



Humane Slaughter Association
Newsletter March 2008

Chairman's comment



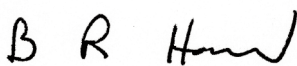
It gives me great pleasure to introduce this HSA Newsletter. I hope that it gives you a flavour of the effectiveness of the staff in tackling a wide range of current issues.

The project with the RVC, to review facilities and practices at markets in the UK, will lead to recommendations which will benefit the welfare of all animals passing through markets. Work with ADAS UK Ltd has resulted in the design of an improved group-stunning pen, which has been constructed and successfully tested in collaboration with commercial manufacturer IAE, and in publication of guidelines for the industry.

The educational role of the Charity is evidenced by presentations at the training course last October for Poultry Welfare Officers at turkey processing plants in East Anglia, to students at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne and to the DIALREL meeting on religious slaughter. I would also draw your attention to the continuing influence of the HSA overseas, with Charles Mason ably representing the Association at veterinary meetings in Croatia, Romania and Finland.

Please consider supporting the Spring Appeal in aid of the Dorothy Sidley Awards scheme which helps students and industry trainees to gain hands-on experience of research and development projects.

Finally, it gives me pleasure to congratulate Trustee Mike Radford, who received the OBE in the New Year's Honours List for his services to animal welfare law.



Bryan Howard
Chairman

HSA/RVC 'welfare in markets' project completed

Between spring 2005 and autumn 2007, the HSA technical team was involved in a major, Defra-funded project to assess the welfare of livestock passing through markets. In collaboration with Professor Neville Gregory of the Royal Veterinary College, London, Charles Mason, Tess Benson and Natalie Smith visited a total of 24 livestock markets to make a critical and constructive assessment of the animal handling facilities and the standards of animal handling, including a comparison of the handling of store and finished animals at 12 premises. Other objectives were to collate the information and experience into a set of guidelines on criteria that can be used for day-to-day management of animals in markets, and to meet with members of the livestock marketing fraternity to present the findings and help develop strategies for maintaining high standards of animal welfare in the future. This work is now complete and the report, together with a compendium of designs for facilities at livestock markets and the aforementioned guidelines, has been forwarded to Defra for approval.



Best practice for group stunning systems

In the majority of small- to medium-sized, mixed species abattoirs in the UK, sheep and pigs are stunned prior to slaughter using head-only electrical systems in group-stunning pens. This represents a sizeable proportion of the total sheep and pigs slaughtered annually in the UK. Although there are semi- and fully-automatic electrical and controlled atmosphere stunning systems available to the industry, the cost of installation is prohibitive to all but the highest throughput abattoirs. It is likely that group-stunning systems will remain the choice of many abattoir operators for the foreseeable future.

Together with ADAS UK Ltd and Industrial and Agricultural Engineers (IAE), the HSA has produced a leaflet entitled *Best Practice Guidelines for Group-Stunning Systems*. This leaflet was launched at the annual conference of the Association of Independent Meat Suppliers (AIMS) in early November. It is the culmination of a three-year project, during which no less than 40 abattoirs were visited and their group-stunning facilities assessed to identify those features which are beneficial to animal welfare and aid good practice. When the assessments were finished, an 'ideal' group-stunning pen was built and tested at one of the participating abattoirs. Finally, the HSA produced guidelines for the industry and these are available from the HSA office at £1.00 for postage and handling, or as a free download from the HSA website www.hsa.org.uk.





Humane slaughter of water buffalo

ADAS UK Ltd, the HSA and the Royal Veterinary College have been continuing their research into the humane slaughter of water buffalo, *Bubalus bubalis*. In 1998 less than 25 individuals were presented for slaughter at UK abattoirs, but by 2004 this number had risen to just under 400 per year. We are now investigating the slaughter of over-thirty-month (OTM) buffalo, where there are specific requirements for brainstem testing, as per food safety legislation for all bovines. Slaughter methods must be compatible with sampling practices to ensure that carcasses can enter the food chain for human consumption. The results of the project are expected towards the end of 2008 and will play a vital role in advising legislators at European level.

