



Australian and New Zealand Council for the Care of Animals in Research and Teaching

Review of the Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes

The *Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes* (the Code) undergoes regular review to take in to account advances in the biological sciences and changes in community attitudes. The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) coordinates this process through the Code Liaison Group (CLG) which includes representatives of the Code sponsors (NHMRC, CSIRO, the Agriculture and Resource Management Council and the Australian Research Council), as well as representatives of State and Territory governments, the RSPCA, Australian and New Zealand Federation of Animal Societies, and the community. In April 1995, members of the CLG met and recommended a limited revision of the Code.

It was agreed that the revision should focus on Section 2 (Responsibilities of institutions and their animal experimentation ethics committees), Section 5 (Responsibilities of teachers), and add to the Code separate sections addressing the use of livestock and the use of wildlife in research and teaching. The review also included clarifying the scope of the Code and updating the bibliography.

All representatives present on the CLG undertook to publicise the review amongst their client groups and in July 1995, an advertisement was placed in the *Weekend Australian* inviting public submissions by mid September. A total of 64 written submissions was received. The Code was annotated to include the substance of all submissions at the relevant section. This procedure was followed to facilitate consideration of all the recommendations made in the submissions. The writing groups developed draft comments which were discussed and amended at meetings of the CLG. The draft revised Code was then sent to all respondents and re-advertised, seeking further public comment.

A further 71 submissions were con-

sidered after the second phase of public consultation, which ended in September 1996. While not all suggestions were taken up by the CLG, every suggestion was given due consideration.

So what is new in the Code?

Wildlife

A noticeable addition to the Code is the new Section 5 on Wildlife Studies. Section 5 was included because of the special considerations involved when wildlife studies are undertaken. They are often conducted in the field where the close monitoring by ethics committees or State authorities is impractical. Many of the studies are observational, some opportunistic, while others involve capture and release, causing significant disruption to the animals. The major issues then revolve around the impact of the researcher's activities on both target and non-target species and also on the ecology of the area in which the study occurs. Consideration is given to the methods of trapping wildlife, identification of animals and transport and release. All of these procedures, if not carried out correctly, can lead to death of the animals.

There are several necessary areas of wildlife research where the impact of the investigations on the animal is severe. One example is the study of feral animals in which the objective of the research may be to control or kill the animal. Another is the study of predator-prey relationships or competitive relationships with a species which have the potential for animals to suffer injury. The revised Code now addresses these issues and urges careful scrutiny of the justification for the research and of the consideration given to animal welfare concerns.

Livestock

Section 6 is another addition to the Code and addresses particular issues encountered when farm livestock are

used for research or teaching purposes. The CLG was particularly concerned that the introduction of this section safeguarded the welfare of livestock, but in a way that did not interfere with valuable educational work of departmental officers in the field demonstrating best practice techniques. In order to satisfy both objectives, the following three situations were identified:

- a full ethics application where the animal is subjected to other than routine husbandry practices;
- an application requiring adherence to published standard operating procedures by staff possessing the appropriate training and skills; or
- circumstances and procedures where no approval is necessary, for example, stock on their home property subjected to routine husbandry procedures.

The last of these may involve a spontaneous on-farm demonstration by a field officer of an approved technique. For such circumstances, to require individual ethics approval would be unreasonable and unproductive.

Education

Section 7 addresses the use of animals in teaching. The previous edition of the Code was very brief on education and the review highlighted the need to

Elsewhere in this issue ...

The value of AECs	3
Functioning of a busy NZ AEC ..	5
Book review	7
Letters	8
ANZCCART's 1997 conference ..	9
ANZCCART Student Award	10
Coming up	11
ECVAM Workshop reports	12
UK 1995 statistics	12

This issue contains the facts sheet on the dog. The insert is also available as an offprint.