



## **Media Release**

### **From the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW)**

**30<sup>th</sup> August, 2006**

**For Immediate Release:**

### **Group to seek better welfare in rodent control**

A Rodent Control Methods Workshop has been set up by the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW) to investigate and pursue ways of achieving animal welfare improvements in methods of controlling rodents. The Workshop members, comprising scientists, policymakers and representatives from the pest control industry have identified three avenues through which potential improvements could be pursued: education to raise awareness of the need for welfare considerations and to provide best practice guidance; regulation of trap design and product registration; and research into more humane methods of control.

It is important to find a balance between the need to ensure safety from pests and the need to control them humanely. Some of the current methods of rodent control fall short of the humane ideal of bringing about effective population control, or individual culling, without causing pain, fear or other unpleasant feelings. Some methods fall considerably short of this ideal. Around the world very large numbers of rodents are subject to control methods and so the subject is one of major animal welfare importance. However, compared to many other animal welfare concerns, rodent control is a 'Cinderella' subject that has received relatively little attention (or investment). Dr James Kirkwood, Chief Executive and Scientific Director of UFAW, organized the first workshop meeting in London in January 2006 to review this subject.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss whether any approaches to improvements can be identified and, if so, how these might be pursued. Future research priorities (potential new directions for humane rodent control - lethal or by preventing breeding, and the potential for improvements or refinements to existing methods) were considered, as was the need for best practice guidance about the use of current methods.

Strong interest in pursuing these aims was expressed at the initial meeting and a number of additional meetings of the group have been held subsequently. Three avenues have been identified through which improvements could be pursued:

Education, to raise awareness of the need to take welfare into consideration and to provide best practice guidance about selection of control methods from welfare and other perspectives;

Regulation, to address an apparent lack of regulation of rodent traps in the UK. The aim of the group is to examine ways in which humaneness of traps can be assessed and controlled through regulation or voluntary schemes, and to explore streamlining of registration of rodenticides;

Research. Ways need to be developed to encourage, promote and fund research into more humane control methods – either novel approaches or refinements to existing methods.

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### **SCIENCE IN THE SERVICE OF ANIMAL WELFARE**

Chief Executive and Scientific Director: James K Kirkwood BVSc PhD CBiol FIBiol MRCVS

Secretary: Donald C Davidson

Registered Charity No. 207996 (Registered in England) and Company Limited by Guarantee No. 579991



## UNIVERSITIES FEDERATION FOR ANIMAL WELFARE

The Old School, Brewhouse Hill, Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire AL4 8AN, UK.

Tel: +44(0)1582 831818 Fax: +44(0)1582 831414

Website: <http://www.ufaw.org.uk>

Email: [ufaw@ufaw.org.uk](mailto:ufaw@ufaw.org.uk)

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Continuing discussions include the development of best practice guidance leaflets, initially aimed at the general public, and the possibility of a research project investigating the addition of analgesics to rodenticides.

“While there are provisions in the UK for assessing humaneness of rodenticides, this does not apply to traps.” said Dr Kirkwood. “It would seem very important, if improvements are to be sought and made in this field, to have a body to consider the welfare aspects of all rodent control methods and provide advice to government, other interested bodies and the public.”

-ENDS-

Media contact:

Dr James Kirkwood, Chief Executive and Scientific Director, UFAW. Tel: 01582-831818, email [kirkwood@ufaw.org.uk](mailto:kirkwood@ufaw.org.uk)

Notes to Editors:

**Members of the UFAW Workshop on Rodent Control Methods** are:

Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW)

Dr Manuel Berdoy, Oxford University

Richard Brand-Hardy, Defra

Dr Andy Brigham, Rentokil Initial plc

Dr Alan Buckle, Reading University

Simon Harding, Defra

Ms Jennifer Hopkins, Biocides and Pesticides Unit, HSE

Sharon Hughes, Sorex Ltd

Dr Ian Inglis, Central Science Laboratory

Dr Dawn Kirby, Rentokil Initial plc

Dr Kate Littin, University of Bristol & MAF Animal Welfare Group, New Zealand

Mr Oliver Madge, British Pest Control Association

Dr Colin Prescott, Reading University

David Richardson, Pesticides Safety Directorate

Dr Janet Talling, Central Science Laboratory

Edward Varley, Defra

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**The Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW)** is an internationally recognised, independent scientific and educational animal welfare charity. It works to improve knowledge and understanding of animals' needs in order to achieve high standards of welfare for farm, companion, research, captive wild animals and those with which we interact in the wild.

UFAW improves animal welfare worldwide through its programme of awards, grants and scholarships; by educational initiatives, especially at university and college level; by providing information in books, videos, reports and in its scientific journal *Animal Welfare*; by providing expert advice to governments and others, including for legislation and 'best practice' guidelines and codes; and by working with animal keepers, scientists, vets, lawyers and all those who care about animals.

This work relies on the support of members, subscribers and donors.

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