

One of the areas in which inadequate equine identification can effect equine welfare is fly-grazing, which is the practice of illegally grazing horses on public or private land without the landholder's permission. Fly-grazing can be detrimental to a horse's welfare because the horses involved are more likely to experience reduced welfare through: poor body condition; insufficient food; worm and lice infestation; and lack of foot, dental and veterinary care. Other concerns raised by fly-grazing are: horses may cause damage to crops, fences and land; landowners may experience significant inconvenience, intimidation and costs; and public safety issues can occur if horses escape onto roads. It is estimated that there are around 2,500 horses being fly-grazed in Wales and 3,000 horses in England, the majority of which are not identifiable.

Current legislation requires local authorities (LAs) to wait at least two weeks before fly-grazing horses can be removed and detained if an owner cannot be contacted. However, since the APGAW and APPG for the Horse briefing document was published, a Private Members', Control of Horses, Bill, has been introduced, which it is hoped will enable LAs to tackle fly-grazing more effectively. The Bill passed its second reading in the House of Commons in October 2014 and will now move onto the committee stage where it will be considered by a panel of Members of Parliament. The Control of Horses Bill would give LAs: powers to remove and detain fly-grazing horses more quickly; more routes through which authorities may dispose of horses (currently they must be sold at market or through auction. The new Bill would allow LAs to give the horses to a rescue charity if appropriate); and greater powers to recover expenses both for any damage that a fly-grazing horse may have caused, and for any costs that may have been incurred during the horse's detention.

Another area of concern raised in the Report is the long-standing Tripartite Agreement (originally established in the 1970s) which allows the free movement of horses, carrying a valid passport, between the United Kingdom, Ireland and France without the need for health certification. For many years, only horses considered to be of high-health status (eg registered racehorses) were included within the agreement, but in 2005 the scheme was opened up to allow the free movement of all horses, bar those destined for slaughter (which still, in theory, required a veterinary health certification). However, after widening the scheme, it was found that many low-value horses were being moved between countries and there was some evidence that these horses were then being sent on for slaughter illegally. Additionally, there were concerns about the spread of equine disease, and the resulting welfare issues, following a number of disease incidences after which it was difficult to trace other horses moved in the same consignment. As of May 2014, the Tripartite Agreement has been revised to, once again, only allow horses of higher health status to move freely.

A further development that has occurred with regards to equine identification and control has been made at the EU level. In September 2014, Commission Regulation (EC) No

504/2008, which lays out the rules for the identification of horses within the EU, was amended. New key requirements are that all member states must implement a centralised equine database from 1 July 2016 along with greater controls on horse microchips. There must also be new minimum standards for horse passports.

It is hoped that a benefit of updating equine identification and control measures within the UK and throughout the EU is the improvement of horse welfare. Greater traceability will assist with both ensuring horse owners are held accountable for the welfare of their animals, and improving control of equine disease.

The Urgent Need for an Effective, Enforceable and Enforced Equine Identification System (2014). A4, 9 pages. Briefing produced by the Associate Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare (APGAW) and the All Party Parliamentary Group for the Horse, along with the Equine Sector Council. Available from the APGAW website: <http://www.apgaw.org/equine-identification-report-2014>.

Control of Horses Bill: A Bill to Make Provision for the Taking of Action in Relation to Horses Which in Public Places; and for Connected Purposes (2014). A4, 4 pages. Presented by Julian Sturdy and printed by authority of the House of Commons, London, UK. For further information on the Control of Horses Bill and its progress, please visit: <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2014-15/controlofhorses.html>.

E Carter,

UFAW

Rodeo Code of Welfare updated in New Zealand

The term 'rodeo' originally stems from the verb 'rodear' which was used to describe the gathering of cattle in the early 1800s, an integral part of cattle ranching. Over the years, 'rodeos' have evolved into sporting competitions which feature a number of events, such as bareback bronco riding, bull-riding, and various roping and tying activities, the aim being to showcase the speed and skill of cowboys and cowgirls.

As rodeos have evolved, so has society's awareness and knowledge of the welfare needs of animals and, increasingly, these events have received criticism from members of the general public and some animal welfare organisations. It is questioned how relevant these competitions of rider skill are to today's farming practices and concerns have been raised about the way in which animals are handled may cause them unreasonable or unnecessary pain or distress (a small percentage of rodeo animals are seriously injured or euthanased every year during the course of training and competitions). Additionally, there is debate over the message that rodeos give to people, especially children, about how animals should be cared for and respected. Consequently, rodeos have been banned completely in some countries and are restricted in others, eg certain events are not permitted (such as those involving calves), or particular 'aids' are prohibited (eg the flank strap, spurs with locked rowels).

