**UFAW NEWS-SHEET March 1999**



**A UFAW Vacation Scholar**

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**WHAT's NEW?**

**PHHSC funds rabbit welfare research**



UFAW established the Pharmaceutical Housing and Husbandry Steering Committee (PHHSC) in 1998 to help the pharmaceutical industry prioritize and support animal welfare research. The initiative led to the establishment of a research studentship funded by the Committee (of which UFAW is a member), and a successful application by Drs Natalie Waran and Mike Appleby of the University of Edinburgh.

The newly appointed PhD student, Shirley Seaman, and her supervisor, Dr Waran, are pictured right after meeting members of the Committee at our offices last December.

UFAW hopes that their work will shed light on the housing requirements of laboratory rabbits as well as those farmed for the meat trade.

**Spring Appeal for Research into Rabbit Housing**

**UFAW is co-funding this research**

**The proceeds from our *Spring Appeal* will help us to fund this important work. Please support the project by contacting UFAW and making a donation!**

**Vacation Scholars' meeting**



*Scholarly speakers: The Vacation Scholars (above)*



*Judges and winning speakers at the inaugural UFAW Vacation Scholars' Meeting in Edinburgh.*

UFAW has been running the [Vacation Scholarship Award Scheme](http://www.ufaw.org.uk/vacation-scholarship.php) since 1983. This successful scheme has enabled over 130 Scholars to pursue a range of high quality projects. The scheme's aims are to encourage research into animal welfare and to provide opportunities for promising students to develop their interests in the subject. In 1998, we made 12 awards.

The presentational skills of 15 of our 1997/1998 Scholars were tested by the inaugural *Vacation Scholars' Meeting*, held on 20 January 1999 at the University of Edinburgh, at which they gave talks about their work to an appreciative audience of fellow students, supervisors, UFAW staff - and a panel of judges. The standard of the presentations was very high, and the judges (UFAW Vice-Chairman Professor Ronald Anderson, Director Dr James Kirkwood, Dr Natalie Waran and Mr Mark Evans) overseen by UFAW Chairman Dr Gillian Sales, awarded a joint first prize for best speaker.

UFAW would like to thank Natalie Waran and the University of Edinburgh for their help in organizing the meeting and all those who helped to make it such a success. We also wish the 1998 Vacation Scholars good luck with their forthcoming final exams. The successful applicants for the 1999 Scholarships will be announced at the end of March. We look forward to hearing about their studies at the next *Vacation Scholars' Meeting*.

Cheques for £100 and a year's subscription to *Animal Welfare* went to Joseph Barber for his talk on *A study of the effect that enhanced feeding has on captive voles (Microtus agrestis), with special reference to stereotypies* and to Victoria Melfi for discussing *A comparison of the activity budgets of wild and captive Sulawesi crested black macaques* (Macaca nigra).

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**LABORATORY AND COMPANION ANIMALS**

**Primate transport project top of the list for the Animal Procedures Committee**

In our *1997/1998 Annual Report* we described the setting up of a collaborative project with the University of Oxford and CBD Porton Down to examine the welfare of primates transported into the UK. The project is targeted at laboratory primates but the work has implications for primates and other species transported for conservation and other purposes. It is now apparent from the recent *Report of the Animal Procedures Committee for 1997* that this was the only new project to be funded by the Animal Procedures Committee (APC) in 1997. While this is gratifying, it indicates the shortage of funds available to the APC for research into animal welfare - although the APC were, fortunately, allocated a 42 per cent increase in funding for 1998.

The Committee described the project as being of particular interest as it is aimed at improving the welfare of animals outside the process of scientific procedures. The work is also timely as the UK has recently signed a Council of Europe *Declaration of Intent on the Use, Transport, Care and Accommodation of Laboratory Animals*. Under this declaration it was agreed 'to make a careful choice of the means and route to ensure that the transport is carried out efficiently and so as to limit the stress and the suffering of the animals'. Since starting work last July, Dr Elizabeth Bradshaw has developed a prototype instrumentation package, which has been tested by monitoring environmental parameters experienced by primates transported within the UK.

