

tors of good welfare, how particular experiences affect welfare, and whether travelling circuses and mobile zoos can fulfil their welfare requirements of wild animals.”

This is a different stance to the one taken by the 2007 circus report which stated: “The opinion of the Academic Panel is that the environment in circuses is too different from those of farms or zoos for helpful comparisons of research findings to be made. Legitimate comparisons could possibly be made with animals transported regularly to shows or competitions involving a high degree of training and human contact but the data are not available at present although even this could be problematic as these are usually domesticated animals”.

However, upon reviewing the responses from the two questionnaires, and considering the latest literature, the Welsh review ultimately comes to a different conclusion: “The scientific evidence indicates that captive wild animals in travelling circuses and mobile zoos do not achieve their optimal welfare requirements set out under the Animal Welfare Act 2006”.

The Welsh Government will now use the review as an advisory document on legislative changes regarding the use of wild animals in circuses.

The Welfare of Wild Animals in Travelling Circuses (April 2017). A4, 177 pages. A review, commissioned by the Welsh Government undertaken by Jo Dorning, Stephen Harris, and Heather Pickett. The report is available at: <http://gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/ahw/performing-animals/?lang=en>.

Wild Animals in Travelling Circuses (October 2007). The report of the Chairman of the Circus Working Group by Mike Radford, Defra, London, UK. Available at: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/welfare/pdf/circus-report.pdf>.

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Welfare of working equids

The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) is an intergovernmental organisation with 180 member countries. The objectives of the OIE are to: Ensure transparency in the global animal disease situation; Collect, analyse and disseminate veterinary scientific information; Encourage international solidarity in the control of animal diseases; Safeguard world trade by publishing health standards for international trade in animals and animal products; Improve the legal framework and resources of national veterinary services; and, To provide a better guarantee of food of animal origin and to promote animal welfare through a science-based approach.

One way in which the OIE works to satisfy its objectives is through the publication of the ‘OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code’. The Terrestrial Code is a comprehensive set of standards that have been formally adopted by the World Assembly of OIE Delegates and are published annually.

The importance of animal welfare within the OIE was initially recognised as a strategic priority in 2000 (3rd OIE Strategic Plan 2001–2005) and the first OIE animal

welfare standards were published in 2005 (covering the transport of animals by land, sea and air, and the slaughter and killing of animals for human consumption and for disease control). During the last 10 years, further animal welfare standards have gradually been developed: Stray dog population control (2009); Use of animals for research and education (2010); Animal welfare and beef cattle production systems (2012); Animal welfare and broiler chicken production systems (2013); Animal welfare and dairy cattle production systems (2015); and, most recently, Welfare of working equids.

The Code is now in its 25th Edition and the new chapter (7.12) covering the welfare of working equids seeks to address the welfare of ‘horses, donkeys and mules that are destined, used for or retired from traction, transport and generation of income’. It is estimated that there are over 100 million working equids worldwide.

Within chapter 7.12, the responsibilities of various authorities and organisations towards working equid welfare are outlined. For example, veterinary authorities are considered to be responsible for the implementation of animal health and welfare legislation, policies and programmes, whilst the role of private veterinarians involves: provision of services and advice; disease surveillance; and dealing with cases of neglect (including the necessary liaison with police or other local authorities).

How working equid welfare may be assessed is then outlined using various criteria and outcome-based measurables under seven headings: Behaviour; Morbidity; Mortality; Body condition and physical appearance; Handling responses; Complications due to management practices; Lameness; and Fitness to work. Within this section it is advised that people have a good understanding of the species-specific behaviour of horses, donkeys and mules due to the differences between the three species, for example donkeys are likely to show subtler behavioural signs than horses.

Under ‘Complications due to management practices’, attention is drawn to practices that fundamentally compromise welfare, including firing, nasal slitting, lampas cutting and applying harmful substances to wounds. There is no evidence that these practices work but working equids may be traditionally ‘treated’ using these methods in some areas.

A number of recommendations are then made, covering: Feeding and provision of water; Shelter; Management of disease and injuries; Handling and management practice; Behaviour; End of working life; Appropriate workloads; and Farriery and harnessing. Each recommendation also includes a list of the relevant outcome-based measurables. For example, within Farriery and harnessing, it is recommended that owners and handlers should routinely clean and check the hooves of working equids both before and after work and that hoof-trimming and shoeing is only performed by persons with the necessary knowledge and skills. The outcome-based measurables listed to assist with welfare assessment are: behaviour, body condition and physical appearance, lameness and fitness to work.

