



May – June 2006

## FIRST EUROPEAN ANIMAL WELFARE CONFERENCE TAKES PLACE

The first ever Animal Welfare Conference took place in Brussels at the end of March. Organised by the Austrian Government in their role in the EU Presidency, it focused on current animal legislation and the new Animal Welfare Action Plan. It also examined what steps can be taken by retailers, consumers, governments and welfare organisations to improve welfare standards.

Many animal welfare charities and organisations from across Europe attended, and the Director of Eurogroup for Animal Welfare, Sonja Van Tichelen (below), was one of the guest speakers.



Sonja said that the results of the recent Eurobarometer survey highlighted the importance across Europe that animal welfare now had, and that it was important that future policy development reflected that.

### **Animal Welfare**

### **A part of EU Food Chain Policy**

International Conference on Animal Welfare

The Austrian Government gave a presentation on their new Federal Act on Animal Welfare, which combines what were different laws in different federal states.

Economist Thom Achterbosch from the LEI-Wageningen University showed how, economically, raising standards of production on farms made little difference to the costs of production or at the point of sale.

### **Exports Of Veal Calves Resumes**

After ten years, the ban on exporting veal calves to Europe was lifted on 1<sup>st</sup> May and the first shipment took place on 3<sup>rd</sup> May. The RSPCA and CIWF have condemned the lifting of the ban, highlighting the appalling conditions the veal calves are kept in during the journeys to Europe.

“It is extraordinary that these very young calves can be transported abroad to be reared in conditions that have long been illegal in the UK,” says David Bowles, the RSPCA’s Head of External Affairs.

“Although cramped veal crates will effectively be banned in the EU from the end of this year, they can still be in use today and, even in the alternative group housing systems, slatted floors are permitted - with no comfortable resting area or bedding.”



Dr Julia Wrathall, RSPCA Head of Farm Animals, added: "An extra concern is that both the existing and forthcoming new EU law on transporting live animals allow calves as young as two weeks old to be in transit for nine hours with a water/feed break of just one hour, followed by another nine or more hours on the road."

## NO EARLY BAN FOR BATTERY CAGES IN GERMANY

The German Government has scrapped plans to introduce the ban on conventional battery cages five years before the ban is to be introduced across the EU.

Germany was expected to ban conventional battery cages next year, but pressure from regional governments led the German Federal Parliament to reconsider this plan, which the German Government has now endorsed.

Germany will now ban battery cages in 2012, in line with the rest of the European Union Member States.



- The RSPCA has just published a new report on the economics of moving away from battery cages. The report – *'Coming of Age: The age structure of UK caged egg production facilities'* - shows how the costs of alternative systems, such as barn systems, are comparable to those of enriched cages.

Read more about the RSPCA's campaign to end the use of all battery cages at:  
[www.rspca.org.uk/layinghens](http://www.rspca.org.uk/layinghens)

## EU expansion to slow down

The expansion of the European Union is likely to slow down once Romania and Bulgaria join next year. The Commission has said that there needs to be time for many of the institutional reforms have been implemented.

Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn said the 25-nation bloc must use the time to make its institutions work better and convince public opinion of the benefits of its "big bang" admission of 10 mainly east European new members in 2004.

## Animal Welfare Action Plan

The proposed Animal Welfare Action Plan is beginning its procedural movement through the Parliament and Council of Ministers.

A demonstration to highlight the benefits of the Plan is being planned for June 19<sup>th</sup> in Luxembourg, when the European Agriculture Ministers will be meeting.

In the European Parliament, the Agriculture Committee will take the lead on examining the proposals and the Plan is expected to be subject to a full vote in the European Parliament in late September. That date should be regarded as provisional though, not as a definitive date.

Read the Animal Welfare Action Plan at  
[http://ec.europa.eu/comm/food/animal/welfare/com\\_action\\_plan230106\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/comm/food/animal/welfare/com_action_plan230106_en.pdf)

## UK Parliament debates Broiler Directive

The House of Commons' European Standing Committee recently debated the broiler Directive proposals, with the Minister, Ben Bradshaw, in attendance.

He stated that there was a blocking minority against the proposals due to the threat of AI and that it was unlikely to go through under Austrian Presidency, which ends in June.



Asked if consumers could afford to pay the extra cost of chicken resulting from the directive, the Government said the legislation would increase poultry meat costs by approximately 1 pence per kilo.

Mr Bradshaw concluded that the proposals were good but there was room for improvement, which struck a balance between higher welfare and economics.

Read the full debate at:  
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmstand/euro/st060427/60427s01.htm>