

**Humane Slaughter
Association**

Newsletter March 2013



Chairman's comment

Welcome to the 2013 Spring Newsletter. On behalf of the Trustees and staff I would like to thank Mike Bird, who retired from the Trustees last October after eight years as Treasurer, for his expertise and service to the HSA over the years.



Ensuring its expertise in humane livestock handling and slaughter is available wherever it is needed continues to be crucial to the HSA's work in promoting high welfare standards. The high demand for HSA training continues, with a wide range of activities in recent months as reported here. An innovation in new legislation is the requirement for all staff handling live animals in slaughterhouses to have certificates of competence – so this demand for expertise is likely to continue.

The HSA has now also begun a series of online modules detailing best practice that will be freely available to anyone, anywhere in the world - and will benefit animals worldwide.

These and many other activities are only possible due to your support. My sincere thanks for this.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lydia Brown".

Lydia Brown, Chairman

New on-line guide to slaughtering poultry published

The internet has revolutionised knowledge transfer in recent years and is increasingly accessible in all parts of the world. To take advantage of this, the HSA has decided to make a series of educational resources available on-line, enabling the information to reach a large, global audience, free of charge.

The first of the intended series is a guide to the practical slaughter of poultry for the smallholder and small-scale producer. The aim is for the guide to be an accessible and comprehensive introduction to the humane slaughter of chickens, ducks, geese, guinea fowl, quail and turkeys. It has been developed to help poultry keepers around the world when killing sick or injured birds, or when slaughtering for consumption, and is an updated version of the paperback guide of the same name produced in 2001.

The guide includes photographs and video of best practice, and covers all stages of the slaughter process: from the catching and handling of poultry to the use of stunning and slaughter equipment available to the smallholder. The information is provided in 'bite size' pieces and allows readers to access more in-depth explanation if they so wish.

The HSA hopes that its educational resources published on-line, as with all HSA publications and recommendations, will be recognised as best practice advice, based on the latest scientific research. A benefit of on-line publication is that it is possible to update the resources according to industry developments and changes in legislation. The on-going development of the content of the HSA website is also due to be complemented by a complete redesign of the site over the coming months.



The on-line guide covers all aspects of the handling and slaughter of chickens, ducks, geese, turkeys, quail and guinea fowl.



The new regulations on slaughter and killing

The new European Regulation on the protection of animals at the time of killing came into force throughout the European Union on 1st January 2013. In the UK, the Westminster Government and devolved administrations are putting in place updated domestic legislation to reflect this. During 2012, the HSA was involved in many discussions and planning meetings addressing preparations for the implementation of this new legislation. A note providing information for processors about all the changes from the previous legislation has been prepared and posted at the HSA website (www.hsa.org.uk) and the charity has dealt with many enquiries about this from processors, vets and producers.

The main principle of the Regulation is that '...animals shall be spared any avoidable pain, distress or suffering...' and the introductory section includes quite a sweeping point about the interpretation of what is meant by 'avoidable'. It states: '...pain, distress or suffering should be considered as avoidable when business operators or any person involved in the killing of animals breach one of the requirements of this Regulation or use permitted practices without reflecting the state-of-the-art... '. This builds in an acknowledgement that the state-of-the-art about best practices is not static, but develops with time (in the light of scientific, technical and other advances) and that practices must reflect this progress.

It puts in place good new measures and appears to have the flexibility to take on board, rather than stifle, new advances as they occur. Regarding imports, it requires standards equivalent to those in its main provisions be met and, in this way, we hope that it will help to raise welfare standards widely around the world.

New qualification structure

In 2013 the change in legislation from the Welfare of Animals (Slaughter or Killing) Regulations 1995 as amended, to the EC Regulation 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing, heralds a new qualification structure for issuing certificates of competence to kill livestock. On 16 October 2012 the HSA attended a meeting of the steering group tasked with implementing the new qualification structure. Topics included the procedures for practical assessment of applicants and any potential differences between the domestic legislation of the different countries of the United Kingdom. Once the legislation has been finalised in each country, it will be possible for the new qualification structure to be rolled out in those locations and to begin accepting trainees.

In the meantime, the HSA has written guidance on the new legislation for interested parties and published it on its website (www.hsa.org.uk) and in relevant journals.

