

EDITORIAL

One of the problems for editors of scientific journals publishing papers based on animal work is deciding, on ethical grounds, whether or not to print a particular piece. This is going to be especially true of a publication entitled '*Animal Welfare*'. Many journals have a policy of not including material resulting from the subjection of animals to 'unnecessary pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm' (or some such wording). The important and often disputed word is 'unnecessary'. In the UK 'unnecessary' usually refers to work which would be outside the ethical standards set by the *Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986*. Papers are usually accepted for publication, other things being equal, if the project has been done under Home Office licence, ie the work has been judged by the Home Office Inspectorate as being necessary. If carried out outside the UK, the work would have to appear to meet the same ethical standards. Should *Animal Welfare* adopt this stance, or should it set itself some different (higher) standard?

The scrutinized contributions in the Articles and Short Communication sections of the present issue of *Animal Welfare* largely avoid the 'necessary/unnecessary' question. Only the investigation into the efficacy of mechanical mole scarers carried out by Gorman and Lamb involved the possibility of subjecting animals to potentially distressing stimuli. The moles did have the opportunity to move away from the stimuli: they didn't and thus, presumably, they weren't distressed by them! The environmental enrichment papers by Lambeth and Bloomsmith and by Schapiro and Bushong are both essentially animal husbandry investigations and were aimed at improving the well-being of captive primates. The dairy cow work reported by Phillips and Schofield is again an animal husbandry study. Cows were kept under two well-accepted 'normal' housing systems - straw yards and cubicles - and subsequent effects on behaviour, production and hoof condition were recorded. The Short Communication by Inglis is a theoretical note made in response to the paper by Blom *et al* published in Volume 2 Number 1 of the journal.

This questioning of the 'ethical' status of the contributions to the journal has been stimulated by the letter entitled '*Unnecessary*' cruelty authored by Frances Rodenburg of The Canadian Federation of Humane Societies and printed on page 71 of this issue. The Editor's note on the same page indicates how we have responded by changing the wording in the Instructions for Authors. There is still, however, a problem with the term 'unnecessary'. Should *Animal Welfare* publish articles which might be of high welfare intent but are the result of invasive work which may have caused pain, suffering, distress etc? Some people will regard this type of investigation as *always* unnecessary - others might hold the view that in some animal welfare areas painful experiments may be justified. Take a theoretical case. Would we or would we not, on ethical grounds, publish a paper on the effects on animals of the development of a new design of injection needle. The new design might have immense welfare advantages if it was accepted by the biomedical research community. A well presented paper in *Animal Welfare* might just do this. The investigation involved subjecting a number of animals to injection by the new needle and comparing the effects of a similar number of injections carried out with the traditional currently used needle. The behaviour of the animals was observed and records were made of the tissue responses to the injuries

inflicted at the injection sites. The handling and injecting has inflicted fear and pain on the animals - admittedly at a relatively mild level - but it is still fear and pain.

Should *Animal Welfare* regard this work as causing 'necessary' pain - but in a good cause - and publish? My own view is that we should - as long as the aim is to improve welfare.

It would be most interesting to hear the views of our readers. The new wording in the Instructions for Authors is not set in stone. Many journals have struggled over the search for the correct phrases to advise their potential contributors on these ethical matters, and we must not pretend that *Animal Welfare* has necessarily got its wording correct.

Finally, I must welcome Mr C B Hart - a veterinary surgeon and recently retired Home Office Inspector - as an Editorial Adviser. He replaces Professor Anton Beynen who must be thanked for his help with the journal both as an Editorial Adviser and, earlier, as one of the Section Editors.

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Roger Ewbank
Editor-in-Chief

THE EXPLOITATION OF MAMMALS

Mammal Society/UFAW Autumn Symposium

To be held at the Meeting Rooms of the Zoological Society of London

November 25-26 1994

The major themes of this meeting are the various ways in which mammal populations are exploited, the concept of sustainable use and the resulting welfare considerations for the animals involved.

The programme includes sessions on Mammal Game Ranching; Mammal-oriented Ecotourism; Mammals in Zoos and Circuses; Sport Hunting of Mammals, and Mammal Wildlife Trade & Conservation.

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