



Animal Welfare Science Centre

www.animalwelfare.net.au
Newsletter

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AWSC joins world-wide animal welfare collaboration

The Animal Welfare Science Centre, along with four other Australian and New Zealand partners, has been recognised for international research collaboration.

The annual meeting in May of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) gave formal approval to include AWSC as part of an Animal Welfare Collaborating Centre involving Australian and New Zealand Governments, universities and research organisations.

Other partners in the collaboration include CSIRO's Division of Livestock Industries, the Centre for Animal Wel-

fare and Ethics at the University of Queensland, the Animal Welfare Science and Bioethics Centre at New Zealand's Massey University and the AgResearch Animal Behaviour and Welfare Research Centre, also in New Zealand.

The decision by OIE reflects the strong existing collaboration between all five agencies that is now formalised and internationally recognised.

The primary role of the collaborating centre is the provision of expert scientific, bioethical and educational advice for the OIE, along with scientific and technical training, the organisation of appropriate meetings and the coordination of scientific and technical studies.

Director of the AWSC, Paul Hensworth said "This new OIE collaboration offers a diversity of high quality scientific expertise in the animal welfare arena. As society continues to ask questions about appropriate welfare standards for our domestic animals in a range of farming, domestic, recreational and research uses, there is an increasing role for science to contribute to these ethical considerations by providing the factual basis of the impact of these uses on the animal. This collaboration will play an important role in providing this science."

For further details regarding the OIE program on animal welfare, please visit: http://www.oie.int/Eng/bien_etre/en_introduction.htm

DPI oversees national Animal Welfare RD&E strategy

DPI Victoria is leading the development of a national Animal Welfare R,D&E strategy as part of the National Primary Industries R,D&E Framework being established by the Primary Industries Ministerial Council.

A Steering Committee comprised of all major co-investors in animal welfare R,D&E, including all animal industry RDC's and both Commonwealth and state government agencies, will oversee the development of the strategy.

Working closely with the Aus-

tralian Animal Welfare Strategy and building upon work performed by that group, the national Framework aims to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the national Primary Industries R,D&E effort, through improved collaboration amongst all co-investors and R,D&E providers and a greater focus on national priorities.

The national Animal Welfare R,D&E strategy will initially focus on production animals (including vertebrate fish), reflecting the interests and responsibility of state Agriculture Ministers.

DPI will work in close consulta-

tion with industry, R,D&E provider organisations and other major stakeholders to identify the national long term priorities for animal welfare and the science capability required to deliver them. A detailed audit of existing capability will highlight any capability gaps and inform the development of the national animal welfare RD&E strategy to ensure that the nation builds and retains the animal welfare capability required for the future.

For further details, please contact Geoff Kroker:

Geoff.kroker@dpi.vic.gov.au



Locomotion problems in sows



Sows are prone to a wide range of injuries that may or may not induce changes in gait and lameness. Lameness is a major contributor to unplanned culling of sows and as such, can negatively impact upon sow welfare and productivity.

It is important for animals to be able to move comfortably to have access to food and water and to interact socially.

Marcus Karlen's PhD aims to develop methodology to assess gait accurately, to establish the relationship between injury and fitness and to study the relationship between aggressive behaviour and lameness of group housed sows.

Three experiments are currently being conducted simultaneously.

In the first experiment, Marcus is collecting data to assess the accuracy of assessing changes in gait in the pen where sows are held in different group sizes. For this, the locomotion of the sows is being examined inside (within a group) and outside (in a corridor, no interference of other animals) the pen with similar protocols.

The second experiment will look at the effects of locomotion on fitness parameters such as changes in body weight and back fat and its effects on litter size are also being measured.

The third experiment will assess the incidence of lameness of sows housed in groups of 10. These data will be correlated to

the level of aggression in each pen to have a better understanding of the relationships between aggression and the incidence of lameness.

This project is part of a large housing project conducted by the AWSC which is examining how space allowance, group size, time of mixing and feeding system affect aggression, stress, injury, lameness and reproduction in sows housed in groups during gestation.

The project is funded by Australian Pork Limited.

For further details, please contact Marcus Karlen by email:

gkarlen@pgrad.unimelb.edu.au



ProHand® Dairy in WA

Twenty-four students from The WA Agriculture College Harvey, have recently completed ProHand® Dairy training.

ProHand® Dairy is an innovative computer-based training program which improves the welfare and productivity of dairy cows by modifying stockperson behaviour through focussing on their beliefs and attitudes towards dairy cows.

Dr. Barb Frey from Consistent Pork, WA conducted the training at Harvey and says "ProHand has helped with the confidence of inexperienced students and has boosted their ability to work things out themselves without always asking the teacher. The program has also reinforced the fact that even experienced stockpeople have something to learn from ProHand as it encourages them to re-assess their handling techniques".

Thanks to Barb Frey and Di Evans (AgFWA) for their assistance and enthusiasm in this project.

ProHand® Dairy is receiving considerable interest in the US and our colleagues at The Ohio State University are actively promoting both the Dairy and Pig versions of the package.

