

World Association for Transport Animal Welfare and Studies (TAWS)



Common ground: moving forward with animals

TAWS/TAA/BVA workshop held 15 April 2004, Silsoe Research Institute, UK

Common ground: potential for cooperation

Report of discussion group

Introduction

The members of the group were: Asselbergs, Marriette Jose; Collister, David; Cotton, Helena; Hovell Ramsay, Hulme Jeremy; Nicholas Sue; Smales John; Lord Soulsby; Stevens Tony; Tasker Alex. Jeremy Hulme acted as Chairman and Ramsay Hovell was appointed rapporteur.

An introduction in resume form was given by each individual covering their particular interests relevant to the workshop as a whole, and their position in any of the participating organisations. BVA, ILPH, SPANA and TAWS were all represented as was the Harness Development Agency, Farrier's Council and the RVC Students' Overseas Expedition (2004).

Education, training and attachments

Several members were interested to find ways in which students or newly qualified veterinary graduates could gain experience with working animals in developing countries. Awareness of employment possibilities overseas was required. Already SPANA provides some work experience positions but there is a limit to the number of places one organisation can usefully create. ILPH might consider some attachments but was keen to establish what could be offered in clinical situations by a student close to qualifying, compared to a young registered veterinary surgeon. It was evident that candidates for these positions should not only be well motivated but also willing to accept a code of conduct in order to avoid a culture clash when adapting to a new environment.

Undergraduates would certainly appreciate more events at which to hear at first hand from those who had themselves taken part in veterinary projects abroad. In addition, it seems possible that some farming experience with animals outside UK could be gained early in the veterinary course and be counted towards credits required in holiday tasks.

The suggestion that work experience might be gained by 'seeing practice' with a farrier, especially by those who aimed ultimately to become equine practitioners, did not appeal because it was said that farriery is not currently an item on the curriculum. However, it could enhance understanding between veterinary surgeons and farriers and be of advantage to those interested in large animal orthopaedics.

Where appropriate, these points concerning education, training and job opportunities can be taken forward by the associations or individuals involved in these discussions; while on behalf of BVA/TAWS, Helena Cotton and Tony Stevens should have further scope and contacts for answering students' enquiries about potential opportunities.

Co-operation with other animal welfare organisations

An example of recent co-operation between organisations is one of SPANA's Outreach Projects, namely Farriery Training in Khartoum. Ramsay Hovell gave some background to the application and described how SPANA and TAWS together had contributed to improving foot care of equines in the Sudan and the steps being taken to ensure sustainability of the project's aims. This was one instance which could be cited of good co-operation; but other occasions had been mentioned where co-operation had been less than could be desired, usually due to a lack of communication and resulting in disadvantage to both parties. One of the aims of the workshop was to improve liaison between organisations with overlapping programmes and to avoid misunderstandings as far as possible.

With this in mind, reference was made to the third theme of the main meeting, 'Working with other animal organisations' introduced by John Smales. It was indicated that there surely must be some common criteria for practical and ethical considerations which applied to both short and longer term projects. In which case, these could be regarded perhaps as core indices for a general code of practice. If these were acceptable to a majority of the organisations, which routinely or from time to time work together, they could be used as a starting point from which further discussion would be possible.

A proposal to this effect was made which found support from the majority present. It was then agreed, when John Smales himself volunteered to take this further, that he would draw up a list of criteria, already referred to, in the form of guidelines for co-operation between animal welfare organisations. This draft would be circulated to the Companion Animal Welfare Council (Chairman Lord Soulsby) and the National Equine Welfare Council (Chairman M Taggart) as these two organisations have experience of this type of code. Comments would be collated in a second draft by John Smales and sent to Paul Starkey who would circulate copies to the ten members of the working group for consultation. TAWS would then be well placed to arrange for wider discussion possibly at the next Seminar.

On this positive note in full accord, the group discussion was closed by the Chairman. A summary of these deliberations was then presented by the rapporteur as part of the final session.

G.J.R. Hovell, 18.4.04