

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON ANIMAL WELFARE

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Vice Chair: Ms. Ria de Grassi, Sacramento, CA

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The Committee met on Tuesday, October 26, 2004, at the Sheraton Four Seasons, in Greensboro, North Carolina. Chair Steven Halstead called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. with 26 committee members and at least 27 guests in attendance.

Cathy Liss, President, Animal Welfare Institute (AWI) reported on results from the recent meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Increased protections were provided to the great white shark, humphead wrasse, Irrawaddy dolphin and the Yellow-crested Cockatoo. Proposals on bobcats and lions were withdrawn. Japan's proposal to downlist certain stocks of Minke Whales was defeated. The Bald eagle was downlisted from Appendix I to II allowing commercial trade. Namibia secured approval of commercial trade in elephant hides and hair, but failed to get an annual quota of 2 tons of ivory. They did, however, get approval for noncommercial trade in ekipas (ornamental worked pieces of ivory). A quota of five hunting trophies from black rhinos was approved for Namibia and S. Africa and the downlisting of the Swazi white rhino (population 61 animals) was approved so animals can be traded live (7%) or as trophies (1%).

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Cathy reported that AWI's development of species-specific humane standards for farm animals is continuing. These standards, with input from scientists and farmers, would permit animals to engage in species-typical behaviors. Whole Foods Market is undertaking a parallel effort, developing Animal Compassionate Standards, and AWI is participating in that process.

Regarding laboratory animals, AWI and the Johns Hopkins Center for Alternatives to Animal Testing are offering twelve Animal Welfare Enhancement Awards of \$6,000 each for projects to refine the housing, handling, and/or experimental situations for animals used for research. The primate dealer, LABS, Inc. has pled guilty to a felony for shipping wild-caught macaques in violation of Indonesian law. Fraudulent documents claimed the animals were captive-bred. Three shipments illegally contained nursing mothers and unweaned young. One thousand animals were shipped in batches of about 200. Sentencing is scheduled for mid-November. Charles River Labs has been charged with animal cruelty in District Court in Alamogordo, NM. The facility, previously run by the Coulston Foundation, houses 288 chimpanzees owned by NIH and cared for by Charles River (the company was given \$42 million to care for the primates for ten years.) Three chimpanzees with wounds were left in the overnight care of security guards. Two of the animals died. Finally, USDA's case against Class B dealer CC Baird for hundreds of apparent violations of the AWA has been scheduled for January 2005.

Cathy closed with an account of deaths from the Avian Influenza (AI) outbreak in Asia where more than 100 million birds have been killed. In Thailand, 53 tigers have died from AI at a private zoo and 30 additional animals are sick. This is the H5N1 strain which has also killed at least 30 people.

Ann Diamond, J.D., Chief, Litigation, Assistant Criminal District Attorney, Office of the Tarrant County, Texas Criminal District Attorney (DA) described the legal actions leading to the recent response by the DA's office to defend current Texas law that bans commercially possessing or transporting horse meat for human consumption. Texas law does not prohibit horse slaughter.

According to Ms. Diamond, the DA's office did not file charges against horse slaughterhouses. The slaughterhouses sued the DA to prevent the filing of criminal charges. However, criminal charges were imminent because the former Texas Attorney General ruled that the long-standing Texas law that prohibits the handling of horsemeat for sale for human consumption is still in effect.

The slaughterhouses filed the original lawsuit and the DA's office is defending itself and the laws of the State of Texas. The DA's office takes the position that everyone must follow the law until that law is repealed by the Legislature or thrown out by the Courts. The Texas

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Attorney General ruled that the slaughterhouses were not in compliance with the laws of Texas. It is the DA's duty, according to Ms. Diamond, to defend the laws of the State of Texas, and the Tarrant County DA is doing that.