Welfare of poultry on shackle lines

Defra has funded a collaborative research project investigating ways to improve the welfare of poultry hung on shackle lines in processing plants. The work addresses issues such as discomfort and injury to the birds' legs whilst in the shackles, pre-stun shocks and wing flapping. Testing of the equipment is scheduled for 2008 and the HSA will be involved in the promotion of the new technology to the industry. Increasing the industry and public's awareness of the benefits of the equipment to poultry welfare and its advantages for staff, relative to existing systems, will hopefully encourage the uptake of this design of equipment and contribute to improved poultry welfare in the UK's slaughterhouses.



Best Practice Guidelines for Group-Stunning Systems

Group-stunning of sheep, pigs, calves and goats is a common practice, particularly in small to medium-sized abattoirs. The design and operation of these systems has changed little for many years. The following guide examines current practice, its potential advantages and disadvantages and provides best practice recommendations for group-stun systems. The guide also suggests ways to improve the welfare of animals slaughtered in group-stun situations.

The information in this guide is taken from Defra Project MH0133. Further details are available on the Defra website www.defra.gov.uk

To contact the organisations involved with the project see below:

ADAS - 0845 760006
NSA - 01582 231919
IAE - 01538 389006
Defra - 020 7236 6000



Congratulations to Mike Radford, HSA Trustee

HSA Trustee and UFAW Council Member Mike Radford was awarded the OBE in the New Year's Honours List for his services to animal welfare law. Mike is a Reader in the University of Aberdeen's faculty of law and in addition to his involvement with the HSA and UFAW is also a member of the Animal Welfare Science, Ethics and Law Board of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and an honorary vice-president of the Scottish SPCA.

Dorothy Sidley Award winners present their work

The 2007 Dorothy Sidley Memorial scholars, Kate Bundy (University of Bristol) and Barbora Stanikova (Royal Veterinary College, London), gave presentations of their research at the Vacation Scholars Meeting, held in conjunction with the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW), at Moulton College near Northampton in December 2007. It was a chance for others involved in scientific research to hear about their work, which was funded by the HSA Dorothy Sidley Memorial Award, and the potential implications of their findings for the welfare of poultry and cattle at the time of slaughter. Ms Bundy's project investigated the implications of different handling practices and facilities in a Turkish and a UK abattoir that both use the Shechita slaughter method. Ms Stanikova examined the relative efficacy of alternating (AC) and direct (DC) current in electrical waterbath stunning of poultry. The 2008 Dorothy Sidley Memorial Awards are now closed for applications and the successful entrants will be listed in the 2007-2008 Annual Report.



This year's HSA Spring Appeal is in support of the Dorothy Sidley Memorial Awards scheme which provides veterinary or biological sciences students and industry trainees with an invaluable means of gaining experience in research and development projects, encouraging them to further develop their interests in animal welfare. Your support of this Appeal will be greatly appreciated.

Mobile slaughter units

The HSA is often asked about the possibility of mobile slaughter units for 'red meat' farmed livestock in the UK. Some HSA members will remember that about seven years ago the HSA helped to fund a detailed feasibility study, commissioned by a group of farmers, into the development and running of mobile slaughter units. The conclusions of this study drew attention to the scale of the economic and logistical challenges that would need to be overcome for a mobile system to become financially viable. The idea was not developed at that time and since then changes in the regulatory environment have, if anything, made the challenges greater still. Although we are aware that several individuals and groups have considered the development of a mobile slaughter unit, as far as we are aware, no one has found a way to take the idea forward in the UK.



Forthcoming events

The HSA is planning to take part in two national shows:

The British Pig and Poultry Fair 2008 Tues 13 and Wed 14 May at Stoneleigh Park, Warks.

NSA Sheep 2008 Wed 30 July in Malvern, Worcs.





Overseas

The HSA's Technical Director, Charles Mason, has been in demand as a speaker at a number of conferences this year. Following his visit to Croatia in August, in September he travelled to Romania, along with former CVO Keith Meldrum and Peter Kettlewell of ADAS (formerly of Silsoe Research), as a guest of the International League for the Protection of Horses (ILPH). There are over 850,000 horses in Romania, more than in any other EU member state except the UK. They are used mainly as working animals, and there is concern within the Romanian veterinary profession about the means used to destroy them when their productive lives are at an end. Charles was invited by the ILPH to address an assembly of approximately 100 equine veterinary surgeons and speak about the use of firearms as a means of humanely despatching horses.



