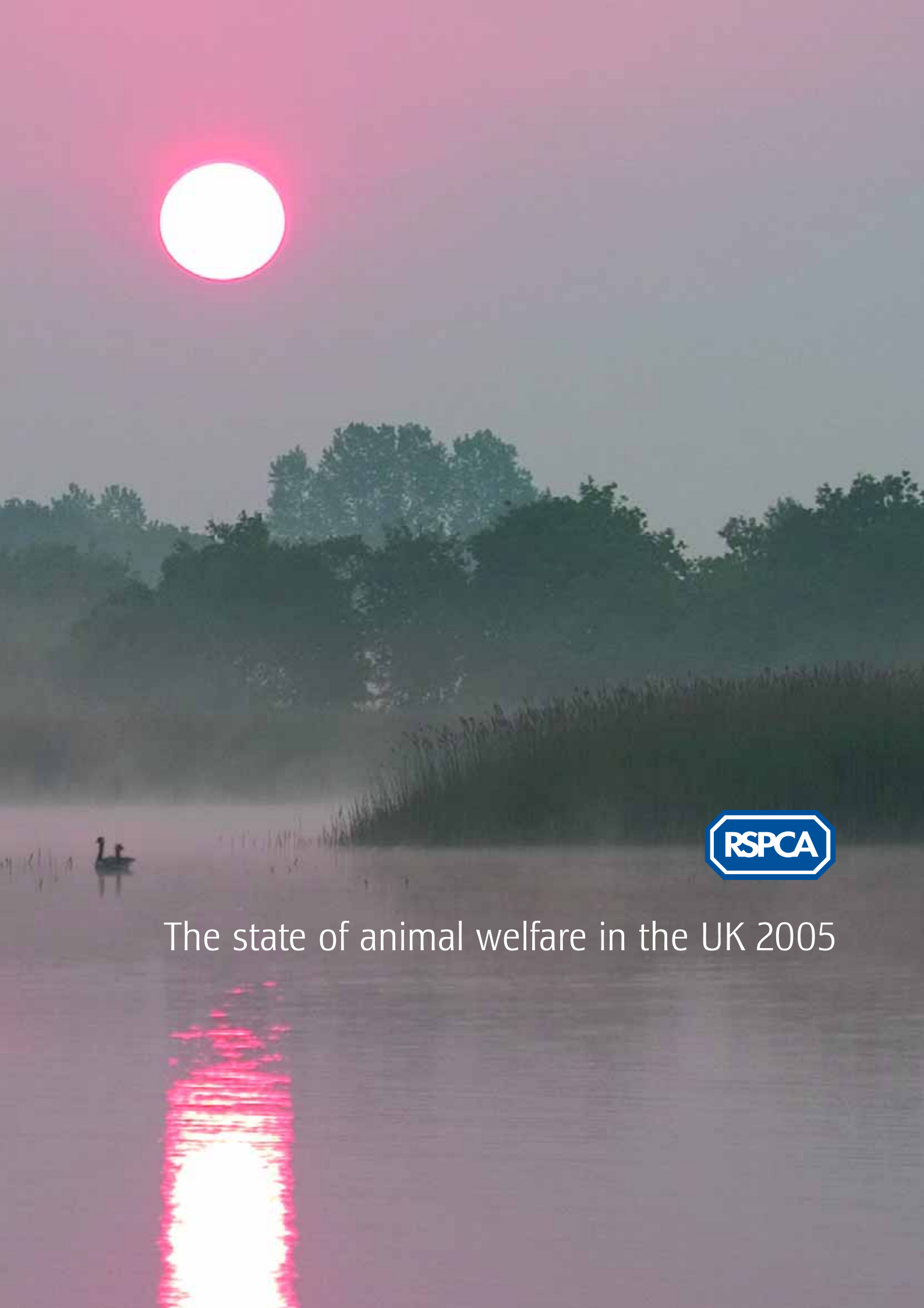




The state of animal welfare in the UK 2005

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The state of animal welfare in the UK 2005

The state of animal welfare in the UK 2005 highlights a small number of animal welfare issues to represent the importance of taking animal welfare seriously, and assesses how it can and should be improved. Issues such as how animals are treated, how they are viewed by society, what legislation exists to protect them and how this is enforced are symbolic of the state of society itself.

Animal welfare

On the eve of the implementation of two of the most significant pieces of legislation to affect the welfare of animals in the United Kingdom, (the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland¹) Act 2006 and the Animal Welfare Bill in England and Wales²), the RSPCA believes it is vital to begin to develop an appropriate gauge of what is happening in the UK with regard to the welfare of its animals. This is important not only from an animal protection perspective, but also essential with regard to feeding into government policy and informing decision-makers and stakeholders.

It is envisaged that by tracking animal welfare year on year, the gauge will serve as a valuable guide to where legislation, government policy, industry practices, education, economics and social attitudes need to be addressed and changed for the better in the UK.

Measuring improvements in animal welfare objectively is a challenge. While carbon emissions or increasing recycling can be measured on a quantitative and objective basis, animal welfare improvements are often less easily quantified. However, the need remains to gather a picture of what is currently happening to millions of animals in the UK that are farmed, used for research purposes, live as our pets and exist in the wild.

The idea of measuring animal welfare is a relatively new concept, but in the past decade several innovations have helped improve this process. Developments in animal welfare science have prompted objectively-based welfare assessment processes such as the Welfare Outcomes Assessment (WOA) protocols developed by Bristol University³. These have now been developed for dairy cattle, pigs and laying hens. The WOA uses animal-based measurements to evaluate an animal's welfare in real time so that problems such as lameness can be identified and rectified. With an increasing amount of scientific research attempting to measure animal welfare, this has led to increased data availability and helped in the process of raising legislative standards.

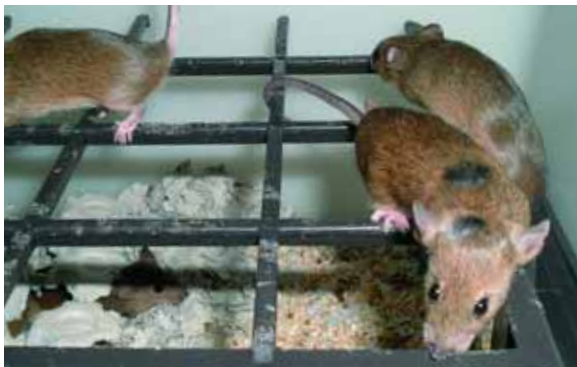
This has resulted in the incorporation of animal welfare into national and international strategic plans. The European Union (EU) Commission released their first ever five-year Animal Welfare Action Plan with specific targeted goals in January 2006⁴. The plan aims to define more clearly the direction of EU policies on animal protection and to promote high animal welfare standards. It identifies five areas for action, including the introduction of standardised animal welfare indicators.



GENERIC INDICATORS

06–18

W B IRWIN/RSPCA PHOTOLIBRARY



RESEARCH ANIMAL INDICATORS

19–30

PENNY HAWKINS/RSPCA PHOTOLIBRARY



WILDLIFE INDICATORS

Indicators

This report represents the inaugural compilation of 25 indicators that will attempt to identify how the UK is currently performing with regard to the welfare of animals and will seek to assess annually the direction of animal welfare in the UK.

The indicators are divided into five categories:

- generic, such as the penetration of animal welfare as a concept, into the public and business world
- the use of animals in research and testing
- wildlife, including animals imported for the pet trade
- farm animals
- pet animals.

Each of the four animal chapters focuses on five different animal welfare issues, while the generic chapter concentrates on five issues that consist of social, governmental and business parameters. The indicators either consist of data and statistics that are currently in the public domain, demonstrate a need for data to be regularly collated by a central source, or refer to research that has been directly carried out by the RSPCA.

Clearly, the issues facing the UK relevant to animals and their welfare are numerous and diverse, so no index can include them all. Twenty-five areas, viewed by the RSPCA as being of high animal welfare importance and providing a good representation from across the range, have therefore been selected for the purposes of this initiative.

This initial report aims to set the scene, highlight the issues and establish where animal welfare is today. Some of the indicators include data from previous years, others use figures from only one year, and some have no statistics as none are available. Next year and beyond, a critical assessment of each indicator will attempt to demonstrate if improvements are being made and whether or not animal welfare is changing and in what direction it is moving.

Traffic lights

In an attempt to measure the progress of the 25 indicators year on year, a traffic light system has been developed to demonstrate the areas that are improving, standing still or getting worse. The red and



Animal welfare in this area has worsened.



The animal welfare issue remains unchanged or there is a negligible change.



Animal welfare in this area has improved.



There are no data or insufficient data are available.

green traffic lights will contain a percentage figure that shows how much the issue has improved or worsened since the previous year.

A green light signifies a degree of improvement only. It does not mean that there are no animal welfare problems associated with the particular issue and therefore no further improvements are required or could be made. There is still room for a huge amount of improvement for all the indicators as only six green lights were awarded this year. The indicators awarded were: **green** – six, **red** – six, **yellow** – nine and **grey** – 10 (31 traffic lights are given as the import data for reptiles and birds is divided into UK and EU categories).

With each publication of the report it is hoped that recognised positive changes will be taking place in the UK with regard to the treatment of all animals, the legislation affecting their well-being and the importance of animal welfare within society as a whole.

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/bills/47-animalhealth/index.htm
- 2 www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/welfare/bill/index.htm
- 3 www.vetschool.bris.ac.uk/animalwelfare/welfareassessmentpaper.html
- 4 http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/actionplan/actionplan_en.html



31–42

PETE OXFORD/RSPCA PHOTOLIBRARY



FARM ANIMAL INDICATORS

43–56

E A JAMES/RSPCA PHOTOLIBRARY



PET ANIMAL INDICATORS

57–70

ANDREW FORSYTH/RSPCA PHOTOLIBRARY



GENERIC INDICATORS

Generic indicators: Introduction

RSPCA concern

Directly and indirectly, animal welfare affects everybody in society. Therefore, when assessing the state of animal welfare in the UK it is important to go beyond the four different areas of concern related to research, wildlife, farm and pet animals. Whereas these indicators focus directly on the animals and the welfare issues themselves, there remains a wider need to find out how more indirect factors are influencing the welfare of animals.

Background

These generic or attitudinal indicators are different to the following four chapters, as most do not deal with numbers of animals. They have been chosen to look at if, how and where animal welfare improvements are being made in the business world, by the UK government, and by the general public.

The welfare indicators

The majority of information relating to each of the five indicators has been collated and interpreted from various sources that are already in the public domain. The business angle looks at Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), a fast-growing phenomenon which is increasingly seen by the government, consumers and businesses themselves as a crucial element to ethical corporate strategy.

To gauge public attitude, the RSPCA commissioned research to find out how, at consumer level, animal welfare should and/or could be improved. Public concern is also measured through the number of phone calls received by the RSPCA for advice or reporting cruelty. Two government components address how animal welfare is given consideration at Westminster by looking at the publication of government white papers and at the number of external animal welfare specialists who sit on advisory non-department public bodies (NDPBs) that can have an input on the health and welfare of animals.

Directly and indirectly, animal welfare affects everybody in society. Therefore, when assessing the state of animal welfare in the UK it is important to go beyond the four different areas of concern related to research, wildlife, farm and pet animals.

Welfare indicator: Proportion of FTSE 100 companies with animal welfare improvements in their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)¹ policies

RSPCA concern

The UK government's CSR strategy does not explicitly mention animal welfare or make any reference to animals per se. Yet many businesses and companies have some impact on and involvement with animals and their welfare. There could be an obvious link such as using animals when safety testing chemicals used in industry or agriculture, animals used in medical research or in the production of food. There may be a subtler link such as the destruction of habitats due to mining or construction, or animals affected by the pollution of water, land or air.

The RSPCA believes that animal welfare must be a consideration when UK companies are developing and implementing CSR policies.

Background

CSR is a growing phenomenon with more and more companies implementing policies, producing reports and even devoting whole departments to ensuring the company has effective and worthy CSR policies. The UK government has: "An ambitious vision for Corporate Social Responsibility"² and would like: "To see UK businesses taking account of their economic, social and environmental impacts, and acting to address the key sustainable development challenges based on their core competencies wherever they operate – locally, regionally and internationally".

CSR is a concept that considers many aspects of a company's performance and risks associated with issues such as employment, the environment, human rights, communities and business relationships. It is a way that organisations can take more responsibility in how they impact on a variety of issues, is a measure of good business over and above compliance with minimum legal requirements, and is beyond the more traditional philanthropy of donating money to good causes. Currently animal welfare is not considered to be a key feature of CSR.

The following two organisations index and benchmark businesses on aspects of CSR.

■ Business in the Community (BITC)³

The BITC is a business-led charity that is encouraging companies to have a more positive impact on society. Current membership stands at more than 750 companies, including 71 FTSE 100 companies. BITC has developed the Corporate Responsibility Index, which is used as a benchmarking tool and covers four impact areas – community, environment, workplace and marketplace. In 2006, 131 companies participated in the index – many of these are FTSE 100 companies.

■ FTSE4Good⁴

The FTSE4Good Index Series measures the performance of FTSE companies that meet globally recognised corporate responsibility standards. The selection criteria focus on three areas – environment sustainability, stakeholder relations and human rights.

Neither BITC nor FTSE4Good makes any provision for animal welfare nor uses it as the basis of indices for benchmarking.

This animal welfare indicator has been developed to identify which of the largest UK-registered companies that form the FTSE 100 have a policy on animal welfare, and which are taking steps to improve, protect and promote animal welfare.



Insufficient data are available.

Some of the FTSE companies, for example pharmaceutical, food and retail, initially seem more predisposed to having such a policy, however all of the companies could and possibly do have an impact on the welfare of animals, and this needs to be addressed.

The indicator figures

All FTSE 100 companies have some form of CSR policy and produce some documentation about this area of their work – either in a report or via dedicated web pages. The policies are of varying levels and differ greatly with regard to depth, content and reporting.

The RSPCA obtained each of the FTSE 100⁵ companies' CSR and/or annual reports or relevant policy information that can be found on their websites. This literature and their websites were used to identify whether the companies had a policy or made any reference to animal welfare or protection.

Just 16 of the FTSE 100 companies have some form of policy that concerns animal welfare. The companies specifically focus on the following aspects of animal welfare – animal experiments, farm animals and fishing. Of these 16 companies, 13 aim to improve animal welfare.

The FTSE is made up of 37 different categories of companies⁵. Table 1 identifies which category of company already has an animal welfare policy or statement, and which of these state an aim to improve animal welfare.

All the health and pharmaceutical companies within the FTSE 100 have a policy on animal testing and research that states an aim to minimise animal use and ensure humane treatment of those animals used. In contrast, just three out of the seven food companies had a CSR policy or statement referring to farm animals even though meat was sold. Of the remaining 84 FTSE 100 companies, some made a reference to animals and biodiversity, however there was nothing concrete in their policies to indicate any real commitment to acknowledging animal welfare and their responsibility to it as a business.

Currently there is little sign of animal welfare being put forward as an important CSR issue by either the government or the business world. However, it is hoped that over time companies will begin to measure animal welfare and view it as an important issue alongside environmental, social and economic impacts.

TABLE 1: Number of FTSE 100 companies that have an animal welfare component

Category/type of company	Number of companies in the FTSE 100	Animal welfare reference	Aim to improve animal welfare
Health	2	2	2
Food	7	3	3
Pharmaceutical	3	3	3
Chemical	3	1	0
Retail	6	5	3
Oil	2	1	1
Personal/house	1	1	1

Data source: FTSE 100.

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 CSR comes under many guises and is also referred to as corporate responsibility, corporate sustainability, corporate citizenship, and environment and social responsibility.
- 2 Department of Trade and Industry. *Corporate Social Responsibility – a government update*. 2004. www.csr.gov.uk
- 3 Business in the Community. www.bitc.org.uk
- 4 FTSE4Good. www.ftse.com
- 5 FTSE 100 companies identified as of 8 March 2006.

Welfare indicator: Number of relevant white papers published by the UK government that include a positive animal welfare component

RSPCA concern

In the UK animal welfare is traditionally seen as a single issue resting with one government department, namely the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). However, there are other ministries, such as the Home Office, the Department of Trade and Industry (Dti), the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), and the Department for International Development (Dfid), that have a direct role in either setting policies on animal welfare or manage issues that have an impact on animal welfare. The RSPCA believes that it is important for the government to assess the current and future needs of animals and their impact and relationship on/with other issues.

The RSPCA believes the UK government should take a holistic approach to animal welfare, and advocates that all government departments give it due consideration when developing and implementing new policy and legislation.



Insufficient data are available.

Background

The major government stakeholder, which is recognised as responsible for carrying animal welfare forward in the UK, is Defra. Other major stakeholders which set animal welfare policy are the Home Office (animals used in research and testing), the Dti (fireworks) and the Department for Communities and Local Government (urban regeneration). Other ministries have an indirect impact (for instance Dfid has an animal welfare policy which is taken into account for any programmes overseas). By looking at the government's plans for future policy, an assessment can be made of how animal welfare is currently viewed and whether aspects of it are being considered and incorporated into future plans across relevant government departments. To gain some insight into current and future government thinking and actions about aspects of animal welfare, white papers (documents produced by a government department to outline details of future policy) have been reviewed and questions asked in parliament on the impact of different ministries on animal welfare (see page 13). While it is appreciated that white papers are just one step in the process of making policy, they are still useful indices.

By looking at white papers, a more detailed analysis can be made of cross-departmental thinking on animal welfare.

The indicator figures

Between January 2004 and December 2005, 21 white papers were published by various government ministries^{1 2}. None of the white papers were specifically about animals or their welfare and none of them were produced by Defra.

The white papers have been assessed according to the following criteria.

- Does the title suggest that animals will be included in the document?
- Does the foreword, preface or executive summary suggest that animals will be incorporated into the document?
- Does the white paper make any reference to animal welfare?
- By the nature of the document, should animal welfare have been considered?

Of the 21 that were published, nine white papers were initially identified as having the potential to incorporate an animal welfare

TABLE 2: Summary of the nine relevant white papers published 2004–2005

Date	Department	Title
April 2004	Home Office	One step ahead: A 21st century strategy to defeat organised crime
April 2004	Foreign and Commonwealth Office	Prospects for the EU in 2004
July 2004	Department of Trade and Industry	Making globalisation a force for good
Sept 2004	Foreign and Commonwealth Office	White paper on the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe
Nov 2004	Home Office	Building communities, beating crime: A better police service for the 21st century
Nov 2004	Department of Health	Choosing health: Making healthier choices easier
Feb 2005	Foreign and Commonwealth Office	Prospects for the EU in 2005
Feb 2005	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister ³	Sustainable communities: People, places and prosperity. A five-year plan
Feb 2005	Department for Education and Skills	14–19 education and skills

Data source: Weekly Information Bulletin¹.

element within them. Table 2 shows the title of these nine white papers and the government department that published the document.

■ One step ahead

As organised crime is the theme of this white paper it was expected that animal issues such as the illegal trade in wildlife or dog fighting would be referred to. The illegal trade in wildlife is estimated to be worth €4 billion annually; only the illegal arms and drugs trades are thought to be more financially important. Organised crime is recognised as driving other crime, and it is known that there is an important crossover with people involved in illegal animal crimes, such as the wildlife trade and dog fighting, and other areas of criminality. The RSPCA often works closely with the police on drugs raids to reduce the threat from dangerous dogs that may be kept by such criminals. Yet dog fighting and other animal fighting are not mentioned.

■ Making globalisation a force for good

The issue of farming is discussed in the third chapter of the white paper although there is no mention of farm animals or the import and/or export of meat, eggs or dairy products, and therefore no consideration is given to animal welfare. The white paper states that: “Consumers have the right to demand tough standards on food and product safety...” and “...governments have the right to impose their own controls on economic activity in order to protect health and the environment”. The negotiations at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) underline the important impact

on the relationship between globalisation and improving animal welfare. The UK has been in the vanguard of proposing solutions to this issue so it is surprising that animal welfare is not specifically mentioned.

■ Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe

Article III–121 clearly states that: “In formulating the Union’s agricultural, fisheries, transport, internal market and technological development and space policies, the Union and the member states shall, since animals are sentient beings, pay full regard to the requirements of animal welfare...”

■ Building communities, beating crime

The white paper’s foreword and executive summary don’t explicitly discuss animals, however they do discuss dedicated neighbourhood policing teams and the government’s aim to: “...reduce crime, to tackle anti-social behaviour and disorder”, in which dog fouling was later mentioned as an anti-social behaviour. Other than dog fouling, no other animal problems or crimes were included. The RSPCA believes that improving animal welfare issues at a neighbourhood level, such as reducing dog fouling or stray animals, could have a societal impact on the neighbourhood and reduce anti-social behaviour. Interestingly, the paper stated that: “There are some functions, which over time, have largely become the responsibility of others – the protection of animals...” It is interesting that the white paper seems to be devolving responsibility to non-governmental organisations such as the RSPCA, rather than statutory agencies such as the police and local authorities.

■ Choosing health

The white paper outlines that the government will work with the farming and food industries, including the production of a food and health action plan which was initially outlined in the Defra-published *Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food*. There is no specific mention of farm animals (meat), the dairy and the egg industry, organic produce or animal diseases that may impact on human health such as BSE and avian influenza.

■ Sustainable communities

Part of the white paper's programme of action includes the proposing of a Neighbourhoods Charter. The charter would incorporate a wide-ranging strategy to make places cleaner and free of anti-social behaviour. Parts of this strategy take into account dog fouling and noise (although it doesn't specifically mention barking dogs this issue would sit under the anti-social behaviour heading) and the local authorities' role. It would make sense for the paper to also include more information on stray animals; litter that encourages pest and feral animals and can cause injury to animals; animal noise pollution; and pest control. However, reference is made to the Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Bill (now Act) which incorporates these issues.

■ 14–19 education and skills

"Today's teenagers are tomorrow's parents, entrepreneurs, public servants and community leaders", says the white paper, yet it does not mention animal welfare. As a subject it could be included in the curriculum; although it is seen by the RSPCA as part of another subject (citizenship), it has been overlooked in the paper.

■ Prospects for the EU – 2004 and 2005

Both the white papers include references to animal welfare, namely CAP⁴ (Common Agriculture Policy) reform and REACH^{5 6} (Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals).

It is encouraging that the white papers which concern the EU and Europe make reference to relevant areas of animal welfare, and this suggests that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is considering this when developing policy. However, it is disappointing that animal welfare is of little or no consideration when policy and debate concerns crime, health and education.

It is hoped that all government departments begin to put animal welfare on their individual agendas and that the issue is incorporated into all relevant white papers in the future.

It is hoped that all government departments begin to put animal welfare on their individual agendas and that the issue is incorporated into all relevant white papers in the future.

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 Weekly Information Bulletin. On: www.parliament.uk
- 2 Office of public sector information website: www.opsi.gov.uk
- 3 The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is now known as the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).
- 4 The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) was first established in 1962. The CAP aims to have a sustainable and vibrant farming sector within the EU.
- 5 Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH), establishing a European Chemicals Agency and amending Directive 1999/45/EC.
- 6 REACH is the EU Commission's proposals for a regulatory framework on chemicals.