Nora Wineland, DVM, Program Leader for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS), National Animal Health Monitoring Systems (NAHMS), National Center for Animal Health Surveillance (NCAHS), Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health (CEAH), gave a status report of the non-ambulatory animal study mandated by the 2002 farm bill. She distributed a draft brochure entitled, "An Opportunity to Help America's Livestock Industries by Participating in the First-Ever National Nonambulatory Livestock Study", and invited feedback from the Committee (*nora.e.wineland@aphis.usda.gov*). This study will provide the first statistically reliable estimates on the number of non-ambulatory cattle, goats, horses, pigs, and sheep in the United States and provide insight as to how these animals are handled on-farm and at market. The study is a collaborative effort among the USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), APHIS-VS, producers, and livestock market operators. For this study, non-ambulatory adult livestock are defined as animals that cannot stand or walk for any reason (no minimum length of time), and non-ambulatory young livestock are defined as animals that cannot stand or walk for at least 12 hours.

In January 2004, USDA-NASS enumerators interviewed approximately 40,000 cattle producers (both dairy and beef) across the U.S. to determine the number and disposition of non-ambulatory cattle and calves. The interview will be repeated in January 2005. Results will be published in spring 2005.

From April 1 through April 27, 2005, a detailed on-farm questionnaire will be administered on a sample of dairy operations (from major dairy states) that had non-ambulatory cattle in 2004. In addition, as a means of comparison, the questionnaire will be administered on a sample of dairy operations that did not have non-ambulatory cattle in 2004. Results will be published in late 2005.

In January 2005, USDA-NASS enumerators will interview U.S. producers regarding the number and disposition of non-ambulatory sheep and goats. The interview will be repeated in January 2006 with both results published in spring 2006.

Erika Voogd, Owner, Voogd Consulting, presented an overview of animal welfare audits from her corporate perspective of helping consumers feel good about the meat that they eat. Ms. Voogd, who has trained under and worked extensively with Temple Grandin, Ph.D., provided a review of existing humane slaughter oversight responsibilities under USDA, Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) law includ-

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ing recent directives 6900.1 calling for “humane handling of disabled livestock” and 6900.2 regarding “humane handling and slaughter of livestock.” Directive 6900.2 includes the Humane Interactive Knowledge (HIKE) and Humane Activities Tracking (HAT) programs, which respectively require that “regardless of the circumstances, the establishment must maintain a proactive approach to humane handling of livestock,” and “federally inspected facilities document inspection activities to ensure that livestock are humanely handled.” Ms. Voogd reviewed 3rd party audit programs and presented examples of improvements in facilities and in facility management philosophy consistent with the HIKE and HAT programs. Inconsistencies remain, however, in that regulatory oversight and application is not uniform, and mid- and small-sized plants not subjected to 3rd party audits may not or do not have the resources to apply these concepts. Ms. Voogd concluded by stating her belief that the emphasis on humane handling will begin to move “upstream” to truckers, terminal markets, auction houses, and farms.

Gail Golab, Ph.D., DVM, Assistant Director, Communications Division, American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), presented a review of the presentation AVMA President Dr. Bonnie Beaver delivered to the AVMA House of Delegates earlier this fall. In this presentation, Dr. Beaver challenged the AVMA to take a stronger leadership role in developing national animal welfare policy. Dr. Beaver called upon the AVMA to establish an Animal Welfare Division within the organization and staff that division with highly motivated scientists, educators, and communicators who are current on global aspects of animal welfare issues and the related science.

Dr. Golab continued with a review of the activities and issues before the AVMA Animal Welfare Committee during the previous year. Dr. Golab began with a review of the AVMA administrative and leadership structures to illustrate the origins and routing of AVMA policies and positions. AVMA members, governmental and non-governmental agencies, members of the public, or literature reviews may trigger AVMA’s consideration of issues. Current “hot” topics engaging AVMA are induced molting of chickens, gestation housing of sows, and foie gras production. Other issues of AVMA interest, and in support of an expanded AVMA focus on animal welfare, are non-ambulatory animals, equine slaughter, feral cats, puppy mills, wild animals as pets, and pain and distress in animals.

