

## MEDIA WATCH

**“The Technical Board of Appeal decision in the *Oncomouse* case”**, *European Intellectual Property Review*, Volume 28(1), 2006

David Thomas and Georgina A. Richards discuss the Board’s decision to narrow the scope of the patent to mice.

**“The ethics of research involving animals: a review of the Nuffield Council on Bioethics report from an antivivisectionist perspective”**, *ATLA*, December 2005

David Thomas

## EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENTS

### MEPs demand action on bear farms

A European Parliament resolution calling on China to ban the farming of bears for their bile was passed in January. The Resolution was approved by more than half of the Parliament's 732 members, with cross-party support, making it official European Parliament policy.

Asiatic Black Bears (Moon bears) are incarcerated in tiny wire cages with rusting metal catheters implanted in their abdomens through which bile is extracted for use in traditional medicines. The procedure causes extreme agony. Although the Chinese Government has closed down some farms, there are still more than 7,000 bears imprisoned in cages on over 200 farms across China. Moon bears can expect to live up to 30 years in the wild, but life expectancy falls to 10-12 years for caged bears.

The Resolution has been forwarded to the European Commission, the Council of Ministers and the Member States.

### European Commission launches Action Plan

Also in January, the European Commission (DG Health and Consumer Protection) launched an Action Plan on the Protection and Welfare of Animals, the overall aim of which is to promote animal welfare over the

next five years. It set out the following primary objectives:

- to give a clearer direction to EU animal welfare policies,
- to continue the promotion of high animal welfare standards,
- to provide better focus for the allocation of resources,
- to support future trends in animal welfare research,
- to continue to seek alternative solutions to animal testing,
- to ensure a more consistent and coordinated approach to animal welfare across all EU policy areas.

## Welfare of non-native species

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Rarely a week passes without some mention of alien or non-native species. Some, such as rabbits, have been in the UK for centuries, others, such as the grey squirrel, are more recent arrivals. Some were deliberately brought here, while others arrived by chance.<sup>26</sup>

In recent years, it has become increasingly apparent that some non-native species, the invasive ones, come at a cost. Sometimes the cost is so high that the particular species must be totally eradicated to protect threatened native species<sup>27</sup> and to fulfil the UK’s obligations under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity.<sup>28</sup>

Indeed, it may appear that much of the legislation relating to non-native species is somewhat draconian. It is, for example, a criminal offence under the Wildlife and

<sup>26</sup> See Yalden, D., “The History of Mammalian Introduction in the UK”, a paper given at “Mammaliens – A One Day Conference on the Problems Caused by Non-native British Mammals” on 23 February 2002, p. 35.

<sup>27</sup> See Martin, B., “Culling of non-native species”, *Journal of Animal Welfare Law*, November 2005, pp. 12-15.

<sup>28</sup> Entered into force in 1993.