

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ANIMAL WELFARE

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The Committee met on November 16, 2010 at the Minneapolis Hilton Hotel in Minneapolis, Minn., from 8:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. There were 47 members and 57 guests present. After calling the meeting to order, the Chair introduced the first speaker for the session.

The theme of the scientific portion of this year's meeting was "Animal Welfare—Interplay Between Science and Policy," and the following presentations were provided.

Should We Legislate Farm Animal Welfare?

Janice Swanson, PhD; Director, Animal Welfare and Acting Chair, Animal Sciences, Michigan State University

During the past five years, successful citizens' initiatives and legislation at the state level have created a patchwork of animal welfare regulation across the United States. Although recent initiatives and legislation have started with similar themes, negotiation has led to differences in enacted laws. As more states choose to regulate, it is likely to force a discussion about federal regulation of animal care beyond those activities currently regulated under the Animal Welfare Act. The decision to legislate for poultry and livestock welfare is controversial. Questions regarding legislative intent and whether the legislation will actually improve animal welfare further complicate decision-making. The decision to legislate requires identifying public thresholds of unacceptability by which it becomes clear that laws are required. Weighing the advantages and disadvantages of legislation can be assisted by asking critical questions about the practice of focus. What is the collective harm of the practice? Is there social or moral endangerment? Will regulation solve the problem? Can a voluntary approach accomplish needed change? There may be good reasons to legislate such as controlling threats to animal and human safety; evening the playing field for affected parties; and providing public accountability and assurance to keep public trust. Legislation is most effective if the end the result is a net improvement to animal welfare accomplished by realistic time frames for implementation by farmers and ranchers to meet compliance.

Developing an 'Equation' for Animal Welfare—What Should We Be Measuring?

Suzanne Millman, PhD; Associate Professor, Animal Welfare, Veterinary Diagnostic and Production Animal Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, Iowa State University

Science is useful for examining animal welfare because related questions are open to deductive reasoning, formation of hypotheses and predictions, and collection and analysis of empirical data. Multidisciplinary techniques are helpful to understanding a whole animal response to particular situations and are especially important in interpretation of data about affective states. Epidemiologic techniques can identify prevalence and risk factors associated with animal welfare challenges under field conditions and can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions intended to improve animal welfare. The presentation explored how the strengths of various scientific approaches can be combined to facilitate a complete picture of an animal's welfare.

Using Resource-based Versus Animal-based Criteria in Evaluating Animal Welfare—Welfare Quality as an Example

Andrew Butterworth, BvSc, PhD, Cert Wel, CBiol MIBiol, MRCVS; Senior Research Fellow, Clinical Veterinary Science, University of Bristol, UK.

Existing assurance schemes generally assess animal welfare by examination of housing or resources (resource-based measures), rather than by looking at the animals themselves (animal-based measures). For some time, researchers have suggested that animal-based measures can provide valuable indicators of animal welfare, since animal welfare is a characteristic of the individual animal, not just the system in which animals are farmed. Questions being asked include, "Are the animals properly fed and supplied with water? Are the animals properly housed? Are the animals healthy? Can the animals express a range of behaviors and emotional states?" To implement effective use of animal-based assessment methods on farms, it is necessary to: step 1, measure (animal-based measures and resource-based measures); step 2, analyze risk factors; step 3, inform (producer, purchaser); and step 4, support management decisions to create improvements in welfare. The presentation reviewed the Welfare Quality project, an Integrated European Research initiative under which animal-based assessment systems have been created for pigs, cattle and poultry, as an example of the development and application of such measures, including practical considerations and challenges.

Understanding the Federal Animal Welfare Act and a New Paradigm for Enforcement

Chester A. Gipson, MAgric, DVM; Deputy Administrator, USDA-APHIS, AC

In 1966, Congress passed Public Law 89-544, known as the Laboratory Animal Welfare Act, to regulate the humane care and handling of dogs, cats, and other laboratory animals. The law was amended in 1970 (Public Law 91-579), changing the name to the Animal Welfare Act (AWA). This amendment also authorized the Secretary of Agriculture to regulate other warm-blooded animals when used in research, exhibition, or the wholesale pet trade. Recent audits by the Office of the Inspector General and the United States Government Accountability Office identified areas USDA-APHIS-Animal Care needs to strengthen to effectively achieve compliance in enforcement of the AWA. In response to findings and recommendations from the audits, APHIS-AC has made operational and organizational changes, and will propose regulatory changes to enhance enforcement of the AWA.