Welfare indicator: Number of relevant government advisory non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) on which an animal welfare specialist¹ is represented

RSPCA concern

Government departments have a number of advisory NDPBs which are established by ministers, or by officials working on behalf of ministers, to 'provide independent expert advice or to provide input into the policy-making process'². Those appointed to the advisory NDPBs are independent of government and are drawn from outside the public sector. With regard to animal welfare, a number of advisory NDPBs exist to provide independent and expert advice on particular topics of interest, such as the Independent Scientific Group on Cattle TB (ISG) and the Animal Procedures Committee (APC).

The RSPCA believes that when issues affecting animals are being discussed by advisory NDPBs, with a view to developing policy and ultimately legislation that impacts on animals' well-being, it is essential that independent animal welfare specialists are involved in such discussions and are represented on the relevant advisory NDPBs.

Background

The indicator has been constructed to identify who sits on which advisory NDPB in England³. This will help to give an insight into whether animal welfare decisions and policy are developed with the assistance of necessary specialists. It would seem to be beneficial, if not expected, that an animal welfare specialist be appointed in a personal capacity (rather than representing an organisation) to sit on an advisory NDPB to contribute expert advice and input into the policy-making process about the welfare of animals.

Before the membership of such bodies could be analysed, it was necessary to identify the actual name of these groups and to find out to which government department and minister they were responsible to. Therefore to establish the number of government committees and advisory bodies, a parliamentary question was developed and tabled by an MP⁴ to four departments. The departments were identified as having the potential to be, or indeed responsibility to be, concerned with animal welfare and therefore were likely to have advisory NDPBs for this purpose:

- Dti
- Defra
- Home Office
- Dfid.

Each department was asked to list its advisory bodies and committees concerned with animal health and welfare. It was hoped that the answer to the parliamentary question would provide a list of relevant bodies, which would then determine the scope of a more detailed examination of the advisory NDPBs or any other bodies or committees that may be submitted (i.e. executive NDPBs).

The indicator figures

All four departments responded to the parliamentary question and tabled a written answer.

The Dti provided the following written statement: "For information on advisory bodies and committees with which the Department works, but which also covers the work of other departments I refer the honourable member to the answer given by my right honourable friend the Secretary of State for Environment Food and Rural Affairs⁵."

Dfid echoed the response of the Dti and referred to the answer that had been given by Defra previously⁶. The Home Office identified its one advisory body, the Animal Procedures Committee (APC) and explained the role of the APC⁷.



Insufficient data are available.

TABLE 3: Summary of Defra's advisory NDPBs and their animal welfare representation

Defra advisory NDPBs	Animal welfare specialist represented?
Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens	No
Advisory Committee on Organic Standards	No
Cattle Compensation Advisory Group	No
Defra Antimicrobial Resistance Coordination Group	No
England Implementation Group for the Animal Health and Welfare Strategy for Great Britain	Yes
Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC)	Yes
Human and Animal Infections and Risks Surveillance Group	No
Independent Scientific Group on Cattle Tuberculosis	No
Science Advisory Council (SAC)	No
Bovine Tuberculosis Vaccine Programme Advisory Group	No
Bovine Tuberculosis Vaccine Steering Group	No
UK Zoonoses Group	No
Veterinary Products Committee	No
Veterinary Residues Committee	No
Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC)	No
Surveillance Group on Diseases and Infections in Animals (SGDIA)	No
Zoos Forum	Yes

Data source: Defra.

Defra produced a list of advisory NDPBs that were related to the health and welfare of animals. They confirmed that: "Defra is the department with the lead responsibility for animal health and welfare. Partnership working with animal owners, the farming industry and others is the heart of the approach set out in the government's Animal Health and Welfare Strategy⁸."

The responses highlight that the UK government very much sees animal welfare sitting in the folds of one department – Defra. There seems to be little overt acknowledgement that the welfare of animals impacts on other departments, such as the issues relating to fireworks (Dti) and the welfare of animals in overseas programmes (Dfid). The answer from Defra also supports this. While Defra is the only department that has the welfare and health of animals as part of its remit, other departments have an indirect or direct impact on animal welfare.

Table 3 shows Defra's 17 current animal health and welfare related

advisory NDPBs and states whether or not there is an animal welfare specialist who is a member. Only three out of the 17 committees or advisory bodies have an animal welfare specialist represented.

Interestingly, FAWC stated at its 2006 open meeting⁹, that it would be: "Seeking an animal welfare specialist" and that a letter seeking nominations for new appointees to FAWC would be sent to a wide range of stakeholders. The RSPCA very much welcomes the fact that FAWC will therefore continue to include an animal welfare specialist, and it is a positive move to ensure that different stakeholders continue to be represented on FAWC.

It is encouraging that three important Defra advisory NDPBs have at least one member who represents animal welfare, and over the next few years it would be a positive step forward if more encouraged the membership of a recognised animal welfare specialist. It would also help if other relevant departments carried out an audit of their NDPBs in relation to animal welfare.

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

¹ An animal welfare specialist is a person with the primary purpose of representing animal welfare (including both physical and behavioural aspects).

² *Public bodies: A guide for departments* 2006. www.civilservice.gov.uk/other/agencies/guidance_for_departments/pb_guidance/index.asp

³ In future years the Welsh Assembly will also be included within this indicator. It must be noted that there is independent animal welfare representation on the Wales Animal Health and Welfare Strategy (AHWS) Steering Committee.

⁴ Hansard written questions, 26 April 2006.

⁵ Hansard written answers, 11 May 2006.

⁶ Hansard written answers, 10 May 2006.

⁷ Hansard written answers, 13 July 2006.

⁸ Hansard written answers, 9 May 2006.

⁹ Farm Animal Welfare Council – summary of open meeting on 30 June 2006.

Welfare indicator: Proportion of people interested in improving animal welfare

RSPCA concern

For improvements to be made to the welfare of animals, whether they are animals used in research and testing, animals farmed for food or pets at home, there needs to be some 'buy-in' and a level of understanding and support from the general public. Assessing the public's attitudes to animal welfare is an important factor when attempting to define how the UK is performing with regard to its animals, yet it is probably one of the hardest to gauge accurately.

If laws, behaviour, consumer habits and attitudes are to be changed, the RSPCA believes that animal welfare must be a concept everyone is familiar with, understands and respects.

Background

The UK has legislation relating to animals used in research and testing, wildlife, farm animals and the keeping of pets. There is also an abundance of animal protection organisations and individuals that work tirelessly for and on behalf of animals in many different capacities including campaigning, hands-on work, fundraising and donating money each month. The RSPCA is rated in the top 10 of UK charities in terms of income¹. On one hand the UK is viewed as a nation of animal lovers, and legislators receive more letters on animal welfare than any other issue. On the other hand the media regularly reports acts of animal cruelty to pet animals such as dogs and cats, and the RSPCA continues to receive complaints about animal suffering and carries out an increasing number of investigations into neglect and cruelty (see page 17).

To try to measure public and social attitudes, commissioned opinion polls have been used to find out how people in the UK view aspects of animal welfare and whether there is any indication that they want improvements to be made. Consumer polls are a well-established and commonly practised tool for measuring the social attitudes and opinions of the general public on all sorts of issues. It is however also recognised that such polls are subjective, and whilst every attempt can be made to formulate questions in an unbiased and objective manner there is no way of preventing the public from giving an answer they believe the questioner would like to hear. The polling questions do not delve into why certain responses are given or explain the reasoning behind the answers, and assumptions can only be made as to why someone has such a viewpoint.

Even with these limitations in mind, opinion polls are still a useful way to find out the attitudes and opinions of the general public. And with regard to animal welfare, they are an important measuring tool to identify where changes and improvements need to be made and where more public educational work needs to take place.

The indicator figures

The four questions on the next page are extracted from three different RSPCA-commissioned omnibus surveys² and provide a window into the views and thoughts of the UK's general public, their attitude to animal welfare and interest in improving it. The RSPCA has attempted to interpret the results of the following questions.



Insufficient data are available.

**To what extent do you agree or disagree that:
“In order for society to be truly civilised, animal welfare
must be a key priority”?³**

A generic question was developed to understand if the public actually thought that animal welfare was an important factor when considering if society was civilised or not. Over half (53 per cent) of the people questioned were in agreement with the statement, with about one-quarter (24 per cent) disagreeing and a further 22 per cent neither agreeing nor disagreeing. The poll results suggest that although animal welfare is viewed as an important societal issue by the majority, there is still a large number of people who either do not have an opinion or disagree that prioritising animal welfare would make a difference to society.

**How strongly do you agree or disagree that:
“It is important to buy products that contain free-range
or barn eggs”?⁴**

For very many years keeping hens in battery cages has been a topical animal welfare issue that has evoked many debates at public, UK and European government levels. The question goes beyond focusing on the production of whole eggs and encourages people to think more widely about which eggs are used as ingredients in many foods.

Nearly three-quarters (72 per cent) of those questioned agreed with the statement, with just six per cent disagreeing. However, more than one-fifth (22 per cent) either had no opinion (five per cent) or didn't agree or disagree (17 per cent). It is a promising sign that the majority of people believe it is important to buy products that do not contain eggs from caged hens, but it is also a concern that so many people did not have an opinion either way. This could indicate a lack of awareness or understanding of the issue or question, a lack of concern, or a sense of apathy towards the issue.

**How strongly do you agree or disagree that:
“Animal welfare is an important consideration when
I buy chicken”?⁵**

Every year about 850 million chickens are reared for their meat in the UK. With the sheer numbers of animals affected, it is beneficial to find out if consumers think about the welfare of chickens when they buy them. The above question formed part of a broader survey that looked at whether or not animal welfare was a consideration when consumers bought whole chickens or pieces of chicken. Of those initially questioned, 72 per cent agreed that animal welfare is an important consideration. Just 17 per cent disagreed with the statement and 11 per cent either didn't know or didn't agree/disagree.

It is extremely positive that such a large number of people consider animal welfare when buying a fresh chicken. However, as another indicator reveals, only a small amount of chicken (three per cent) is produced to higher welfare standards (see page 50). There is quite a discrepancy between the two figures, which could suggest that the public have good intentions but are confused with what they are actually buying due to confusing or absent labelling for example, or are swayed by price rather than ethics, or cannot easily find the higher welfare product.

**“Some people say that in addition to factors
such as price and quality, there are ethical factors
involved when buying different items. On this card
is a list of factors which come under this ethical
heading. Please tell me which two or three, if any,
you personally think are the most important.”³**

The question was asked in order to ascertain the importance of animal welfare in ethical shopping.

The following statements were provided:

- items are produced in an environmentally friendly manner
- items are produced without violation of human rights or exploitation of people in developing countries
- items are produced with fair trade issues in mind
- items are organically produced.

The sample population was split in half and two different animal welfare statements were provided to each half of the sample. The animal welfare statement given to the first half was: “Items are produced in a way that ensures animal welfare”, while the statement provided to the second half was: “Items are produced in a way that minimises unnecessary animal suffering”.

The results from both versions are very similar. In the first half of the sample, two-fifths (41 per cent) of respondents felt that items produced in a way that ensures animal welfare is important for ethical shopping and purchasing. In the second half of the sample, again about two-fifths (43 per cent) of respondents felt that minimising unnecessary animal suffering is important.

However, both samples reveal that three-fifths of respondents felt that items produced in an environmentally friendly manner (60 per cent and 57 per cent), and in a manner that does not violate human rights in developing countries (55 per cent and 57 per cent) are the most important.

It is encouraging that both samples felt animal welfare was an important factor when shopping.

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

¹ Charities Aid Foundation. 2006. *Charity Trends 2006* report. www.cafonline.org

² An omnibus survey covers a number of topics, usually from different organisations.

³ Ipsos MORI poll: Results based on interviews with 2,028 adults aged 15+ in Great Britain across 170 constituency-based sampling points. In-home, face-to-face interviews between 31 March and 6 April 2006.

⁴ Ipsos MORI poll: Results based on interviews with 2,182 adults aged 15+ in Great Britain. In-home, face-to-face interviews between 2–7 February 2006.

⁵ TNS poll: Results based on interviews with 1,013 adults aged 16+ in Great Britain. Telephone interviews between 12–14 May 2006.

Welfare indicator: The number of investigations and convictions taken by the RSPCA under the Protection of Animals Act 1911

RSPCA concern

Animal cruelty is an indicator that can measure not only the trends in cruelty to individual animals but can also be representative of societal attitudes. England and Wales first enacted legislation specifically intended to prevent cruelty to animals in 1822 with 'An Act to prevent the cruel and improper treatment of cattle'. This was one of the earliest laws on animal cruelty in the world and seems to refer to all livestock not just cattle. It was followed by the establishment of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in 1824 with the purpose of enforcing this new Act and promoting education on animal issues.

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), as it became in 1840, established an inspectorate to enforce the animal welfare related legislation and now has about 330 inspectors in England and Wales. The RSPCA investigates and prosecutes the majority of offences for animal cruelty¹.

In 1911 the existing laws relating to cruelty were consolidated and updated by the Protection of Animals Act 1911. Section 1.1(a) of the Act makes it an offence inter alia to cruelly beat, kick, ill-treat, torture, or terrify any domestic or captive animal, or wantonly or unreasonably to do or omit to do any act which causes such an animal unnecessary suffering. The Animal Welfare Bill², would significantly update this 90-year-old legislation and, most importantly, will introduce the welfare offence.



There is little change in the number of defendants. The increase in conviction reflects changes demanded by the High Court in laying charges.

This imposes a new duty on the person responsible for an animal to ensure its welfare. In particular, once the Animal Welfare Act comes into force, a person will commit an offence if he/she does not take reasonable steps to ensure the needs of an animal for which he/she is responsible are met to the extent required by good practice. For the purposes of the Act, an animal's needs include its need for: a suitable environment; a suitable diet; the ability to exhibit normal behavioural patterns; any needs to be housed with, or apart from, other animals; and to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease.

Data will be generated once the Act is enacted to measure the welfare offence in England and Wales and is covered elsewhere in the report (see page 64).

The offence of cruelty and unnecessary suffering from the 1911 Act is being updated in the Animal Welfare Bill and is laid out under Section 4. Although there are language changes in the offence it is hoped to be able to measure trends in offences committed relating to unnecessary suffering and animal cruelty once the 1911 Act is superseded by the Animal Welfare Act.

Background

Every year, the RSPCA handles the majority of telephone calls reporting animal cruelty in England and Wales. These give a snapshot of the level of concern from the public on animal cruelty and welfare issues. They also provide the basis of the investigations the RSPCA undertakes. If it appears that an offence of cruelty has been committed, the RSPCA inspector will consult a vet/expert and ask their opinion of the animal's condition. If they believe that the animal is suffering unnecessarily then further action is taken. Where owners do not cooperate or refuse entry to their property, the RSPCA may have to ask the police for assistance.

Prosecutions are not undertaken unless the Code for Crown Prosecutors³ is met. The Society has a very high success rate with its prosecutions – in 2005, 96.7 per cent of the RSPCA's prosecutions were successful.

Although the RSPCA does take prosecutions using more than 30 pieces of animal legislation, the vast majority (over 80 per cent in 2004) are taken under the 1911 Act.

Data on the numbers of convictions achieved by the RSPCA under Section 1(1)(a) of the Protection of Animals Act 1911 is therefore a useful indicator to assess trends in cruelty levels in England and Wales. In future years it is hoped to get data from Scotland (where cruelty complaints are investigated by the Scottish SPCA and prosecutions undertaken by the Procurator Fiscal). Individual data will also become available for Wales where the National Assembly now has some devolved power on animal cruelty.

The indicator figures

The indicator measures one of the ways the public expresses concern on animal welfare issues, as measured by telephone calls to the RSPCA. An additional measurement of public concern can be obtained from public polling and is represented by a different indicator (see page 15). These supply the majority of investigations (Figure 1). The number of convictions for animal cruelty taken by the RSPCA are divided into two parts: the numbers of animals involved and the number of persons convicted (Figure 2). Care must be taken where multiple convictions are secured against the same person or involving several animals.

Over the past five years the number of telephone calls to the RSPCA from the public has been steadily declining but rose in 2005. It is too early to assign a long-term trend to this or determine why it is occurring, but it may represent a trend for members of the public that would phone for advice on animals now getting it from other sources such as the RSPCA website.

The RSPCA recently changed the way in which it records convictions and defendants successfully prosecuted, so comparable data on these two indices are only available for 2004 and 2005. These show a slight rise in the number of defendants prosecuted under the 1911 Act whilst the number of convictions rose by more than 21 per cent from 2004 to 2005. The latter rise is due to a number of animal hoarding cases and a change in the way charges are laid.

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

¹ Rt Hon Harriet Harman Solicitor General. 13 March 2003. Hansard col 427.

² It is anticipated that the Animal Welfare Bill will receive Royal Assent during autumn 2006 with the Act coming into force in April 2007.

³ www.cps.gov.uk/victims_witnesses/code.html

FIGURE 1: Number of phone calls from the public to the RSPCA on advice and reporting cruelty, 2001–2005

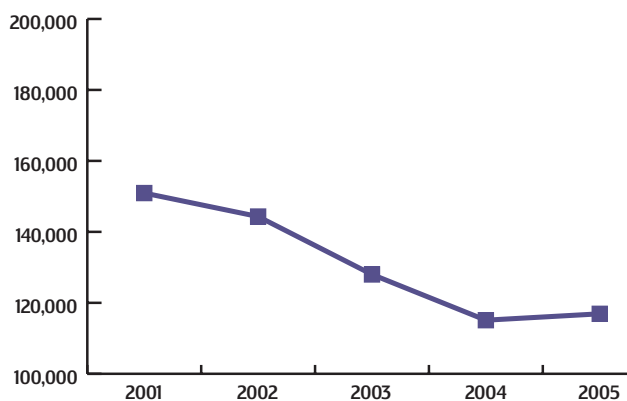


FIGURE 2: Number of convictions and defendants convicted for offences under the Protection of Animals Act 1911, 2004–2005

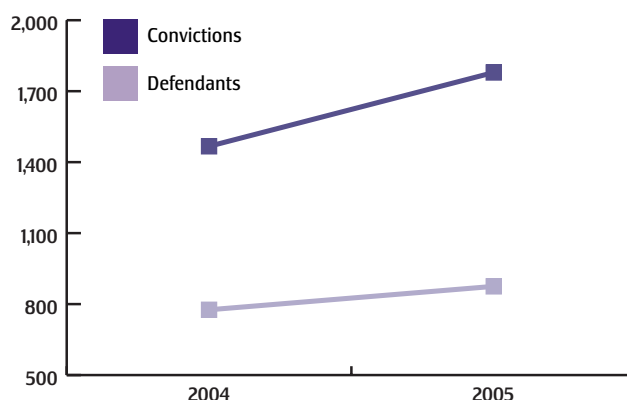
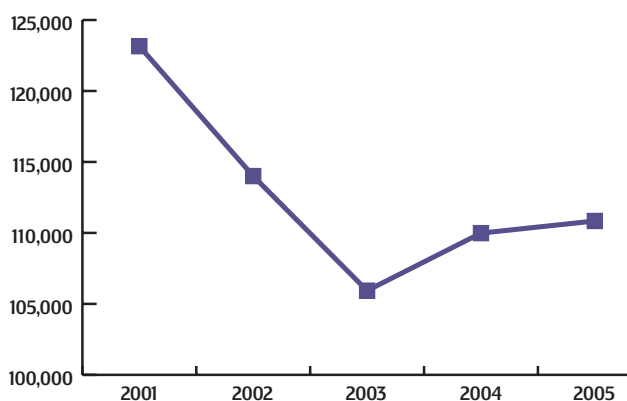
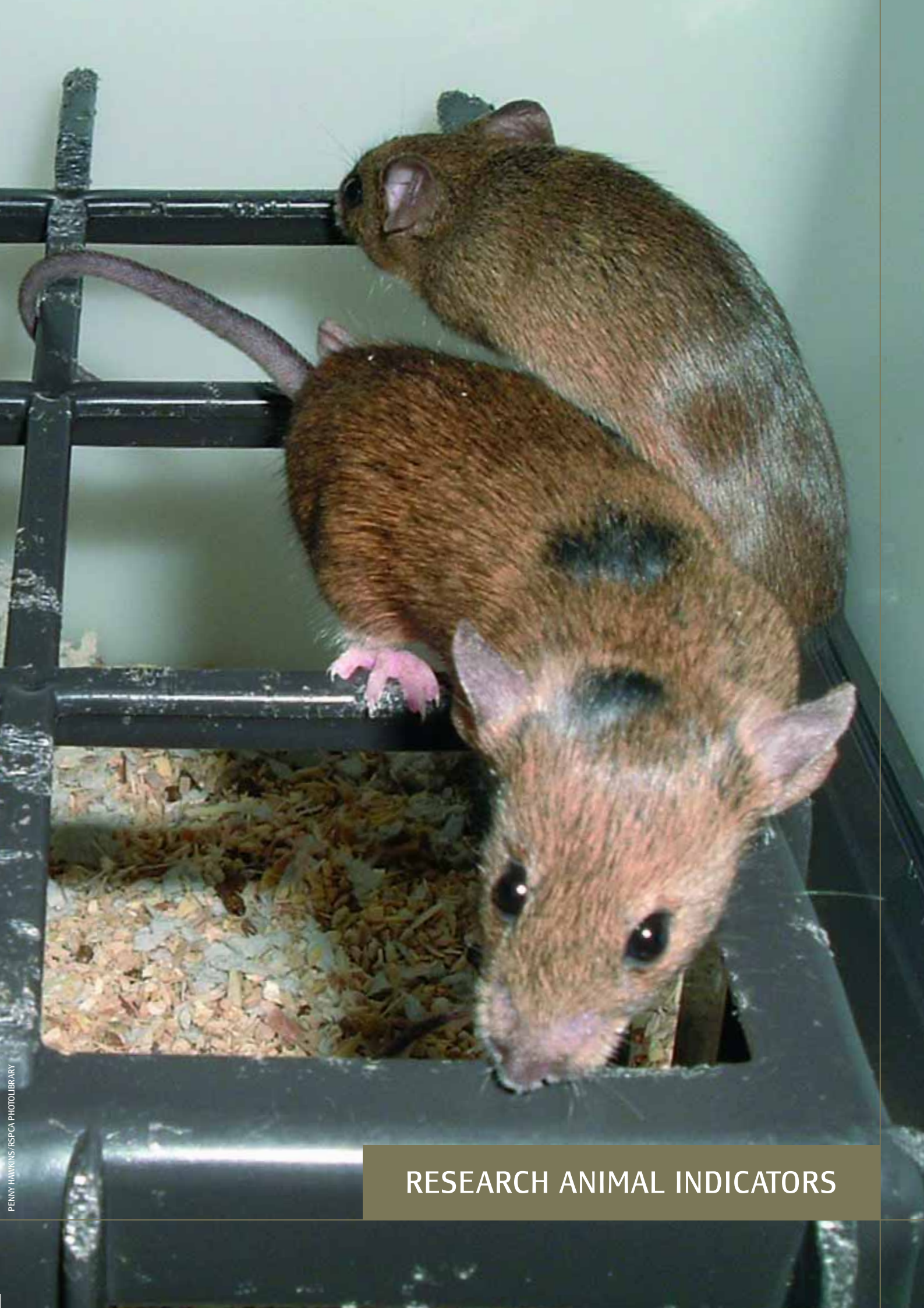


FIGURE 3: Cruelty complaints investigated, 2001–2005



Data source for Figures 1 to 3: RSPCA.