**Refinements for mice**

While mice may lack mass media appeal, it is just as important for them to be housed humanely as other animals used in scientific studies - particularly since mice are used in animal experimentation more than any other species. The Rodent Refinement Working Party of the RSPCA/UFAW/FRAME/BVAAWF Steering Committee on Refinement recently published a report on laboratory mouse husbandry, which identifies current 'best practice', provides many recommendations on housing and husbandry techniques and also identifies areas for future research into mouse welfare. Reprints may be obtained from the UFAW offices, or from: RSPCA, Research Animals Department, Causeway, Horsham, West Sussex RH12 1HG UK.

**UFAW/RSPCA rabbit meeting**

The 1998 meeting of the UFAW/RSPCA Rabbit Behaviour and Welfare Group proved to be the most popular yet. Participants gathered in London last December to listen to a wide range of papers ranging from improvements in rabbit housing to attempts to determine the socialization period of the rabbit. It was clear from the presentations and accompanying discussions that many of the organizations attending the meeting had successfully introduced group-housing for their female rabbits. Success seemed to be related to the strain used and the social and developmental history of the rabbits within each group.

The importance of the expertise of technicians and animal house staff in successfully implementing improvements in the housing and husbandry of rabbits was clear; many suggestions for change came from the technicians themselves. Their contributions underlined the importance of encouraging participation in welfare issues at all levels within an organization.

**UFAW advises on animal housing standards**

UFAW staff are taking part in the process of revising the standards of animal accommodation laid out in *Appendix A of the European Convention for the Protection of Vertebrate Animals Used for Experimental and Other Scientific Purposes* (ETS 123). These revisions will probably lead to changes in national laws relating to the housing of laboratory animals. UFAW staff, through their affiliations to other organizations, are serving directly on two of the expert groups: revising standards for dogs and cats, and for rodents and rabbits. As part of this process, UFAW hosted a meeting last November for members of the Rodent and Rabbit Expert Group. Submissions from all the groups should be completed by the next multilateral consultation, which will be held in 2000.

As a result of the Animal Procedures Committee's recent review of the operation of the *Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986*, it was agreed that ferrets and gerbils should be added to the list of animals in *Schedule 2* of the Act. This change means that, from 1 December 1999, ferrets and gerbils destined for use in laboratory research under the Act must come from designated breeding establishments. UFAW staff have also been taking part in discussions to draw up minimum (UK) housing standards for these animals in designated establishments.

**Companion Animals**

**Improved safeguards for wild pets**

For many years, laws have prohibited the taking of most species of wild British vertebrates into captivity (except under certain conditions), so it is perhaps increasingly anomalous that many species of vertebrates taken from the wild elsewhere can still be readily purchased as exotic pets. Although the *International Convention on Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)* controls trade in threatened species with the aim of safeguarding the viability of wild populations, many countries lack adequate safeguards for the welfare of individuals of non-threatened species which are often captured live for the pet trade. While the last 20 years have seen considerable tightening of UK and European Union legislation protecting the welfare of animals kept in zoos, in laboratories and on farms, little has been done to improve protection for wild animals imported, sold and kept as pets.

However, positive moves are now afoot in Europe to redress the balance. On 10 March 1995, the multilateral consultation of parties to the *European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals* (ETS 125), adopted a resolution on the keeping of wild animals as pets. This advocated establishing systems to control the keeping of wild species as companion animals which would require housing according to their physiological and behavioural needs and that keepers must have appropriate knowledge to be able to satisfy these needs. Sweden has already put legislation in place which, in addition to specifying standards for the keeping of captive-bred wild animals, bans the keeping, procurement or sale of animals (other than fish or amphibians) caught in the wild as pets or for hobby purposes. A legal framework restricting the sale and keeping of wild animals as pets is also in place in the Netherlands, where there are further moves to ban the import of wild-caught animals. In the UK, however, UFAW is concerned that it remains much easier to buy certain wild animals as pets than to find out how to keep them properly. Discussions are under way with various groups to explore ways of improving the situation.

