

LETTERS

Wildlife rehabilitation

Sir, I am pleased that my *Wildcare Handbook* received a review in *Animal Welfare* 1992, 1: 301-302. Wildlife care is now being accepted as a discipline all over the world and I am sorry that Ian Robinson of the RSPCA seems to have missed the whole purpose of the book, that of giving help and treatment to wild birds and other animals that for many years appear to have escaped much needed professional assistance.

Euthanasia is fast being rejected as a first aid measure and now more and more people are insisting that injured wild animals receive treatment. Birds, and especially wild birds, receive scant attention by the veterinary colleges and practices and at times the person seeking qualified assistance for a bird has had to soldier on alone. To add to this, analgesics are relatively untried in birds and I understand that only a few veterinary practices use Isoflurane, in many opinions the only safe anaesthetic for use in birds.

Because of this, many birds have and will continue to be treated without either and although I would not necessarily agree with this, it is a fact of life. A fractured bone stabilized without anaesthetic is going to be far less painful than a fractured bone flapping uncontrollably.

The paper 'Pain in birds' in the same issue highlights the unknown realms of bird pain sensation and comes up with few conclusions. It might have been more helpful had the paper or Ian Robinson discussed the obvious discomfort a bird shows even when under anaesthetic. I fear that even when anaesthetized, pain is not fully

eliminated especially when the veterinary surgeon has to pluck feathers to gain access to a wound site.

Throughout my book I recommend the input of veterinary surgeons - many of whom have written to say that my experiences of 7,000-8,000 birds each year has been helpful in general practice.

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Statistics of scientific procedures on living animals

Sir, The workings of the *Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986* (Reports and comments, *Animal Welfare* 1993, 2: 90-92) rightly drew attention to the difficulty of using the Home Office *Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals*. Such concerns are not new and are shared by protagonists on both sides of the present debate over the use of animal experimentation in the UK. Indeed, commenting on the 1991 publication, Hart has argued that: 'Doctors wanting to defend Britain's 3.2 million scientific procedures on living animals will want to know much more about what they are defending than this book tells them.' (*British Medical Journal* 303: 670).

Noting that like many statistical publications, the Home Office statistics seemed to conceal more than it revealed, your report suggested that careful study and comparison of different tables would often reveal apparently hidden facts (*Animal Welfare* 1993, 2: 90-92). However, recent correspondence between the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection (BUAV) and