
LETTERS

Head-restraint and stunning

Sir, I write in response to the article in the first issue of your journal. I was pleased to note that the welfare advantages of improved accuracy of shooting that can be expected from the restraint of bovine heads prior to stunning have been recognised. Earlier research work, commissioned by the MAFF, had indicated that deficiencies existed in the accuracy of captive bolt positioning in cattle whose heads had not been restrained. Clearly the distress experienced by an animal that has been mis-stunned would be very considerable, and would outweigh the stress associated with temporary head-restraint.

I would like to emphasise that it is not intended that cattle heads should be completely immobilised prior to stunning, as would occur with the equipment described in the article. The purpose of the statutory requirement for head-restraint, that is to be introduced from 5 July 1992, is to improve the accuracy of stunning, without causing further distress to the animal by restraining its freedom of movement unnecessarily.

Considerable work on the design of suitable restraint systems, that can be fitted to pre-existing stunning pens, has already been carried out by Dr Clyde Daly, Department of Meat Animal Science, University of Bristol, Langford, Avon.

You may wish to be aware that a letter is being sent to all slaughterhouse operators, and relevant meat industry trade associations, offering guidance on cattle head-restraints and fail safe devices to be fitted to electrical stunning devices, both of which become statutory requirements from 5 July 1992.

K C Meldrum
Chief Veterinary Officer,
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

Bullfighting and welfare

Sir, In welcoming the first number of *Animal Welfare*, I am glad to note that the contents cover a wide subject range, which is a good augury of the journal's breadth of interest. In particular Professor Ödberg's paper was very well-balanced, knowledgeable and thoughtful, but also unequivocal in pointing the way forward in controlling the welfare of the corrida.

I was initially surprised that the very first paper dealt with bullfighting and that this was also the subject of a video review, but recalled that the Olympic Games are to be held in Spain this summer and that interest in the corrida may be widespread. Also, I am reminded that Major C W Hume (Founder of UFAW) wrote a poignant critique¹ of Spanish bullfighting, in 1959, condemning the support given by tourists to the corrida and emphasizing the inherent cruelty and sadism involved. Although not a supporter of fox hunting, Hume pointed out that any comparison between the bull ring and the fox hunt was illusory.

While commending the spread of a humane tradition in Britain, as indicated by over a century of animal welfare legislation, there can be no complacency while the illegal activities of dog-fighting and badger-baiting continue.

Harry V Thompson, President of UFAW

¹ *Two Ways with a Bull*, copies available from UFAW