



**Humane Slaughter
Association**
Newsletter March 2014

Chairman's comment

Welcome to the Spring 2014 Newsletter. The new HSA website is now up and running and includes online donations, membership subscription/renewal and purchases. Also among its new features is the series of free online guides – already numbering five, with more in development – that will cover a wide range of handling and slaughter topics. Do visit the site if you haven't already.



The online guides have been made free to download in order to make access to humane best practice as widely available as possible, including in those parts of the world where such information may be hard to come by. As you will see from reports in the newsletter, the HSA, and importantly its advice, continues to be well-respected internationally and, thanks to your support, will continue to make a difference to animal welfare both in the UK and worldwide.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lydia Brown". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lydia Brown, Chairman

New constitution for the HSA

As outlined in the Annual Report 2013, work is underway to develop a new constitution for the HSA. The charity will be applying to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). CIOs are new charity structures. The aim is to modernise the constitution and to make the HSA a body with limited liability, without changing the governance and management structures that have served the HSA well for many years.

HSA international developments and priorities

Although based in the UK, the HSA operates increasingly at an international level. It promotes the scientific approach to tackling problems and neither science nor animal welfare problems heed national boundaries. Current research and educational priorities and the extent to which HSA should try to further develop internationally are topics under discussion as part of a wide-ranging review of HSA strategy that is presently being conducted. Strategy is reviewed every few years to ensure that effort and resources are focused to best effect in pursuit of the charity's aims.

New slaughter legislation – update

The European Regulation (No. 1099/2009) on the protection of animals at the time of killing came into force throughout the EU at the beginning of 2013. The relevant national laws for England, Wales, and Northern Ireland are being updated by the relevant administrations to bring these into line with the new EU Regulation and it is expected that they will be published shortly (the new Scottish legislation came into force on 1 January 2013). The HSA has summarised the changes resulting from the new Regulation, as they affect slaughterhouses and knackers yards, and this is available at the HSA website at: <http://www.hsa.org.uk/TN26>.

The HSA will be following the implementation of the new Regulation across Europe with interest. The charity is planning to hold an international symposium in 2015 and progress resulting from the new legislation is likely to be a matter of interest.





Working towards consistency across the EU

The HSA has been a member of the advisory board for EUWeINet, a 12-month project looking at the implementation strategies of EU member states for slaughter legislation. A pilot network of technical experts to assist competent authorities and other stakeholders in implementation of legislation was also set up as part of the study. The HSA looks forward to receiving the final project report.

EFSA Workshop

In September 2013, HSA Technical Director Charles Mason represented the HSA at a meeting in Parma, Italy, organized by the European Food Safety Agency (EFSA). The workshop discussed the identification of welfare indicators for monitoring procedures at slaughterhouses. The HSA's role was that of a hearing expert, with an opportunity to make comments when invited. The purpose of the meeting was to comment and share views on the draft scientific opinions which are being developed by EFSA in response to the request from the EU Commission to assess welfare indicators and sampling protocols, with a view to setting up monitoring procedures during slaughter of the main commercial animal species. Nine other external attendees with relevant expertise were also present.

AMI Seminar

In September 2013, HSA Technical Director Charles Mason and Technical Officer Nathan Williams attended the 48th annual seminar of the Association of Meat Inspectors (AMI) at Harper Adams University College in Shropshire, at which Charles presented a paper. At the conference dinner he was presented with the Robin Irish Award for outstanding contribution to the AMI – this was the 26th seminar attended by Charles and the seventh at which he has spoken.



New stunning method may significantly improve animal welfare

A new method for stunning livestock at slaughter may have the potential for significant animal welfare benefits, operational and economic advantages, concluded a recent workshop convened by the HSA.

Low Atmospheric Pressure Stunning (LAPS) utilizes controlled reduction in air pressure causing oxygen insufficiency – in humans unconsciousness caused by oxygen insufficiency is associated with little or no discomfort. The workshop was held in London in September 2013 to discuss developments in this system, the outcome of scientific work regarding its humaneness, its potential for wider application, and what further work might be needed relating to this.

The meeting was attended by participants with scientific, technical, animal welfare and legislative interests. Presentations were given by Dr Karen Christensen of OK Foods, Arkansas, USA, which is successfully using LAPS for broilers, and Dr Dorothy McKeegan of the University of Glasgow, UK, who has undertaken research work evaluating the humaneness of LAPS.

