

# News & Analysis

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## **New Assaults on Dogs in the USSR**

The Advanced International Studies Institute of Washington, which monitors emerging trends in the Soviet press, has noted a sharp increase in anti-dog letters and articles. Letters that stridently call for "a decree to destroy all dogs" (*Sovietskaia Rossiia*, September 16, 1982), or declare that "only service dogs are needed; the others do not have the right to food, and consequently, to life" seem to be motivated by three critical factors: (1) poor to nonexistent dog-control measures; (2) problems in food distribution related to periodic food shortages and troubles with the machinery of the planned economy; (3) an attitude toward dogs that is to a great extent the obverse of that in the West—dogs are viewed by a sizeable sector of the populace as pariahs, and by many others as game animals.

In its September 16th edition, *Sovietskaia Rossiia* admonished dog owners that they were accountable for a number of social ills: "undisciplined pet owners," the newspaper claimed, were permitting dogs to wander freely throughout city parks and streets, biting pedestrians and littering the roads. For 1980, *Pravda* reported that 190,000 people stated that they had been bitten by dogs, and another 500,000 said they were attacked. While Soviet law stipulates that only city dog-catchers and "special brigades of communal and veterinary services" are allowed "to hunt down stray animals," this task seems to have been usurped by private citizens - for example, an army major who, as reported in the military paper *Red Star* (September 9, 1982), used dogs as target practice.

Further, to the common man, ownership of dogs is regarded as a distinctly anti-proletarian habit, whereby "thousands of tons of food" that could have been used to feed humans is shunted to

"unproductive animals." In fact, *Pravda* (July 2, 1981) did assert that dog owners benefit from government subsidies to the tune of about 1 ½ billion rubles (\$2 billion) a year, because the retail price of meat in the Soviet Union is held at a level that represents only half of the actual production costs.

Finally, the general tenor of Soviet feelings toward dogs is perhaps best reflected by a single datum: the brisk trade in dog pelts that exists within that nation. At the moment, dog fur hats (selling at about \$260 per hat) are an especially lucrative item. As reported in the trend-setting *Sovietskaia Rossiia*, "dog skin hats are a real hit among young people of both sexes."

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## **Just How Free is a "Free-Range" Chicken?**

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It's always easier to think of things in terms of simple dichotomies like good and evil, summer and winter, freedom and slavery. But most often, a whole spectrum of gray realities lies in between any set of abstract extremes. In the instance of laying hens, we are likely to envision the densely packed battery cage at one end of the spectrum, while the image of contented chickens enjoying the liberty and sunshine of an old-fashioned farm emerges when we consider the term "free-range."

Unfortunately, as usual, life is not that straightforward, since there are an increasing number of new systems that purport to be housing "free-range" chickens whereas, in truth, they may not meet the minimum welfare requirements for consideration as legitimate free-range housing. The problem of coming up with a workable definition of "free-range" (as opposed to "deep litter," etc.) has recently been the focus of several decisions made in U.K. courts.

The August 1982 edition of *Ag* (no. 68) reported that one Russell Peake was fined 100 pounds, because he had been keeping 1,200 hens in deep litter, but denominating his egg product as "free-range." The hens were allowed occasional access to grass runs, but the magistrate ruled that "freedom to range is not necessarily free-range."

A ruling in a Magistrates Court does not constitute true legal precedent, but it is likely to have some influence on future decisions such that, eventually, free-range hens will likely be required to have daily access to grassland, stubble, etc., to supply them with growing plants. In this way, concrete or muddy runs would be ruled out as inadequate.

The Court also held that the density of the grazing land must not exceed 150 birds per acre, although *Ag* noted that the grass area can also be used by other livestock, preferably sheep. Also, *Ag* advises that the layer houses will "need to be moved regularly and the poultry moved to a fresh field after 3 or 4 years."

Definitions like these have become a critical concern in the U.K., as increasing public pressure is being brought to bear on major supermarket chains, such as Marks & Spencers, to halt the sale of battery eggs.

