments, due to the lack of specialist housing within our centres.

For the RSPCA to safely collect, transport, handle and care for exotics (such as reptiles and amphibians), specialist knowledge is required about the more commonly-kept species. In response to the increase in exotic animals being collected by the RSPCA, in 2014 we recruited 11 exotics officers from the RSPCA inspectorate. These officers will provide support and advice on exotics to colleagues in the field. They will also be responsible for approving external establishments to board exotics for the RSPCA, following an assessment of suitability.

In 2014 the RSPCA received calls to collect a variety of stray or

unwanted exotic mammals, including **raccoon dogs** and an **Asian palm civet**. Such animals are being sold online and in pet shops and unfortunately a licence is not required to keep them. In most cases the animal is bought by those who have no knowledge of the species and therefore the animals can suffer poor welfare, or become unwanted and then may be abandoned, once the owner realises how difficult they are to care for. Finding suitable homes for such specialist animals is difficult and time-consuming – but all exotic mammals received were rehomed to people with the space and knowledge to care for them properly.

Primates as pets

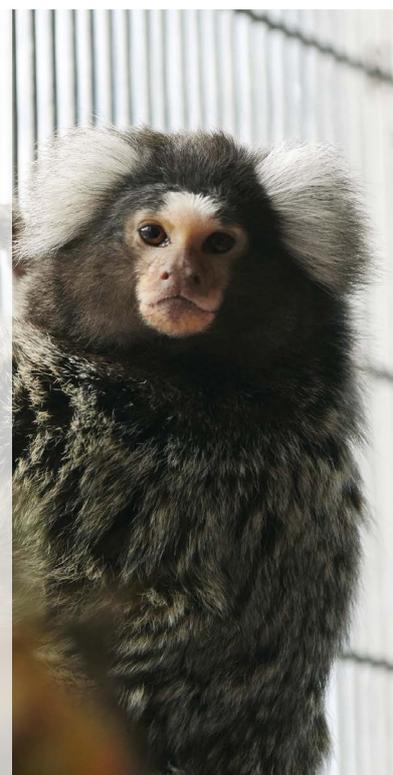
The RSPCA continues to address the growing problem of keeping primates, such as marmosets, capuchins and squirrel monkeys, as household pets in the UK.

In 2014 the wildlife department published a report – *Do you give a monkey's?: The need for a ban on pet primates* – to highlight the issues and outline why the UK should join the 15 other European countries that have already put a stop to keeping primates as pets.

In February, the RSPCA gave oral evidence to a select committee of MPs who launched an **inquiry** into keeping pet primates. A member of the wildlife team answered questions about the trade, the scale of the problem, enforcement and bans in other countries. In their **report**, the committee recognised the need for urgent action and supported a ban in principle. However, their recommendation for further research, specifically on numbers kept, is a costly and pointless exercise as the data is simply not there. The **Westminster Government's response** was rather weak overall, committing only to spreading the word that primates should not be kept as pets and reviewing existing guidance. They also stated that keeping a primate as a pet is already an offence under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, and so it follows that no further regulation is necessary. Whilst a strong statement against keeping primates as pets is welcomed, failing to take further action does nothing to 'turn off the tap' of primates entering the pet trade to prevent further suffering.

As well as preventative work, the RSPCA has to deal with ex-pet primates in need of a good home. The Society is supporting the construction of an additional small primate complex at Monkey World Ape Rescue Centre in Dorset, due for completion in early 2015. By providing briefing material to the RSPCA's major donors team, an amazing £53,000 was raised for this project which will provide a permanent and safe, species-appropriate, home for rescued primates.

“The Westminster Government made the statement that keeping a primate as a pet would ‘be an offence under the Animal Welfare Act 2006.’”



“Animals caught in glue traps have been known to tear out fur, break bones and even gnaw off their own limbs trying to escape.”

Wild animals and glue traps

The RSPCA is opposed to the manufacture, sale and use of any glue-type trap because they cause unacceptable suffering and are, by their nature, indiscriminate. These animals are frequently left alive to suffer in traps for extended periods of time, often dying slowly from dehydration, starvation or exhaustion. Animals caught in glue traps have been known to tear out fur, break bones and even gnaw off their own limbs trying to escape.

