

Stranded cetaceans

The RSPCA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) has produced a second edition of its stranded whales booklet. The first version was published out of the RSPCA's 1983 Stranded Whale Workshop and this 1994 edition incorporates additional information from a follow-up seminar run by the Society in November 1992.

The main purpose of this well written and very practically organized booklet is to assist those who may be officially involved after stranding incidents eg the police, the coastguard, animal welfare society officials, veterinary surgeons and environmental health officers.

Clear instructions are given as to what should and should not be attempted and thoughts are directed both towards the welfare of the stranded cetacean and the safety of the human helpers. The booklet includes items on protecting the stranded cetacean from injury and overheating; refloating; transportation; convalescence in captivity, and humane killing. There is an illustrated identification section, and a detachable British Museum (Natural History) stranded whale report form has been included.

The point is well made that the stranding event should be recorded in as much detail as possible so that others may benefit from the accumulation and correlation of the hard-bought experience of those who have assisted at strandings.

This most useful and reasonably priced booklet should be available to all who may, at some time, have to deal with stranded cetaceans.

Stranded Whales, Dolphins and Porpoises: A First Aid Guide Produced and published by the RSPCA: Horsham (1994). 32pp. Paperback. Obtainable from the publishers, Causeway, Horsham, West Sussex RH12 1HG, UK. Price £1.10 including postage.

Codes of animal welfare

In 1989 the then New Zealand (NZ) Minister of Agriculture set up an Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC) to advise him on animal welfare matters. The Committee has continued in existence and now consists of members from the following backgrounds: the farming community, animal welfare groups, the veterinary profession, behavioural science and the NZ Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. It also includes the Chairman of the NZ National Animal Ethics Advisory Committee, an independent chairman and, up to February 1991, a philosopher. Much of the Committee's work has been directed towards a series of Codes of Recommendations and Minimum Standards for the Welfare of Animals.

These codes – three of those published in 1993 on horses, bobby calves and animals in breeding establishments being noted here – were developed after extensive consultation with industry and other interested groups. The codes take account of five basic animal needs:

- freedom from thirst, hunger and malnutrition;
- provision of appropriate comfort and shelter;
- prevention, or rapid diagnosis and treatment of injury, disease or infestation with parasites;
- freedom from distress;
- ability to display normal patterns of behaviour.