FAWC meeting on welfare of farmed fish

Technical Officer, Nathan Rhys Williams, represented the HSA at a meeting of the Farm Animal Welfare Committee (FAWC) in Edinburgh in July to discuss the welfare of farmed fish at slaughter and killing. FAWC was interested in seeking the opinion of relevant parties in order to inform their impending report on the topic. Present at the meeting were representatives from the fish farming industry and producer groups, academics, veterinarians, engineers and other animal welfare organisations. There was much discussion about the animal welfare improvements already seen in the Scottish salmon industry in recent years and how those experiences could be used to improve the welfare of other species of farmed fish, including those farmed in other countries. It was good to see much consensus around the table and a genuine desire for the fish industry to be leading the way in adopting high standards of farmed animal welfare. The HSA looks forward to reading the committee's final report.

Welfare advice

Over the last six months, at the invitation of the Food Business Operators, the Technical Director, Charles Mason, accompanied by Technical Officer Nathan Rhys Williams, has carried out four visits to provide independent animal welfare advice at premises supplying major retailers. These visits were to two plants processing cattle and two processing sheep. In December 2012 the HSA visited a slaughterhouse processing geese to provide advice on animal welfare.



HSA Education and Training

Throughout the year, the HSA's technical team has again been in high demand to provide training in various aspects of its work.

- In July and August 2012 the HSA trained staff responsible for the welfare of turkeys from day-old pouls through to adults at a large company. Each course was a two-day instruction on animal health, husbandry and welfare in the hatchery and on-farm. The training was carried out in association with Andrew Farley of Easton College and Stephen Lister of Crowshall Veterinary Services.
- Since the summer, Charles Mason has delivered ten humane dispatch courses to BPEX producer groups in various locations from East Yorkshire to Cornwall, with more planned for the southern region in the spring.
- In-house animal welfare training has been delivered to the lairage, slaughter and security staff of two companies in Lincolnshire and Surrey processing pigs and cattle for major retailers.
- In October/November 2012 Technical Officer Jade Spence spent a week in Scotland training stock workers how to use a captive-bolt stunner designed for poultry. The training was performed at the request of the Avian Science Research Centre at Scotland's Rural College, who (in association with the University of Glasgow and Livetec Systems Ltd) are funded by Defra to investigate novel methods of culling poultry on-farm. The HSA visited three sites to provide training for staff who work with broiler chickens, laying hens and turkeys.
- A course was held in February this year at the Duchy College in Cornwall for sheep farmers faced with the need to dispatch lambs affected by the Schmallenberg virus.

All around the UK there is a demand from owners of livestock and their employees for training courses on animal welfare. Practical instruction in particular ensures personnel are better prepared to perform handling and killing procedures appropriately and effectively, thereby reducing any risk of an animal suffering. Between 2008 and 2012, 100% of delegates surveyed at the practical HSA on-farm slaughter of poultry course rated the HSA trainers, practical session and overall structure of the course as "very good" or "good".

In order to further develop instruction in practical and effective skills in humane slaughter methods, particularly for novice handlers, the HSA is investigating the use of life-like, life-size model animals in teaching humane killing procedures, initially for poultry.

Market posters

In consultation with the Livestock Auctioneers' Association, the HSA has produced a series of posters on animal handling for display in markets and for use in training market staff.



Dorothy Sidley Scholars Meeting

The four 2012 Dorothy Sidley Scholars were invited to give a presentation about their research projects at the annual Animal Welfare Student Scholars Meeting, hosted by UFAW. This year the event was held at Harper Adams University College on the 5 December 2012. The event attracted a large audience and the fifteen student presentations recounted a breadth of animal welfare research – from laboratory rodents to dairy cows.

Of the HSA Dorothy Sidley Scholars, Helen Braid, from the Royal Veterinary College, London, used her scholarship to investigate electrical stunning of sheep. Her presentation provided an interesting insight into the use of such equipment in the slaughterhouse.

Tanya Stafford-Jones from the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies, Edinburgh, proposed to develop a poster for the pig-industry as part of her scholarship. In her presentation, she described the difficulties she encountered trying to summarise the existing best-practice literature into a single document and the areas she believes would benefit from further research.

Both presentations generated much interest from the audience. The Scholars answered questions confidently and will surely have inspired some potential applicants for the scheme in 2013. The other two 2012 Dorothy Sidley Scholars, Josephine Hart, from the Royal Veterinary College, and Kristi Kerner, from the Estonian University of Life Sciences, were unable to attend the meeting. However, the HSA is pleased to have received their final reports – Josephine has looked into neck-cutting practices on turkey processing plants and Kristi has compared practices in UK and Estonian slaughterhouses.