**Radical changes to rabies quarantine?**

The UK Government described the Advisory Group on Quarantine's recent review of quarantine legislation as offering the 'most radical changes to UK quarantine laws for almost a century'. The Group's recommendations would drastically reduce the number of mammals entering the UK which have to undergo 6 months of rabies quarantine. They propose that qualified vets could issue certificates of exemption from quarantine (costing owners an estimated £150.00 per pet) provided animals meet stringent requirements - including proven anti-rabies vaccination, electronic 'tagging' with a microchip, and precautionary measures against other diseases. If this system is accepted, a 3-year introduction period is planned.

While these proposals will be warmly greeted as offering a humane alternative to quarantine, there are issues of concern - many of which were highlighted by the Group. Any increased movement of animals across borders may raise the chances of diseases, other than rabies, being imported into the UK; and it increases the numbers of animals at risk of suffering through transportation in inappropriate conditions. UFAW has recommended a fuller assessment of the risks and suggested that public education about the welfare hazards of transporting pets forms part of the introduction programme. Finally, there are other hidden costs to consider: each batch of manufactured rabies vaccine requires testing on animals to determine its effectiveness. UFAW will continue to support work to identify alternatives to in vivo testing of vaccines that do not use animals, and which ensure that the lives of all animals are improved.

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**ZOO AND WILD ANIMALS**

**Zoo Animal Welfare Award presentations**



Dr Jane Goodall, the world-renowned chimpanzee researcher and campaigner, and Mark Evans, vet and presenter of Channel 4's 'Pet Rescue', awarded the 1998 UFAW Zoo Animal Welfare Awards to the joint winners last autumn.

Dr Goodall (first picture right), praised Dorset's Monkey World Ape Rescue Centre for their winning 'Woolly Monkey Habitat'. This provides the monkeys with a verdant outdoor arena to explore, imaginatively enriched by several herb beds, which have proved very popular with the monkeys - garlic, chives and camomile being particular favourites.

Paignton Zoo Environmental Park in Devon, was the first zoo to complete a clean sweep of the annual awards: winning both the main award for its 'Marie Le Fevre Ape Centre' and the innovation award for its 'Artificial Termite Mound' for birds.

Mark Evans (second picture right) praised the UFAW scheme, adding: 'It should be the aim of all zoos to create stimulating environments for animals in their care, which allow them to display their natural patterns of behaviour'. Entries for the 1999 UFAW Zoo Animal Welfare Awards are now under consideration and the judges' decisions will be finalized over the summer.

**Review of UK zoo standards**

The Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions has commissioned a review of the Secretary of State's *Standards of Modern Zoo Practice*. This document outlines the standards for animal husbandry and welfare, and for visitor safety, expected in UK zoos. Knowledge of zoo animal biology and welfare has progressed since the document was first published in 1988. There is also a need to incorporate recommendations arising from the Government's recent consultation on the *Zoo Licensing Act 1981* - one of which was that all zoos should play a role in conservation. The team undertaking the review includes UFAW Council member Dr Miranda Stevenson and UFAW members Professor John and Mrs Margaret Cooper. The team is headed by Mr Peter Scott. This is an important undertaking and we wish the team well.

**Preventing garden bird diseases**

It is estimated that some 15 000 tonnes of peanuts - and a similar volume of mixed seeds - are fed to garden birds in Britain each year. Having altered our environment through industrialization and farming, to the disadvantage of many bird species, providing them with food can help to redress the situation. However, there may be a case for moderation. Evidence is still growing that where birds gather in high densities to feed day after day in the same place, there is a risk of epidemics. Reports from around the UK suggest that mortality incidents due to *Salmonella or Escherichia coli* infections, particularly among greenfinches and sparrows, are becoming increasingly common. Following further media interest in the subject earlier this year, UFAW has received many more requests for its leaflet *Infectious Diseases of Garden Birds: Minimising the Risks*.

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**FARMED ANIMALS**

**Plumbing the depths of minks' preferences**



When keeping animals it is difficult, and almost always uneconomical, to provide them with all the opportunities to express behaviours that they would encounter in their native environments. Understanding how much it matters if a pig can't root, a vulture can't soar, a cat can't hunt or a duck can't swim is crucial for their welfare. It seems both likely - and just - that entire systems of husbandry will ultimately stand or fall depending on the outcome of research aimed at unravelling these issues. However, this presents a great challenge to animal welfare scientists.

