

The VOICE

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BIODIVERSITY, BIOCIDES AND NOW "BIOSECURITY"

Interest in concepts beginning with the prefix bio- seems to be a theme from the late '90's to the present day.

Over the past couple of months biosecurity (particularly in the wake of the outbreak of foot and mouth, which was reputed to have cost the economy £8 billion), seems to have been included in many documents outlining or consulting on the governments

plans or future policy concerning animal diseases controls. However the concept of biosecurity is expanded in some documents to include the introduction of any new organism, rather than just diseases.

A recent document from DEFRA outlines an "animal health and welfare strategy"; the cabinet office produced a report on biosecurity issues with regard to live animals

and the CAWC report (see elsewhere in this issue); all make recommendations that could impact upon our industry.

OATA is producing a follow on document from the KHV report produced in 2001, is active in consultation processes to try and ensure the industries voice is heard and outcomes are practical, proportionate and effective.■

[1]Biodiversity, biocides and now biosecurity

[2] Report from CAWC

[3] The biocides directive

[4] KHV - proposed name change and vaccine ● GLEE

[5] Campaign against ornamental fish? ● Postal ballots to be introduced

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REPORT FROM THE "COMPANION ANIMAL WELFARE COUNCIL"

The Companion Animal Welfare Council (CAWC) is a body that "undertakes independent and objective studies of companion animal welfare issues" and produces reports based on those studies. Their latest report entitled "The welfare of non-domesticated animals kept for companionship" was launched at a reception in the Houses of Parliament on the 9th July.

CAWC arrived at four conclusions and made 14 recommendations. While preparing the report, various groups including OATA presented evidence. While some of the more detailed information we provided was presented inaccurately, or in a muddled fashion, some of the key points we raised were included in the report. Indeed it would appear that but for our intervention, the benefits afforded to conservation by collecting animals from the wild may not have been reported so strongly.

There are many interesting points raised in the report. Many of the issues identified have been addressed by OATA or its' members in areas such as training, codes of

conduct, point of sale information and so forth.

The report emphasised the "Five freedoms". The report takes a practical view that animals should be:

- free from thirst, hunger and malnutrition
- free from discomfort
- free from pain, injury and disease
- free to express normal behaviour
- and free from fear and distress.

Their view is practical in that they recognise that the complete absence of discomfort is impossible.

As an example they say that laying hens should be provided with access to a nest box, but it isn't necessary to mimic a situation that means they have, as they would in the wild, to flee from a predator. Albeit in a different form our code of conduct and various materials already distributed, cover many of these themes to a greater or lesser extent.

The future plans of CAWC are of interest. One of their next reports will look at the benefits or welfare problems associated with selective breeding.

Some interesting comments from the CAWC report members may find interesting..:

Despite high profile adverse publicity over the "high mortality" of reptiles imported into the UK, the report concluded these were less than 1% during 2001.

"A high standard of welfare is dependent on an animals physical and behavioural needs being adequately met at all stages of its life. If these requirements are known and are satisfactorily met, there is no reason to suppose that the welfare of the non-domesticated animal will be better or worse than that of a domesticated animal whose needs are similarly provided for"..." There seems to be no reasons to believe that the degree of domestication of an animal influences its welfare status per se"

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THE BIOCIDES DIRECTIVE

The biocides directive is a "catch all" directive, and "catch-all" it might. The way it appears to be being applied by the EC and the Health and Safety Executive, it could catch just about anything. Specifically included (presumably to primarily protect public safety) are such items as cedar wood blocks that can be used as moth repellents, and silica gel that can be used to kill insects.

Among the list of active substances that might be used in a biocide is acetic acid. If a product containing acetic acid is used to control a harmful organism, then that product must be notified to the authorities and a dossier on safety and other matters will have to be produced. This will not stop you tipping as much vinegar (another name for acetic acid) on your fish and chips as you wish, because no biocidal claims are made. In this instance you can eat the chemical, but not market a product containing it for use as biocide. As you will see from the definitions below, the claims made (or from conversations with various businesses claims that have been previously made) are one determining factor in deciding what is or is not, a biocide.

The definition of a biocidal product is "Active substances and

preparations containing one or more active substances, put up in the form in which they are supplied to the user, intended to destroy, deter, render harmless, prevent the action of, or otherwise exert a controlling effect on any harmful organism by chemical or biological means."

The definition of an active substance is "a substance or micro-organism including a virus or a fungus that has a general or specific action on or against harmful organisms."

As can be anticipated, life only gets more complicated for everyone from here. The EC has produced a manual of decisions that will help the HSE decide on whether or not a product is biocidal. One piece of good news is products that use flocculants to help garden ponds remain clear, are not thought of as biocides. However, recent events indicate barley straw extracts will be included in the directive. There is considerable discussion about whether barley straw itself is included in, or counted out of the directive at the moment. It remains to be seen which way that decision falls.