RESEARCH ANIMAL INDICATORS

Research animal indicators: Introduction

RSPCA concern

Scientific procedures can cause animals pain, suffering and distress and this is an issue of serious concern for the RSPCA and the members of the public the Society represents. The RSPCA believes that the replacement of animals in experiments with humane alternatives must be accepted as a legitimate and desirable goal for science, industry, research funders and governments worldwide.

Background

The RSPCA is committed to ending the suffering of laboratory animals by urging more critical challenge of the necessity and justification for animal use on a case-by-case basis, and by more stringent application of the 3Rs¹ to the full lifetime experience of the animals. For as long as animals continue to be used in research and testing, the RSPCA believes that every possible effort should be made to prevent suffering at every stage of their lives – not just during experiments, but also as a result of their acquisition, transport, housing, husbandry and care.

Animals are used for many different purposes; for example in the development and testing of human and veterinary medicines, in basic research to acquire scientific knowledge, and in the safety assessment of chemical products. The RSPCA recognises that such research and testing is increasingly multinational, and the regulations that set requirements for animal tests are also international. The many ethical, scientific, animal welfare and regulatory issues involved therefore need to be addressed in this context to avoid shifting welfare problems around the world.

A further concern is that science and technology is developing rapidly in many fields that do not recognise or adequately predict their impact on animals, or give it sufficient priority. Developments

and their applications are also outstripping ethical and public debate about the use of animals – both in terms of the harms and the perceived benefits and how these are assessed and weighed.

Research is done directly or indirectly with public money or in the public's name, yet little information is made available on what is done to animals and why. Greater transparency on all of these issues is essential, together with far greater commitment to reducing the conflict between the interests of animals and those of science and industry.

The welfare indicators

It is extremely difficult to obtain meaningful information that will allow an accurate measure of how well the 3Rs are being implemented, or how critically the justification for animal use is being assessed.

Five areas have been selected that reflect some of the Society's key concerns and where some relevant information is, or should be, available:

- the number of non-human primates used in scientific procedures in the UK
- the amount of laboratory animal suffering
- the proportion of non-animal methods in Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) test guidelines
- the number of animals used in quality-control tests for release of veterinary vaccines in the UK
- the percentage of scientific journals with ethical policies and guidelines relating to the use of animals in research and testing.

For as long as animals continue to be used in research and testing, the RSPCA believes that every possible effort should be made to prevent suffering at every stage of their lives.

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

¹ The 3Rs are: the Replacement of animals with humane alternatives; a Reduction in numbers used; and Refinement of procedures and husbandry to reduce suffering and improve animal welfare.

Welfare indicator: The number of non-human primates used in scientific procedures in the UK

RSPCA concern

The use of primates in research and testing is a matter of extreme concern to the RSPCA, animal protection groups worldwide, and to the significant sector of the public that such groups represent. This concern has been recognised at a regulatory level with some countries making special provisions for primates in their legislation, and emphasising the need to reduce and replace primate experiments¹.

The RSPCA believes governments, regulators, industry, scientists and research funders worldwide should accept the need to end primate use as a legitimate and essential goal, make achieving this goal a high priority, and work together to facilitate this. In particular there must be an immediate, internationally coordinated effort to define a strategy to bring all non-human primate experiments to an end.



There is only a negligible change over a five-year period.

Background

In the UK about 3,000 non-human primates (mostly marmosets and macaques) are used in research and testing every year². Across the EU this figure is around 10,000³. Much of this use is for developing or testing the safety and effectiveness of medicines and vaccines, but primates are also used in biological research, for example in studies into brain function and behaviour.

Non-human primates are highly intelligent sentient animals. They form intricate social relationships, interact with their environment in a dynamic and complex way, and engage in imaginative problem solving. It is also widely accepted that primates experience a range of negative emotions (e.g. anxiety, apprehension, fear, frustration, boredom and mental stress) as well as a range of positive emotions (e.g. interest, pleasure, happiness and excitement). In short, they are very close to humans in their biology and capabilities, and it is often argued that this makes them ideal 'models' for research. However, this also means that primates have the capacity to suffer in similar ways to humans – there can be no question that primates experience pain and distress.

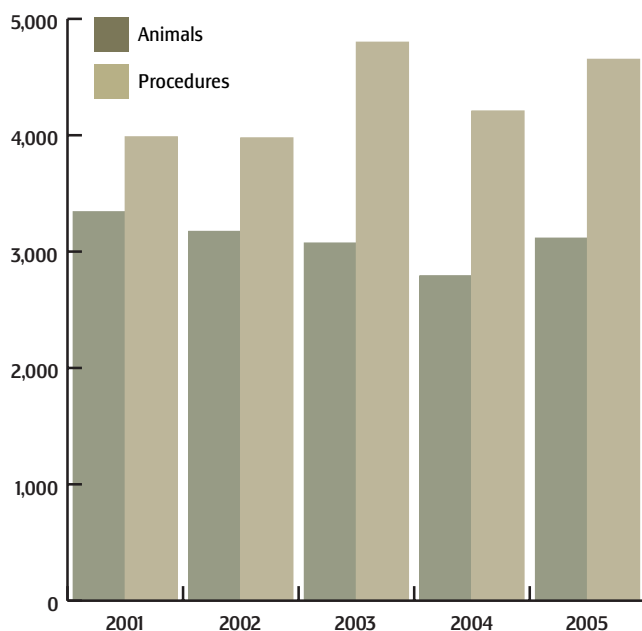
Confining primates in the laboratory when they would normally live in a large and complex home range has a significant adverse effect on their welfare. At its best laboratory primate housing represents only a small fraction of their home range. The worst, still commonly used in many countries, is a small, barren metal box in which the animals can only take a few steps in any direction. Other aspects of the lifetime experience of laboratory primates also cause stress and suffering, particularly where they cannot control their environment, social grouping, or what is done to them⁴. Any pain or distress associated with experimental procedures is therefore compounded by additional adverse effects resulting from capture of wild primates, breeding practices, transport, housing, husbandry, identification, restraint, and finally, euthanasia.

The indicator figures

The number of primates used in the UK and Europe are reported in Home Office and EU official publications respectively.

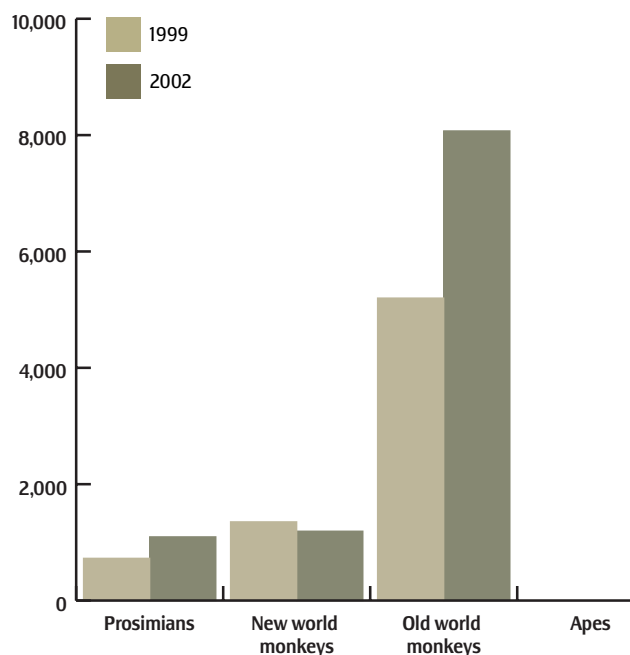
Data for Figure 4 has been taken from the Home Office annual statistics publications, 2001–2005 (published 2002–2006). Data for Figure 5 has been taken from the third and fourth reports on the statistics on the number of animals used for experimental and other

FIGURE 4: The number of primates used in research and testing in the UK, 2001–2005



Data source: Home Office.

FIGURE 5: The number of primates used in scientific procedures in the EU in 1999 and 2002 (latest available data)



Data source: European Commission.

scientific purposes in the member states of the EU (published by the European Commission in 2003 and 2005 respectively).

The data shows that the number of procedures carried out on primates in the UK has fluctuated each year since 2001, with no significant downward trend achieved. The latest figures for the EU show a worrying increase in the number of old world primates used in research and testing, although no apes were used in scientific procedures in the EU in 2002.

Any pain or distress associated with experimental procedures is therefore compounded by additional adverse effects resulting from capture of wild primates, breeding practices, transport, housing, husbandry, identification, restraint, and finally, euthanasia.

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

- For example, the UK Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, and Council Decision (1989) on the European Convention for the protection of vertebrate animals used for experimental and other scientific purposes (*Official Journal of the European Communities*).
- Home Office. 2006. *Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals: Great Britain 2005*. London: HMSO.
- European Commission. 2005. *Fourth report on the statistics on the number of animals used for experimental and other scientific purposes in the member states of the European Union* (data for 2002). Brussels.
- See for example: *The welfare of non-human primates used in research* (2002) – Report of the Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Welfare, European Commission, Health and Consumer Protection Directorate-General.

Welfare indicator: The amount of laboratory animal suffering

RSPCA concern

The suffering experienced by animals used in research and testing is an important concern for the RSPCA and the public alike. For as long as animals are used it is vitally important that discomfort, pain, stress and distress is minimised or, preferably, avoided altogether. This requires effective recognition and assessment of the nature and level of animal suffering. Reliable information about potential and actual suffering is also a key element of the harm-benefit assessment that is used to make decisions about the justification for each research project.

Meaningful and comprehensive information about the amount of suffering that is experienced by each animal is essential to monitor whether – or how successfully – laboratory animals' pain, suffering and distress are being reduced from year to year. However, such information is not currently available, which is a serious concern in itself.

The RSPCA wants to see significant reductions in laboratory animal suffering, with an end to substantial suffering within the next five years.



Insufficient data are available.

Background

There are a number of sources of information on animal use, including the statistics on animal use that are collected and published by the Home Office each year¹, scientific literature, and materials produced by funding bodies, research establishments and companies.

The Home Office publication is the only centrally gathered, annually updated and consistent source of information. However, it does not include details of how much individual animals suffer, because severity is currently only recorded for research projects as a whole. Each project is assigned an overall severity banding, which may be mild, moderate, substantial or unclassified², but this does not indicate what each individual animal experienced – some animals may suffer more than the banding implies. A further problem is that the severity bandings are assigned prospectively, using predictions of the effects that animals may experience rather than effects that actually occurred.

Scientific publications can provide detailed information about the nature and level of animal suffering. However, the literature does not provide a reliable picture because not all research is published, there can be a significant time lag between experiments and publication, and not all papers include relevant information. Similarly the material produced by funders, establishments and companies can be inconsistent and may not be regularly updated.

Until the actual amount of suffering experienced by each animal is gathered and made available, there will be no way of knowing how much suffering animal experiments cause or whether the situation is improving for animals.

The indicator figures

There are a number of areas in which action is needed to provide meaningful figures for this welfare indicator.

■ Home Office statistics

The Animal Procedures Committee (APC), which is the independent body that advises the government on the implementation of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 has considered the format and content of the statistics³. The RSPCA submitted a comprehensive report to the APC in 2004⁴. This included a call for retrospective reviews of severity so that the actual nature and level of animal

suffering can be reported. It also called for data on the number of animals used in procedures of mild, moderate, substantial or unclassified severity, as opposed to the number of projects in each banding.

The APC and the Laboratory Animal Science Association (LASA) subsequently co-produced a report⁵ in December 2005 that proposed a 'double code' system of reporting to provide information about the level and duration of (i) the maximum severity of a procedure and (ii) remaining severity over the rest of the procedure. The LASA/APC group also suggested a further programme of work to address some outstanding practical issues. The RSPCA supports the system suggested by the LASA/APC group and believes that the proposed further programme of work should be carried out without delay.

■ Scientific publications

Journal editors should insist on useful and worthwhile information on any adverse effects experienced by the animals and how these were ameliorated as a condition of publication (see page 29).

■ Materials produced by funders, establishments and companies

All those responsible for funding or carrying out animal experiments should aim for full transparency with respect to animal use. This includes making details publicly available of the nature and level of suffering, and how this is reduced and animal welfare improved.

Until the actual amount of suffering experienced by each animal is gathered and made available, there will be no way of knowing how much suffering animal experiments cause or whether the situation is improving for animals.

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 Home Office. 2006. *Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals: Great Britain 2005*. London: HMSO.
- 2 Unclassified: The animal is used under anaesthesia, is not allowed to regain consciousness and is euthanased immediately after the experiment.
- 3 Animal Procedures Committee. May 2005. *Home Office: Animal Procedures Committee Report of Statistics Working Group*. www.apc.gov.uk/reference/stats-report270505.pdf
- 4 Reed B. 2004. *RSPCA Response to the Animal Procedures Committee Consultation Paper on the Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals in Great Britain*. RSPCA Research Animals Department, Science Group.
- 5 Smith J A (rapporteur). 2005. *Reporting the Severity of Animal Procedures Retrospectively: Report of a LASA/APC Pilot Study to Assess the Feasibility of Collecting and Reporting Data on the Severity of Adverse Effects Caused to Animals Used in Procedures Regulated Under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986*. www.apc.gov.uk

Welfare indicator: The proportion of non-animal methods in OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) test guidelines

RSPCA concern

In 2002 more than a million animals were used in the EU in tests intended to evaluate the safety of products such as new medicines, pesticides and industrial chemicals¹. Many more animals are used for this purpose worldwide. The amount of suffering caused by these tests is highly variable and often unpredictable since new products may be harmless or highly poisonous. Nevertheless, large numbers of animals, including primates and dogs, are kept in laboratory conditions, subjected to distressful dosing procedures, suffer some adverse effects from the test chemicals and, ultimately, are killed.

The RSPCA believes that safety tests using animals must be replaced with humane alternative methods. To achieve this end much more effort is needed to develop non-animal test methods and to accelerate their worldwide acceptance as alternatives to the existing methods using animals.

Background

The vast majority of safety testing is done in such a way that the results will satisfy legal requirements for ensuring the safety of products for people and the environment. For some types of product, testing on animals is required by law whereas in other cases the testing is done according to guidelines issued by regulatory authorities². Overall, it is the willingness of regulators to accept results from particular tests that determines whether animal or non-animal tests are used.

A large number of different safety tests are used to detect or measure effects ranging from eye irritation to cancer, and vary in the species of animal used, the way in which they are exposed to the product and the length of treatment. In an attempt to standardise the methods, various international bodies have produced sets of test guidelines. The most influential of these is the test guidelines (TGs) programme of the OECD – the OECD TGs. If tests are done in accordance with OECD guidelines the results are ensured acceptance by regulators in the 30 member countries, and probably beyond. The methods apply to all chemical products, including pesticides and medicines.

A great deal of effort continues to be put into the development of alternative, non-animal, methods of safety testing. However, progress in gaining regulatory acceptance of the new methods has been painfully slow. A complex and time-consuming system of validation has been developed by which new methods are shown to be reliable and relevant for their intended purpose. Even when successfully validated, alternative methods may not be accepted or only conditionally accepted by regulators, and then only after a number of years of discussion.

The RSPCA promotes all stages of the development and acceptance of non-animal alternative methods. Acceptance into the OECD TGs can be regarded as the final step in this process for chemical products. Other sets of guidelines such as the European Pharmacopoeia monographs would be more appropriate for biological products.

The indicator figures

The OECD TGs are published in several series, but tests on animals occur only in the series on Health Effects and Effects on Biotic Systems. Currently, 44 TGs involve animal use and 11 are non-animal methods, which can be regarded as alternatives to animal tests. A reliable indicator of progress would be the number of animal tests replaced



There is no change from the previous year.

with alternatives. Ideally this would take account of the numbers of animals used in each test and the suffering involved, because replacement of a rarely used test would be of less significance than replacement of a commonly used test which used large numbers of animals. There are also difficulties associated with the inclusion of multiple non-animal alternatives for the same purpose, and with TGs that include structured approaches including both animal and non-animal stages. However, in the interests of simplicity the proportion of non-animal to animal tests gives a reasonable guide to progress.

- The ultimate objective would be to see all the animal tests removed and replaced with non-animal tests, i.e. 100 per cent of TGs based on non-animal methods.
- An increase in the proportion of non-animal tests would be positive progress towards this objective.

It should be noted that a decrease in the proportion of non-animal TGs is also possible because more animal test methods will almost certainly continue to be added as new safety concerns are identified. For example, a number of new animal tests have been proposed for the detection of chemicals with specific effects on the endocrine system.

The indicator is best expressed as the percentage of OECD TGs describing exclusively non-animal tests (Figure 6). The actual numbers of non-animal and animal test methods is shown in Figure 7.

FIGURE 6: Percentage of non-animal tests in OECD TGs, 2000–2005

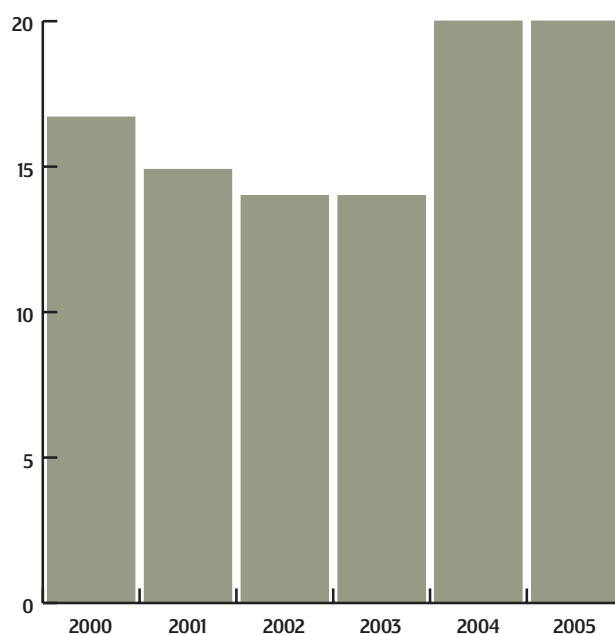
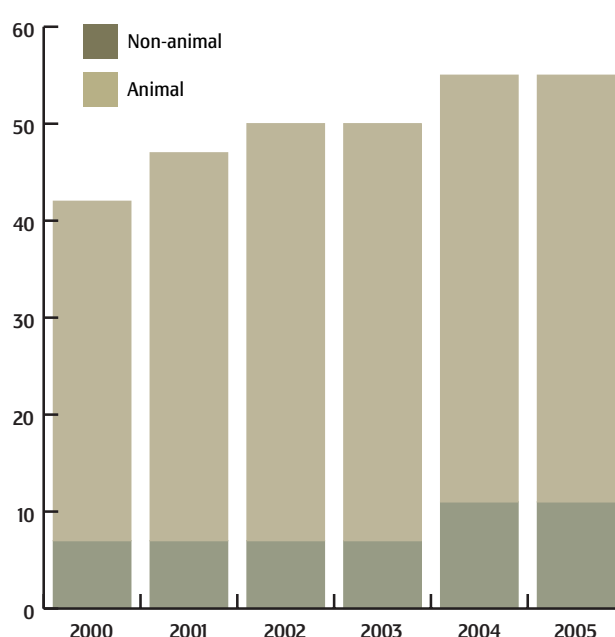


FIGURE 7: Number of OECD TGs using non-animal or animal methods, 2000–2005



Data source for Figures 6 and 7: OECD.

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 European Commission. 2005. *Fourth report on the statistics on the number of animals used for experimental and other scientific purposes in the member states of the European Union* (data for 2002). Brussels.
- 2 For example, the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and the Scientific Committee on Consumer Products (SCCP).

Welfare indicator: The number of animals used in quality-control tests for release of veterinary vaccines in the UK

RSPCA concern

European regulations require that batches of veterinary vaccines are subjected to a variety of tests before they can be released on the market. The tests can cause considerable suffering and large numbers of animals are used. During 2003, quality control tests for release of batches into the UK involved the use of more than 31,000 animals¹.

The RSPCA wants to see a reduction in the number of animals used to test each batch of vaccine and for the refinement of the tests to reduce suffering.

Background

There are two main types of test – for potency (strength and effectiveness) and for safety. Some potency tests require animals to be infected with harmful bacteria or viruses, which can result in substantial suffering. For example, the potency test for *Clostridium chauvoei* vaccine (given routinely to sheep) involves injecting guinea pigs with bacteria, resulting in painful infections. The guinea pigs usually have to be euthanased before the infection leads to their death. Tests to assess safety involve relatively mild procedures, but these may involve housing animals in a laboratory environment that can be a source of distress in itself.

In some instances it has been possible to replace traditional tests for potency with non-animal tests. Unfortunately it is not currently possible to test the effectiveness of many vaccines without using living animals with functioning immune systems. However, considerable research is being done to find alternative methods of testing vaccine potency that either do not involve animal tests or use animals in ways that cause less suffering and use smaller numbers. For example, an alternative approach is to vaccinate test animals and then measure antibodies in their blood. This reduces the level of suffering to the animals and fewer are needed.

Until recently regulations required that animal tests be used to check the safety of every batch of veterinary vaccine. However, the legislation has changed and under certain conditions veterinary vaccine manufacturers can apply for permission to discontinue such tests². Hence manufacturers now have an opportunity to significantly reduce the numbers of animals used in vaccine testing. Despite this opportunity batch safety testing is still routinely performed and the number of applications to discontinue the test has been disappointingly low.

The use of animals for the testing of veterinary vaccines presents a fundamental ethical dilemma for everyone concerned with animal welfare, since the vaccines are used to protect the health and welfare of one set of animals at the expense of another. Resolution of this dilemma depends on a concerted effort being made to develop tests that will replace or avoid the use of animals, and to accelerate the adoption of these by regulators and manufacturers internationally.



Insufficient data are available.

The indicator figures

In the UK manufacturers must submit details of the methods and results of tests performed on each batch of vaccine to the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) before the batch can be released. In 2005 the VMD released statistics relating to the number of animals used in tests for batch release in the UK during 2003¹ (see Figure 8) and indicated that they planned to release similar figures on an annual basis. The data included the total numbers of animals used and batches released with a breakdown of how many animals had been used for each type of test.

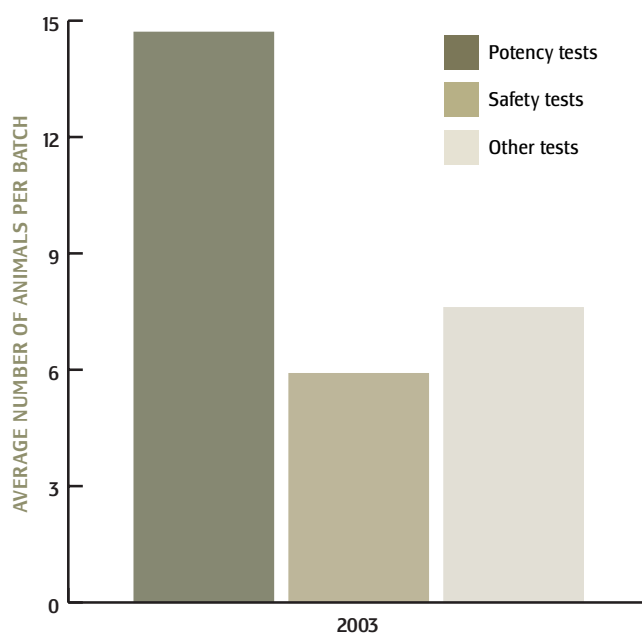
Similar statistics are needed each year in order to evaluate trends.