The LAPS system at OK Foods has been developed over three years with Mississippi State University and the University of Arkansas, together with the manufacturer, TechnoCatch of Kosciusko, Mississippi. It is capable of handling over 20,000 birds an hour and has been in full commercial use at OK Foods since early 2011. Dr McKeegan's research has focused on evaluating the humaneness of the method using EEG and ECG data from the birds.

The LAPS system appears to offer some significant welfare advantages over other commercial methods of slaughter currently in use for broilers and we hope that the workshop will stimulate further research and development of the system both for broilers and other species. A full report of the proceedings is available at the HSA website.

Inspiring research

The HSA awarded three Dorothy Sidley Memorial Scholarships this year. Two of the scholars, Rebecca Taylor of the Royal Veterinary College (RVC), UK, and Jorge Miguel Carvalho dos Reis Branco de Matos of the University of Porto, Portugal, were invited to speak at the Scholars' Meeting, organised by sister charity the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW) for the UFAW and HSA student scholars, held at the RVC in December 2013. The third of the 2013 scholars, Thomas Elwes, is due to submit his project report in 2014.

Rebecca Taylor presented the results of her study examining the pathophysiology of captive-bolt stunning of alpacas. Rebecca found that, although the recommended stunning positions for alpacas can successfully induce immediate unconsciousness, providing adequate restraint is a significant issue in ensuring the effectiveness of the method.

Jorge Miguel Carvalho dos Reis Branco de Matos presented his project which aimed to assess whether there was any correlation between the weight, age and handling methods of broilers, during catching on-farm and shackling in the slaughterhouse, and lesions found in the hip joints of the birds post-mortem.



2013 Dorothy Sidley Scholars Jorge Miguel Carvalho dos Reis Branco de Matos (left) and Rebecca Taylor with HSA Technical Officer Nathan Williams at the Scholars' Meeting held at the Royal Veterinary College

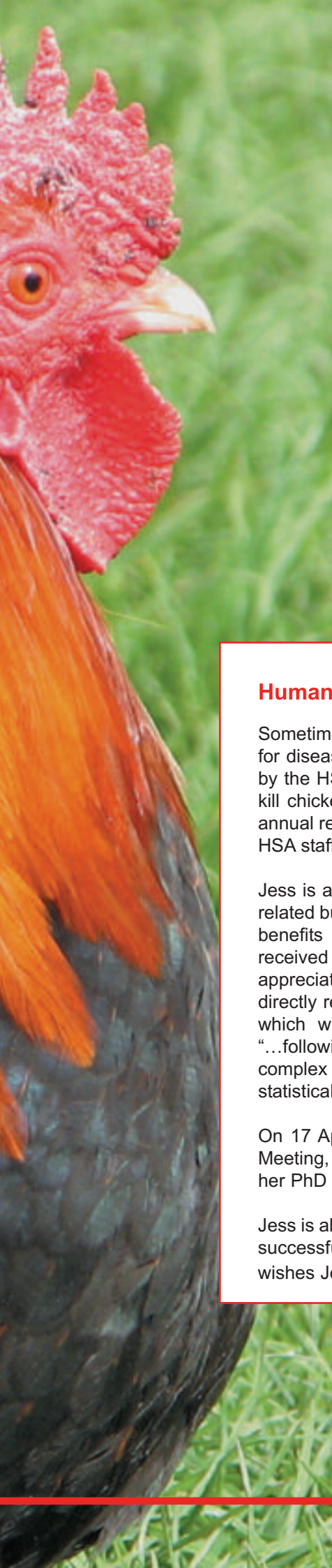
Jorge found that younger birds suffered more muscle damage during handling and heavier birds suffered greater damage to the hip joint. He concluded that the main risk factor for damage during handling is the immaturity of the birds' tissues, resulting from the rapid growth rate of modern broilers.

Both speakers demonstrated an enthusiasm for their research and we wish them well in the completion of their university studies.

The Dorothy Sidley Memorial Scholarships are named after the late Dorothy Sidley MBE, who was General Secretary of the HSA for 48 years.

The Scholarships exist to encourage students anywhere in the world to consider research and careers within the fields covered by the HSA's remit. Past scholars' projects have covered a wide range of topics, from investigating the welfare of sheep during sea transport in Australia to evaluating the efficiency of slaughter methods of small- to medium-scale turkey processing plants in the United Kingdom.





