

Laboratory animal bibliographies

The literature dealing with the welfare, care and use of animals for scientific purposes is immense and scattered throughout many books and journals. It has always been difficult for newcomers to the laboratory animal field to assess the scale and coverage of this literature and to locate the general background material which is so necessary for them to read if they are to understand the subject. Recently, however, two bibliographies of laboratory animal literature have been published. One has been prepared by the Scientists Center for Animal Welfare (SCAW) in the United States, and the other by the Australian Council for the Care of Animals in Research and Teaching (ACCART).

The SCAW bibliography is annotated, has a greater number of pages but actually lists fewer publications than the ACCART document. The entries in the two volumes are classified somewhat differently — there are 10 subject headings in one volume and 17 in the other — but even so it is possible to make a comparison between the relative coverage of various subject areas. Animal welfare and ethics (including alternatives) for example has some 242 entries in the SCAW publication and only about 130 in the ACCART book; the subject of animal models earns only 15 entries in the American book but has 132 in the Australian publication.

There is some duplication between the two works, but in many ways they are complementary: one is strong on ethics and welfare, the other on the technical aspects of animal usage. Together they now make it easier to assess and locate the key books and papers in the laboratory animal usage and welfare field. It is to be hoped, that in due course, supplements and/or new editions will become available to keep us all up to date.

Annotated Bibliography on Laboratory Animal Welfare edited by R A Murphy, A N Rowan and R R Smeby (1991). 91 pp. Scientists Center for Animal Welfare: Bethesda MD. Available from SCAW, 4805 St Elmo Avenue, Bethesda, MD 20814, USA. Price US\$15, overseas US\$20 including postage.

The Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes: a selected bibliography by Margaret Rose (1991). 69 pp. Australian Council for the Care of Animals in Research and Teaching: Canberra. Available from Australian Vice Chancellor's Committee, GPO Box 1142, Canberra, ACT 2601, Australia. ISBN 0 646 05678 6. ISSN 1 037 0013. Price \$A30 including postage.

Whaling

This short booklet produced and published by the RSPCA Wildlife Department attempts, most successfully, to give a realistic account of the killing methods currently used in whaling. It describes, for the general reader, the techniques that have been and are employed, ie the cold (non-explosive) harpoon and the now more commonly used explosive head harpoon. Methods which have been tried experimentally, ie electricity, carbon dioxide and systemic poisons are also covered. Considering the size of many of the cetaceans and the difficult conditions under which they are hunted, it is obviously not going to be easy to kill them humanely. The main conclusion of the booklet: 'There is

absolutely no doubt that the methods used for killing whales are, in the majority of situations, extremely cruel' is most probably correct.

It will be interesting to hear, in due course, the findings of the International Whaling Commission's group which currently is looking into the humaneness of the present commercial method of killing cetaceans.

The Cruel Seas - man's inhumanity to whales by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Wildlife Department (1991). 20 pp. Obtainable from RSPCA Wildlife Department, Causeway, Horsham, West Sussex RH12 1HG. Free on receipt of a 34p sae.

Dog and cat overpopulation

Many urban areas throughout the world have a problem with surplus dogs and cats. Owners allow their animals to breed and then have difficulty in finding homes for the offspring. Some of the young are abandoned and become strays, others are taken to the local animal welfare society, hopefully for rehoming, but usually for euthanasia. The strays are often caught and dealt with in the same way. Large numbers of animals are involved; in the United States for example, it has been estimated that some 27 million kittens and puppies are born each year and that, at times, up to 17 million of these are unwanted and killed.

The problem persists year after year without, seemingly, much being done to control the basic cause - the overbreeding of the parent stock. In an attempt to highlight this mass killing and to suggest ways towards its reduction the International Society for Animal Rights and the Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights held, in September 1991, an International Symposium on Dog and Cat Overpopulation. The proceedings of this meeting have now been published as a spiral bound volume made up of the texts of the papers presented at the meeting. The contributions range from technical reports of new sterilization techniques, through assessments of the scale of the problem and the method towards its resolution in such countries as India, the USA and Israel, to accounts of how the media should be handled so that local communities can be persuaded to accept mandatory dog and cat neutering schemes.

The quality of the papers varies somewhat as does, at times, the photocopy quality of the print. The whole volume, however, is a most valuable contribution to our knowledge and understanding of the complex biological, social and economic forces which lead to the build-up of these large populations of unwanted dogs and cats. Hopefully this knowledge and understanding will eventually result in the adoption of rational and humane ways of dealing with this massive welfare problem.

Killing the Crisis, not the Animals. Proceedings of an International Symposium on Dog and Cat Overpopulation (Washington DC, 20-21 September 1991). 194 pp. Obtainable from International Society for Animal Rights, 421 South State Street, Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania 18411, USA. Price US\$20. Price Economy Air to UK US\$22.32.