

News Updates

Expulsion of NGOs from Ivory Trade Talks

The International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) reported (17 August 2011) that NGOs, including the European Commission, were excluded from the 61st meeting of the Convention on Illegal Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) Standing Committee when discussions about the future of ivory trade were about to commence. On the agenda was the ivory-decision making mechanism, elephant management and conservation, as well as poaching and illegal ivory trade.

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The request to remove members of the civil society and to conduct talks behind closed doors came from Kuwait who made this request on behalf of some Asian countries. The alleged rationale for this expulsion was disclosure of sensitive documents.

However, according to IFAW all documents were readily available on the CITES website prior to discussions taking place.

Kenya and UK strongly opposed removal of the NGOs from the talks citing their great expertise on the subject of elephants and ivory sale. After a vote the NGOs were allowed to come back to the discussion table.

The CITES Standing Committee oversees the implementation of rules for the international trade in over 34,000 species between the triennial meetings of the 175 CITES member States. The top issues debated during the 61st meeting included new financial mechanisms, elephant conservation, measures to reduce current levels of rhino poaching, tigers and other big cats, mahogany and other timber species, sturgeon and caviar trade, and the sourcing of reptile skins used in the leather industry.

Slaughter without stunning banned in the Netherlands

Eurogroup for Animals reported (29 June 2011) that the Dutch parliament voted to ban slaughter of livestock without prior stunning. The ban puts an end to exemption that has allowed

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Muslims and Jews living in the Netherlands to slaughter animals according to centuries-old dietary norms.

According to Eurogroup's communiqué the Dutch government's decision to vote in favour of such a ban is not directed against religious slaughter but rather that religion is not a sufficient reason for animals to suffer unnecessarily. The various religious groups based in the Netherlands that practise ritual killing of animals were invited to find an alternative animal friendly methods.

This bill was proposed by the Party for the Animals and after scientific consensus that animals that are made unconscious prior to slaughter suffer less, than animals that are killed fully conscious.

Dr. Courat from Eurogroups said: *“This is a major step forward for animal welfare and we urge all of the 26 other European Union member states to follow the example of the Dutch government. It will however be possible for religious groups to get an exemption, but only when they provide indisputably proof that their alternative method will not cause more harm to animal welfare than pre-slaughter stunning.”*

If the bill passes the upper house of the Dutch parliament later this year it will alleviate suffering of 1 million animals in the Netherlands.

Sweden, Norway, Luxembourg, and Switzerland had ritual slaughter of livestock, but the EU permits religious dispensation.

EU’s ban on seal products

In 2009 the European Parliament and the Council adopted a Regulation (No 1007/2009), which banned the trade in seal products in the European Union. The ban was implemented in light of concerns about the animal welfare aspects of seal hunts.

Hunting methods used by sealers such as shooting, netting and clubbing were also put into question. The ban that came into force in 2010 applies to imported seal products as well as to seal products produced in the EU.

IFAW’s communiqué from 8 June 2011 informs that the Canadian government had asked the World Trade Organization (WTO) to form a formal dispute resolution panel that would review the ban in terms of whether the ban complies with WTO rules.

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In turn the EU Parliament reaffirmed their position for the EU ban on seal products, and had asked the Canadian government to withdraw their request for review, which they say is counter to positive trade relations.

The spokesperson for the IFAW said: *“Canada must respect the right of Europeans to say ‘no’ to a bloody, cruel and unnecessary industry. This WTO challenge on behalf of a dying industry will cost millions and could threaten a trade deal worth billions to Canadian and European citizens.”*

The IFAW further reports that despite this year’s hunt smallest scale since 1993, the video footage they were able to obtain shows that sealers continue to engage in intentional cruelty. They intend to share the evidence as a further prove that commercial sealing is *“inhumane, unnecessary, and outdated practice that should be stopped.”*

The EU barred the import of white pelts taken from baby seals in 1983. Belgium and Netherlands have banned seal products, and the US has banned Canadian seal products since 1972.

The use of animals in experimentation

Under the Motto **“Together it is possible”** 900 professionals from 50 countries gathered in Montreal, Canada between the 21-25 August 2011 to take part in a dialogue on how to replace, reduce or refine (the three R’s) the use of animals in experimentation.

The goal of the 8th World Congress on Alternatives and Animal Use in the Life Sciences was *“to bridge the distance between science and policy and to identify opportunities for collaborations.”*

Among the debated themes was international development in the three R’s and regulatory testing, alternative method development, public participation in animal policy decision making, conflicts between the three R’s, incorporation of the three R’s in education and training, linking the three R’s to animal welfare, and replacement and reduction in basic research. The use of animals in experiments and the eventual reduction and replacement is also a hot topic in Europe. The EU Directive

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2010/63/EU aimed to update and replace the 1986 EU Directive 86/609/EEC on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes. The goal behind this revision was to ‘harmonise’ animal research legislation in the EU, to strengthen the protection of animals used in scientific procedures in line with the EC Treaty of Rome protocol on animal welfare, and to implement fully the principles of the 3Rs. The ‘new’ Directive acknowledges the capacity of animals to sense and express pain, suffering, distress and lasting harm and seeks to improve

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the welfare of animals used in scientific procedures by raising minimum standards for their protection in line with the latest scientific developments. While the target is to replace live animals in experiments, the Directive states that the use of animals is *“necessary to protect human and animal health and the environment.”*

The Eurogroup for Animals (22 August 2011) requested the 8th World Congress participants to ensure that the EU and the European researchers work out a strategy that will adopt the three R’s and implementing this strategy in all aspects on research and testing.

