

Trade in exotic animals

During 1997 a study was carried out on welfare aspects of the exotic animal trade in the Netherlands to provide data for the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture in their preparation of animal health and welfare legislation. The summary and conclusions are available in English translation. In a report which provides some interesting statistics on the scale of the trade and keeping of exotic animals as pets in the Netherlands, it is estimated that about 16 million animals are kept as pets, of which some 11 million are birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish. There are 2200 pet shops and through these some 1 million birds, 200 000 reptiles and amphibians, and 200 000 small mammals are sold each year. The majority of these are bred in the Netherlands but there are significant importations of wild-caught marine fish, reptiles and amphibians and birds. Welfare problems were identified at the pre-transport, transport, and subsequent stages of the chain from source to buyer. The report recommends that the selling of wild-caught animals to inexperienced pet owners should cease and suggests ways in which this could be brought about including: increasing the availability of captive-bred animals, making wild-caught animals more expensive (eg by taxing their sale), and making it a requirement that wild-caught animals can be sold only through registered outlets.

Research into the Welfare Situation of Exotic Animals During the Process of Animal Trade. English Summary. C M Vinke (1998). Animal Welfare Centre: Utrecht. 11pp. Loose-leaf. Obtainable from the publishers, University of Utrecht, Yalelaan 17, 3584 CL Utrecht, The Netherlands (welfare@pobox.ruu.nl). Free.

Welfare of calves

On 27 July 1998 new regulations came into force in the UK on the husbandry and welfare of calves. These implement EU Council Directive 91/629/EEC, as amended by Directive 97/2/EC, (laying down minimum standards for the protection of calves). Under the new law, calves older than 8 weeks must be kept in groups, unless isolated for veterinary reasons. Furthermore, those kept in individual stalls prior to this age must be able to have direct visual and tactile contact with at least one other calf through perforations in the walls of their stalls. To allow time for changes in housing, these rules will not apply for 5 years to accommodation that was in use on 1 January 1998. Minimum space allowances are also defined both for individual stalls and for group pens.

The law makes several other new provisions. Tethering is no longer permitted for single calves and group-housed calves may only be tethered for up to 1h when being fed milk or milk substitute. Tethers must cause no harm and must allow animals to lie down, stand up and groom without hindrance. Calves must have access to a clean, comfortable lying area with appropriate bedding at all times, must be fed twice daily, and during hot weather conditions or when they are ill must have a constant supply of fresh drinking water available. Calves housed indoors must be inspected twice daily. Minimum daily rations of fibrous food are set by these new regulations and it is a requirement that the diet contains sufficient iron to ensure blood haemoglobin levels of at least 4.5 mmol l⁻¹ (see, Morisse *et al* earlier in this issue).

Welfare of Livestock (Amendment) Regulations 1998. (1998) HMSO: London. 5pp. Leaflet. Obtainable from The Publications Centre, PO Box 276, London SW8 5DT, UK and other usual HMSO sources (Statutory Instrument No1709). Price £1.55.

Reappraising quarantine and rabies

In what the UK Government are calling the 'most radical changes to UK quarantine laws for almost a century' the Advisory Group on Quarantine, chaired by Professor Ian Kennedy,