HSA Centenary PhD: 18 months on

In 2011, as part of its Centenary, the HSA awarded a Research Training Scholarship to Jessica Hopkins for her PhD research proposal to investigate humane mechanical methods for killing poultry. Within the scientific community there have been some doubts as to the humanness of cervical (neck) dislocation. With EC Regulation 1099/2009 coming into force on 1 January 2013, there are now limitations to the use of cervical dislocation to kill poultry. Humane, reliable, simple and economic alternatives are therefore required and the HSA hopes that Jessica's important work will assist with the development and worldwide uptake of such equipment.

Jess has begun her second year of research at Scotland's Rural College, the SRUC (formerly the Scottish Agricultural College) and she submitted her first annual report to the HSA in autumn 2012. In Jess's own words: "The first year of this studentship started off with writing a comprehensive literature review which explored the physiology of death and the conundrum which is animal consciousness, as well as a wide variety of mechanical killing devices across several species." With the assistance of the British Poultry Council and the British Egg Industry Council, Jess surveyed a number of farms and recorded that the vast majority instruct their staff to use manual cervical dislocation to kill unviable poultry (eg in an emergency for bird welfare) and that stock workers prefer this method. Jess informed the HSA: "Following this, four mechanical killing devices were designed: one novel device and the modification of three existing killing devices. These devices were then tested to determine their efficacy on chicken cadavers (broilers and layers) at two stages of production (juveniles and adults/slaughter age)." In her second year of research, Jess plans to focus on testing the most promising of these devices on anaesthetised birds.

During the first year Jess presented her research plans at various conferences and to students of the MSc Applied Poultry Science degree at SRUC. In year two she plans to present her work at two international conferences. The HSA looks forward to receiving Jess's second annual report of her progress this autumn.



Dorothy Sidley Scholars Tanya Stafford-Jones (fourth from left) and Helen Braid (far right), with the HSA's Nathan Williams at the annual UFAW/HSA Scholars Meeting.



Conferences, Workshops and Lectures

HSA Technical Director, Charles Mason, has given lectures to animal welfare students and trainee livestock auctioneers at Harper Adams University College. He has also given papers on the new slaughter legislation at the annual seminar of the Association of Meat Inspectors (AMI) in September 2012 and at a Public Policy Exchange conference at the end of January 2013. He also attended a workshop on sheep transport at the University of Bristol.

International meetings

James Kirkwood spoke on 'The new Regulation: opportunities and challenges for animal welfare' at the European Commission's International Conference on 'Protection of Animals in the Slaughterhouse: Getting ready for 2013' in Brussels, 24 October 2012; and on principles of welfare in the killing and slaughter of animals at the Third Chinese Veterinary Medicine Association Conference, SuZhou, 28-29 October 2012.

Charles Mason attended a Sanco conference on the new slaughter legislation in Brussels.

EFSA consultation on welfare indicators at slaughter

James Kirkwood attended a meeting at the European Food Standards Agency (EFSA) in January 2013 at which the agency presented its plans for identifying welfare indicators for monitoring procedures at slaughterhouses. EFSA will be seeking views and consulting on this in the coming year.

CARAS Presentation

Charles Mason was presented with his certificate in recognition of Associateship of the Royal Agricultural Societies (ARAgS) at the House of Lords on 5 February 2013. The presentation was made by Baroness Byford, who served as Opposition Parliamentary Spokesman for Food, Farming and Rural Affairs from 1997 to 2007. She has also served as President of the Royal Association of British Dairy Farmers, as a Warden of the Worshipful Company of Farmers in the City of London and she is a Fellow of the Royal Agricultural Society.

Welcome

Nathan Rhys Williams joined the HSA as Technical Officer in June 2012. This is his first role since graduating as a veterinary surgeon from the University of Liverpool in 2012, from where he also gained a BSc in Veterinary Conservation Medicine. A desire to specialise within the livestock industry combined with previous experience of technical writing for Arla Foods and Robert Wiseman Dairies led him to take up his post, where he is currently focussed on developing HSA resources for on-line publication.



Humane Slaughter Association

The Old School, Brewhouse Hill,
Wheathampstead, St Albans,
Herts AL4 8AN, UK
Tel: +44(0)1582 831919
Fax: +44(0)1582 831414
Email: info@hsa.org.uk
Website: www.hsa.org.uk