Sonja Van Tischen of Eurogroup said: *“The goal of the World Congress is to bridge the gap between science, policy and education by identifying mechanisms which enable effective knowledge transfer and the translation of science based evidence into good animal practices. Non-animal alternatives will result in higher quality science and it is time for the EU to act and promote alternative methods by committing to their development and use.”*

The implementation of the EU Directive 2010/63/EU will start in January 2013.

Degradation from the Battery Cage Ban

In the last issue of the Journal attention was brought to the Eurogroup’s call on the EU’s Commission to adhere to the deadline for the ban of the barren battery cages after some egg producers failed to invest in new egg production systems.

The egg producers had 12 years to change their practices in order to comply with this law.

On 16th August 2011 the Eurogroup for Animals strongly opposed the suggestion of the Belgian Minister Onkelinx that she would be willing to grant egg producers unable to implement the new systems six months “period of grace”. The Eurogroup states that should the postponement took place it would be illegal and in breach of the EU Directive that clearly states that as of 1 January 2012 chickens cannot be kept in battery ban cages under any conditions.

Director of the Eurogroup, Sonja Van Tische, stated the following: *“Eurogroup is extremely concerned that member states are taking unilateral decisions to postpone this ban, either by stating that they will not control the ban before a given time as is the case in Spain or like*

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Belgium where they have put forward their own conditions. It is appalling how member states treat EU legislation to protect animals. Enforcement and compliance are becoming a big joke with large numbers of animals suffering as a result.”

Badger Cull in Wales Postponed

In March the Welsh Assembly voted in favour of a badger cull to eradicate the spread of bovine tuberculosis in cattle. The cull was to apply in West Wales, in the so-called intensive action area of north Pembrokeshire and neighbouring areas of Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire.

The Guardian reports (21 June 2011) that the Welsh environment minister John Griffiths put a halt on the cull, and ordered a scientific review that will look into the tactics of how to control the disease and to find out the best way to tackle bovine TB.

The Badger Trust welcomed a “rigorous review” but maintains that the cull ordered by the previous government was *“legally flawed and was likely to have been quashed by the High Court on judicial review.”*

The report of the panel, chaired by Prof. Christopher Gaskell of the Royal Agricultural College, is expected to be completed before the end of the year.

Dominika Flindt Researcher

News from Columbia

During August and September 2010, the university group "Javeriana Animal Protection", organised the academic event "Seminar-Workshop: Participatory tools for Animal Protection in Colombia" at Pontificia Universidad Javeriana in Bogotá, Colombia.

This seminar-workshop was one of the first of its kind in Columbia intended to train citizens in the legal, ethical and participatory tools for animal protection with links to the animal protection movement and NGOs.

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The seminar-workshop lasted over five days, during which lectures and group activities were conducted covering thirty topics related to animal protection. Twenty seven speakers and approximately fifty attendees took part in the event. In addition, local control officers at District and National, levels explained what powers have been developed for animal protection.

Topics included: the current context of animal abuse, the bioethical perspective, concepts of leadership

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and the study of Colombian and international law. Later a session on local, national and international animal protection practices.

The following modules were presented: specific policy issues, case studies, government agencies responsible for the supervision and control as well as appropriate mechanisms for implementation in the lines of: pets, animals used in work, animals used in shows, animals used for experimental and wild animals. Exercises were conducted in applying the tools learned and finally, the event closed with a panel of experts in ethics and policy.

Some of the participants (teachers and students) participated actively in the management and promotion of different activities that have enabled small and medium achievements in animal protection issues in the country.

The seminar-workshop was made possible by financial and logistical support of the Career of Ecology, School of Environmental and Rural Studies, Bioethics Institute and Welfare Vice-Rector of the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Further support was provided by the Environmental Police and the District Oversight, which we owe grateful thanks.

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Stop Press

British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection v Information Commissioner

(Unreported) Independent November 16, 2011

In what has been described as a 'landmark ruling' the Information Tribunal found in favour of the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection (BUAV) in its bid to force Newcastle University to hand over details of Home Office licences to conduct experiments on primates. The University is expected to appeal. Further details will appear in the next edition of the journal.

Dog breeding laws in Wales

The First Minister announced in August 2011 Welsh Government plans to introduce dog breeding legislation to address unsatisfactory practices among some dog breeding establishments. It is planned that legislation will tighten the thresholds for when a dog breeding licence is required and set staff to dog rations.