

**The Humane Society Institute for Science and Policy**  
**Animal Studies Repository**

1980

# The Ministry of Agriculture's Involvement with Animal Welfare

Roy Moss

*British Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food*

Follow this and additional works at: [http://animalstudiesrepository.org/acwp\\_faafp](http://animalstudiesrepository.org/acwp_faafp)



Part of the [Animal Law Commons](#), [Animal Studies Commons](#), and the [Other Anthropology Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Moss, R. (1980). The ministry of agriculture's involvement with animal welfare. *International Journal for the Study of Animal Problems*, 1(4), 226-229.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Humane Society Institute for Science and Policy. It has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator of the Animal Studies Repository. For more information, please contact [eyahner@humanesociety.org](mailto:eyahner@humanesociety.org).

philosophical purists, whether their philosophy falls to the left of Animal Liberation or to the right of the hard-core dominionist. However, those who are most directly affected by the changes wrought from the debate between industry and the champions of reform are the farmer, the consumer and the animals themselves. When the needs of more than one group are taken into account, compromise is the most likely outcome.

The farmer may understand his or her animals better than the animal rights philosophers, the animal welfare lobbyist, or the managers of corporate agribusiness. Yet such familiarity with the object of concern does not necessarily imply that other sectors of society should have little or no part in trying to resolve the larger ethical questions of animal exploitation. Animal Lib may not have all the answers, but that does not preclude its ability to serve as a societal watchdog. In order to have maximum impact, however, its efforts must be backed up by data from applied animal welfare science as well as a thorough understanding of the economic arguments of producers and other representatives of the livestock industry. As stated by Wal Shaw, President of the Australian Broiler Growers Council, in an interview with *National Farmer* (November 29, 1979): "The Animal Lib stir has caused us to look at ourselves — and that's not a bad thing at all."

## The Ministry of Agriculture's Involvement With Animal Welfare

Roy Moss

**The following is excerpted from a paper presented by Mr. Moss, Regional Veterinary Officer in the British Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, at the British Veterinary Association Annual Congress, September 9-14, 1979, Aberdeen, Scotland.**

Keeping livestock healthy is primarily the responsibility of owners. Indeed, if they did not do so they would certainly not make a profit. Advice on the prevention, treatment and possible cure of disease is the responsibility of the veterinary surgeon. Prevention of physical damage to animals and their adoption of abnormal behavior caused by confinement which prevents them from exercising their inherited behavioral patterns is the joint responsibility of the ethologist, the technologist who designs the confinement system and ancillary equipment, the livestock husbandry specialist, the veterinary surgeon and the owner. If society also decides that there is a need for enforcement of measures to make such responsibilities compulsory, then it is for governments to make the political decision to do so and to enact legislation on animal protection.

Following consideration of the report of the Brambell Committee, the British government in 1968 took powers under Part I of the Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1968 to prevent the infliction of unnecessary pain or unnecessary distress to livestock on agricultural land; to make regulations with respect to the welfare of such livestock where such a course was considered appropriate; and to prepare codes of recommendations for the welfare of livestock and to "spend such sums as he (the Minister) thinks fit on the giving of advice, free of charge, to persons concerned with livestock on matters relating to the welfare of livestock."

Thus it was that the State Veterinary Service (SVS) was given responsibilities for the surveillance of the welfare of livestock kept for farming purposes.

In addition to economic pressures, the virtual eradication of such diseases as tuberculosis and the complete eradication of others, e.g., swine fever, has encouraged livestock owners to invest with greater confidence in larger individual livestock units or complexes of such units. These intensive systems are characterized by more animals per unit, less space per animal and mechanical equipment replacing some of the personnel attending to the animals. One man is thus enabled to look after very many animals. We must never forget the importance of that man, the stockman. His competence with and sympathy for his livestock is crucial for their well being. Paradoxically that very confidence to enlarge has meant that today the size of individual units with high stocking densities under systems of intensive management presents problems of entirely different dimensions than in the past in both the disease and welfare context.

There are aspects of certain husbandry systems which to some observers come very close to the dividing line between necessary pain and distress and that which can be described as unnecessary, if the infliction of pain and distress can ever be described as wholly necessary except in very well defined circumstances. It is in this area that most of the problems for the SVS arise, particularly in the determination of whether or not unnecessary pain or distress is being caused.

The philosophy of the SVS approach to livestock inspection is two-fold. First, we believe that animal welfare is inseparable from the majority, if not all, of our work with domestic farm livestock. Indeed as veterinary surgeons, we take an oath "that my constant endeavor will be to the welfare of animals committed to my care." Second, we believe that prosecution under the 1968 Act should be used as a last resort when all else has failed. That is why since 1968 there have been few prosecutions. We try first of all to be advisers and in advising we seek the help of the owner's own veterinary surgeon and other colleagues in the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service (ADAS) such as the environmental specialists, the nutritionists, and the surveyors, all of whom are always willing to cooperate.

