Balance in Animal Welfare

Congratulations on the standard of quality set by the first issues of your new Journal. I was especially impressed with the balanced approach taken by the authors of the review articles as well as the editorial comment you have provided.

While conducting research on livestock bruising, I became quite aware that much of the conflict that matters of animal welfare generate results from the different perspectives of the participants. Animal “welfare” often criticize the dehorning of cattle. They are correctly upset at the suffering and pain which attend the bruising of cattle prior to slaughter. Both events are separated in space and time, but a tradeoff occurs between them. Dehorning cattle reduces bruising. From the perspective of the farmer, the balance is in favor of horn removal in spite of the criticism, because his loss can be most acute at the time of slaughter.

Since bruising is still one of the few objective measures of food animal abuse, it is hoped that further research will identify more factors where the balance of suffering and pain tilts in favor of the long-term welfare of the animal and its farmer. The review by Temple Grandin in the second issue of your Journal (12:121-137, 1980) does much to place research in bruising into this potentially constructive context.

Yours faithfully,
H.R.C. Meischke MVSc, PhD, MRCVS, MASM
“Strath Allan”
Gundaroo NSW 2681
AUSTRALIA
30 April 1980

Although Temple Grandin cites the Australian studies as evidence for the significant role of horns in livestock bruising, she also states: “The number one cause of bruises on all types of livestock is rough, abusive handling which may account for up to 50% of all bruises” (p. 125). Clearly, this is a highly debatable subject, and we encourage letters such as Dr. Meischke’s to help the Journal maintain a balanced approach — Ed

Efficacy of Furosemide in the Equine

An article appearing in the Int J Stud Anim Prob 1(5), 1980 entitled “Horse Racing and Drug Abuse” quotes Dr. George Maylin of Cornell University as stating that “in clinical trials, some, but not all ‘bleeders’ respond to furosemide therapy.”

I have recently completed an extensive literature search on the use of furosemide in the equine and am unaware of any clinical trials which have been conducted to determine the efficacy of furosemide in preventing epistaxis in the horse. Not only has there been a lack of experimental evidence of furosemide’s efficacy in preventing epistaxis, there seems to be no objective rationale for using a diuretic, such as furosemide, as a prophylaxis against epistaxis (pulmonary hemorrhage).

Unfortunately, furosemide treatment of race horses is just another example of the empirical veterinary medicine which is so prevalently employed by racetrack practitioners.

Sincerely,
Robert O. Baker
411 N. 7th St.
St. Louis, MO 63101
10 April 1980

Dr. Maylin was referring to general claims by representatives of the American Association of Equine Practitioners that clinical trials have yielded evidence in support of furosemide therapy for equine epistaxis. The quotation was misleading in that it falsely implied first-hand knowledge of and participation in such trials by Dr. Maylin. We apologize. — Ed.

The Journal and its Organization

Andrew N. Rowan, Editor-in-Chief

Five issues of the Journal have now appeared and it is perhaps appropriate at this juncture to share some of the comments we have received and to explain the different Journal departments and their intended functions.

Almost without exception, the general tenor of the comments received has been favorable. There was a certain amount of adverse reaction to the ‘boxiness’ of the first issue’s layout, and this was, we hope, corrected in subsequent issues. The layout of the cover masthead will be changed for the second volume to accentuate the subject matter elements of the title rather than “International Journal.” We also intend to change the color of the cover page with the first issue of every new volume so that subscribers can discriminate between volumes with greater ease.

The initial issues of the Journal have depended heavily on solicited articles from selected authors, but this is beginning to change as more unsolicited articles are being received for consideration. We hope that this trend will continue to gather momentum, especially now that the Journal is scheduled to be included in Current Contents. (Current Contents publishes article titles and authors’ addresses, its very wide circulation ensures that an article in a journal covered by Current Contents will get maximum exposure.) In addition, we hope that more dialogue will take place in the pages of the Journal. Much of the material that has appeared so far has had an animal welfare bias or has been prepared by authors with such a bias. It is important that the Journal not be perceived merely as a means of preaching to the converted, but rather as a forum for debate. However, it is not always easy to draw the line between mere difference of opinion or perception and factual error. Anyone who deals in controversial issues — and animal welfare topics certainly qualify for this label — recognizes that there can be very different perceptions of what is factually correct. It is therefore important for the readers to recognize our different approaches to different departments in the Journal.

Editorials are written by members of the editorial staff and editorial advisory board and are subject to only minor editorial changes. If the editors recognize a statement as blatantly incorrect, we will call it to the attention of the author, but will not change it without permission.

News and Review items are prepared by the editorial staff, and every effort is made to ensure their accuracy. Such items cover stories and articles of interest in a concise and informative manner with brief references as required. Occasionally, the News and Review format will expand to accommodate special features such as the Focus on Live Animals in Car Crash Studies in issue #4. These features, which can be written either by a member of the editorial staff or other qualified journalists, are meant to be analytical, as distinct from the straight reporting of News and Review, and will therefore carry a byline.