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### **The Dutch Announce Potential Alternatives to the Draize Test**

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It may not be the end of the rainbow; it certainly involves continued use of animals; but a new test for assessing the eye toxicity currently being developed in The Netherlands does, at least, offer hope for minimizing both the numbers of animals used and the extent of pain.

The proposed test scheme involves using the eyes of rabbits that were previously used and killed for other experimental purposes. The dissected eyes are placed in a culture dish, and the test chemical is added to the culture medium.

Later, the effects of the test chemical are assessed by inspecting the degree of irritation of the cultured eye tissue.

The test venture represents a joint initiative by the Dutch Society for the Protection of Animals, the research institute T.N.O., and the Dutch Beauty Without Cruelty Foundation. Their endeavor is particularly timely because a draft bill on Environmental Dangerous Chemicals, based on Directives issued by the EEC, is currently working its way through the Dutch parliament. When the final version is enacted, the number of animals that will be required for toxicity testing is expected to increase dramatically.

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### **Art for Whose Sake?**

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In Miami, the last of several necessary permits (from the Fish and Wildlife Service) has been granted to an artist who works under a single name, Christo (not unlike "Ann Margaret"), to float 6 million square feet of shocking-pink iridescent plastic around 11 islands in Biscayne Bay (New York *Times*, December 28, 1982). The plastic will extend 200 feet from the shores of each island into the bay.

Already, the \$540,000 sewing job required for the project is underway, and is expected to be finished, for commencement of "island wrapping," by May. "This will be my 'Water Lillies'" said Christo euphorically, "It is the most painterly thing I have done."

The possible complications of such a project, however, come quickly to mind. In recent years, Biscayne Bay was set aside as a state aquatic preserve, home to a number of endangered species such as the bald eagle and the brown pelican.

The manatee, in particular, could be threatened by the project, according to Jack Kassewitz, President of the National Wildlife Rescue Team, since it must come to the surface to breathe, and thus might become smothered by the plastic. Also, these animals tend to be highly curious about any novelties in their environment, and so may hurt themselves on the submerged anchor cables of the project.

To Kassewitz, it seems ironic that, after a long-fought, but eventually successful, battle with industries and developers (who would *love* to *move* into the

bay) that was waged by environmentalists, who won for the area its designation as an aquatic preserve, a legal precedent endangering a multitude of animals may be set by an artist, whose purported goal is to shock us into a re-thinking of our basic perceptions about the natural environment.

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### **Mysterious New Cat Disease in U.K.**

In a short letter published in the *Veterinary Record* (110(7):160, 1982), T.J.A. Key and C.J. Gaskell reported that, in the past few months, they had seen four cats with a curious collection of common symptoms: dilation of both pupils, dryness of the oral mucosa, constipation, lack of appetite, a slower heart rate, and, in three cases, vomiting as well. Significantly, the exact cause of the disease was a mystery: no common feature, such as exposure to a particular toxic agent or a previous illness, was discovered. The two authors asked to hear from other vets who might have encountered the same condition.

The original letter describing the disease was published in February; by the end of the summer, P.G.C. Bedford (*Vet Rec* 111(21):473) observed that the condition had been noted in a great many cats, and that the problem still seemed to be confined to the U.K. alone. By November, very few practitioners had not seen at least one case of the disease, and the condition was elevated to the status of a true syndrome- "Key-Gaskell syndrome."

Meanwhile, a team of workers at the Glasgow veterinary school (A.S. Nash *et al.*, *Vet Rec* 111(13):307-308) had worked out some of the factors that were associated with the disease. In the great majority of cases, families with several cats noted that only one of their animals had come down with the disease (thus, infection with a bacterium or virus seemed unlikely), nor had the owners been affected. Cats with the disease were also far more likely to have been short-haired. Analysis of blood and urine specimens

had shown no findings of significance, and attempts at virus isolation had been equally futile. However, on the basis of the clinical signs alone, Nash *et al.* determined that the pathological basis of Key-Gaskell syndrome lay in the nervous system's autonomic ganglia, which showed severe abnormalities such as loss of neurones on microscopic examination.