Dr. Golab and Dr. Larry Shuler, former state veterinarian of North Dakota, provided an overview of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) Global Conference on Animal Welfare held in Paris, France in February 2004. Over 400 participants representing more than 60 countries met to begin developing standards that would become the reference framework for the World Trade Organization (WTO) for inter-

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national trade considerations. This initiative came from the 2001-2005 OIE Strategic Plan that recognized animal welfare as a priority. Dr. Golab and Dr. Shuler attended this conference representing AVMA and United States Animal Health Association (USAHA).

Participants developed the general agreement that standards should be based on science recognizing that ethical and cultural differences will exist. At the same time, there was recognition that wide variation in emphasis and progress of OIE member countries regarding animal welfare expectation, guidelines, educational emphasis, and stakeholder roles. Differences in voluntary versus regulatory philosophy, and on what role animal welfare should play in trade negotiations were also identified.

Following the Paris Conference the following Guiding Principles were adopted:

1. A critical relationship exists between animal health and animal welfare.
2. The internationally recognized "five freedoms" (freedom from thirst, hunger, malnutrition; freedom from fear and distress; freedom from physical and thermal discomfort; freedom from pain, injury and disease; freedom to express normal patterns of behavior) provide valuable guidance in animal welfare.
3. The internationally recognized "three R's" (reduction in numbers of animals, refinement of experimental methods, and replacement of animals with non-animal techniques) provide valuable guidance for the use of animals in science.
4. The scientific assessment of animal welfare involves diverse elements that need to be considered together, and selecting and weighing these elements often involves value-based assumptions that should be made as explicit as possible.
5. The use of animals in agriculture and science, and for companionship, recreation and entertainment, makes a major contribution to the well being of people.
6. The use of animals carries with it an ethical responsibility to ensure the welfare of such animals to the greatest extent practicable.
7. Improvements in farm animal welfare can often improve productivity and food safety and hence lead to economic benefits.
8. That equivalent outcomes (performance criteria) rather than identical systems (design criteria) be the basis for comparison of animal welfare standards and guidelines.

Additionally, post-conference comment deadlines have passed. Products of these comments will be presented to the OIE membership by May 2005. Comments submitted by USDA can be viewed at www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/ncie/oie/#terrestrial, and Proceedings of the Conference are available at www.oie.int

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Elizabeth Goldentyer, DVM, Eastern Regional Director, USDA-APHIS, Animal Care (AC), presented the annual update on USDA-AC programs and enforcement activities. Highlights include the addition of staff in the past year resulting in a significant increase in inspections and facilities brought under USDA authority. Enforcement action resulted 205 warning notices and enforcement investigations, with \$548,614 in penalties levied.

Concluding the general session, the USAHA Committee on Animal Welfare moved to the annual business meeting with the following actions:

The Committee on Animal Welfare adopted the following statement as the mission of the committee: "The USAHA Committee on Animal Welfare explores animal welfare concerns and seeks to present data in an honest, unbiased, science-based manner for USAHA membership to evaluate. In this capacity, the committee serves as a forum for promoting dialogue between the various animal welfare groups and industry and for promoting the development of broad-based animal welfare solutions."

The Committee discussed a proposed resolution on dairy cow tail docking requesting the USDA recognize currently available scientific data on tail docking in U.S. dairy herds and opposing the practice of tail docking in developing regulatory policies and educational materials. Subsequent discussion of the issue questioned the sufficiency of information opposing tail docking as a routine practice. The Committee voted to not approve this proposed resolution. In further discussion it was suggested that the dairy industry should provide information detailing why and under what circumstances that they dock tails.

The Committee approved a resolution encouraging the U.S. animal agriculture sector to continue their efforts to develop and implement science-based animal care guidelines that will help ensure the humane treatment of animals and discouraging attempts to resolve these issues through legislative and regulatory mandates. It was forwarded to the Committee on Nominations and Resolutions for approval by the general membership.