The beginning of November found Charles in Helsinki at the invitation of the Finnish Veterinary Association. He was there to address their annual conference and give three presentations about the HSA, welfare in transit and welfare at slaughter. This conference is a major event, with approximately 800 veterinary surgeons attending – half of all the practitioners in Finland. There were four sessions running concurrently: small animals; equine; dairy cattle; and meat hygiene. The HSA's contribution came in the meat hygiene section and commanded an audience of

approximately 150 people and generated some interesting questions and lively debate. The invitation came from a Finnish veterinary surgeon who had been a delegate at the EC-funded workshop on welfare at slaughter and killing, organised by the HSA in Bristol in September 2006.

Discussions about religious slaughter

HSA staff were invited to participate in a meeting held in Cardiff on 7 December 2007 to discuss religious slaughter. This meeting was run as part of an EC-funded 'DIALREL' project that is being organised by Dr Haluk Anil of the University of Bristol with a team of co-organisers in other European countries. The DIALREL project provides a discussion forum for dialogue and debate on issues of welfare, legislation and socio-economic aspects. The Cardiff meeting was attended by scientists, members of religious communities, and others with interests in livestock slaughter methods and welfare. James Kirkwood chaired the scientific session and Charles Mason presented evidence that pre-slaughter stunning does not affect the efficacy of bleed out (as some have claimed). Other talks addressed EU and UK law regarding religious slaughter and requirements for Halal slaughter.



HSA *Education & Training*

The HSA has been continuing to train professionals within the meat industry over the last few months. The HSA, Stephen Lister of Crowshall Veterinary Services and the Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC), and Easton College in Norwich held a training course in October 2007 for Poultry Welfare Officers of two turkey processing plants based in East Anglia. The feedback from the course delegates was very positive and the HSA hopes to embark on future training initiatives with other companies in 2008.

The HSA also visited students at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne in November to introduce them to the welfare issues surrounding the handling of livestock and its welfare during transport, marketing and slaughter. Such courses provide a valuable insight into these areas of food production, and encourage students to pursue research in livestock welfare science.

A number of new training course prospectuses are now in preparation for introduction later in the year.

Publications update

Best Practice Guidelines

Ducks and Geese in Processing Plants. This publication provides a set of best practice standards of use to all involved in developing and running assurance schemes and processing plant policies.

Technical Notes

Transport. Following the introduction of new legislation last year, a series of three Technical Notes has been produced covering the requirements for farm animals and horses, poultry, and fish respectively – including information on the necessary documentation and authorisations in addition to technical requirements.

Slaughter and killing of minority farmed species. With the growth of farming of species not indigenous to the UK, this new Technical Note provides information on relevant legislation and technical information for the humane slaughter of deer, ostrich, wild boar, water buffalo and bison.

Humane harvesting of halibut. This publication draws on the results of several scientific experimental projects on the humane harvesting of sea fish. It also fulfils the HSA's commitments to the Defra-funded LINK 0663 Project on humane harvesting of halibut. The technical note discusses the legislative and welfare requirements for the practical harvesting of farmed halibut and advice is given on welfare during fasting, crowding, transport, stunning and killing.

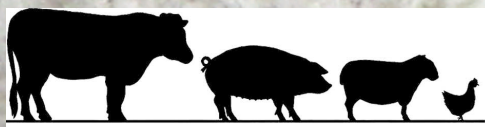
HSA Technical Notes are available for free download from the HSA website (www.hsa.org.uk) or at £1.00 each from the HSA office.

HSA Fact Sheets

Two publications in the HSA Fact Sheet series have new editions:

'Transport of Animals – Moving Forward' and *'The History of the HSA – Making Progress'*.

Fact Sheets are information leaflets intended for the general reader and are available free as single copies from the HSA office or free download from the HSA website (www.hsa.org.uk).



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