In particular it is important to be able to calculate the:

- total number of animals used to test each batch of veterinary vaccine
- number of animals used to test the potency of each batch
- number of animals used to test the safety of each batch
- number of animals used in other batch tests³.

The RSPCA believes that there is considerable scope for a reduction in the number of animals used to test each batch of vaccine and for refinement of the tests to reduce suffering. This will require serious commitment from regulatory authorities and manufacturers.

FIGURE 8: The average number of animals used per batch in quality control tests for veterinary vaccines across a range of products released in the UK in 2003



Average total number of animals used per batch in all tests = 28.2 (based on 31,047 animals used to test 1,101 batches)

Data source: Veterinary Medicines Directorate.

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

- ¹ Spagnuola-Weaver M, Iltott M and Price S. 2005. Animal usage in quality control tests for the release of immunological veterinary medicinal products in the United Kingdom. Proceedings of the 5th World Congress on Alternatives to Animal Experimentation, Berlin, August 2005, p223 – ALTEx, Volume 22, Special Issue.
- ² Manufacturers can apply for permission to discontinue the batch safety test for a particular vaccine if 10 consecutive batches have previously passed the test and providing there have been no major changes to the manufacturing process.
- ³ Other batch tests may include tests for extraneous agents, toxoid contents, inactivation etc.

Welfare indicator: The percentage of scientific journals with ethical policies and guidelines relating to the use of animals in research and testing

RSPCA concern

Ethical review of animal studies – both prospective and retrospective – is vitally important. Not only does this provide an opportunity to evaluate and weigh the harms and benefits of the research, but it also enables a critical assessment of the implementation of the 3Rs (reduction, refinement and replacement) within the research programme. There are a number of stages at which ethical review of animal studies can be carried out, all of which are important and complement each other. In the UK, formal ethical review is carried out prospectively under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 by the Home Office and within the local ethical review process. Issues relating to the use of animals may also be considered as part of the peer review process of research applications carried out by funding bodies and, retrospectively, when the research is submitted for publication.

A number of organisations, including the Nuffield Council of Bioethics¹ and APC², have highlighted the importance of journals publishing more information regarding the use of animals in research. This issue has also been raised at international meetings such as the World Congress on Alternatives and Animal Use in the Life Sciences³. The RSPCA believes this is very important and that all journals publishing research involving animals should ask authors for, and be prepared to publish much more information on, issues relating to the 3Rs.



There are no data currently available.

This would help disseminate information on the 3Rs, provide a means of retrospective review of studies that would help to inform future harm-benefit assessments, and act as a driving force to improve standards and apply these consistently worldwide.

Publishing more information is just one aspect of the overall ethical policy of journals. The RSPCA believes that editorial boards should have an ethical policy stating what research they are prepared to publish and a defined process for implementing this. Research not satisfying the ethical criteria should be rejected for publication.

Background

There are nearly 6,000 scientific journals in circulation, of which around 2,000 publish research involving the use of animals⁴. To date there has been no detailed examination of publication policies relating to animal use, either with respect to the criteria for ethical acceptability of research or with regard to the information that the journal is prepared to include.

Many journals already implement the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) guidelines⁵ on good publication practice. These state that: "Animal experiments require full compliance with local, national, ethical and regulatory principles, and local licensing arrangements." This is an important step since it recognises that the use of animals is an important issue. However, relying on this statement alone is insufficient in the RSPCA's view, since it devolves responsibility for decision making on ethical and welfare issues away from the journal itself. Furthermore, national and local standards vary considerably, with some based on minimal requirements only. For example, there may be no requirement for the ethical review of research or provision of environmental enrichment, and no critical evaluation of opportunities for implementing any of the 3Rs. In such cases, compliance requires little effort on the part of the researcher and could result in research with very poor welfare standards (and hence poor scientific quality) being published.

Some journals publish information on issues related to the 3Rs, such as housing and care, but others do not, either because of space limitations or because it may not be considered relevant.

The indicator figures

Journal publication policies are generally freely available so journals publishing research involving animals will be identified, a suitable sample size determined, and policies evaluated to determine whether:

- a) There is a policy which defines criteria for the ethical acceptability of research the journal is prepared to publish and if so, if there is a defined process for the implementation of this policy?
- b) They require, and are prepared to publish, information on the following:
 - the nature of any ethical review
 - how the 3Rs were implemented
 - details of animal housing, husbandry and care
 - how any pain, suffering or distress was minimised, for example by using appropriate anaesthesia and analgesia
 - how humane endpoints were defined and implemented
 - methods of euthanasia
 - any specialised training requirements?

The analysis will be retrospective and conducted annually starting in 2007.

To date there has been no detailed examination of publication policies relating to animal use, either with respect to the criteria for ethical acceptability of research or with regard to the information that the journal is prepared to include.

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

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- 1 Nuffield Council on Bioethics. 2005. *The ethics of research involving animals*. London.
 - 2 Animal Procedures Committee. 2003. *Report of the cost-benefit working group of the Animal Procedures Committee*. Home Office: Communication Directorate, London.
 - 3 Festing M F W and van Zutphen B. 1999. Workshop 15: 'Update on policies of Journals' Proceedings of the Third World Congress on Alternatives and Animal Use in the Life Sciences, Bologna, Italy. ATLA, Volume 27, Special Issue.
 - 4 This information was obtained by undertaking a targeted interrogation of the Entrez Pubmed records database (www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/PubMed), searching for English language journals which have, in the past year, published original research articles tagged as involving animal use.
 - 5 Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE). *Guidelines on Good Publication Practice*. 1999. www.publicationethics.org.uk/guidelines



WILDLIFE INDICATORS

Wildlife indicators: Introduction

RSPCA concern

Regrettably, humans' interactions with wildlife are usually more negative than positive. Humans cause suffering and death to wild animals in many ways and for many reasons, including unavoidable accidents, keeping them in captivity and killing them for sport.

Wherever animals and humans share the same space, suffering and death of wildlife are sadly inevitable – it is simply impossible to avoid all negative interactions. However, wherever control over interactions is possible the RSPCA would like to see a major reduction in the number of incidents where humans have a detrimental impact on wild animals.

Background

UK legislation concerning wild animals includes the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; the Zoo Licensing Act 1981; the Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996; and the Hunting Act 2004. This and other legislation gives a degree of protection to wildlife, but there is a need to review, standardise and improve many existing laws.

Measuring the welfare of wild animals is challenging for many reasons. It is difficult to obtain consistently accurate data over periods of time long enough to establish clear trends, and even more difficult to interpret them. For example, an increase in the number of deer killed by cars might indicate there are more cars, or faster drivers, or more deer, or fewer fences, or even a change in the way such accidents are reported.

The welfare indicators

The wildlife indicators cover a broad range of issues concerning the welfare of native and non-native wildlife, both captive and free-ranging.

Three aspects of the growing non-domestic pet trade are measured. Firstly, two indicators will survey the numbers of both wild-caught birds and wild-caught reptiles that enter the UK and the European Union. A third indicator will examine whether and in what way people selling non-domestic animals as pets inform their customers on how to care for the animals.

Another indicator focuses on how the actions of humans can cause accidental suffering and death to wild animals. Data are used to estimate the number of dolphins and porpoises that die through by-catch in waters around the UK – an unfortunate result of the fishing industry.

Finally, against a background of concern for the welfare of zoo animals, the work of UK zoos will be examined to assess whether they are fulfilling their duty to conservation and to educate the public.

Wherever control over interactions is possible the RSPCA would like to see a major reduction in the number of incidents where humans have a detrimental impact on wild animals.

Welfare indicator: Number of cetaceans by-caught around the UK

RSPCA concern

By-catch (when non-target animals are entangled, trapped or injured in fishing nets) poses a significant threat to the welfare and conservation of cetaceans in waters around the UK and globally.

The RSPCA is extremely concerned at the levels of suffering by-caught cetaceans endure. Cetaceans caught in the nets can become injured as they struggle to try to get free and will eventually die if unable to return to the surface to breathe. As a result, some animals may later be found stranded, dead or alive. Entanglement injuries can be used as an indicator that the animal was previously caught in nets.

The number of porpoises and dolphins dying in UK fisheries over the last 10 years has been constantly high. Yet no consistent effort of mitigation has been undertaken, even though enforcement of UK cetacean by-catch legislation¹ would bring a reduction in the frequency of harbour porpoise by-catch.

The RSPCA believes the government must take action to enforce such legislation, and must be proactive in supporting research into alternative fishing technology and by-catch mitigation methods, with the aim of eliminating all cetacean by-catch.



Over the past 12 years the number of by-caught cetaceans has changed each year. However the proportion of stranded cetacean deaths that are known to be caused by by-catch over that period has been on average 20 per cent.

Background

The issue of small cetacean (dolphin and porpoise) entanglement in UK fisheries was first highlighted in 1992, when large numbers of dead dolphins washed up on the beaches of Cornwall and Devon. Within the first three months of 1992, 118 dead dolphins were stranded, and post-mortem investigations revealed for the first time that the deaths of many of these animals could be attributed to by-catch². Post-mortem evidence pointed clearly at a prolonged and traumatic death for the entangled animals – blood-filled froth had started to form in the lungs, skin was lacerated from net meshes, teeth were broken, all indicative of a sustained struggle by these air-breathing mammals trapped underwater. Because cetaceans are conscious breathers, they did not inhale water into their lungs ('drowning') but instead were categorised as dying from asphyxia as their oxygen supplies ran out².

Observers were placed on fishing vessels in south-west England between summer 1992 and spring 1994³ in an attempt to identify the source of dolphin mortality. The findings revealed that, rather than dolphins, there were many porpoises dying in nets set on the sea floor (bottom-set gillnets). Estimates put the mortality of porpoise by-catch at over 2,000 animals each year in that fishery³, which was considered to be a threat to the survival of the population, as well as a huge welfare concern. Subsequent studies in other European fisheries revealed dolphin deaths in trawl nets at a rate ranging from one to two dolphins every 100 hours of fishing⁴. Clearly, multiple fisheries were to blame for the cetacean mortality.

Efforts have been made to mitigate cetacean by-catch. Acoustic alarms (called 'pingers') have been developed to deter porpoises from gillnets and have proved effective in trials in North America and south-west England⁵ at reducing porpoise by-catch by up to 90 per cent. This is not seen as the definitive solution to the problem⁶ and further fishing gear development is required.

Ongoing work in the UK⁷ and in Europe, is aiming to address the deaths of common dolphins in trawl nets. Mortality rates in the sea-bass fishery in the English Channel and south-west approaches are extremely high and indicate that more than 900 common dolphins died in the UK bass fishery between 2000 and 2005^{8,9}. Many more French than UK boats use this fishery, so overall mortality will be significantly greater. Research projects are underway to design escape hatches from trawl nets, or to deter dolphins from entering trawl nets using acoustic harassment devices.

Under the EU Common Fisheries Policy a Regulation has been introduced to monitor and reduce cetacean by-catch in certain fisheries. The UK has adopted this Regulation into domestic law¹⁰, thus placing an obligation on certain fisheries either to carry observers or to fix acoustic deterrent pingers onto their nets. Though the observer work is underway, fishermen are failing to comply with pinger requirements, as they believe that pingers are unreliable (and costly). Additionally, the large number of small boats using bottom-set gillnets, which are known to cause porpoise deaths, are exempt from the regulations (which only apply to vessels 12m or over).

The indicator figures

The actual death toll of cetaceans in fisheries is unknown, but estimates can be made from observer programmes that sample a small proportion of fishing fleets, and from the analysis of carcasses found on beaches.

The total number of cetaceans stranding on UK shores has increased over the last twelve years from 360 in 1994 to 782 in 2004¹¹ and it is possible this increase is due to an increase in a type of fishing known as pair trawling, used largely to catch sea bass. To reveal the cause of death post-mortem examinations were conducted¹¹ on stranded cetaceans that were not badly decomposed.

Figure 9 shows the numbers of stranded cetacea examined, and the numbers of those deaths, which are known to have been caused by by-catch.

Figure 10 shows these figures as percentage. It can be seen that the proportion of deaths known to be caused by by-catch has run consistently at around 20 per cent, and this figure will be higher if analysis is restricted to porpoises and dolphins.

These figures do not provide information on the scale of the problem, as most discarded carcasses never reach the beach¹².

There is no doubt that enforcement of UK cetacean by-catch legislation could bring a reduction in the frequency of harbour porpoise entanglement in nets. The government must take action to enforce the legislation, and must be proactive in supporting research into alternative fishing technology and by-catch mitigation methods. Cetacean by-catch has remained consistently high over the last 10 years and this situation should not be allowed to continue for another 10.

FIGURE 9: The number of stranded cetaceans examined and number of deaths caused by by-catch, 1994–2005

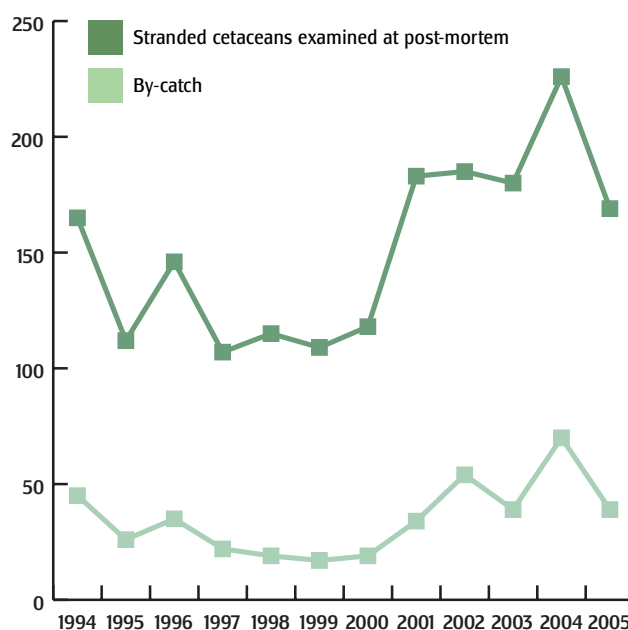
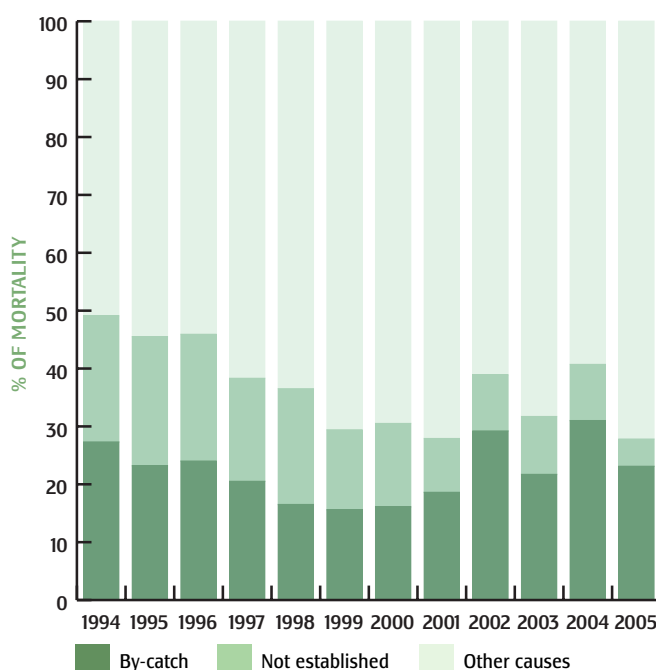


FIGURE 10: Proportion of total deaths (%) known to be caused by by-catch and other causes, 1994–2005



Data source for Figures 9 and 10: Institute of Zoology.

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Wildlife indicator: The proportion and number of imported wild-taken reptiles and birds of the total trade into the UK and the EU

RSPCA concern

There is now a diverse range of live birds and reptiles on sale to the public. Despite improvements in experienced keepers' knowledge of the needs of many species now kept in captivity in the UK, and the ability of commercial breeders to supply some species completely from captive-bred animals, hundreds of thousands of wild birds and reptiles continue to be removed from their native habitats each year to supply the demands of the pet trade in the EU, including the UK. The RSPCA is concerned that many of these animals suffer or die before being exported from where they are naturally found in the wild, during transportation or once held in captivity for the pet trade^{1,2}.

To prevent the suffering of wild animals still taken for the pet trade, the Society advocates far stricter regulations to prevent the importation of vulnerable animals into the EU – the largest market for wild bird trade. Stopping the trade in the most vulnerable animals will reduce the impact such trade has on wild populations and encourage traders to focus on species already obtainable from captive-bred sources.

Background

The pet-keeping public may assume that live animals on sale nowadays are captive-bred and that all wild animals are protected by international regulations to control their use for the pet trade. Both of these assumptions are untrue.

The trade in wild animals is only regulated for those species that have wild populations reported as being endangered or threatened (such as following the impact of habitat destruction and/or removal of animals for food and the pet trade) and therefore listed on the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Appendices. The Convention to protect the listed species is then implemented through EU CITES trade regulations³ and enforced through the UK COTES (Control of Trade in Endangered Species) legislation⁴. As these controls do not monitor the trade in non-CITES listed species and the majority of wild animals are not protected by CITES, it is therefore difficult to determine how many species and individual animals in total are imported into the EU or UK from the wild. For example, of the approximate 9,000 species of birds and 7,700 species of reptiles recorded in the wild, less than 20 per cent of bird species and eight per cent of reptile species are protected through CITES to control their commercial trade.

The figures on CITES-listed animals entering the EU are therefore seen as only part of the total live animal trade. Figures on animals imported into the UK also provide a partial picture, as they only record animals entering the UK as the first port of destination after export and not those imported from other EU countries.

Figures on the intra-EU movements of both CITES-listed and non CITES-listed animals between EU member states are collated into a central EU database called TRACES (the Trade Control and Expert System). This central EU database, which only became compulsory at the beginning of 2005, provides a web-based service for the application for, and issuing of, export health certificates for intra-Community trade in live animals, their products and germplasm. However, there is some doubt about the accuracy of these intra-Community trade figures as Defra has recently reported that the figures in TRACES do not correspond with those figures collated through CITES for CITES-listed species⁵. The TRACES database also does not qualify the source of the animals in trade, as no distinction is made between whether an animal was wild-caught or bred in captivity.

However, even given limitations in trade figures available, monitoring the number of CITES-listed birds and reptiles imported into the UK and the EU from different sources will help to inform the

debate on the shifts in the number of animals taken from the wild (including ranched animals that were removed from the wild to be reared in captivity before exportation) compared to those animals that have been bred in captivity.

The figures for CITES-listed reptiles and birds imported into the UK and EU for 2000–2005 reported here will therefore be sub-divided according to the designation of each animal's source as follows.

a) Wild-caught (w)

Includes **'wild-enhanced'** (specimens in trade are wild-caught from a population that is 'enhanced' through provision of resources, such as nesting sites), **'wild-introduced'** (specimens in trade are wild-caught from a population that is 'introduced' to an area outside the species' natural range) and **'wild'** (specimens in trade are wild-caught).

b) Captive-bred (c)

Includes **'closed-cycle captive breeding'** (parents are born in a controlled environment that can be in-situ in its natural habitat, such as a game ranch in Africa, or ex-situ, such as a parrot breeding operation in the US; with no wild-caught animals added to the breeding stock) and **'bred in captivity'** (where parents are mated in a controlled environment with the occasional addition of animals from the wild allowed to prevent deleterious inbreeding, to dispose of confiscated animals or 'exceptionally' for use as breeding stock).

c) Ranched or captive-reared (r)

Rearing in a controlled environment of specimens taken from the wild, such as eggs or hatchlings into captivity.

An annual review of the number of birds and reptiles imported into the EU (including into the UK) from both wild and captive-bred sources will provide both a wild bird and wild reptile animal welfare indicator to monitor whether there are any positive shifts in the importation figures that indicate a reduction in the trade in wild animals.

The indicator figures for live reptiles

The number of live reptiles imported into the UK from outside the EU under CITES for 1990–1999⁶ and 2000–2005 are shown in Table 4⁷.

The increase in the number of reptiles being given full protection under CITES in recent years to stop their commercial trade – with the growth in the number of animals being bred in captivity in the UK to supply demands for the pet trade or being bred elsewhere in the EU before being imported into the UK (as intra-EU figures are not included in CITES data given here) – may have all contributed to the reduction in the overall trade in live reptiles being imported into the UK from outside the EU since 2000 compared to figures for the 10 years from 1990–1999. However, it is clear from looking at the CITES trade figures for the last six years since 2000 that the trend in the trade of live reptiles into the UK has been increasing each year; with animals taken from the wild being up to 82.4 per cent (a 19 per cent increase on figures in 2000) of the total imports into the UK from outside the EU. This increase in live reptiles imported into the UK from the wild is consistent with their origin, as the most common countries exporting these reptiles into Heathrow are Guyana, Chile and Ghana where the species live in the wild⁸.

It is also important to look at the complete live reptile figures for each year – with the detail of the source of the animals – as even though the animals designated as 'wild-caught' have decreased in the last three years, the trade in reptiles taken from the wild and then reared in captivity (ranched) before exportation has increased over the same period. So the total number of reptiles taken from the wild (w + r) has actually increased by 135 per cent since 2000 for reptiles into the UK from outside the EU for CITES-listed species.

As the UK is only part of the EU trade, with the intra-EU trade figures not included here, the number of live CITES-listed reptiles imported into the EU provides a greater appreciation of importation trends for the European Community as a whole. EU member states are required to release data about the previous year's CITES imports

TABLE 4: Number of live CITES-listed reptiles imported into the UK from outside the EU

	Wild-caught (w)	Captive-bred (c)	Ranched or captive-reared (r)	Total taken from the wild (w + r)	Total into UK (w + r + c)	% of non-EU imports into UK taken from the wild
1990–1999 ⁶					226,809 (total for 10 years)	
2000 ⁷	3,157	2,089	1,600	4,757	6,846	69.5
2001 ⁷	2,618	4,013	2,164	4,782	8,795	54.4
2002 ⁷	3,544	1,393	2,356	5,900	7,293	80.9
2003 ⁷	5,149	1,988	5,347	10,496	12,484	67.5
2004 ⁷	4,793	2,925	5,436	10,229	13,154	77.8
2005 ⁷	3,636	2,382	7,527	11,163	13,545	82.4

Data source: UK government.

annually in June. So at the time of writing, data for imports into the EU are only available up to 2004. The total number of live reptiles imported into the EU under CITES for 1990 and 1995⁶ are shown in Table 5 (to provide a historical comparison with the more recent trade figures), as well as for 2000–2004⁷.