Dr Georgia Mason of the University of Oxford has been studying approaches to the measurement of how much things 'matter' to animals. Supported by UFAW, her recent investigations into the validity of 'consumer demand' techniques for measuring preferences have some important theoretical and practical implications.

A captive group of mink are helping her with this work and have already indicated the importance they attach to having access to swimming water by showing how hard they are prepared to work for it (by pushing under weighted cat flaps to reach a pool); and by the way in which they prioritize their swimming time compared with other activities. Dr Mason was also able to obtain another, biochemical, corroboration of the minks' feelings about swimming water by measuring changes in their excretion of a stress hormone on days when the pool is closed. Urinary cortisol excretion increased to levels which suggest that the mink rate access to swimming water highly (above access to an extra nest or to more space, although not as highly as access to food). This has significant implications for mink housing (mink are farmed for fur in many countries where they are not generally provided with swimming water). UFAW is also supporting an investigation by Dr Jonathan Cooper of De Montfort University into the importance of swimming water to farmed ducks which, like mink, are mostly kept without access to a pool.

**Turkey legs**

Modern, commercial turkey production may subject birds (particularly heavy males) to serious welfare problems arising from leg disorders. Although the problem is well documented, very little is known about how the aetiology of these disorders relates to variation in behaviour. UFAW Vacation Scholar, Lorraine McAulay (National Centre for Poultry Studies, SAC Auchincruive) studied the behaviour of older and heavier male birds (12-20 weeks old) to determine whether changes in their activity patterns could be interpreted as indicators of pain or discomfort. She also investigated whether 20-week-old turkeys would self-administer an anti-inflammatory drug (carprofen) in a choice-feeding situation, as has been found in studies involving conditioned broiler chickens with leg disorders.



The behavioural study indicated that the birds became more active as they grew older, with a large proportion of their time spent in displaying themselves to potential mates. The two birds in this study which exhibited obvious lameness (resulting in early, humane, culling) were observed to spend more time sitting than other members of the group. The conditioned turkeys in the choice-feeding situation showed no preference for the carprofen-containing food, however none had a leg problem judged severe enough to be a significant source of pain. It seems that degenerative leg problems may only become serious in turkeys which are more than 20 weeks old.

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**UFAW AND YOU**

**University visits**

As part of a drive to promote further college-level interest in UFAW and animal welfare issues, UFAW staff attended Freshers' Week events at various universities across the country, including Bristol, Glasgow, Liverpool and Oxford in 1998. There was great interest in the stands, with details about Vacation Scholarships, grants and publications particularly in demand. UFAW's rational, science-based approach to resolving animal welfare problems attracted support from many students and led to an encouraging number joining UFAW. We enjoyed meeting our new members and hope to repeat such visits this autumn. We would welcome approaches from any university or college which is keen to receive a visit or talk. Interested organizations, or members who are prepared to assist UFAW during these visits, are asked to contact the Development Officer.

**Developing UFAW's information technology**

UFAW has decided to further expand its IT capabilities. All UFAW publications and staff publications are in the process of being logged into a specially designed database. Abstracts of papers that have been published in our journal ***Animal Welfare*** are already available [here](http://www.ufaw.org.uk/news-sheet-1999.php).

**Information about UFAW's work**

We are constantly seeking ways to raise the level of understanding of animal welfare. UFAW staff will give thought-provoking and informative talks to interested groups. If you are a member of the WI, Probus or any other group that would be interested in hearing about UFAW's work for animal welfare, please contact UFAW and we will try to arrange a speaker.

**Notification for election to Council at the 1999 AGM**

In accordance with Article 46 of the Constitution, members' nominations for election to Council at the 1999 AGM must reach the UFAW office between 4 August and 1 September 1999. Further information may be obtained from the UFAW Secretary.

**1999 Annual General Meeting**

This year's AGM will be held on the afternoon of Wednesday 13 October 1999 at the Womens' Institute Hall in Wheathampstead. Full details of the time and business of the meeting will be sent to members in due course.

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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
Email: ufaw@ufaw.org.uk
Registered charity number: 207996
(Registered in England) and Company Limited by Guarantee No. 579991