The specific welfare content of our efforts to achieve these objectives can be divided into two separate parts:

- i. "Police" action which is taken in response to the discovery of adverse welfare conditions found at routine inspections or following the investigation of complaints;
- ii. The promotion of positive health which can, I believe, be considered to be the study of the relationship between particular systems of animal husbandry and management standards and the need to improve

(or maintain) productivity. However, before we can hope to satisfactorily discharge these responsibilities to both the animal and the agricultural industry, thereby promoting and maintaining a healthy profitable livestock enterprise on the farm, we need continuously to seek information on the range of normal behavior in all the species of domesticated farm livestock so that we can advise on the design of systems, particularly intensive systems, that will not lead to stress, frustration, or abnormal behavior, for this not only antagonizes certain sections of the general public but also leads to predisposition to disease and to loss in productivity and profitability.

In making these evaluations let us not forget the recommendations of the Brambell Committee which said quite categorically that animals should be provided with a husbandry system appropriate to their health and behavioral needs.

The Brambell Committee also recognized that each system of husbandry has its own hazards which must be evaluated and in that statement they included systems of extensive husbandry. The Committee also believed that if the above principles were applied to intensive husbandry methods the use of such methods should not in themselves be regarded as objectionable and may even often benefit the animals.

Careful observation is a basic and most important tool of our discipline. Knowledge of the range of normal behavior within our domesticated farm livestock species has many gaps. I would like to think that all of us who visit farms on a regular basis or who undertake projects with livestock could record basic aspects of behavior so that the bank of information is increased, thereby improving the quality of the advice that can be given.

More information allows more meaningful advice to be given to Ministers through the Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (FAWAC), which may involve a recommendation to amend parts of the Welfare Codes of Practice. More information allows our colleagues who are daily concerned with this work on the farm to be better briefed. More information allows consideration to be given to setting up and monitoring husbandry systems which can be designed to more closely match the most up-to-date knowledge of the behavioral needs of the animals concerned yet still provide satisfactory returns to the producer.

In the State Veterinary Service, with the cooperation of colleagues in other services of ADAS, we try to monitor all relevant experimental and development projects both inside and outside the Ministry in order to ensure compliance with the welfare codes of practice and any other statutory requirements, and consider if, with minor adjustments to the experiment or development protocol, subsequent results could be improved insofar as welfare content is concerned. The SVS also endeavors to ensure that the results of experimental and development projects which have or could have welfare implications are passed rapidly to all our veterinary and husbandry colleagues, to seek out and support new development projects and to act as a liaison between the FAWAC and research organizations.

We are continuously considering how we can more efficiently retrieve and disseminate information. Currently we are looking at ways and means of obtaining more information on the various husbandry systems for veal production, and have set up a small observational study on the transport of pigs.

It is not just in Great Britain that such interest is being taken in the welfare of livestock and in intensive husbandry systems. Within the Council of Europe, the European Convention for the Protection of Animals kept for Farming Purposes, applies to the keeping, care and housing of all domestic farm animals, and in particular to animals in modern intensive stock farming systems. This Convention has been ratified by a number of member countries including the UK, and a common approach by the European Economic Community countries is expected.

Articles 3 and 4 of the Convention state: "environmental conditions shall conform to the animals' physiological and ethological needs in accordance with established experience and scientific knowledge." That must always be our aim.

---

## NSMR: Its Image, Direction and Future

J. Russell Lindsey

**The following speech was presented by Dr. Lindsey, Chairman of the University of Alabama Department of Comparative Medicine, at the Annual Board Meeting of the National Society for Medical Research (NSMR), Chicago, Illinois, November 10, 1979.**

I would like to begin by stating two fundamental beliefs which have served as guiding principles throughout my professional career:

1. I am absolutely committed to the principle that animal research is in the best interest of *both* man and animals. (I have had the unusual experience of observing some of the earliest research on the defibrillator done in animals, and later seeing this instrument used to prolong my father's life by eight years. Similarly, I have seen light years of progress in medical care for animals since I graduated from veterinary school twenty years ago.)

2. I am equally committed to the principle that *all* animals used in research should be treated humanely throughout the research process. (Some people erroneously believe that a majority of animal research projects involve pain and suffering. I know from personal experience that when trained professionals are willing to invest the time, effort and ingenuity, most legitimate research objectives can be accomplished without pain and suffering.)

Now to the topic at hand, the "image, direction and future" of NSMR. It seems to me that the organization's present image can be appreciated only as