Animal Welfare at the State Level—An Activity Summary

Adrian Hochstadt, JD; Assistant Director, Communications (State Legislative and Regulatory Affairs), American Veterinary Medical Association

The presentation comprised a round-up of the most significant animal welfare-related state legislative and regulatory developments taking place around the country in 2010. Attention was paid to proposals affecting a range of animal uses, species and stakeholders. A brief overview of AVMA resources available to assist those engaged in state legislative and regulatory affairs was also provided.

Animal Welfare at the State Level—Ohio as a Test Case for 'Independent' Regulatory Boards

Tony Forshey, DVM; State Veterinarian, Division of Animal Industry, Ohio Department of Agriculture

An update on the Ohio Livestock Care Standards Board was provided that summarized activities during the past calendar year. Information about organizational and standard-setting processes was included. Regulatory requirements are incorporated into the administrative code, rather than legislative language, which allows increased flexibility in modifying animal care standards as additional information on the effectiveness and practicality of the standards adopted becomes available. Emphasized were the contributions of multiple stakeholders, a need to maintain openness and transparency, and the importance

of encouraging broad public engagement. Accomplishments to date include adoption of euthanasia rules and circulation of draft nonambulatory livestock rules for comment.

Committee Business

The business meeting followed the last presentation and the presence of a quorum was confirmed. The Chair reviewed the activities of the Committee during and following its 2009 meeting in San Diego. She then referred Committee members to the USAHA website to review the 2009 resolutions and the US Department of Agriculture's (USDA) responses (including the Committee on Animal Welfare's Resolution 38 regarding development of the Center for Animal Welfare by the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service [APHIS] and Resolution 39 regarding support for the American Veterinary Medical Association's response to the *Final Report of the Pew Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production*).

Committee members were briefed on the comment submission process for updates to chapters in the OIE Terrestrial and Aquatic Codes. Chapters originating from the September 2010 meetings of the Terrestrial Code Commission and pertaining to the work of the Committee on Animal Welfare were distributed electronically by the Chair for Committee members' feedback. The Chair indicated that feedback received would be compiled, any discrepancies in comments received from Committee members resolved, and a final set of comments provided to the Chair of the International Standards Committee (Dr. Don Hoenig) for incorporation in the overall USAHA response to USDA.

In addition, two recommendations were considered.

Editor's Note: *The following recommendation regarding the mission statement, enclosed in brackets, was not approved by the Board of Directors during the review and approval process of this Committee Report. The Board recommended that the mission statement be referred back to the Committee for discussion with the Executive Committee and the President.*

[The first recommendation asked the USAHA Executive Committee to approve a revised Mission Statement for the Committee as follows:

"The USAHA Committee on Animal Welfare explores and promotes dialog on issues related to animal use, care, and welfare. While focused on animal well being, the Committee recognizes that a responsible approach to improving animal care practices includes due consideration for food security, public health and safety, environment, cultural and social diversity, and sustainability.

In developing recommendations and resolutions and presenting those to the USAHA for consideration, the Committee seeks to present data in an honest and unbiased manner. Its overarching goal is to promote solutions to animal welfare-related challenges that are scientifically robust and socially responsible. In so doing, the Committee may seek input from advisory subcommittees, outside consultants, and public and private agencies and organizations." The recommendation was approved by the Committee.]

The second recommendation asked the USAHA Executive Committee to explore the possibility of USAHA partnering with AVMA and other relevant organizations to conduct a joint topic-specific symposium on animal welfare and public policy. The purposes of the symposium would be to (1) increase members' knowledge about animal welfare, its scientific assessment, and the development of science-based solutions and standards (scientific context); (2) explore relationships among animal welfare, food security and environment (complexity and sustainability); and (3) improve members' understanding of the stakeholder environment and its effects on decision-making and public policy (social and political context). The anticipated outcome is a framework for contributing to public policy solutions that are scientifically robust and socially responsible. The recommendation was approved by the Committee.

The Committee on Animal Welfare adjourned at 12:25 pm.