



European Commission calls for the endorsement of the Declaration to end the surgical castration of pigs

On 25 February 2011 the Commission organised a meeting in Brussels to present the European declaration on alternatives to the surgical castration of pigs.



The Declaration aims to stop by voluntary agreement the surgical castration of pigs by 1 January 2018. The Declaration also calls for the establishment of a European partnership on pig castration in order to develop the tools needed to reach this goal and ensure that the costs are shared fairly. Several international organisations have already committed themselves to this initiative.

Professional organisations in the pig sector, from producers to retailers, are encouraged to endorse the Declaration by signing it on the Directorate General for Health and Consumers website.

For the full list of the stakeholders and the endorsement of the Declaration please go to:
http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/farm/initiatives_en.htm

Food and Veterinary Office: the "eyes and ears" of the Commission

Protecting the welfare of animals and ensuring that EU legislation on animal welfare is applied properly and in a harmonised way is a strong priority for the Commission.

In 2010, an evaluation of EU policy on Animal Welfare was conducted and it showed that there was a need to ensure the existing rules were better enforced, so that Europe could achieve higher standards of animal welfare. To carry this out, the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO), which is the Commission inspection service within the Directorate General for Health and Consumers, visits farms, slaughterhouses and transport facilities regularly in all Member States. For example, in 2010, 12 audits on animal welfare were carried out in Member States. EU Candidate Countries are also normally visited.

Based on FVO findings, the Member States develop corrective action plans in cooperation with the Commission. These action plans will be monitored regularly by the Commission until such time that enforcement of the EU law is improved.

Inspecting how animals are treated is one way of protecting animals in Europe. However, a great deal can be done through education and more information. In order to try and help towards this, the Commission organises specific meetings and regular training sessions on animal welfare for staff performing the controls at national level. The "Better Training for Safer Food" programme, for example, addresses welfare issues such as the farming of laying hens and of chickens kept for meat production, the farming of pigs or animal welfare at the time of killing in disease control situations, in order to improve the capacity of the veterinary services.

Additionally, the Commission organises or supports dedicated workshops and seminars on relevant issues, where a wide range of stakeholders are invited to participate. In its future strategy for animal welfare (2011-2015), the Commission plans to strengthen initiatives specifically designed to improve the enforcement of animal welfare across Europe.

5th Pan Commonwealth Veterinary Conference “The Role of Veterinarians and Livestock Farmers in Food Security and Poverty Alleviation”, 21–25 March, Accra, Ghana



“The role of Veterinarians and Livestock farmers in Food Security and Poverty Alleviation” was the theme of the 5th Pan Conference organised last March in Ghana by the Commonwealth Veterinary Association (CVA) and supported by the European Commission.

for the Protection of Animals (WSPA), Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) and The Brooke attended and contributed to the event.

The CVA conference is organised every four years and for the first time animal welfare issues featured prominently in the scientific programme. One session of particular note was entitled, “Animal Welfare Issues, Challenges and Opportunities – Thinking globally: Acting local”.

The benefits of developing regional strategies for the implementation of animal welfare standards were also discussed, as was the need to share legislation, best practices, scientific information and resources in order to develop local projects to educate communities on animal welfare. In this context, the crucial role of OIE and FAO as the benchmark organisations for developing animal welfare standards and promoting their application was highlighted.

Representatives from the veterinary profession (public, private and academics) from around 110 countries, international organisations such as World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), World Health Organization (WHO), the European Commission, several African Institutions, NGOs including the World Society

Welfare of Working Animals

Animal welfare is now considered an important issue in its own right by governments and international organisations. However, working animals used in transport and traction activities are often invisible to these agencies. As many as 100 million working equine animals are essential to the livelihoods of an estimated 600 million people in the developing world, who often lack the capacity to care for them. Not only is this a significant animal welfare issue, the resulting reduction in productivity also impacts poverty levels.

The Brooke, a leading international equine welfare charity based in the UK, works with marginalised communities to improve the welfare of the horses, donkeys and mules on which they depend. The welfare challenges facing these animals are a result of poor working conditions, lack of resource provision including access to services such as effective animal health care and lack of educational opportunities for owners and service providers. The Brooke uses the “five freedoms” approach as the basis to define how the animals should be treated.

Working equine animals play a large role in agricultural communities where they carry out diverse tasks such, carrying water, fodder and transporting goods and people. In some instances, they are used as taxi services and in some industries they are often the first link in the transport chain moving goods.

The Brooke also participated in the 5th Pan Commonwealth Veterinary Conference in Accra, Ghana. The informative scientific programme included a full day workshop facilitated by The Brooke and FAO on the welfare of working animals.

Presentations on the day included the link between livelihood and working animal welfare, and on policies and legislation, followed by working groups discussing the issues further and producing recommendations to raise the profile of working animals on the agenda of international bodies.

The Brooke’s goal is to ensure measurable improvements are made in the welfare of two million working horses, donkeys and mules every year, by 2016.

www.thebrooke.org

http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/animalwelfare/FAO-The%20Brooke%20working%20animals%20e-consultation%20report.pdf





Interview with Dr. Leopoldo Stuardo

Dr. Leopoldo Stuardo Escobar (Master in Environmental Science and Management from the University of Louvain in Belgium – LLN) is a Veterinary Doctor from Universidad de Santiago de Chile. He was appointed the Head of the recently created Animal Welfare Unit of the Agriculture and Livestock Service (SAG), in April 2010, after having spent almost four years at the International Trade Department of the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE).