Comment articles are written by a very diverse group, including editorial staff. Such articles vary from an examination of a particular issue in some depth to an outline of an organization’s goals and policies to the development of a personal viewpoint. These articles are not necessarily refereed although this section
A.N. Rowan  

Editorial  

may be used to present differing views on the same subject. If references are used in these articles, they will be the minimum necessary to locate the source and support the argument being developed.

Original and Review Articles are written by anyone with the necessary knowledge, data or expertise to prepare ‘hard’ scientific reviews or to present new data. These articles will be refereed, and we are following a policy of sending out papers for review without identifying the author. The referees will remain anonymous unless they agree to be named.

Legislation and Regulation items are written by members of the editorial staff or appropriate experts, and every effort is made to ensure their factual accuracy.

Meeting Reports are written by persons who have attended the relevant meetings. Every effort is made to ensure factual accuracy.

IJSAP Book News consists of a conglomeration of reviews and news about the printed and electronic media. The reviews reflect the opinions of the bylined author.

Letters to the Editor is the department in which readers should point out errors and dispute opinions and statements made in earlier issues of the Journal. If a letter is very long and cannot be cut, we will place it in the Comment section.

As should be apparent from the above, the Journal may well contain articles which produce vehement disagreement from certain segments of our readers. In fact, if everyone agreed with everything printed in these pages, we would not be achieving our objective, namely, to act as a forum for constructive debate and dialogue. Perhaps it is unrealistic to expect the Letters page to be flooded with comments at this stage, but we hope that readers will not be hesitant about criticizing the Journal’s content or style. We may not agree with all of the criticisms, but we will not ignore them.

Finally, we would like to thank all of you who had sufficient faith in the Journal to subscribe, some even before we had produced a single issue. There have been a few problems with distribution and we apologize for the long delay in getting the first issue out. We hope that you feel the wait was worthwhile.

Troubled Times at the RSPCA  

David Wilkins, Associate Editor  

Animal welfare means different things to different people. To the farmer it can mean proper care of stock and prevention of disease; to the urban dweller it can mean the abolition of fox hunting and the provision of kennels for unwanted dogs and cats; to the countryman it can mean maintaining the countryside for wildlife; to the philosopher it can mean the appreciation of the rights of animals to live a life of freedom in which all natural instincts can be followed, to a scientist it can mean advancement in the diagnosis and treatment of disease.

When one considers that representatives of all these varied walks of life with their different ideological attitudes can come together under the umbrella of the largest British welfare society—the RSPCA—then one should not be surprised that arguments occur and that complete agreement is the exception rather than the rule. Representatives must believe, if they are sincere, that their own individual views are important, and as in all democratic institutions, that they are entitled to express them.

Confrontation between advocates of extreme opinions has occurred from time to time. The most recent example within the RSPCA culminated in an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) in February this year, which stimulated a great deal of publicity in the United Kingdom. The acrimonious debate that took place was considered by many to be a sure sign of disintegration. This pessimistic view is not supported either by a closer examination of the underlying situation or by the developments since the EGM.

The background to the present problem would appear to be the rapidly changing attitude of many people toward man’s exploitation of animals. There has always been a small minority of people which has taken the view that no exploitation is justified under any circumstances. The loud and constant voicing of their ideals has had the effect of pushing a much larger percentage of the population toward reappraising both the extent and manner in which animals are utilized for the benefit of man.

Those who now question some of the existing animal husbandry practices can no longer be dismissed as cranks or sentimentalists. They include internationally respected scientists, philosophers, ecologists, etc. Within this new approach to animal welfare there are differing opinions as to the extent to which one should go in the name of progress. It is also significant that, regardless of the differences, all these welfare-oriented people have been thrown together as a result of the strong opposition to change that has come from the commercial purveyors of the more extreme examples of exploitation. It has produced an uneasy alliance.

A conflict of opinion has always existed, therefore, but it is important to establish why, within the RSPCA, this conflict has recently become acrimonious and subsequently public.

In part it has been created by the peculiar balance that exists between the voluntary workers who make up the RSPCA Branch membership and the National membership. A strong feeling has always existed that the Society’s activities are largely financed by and based upon the work of voluntary workers in the Branches. It is they who function at what is euphemistically termed the grass roots level. This can lead, as it has undoubtedly done recently, to a pronounced “holier-than-thou” attitude toward people in and outside the Society who are involved with animal welfare from a theoretical rather than a practical point of view. There may be justification for this attitude, but in itself it can and has led to confrontation. The National member may have no direct connection with any RSPCA Branch at all, and in this way a group of people has evolved which, albeit interrelated, has a different and perhaps more enlightened attitude toward people in and outside the Society who are involved with animal welfare from a theoretical rather than a practical point of view.

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A second and important factor lies in the nature of the welfare argument itself. It is a false assumption that an interest in or involvement with animal welfare in itself provides sufficient common ground for harmony. Many people may express a desire for change, but one immediately comes up against massive disa-