In 2010 the **Pest Management Alliance** produced a code of best practice for the **Humane use of rodent glue boards**. The code states that traps should only be sold to suitably trained and competent pest controllers, and that responsibility for the humane use of glue traps cannot be delegated to untrained people. Despite the code however, glue traps are openly and increasingly available to the general public through hardware stores, garden centres and other retailers. This illustrates the limited effectiveness of the code and the severe threat to animal welfare posed by this kind of trap.

In response to this growing problem, throughout 2014, the RSPCA's wildlife team has been writing to retailers that sell glue traps to the public. These letters urge retailers to take more responsibility for their actions and follow the code of practice by ensuring they only sell to pest control technicians trained and competent in the application, maintenance and disposal of the traps (including the humane euthanasia of the target species and safe removal of non-target species).



The RSPCA leaflet *Wild animals and glue traps* is available to order – email: wildlife@rspca.org.uk

RSPCA wildlife centres

RSPCA Mallydams Wood Wildlife Centre

Research at RSPCA Mallydams Wood Wildlife Centre in 2014 focused on exploring how we can build positive human-wild animal relationships through animal welfare education. The views of over 100 families that visited the woods and education centre were analysed to better understand the process of fostering empathy and compassion for wild animals.

The research showed that, initially, many parents felt their family unit to be uncomfortable in a natural setting and had little awareness for care and consideration towards animals there. Parents expressed fears (of mud, getting lost and being bitten or stung) both for themselves and their children.

However, when parents gained the confidence to let children out of their buggies and allow them to explore the natural environment, their mental and physical separation from animals and nature began to transform. Curious toddlers built bridges between their families and the wild animals that chose to encounter them.

This research deepened our understanding of the family dynamic in wild places, and the stories shared and analysed reveal how we can nurture a positive human-wild animal bond through targeted intervention and support. The research findings were presented at the [British Animal Studies Network meeting](#), as well as the ID-Net conference, [Making Sense of the Human-Animal Bond](#).



Alison Charles –
RSPCA Centre Manager

“At the height of the incident there were 44 seals on three hourly feeds of fish soup in the isolation unit, so staff and volunteers were pushed to the limit.”

RSPCA East Winch Wildlife Centre

When the surge tide hit the Norfolk coast on 5th December 2013, there were already 50 seals at the RSPCA's East Winch Wildlife Centre. Over the following three days 58 pups were admitted – all orphaned by the surge tide - bringing the total of seals in care to 108. The centre has never had this many orphaned juveniles to care for – even during the Phocine Distemper Virus (PDV) outbreaks in 1988 and 2002. Most of the seals had been on a pupping beach at Horsey, Norfolk and were washed down the coast to Winterton – too far away for the returning mothers to find and nurse them.

Seal milk is rich in fats (over 50 percent fat content) and so is very difficult to substitute. To tackle this problem RSPCA East Winch use a replacement soup of liquidised fish and oral rehydration solution. During the incident the normal herring-based fish soup was changed to mackerel as it has shown to increase weight gain in emaciated pups. At the height of the incident there were 44 seals on three hourly feeds of fish soup in the isolation unit, so staff and volunteers were pushed to the limit.

As each seal improved medically and began to eat on its own, it was moved from the isolation unit to an intermediate pool with another seal before going on to an outside pool with a group of seals so they have to compete for food. The first of the pups to recover was returned to the sea in February 2014.

RSPCA West Hatch Wildlife Centre

During the heavy storms in February 2014, an influx of over 40 exhausted seabirds arrived at RSPCA West Hatch Wildlife Centre including guillemots, kittiwakes, gannets and razorbills. Among the rescued birds were some rare and unexpected guests – three juvenile Atlantic puffins. Atlantic puffins aren't usual visitors to the beaches of Somerset – in the last fourteen years RSPCA West Hatch Wildlife Centre has taken in just 11 of these birds – and it is thought the storms blew these three inland and left them too tired to return.

For the first 48-72 hours of hospitalisation, oral electrolytes were administered by stomach-tube to these birds, until they were eating sand-eels and sprats convincingly. Seabirds are particularly prone to the fungal infection aspergillosis and, as a safety measure, the puffins were given prophylactic treatment against it. When their condition had improved, the birds were washed and placed on pools to ensure they were fully waterproof prior to release.

