

REPORTS AND COMMENTS

Research into smoking

It has been known for many years that cigarettes are bad for the health. This knowledge has been largely acquired from epidemiological studies in the human population – where it is suggested that, in the UK alone, over 100,000 smokers die every year as a result of their habit.

The anti-vivisectionist movement has long believed that there is no justification in carrying out experiments to study the effects of cigarette smoke on live animals, when the human epidemiological evidence is so clear and where the prevention of the problem (ie to stop smoking!) is so obvious.

As part of their campaign against smoking experiments, the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection (BUAV) has produced a technical report on the use of animals in smoking and tobacco research. The document which is based on the examination of recent literature published worldwide and an undercover investigation in Japan, addresses several relevant areas, for example experiments on passive smoking, on 'smokeless' cigarettes (that heat but do not burn tobacco), on the current situation in the UK and on animal studies on nicotine patches.

The case is made that there is, perhaps, more tobacco/smoke experimentation going on than is generally known about. In the UK, for instance, all applications for licences to use animals in experiments involving tobacco are supposed to be referred to the Animal Procedures Committee (APC) – the statutory advisory committee to the Home Office minister responsible for running the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986. In 1993, after several years of low figures, the official Home Office statistics on animal use recorded no procedures for safety testing on tobacco. It is suggested in the Report, however, that some tobacco related work may not be recorded in the tobacco experiments statistic as it is being classified as environmental pollution research. The point is also made that the APC only receives referrals of applications for tobacco research if the experiments are to be carried out on *conscious* animals ie there may be other tobacco experiments carried out on unconscious animals and so these are not being considered by the APC.

This Report will probably be criticized by the scientific community as being somewhat selective in its presentation, but at least it does draw attention to possible anomalies in the classification and control of the use of animals in smoking and tobacco research in the UK.

Dying for a Smoke: A BUAV Special Report into the Use of Animals in Smoking and Tobacco Research. Donal Crawford (1995). British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection (BUAV): London. 37pp. Paperback. Obtainable from the publishers, 16a Crane Grove, London N7 8LB, UK.

Protection of birds

Over the years there has been much UK, European and International legislation which has, directly or indirectly, had an influence on the protection of wild birds. Some of this legislation is aimed at conserving rare species or controlling the shooting of the so-called game birds. Some indirectly help bird conservation by protecting certain habitats or by controlling, in a more general sense, rural development and land usage.

The British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and the Environmental Law Department of Simmons & Simmons (one of the largest law firms in the UK) have worked together to