The EU figures show a different picture to what has been seen in the UK. When you compare the total number of live CITES-listed reptiles imported into the EU as a whole since 1990, the overall trend for the last fourteen years is a continual increase in live reptiles being imported each year (apart from a small decline in 2001 and 2004). The annual total number of CITES-listed reptiles imported into the EU has more than tripled since 1990 and increased by 26 per cent since 2000. The number of reptiles designated as being 'wild-caught' has been up and down in the last five years, however, again when those animals that have been taken from the wild to be reared in captivity before exportation (ranched) are included, the number of reptiles taken from the wild has been increasing each year (peaking in 2003), a two per cent increase in the proportion of wild-taken reptiles imported in 2004 compared to 2000.

The RSPCA would therefore like to see greater regulation of the reptile trade into, and within, the EU to restrict the importation of those species that are most vulnerable to suffering and mortality once captured and removed from the wild. Reptile traders and keepers should be encouraged to: consider the source of the animal to be acquired; choose those species in the trade that are supplied from captive-bred animals; and, where they have the best practice knowledge, provide the facilities and care necessary for the animals' welfare when kept in captivity.

19%

Live CITES-listed reptiles imported into the UK from outside the EU – increase in the proportion of the total trade in reptiles taken from the wild since 2000.

135%

Live CITES-listed reptiles imported into the UK from outside the EU – increase in the total number of reptiles imported that are taken from the wild since 2000.



Live CITES-listed reptiles imported into the EU – low increase in the proportion of the total trade in reptiles taken from the wild since 2000.

26%

Live CITES-listed reptiles imported into the EU – increase in the total number of reptiles imported that are taken from the wild since 2000.

The indicator figures for wild birds

Figures on CITES-listed birds imported into the UK from outside the EU and into the EU as a whole for 2000–2005 have recently been provided by Defra and are given in Table 6 and Table 7⁹. The figures for imports of wild-caught and captive-bred CITES-listed birds into the UK for 1997 to October 2002 have also been included in italics in the Table 6¹⁰. TRACES figures for the movement of captive birds (from both wild-caught and captive-bred sources) into the UK from within the EU (includes non-CITES and CITES-listed birds) are also given in bold in the table⁵.

The RSPCA would therefore like to see greater regulation of the reptile trade into, and within, the EU to restrict the importation of those species that are most vulnerable to suffering and mortality once captured and removed from the wild.

TABLE 5: Number of live CITES-listed reptiles imported into the EU

	Wild-caught (w)	Captive-bred (c)	Ranched (captive-reared) (r)	Total taken from the wild (w + r)	Total into EU (w + r + c)
1990 ⁶					<75,000
1995 ⁶					>175,000
2000 ⁷	41,374	143,735	34,405	75,779	219,514
2001 ⁷	51,642	123,217	34,611	86,779	209,996
2002 ⁷	43,885	155,561	46,637	90,522	246,083
2003 ⁷	57,753	192,541	54,999	112,752	305,293
2004 ⁷	46,198	176,383	49,617	95,815	272,198

Data source: UK government.

TABLE 6: Number of live CITES-listed birds imported into the UK from outside the EU

	Wild-taken (including ranched) (w + r)	Captive-bred (c)	Total into UK (w + r + c)	% of imports into UK from outside the EU taken from the wild
1997 ¹⁰	4,800	357	5,157	
1998 ¹⁰	4,845	422	5,267	
1999 ¹⁰	4,826	411	5,237	
2000	4,572 ⁹ (3,995 ¹⁰)	1,663 ⁹ (1,551 ¹⁰)	6,235 ⁹ (5,546 ¹⁰)	73.3
2001	4,880 ⁹ (5,565 ¹⁰)	1,101 ⁹ (1,114 ¹⁰)	5,981 ⁹ (6,679 ¹⁰)	81.6
2002	61,000 ⁹	2,986 ⁹	63,986 ⁹	95.3
2003	72,171 ⁹	2,813 ⁹	74,984 ⁹	96.3
2004	11,850 ⁹	6,486 ⁹	18,336 ⁹ (66,586⁹)	64.6
2005	4,466 ⁹	1,445 ^{9*}	5,911 ^{9*} (119,586^{5*})	75.6

* Wild bird import ban into EU since October 2005¹¹. Data source: UK government.

These figures show that thousands of wild-caught CITES-listed birds are imported annually into the UK, with more than a 12-fold increase from 2001 to 2002 and then a six-fold decrease from 2003 to 2004. There is a 2.3 per cent decrease in wild-taken birds imported when comparing 2005 with 2000, however, this decline will have been affected last year by the wild bird trade import ban into the EU from October 2005 to reduce the risk of spreading avian influenza¹¹. The proportion of the UK imports of birds taken from the wild has increased by 31 per cent since 2000.

It is important to remember that these figures show just part of the bird trade picture, as the 1997–2005 figures only include those birds listed under CITES which have been imported from outside the EU directly into the UK. More information is provided by adding the recent figures reported from the TRACES database for both CITES-listed and non CITES-listed birds transported from outside and within the EU into the UK in 2004 and 2005 (shown in bold). So a more realistic figure is obtained when intra-EU trade is included, with an increase by some 20-fold on the UK-only data. However, as the TRACES data does not qualify the source of the animal, whether wild-caught or captive-bred, it is not possible to determine what proportion of the intra-EU trade into the UK originates from birds taken from the wild.

The figures for live CITES-listed birds imported into the EU as a whole for each year from 2000 to 2005 has recently been provided

by Defra⁹, with a 26 per cent decrease in the total number of birds taken from the wild in 2004 compared to 2000. TRACES figures for the movement of captive birds (from both wild-caught and captive-bred sources) within the EU (which includes non-CITES and CITES-listed birds) are also available and are given in bold in Table 7⁵.

When you look at the EU as a whole, far more wild-caught birds are imported into the EU than captive-bred birds, with an average 85.6 per cent of the birds imported into the EU in the last five years being taken from the wild. The proportion of the total trade in birds taken from the wild has increased by 11 per cent in 2004 compared to 2000. The steady downward trend in numbers of imported captive-bred birds in the past five years (apart from the low in 2002) could be affected by the apparent shift in the trade back to wild-caught birds (as shown in Table 7). The trade is now expanding into captive-bred species that are not listed under CITES (these are not included in these figures). The birds bred in captivity within the EU may also be increasingly supplying the captive-bird trade, so are not included in these figures for imports from outside the EU. More information would be needed to get to the route of these shifts in annual EU imports, but that does not negate the clear figures that show the large number of wild-caught birds still being imported into the EU.

The figures from TRACES for the intra-EU movements of CITES-listed and non CITES-listed birds is far lower than the figures held by CITES for birds imported into the EU. If the TRACES figures are

TABLE 7: Number of live CITES-listed birds imported into the EU

	Wild-taken (including ranched) (w + r)	Captive-bred (c)	Total into EU (w + r + c)	% of EU bird imports that are taken from the wild
2000 ⁹	634,027	162,274	796,301	79.6
2001 ⁹	645,764	85,169	730,933	88.4
2002 ⁹	336,883	48,909	385,792	87.3
2003 ⁹	374,122	70,952	445,074	84.1
2004 ⁹	468,023	61,311	529,334 (67,480¹⁰)	88.4
2005			120,639^{5*}	

* Wild bird import ban into EU since October 2005¹¹. The 2005 CITES figures have not been submitted yet from member states. Data source: UK government.

accurate, which according to Defra is now in doubt⁵, then this would indicate that far more birds are imported into the EU from outside the EU than recorded for the total number of birds moved across borders for the captive-bird trade within the EU.

The RSPCA would advocate that the current ban on the importation of wild-caught birds into the EU be made permanent on welfare, conservation and biosecurity grounds.

When you look at the EU as a whole, far more wild-caught birds are imported into the EU than captive-bred birds, with an average 85.6 per cent of the birds imported into the EU in the last five years being taken from the wild.

3.1%

Live CITES-listed birds imported into the UK from outside the EU – increase in the proportion of the total trade in birds taken from the wild since 2000.



Live CITES-listed birds imported into the UK from outside the EU – low decrease in the total number of birds imported that are taken from the wild since 2000.

11%

Live CITES-listed birds imported into the EU – increase in the proportion of the total trade in birds taken from the wild since 2000.

26%

Live CITES-listed birds imported into the EU – decrease in total number of birds imported that are taken from the wild since 2000.

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- 1 Altherr S and Freyer D. 2001. Mortality and morbidity in private husbandry of reptiles. RSPCA.
- 2 Maas B. 2000. Prepared and shipped – A multidisciplinary review of the effects of capture, handling, housing and transport on morbidity and mortality. RSPCA.
- 3 Council Regulation (EC) No 338/97 (and subsequent amendments).
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- 5 Ben Bradshaw, Defra Minister, Hansard, 8 November 2005.
- 6 WCMC. 2001. European Community imports of live reptiles, 1990–1999. World Conservation Monitoring Centre.
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- 8 CAWC. 2003. The report on the welfare of non-domesticated animals kept for companionship.
- 9 Letter from the Minister for Local Environment, Marine and Animal Welfare, 7 June 2006 and copy in House of Commons library.
- 10 Elliot Morley, Defra Minister, Hansard, 6 November 2002.
- 11 European Commission Decisions 2005/759/EC and 2005/760/EC, as amended by Decision 2005/862/EC and Decision 2006/79/EC.

Welfare indicator: Provision of quality written information for the sale of non-domestic pets (reptiles, birds, amphibians and mammals) in a sample of outlets

RSPCA concern

Before acquiring any animal it is essential for the animal's welfare that the person responsible for its care fully understands its long-term needs in captivity and is completely prepared. The RSPCA believes that to help inform the person thinking about keeping an animal as a pet, anyone selling or rehoming the animal has a responsibility to help provide good-quality husbandry advice appropriate for the species.

Background

The Animal Welfare Bill clearly recognises the responsibility of any pet keeper to take reasonable steps to meet their animal's welfare needs in captivity. Annex E of the Regulatory Impact Assessment also recognises the responsibility of pet vendors to help educate prospective purchasers in the husbandry and care of the animals they are thinking about buying. It is therefore advocated that all commercial vendors of pet animals should issue information leaflets.

Nowadays the diverse range of animals that are available to keep as pets can be acquired from many different sources, including from breeders, specialist pet shops that sell non-domestic animals, generalist pet shops, pet fairs, animal auctions, animal centres, small-ad papers, hobbyist groups, distance sellers (such as the internet), or from friends and family. The animals may have been bred in the UK, bred overseas or caught in the wild before being exported for sale.

To investigate the ownership of non-domestic pets, including where pet animals were acquired, research was commissioned by the RSPCA that was completed by Dr Deborah Wells from Queens University in Belfast in 2002¹. The 1,024 surveys completed by keepers from around the UK (who kept reptiles, amphibians or insects) reported acquiring their pet from four main sources: 51.2 per cent from a non-domestic (specialist) pet shop; 16.6 per cent from a general pet shop; 22.5 per cent from a private breeder; and 9.8 per cent from a friend or relative (Figure 11).

The same respondents were also asked what husbandry advice they were given. Almost half were given only verbal advice by the seller, 31.2 per cent were given written information and 20.5 per cent were given no husbandry advice at all (Figure 12). The pet keepers then went on to state, when asked, that the most common problem they experienced with their pet was the lack of information provided by the supplier.

From this study, it is clear that despite over three-quarters of pet suppliers providing some verbal or written advice, less than one-third gave written information and one in five pet owners surveyed were given no information at all by the supplier. As two-thirds of suppliers in the study were identified as either being specialist or generalist pet shops, that sector of the pet trade clearly provides an important source for passing on care sheets to those considering or already keeping a companion animal.



There are no data or insufficient data are available.

FIGURE 11: Source of pets in 2001

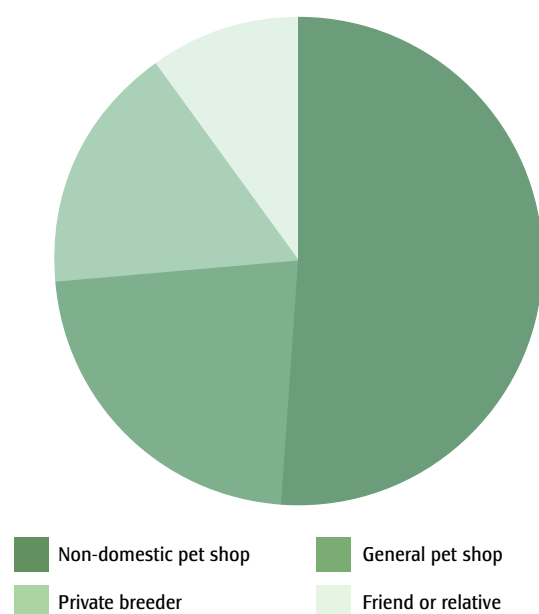
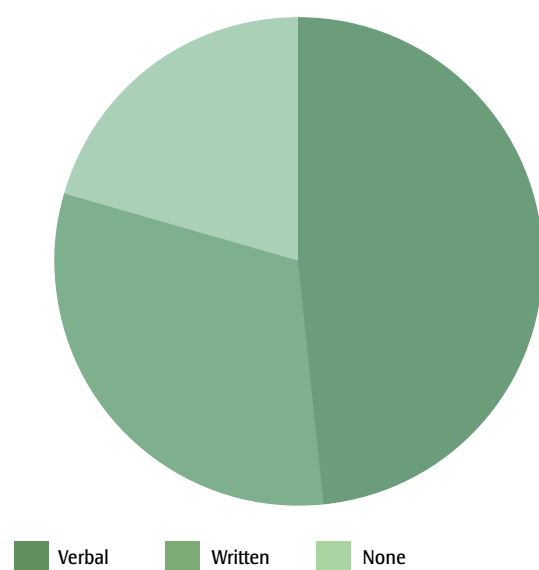


FIGURE 12: What information was provided?



Data source for Figures 11 and 12: D Wells.

The indicator figures

In recognition of the role pet shops provide in helping to inform the pet-buying public on the needs of animals in captivity and what equipment and long-term care is required once the animal is taken home, the RSPCA has selected the provision of good-quality written information, appropriate for the animals on sale in the individual pet shop, as an animal welfare indicator that will be monitored on an annual basis. Only then will it be possible to monitor trends in the provision of written care sheets that are informative and appropriate for the animal on sale that is being acquired as a pet.

To assess this animal welfare indicator an annual survey of pet shops sampled in England and Wales will investigate:

- the proportion of pet shops surveyed that sell species from each broad animal group (reptiles, birds, amphibians and mammals)
- the number and species of animals which are on sale from each animal group in the pet shops surveyed
- the proportion of pet shops surveyed that provide good-quality and accurate written husbandry care information (free or for sale) appropriate for each of the species on sale, which can then be taken away for reference by those considering or intending to buy an animal on sale.

From this study, it is clear that despite over three-quarters of pet suppliers providing some verbal or written advice, less than one-third gave written information and one in five pet owners surveyed were given no information at all by the supplier.

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

- ¹ Wells D. 2002. The ownership and welfare of exotic pets. RSPCA.

Welfare indicator: Evaluation of the effectiveness of zoos in meeting conservation and education objectives

RSPCA concern

Zoos have passed through various stages in their history, each stage largely typified by a desire to meet the needs of humans more than the needs of individual animals¹. For most of their history zoos' main purpose has been to demonstrate wealth and prestige, although very recently conservation has been the main stated purpose of zoos, with awareness raising through education being the primary means of achieving this aim^{2,3,4}.

The RSPCA is concerned that there may be welfare problems occurring in animals kept by zoos that cannot be justified by unsupported claims of conservation or education benefit. The Society is also concerned that current legislation is too weak to ensure that zoos are of real conservation or educational benefit.

Background

From their original purpose zoos have, over the last forty years or so, claimed a role as agents for conservation through their work on preserving biodiversity⁵, but their success in this role has been questioned⁶. Further, zoos state that one of their aims is to educate and inspire people to take action on behalf of wildlife conservation⁷, although evidence of their success at meeting this target is sparse⁸.

Zoos are required to take conservation measures under Article 9 of the Convention on Biological Diversity 1992⁹, which within the EU has been implemented by the Zoos Directive (Council Directive 1999/22/EC¹⁰). The main impact of the Directive is to require all zoos in the UK (and all EU member states) to practice suitable and significant conservation, education and research. In the UK the requirements of the Directive are incorporated into the Secretary of State's Standards of Modern Zoo Practice¹¹.

However, most zoo research is not aimed at conservation in the field, and, under the Directive zoos may meet their conservation goals in other ways, for instance by engaging in public education¹².

The RSPCA is concerned that if there are welfare problems in zoos they might be the unintentional side effect of zoos pursuing causes they may not currently be well placed to serve. The RSPCA believes there may be a danger of zoos over-emphasising their roles in conservation and education if that results in animals being kept in unsuitable conditions.

It is apparent that some animals suffer greatly in zoos¹³, but zoos keep them because they claim there are great conservation and education benefits in doing so¹⁴. The RSPCA strongly questions this approach.

The indicator figures

To test the conservation and education claims of zoos, the RSPCA will monitor the number and content of publications evaluating zoos in these areas. By reviewing such publications the success of reintroduction programmes, field conservation projects and education programmes will be carefully monitored, providing a background against which poor animal welfare can be assessed.



There are no data available.

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

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- 2 Conway W. 2003. The role of zoos in the 21st century. *International Zoo Yearbook* 38: 7-13.
- 3 Hancock D. 2001. op. cit.
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- 5 World Association of Zoos and Aquariums. 2006. Understanding animals and protecting them – about the World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy WAZA, Bern, Switzerland.
- 6 Zoological Society of London Symposium 'Catalysts for Conservation: A Direction for Zoos in the 21st Century' (Feb 2004 – proceedings are currently being compiled).
- 7 World Association of Zoos and Aquariums. 2006. op. cit.
- 8 Dierking L D, Burtnyk K, Buchner K S and Falk J. 2002. Visitor learning in zoos and aquariums, Executive Summary, American Zoological and Aquarium Association, Silver Spring, MD.
- 9 www.biodiv.org/convention/articles.asp?lg=0&a=cbd-09
- 10 http://eurlex.europa.eu/smartapi/cgi/sga_doc?smartapi!celexplus!prod!DocNumber&lg=en&type_doc=Directive&an_doc=1999&nu_doc=22
- 11 www.leeds.gov.uk/files/2005/week53/inter_4f445858-1f55-49f5-88ba-5f094a66be62_4590a85f-bc72-475e-82a8-b5738c589fef.pdf
- 12 Rees P A. 2005. Will the EC Zoos Directive increase the conservation value of zoo research? *Oryx*, 39(2): 128-131.
- 13 RSPCA 2002. *Live hard, die young – how elephants suffer in zoos*. RSPCA. Available at: www.rspca.org.uk
- 14 See for instance Clubb R and Mason G. 2002. *A Review of the Welfare of Zoo Elephants in Europe*. A report commissioned by the RSPCA. Available at: www.rspca.org.uk



FARM ANIMAL INDICATORS

Farm animal indicators: Introduction

RSPCA concern

The sheer numbers of livestock produced every year in the UK alone (more than 900 million), together with the huge variety of welfare issues associated with rearing, handling, transporting and slaughtering of the various species, means that the task of ensuring an acceptable quality of life for all farm animals is a highly challenging one.

Ultimately the RSPCA believes that the way in which farm animals are treated throughout their lives should take account of both their physical and behavioural requirements. These needs, which can differ greatly between livestock species, must be explored and acknowledged, and environment, management and health care tailored to help ensure they are effectively met.

Background

Many sectors have an influence on and responsibility for the welfare of farm animals. The farming industry itself has a very clear and direct effect on the way farm animals are treated. Government, which makes and enforces legislation relating to farm animal welfare, obviously has a clear responsibility for ensuring acceptable standards of care. The food industry, including retailers and – of increasing importance – caterers, restaurants and similar food outlets, have growing power over, and hence responsibility for, how livestock are treated. Ultimately consumers could have the greatest influence over farm animal welfare through their buying power and so must also bear responsibility for the well-being of livestock. However, in order to exercise this influence they need to be properly aware of the issues and be able to identify higher welfare products when shopping. Public awareness-raising initiatives and understandable, transparent welfare labelling are therefore of great importance if consumer power is to be harnessed for the benefit of farm animal welfare.

Making an assessment of the current overall state of farm animal welfare in the UK is extremely challenging, not only because of the huge number of issues and species involved but also due to the serious lack of publicly available, centrally collected, objective and reliable data on a number of major farm animal health and welfare parameters. The need to address this lack of information has been identified as a key area for action within the UK government's Animal Health and Welfare Strategy¹. Proper assessment both of the status quo and of year-on-year progress (or otherwise) in improving the welfare state of the UK's livestock can only be effectively undertaken if such information is available.

The welfare indicators

The farm animal welfare indicators chosen for the purposes of this report represent a wide range of issues, and are based on information available from government and industry sources. Considerations associated with the number of farm animals exported live from the UK for slaughter or further fattening relate both to the welfare risks surrounding live transport and the fact that the process, and hence the risk, is essentially unnecessary. The indicators relating to proportions of eggs produced from battery cage systems and alternatives, and to the relative sales of standard and higher welfare chicken, deal with issues of considerable animal welfare significance in terms of both scale (i.e. numbers of birds involved) and level of suffering. Data on the levels of piglet mortality help to provide a gauge of how and/or whether a number of issues relating to pig health and welfare are being addressed. The number, nature and outcome of State Veterinary Service (SVS) visits to farms and markets gives an indication of the level of resources allocated to enforcement of farm animal welfare laws and codes of recommendation by government, as well as the current state of compliance on farm.

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

¹ Animal Health and Welfare Strategy for Great Britain, Defra 2004.

Welfare indicator: Number of animals transported live from the UK for slaughter and further fattening

RSPCA concern

The transport of live farm animals from the UK for slaughter or further fattening is a process that is both unnecessary and fraught with risk to animal health and welfare. The RSPCA advocates that all animals should be slaughtered as close as possible to where they are reared. In addition, whilst most livestock will have to be transported at some time during their lives, for welfare reasons the frequency, duration and complexity of any travel should be minimised, whilst the quality of the transport process should be optimised. Live export for slaughter or further fattening fails to satisfy these criteria. Firstly, the travel is unnecessary as animals could be fattened and slaughtered in the UK and their meat exported instead. In addition, exported animals are taken on potentially long and complex journeys (involving both land and sea travel), which are governed by legislation that does not adequately protect their welfare. The law fails to take proper account of scientific research and practical experience relating to their needs in areas such as journey length, space allowance and temperature.

95%

There has been a positive change over the past six years with fewer animals being transported live from the UK for slaughter and further fattening.

Background

Scientific evidence¹ indicates that transport can result in serious health and welfare problems for farm animals. Livestock are subjected to a series of unfamiliar experiences and conditions, inevitably resulting in some degree of stress. Dehydration, thirst, hunger, heat and cold stress, inability to rest comfortably, injury and even death may occur in transit if the animals' needs are not properly catered for in terms of provision of food and water, appropriate temperature, humidity and ventilation, enough space and bedding. Poor driving technique, such as cornering too quickly or braking too hard, also has a major effect on welfare, leading to animals falling and becoming injured. Animals can become ill after travel due to a suppressed immune system resulting from stress², whilst animals already suffering from disease during transport can become more 'infective' when stressed, so are more likely to transmit illness to others in transit¹. The journey complexity is also important. Journeys involving more than one loading or unloading process and/or different modes of transport, such as those undertaken during export from the UK, clearly add to the potential for stress, distress and injury, with the loading and unloading processes being particularly challenging to some species. It has also been recommended – on the basis of research – that some young animals, such as calves under four weeks of age, should not be 'marketed' at all due to their inability to cope adequately with all the physical and mental challenges posed by the transport and associated processes³.