The release of the three birds was undertaken in collaboration with the wardens at Lundy Island, off the North Devon coast. The birds made the 22-mile

trip across the Bristol Channel aboard the MS Oldenburg before moving to a smaller boat and travelling to the release site on Gannet's Bay. All three birds were mid-moult, and were missing their primary and secondary (flight) feathers. As the birds would normally be found out at sea during the moult, it was not considered suitable to release them on the coast. A release from a boat, next to the island (where there is a breeding colony) was therefore planned, and carried out successfully. British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) rings were fitted, as a passive means of monitoring the survival of the birds post-release.



RSPCA Stapeley Grange Wildlife Centre

Fishing litter remains a serious issue for British wildlife living offshore and around our waterways. Since 1986, lead fishing weights of between 0.06 and 28.35 grams have been banned in the UK to help protect mute swans from lead poisoning.

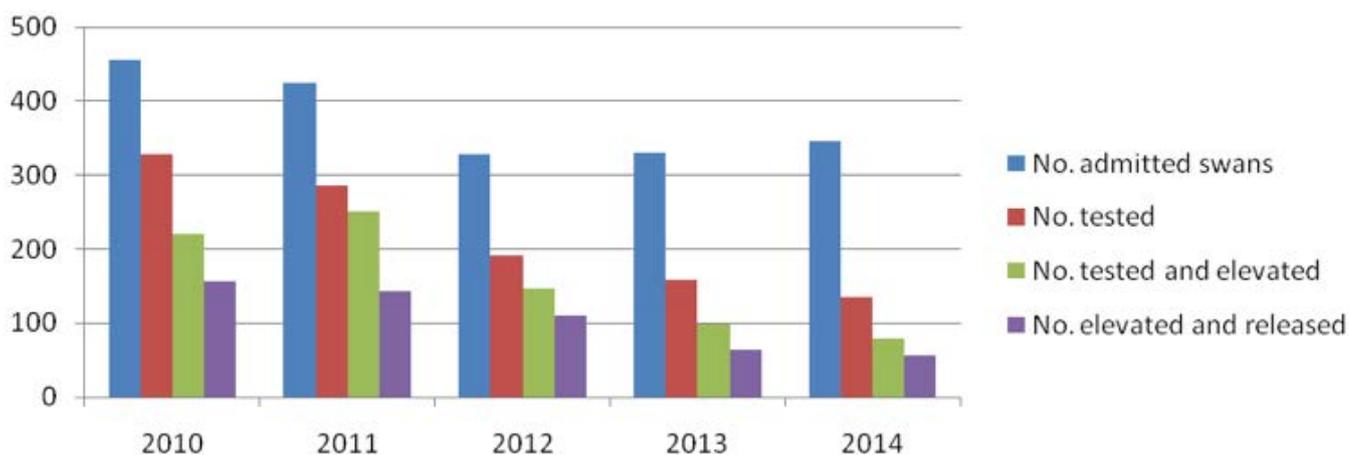
Between 2010 and 2014, the RSPCA Stapeley Grange Wildlife Centre admitted 1,887 swans for a wide range of reasons. Of the 1,100 swans tested for lead, 72 percent were found to have elevated levels – over one µmol/l. Of those found to have elevated levels, 66 percent were released after successful rehabilitation, including treating with Calcium EDTA to chelate the lead.

During the same period, the centre also received 297 wildlife casualties because of discarded fishing line and hooks. The most commonly

affected species (58 percent) were swans, possibly because they feed from the bottom of lakes and rivers; where much of this litter and spent shot lies. Whilst 76 percent of swans were successfully released following treatment, which sometimes included intricate surgery to repair the oesophageal wall, only 55 percent of all other species were released.

Stapeley's veterinary team are currently looking into whether metal detectors could be used to detect if line caught in a swan's mouth/throat has a hook attached to it. This could potentially enable the removal of the line in the field if a hook is not detected, providing an alternative to transporting animals – sometimes long distances – to a wildlife hospital or a vet for x-ray. We have also started to work with Cheshire East Council to erect signs and distribute leaflets regarding fishing related injuries, around targeted sites to help reduce casualties.

Yearly breakdown of number of swans admitted, tested, those elevated and those elevated and released.



