

27 February 2004

WELFARE ASPECTS OF MODIFICATIONS, THROUGH SELECTIVE BREEDING OR APPLICATION OF MODERN BIOTECHNOLOGY, TO THE FORM, FUNCTION, OR BEHAVIOUR OF COMPANION ANIMALS

CALL FOR EVIDENCE

The Companion Animal Welfare Council (CAWC) is undertaking an inquiry into welfare aspects of genetic changes arising through the breeding of companion animals. This will cover selective natural breeding and the application of modern biotechnological methods and will include the welfare aspects of the actual breeding methods also.

A very wide range of species is kept and bred as companion animals (including those kept for interest or as a hobby). The breeding of these animals has often involved, and continues to involve, selection for a wide variety of traits such as colour, size, shape, and temperament. This is apparent, for example, in the extraordinary diversity of breeds of dogs, pigeons, rabbits, goldfish and of strains of many other species of mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles and fish kept as companion animals. Historically, it seems that once animals begin to be bred in captivity, it is not long before interest in deliberate selection for particular characteristics and strains emerges. There are already, for example, various colour morphs of the corn snake.

Selective breeding may often have no adverse effect on welfare but clearly it does in some cases, as a considerable number of diseases of the more common companion animals are known to have a genetic basis. Selective breeding can also be used in pursuit of welfare.

The welfare consequences of genetic changes to companion animals that may be associated with controlled breeding or modern biotechnology have received rather little attention and the Council believes it is timely to undertake a review of the subject. The aim is to produce a report that (a) provides information on welfare issues surrounding the breeding of companion animals, and (b) makes recommendations to improve or protect welfare if the Council should decide these are needed.

CAWC wishes to emphasise that, at the outset of this review, no presumption is made about the welfare impact (positive or negative) of the selection of companion animals for particular characteristics. The Council is undertaking this review to try to form objective views about various aspects of the subject.

In this review, the Council is interested to gather evidence on a wide range of aspects, and is seeking evidence and views on the following subjects, and on others where you think improvements, for example, in trying to eliminate hereditary diseases by breeding only from individuals that do not carry harmful genes, or in selecting (intentionally or unintentionally) for temperaments suited to particular environments, are relevant to this inquiry:

- the history of selective breeding in companion animals
- the range of characters intentionally selected for in various species
- past and present methods used for selection/genetic modification
- the impact of selection/genetic modification on physical health, behaviour and welfare
- methods of assessment of welfare impact relevant to this inquiry
- efforts to improve welfare by selection/ genetic modification
- gene replacement therapy
- legal and other constraints relevant to the UK
- available codes and guidance on the subject

In view of the scale of the subject, it will not be possible to undertake a detailed species by species review. Whilst species-specific information will be collected and considered in the process of the review, this will be in pursuit, largely, of identifying and understanding important key principles.

The deadline for receipt of responses is Friday 16th April 2004. Following this, the CAWC Working Party will collate the responses received, and aims to meet on Wednesday 26th May to consider these. The Working Party may wish to call some respondents and, perhaps, others who may be able to assist, to a meeting on Wednesday 30th June 2004 in London, to discuss some of the points raised in further detail.

How to respond to this consultation

The Companion Animal Welfare Council would be most grateful for evidence and views relevant to the subject (see above).

Respondents should, in their replies, make the following clear:

- which organisation (if any) they are representing
- what their interests in the subject are (eg fish breeder, research geneticist, etc)
- their name and contact details
- if they **DO NOT** wish their names and addresses to be listed as respondents in any reports produced.

Replies should be sent to CAWC, preferably by email to cawc@cawc.freemove.co.uk (or, if this is not possible, to Mrs C D Baldock, Secretary, Companion Animal Welfare Council, 43 Brook Lane Field, Harlow, Essex CM18 7AU, fax: 01279 639212, Tel: 01279412797).

Information about the objectives and activities of the Companion Animal Welfare Council, its membership and about previous CAWC reports, is appended. Further information about CAWC is available at www.cawc.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

Lord Soulsby of Swaffham Prior
Chairman, Companion Animal Welfare Council

Members of the Working Party:

Dr J K Kirkwood – Chairman
Professor P Bedford
Dr M Binns
Mr M Herrtage
Dr A McBride
Mr M Radford
Revd Professor M Reiss
Lord Soulsby of Swaffham Prior
Sir Colin Spedding – CAWC Advisor

Cawc/phenotypes/callforevidence/consultationletter

APPENDIX 1

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE COMPANION ANIMAL WELFARE COUNCIL

The Companion Animal Welfare Council (CAWC) has as its principal objectives:

- (a) the provision of advice on the welfare of companion animals and the publication of its findings;
- (b) the furtherance of the fuller understanding of companion animal welfare and of the role of companion animals in society;
- (c) the assessment of existing legislation affecting the welfare of companion animals, and the making of recommendations regarding amendments or additions thereto.

In the furtherance of these objectives, the Council will:

- * undertake independent and objective studies of companion animal welfare issues and identify where further information is required
- * prepare and publish reports thereon
- * make available information and research data that it has obtained, and if appropriate, to enable Parliamentary legislation on companion animal welfare issues to be drafted and debated on an informal basis
- * be open to requests for objective views, advice and the carrying out of independent studies on issues concerned with the welfare of companion animals

APPENDIX 2

MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMPANION ANIMAL WELFARE COUNCIL

The following are presently members of the Council:

<i>Chairman</i>	Lord Soulsby of Swaffham Prior
<i>Deputy Chairman</i>	Dr James Kirkwood <i>Chairman of Non-Domesticated Animals Working Party</i> <i>Chairman of Genetics and Welfare Working Party</i>
<i>Treasurer</i>	Mr Ronald Mochrie Professor Sam Ahmedzai <i>Chairman of Companion Animals in Health and Social Care Institutions Working Party</i> Mrs Sue Bell Mrs Barbara Cooper <i>Chair of the Un-Regulated Companion Animal Services in Relation to Training, Exercising and Care Working Party</i> Ms Anne Docherty Lady Fretwell Dr Michael Herrtage Mr Lou Leather <i>Chairman of the Identification and Registration Working Party</i> Dr Anne McBride Mr Mike Radford <i>Chairman of the Legislation on Companion Animals Working Party</i> Mr John Rogerson Dr Peter Scott Mr Bill Swann <i>Chairman of the Companion Animal Welfare Establishments Working Party</i> <i>Chairman of the CAWC Working Party on Methods of Welfare Assessment for companion animals – to be taken forward as a tool kit for companion animals</i>
<i>Adviser to the Council:</i>	Professor Sir Colin Spedding
<i>Secretariat:</i>	Mrs Cynthia Baldock

APPENDIX 3

PREVIOUS REPORTS, RESPONSES AND SUBMISSIONS OF THE COMPANION ANIMAL WELFARE COUNCIL

The Identification and Registration of Companion Animals. April 2002

The Response of the Companion Animal Welfare Council to DEFRA's Consultation letter on an Animal Welfare Bill. April 2002.

Animal Welfare – the need for Legislative Reform. A submission by the Companion Animal Welfare Council to the Scottish Executive. July 2003

The welfare of non-domesticated animals kept for companionship. July 2003.

Companion Animal Welfare Establishments: Sanctuaries, Shelters and Re-Homing Centres. February 2004.

CAWC's previous reports are available on the Website at www.cawc.org.uk.

Phenotypes/callforevidence/consultationletter