Current EU legislation, implemented in the UK through the Welfare of Animals (Transport) Order 1997 (and subsequent amendments) fails to protect adequately the welfare of farm animals in transit. It, for example, fails to take account of research indicating how much space they need, what maximum travel times and feeding and watering intervals should be for different species and ages of animal, and appropriate temperatures and humidity. Poor enforcement of the law in some countries, as evidenced by the findings of the European Commission's own inspection body, the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO)⁴, as well as by the findings of investigations undertaken by other bodies including the RSPCA⁵, adds to the likelihood of welfare problems occurring.

TABLE 8: Number of live farm animals⁶ exported from the UK for slaughter or further fattening over the past six years

	Number for fattening	Number for slaughter	Total number
2000	Not available	Not available	752,150 ^A
2001 ^B	Not available	Not available	109,316
2002 ^C	Not available	Not available	130,048
2003	61,931	6,682	68,613
2004	41,622	6,826	48,448
2005	Not available	Not available	37,104

Data source: Defra website.

A – Includes 1,230 pigs.

B – In 2001 exports only took place during January and part of February, due to the ban imposed following the outbreak of FMD.

C – In 2002 live exports did not resume until July, following the end of the FMD outbreak.

The indicator figures

The number of live animals transported from the UK is reported by Defra on its website. Figures are obtained from sailing reports made by SVS staff.

As shown by the figures in Table 8 above, live exports have fallen sharply since the Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) outbreak in 2001. The 2005 levels were only five per cent of those in 2000, which could indicate that alternatives have been sought and successfully developed for the livestock (primarily sheep) that are no longer being transported overseas. Slaughtering animals in the UK and exporting the meat instead is already the way in which the vast majority of lamb is exported. The negative effect of transport-related stress and injury on meat quality is well documented⁷. Hence, the export of meat instead of livestock is a positive approach not only from an animal welfare point of view but also in terms of product quality, lending further incentive to achieving the complete phasing-out of live exports for slaughter and further fattening.

Over the past few years, there has been an encouraging downward trend in the number of animals exported for slaughter or further fattening, which could indicate that alternative outlets have been developed and utilised, and hence that the process of live export can indeed be successfully replaced. The RSPCA therefore believes that it would be feasible for the export of live animals for slaughter or further fattening to cease within the next five years, thereby avoiding the many associated risks to welfare faced by livestock not only during the export process but in some cases due to the conditions in which they are subsequently fattened and/or slaughtered overseas. In addition, the RSPCA would want to see significant improvements in content, implementation and enforcement of European legislation⁸ relating to live transport as a whole, particularly with regard to reduced journey times, greater space allowances, stricter temperature requirements and more resources allocated to monitoring and enforcement in all member states.

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

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- Kent J E and Ewbank R. 1986. The effect of road transportation on the blood constituent and behaviour of calves. 11. One to three weeks old. *British Veterinary Journal* 142, 131–140.
- Knowles T G. 1995. A review of the post-transport mortality among younger calves. *Veterinary Record* 317, 406–407.
- For further information on the FVO, including its reports on implementation and enforcement of live transport law in EU countries, see: http://ec.europa.eu/comm/food/fvo/index_en.htm
- Standing room only: science and suffering in European live animal transport*, chapter 3. RSPCA 2003.
- Sheep were the only species recorded as being exported from the UK for slaughter or further fattening from 2001 onwards.
- Gregory N G. 1998. *Animal Welfare and Meat Science*, CAB International.
- This relates both to the current Directive and the forthcoming Regulation (to be implemented from January 2007) on the protection of animals during transport and related operations.

Welfare indicator: Production of UK non-caged eggs as a proportion of total eggs produced

RSPCA concern

In the UK about 19 million hens are kept for egg production in battery cages that do not meet the welfare needs of the birds¹. Conventional barren cages are scheduled to be replaced by other systems, including so-called 'enriched' battery cages by 2012². Enriched cages provide a minimum of just 50cm² extra usable space for each hen – about the size of a beer mat – and limited facilities. Evidence indicates that neither conventional nor enriched cages satisfy the birds' physical or behavioural requirements¹.

The RSPCA believes that all hens should be kept in alternative production systems, namely barn and free-range³. When properly managed these systems can provide hens with much higher standards of welfare compared with cages¹.



There has been a positive change with more eggs being produced in alternative systems in 2005 than in 2001.

Background

There are several key welfare issues relating to laying hens.

■ Space allowance

Hens naturally carry out numerous basic comfort behaviours, such as feather ruffling, head scratching, body shaking, wing stretching and flapping. Insufficient space in both types of battery cage does not allow the birds to properly carry out these behaviours. In contrast, free-range and barn systems allow free movement of hens over a large area so that they can move away from others, increase bone strength and gain access to all the different facilities without difficulty¹.

■ Dustbathing

Dustbathing is an important physical and behavioural requirement for laying hens, enabling them to preen and recondition their feathers as well as helping to maintain a comfortable body temperature. A scratch area is provided in enriched cages, but the RSPCA believes that the scratch area is not only restrictive in space, but cannot provide the appropriate substrate for adequate dustbathing. In free-range and barn systems hens are provided with enough space as well as access to litter in which the birds are able to dustbathe when and where they choose¹.

■ Egg laying

Hens are extremely motivated to gain access to a suitable nest site in which to lay their eggs and will perform complex pre-laying behaviours¹. Currently enriched cages provide only one small nest space in each cage and birds will be forced to compete for this site each day. In free-range and barn systems there is considerably more nest area available compared to enriched cages, giving the hens plenty of opportunity to gain access to and spend appropriate time in the nest site of their choice¹.

■ Perching

Depending on the positioning of perches in enriched cages, it may be difficult for birds to perch undisturbed or move around the cage. In free-range and barn systems hens are able to freely use perches that do not detract from the overall floor area.

Changes in the use of different methods of production over a period of years can be analysed and have so far illustrated the decrease in caged egg production as a proportion of total production. This is a very useful statistic as it shows the movement of the industry as a whole towards higher welfare alternative systems...

Figures for the numbers of eggs produced in the UK according to the method of production are collected by Defra every three months. The data is based on egg packing throughput surveys for all class A eggs (suitable for retail) and is widely quoted by the egg industry and other relevant organisations. Numbers are given for caged, barn and free-range (which includes organic) eggs. From 2006 separate figures for numbers of organic eggs produced will also be available.

These production figures give a picture of the UK egg market and provide a general indication of the welfare of hens by determining what proportion of the total number of eggs are produced in higher welfare systems compared to cages. Changes in the use of different methods of production over a period of years can be analysed and have so far illustrated the decrease in caged egg production as a proportion of total production. This is a very useful statistic as it shows the movement of the industry as a whole towards higher welfare alternative systems (barn and free-range) for housing hens.

The majority of class A eggs will be found on supermarket shelves and so an indication of consumer choice and influence on the supply of eggs from different systems of production can also be gained from the changes in numbers of egg produced.

The indicator figures

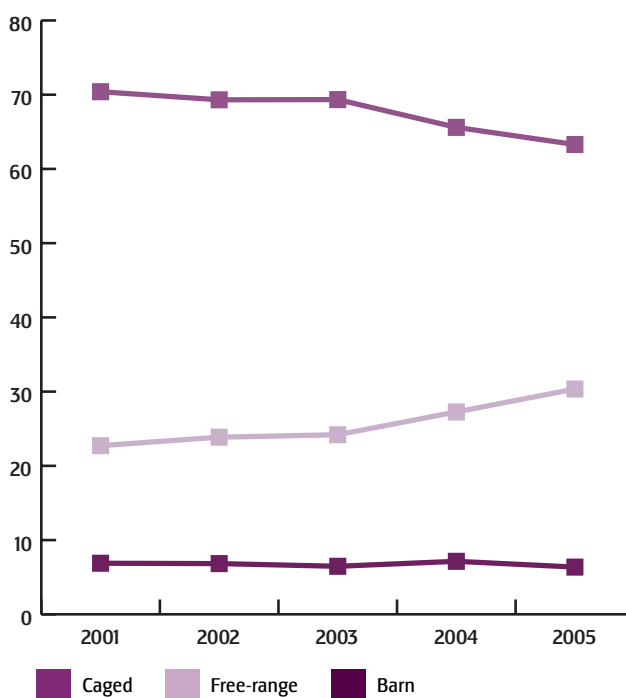
In 2005 approximately 30 million hens in the UK produced 8,847 million eggs. The percentage of eggs produced in each system is as follows.

- **Cages: 63.29 per cent.**
- **Barn: 6.36 per cent.**
- **Free-range: 30.35 per cent.**

Data source: Defra.

The proportion of eggs produced in alternative systems has increased by 25 per cent in the last 10 years. Looking at just the past five years a continual steady increase in the proportion of eggs produced in alternative systems is shown in Figure 13.

FIGURE 13: Eggs produced in different systems as a percentage of total annual egg production, 2001–2005



Data source: Defra.

The actual numbers of eggs produced in each system has followed a similar trend, with eggs produced in cages decreasing over the last five years indicating a reduction in the number of laying hens being kept in cages. In 2005, 3,248 million eggs were produced overall in alternative systems, a 27.3 per cent increase when compared to figures from five years ago (Table 9). Conversely, caged egg numbers have decreased by 7.7 per cent over the same period.

This information shows an encouraging movement in favour of alternative systems for laying hens. However, more than half of UK hens still face a life in battery cages.

TABLE 9: Proportion of eggs produced in different systems and total number of eggs produced, 2001–2005

	Eggs produced in different systems as a proportion of total (%)			Total number of eggs produced in each system (millions)		
	Caged	Free-range	Barn	Caged	Free-range	Barn
2001	70.40	22.72	6.88	6,067	1,958	593
2002	69.31	23.86	6.83	5,928	2,041	584
2003	69.34	24.19	6.47	5,864	2,046	547
2004	65.60	27.26	7.14	5,873	2,441	639
2005	63.29	30.35	6.36	5,599	2,685	563

Data source: Defra.

The European Directive on the protection of laying hens intends to mark the end of conventional cages in 2012. In five years' time the full implementation of the Directive will be imminent and the RSPCA would like to see all cages banned and converted to alternative systems, compliant with the RSPCA's Welfare Standards for Laying Hens⁴, with the above indicator showing that 100 per cent of UK eggs are being produced in alternative systems.

In support of this, recent research has shown that when replacing conventional cages, some barn systems can offer a financially comparable alternative to enriched cages¹. Evidence also shows that the vast majority of caged egg producers will have written off their existing cage equipment costs, irrespective of the Directive⁵, and will be ready to invest in new equipment by 2012.

The RSPCA believes that the trend can continue to increase provided consumers are given transparent information and a lead is taken by the government.

For further information on the welfare of laying hens kept in different production systems, including details of scientific research on key welfare issues, see the RSPCA report:
The case against cages: Evidence in favour of alternative systems for laying hens.

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

- ¹ *The case against cages: Evidence in favour of alternative systems for laying hens*. 2005. RSPCA.
- ² The Council Directive 1999/74/EC of 19 July 1999 laying down minimum standards for the protection of laying hens currently requires that conventional battery cages be phased out by 2012. However, this date is currently under review.
- ³ The vast majority of alternative egg production systems in the UK are Freedom Food accredited, complying with RSPCA Welfare Standards.
- ⁴ www.rspca.org.uk/servlet/Satellite?pagename=RSPCA/RSPCARedirect&pg=layinghensresourcepage
- ⁵ *Coming of age: The age structure of UK caged egg production facilities*. 2006. RSPCA.

Welfare indicator: Number of chickens reared under standard and higher welfare conditions

RSPCA concern

Meat chickens – also referred to as broilers – are by far the most numerous farm animals reared for meat in the UK, accounting for approximately one-third of total meat production¹. The consumption of chicken meat has become increasingly popular, with the number of chickens reared in the UK rising by 16 per cent in the last 10 years². The average annual consumption of chicken meat in the UK is 23kg per person, exceeding that of any other type of meat¹.

The welfare issues faced by many meat chickens are particularly severe. Fast growth rates, low space allowance and poor environmental conditions can all contribute to major welfare problems being experienced by today's broiler. The RSPCA believes the adoption of higher welfare standards can effectively address these issues and significantly contribute to the improvement of chicken welfare³.

Therefore, owing to the numbers of animals involved and the severity of the welfare issues that can be encountered, the number of chickens reared to higher welfare standards is an important welfare indicator to monitor.



There is a significant increase in the number of chickens reared under higher welfare conditions.

Background

Chickens are generally reared in one of three systems – indoor, free-range or organic. Although indoor systems can vary, typically chickens reared indoors are in large, closed buildings where temperature, artificial lighting, ventilation, food and water are controlled to ensure the birds grow efficiently. Food and water are provided in lines along the length of the building and wood shavings are provided as a floor covering. There can be anywhere between 500 and 50,000 birds housed within a shed, and there may be several sheds – or houses – on a farm.

■ Growth rate

The rate at which broilers grow can have a huge effect on their welfare⁴. Broilers have been genetically selected to grow quickly. In production terms, genetic selection for high growth rate has been very successful. The time from when the birds first hatch to appearing on the supermarket shelves can be less than six weeks. They can put on weight so rapidly that they can suffer from severe health problems such as lameness and heart defects⁴.

■ Stocking density

Stocking density relates to the number of birds that can be reared for every 1m² of floor space in a house. High stocking densities can impair welfare both directly through movement restriction and indirectly by causing poor litter and air quality⁴. When stocking densities exceed 30kg per m² there is a steep rise in the frequency of serious welfare problems regardless of the quality of management or the housing specification⁴. For example, at high stocking densities the prevalence of lameness and skin diseases substantially increases. High stocking densities also make it difficult for birds to perform many of their natural behaviours⁴.

■ Lighting

Very low light intensities (at or below 10 lux) can be used to discourage activity and maximise growth rate⁵. Welfare problems arise at light intensities below 20 lux⁴. At low light intensities birds are less active, which can cause increases in lameness and skin diseases and, at very low light levels, the development of eye abnormalities⁶.

Broilers may also be reared under a near-continuous lighting regime as this increases feed intake, which also maximises growth rate. There is scientific evidence showing that preventing broilers from having a proper night period adversely affects their welfare⁷.

TABLE 10: Summary of differences in welfare indicators between ACP and Freedom Food standards

Key welfare issue		ACP standards (the chicken industry's own standards)	RSPCA standards (as used by the Freedom Food scheme)
Growth rate (per bird)		No restriction	Maximum 45g per day
Stocking density in house (kg per m ²)		Above 38 permitted	Maximum 30
Lighting	Intensity	Minimum of 10 lux	Minimum 20 lux (when housed)
	Dark period	One hour for about 40 per cent of chicken's life, otherwise minimum of four hours	Minimum six hours (when housed)
Environmental enrichment		None	Straw bales, perches and pecking objects

Data source: ACP and Freedom Food.

■ Environmental enrichment

A more stimulating, enriched environment encourages increased activity and can reduce leg and skin problems⁴. Chickens provided with an enriched environment are more active than those kept without any form of enrichment⁸. When birds are provided with an enriched environment they walk and run more, and sit down less⁸.

■ Assurance schemes

The largest assurance scheme, which currently covers more than 90 per cent of UK producers, is called Assured Chicken Production (ACP). ACP is the chicken industry's own assurance scheme.

There is also the Freedom Food scheme, which was set up by the RSPCA. Freedom Food exists solely to improve farm animal welfare and works to the RSPCA's strict species-specific welfare standards.

Table 10 compares the RSPCA's Welfare Standards for Chickens⁹ (as used by the Freedom Food scheme) with the chicken industry's own assurance scheme standards (ACP) for the key issues affecting chicken welfare.

The indicator figures

The number of chickens reared in the UK to ACP standards (the chicken industry's own standards) and to the RSPCA's Welfare Standards for Chickens (and labelled as Freedom Food), and reared in free-range and organic systems has been monitored for this welfare indicator and are presented in Table 11.

The RSPCA is keen to see more chickens reared to higher welfare standards, such as those of the RSPCA, and reared in higher welfare systems, such as free-range and organic.

As can be seen from Table 11, about 97 per cent of all chickens reared in the UK in 2005 were reared to the chicken industry's own standards (ACP) – down by two per cent compared to 2004.

The alternative, higher welfare, market, i.e. Freedom Food, free-range and organic labelled chickens, accounted in total for around 1.8 per cent of the market in 2004, rising to 2.9 per cent in 2005. This was primarily due to an increase in the number of birds reared to the RSPCA's welfare standards and labelled as Freedom Food.

In production terms, genetic selection for high growth rate has been very successful. The time from when the birds first hatch to appearing on the supermarket shelves can be less than six weeks. They can put on weight so rapidly that they can suffer from severe health problems such as lameness and heart defects⁴.

TABLE 11: The approximate number and proportion of meat chickens reared in the UK to higher welfare standards and to the chicken industry's own standards (ACP) during 2004 and 2005

Standards applied	Total number of birds reared (million)		Proportion of total (%)		Data source
	2004	2005	2004	2005	
ACP ^A	852.95	835.58	98.23	97.07	Defra ²
RSPCA (labelled as Freedom Food) ^B	6.50	14.62	0.75	1.70	Freedom Food
Free-range ^C	7.84	9.38	0.90	1.09	Four largest UK free-range producers
Organic	1.06	1.22	0.12	0.14	Defra ¹⁰
Total	868.35	860.80	100		

A – Commercial broiler chick placings in the UK from UK and non-UK (i.e. imported broiler chicks) hatcheries. Due to calculations figures also include a small number of chicks reared as free-range or to other standards.

B – Only includes birds reared to RSPCA standards and labelled as Freedom Food – any chickens reared to the RSPCA standards and not labelled as Freedom Food have not been included. Also includes those reared to the RSPCA's welfare standards as free-range – the RSPCA welfare standards can be used for all systems of production, i.e. indoor, free-range and organic. No organic chickens were reared to the RSPCA's standards and labelled as Freedom Food in 2004 or 2005.

C – Does not include free-range chickens reared to the RSPCA's standards.

Therefore, the number of birds reared to higher welfare standards was up 64 per cent, compared to the previous year, which equated approximately to an additional 9.8 million birds.

Figures for the number of birds reared only as free-range are not collected centrally by Defra or any other organisation (e.g. National Farmers Union, British Poultry Council). Defra presents a single figure for birds reared as both standard and free-range – not a separate figure for each in contrast with laying hens (see page 47). Therefore, to obtain a reasonable estimate of the number of birds reared annually as free-range the four largest UK producers of free-range birds were approached to supply figures. The fourth largest producer reared approximately half a million birds last year, which indicates that the four producers between them represent the majority of the free-range market, as other producers would be rearing small numbers of birds.

The number of birds reared to ACP standards was calculated by omitting the estimated number of birds reared as free-range and those reared to the RSPCA's Welfare Standards for Chickens and labelled as Freedom Food. This means that the figure presented for birds reared to ACP standards may contain a small number of chickens reared to other standards.

The Society would like to see all meat chickens reared to higher welfare standards, such as the RSPCA's Welfare Standards for Chickens, that take proper account of their physical and behavioural needs. At the very least, the RSPCA would like to see the adoption of an EU Directive protecting broiler chickens, that requires the implementation of higher welfare standards by all producers that effectively address the key welfare issues listed here. The Society would also welcome the collection and publication of data on the number of chickens produced under the different methods of production.

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 National Farmers Union and British Poultry Council. 2006. *British Chicken – What Price?* NFU, Warwickshire and BPC, London.
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- 4 European Commission – Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare. 2000. *The Welfare of Chickens Kept for Meat Production (Broilers)*. European Commission, Brussels, Belgium.
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- 6 Prescott N. 2005. The importance of light and vision to poultry. Proceeding of the workshop on lighting for domestic fowl. Silsoe Research Institute, Bedford, UK. March 2005.
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- 8 Kells A and Dawkins M S. 2001. The effect of a 'Freedom Food' enrichment on the behaviour of broilers on commercial farms. *Animal Welfare*, 10, 347–356.
- 9 www.rspca.org.uk/servlet/Satellite?pagename=RSPCA/RSPCARedirect&pg=broilerchickenresourcepage
- 10 Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Organic Statistics United Kingdom (online). June 2005. Defra, London. Available from: <http://statistics.defra.gov.uk/esg/statnot/ppntc.pdf> (Accessed March 2006).

Welfare indicator: Piglet mortality levels between birth and weaning

RSPCA concern

The average mortality rate of piglets between birth and weaning, (which on average in the UK, takes place at around 26 days old¹), experienced on commercial pig farms in the UK is influenced by a number of factors, including the animals' environment, health care, management, nutrition and genetics of the mother and/or piglets.

It is reasonable to assume that in many cases, the deaths of piglets pre-weaning will have been preceded by a period of suffering, with the nature, degree and duration of suffering depending on the cause of death.

The RSPCA therefore believes that a reduction in the levels of pre-weaning piglet mortality would clearly be an important development in pig welfare.



There has only been negligible change over the past five years.

Background

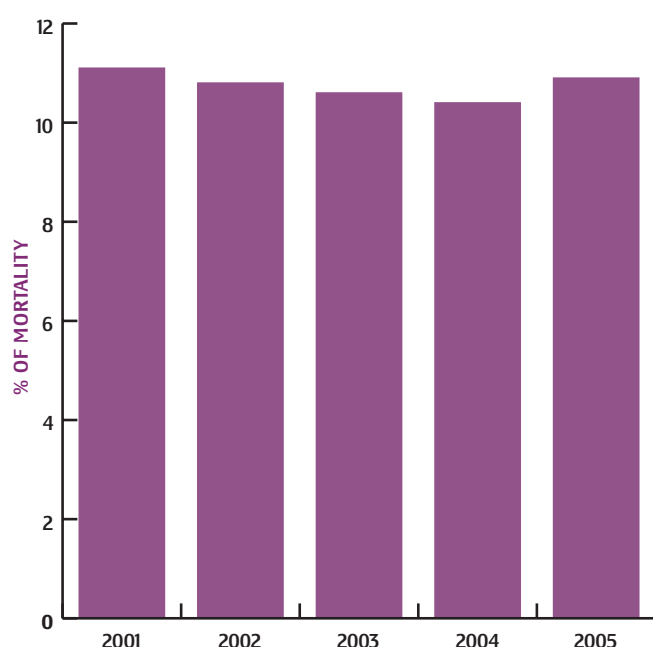
In addition to causes such as disease and illness, studies investigating the factors affecting pre-weaning mortality have shown that a significant proportion of deaths result from overlaying or crushing by the piglets' mother (the sow)²⁻³. There are known to be breed or genetic-related differences in the mothering behaviour and ability of sows, resulting in different levels of sow-related piglet deaths between strains⁴. The level of fearfulness of sows towards their stock-keepers has been shown to affect both the length of time a sow takes to give birth and pre-weaning piglet survival; higher fearfulness being associated with higher death rates⁵. This illustrates the importance of positive, considerate handling and stockmanship in order to ensure that the pigs have trust in and lack of fear towards their stock-keepers. Research also indicates that litter size affects piglet survival rates, with studies showing that larger litters result in higher levels of mortality⁶. Piglet weight and survival rate tend to be inversely proportional, particularly in larger litters⁷, and as there is a tendency for piglet weight at birth to fall as the number in the litter increases, larger litters result in more vulnerable piglets. Thus, rather than placing emphasis on increasing litter size through selective breeding, the RSPCA would encourage efforts to select for improved piglet survival and positive maternal behaviours. This approach, coupled with the implementation of appropriate husbandry and management practices, (including development and effective implementation of veterinary health plans aimed at reducing pre-weaning deaths) should facilitate a positive outcome in both welfare and economic terms.