Reproduced below is the text of an email received by a member concerning a product; it has been slightly edited to make a general point,

rather than one about a specific product:

"therefore, the active substance released from your product will have to have been at least identified under the review regulation if you hope to market your product beyond this September (products containing active substances that have been identified can be marketed, subject to national rules, until around September 2006. Products containing active substance that have been notified for review for the relevant product type can remain on the market, subject to national rules, until the active substance has been reviewed. Products containing active substances that have been neither identified or notified will have to be removed from the EU market this September."

All members are asked to, in particular note the contents of the last paragraph. You may need to refer to the manufacturer or supplier of a product if in doubt.

More information on this labyrinthine directive is available from the office or the web at <<http://www.hse.gov.uk/htthdir/noframes/biobkgnd.htm>>.■

KHV – PROPOSED NAME CHANGE AND VACCINE

A summary of a paper by Israeli scientists proposing a change of name for KHV and announcing the development of a vaccine has been circulated via email recently. We have not yet seen a full copy of the paper, but are endeavouring to obtain one.

The proposed new name is carp nephritis and gill necrosis virus or CNGV. It remains to be seen if a fight develops between scientists over whether this designation or the original one is correct. In practical terms of managing the disease it may make little difference. There is the possibility that if the virus has been allocated to wrong the group, then previously selected management techniques might be altered to good effect. An exaggerated analogy might be if a new animal were allocated to the group containing cows and was managed as such but in fact turned out to be a goat or chicken on further examination.

We are not in a position to comment on the vaccine, which uses live attenuated or weakened virus. However, we would remind members that in many countries

there is often a significant gap in time between the scientific discovery of a vaccine and a product being available on the market.

Please feedback fish health reports to the office as in previous years. Any reports will be treated in confidence individually, but may permit us to produce a consolidated idea of the situation around the country. Please

remember we also welcome “no problem” reports as that helps us grasp the overall picture.

We understand that some positive results have been found, mainly on fish from garden ponds. Please remember that the symptoms of KHV can resemble those of many other diseases. Also bear in mind that it is difficult to work out where a problem originated, conclusions reached in haste often prove to be incorrect.■

GLEE

OATA will once again have a stand at GLEE (4E26). If you attend please try to call and say “Hello”. It is ideal time to raise with us that issue that you’ve been meaning to mention on the phone or by writing, but never quite got around to. We look forward to seeing you!

Also please note we intend to produce a newsletter during late August or September, prior to GLEE. If you have any circulars you want included with that newsletter at a cost of £150+VAT, please let us know as soon as possible so the necessary arrangements can be made. Please note we can only include a limited number of circulars on a first come first served basis.■

CAMPAIGN AGAINST ORNAMENTAL FISH?

In a continued campaign against a particular retailer, the Animal Aid group are making available on their website a downloadable "factfile" which "details the suffering of fish in the pet trade". This factfile looks a bit like a "cut and paste" job with different fonts and formats throughout. As can be anticipated it is not complimentary about the industry.

It is interesting that on several issues the industry is lambasted for trying to improve the welfare of fish, in the case of vaccine production, or avoid welfare problems by making arrangements to make sure fish don't become stranded at airports.

They conclude "Their (ornamental fish) production and transportation is profoundly traumatising and results in a host of disease problems and high levels of mortality. Animal Aid is against keeping fish in aquarium per se."

OATA will try to monitor developments but would welcome additional reports or information from members. ■



The illustration of a goldfish in a bowl appearing on Animal Aids' website

POSTAL BALLOTS TO BE INTRODUCED

At the Extraordinary General Meeting held on 16 July, it was agreed that postal ballots would in effect replace the system of proxy voting approved. The intention of this change is to enable each member to vote in a very detailed way on a personal basis, on matters at members meetings such as the AGM. Thus this year in the lead up to the AGM, which it is planned to be held as usual in the middle of November, you will for the first time receive the new post ballot forms. Just as was the case with proxy forms, the postal ballot forms will have to be returned to the office by a set time, certainly at least 48 hours, before the meeting commences. ■

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"...it would seem unwise to assume that the translocation of domesticated animals to new homes never causes them stress, but the transfer of wild animals to captive environments inevitably does so. In either case, the degree of stress is likely to depend upon the circumstances"

"Good welfare cannot be equated with never having unpleasant feelings, because these are essential "sticks" that help keep us and other animals from harm (thirst makes us drink, pain often prevents us damaging ourselves; and so on.)"

"Where welfare standards are high, welfare can be better in captivity than in the wild. Life in the wild is hazardous, needs are not always met, and in the context of the survival of the fittest, the less fit frequently face food shortage, injury, disease and lingering deaths. Accordingly there is no compelling argument on grounds of welfare that animals should never be taken from the wild."

There are dangers in quoting short passages of text as the context may be lost, but we believe the meaning remains fundamentally the same in the examples used above. ■