For more details regarding the **ProHand®** suite of programs, please contact Jeremy Skuse jskuse@unimelb.edu.au

ProHand® is an original concept developed by Australian Pork Limited in 1996



Dr. Barb Frey, Consistent Pork



Students at Harvey proudly wearing their ProHand® caps

Seminar Series 2009



Jeff Rushen at the recent dairy welfare seminar at Attwood

The AWSC Seminar program has been extremely busy with key international speakers attracting good audiences from diverse backgrounds and interests. The following seminars were presented in May and June:

Laying hen welfare:

- Prof. Tina Widowski, University of Guelph - "Urges, needs, preferences & priorities – coming to terms with the welfare of the laying hen"
- Philip Szepe, Kinross Farm - "An Australian perspective on EU layer hen housing"

Dairy welfare:

- Dr Jeffrey Rushen, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada- "Improved detection of lameness in dairy cows"
- Dr Anne Marie de Passillé, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada- "Feeding behaviour and weaning of milk-fed dairy calves"

Assessing animal welfare:

- Prof Berry Spruijt, University of Utrecht - "What cognitive abilities are indispensable for experiencing welfare?"
- Dr Don Lay, USDA - "Using physiology and behaviour to assess welfare in farm animals: research of the United States Department of Agriculture"

Presentations from these seminars will be posted on our website progressively during July - www.animalwelfare.net.au/comm

Animal Welfare Education Project

The AWSC is developing an animal welfare educational package for people responsible for the oversight of animal welfare as part of their jobs.

Grahame Coleman (Monash University) and Mariko Lauber (DPI and University of Melbourne) are developing the package to provide comprehensive training in animal welfare and welfare assessment to underpin the assessments in existing further education certificates.

The package will examine:

- the concepts of animal ethics and its implications for animal use in society. The impact of ethical (considerations of right and wrong) viewpoints of industry workers and the general community and how that impacts on the way we use animals to support human life will be discussed.
- animal rights movement's philosophies and how animal rights groups affect change to animal use within our society by influencing public opinion and, ultimately, government regulation and legislation.
- climate change and other environmental issues that may result in short, medium and long-term changes to livestock production and how these might affect animal welfare.
- current issues regarding "minimum" acceptable standards as set out in codes of practice and industry care documents and how these standards, and mooted legislated animal welfare standards, impact on animal welfare.

Key concepts in animal welfare will be introduced and field

tools will be provided to identify certain animal welfare problems in a range of species.

An introduction to the topic of human-animal interactions and the impacts of these interactions on animal welfare will also be provided. Issues of supervision and care, attitudes and handling will be discussed as a strong emphasis is placed on the pivotal and often underestimated role that humans play in the welfare of animals and those human behaviours that can compromise the human-animal relationship.

The package will be delivered in a flexible, self-paced manner and nor require expert teachers for delivery.

It is envisaged that the package will consist of CD and web-based modules that can be configured to suit the demands of the group being trained.

The modules will comprise text, visual material, videos and a voiceover to ensure that the material is delivered in an attractive way and consistent manner.

Being self-paced ensures that delivery is flexible and is not affected by such things as geographical location, class size, timetabling and the like.

Our previous research has shown that trainees prefer multi-media programs of this type over self-help manuals or didactic classroom teaching.

Each module will be able to be completed on its own or as part of the whole training course and will consist of a multi-media interactive computer programme and at least one facilitated learning session.

The project is due for completion in June 2010 and has been made possible through funding from the Telematics Trust Course Development Fund, DPI Victoria and the Bureau of Animal Welfare.

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If you have any comments, questions or suggestions, please contact our Executive Officer, Jeremy Skuse at our Parkville Offices.

Please feel free to pass this newsletter on to those who may be interested.

If you wish to be removed from our mailing list, please send an email to:

awsc-info@unimelb.edu.au

Quoting "remove" in the subject line.

SNIPPETS

Andrew Fisher (University of Melbourne, Faculty of Veterinary Science), has been invited to join the newly-formed OIE Expert Working Group on Beef Cattle Welfare.

The first meeting will be held in Paris in late July.

Mia Cobb (Guide dogs Victoria and Monash University), is jointly carrying out a study looking at Australia's working dogs.

The study is being conducted by Dr Nick Branson (Independent Veterinary Researcher) and Ms Mia Cobb under the supervision of Associate Professor Paul McGreevy (University of Sydney). It is funded by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

The research uses a survey to gather data about how you train, handle, house and care for your working dogs. It aims to develop the first da-

tabase of information about working dogs in Australia.

The reason underlying the collection of these data is to provide insights into the welfare status of dogs used in work by humans. There are currently few opportunities for collaboration between the different working dog sectors at both an Australian and international level.

We anticipate that this study will facilitate collaboration between the industries involved to enhance knowledge sharing and hence improve efficiency, output and functionality of working dog programs. For survey details, please visit: http://www.vetsci.usyd.edu.au/teaching_learning/surveys/dog_survey.shtml

AWSC is examining the potential for a collaborative project with the University of Queensland and Zoos Victoria.

Areas of interest include:

- the relationships between the behaviour of visitors and the fear responses of zoo animals to humans;

- the relationships between the attitudes of keepers, facilities, the use of environmental enrichment strategies and the behaviour of zoo animals;

- the relationship between community attitudes and actual zoo visits; and;

- the relationship between community attitudes and community behaviours that might impact on the sustainability of zoos

At the University of Melbourne, Rachel Clair Bloomfield is studying visitor effects on non-human primates at zoos as part of her 4th year honours project.