The indicator figures

As illustrated in Figure 14, pre-weaning piglet mortality levels have barely changed over the past five years, with the average remaining at around 11 per cent, representing the deaths every year of about 1.2 million piglets⁸ before weaning at three to four weeks of age. The death of a certain percentage of newborns in any species, whether farmed, wild or companion, is common, and in some circumstances unavoidable (e.g. in the case of animals born with serious physical or physiological defects). However, the RSPCA is aware from practical experience that on some pig farms, piglet mortality rates significantly below the national average are being achieved, highlighting the potential for reduction in the current

average levels. In recent years, the UK pig industry itself has recognised the importance of striving for improvements in pig health and welfare, and has been encouragingly proactive in setting up several initiatives aimed at gathering information on, and taking action to improve, the well-being of farmed pigs. The BPEX Pig Health Monitoring Scheme⁹ is a good example of this. It is hoped that these initiatives will result in improvements in the health and welfare of the UK pig herd.

FIGURE 14: Average mortality levels (%) from birth to weaning of piglets born alive in the UK



Data source: MLC/BPEX Pig Yearbooks.

Clearly, reducing pre-weaning piglet mortality to a figure near to zero would be extremely difficult to achieve, even with high standards of environment, health care and management. However, in view of the indications from practical experience that piglet mortality levels significantly lower than the national average can be achieved on some pig farms, there is clearly the potential for improvement in this area. This, coupled with the growing availability of information both on the causes of piglet deaths, and ways in which the problem might be reduced, would suggest that an annual reduction in the average level of one per cent over the next five years would be a realistic aspiration. If achieved, this would result in a fall from just under 11 per cent (in 2005)¹⁰ down to six per cent by the end of 2010, a drop that would prevent the deaths of approximately 1.6 million piglets over that period¹¹. Such a reduction would be of benefit both to the pig industry in economic terms and, most importantly, to pig welfare.

In view of the indications from practical experience that piglet mortality levels significantly lower than the national average can be achieved on some pig farms, there is clearly the potential for improvement in this area.

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

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- ² Svedensen J, Bengtsson A C H and Svedensen L S. 1986. Occurrence and causes of traumatic injuries in neonatal pigs. *Pig News Information* 7: 159–179.
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- ⁸ English J G H and Bilkei G. 2004. The effect of litter size and littermate weight on pre-weaning performance of low birth weight piglets that have been cross-fostered. *Animal Science* 79: 439–443.
- ⁹ Based on BPEX Pig Yearbook 2006 figures for number of breeding sows, piglets born alive per sow and piglet mortality rate in 2005.
- ¹⁰ See: www.bpex.org/bphs/Brochure.asp for further information.
- ¹¹ BPEX Pig Yearbook 2006.
- ¹² Calculated on the basis of the 2005 figure for piglets born alive per year in the UK pig herd, and assuming a stable annual figure for this parameter.

Welfare indicator: The number, nature and outcomes of State Veterinary Service (SVS) inspections of farms and livestock markets

RSPCA concern

The welfare of farm animals in the UK on farms and at livestock markets is governed by specific legislation. While the RSPCA believes that in a number of areas the law fails to protect farm animal welfare adequately, it does at least provide a baseline standard which all are required to achieve. Monitoring of the implementation of animal welfare legislation and ensuring its enforcement are, therefore, of considerable importance, and must be undertaken effectively – in terms of both quantity and quality of inspection. Similarly, the government issues codes of recommendation for the welfare of livestock that aim to set out 'best practice' in terms of the care of farm animals. Ascertaining the degree to which the codes are followed across the farming industry can, therefore, provide a valuable indication of the overall welfare state of farm animals in the UK.

The RSPCA believes the government must allocate increased resources to its farm animal welfare inspection bodies, to enable them to achieve sufficient coverage (in terms of number and nature of inspection visits) of farm animal holdings to ensure that legislation relating to livestock welfare is being implemented across the country.



There has been virtually no change over the past three years.

Background

The SVS is the government's delivery agent responsible for animal health and welfare in England, Scotland and Wales. It describes itself as delivering: "government policies to farmers and keepers of livestock to help ensure that kept animals are healthy, disease free and well looked after". It is the official inspection body acting on behalf of the government (Defra, the Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department and the Welsh Assembly Government). A significant part of SVS's work involves undertaking visits to livestock premises to ascertain the level of compliance with, and undertake enforcement of, UK legislation relating to farm animal welfare on farms (primarily the Welfare of Farmed Animals [England] Regulations 2000) and at livestock markets (primarily the Welfare of Animals at Markets Order 1990). Compliance with government codes of recommendation for the welfare of livestock is also checked. Failure to achieve the codes is not in itself a legal offence, but can be used as evidence of falling below 'best practice' in the event of an animal welfare-related prosecution.

Although the RSPCA believes that in several areas, current EU (and hence, for the most part, UK) farm animal welfare-related legislation fails to afford adequate protection to livestock, compliance with the law does at least help to ensure minimum standards of care. Government codes of recommendation, which set generally higher standards, help to offer more protection. The work of the SVS is, therefore, very significant on several counts. The data it generates can be extremely valuable in terms of both providing information of the status quo as to the level of compliance with welfare law and codes, and also assisting in decisions on where best to focus efforts to bring about necessary improvements. The number of visits (and hence the proportion of livestock holdings visited) is obviously also significant if a truly representational picture of the welfare state of the UK's livestock is to be ascertained.

SVS visits are undertaken on both a targeted and random basis, resulting not only from complaints but also from an elective UK-based process.

The indicator figures

The total number of livestock holdings in England, Scotland and Wales is about 172,238². As can be seen from the figures in Table 12, the maximum number of visits to farms by the SVS in any one of the past three years is 3,349, representing almost two per cent of the total number of farms.

TABLE 12: Number of visits and inspections undertaken by the SVS on farms and at livestock markets

Year	2003	2004	2005
Farms	2,817 (4,964)	3,149 (5,431)	3,349 (6,123)
Markets	3,647 (8,735)	3,658 (8,719)	2,943 (7,293)

Note: The number of inspections is the second figure, shown in brackets. More than one 'inspection' may take place during a single 'visit' to one premises, if more than one species is held at the site. Data on numbers of visits are only available for the past three years.

Data source: Defra: The report of the Chief Veterinary Officer – Animal Health 2003; 2004; 2005.

This contrasts with the coverage achieved by a number of farm assurance schemes (such as the RSPCA's Freedom Food scheme and Assured British Pigs), which visit every scheme member every year, though clearly, the number of farms involved in a single scheme is significantly lower than the total in the country. The total number of livestock markets in the UK is currently 262³. On average, therefore, each market received 11 SVS visits during 2005.

The outcome of SVS visits is also reported in the Defra Chief Veterinary Officer's (CVO) report. The outcomes are recorded as falling into one of four categories: A (compliance with legislation and codes); B (compliance with legislation but not codes); C (non-compliance with legislation), and D (unnecessary pain, unnecessary distress seen on the visit). The data are presented in the form of graphs in the CVO's report, without the actual figures being stated, making it difficult to report exact information here. However, the following conclusions regarding the situation in 2005 can be drawn from the graphs presented in the 2005 report.

- Non-compliance with codes of recommendation is seen most frequently in beef and calves, with more than 50 per cent of assessments undertaken on beef farms during complaint or targeted visits identifying a failure to comply with the relevant codes.
- Combining data relating to all species visited, non-compliance with codes found on complaint or target farm visits was most common in the areas of disease treatment (more than 60 per cent non-compliance), housing (around 60 per cent), and staffing issues (almost 60 per cent).
- Failure to comply with freedom of movement-related codes was found in just over 20 per cent of cases.

- With regard to legislation, a 30 per cent failure rate in complying with requirements on keeping farm records was noted on complaint or target farm visits, as was a more than 20 per cent failure to comply with the law relating to the animals' environment and over 15 per cent non-compliance with legislation on feed and water.
- Overall, nearly 50 per cent of all assessments made on complaint or target farm visits identified a failure to comply with codes of recommendation for the welfare of livestock, with almost 20 per cent of assessments noting non-compliance with legislation.
- At livestock markets, the most common areas of non-compliance with codes noted were those relating to feed and water (around 30 per cent of assessments identifying failures), bedding (approximately 25 per cent) and young animals (around 25 per cent). Generally, the incidence of non-compliance with legislation on livestock markets was reported as being very low.

Following recent reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), UK farmers will have to comply with basic EU legislation (from 1 January 2007) on farm animal welfare if they are to 'qualify' for some government payments. It is likely that the SVS will have primary responsibility for ascertaining the level of 'cross-compliance'. The RSPCA wants to see allocation of more resources to this inspection and enforcement of animal welfare legislation on farms and a commitment that any non-compliance will be enforced through withdrawal of CAP payments.

A qualitative change in the nature of the visits would also be an important development. The SVS itself states that it is working with government to help develop government policies that are: "both deliverable and focused on outcomes", an approach with much to commend it if the welfare of livestock is to be effectively assessed and, where necessary, improved. The RSPCA would encourage more outcomes-based approach to SVS visits to farms and markets, in which a formal assessment is made of both the resources (in terms of environment, feed and water etc.) provided, and the end result in terms of the animals' health and welfare.

The RSPCA would also like to see a fall in the level of non-compliance both with codes of recommendation for the welfare of livestock, and with relevant welfare legislation at markets and particularly on farms, where failure to implement codes, and in some cases law, is of great concern. In particular, improvement in compliance in the areas of beef and calf rearing, and for all species in implementation of requirements on housing, records, staffing issues and disease treatment are essential if acceptable levels of welfare are to be achieved.

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

1 State Veterinary Service: www.svs.gov.uk

2 Defra Farming Statistics; Welsh Assembly Agricultural Statistics; SEERAD Agricultural Statistics.

3 Livestock Auctioneers Association: www.laa.co.uk May 2006.



PET ANIMAL INDICATORS

Pet animal indicators: Introduction

RSPCA concern

Since the foundation of the RSPCA in 1824, legislation, public education and direct intervention have improved the welfare standards for pet animals in the UK. Despite these efforts, many welfare issues affecting pets still persist today. Instances of cruelty and neglect and the continuing stray animal and unwanted pet problem remain a key concern for the RSPCA.

The RSPCA wants to see continued improvements in the welfare of pet animals, and the pet owning public taking more responsibility for the animals in their care.

Background

The Animal Welfare Bill brings together and updates legislation (some of which is nearly 100 years old) that exists to promote the welfare of vertebrate animals other than those in the wild. Once enacted the Animal Welfare Bill will be the most important piece of legislation in relation to the welfare of pet animals. The introduction of the welfare offence¹, which places a 'duty of care' on all those responsible for animals to provide for their animals' needs, is one of the most significant components of the new law and it is hoped will prevent the suffering of many animals. But with approximately one in two UK households owning a pet (24.6% cats; 21.1% dogs²) there is still a great deal of potential for pet animals to endure neglect and suffering through cruelty or by irresponsible pet ownership.

It is difficult to obtain an objective overview of the many issues affecting pets and to assess how society views pet animals, as the majority of data and statistical information has been obtained from the RSPCA's own internal data collecting sources, because such figures are not collected at a national level by central or local government. As the largest animal welfare organisation in the UK that deals with pet animals, the RSPCA figures could therefore be viewed as representative for the whole country and as a reflection of these issues unless external statistical information is provided.

The welfare indicators

The five welfare indicators have been chosen to reflect some of the key welfare issues that affect the UK's pet animals. Different aspects of responsible pet ownership are measured by focusing on non-microchipping, the euthanasia of healthy animals and unwanted animals coming into the care of the RSPCA. The three are all linked and although they do not demonstrate direct suffering, are good indications of how pets are treated and viewed in the UK.

Organised animal fights have been prohibited for more than 150 years³. This is a serious, brutal, underground crime that causes a great deal of suffering to the animals involved. The indicator, using figures from the RSPCA's Special Operations Unit, identifies the illegal activities of fighting involving dogs, cockerels and badgers, and the difficulty and expense in finding the perpetrators.

Using data collated from the RSPCA inspectorate, the number of animal welfare complaints the Society receives is compared to the number of animals seen by an inspector where a welfare concern is identified. The statistics demonstrate how often advice is given and more importantly when the advice is ignored.

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

¹ Animal Welfare Bill, section 9.

² Pet Food Manufacturers' Association data: www.pfma.com/public/petownership.htm

³ Animal baiting and fighting (including cockfighting and badger baiting) within the City of London was prohibited in 1833. The prohibition was extended to the whole country in 1835 and is now in the Protection of Animals Act 1911, s1(1)(b)(c). The Animal Welfare Bill will repeal this piece of legislation.

Welfare indicator: Number of unwanted healthy animals taken into the care of the RSPCA

RSPCA concern

Nearly half of UK households own a pet. These include familiar animals such as dogs, cats and rabbits, and less common animals such as snakes, lizards and various mammals¹. Unfortunately, not all pet owners are aware of the long-term commitment they are taking on when obtaining a pet, and are unable to provide the suitable environment or care for their chosen animal. In extreme cases these animals suffer severe physical or emotional cruelty. Others are simply abandoned, while some are taken into the care of the RSPCA or other welfare organisations. It is a concern that some animals suffer unnecessarily due to the irresponsibility of those who are responsible for them.

The RSPCA would like to see the number of unwanted animals in the UK as a whole significantly reduced until ultimately the problem no longer exists.

Background

The problem of unwanted animals is at least partly the result of impulse buying, however it can also result from the lack of research carried out or advice offered into the needs of an animal. Appropriate behavioural training is often neglected and a significant proportion of unwanted animals pass through rehoming centres for this reason alone. However, there are many other reasons that a pet may need to be found a new home such as changes in family, health or financial circumstances.

Pet animals specifically are taken into the Society's care by RSPCA inspectors and Animal Collection Officers or by owners who are directed towards their local RSPCA branch or animal establishment. In 2005 the RSPCA operated 15 regional animal centres, four hospitals and five clinics. The RSPCA branches operated a further 36 centres and 40 clinics. Collectively these establishments have a capacity for more than 5,400 cats and dogs at any given time. A network of about 500 volunteer animal fosterers and 100 private boarding establishments are also utilised for animal rehoming and accommodation.

This national network of specialists not only provides a safe haven for the huge variety of animals that are rescued, abandoned or voluntarily signed over to the Society, but also offers them a second chance. It is the Society's aim to find homes for every animal that enters into its care.

The number of healthy animals entering the care of the RSPCA each year indicates the scale of the unwanted pet problem.

The indicator figures

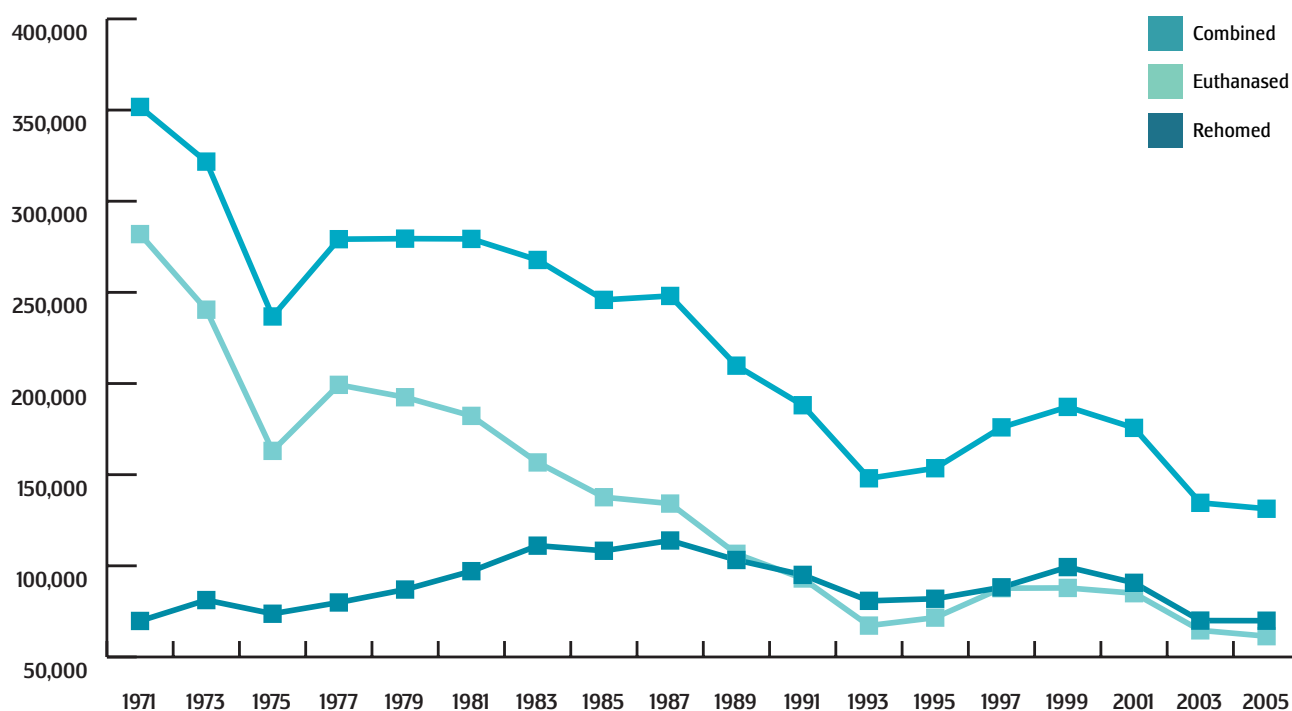
To gauge the problem of unwanted healthy animals in the UK, the indicator focuses on just the animals that are taken into RSPCA care to reflect the number of animals that are no longer wanted by their owners. A true figure would incorporate the number of animals euthanased by vets and the number of animals that enter non-RSPCA establishments. Currently, there is no national established format to identify the number of unwanted pets that are dealt with across the UK each year.

This indicator is calculated by combining the number of animals rehomed and the number of healthy animals euthanased. This figure includes cats, dogs, equines, birds, non-domestic animals such as snakes, lizards and terrapins, and small mammals such as rabbits.



There has been a positive change over the past five years with the number of healthy animals entering the care of the RSPCA reducing by 23.2% from 2001 to 2005.

FIGURE 15: Number of unwanted animals taken into the care of the RSPCA



NB: The number of animal euthanased includes both healthy and unhealthy animals, as separate data is not available for all of the shown time period.
Data source: RSPCA.

Understanding the current trend in the numbers of unwanted animals entering the care of the RSPCA is facilitated by an overview of the underlying long-term trends (Figure 15). Over the past 25 years the Society has seen a massive reduction in unwanted animals. The total number of unwanted animals fell steadily until the mid 1990s followed by a small increase. This fall is likely to be a result of high profile public awareness campaigns and the promotion of neutering.

Table 13 demonstrates that over the past five years the number of healthy animals entering the care of the RSPCA has decreased quite considerably, however since 2003 this figure has remained relatively stable.

It would seem that neutering and microchipping campaigns have had an impact on the number of unwanted animals the RSPCA deals with. Although with nearly 75,000 animals still entering RSPCA care each year (and thousands taken into the care of other organisations), there is still a huge problem with breeding, impulse buying of pets and general irresponsible behaviour that leaves many animals needing new homes.

TABLE 13: Number of unwanted healthy animals taken into the care of the RSPCA, 2001-2005

Year	Number of animals rehomed	Number of healthy animals euthanased*	Total number of healthy animals entering RSPCA care
2001	90,689	6,852	97,541
2002	82,936	5,560	88,496
2003	69,956	4,967	74,923
2004	69,787	4,854	74,641
2005	69,900	4,923	74,823

* This figure also includes animals euthanased at owners' request and by RSPCA inspectors.

Data source: RSPCA.

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

¹ Pet Food Manufacturer Association's data: www.pfma.com/public/petownership.htm

Welfare indicator: The number of non-microchipped dogs and cats taken into RSPCA care

RSPCA concern

Microchipping is an inexpensive way of ensuring permanent identification of pet animals. A small 'chip', the size of a grain of rice, is painlessly inserted under the skin between the shoulder blades. The microchip bears a unique number that is entered onto a database alongside the owner's details. A hand-held scanner, carried by RSPCA inspectors as well as vets and local authority dog wardens, can then read the details of the microchip if a lost or injured animal is found.

A dog owner has a legal requirement to ensure that their dog while on a highway or in a public place wears a collar with the name and address of the owner inscribed on it¹. This legal requirement does not apply to cats. However, collars can fall off. If animals are fitted with a microchip they are more likely to be reunited with their owner, without a microchip the animals' owners may never be successfully located.

The RSPCA believes that all cats and dogs should be fitted with a microchip.

Background

Every year, the RSPCA, vets, police, local authorities and other animal welfare organisations handle a large number of animals that are reported as strays, are sick or injured, have become trapped or have wandered from their owners. Many of these animals are never reunited with their owners, because either the owner or the pet cannot be identified.

Microchips are most commonly used in cats, dogs and equines but can also be used on smaller animals such as rabbits, ferrets and birds. This method of identification is a requirement of the Horse and Pet Passport schemes^{1 2}. A microchip serves as proof of ownership of an animal and can be very useful when dealing with incidents of pet theft, straying animals and animal cruelty, and is one of the most reliable methods of tracing pets or their owners.

Every June, the Kennel Club coordinates National Microchipping Month³ throughout the UK in an endeavour to promote microchipping and to encourage responsible pet ownership. The RSPCA, other animal welfare organisations, councils and vets also organise events where microchipping is offered at discounted rates.

The RSPCA supports microchipping as a form of animal identification, specifically through its rehoming efforts. Every animal leaving the care of the RSPCA is fitted with a microchip unless it already has one. The RSPCA also offers a welfare microchipping service that is carried out at the request of pet owners at RSPCA animal centres, hospitals, clinics and individual RSPCA branches.

The indicator figures

The indicator aims to establish if the microchipping message is being communicated and understood by owners and keepers of pet animals and whether more needs to be done by local authorities, vets, breeders and welfare organisations in promoting the benefits of microchipping as a part of responsible pet ownership.

The data used for the indicator focuses on the cats and dogs the RSPCA microchips as they leave its care and enter new homes. Ideally, the RSPCA would not be microchipping any of these animals as they would already be microchipped by their previous owner.

Tables 14, 15 and 16 focus on the number of cats and dogs that have been microchipped over a two-year period. The figures demonstrate that on average just over 15 per cent of cats and dogs are being microchipped before entering an RSPCA centre.



There has only been negligible change over the past two years.