Responses to consultations in 2014

Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs

- Bovine TB: new control measures tackling transmission between cattle herds.
- Pet Travel: changes to the EU scheme.
- The Microchipping of Dogs (England) Regulations 2014.

Home Office

- Consultation on the review of Section 24 of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills

- Science and Innovation Strategy 2014.

Welsh Government

- EIDCymru: An electronic movement reporting system for sheep/goats. Identification of Sheep and the Slaughter derogation.
- ■ Achieving high standards together – a new framework for animal health and welfare in Wales.

Farm Animal Welfare Committee

- The animal welfare implications of systems for farrowing and lactating sows kept indoors.
- CCTV and other monitoring and verification methods in slaughterhouses.
- On-farm killing.

Other

- **European Commission:** Study on the Welfare of Cats and Dogs involved in Commercial Practices.
- **Association of Dogs and Cats Homes:** Members' Code of Practice.
- **LANTRA:** National Occupational Standards for dog training and behaviour.
- **All Party Parliamentary Group for Eggs, Pigs & Poultry:** calls for submission of views on planning, antibiotics and welfare.
- **Marine Scotland:** Aquaculture Science and Research Strategy.
- **Assured Food Standards:** Red Tractor Standards for Pigs.
- **Eurogroup for Animals:** Farm Assurance Standards.
- **Federation of Veterinarians of Europe:** Veterinary aspects of aquatic health and welfare; aquaculture and ornamental fish trade.
- **ICFAW:** OIE Broiler Code.
- **Agenda 2030:** One Nation Labour's Plan for Science.
- **EFRA Select Committee:** Inquiry into primates kept as pets: oral evidence.
- **Natural England:** General and Class licences under wildlife legislation in England.
- **Federation of British Herpetologists:** Good Practice Guidelines for the Welfare of Privately Kept Reptiles & Amphibians.

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(RSPCA staff in colour)

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- **Hawkins P** (2014). **Progress in assessing animal welfare in relation to new legislation: Opportunities for behavioural researchers.** Journal of Neuroscience Methods 234, 135-138.
- **Hawkins P** (2014). **Facts and demonstrations: exploring the effects of enrichment on data quality.** The Enrichment Record (Winter, 12-21).
- **Lilley E**, **Hawkins P** & **Jennings M** (2014). **A 'road map' toward ending severe suffering of animals used in research and testing.** ATLA 42, 267-272.
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- European Oiled Wildlife Response (2014). **Animal care during an oiled wildlife response (part B).** Joint document produced by **RSPCA**, Wildlife Rescue Centre – Ostend, Pro Bird and Independent Institute for Wildlife Protection.

The RSPCA Science Group

Companion Animals Department

Samantha Gaines BSc MSc PhD

Lisa Richards BSc

Alice Potter BSc MSc

Jane Tyson BSc MSc PhD

Farm Animals Department

Julia Wrathall BSc MSc PhD ChMIACE

John Avizienius BA MSc

Marc Cooper BSc MSc PhD

Kate Parkes MA MSc

Siân Phillips BSc

Mia Fernyhough BSc MSc PGCE

Sophie Butcher BSc

Sophie Elwes MA MSc [from May]

Belinda De Lara

Regionally based field staff

Allan Pearson OND

Roger Briddock NDA

Charlotte Boss BSc

Emma Heathcote BSc

Phil McCarthy

Pam Foster BSc

Emilie Wix BSc

Research Animals Department

Maggy Jennings OBE BSc PhD

Penny Hawkins BSc PhD

Barney Reed BSc MSc

Nikki Osborne BSc PhD

Elliot Lilley BSc PhD

Juliet Dukes FSB BSc MSc PhD [from April]

Rita Malcolm

Wildlife Department

Adam Grogan BSc

Ros Clubb BSc DPhil

Nicola White BSc MSc PGDip

Llewelyn Lowen BSc MSc [from February]

Sue Gallagher

RSPCA Wildlife Centre Managers

Alison Charles VN

Bel Deering BSc DPhil

Lee Stewart BSc MSc

Peter Venn BA AKC



Helping animals through welfare science



Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

Wilberforce Way, Southwater, Horsham, West Sussex RH13 9RS

www.rspca.org.uk/sciencegroup facebook.com/RSPCA twitter.com/RSPCA_official

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