

Talks break down

Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) was dismayed after talks to protect the welfare of broiler birds collapsed.

The animal welfare charity based in Petersfield, Hampshire, said the talks were aimed at securing a European Union directive on broilers, which are reared for meat. The breakdown was caused by the refusal of France, Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia to agree to a package of welfare reforms.

A recent study by researchers at Bristol University funded by DEFRA examined broilers in commercial flocks owned by five big UK producers and found that 27.3% of the chickens had moderate or severe leg disorders which impaired their ability to move. CIWF claims this means that each year more 200 million broiler chickens reared in the UK suffer from lameness.

● DEFRA is running a consultation on farmers paying for the costs of animal disease.



This is John Gray, who farms 18,000 pigs a year on an island off Essex, and has been using a slurry additive marketed by Epizym Ltd based in Tunbridge Wells, Kent, since 1996. "I installed slatted accommodation and very soon the neighbours complained about the smell," he said. According to the company, after using their product, the smell on Mr Gray's farm cleared up within six weeks.

The company claims that Epizym Pigs has reduced gross odour emissions by 53% and by 55% per kilogram pig liveweight. Silsoe Research Institute ran the odour assessment trial in their dynamic Olfactometer unit, using pig slurry taken from a trial run at the ADAS climate house. "The results were proof that odour levels can be halved," said Giles Dadd, principal agricultural consultant for Epizym.

Farmers face court action over paths

Farmers in Kent who break the law by restoring public rights of way are facing a clamp-down.

Kent county council (KCC) inspected at least 70 footpaths in East Kent during November after walkers reported paths destroyed by ploughing or growing crops.

As a result, direct action has been taken following one farmer's failure to reinstate three public rights of way. Costs will be recovered from him and a prosecution is likely.

To report blocked paths contact the East Kent public rights of way 24 hour report line on 0845 3450210.

LETTER

Sir,

I write in respect of the article by Alan West on page 12 of the December 2006 South East Farmer in an attempt to clarify some of the "confusion over new welfare and transport rules," although I considered the article explained the issues very well.

The new European Union regulation and the implementing UK legislation have common objectives with the legislation that it has replaced, namely:

- animals must not be caused unnecessary suffering;
- animals must be fit for their intended journey;
- vehicles must be suitable;
- journey times and space allowances have not changed.

There are limited exemptions to the legislation for journeys of up to 50 kilometres by producers carrying their own stock in their own vehicles. The requirement for authorisations for all journeys over 65 km is new. The article referred to a "grey area" for journeys between 50 and 65 km and this can best be explained by the following:

- an ATC is required;
- specific technical rules in Annex 1 do apply;
- authorisation, certificate of competence and vehicle approval are NOT required.

Any enforcement action by trading standards officers and the SVS will initially be focused on situations where animal welfare has suffered or is likely to suffer, rather than technical or documentary breaches. Legal action will be reserved only for those who persistently fail to meet their obligations.

I hope this helps overcome some of the "confusion," but if any further explanation of the welfare in transport rules is needed there is an SVS helpline on 0845 603 8395; or contact your local trading standards office.

Val Allan,
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