TABLE 14: Total number of non-microchipped cats and dogs

Year	Number of cats and dogs rehomed by the RSPCA	Number of cats and dogs not microchipped before RSPCA care	Percentage of animals not microchipped before RSPCA care
2004	52,105	41,542	79.7%
2005	51,277	43,150	84.2%

Data source: RSPCA.

TABLE 15: Dogs

Year	Number of dogs rehomed by the RSPCA	Number of dogs not microchipped before RSPCA care	Percentage of dogs not microchipped before RSPCA care
2004	19,089	15,124	79.2%
2005	18,575	16,061	86.5%

Data source: RSPCA.

TABLE 16: Cats

Year	Number of cats rehomed by the RSPCA	Number of cats not microchipped before RSPCA care	Percentage of cats not microchipped before RSPCA care
2004	33,016	26,418	80.0%
2005	32,702	27,089	82.8%

Data source: RSPCA.

TABLE 17: Welfare microchipping performed by the RSPCA

Year	Dogs	% increase or decrease	Cats	% increase or decrease
2004	3,420		3,249	
2005	7,509	+119.6%	5,516	+69.8%

Data source: RSPCA.

The figure is perhaps not surprising, as many of these animals have ended up in the care of the RSPCA because they are no longer wanted by their owners (see page 59).

In 2005, there was an increase in both cats and dogs that entered the care of the RSPCA that were not microchipped. It is difficult to explain why this happened without assuming that someone who gives up their cat or dog is perhaps less likely to have had their pet microchipped because they have not considered the long-term impact of pet ownership.

To put the figures into context, Table 17 demonstrates the amount of welfare microchipping that is carried out by the RSPCA on the request of cat and dog owners. Using these figures as an indicator of responsible pet ownership, it can be concluded that more people want to be responsible by having their animals microchipped as the figures have dramatically increased from year to year.

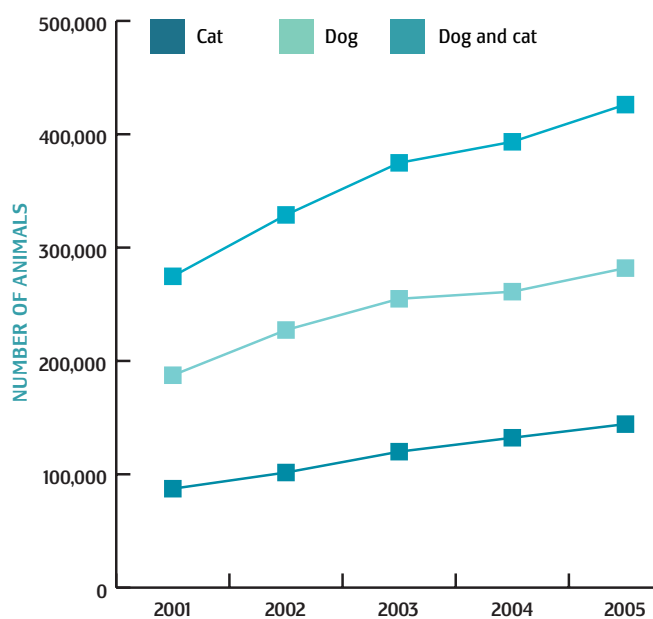
On a national level, data from Petlog³ (the microchip identification service provided by the Kennel Club and the largest national database of its type in the UK), demonstrates the increase in cats and dogs registered on its microchip database. Figure 16 shows the number of cats and dogs that have been microchipped and registered on the Petlog scheme between 2001 and 2005³.

Over the past five years the number of animals registered on the Petlog database steadily increased. This is likely to be due to increased public awareness and education about microchipping during national microchipping month and other events.

Nationally, the number of cats and dogs that are microchipped each year is rising, yet the number of microchipped cats and dogs entering RSPCA centres is decreasing, indicating that while the microchipping message is getting through to some people, the overall responsible pet ownership message needs to be generally improved.

It will be a major step forward if the majority of animals entering the RSPCA's care over the next five years have already been microchipped, however a more realistic figure is 50 per cent for both cats and dogs.

FIGURE 16: Microchipping of cats and dogs



Data source: Petlog.

Over the past five years the number of animals registered on the Petlog database steadily increased. This is likely to be due to increased public awareness and education about microchipping during national microchipping month and other events.

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

¹ A badge or plate is also acceptable. Control of Dogs Order 1992, SI 1992/901, art 2(1).

² EC Regulation 998/2003 of 13 June 2003 on the non-commercial movement of pets. See also: www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/quarantine/pets/procedures/support-infor/guide.htm

³ For more information about Petlog and the Kennel Club visit: www.petlog.org.uk

Welfare indicator: Number of animals seen by RSPCA inspectors where a welfare concern is raised

RSPCA concern

Under current animal welfare law, the Protection of Animals Act 1911, people can only be prosecuted for cruelty to animals once there is sufficient evidence that unnecessary suffering has occurred. This can result in animals enduring long-lasting suffering or in extreme cases, death.

One of the most important aspects of the new Animal Welfare Bill is the welfare offence. This imposes a duty on any person who is responsible for an animal to take such steps that are reasonable in all circumstances to ensure the needs of that animal are met to the extent of good practice.

It is hoped that the welfare offence will prevent many animals from suffering unnecessarily as action can be taken before it occurs.

76%

Increase in the number of animals where welfare concerns were raised.

Background

The specific needs of an animal can vary both between and within species. The RSPCA currently uses a standardised measurement system to assess the welfare needs of the animals they are investigating. This is implemented under its welfare assessment form, which the Society's inspectors use every time they visit a home, farm or other establishment, to identify any welfare concerns. The form consists of an eleven-point checklist that expands on the issues set out by the Five Freedoms.

The Five Freedoms are:

- **Freedom from hunger and thirst.**
- **Freedom from discomfort.**
- **Freedom from pain, injury and disease.**
- **Freedom to express normal behaviour.**
- **Freedom from fear and distress.**

Once a welfare assessment of an animal is made and if problems are identified, such as a dog does not have access to clean drinking water and is thin but not malnourished, the RSPCA inspector will offer advice about how to rectify the problem and how to avoid the situation worsening into a cruelty case. For example, advice will be given on how to provide a dog with a nutritionally adequate diet. However, the pet owner is under no legal obligation to follow the advice given and some may ignore it. The inspector will revisit the animal to see if improvements have been made and whether the advice has been followed. In the majority of cases improvements have been made and any problems have been rectified. There are incidents where the situation has worsened and the animal is then suffering unnecessarily. In such cases, further action may be appropriate.

With the introduction of the Animal Welfare Act and the welfare offence (Clause 9), an RSPCA inspector will be able to consider taking action beyond just giving out advice, and before suffering or cruelty has occurred. With the implementation of the new legislation, the RSPCA's welfare assessment form will be modified to reflect the welfare offence. Once an inspector has seen an animal that has given cause for concern, an advisory notice can be issued with a set timescale or compliance period for positive changes to take place. This notice is effectively a warning to the person responsible for the animal that they need to take action to address the welfare needs of their animal. If they fail to take heed of the notice and make no attempts to improve the welfare of the animal in question, then a prosecution under the Animal Welfare Act may follow.

The indicator has been developed to highlight the number of welfare complaints RSPCA inspectors deal with each year, the number of animals affected and the number of animals affected where the advice that is given is ignored.

The indicator figures

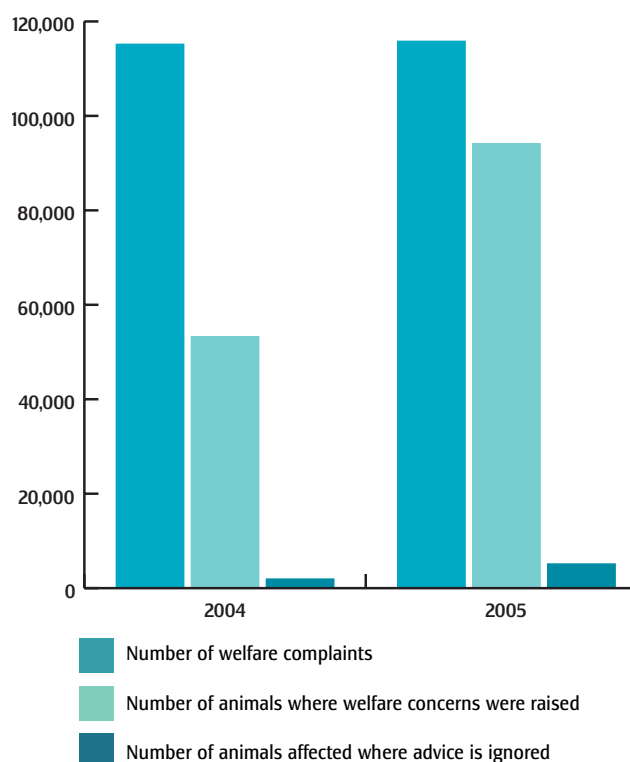
The aim of this indicator is to firstly identify the number of animals RSPCA inspectors see each year that are of concern because their welfare needs are not being met. More importantly, the indicator highlights the number of animals that continue to have their welfare needs compromised due to their owners not taking on board the advice they are given. Finally, the indicator will hopefully establish if the new Animal Welfare Act is having a positive effect on the number of pet owners accepting the advice they are given.

The numbers in Figure 17 show that in 2005 RSPCA inspectors saw nearly twice as many animals where welfare concerns were raised than the previous year.

Due to the amount of animals involved, it is perhaps unsurprising that the number of animals where advice is ignored has increased from 1,935 in 2004 to 5,126 in 2005. It is extremely disturbing that over two-and-a-half times more animals are affected by their owners not taking notice of the advice given by RSPCA inspectors.

It is hoped that over the next few years the number of instances where advice is ignored should change in line with the introduction of the welfare offence. Ideally, nobody will be prosecuted under the welfare offence of the Animal Welfare Act and hopefully the number of animals where concerns are raised will reduce as owners become more aware of their animals' needs as education and awareness improves.

FIGURE 17: Animal welfare complaints received by the RSPCA in 2004–2005



Data source: RSPCA.

With the introduction of the Animal Welfare Act and the welfare offence (Clause 9), an RSPCA inspector will be able to consider taking action beyond just giving out advice, and before suffering or cruelty has occurred.

Welfare indicator: Number of healthy dogs being euthanased by the RSPCA due to irresponsible pet ownership

RSPCA concern

Irresponsible pet ownership can result in the humane destruction or euthanasia of healthy dogs (and many other animals). Every year the RSPCA, vets, local authorities and other animal welfare organisations are reluctantly forced to carry out the humane destruction of healthy dogs because they are no longer wanted or new homes cannot be found for them.

The RSPCA would like to see a future where no healthy pet animal is euthanased; this can be achieved through animal owners adopting more responsible attitudes towards their pets.

Background

Dogs are euthanased if they are sick, injured or are a danger to the public, by trained operators such as vets using approved methods. They are also euthanased for non-medical reasons or when they are healthy, such as when they cannot be found new homes or the owners' insistence because they are no longer wanted.

RSPCA rehoming centres take in unwanted animals and RSPCA inspectors and Animal Collection Officers often collect strays, or dogs that have been abandoned by their owners. In certain areas of the UK, the number of unwanted and stray dogs is so great that there are not enough people able to offer them homes. The RSPCA uses different methods to aid rehoming of these unwanted animals such as adverts in the local press, websites and transfer of long stay animals to different parts of the UK. The transfer system relocates animals to different centres around the country after three months, giving different members of the public an opportunity to view the dogs.

When all possible methods of rehoming have been exhausted, a dog may be euthanased. This always happens with great reluctance and only after everything has been done to find the dog a new owner. The RSPCA is opposed to the long-term confinement of animals as this can cause distress and mental suffering to the animal concerned.

A large proportion of the unwanted dogs received by the RSPCA were purchased as puppies and then signed over at two to four years old. This may happen for many reasons, but often owners become bored of the dog once it is an adult, they cannot cope with behavioural problems caused by inadequate training, or long-term plans for the care of the dog have not been made.

The number of healthy dogs put to sleep could be reduced with a combination of simple, practical actions. Microchipping would assist with locating pet owners and could reduce the number of strays. Neutering of dogs when young would prevent unwanted pregnancies and help control the dog population. The provision of suitable information and guidance from pet sellers should also improve the welfare of the animal concerned. These activities would reduce the number of unwanted animals and therefore reduce the need for healthy animals to be euthanased.



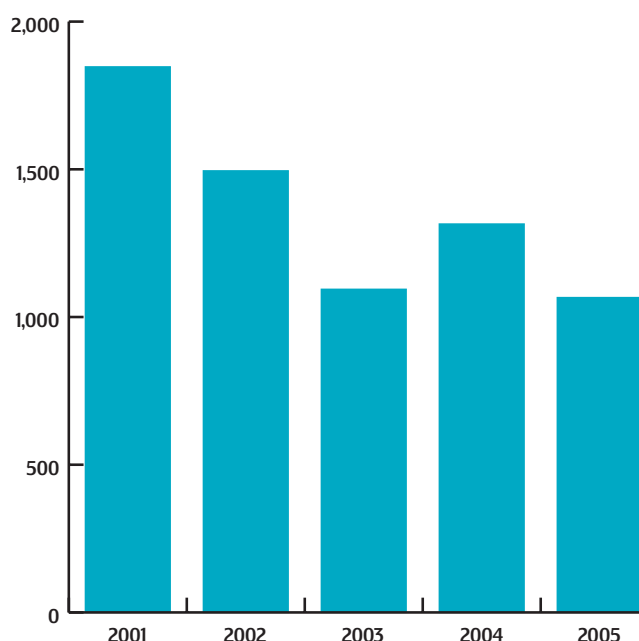
There has been a positive change over the past five years with the number of healthy animals that have to be euthanased by the RSPCA dropping by 42.3% from 2001 to 2005.

The indicator figures

This sensitive indicator measures the number of dogs the RSPCA has to humanely destroy each year. The total number of healthy dogs euthanased each year in the UK is likely to be a lot higher, however there is no easy way to find out what this figure is. Local authorities, vets (at the owners' request), and some animal welfare organisations will euthanase unwanted healthy dogs, but these statistics are not widely available or collected nationally. Each year, the Dogs Trust collates figures from local authorities about the number of stray animals they euthanase each year, however these figures do not differentiate between healthy and non-healthy animals and therefore have not been included in this chapter.

Figure 18 shows the number of healthy dogs the RSPCA has had to euthanase over the past five years.

FIGURE 18: Number of healthy dogs that have to be euthanased, 2001–2005



Data source: RSPCA.

Since 2001, the trend has been that the number of healthy dogs euthanased has fallen, with the exception of 2004. It is difficult to identify exactly why this has occurred when the figure fell dramatically the following year. It is expected that with more information being produced and circulated about the benefits of neutering, microchipping and owning a dog, fewer animals will have to be needlessly euthanased each year.

It is important to put this figure into context, as the number of healthy dogs destroyed each year is relatively low (5.7 per cent) when compared to the number of dogs the RSPCA found new homes for (18,575 in 2005). However this figure is still too high and unacceptable and reflects continuing irresponsible pet ownership. Ideally, in five years' time there would be no healthy animals being euthanased by the RSPCA or any other organisation. It is hoped the introduction of the Animal Welfare Acts in Scotland, Wales and England will encourage and improve responsible pet keeping.

The RSPCA is opposed to the long-term confinement of animals as this can cause distress and mental suffering to the animal concerned.

Welfare indicator: Number of organised animal fights in the UK

RSPCA concern

Animal fighting is viewed by the RSPCA as one of the most serious areas of animal cruelty. These activities are deliberate and calculated, and by their very nature cause a great deal of unnecessary suffering to the animals involved. All animal baiting and fighting was outlawed in the UK in 1835¹, with the persecution of badgers being similarly outlawed in 1973². Since these times the RSPCA has worked to combat these barbaric activities in its efforts to see the eradication of all forms of organised animal fighting within the UK.



Insufficient data are available.

Background

All organised animal fighting is clandestine and covert. The three main areas of animal fighting investigated by the RSPCA's Special Operations Unit involve dogs, cockerels and badgers³.

■ Dog fighting

This activity usually involves a large number of people coming together to 'pit' one fighting dog against another, with large amounts of money being placed as bets on the outcome of the fight. The dogs used are almost exclusively American pit bull terriers. The fights take place in a pit, constructed to a size and standard recognised by the dog fighting fraternity, with the dogs being fought according to strict rules enforced by a referee. Owners of the dogs are not permitted to touch their dogs during the course of the fight.

The fights can vary in length from a matter of minutes to a couple of hours and dogs may suffer from a large number of bite wounds. These injuries, and any subsequent infection, will probably be treated by the owner of the dog. Treatments will include suturing wounds and administering steroids and antibiotics.

■ Cockfighting

As with dogs, cockfighting involves a large number of people fighting cockerels in a pit area with a referee enforcing strict rules. The birds are conditioned to fight and may have the natural spurs on their feet sharpened so as to inflict the maximum damage to their opponents. Alternatively the natural spurs may have been removed and replaced with sharpened 5cm steel spikes, which are fitted and bound to the birds' legs.

Bouts may last anything from a few seconds up to an hour. Often one of the birds is killed, with many others receiving severe injuries.

■ Badger digging/baiting

Badger digging is carried out by small groups of people and involves terrier dogs entering badger setts to locate and corner badgers deep in the tunnels of the sett. The dogs usually wear electronic transmitter collars that provide a signal, which the diggers can detect on the surface of the sett.

When a dog has cornered a badger the signal will become stationary and the diggers can then dig down to where the dog and badger are located, irreparably damaging the badger sett in the process. At this time both the dog and the badger are likely to receive severe bite injuries as a badger will fight fiercely when cornered.

Once the diggers reach the dog and badger, both will be removed from the sett. The badger may then be killed with a knife or a spade. On other occasions the badger may be set free on the surface and several dogs set upon it to kill it, with the badger often suffering a slow and painful death. More organised baiting of badgers also takes place with badgers taken away from the sett and baited in a pit with several dogs attacking it at once.

The badger is not the only animal suffering in this barbaric activity, as the dogs involved will receive serious bite injuries, which may be treated by the owners. The main areas of injury to the dogs are around the face, muzzle and neck, this is due to the badger defending itself by rolling on its back and attacking from underneath.

Different leagues of animal fighting take place, with dog fighters and cock fighters participating in a wide range of activities. This can range from a simple 'roll' where two dog owners engage their dogs in a low key fight, possibly for training purposes (similar to boxers sparring), to highly organised events involving large numbers of people, often with large amounts of money changing hands.

The participants and organisers are often involved in other areas of serious criminality, especially with those involved in dog fighting. Due to their criminal background and knowledge of investigative techniques the perpetrators are difficult to trace and track, requiring investigators to employ specialist skills and techniques in bringing them to justice.

Owing to the specialist skills and techniques employed in animal fighting investigations the cost of bringing cases before the courts is very high. In terms of manpower, time, specialised training and equipment that officers require, the cost per conviction is higher than any other area of the RSPCA inspectorate's investigative work. As an example of the typical costs involved in prosecuting animal fighting cases, the type of costs relating to one operation are shown above.

Operation details:

- 15 defendants arrested at 13 different locations throughout England
- 75 dogs (of a fighting breed) seized
- more than 2,000 investigator man-hours
- more than two years to bring the subsequent prosecutions to a conclusion.

Prosecution costs involved in prosecuting the 10 court cases in this operation include:

- dog boarding costs
- veterinary fees
- expert witness fees
- legal fees.

For this one operation costs amounted to about £300,000. This example demonstrates just how costly it can be to bring the perpetrators to court and secure a conviction.

Animal fighting, despite being prohibited for many years, is an important welfare indicator not only because of the welfare of those animals directly affected, but because it symbolises the status of society. Dog fighting in particular has cross-border implications where information, techniques and even dogs and baiters work at an international level. Many countries with their own animal fighting problems look to the UK, with its long legislative history and status as a country of animal lovers, to solve the problem.

The indicator figures

It is extremely difficult to establish the scale of the animal fighting problem in the UK due to the criminal and covert element of the activities and as a result the Society receives relatively few complaints from the general public. Table 18 identifies the number of reports of animal fighting the RSPCA received through its national cruelty and advice line⁴ during 2004 and 2005.

TABLE 18: Reports of animal fighting given to RSPCA

Incidents reported by the public	2004	2005
Dog fighting	24	36
Cockfighting	34	45
Badger digging/baiting	81	72
Badger sett interference	74	59

With other instances of animal cruelty, reporting issues to the RSPCA can be seen as a good indication of how big a problem is, unfortunately with animal fighting this is not the case.

Investigating animal fighting is extremely costly because of the underground and difficult nature of finding out information about the perpetrators. Some of the factors affecting investigations include the following.

- Those involved are prepared to travel long distances to participate in their chosen area of animal fighting. Crossing police and county boundaries adds a further element to any investigation due to having to coordinate different enforcement agencies. This is exacerbated by some individuals who are prepared to cross international boundaries to further their interests.
- Suspects crossing police force boundaries and stopped/arrested are unlikely to be linked to previous offences in other force areas.
- Injuries to animals that have been used in organised animal fights are very distinctive. Therefore owners will not take them for veterinary treatment and may try and treat the injuries themselves, consequently it is very rare for vets to come across injured animals.
- New factions of animal fighters are constantly emerging as world travel, mobile phone technology and the internet makes information transfer easier.
- Participants are willing to risk repeated prosecution; the current penalties/sentences do not appear to deter as there are many cases of repeat offenders.

In an attempt to try and identify the scale of animal fighting, Table 19 shows the number of successful convictions for animal fighting for 2004 and 2005.

It is difficult to assess how many incidents of animal fighting are carried out each year. Whilst it is useful to look at the number of convictions, as this shows that these sorts of acts are continuing to take place, it does not clearly represent the true scale of the problem. For example, 11 convictions under the Cockfighting Act could all relate to one event rather than 11 different incidents. One year could see far more convictions than the previous, which does not mean the problem is worsening, it could just mean more information was received about fighting so more people were caught or many people were involved at one event and subsequently convicted.

Ultimately, organised animal fighting is a continuing issue and it is extremely challenging to try and measure how big the problem is, which makes it difficult to statistically gauge whether animal fighting is increasing or decreasing. However, in an attempt to objectively measure animal fighting, the aim in the future is to use a five-year running mean to try and estimate the scale of the problem.

TABLE 19: Successful convictions for animal fighting obtained by the RSPCA, 2004–2005

Legislation	Conviction	2004	2005
Protection of Animals Act 1911	Causing dogs to fight and keeping premises for the purposes of dog fighting	0	4
Dangerous Dogs Act 1991	Possession of illegal fighting breeds of dog	4	19
Cockfighting Act 1952	Attending a cockfight and possession of paraphernalia relating to cockfighting	0	11
Protection of Badgers Act 1992	Entering of dogs into a badger sett and disturbing a sett	14	2

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 An Act to consolidate and amend the several laws relating to the cruel and improper treatment of animals and the mischiefs arising from the driving of cattle (Pease's Act) 1835.
- 2 Protection of Badgers Act 1973.
- 3 Although badgers are not a pet animal, it is important to include them when discussing animal fighting.
- 4 The RSPCA's 24-hour cruelty and advice line number is: 0870 55 55 999.



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