However, the New Zealand (NZ) National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC) consider rodeos still to be

significantly important to rural communities and rural cohesion. In light of this, NAWAC has recently reviewed and updated the 2003 Animal Welfare (Rodeo) Code of Welfare, in consultation with Bull Riding New Zealand Inc, the New Zealand Rodeo Cowboys Association, New Zealand Veterinary Association, and the Royal Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals.

The only animals that may be used in rodeos in New Zealand are horses and cattle. There are approximately 35 rodeos held each year, overseen by the Rodeo Cowboys Association (NZRCA), as well as a small number of steer riding events, and a number of bull-riding competitions, overseen by Bull Riding New Zealand. Additionally, NZRCA runs rodeo training schools.

The updated Code informs owners and persons in charge of rodeo animals of the NZ Government's expectations concerning appropriate treatment of animals used in rodeos and makes clear the standards that must be achieved in order to ensure compliance with the NZ Animal Welfare Act 1999. Animals used in rodeos are often under the care of many different individuals during an event, therefore the 'person in charge' may be the rodeo organiser (who has an overarching responsibility for ensuring the good welfare of animals used at the rodeo), the contestant (considered the person in charge during the time that they are using the animal during an event), the animal welfare officer (who must be present at the rodeo and has direct responsibility for the welfare of all animals), the veterinarian (who must be present at the rodeo and should have suitable experience to be able to offer expert advice on the health and welfare status of rodeo animals and their suitability for competition), and rodeo staff and stock people (who are responsible for carrying out particular tasks).

The Code specifies fifteen minimum standards within the following key areas: stockmanship; food and water; selecting appropriate animals; handling; equipment (arena and gear); specific rodeo events (saddle and bareback bronco riding; bull and steer riding; rope and tie; team roping; steer wrestling; calf riding; and barrel racing); health, injury and disease; and emergency humane destruction.

Each section on a standard provided a brief introduction on its importance, followed by the minimum standard, along with indicators, which may be used to show that the minimum standard is being met. Additionally, there is often a section on what is considered best practice (which usually exceeds the minimum standard and offers a higher standard of animal welfare) and, where a minimum standard may be complex, or controversial, a further 'General information' section is also provided.

The most controversial events in a rodeo often involve calves (eg rope and tie, calf riding). The rope and tie is a timed event during which a young calf, released from a chute, is chased by a rider on horseback who ropes the calf, bringing the animal to an abrupt halt, at which point the rider dismounts and ties three of the calves legs together. The new Code attempts to mitigate any harm or distress caused to calves during this event by specifying a minimum

weight of 100 kg (Minimum Standard No 3 — Selecting Animals) and by making a number of other requirements such as: "(a) Calves must be handled using the minimum force and in a way that minimises pain and distress at all times during the event", and "(c) All reasonable precautions must be taken to ensure that calves are not busted, dragged or harmed in any other way during calf roping" (Minimum Standard No 9 — Rope and Tie, [a]–[f]). However, ultimately, the code recommends that "Calves should not be used in rodeo events".

Rodeos, Code of Welfare (October 2012). A4, 27 pages. National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, New Zealand. The guidelines are available at the MAF website: <http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/animal-welfare>, or by emailing: animalwelfare@maf.govt.nz.

E Carter,

UFAW

RSPCA revise Freedom Food standards covering farmed pigs

Approximately 9.5 million pigs are slaughtered every year in the United Kingdom to supply the growing demand for pork. Thirty per cent of these pigs are cared for in line with the Royal Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), Freedom Food farm assurance scheme, which covers the lives of pigs from when they are born, throughout the rearing process, during transport, and at slaughter.

In November 2014, the RSPCA published an updated version of their welfare standards for pigs. The new standards were developed in consultation with farmers, veterinary professionals and those working in animal welfare research, and aim to take into account advancements in scientific research, veterinary knowledge and practical developments.

The standards are arranged under six broad headings: Food and water; Environment; Management; Health; Transport; and Slaughter/Killing. Additionally, there are detailed Appendices covering: Herd biosecurity; Wild animal control plan; Transport standard operating and emergency procedure; Veterinary health and welfare plan guidance notes; and Documents required.

Many of the standards are similar to the previous edition, published in May 2012, with some reordering/renumbering. Where changes have been made, these are marked with an asterisk. Changes often involve additional material in the information boxes, which complement the mandatory standards. For example, in relation to farrowing sows, standard E6.2.1 states that "Prior to farrowing, materials must be provided in sufficient quantities, and be of a type, which allows sows to carry out their natural nesting behaviours", and the updated standards now includes a recommendation that "at least 2 kg of long straw be provided per sow to satisfy nest building behaviour" in the further information section.

Another change involves teeth clipping of piglets. Although the RSCPA state that: "The removal of the points of needle teeth of newborn pigs must not be carried out routinely". Many farmers do regularly carry out this procedure because