



July - August 2006

## BROILER DIRECTIVE WEAKENED BY MINISTERS

The Directive to introduce higher welfare standards for chickens reared for meat has been watered down following discussions and a lack of agreement between European Governments.

At the start of June, the Austrian Presidency tabled new proposals that see the plans to limit stocking densities drastically altered.

Whereas the original proposal set an upper stocking density of 38 kg/m<sup>2</sup>, the new version does not set an upper limit at all.

Instead it brings in a series of welfare standards for production facilities with under 30 kg/m<sup>2</sup> and slightly tougher ones for those over 30.

In addition, the proposals will now apply to facilities with 350 or more chickens, compared with the previous plan to apply to any facility with 100 chickens.

Agriculture Ministers met in Luxembourg to debate the proposals on 19<sup>th</sup> June, at which there was broad support for the weakened plan.

The Commission expressed concern over scrapping the upper stocking density limit, arguing that real improvements for chicken welfare needed to be achieved within an acceptable time scale.

Several countries, including the British Government, backed this view.

Countries including France, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland argued that an upper limit for stocking densities should be introduced only when additional data had been collated.

The Finnish Presidency will now focus on ways to take the Directive forward.

### Finland in charge

Finland has taken over the Presidency of the European Union for the second half of 2006.



Their priorities are to have the REACH chemicals proposals adopted by the end of the year, to start work on creating a model for sustainable agriculture and to stage a common animal disease policy, focused on prevention.

### Time To Stop Winging It : New Report On Wild Bird Trade

The RSPCA has launched a new report highlighting the welfare problems around the trade in wild caught birds.

The report argues that the current temporary ban on the import of wild caught birds into the European Union – introduced because of fears over Avian Flu – should be made permanent to save the lives of hundreds of thousands of birds.

The temporary ban has now been extended until 31<sup>st</sup> December.

The report highlights how support for a permanent ban comes from not just animal welfare organisations but also the Parrot Society UK, with 75% of its members wanting to see a ban.

## SUPPORT FOR THE ANIMAL WELFARE ACTION PLAN

Animal welfare organisations from across the European Union demonstrated in support of the new Animal Welfare Action Plan recently.

The action took place in Luxembourg, directly outside the venue where Europe's Ministers were meeting to have their first debate on the plan.

The event, organised by Eurogroup for Animal Welfare, was to encourage Ministers to give their full support to the Plan, which was unveiled by the European Commission in March.

Over 50 people attended the rally, and although a huge thunderstorm erupted as the EU Ministers started arriving, the demonstration of support for the plan remained clear.



*Thunderstorms failed to quell support for the Animal Welfare Action Plan in Luxembourg*

At the meeting, Ministers had their first opportunity to discuss the Plan, with countries like Germany, the UK, Austria and Belgium supporting the proposals.

The French Government, though, is opposed to the Action Plan, along with the Czech Republic.

In the European Parliament, Eurogroup gave evidence at a public hearing in May, a hearing attended by over 200 organisations.

Parliament is expected to make its recommendations on the Plan in October.

## Live Transport

The European Commission held a conference focusing on satellite navigation systems for vehicles transporting live animals, aimed at ensuring the new systems work effectively when introduced in 2007. Installation of satellite navigation systems will be required on all newly built vehicles that are to be used for transporting animals from 1<sup>st</sup> January, and it will be mandatory on all vehicles from 2009.

## RSPCA Award to Caroline Lucas MEP

THE RSPCA has awarded Euro-MP Caroline Lucas 'The Michael Kay Award' for her outstanding contribution to European animal welfare. The MEP was presented with her award during at the RSPCA's recent AGM.

Dr Lucas, who is a vice-president of the RSPCA, as well as of the European Parliament's animal welfare group, said:

"I am delighted to receive this award, and hope I can use it to further my campaigning and parliamentary work to stamp out animal cruelty. If the EU is to become relevant to people's everyday lives it must impose minimum standards in those areas, like animal welfare and protection, which matter most to voters across Europe."



*Caroline Lucas MEP*

RSPCA Director General Jackie Ballard said:

"Caroline has made improving animal welfare central as her work as an MEP, ensuring that animal protection issues are high on the agenda. She has demanded legislation to halt the testing of thousands of chemicals on animals, proposing an entirely non-animal test strategy, a complete ban on live exports, and looked at the implications of international trade for animal welfare."