The new OIE standards are a step towards improving the welfare of working horses, donkeys and mules, and provide a new resource for member countries.

OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code, Volume I: Section 7 Animal Welfare, Chapter 7.12. Welfare of Working Equids, 25th Edition (2016). World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE). ISBN: 978 92 95108 01 1. Available at: <http://www.oie.int/international-standard-setting/terrestrial-code/access-online/>.

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Horses in our hands

The University of Bristol has recently published a report documenting the findings of a three-year research project, which aimed to: “identify the priority welfare issues currently faced by horses and to explore horse owner and industry experts’ perceptions around these”.

It is clear from the report that the estimated 1.35 million horses in Great Britain are kept both in a wide range of settings (livery yards, farms, racing yards, riding schools, private yards, rented pasture, stables at own premises) and for a variety of purposes (pleasure, competition, riding schools, retired/companions, unbroken, breeding). The researchers noted that: “From the outset it was apparent that capturing the broad range of experiences that people have in caring for and interacting with horses, and their associated views on horse welfare, would be essential to genuinely understand the welfare of horses in England and Wales”.

To clarify what the main welfare priorities for horses are thought to be, the researchers asked 31 relevant stakeholders (such as farriers, veterinarians, welfare workers, trainers, and competition riders) four key questions:

- What does the phrase ‘equine welfare’ mean to you?
- What results in a horse having ‘good’ welfare?
- What results in a horse having ‘poor’ welfare? and
- What examples of poor welfare have you seen?

Through these discussions, 40 specific welfare concerns were highlighted (eg laminitis, social isolations, poorly fitting tack, incorrect feeding, dental problems, rapping). A further 12 broader welfare issues were raised, of which the top three were: horses kept in unsuitable environments; inappropriate ‘use’; and, where behaviour is misunderstood. An interesting finding that came to light during interviews with stakeholders was how the term ‘welfare’ is largely seen as a negative concept and often considered ‘someone else’s problem’.

The researchers then carried out a consultation process with 20 industry experts (veterinarians, equine behaviourists, representatives from industry governing bodies and equine welfare charities) which, taking into account severity, duration and number of horses affected, identified four priority welfare challenges:

- Unresolved stress/pain behaviour;
- Inappropriate nutrition;
- Inappropriate stabling/turnout; and
- Delayed death.

The perceptions of stakeholders to the four welfare challenges was then sought and quotes are used to emphasise the diversity of opinion.

The report goes on to consider the assessment of horse welfare. Currently, a formal assessment of horse welfare, whether at an individual or population level, is rarely carried out and the researchers wished to understand why. Another round of focus group discussions was therefore undertaken, and the findings showed that many people had negative connotations associated with the term welfare assessment (believing it to only occur when measuring poor welfare, and not recognising its value as a tool to promote good welfare) and were also defensive over ‘outside’ assessment. Many stakeholders stressed the importance of assessing welfare both over time and within context.

The researchers close the report with a chapter entitled: ‘Future directions to improve equine welfare in England and Wales’ and include recommendations under the following headings:

- Recommendations on strategic approaches to equine welfare improvement;
- Focusing together on the 4 welfare priorities;
- Amending legislation and updating Codes of Practice;
- Developing welfare assessment protocols for use by horse owners;
- Recommendations for communication about equine welfare with people who own or care for horses;
- Communicating about welfare;
- Identifying suitable sources of advice;
- Ensuring up-to-date advice;
- Developing practical solutions; and
- Encouraging owners.

The researchers stress the importance of those in leadership roles (such as veterinarians, welfare charities, or trainers) to ensure that advice offered to horse owners is based on up-to-date scientific and practical knowledge and that positive and non-threatening language is used. Additionally, they advise a cohesive and joint approach when developing solutions to practical husbandry and management problems. However, it is noted that even when there are suitable solutions available to existing welfare problems, it can be difficult to relay the information to those in direct contact with horses and there may be barriers in changing owner behaviour. The researchers suggest that lessons may be learnt from the farm and companion animal industries as to how best to motivate people to change their behaviour for the benefit of animals.

Horses in Our Hands (2016). A4, 35 pages. World Horse Welfare and Bristol Equine Welfare Project, University of Bristol, UK. Available at: <http://www.worldhorsewelfare.org/survey-equine-welfare-england-and-wales>.

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