

Conference on global trade and animal welfare

In January this year over 400 delegates from 55 countries travelled to Brussels to attend a two-day international conference on global trade and farm animal welfare. The conference was a joint initiative organised by the Directorate-General for External Trade and the Directorate-General for Health and Consumers of the European Commission, together with Eurogroup for Animals, Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) and World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA). The role of the conference was to bring together academics, retailers, farmers, government, animal welfare organisations, and representatives from other interested parties, to discuss the complex relationship between animal welfare and the globalisation of trade in animals and animal products. Currently, animal welfare is not included by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in international trade agreements.

Thought-provoking presentations were given and opinions expressed, during the two days, as to how animal welfare may be best safeguarded in a global market whilst avoiding the problems that can be associated with protectionism. It was noted that although the current market situation does not permit banning of international trade on animal welfare grounds, there is an increasing trend for retail companies and organisations to implement their own standards when buying-in produce. Some were concerned that, if not addressed at a global level, the vacuum will be filled by multiple private standards of varying quality.

There was agreement about the need for standards to be supported by a strong scientific base. Additionally, the general view was that the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), through its wide contacts and animal health and welfare initiatives, is well placed to develop any standards required. An interesting take on measuring animal welfare and allowing greater flexibility in achieving

standards was given by Linda Keeling in which she presented her work on output-based measures.

The conference organisers anticipate publishing conclusions from the conference and further information relating to this subject in the near future.

Global Trade and Farm Animal Welfare Conference. Organised by the Directorate-General for External Trade, Directorate-General for Health and Consumers of the European Commission, Eurogroup for Animals, RSPCA, CIWF and WSPA (20-21 January 2009). Further information is available at: <http://www.animalwelfareandtrade.com/>.

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New information resource on rabbit care

Rabbits: Health and Management is a comprehensive CD-ROM aimed at veterinarians, veterinary nurses and others interested in the treatment or care of domestic rabbits or wild lagomorphs. A wealth of referenced information has been collated on many aspects, including: husbandry protocols, diseases, veterinary techniques and therapeutics. There are also sections covering frequently asked questions, notes for nurses and notes for children.

This new CD-ROM is the latest volume in the WildPro© Multimedia series which aims to offer an “electronic encyclopaedia and library of wildlife, wildlife habitats, and emerging infectious diseases”.

Rabbits: Health and Management (2009). Edited by N Fox, K Pintus and DC Bourne. Published by Wildlife Information Network. CD-ROM currently available from www.wildlifeinformation.org.uk at the introductory price of £48.37 (normal price £59.95).

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