SANCO: The EU-Chile SPS Agreement was the first agreement between the EU and a third country to include collaboration on animal welfare within its scope. Chile set an example for other countries around the world. Which benefits and which challenges for Chile do you see in this relationship?

LS: Since 2003, the SPS Agreement between the EU and Chile in the animal welfare field has brought about significant benefits, including the continuous exchange of scientific and technical information on the topics covered by the agreement. It has also served as a stimulus to the development of research in this area in Chilean universities and research centres. Among the challenges we have faced, one of the most important is the institutional development of this field within the Agricultural and Livestock Service (SAG), which has resulted in the organisation of the regulatory aspects of the competency of the Service in the field of animal welfare. Moreover, it will help us implement the new Animal Protection Law.

SANCO: Last year, Chile adopted the first national law on animal protection. In which phase of the legislative process was the EU an important actor and supporter? What is the role of the Chilean private sector in the law's development and implementation process?

LS: Our relationship with the EU has been important in disseminating the concept of animal welfare. This has been carried out through various seminars, which involved all stakeholders, including the private sector. This has led to a common understanding about the concept. Thus, the private sector has participated actively in the work for the preparation of the new Animal Protection Law regulations, bearing in mind the fact that it could use the concept of welfare as an opportunity, rather than an obstacle, to trade. In particular, the production conditions in Chile show that animal welfare issues can arise naturally. Moreover, the private sector has been implementing good farming practices, which have already taken animal welfare issues into consideration for 15 years.

SANCO: Did this collaboration with the EU help improve the level of knowledge and expertise on animal welfare in your country?

LS: Definitely. The cooperation we have had, in terms of the participation of internationally renowned experts in different training and dissemination activities in particular, has significantly increased the understanding of this important subject. The last Technical Seminar on Animal Welfare and Intensive Production Systems, held in Santiago on 13 and 14 September 2010, is a good example for this. During the seminar, organised jointly by the European Commission, the Universidad de Santiago de Chile and Universidad Austral de Chile, invited experts were able to achieve significant progress in their level of knowledge regarding animal welfare aspects, a fact which was highlighted by the quality of their questions and comments.

SANCO: What is your perception of EU policies on animal welfare?

LS: The animal welfare standards demanded of European authorities by EU citizens are certainly different from those that Chile is elaborating. We think that, with time, both parties will develop new policies on animal welfare, looking closely at the developments in the benchmark organisations, especially OIE in this case. This means that there are more possibilities of reaching a common understanding when implementing animal welfare measures in different areas. Thus, the bilateral agreement, as the one Chile signed with the EU (which has as reference the standards developed by OIE) is an interesting model for facilitating the implementation of animal welfare measures between partners.

Vet Week 2011: Vets in your daily life

DG SANCO organised the fourth EU Veterinary Week, which took place between 16–22 May 2011. As in the past, hosting the Brussels conference, which focused this year on “Crisis management in the food chain”, was the centrepiece of our efforts.

The conference was attended by approximately 400 participants, including Chief Veterinary Officers from EU Member States, Members of the European Parliament, representatives from veterinary associations, EU Veterinary faculties, and from countries outside of the EU. Farming associations, consumer groups and other stakeholders were also represented.

A stand presenting the role played by vets in people’s everyday lives was open throughout the entire week and was visited by several schools from Belgium. Children and their teachers learned what vets do to protect the health and welfare of animals. A special corner was dedicated to Farmland, the website on animal welfare created for children in primary schools to teach them, through online games and interactive presentations, where their food actually comes from and how animals should be treated.



First EU workshops on animal welfare for veterinary practitioners

The European Commission together with the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe and the Born Free Foundation will organise for the first time a series of regional workshops on animal welfare dedicated mainly to veterinary practitioners.

The workshops will consist of both theoretical and practical on-site farm sessions, where participants can put their theoretical knowledge into practice.

The vets, from both public and private sectors, are important actors in the process of the improved implementation and evaluation of the animal welfare standards. The aim of these workshops is to provide all veterinarians with a deeper understanding of animal welfare. Each event will focus on the animal welfare legislation applicable, the critical welfare issues and species-specific welfare assessment schemes. The workshops will be true to the saying, “prevention is better than cure”.

Crisis management and animal welfare – a balancing act

Disasters affect an estimated 40 million plus animals across the globe each year resulting in suffering and death. Animals, however, have a crucial role to play in supporting people through disasters. Companion animals provide psychological support in the aftermath of disaster, but they can equally cause significant problems for rescuers and aid providers at the point of evacuation or during an evacuation itself.

Production animals often form the backbone of subsistence agriculture and can have a significant impact on people’s livelihoods if lost in the aftermath of disasters. Equally, when multiplied on a regional or national scale, this can have significant national economic effects. The lecture ‘Crisis management and animal welfare – a balancing act’ at the EU Veterinary Week conference addressed these issues and their impact, exploring the drivers and barriers

for this problem and the potential solutions being offered by those organisations at the forefront of change. The lecture exposed many vets to a new sub discipline of animal care, which is emerging globally.

WSPA: <http://animalsindisasters.typepad.com/>