Training activities and welfare assessments

The HSA's activity in these areas was severely curtailed at the end of September when the Technical Director sustained a ruptured Achilles tendon, which took him off the road for three months. Consequently, appointments scheduled for the autumn had to be postponed until the coming spring. However, two training events did take place in September – a BPEX emergency slaughter workshop in Yorkshire and animal welfare training for slaughtermen and lairage workers in Derbyshire. The beginning of 2014 has seen the Technical Director at Harper Adams University College teaching trainee livestock auctioneers about animal welfare policies and in Surrey giving a firearms course to rangers at the Surrey Wildlife Trust.

Pig Veterinary Society Conference

The HSA's Technical Director, Charles Mason, was invited to give a paper at the Pig Veterinary Society's (PVS) 50th Anniversary Conference held at Birmingham in mid-November. Following on from the numerous BPEX workshops contributed to by the HSA over the last four years, Charles was asked to explain the implications of the new European slaughter regulation with regard to the commercial pig producer. This event also gave the HSA an opportunity to inform PVS members about the forthcoming collaboration with Bristol University to investigate a mechanical device for the humane destruction of neonates less than five kilograms in weight.

Humane killing of chickens – HSA Centenary RTS

Sometimes poultry may need to be killed on-farm to prevent further suffering (eg if injured), for disease control or for farm-gate sales. Jessica Hopkins is carrying out a PhD (funded by the HSA Centenary Research Training Scholarship) to identify a mechanical device to kill chickens reliably, swiftly and humanely. In autumn 2013 Jess submitted the second annual report of her progress and visited The Old School in January 2014 to further update HSA staff.

Jess is ahead of schedule with her PhD, so during 2013 she assisted with research on a related but separate project funded by Defra entitled 'Study to identify the welfare costs and benefits of existing and novel on-farm culling methods of poultry'. Jess subsequently received high praise from her supervisors: "...her significant contribution is greatly appreciated...many of the analysis approaches used [in the Defra-funded project] are directly relevant to her PhD studies, as are many of the transferrable skills she practiced, which will be especially valuable as she enters her writing year". Jess remarked: "...following the work I conducted on the Defra project, I have since established a more complex model to analyse the [PhD] data as a whole. This...will provide a more robust statistical analysis for my thesis and peer-reviewed papers".

On 17 April 2013 at The World's Poultry Science Association UK Branch Annual Spring Meeting, Jess was awarded a WPSA President's Prize for her "excellent presentation" of her PhD research.

Jess is about to embark on the final experiment of her PhD, where she will choose the most successful mechanical device and investigate how easily it can be used on-farm. The HSA wishes Jess all the best in the final year of her PhD studies.

Welcome

Jane Moorman joined the staff of the HSA, and sister charity UFAW, as Secretary in July 2013. Raised in a farming community in Wales and now living in Hatfield, Jane has over 25 years experience of finance and business administration in both the private and not-for-profit sectors. We extend a warm welcome to her.

Advancing animal welfare in Africa

The first international Pan African Animal Welfare Alliance (PAAWA) conference was held in Nairobi, Kenya, in September to discuss 'Mainstreaming Animal Welfare in Africa's Development'. Technical Officer, Nathan Williams, represented the HSA at the event.

The conference brought together a varied group of professionals working to improve animal welfare in Africa, including representatives from African governments, the African Union, OIE, academic institutes, and local and international NGOs.

Held over three days, the full timetable covered a wide range of topics, from slaughter to conservation, and highlighted the current challenges and future opportunities for improving animal welfare on the continent.

The event provided an opportunity to promote the support available from the HSA internationally through the technical resources provided on the HSA website. The HSA online guides received much interest and it is hoped that these, along with the other publications available online, will be able to play an important role in advancing animal welfare standards in Africa.

The HSA was warmly received at the event and has benefitted from introductions to professionals working to improve animal welfare at slaughter, markets and transport in more than twenty African countries.



*The PAAWA conference venue
in Nairobi*

New-look website welcomes the world

The HSA website has undergone a complete redesign over the last few months. It provides a large collection of open-access resources dedicated to improving animal welfare at slaughter, markets and transport, and plays an important role in disseminating the HSA's best practice resources around the world.



The new website has been designed to make it easier to locate specific HSA resources, many of which are now available to view online or download free of charge. The HSA's series of online guides, which continues to expand with 'Emergency Slaughter' recently added, has also been incorporated.

In addition to an updated design, the new website includes e-commerce, allowing hard-copies of HSA publications and other items to be purchased simply and securely online. Membership applications and donations are now also possible online.

We will continue to add new resources to the website over the coming months, with an online guide on humane handling currently in development. Visit the news and events pages to keep up-to-date with the latest developments from the charity.



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