The authors concluded by expressing the hope that the precise causation of the disease would be uncovered shortly.

But at present, there are still no clear lines of evidence about the etiology of Key-Gaskell syndrome, so treatment must remain symptomatic (administration of parenteral fluids for the dehydration associated with the disease, and the ophthalmic solutions pilocarpine or pyostigmine given for the pupil dilation). Luckily, most cats seem to make an uneventful recovery from the disease. Yet, there are some tantalizing correlations that may help eventually unravel the actual cause. Bedford, for one, noted that the ganglion damage described by Nash and colleagues was most likely associated with a virus or some toxic agent. He speculated that the record flea population of that year might have led to increased use of flea collars, and hence the pesticides in the collars might have been the cause of the slow degeneration of nerve tissue seen in the disease.

Then, in December (*Vet Rec* 111(23):540), two letters appeared on the medical history of cats with Key-Gaskell. While the author of the second letter suspected that the key etiological item in his patient's history was a change in diet, the second discussed two kittens from the same litter, both of whom contracted the disease, who had been recently treated with a flea powder. Was it possible, then, that Bedford's suspicion that the toxic agents in flea powder were responsible for the illness, was correct?

But only a week later, two further letters (one from Nash, the other from Gaskell) gave, for the first time, some cumulative epidemiological data on, respectively, populations of 86 and 140 cats. The data in both studies showed that

while treatment with powders was a common factor, it was by no means a feature in all cases. Also, as Nash pointed out, "several popular insecticide preparations contain organophosphorus compounds. Signs of acute poisoning would be those associated with increased parasympathetic activity, and these are the opposite of what is seen in the Key-Gaskell syndrome."

So the mystery of this new disease remains unsolved and as Gaskell observes, "advice for the owner is frustratingly limited."

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### **Sleuthing Down the True Facts- Provimi Group Housing Trial**

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After the first joint Provimi-Quantock trial of group-pen housing of veal calves had begun in December 1981, we wrote to both Provimi and Philip Paxman of Quantock, to see if we could get either, or both, to send us some specific data on the final outcome. Although Provimi failed to provide us with any information, Mr. Paxman was kind enough to send us a very detailed letter on just what happened to the 83 animals that had the singular distinction of becoming the first U.S. calves to try out the British group-housing arrangement.

As reported in the *Journal* (3(4):272-273, 1982), Paxman seemed, in general, to be quite satisfied with the first trial:

*The growth rate and health of the calves, as reflected in the cost of veterinary treatments, were both superior to crated calves reared at the same time.*

*The physical performances of the calves were satisfactory, and feed consumption and growth rates were within 1 percent of the targeted figures based on British results.*

The only real problems encountered in the trial were caused by the ventilation system, which appeared to break down with disappointing regularity, and the type of bedding chosen - straw-which

introduced somewhat higher costs than the bare floors of conventional crates.

Paxman also furnished us with a table that summarized most of the standard production data; among other things, he judged the feed conversion ratio "particularly high."

Paxman's comments to us were, as we had requested, focused mainly on the economic aspects of group housing, in part because we believed that convincing U.S. farmers of the superiority of the group-pen system must involve a careful assessment of these kinds of critical production parameters, in addition to an ethical appeal to farmers that is based on helping them to appreciate the inherent cruelty of crate-rearing.

So it was with no small surprise that we read, in the November 15, 1982 edition of *Feedstuffs*, reporter Rod Smith's version of the Quantock-Provimi venture in group housing. Ironically, Smith at one point quoted Provimi's Jim Mailman: "We went to extremes to make sure any potential problems could not be blamed on the design of the project. We knew we were being watched very closely (by people) who thought we would try and make it fail." And he then went on to pen an article detailing just how the trial *did* fail, thereby vindicating the standard objections to group housing, claiming that "Looks can be deceiving," even though the "frisky young calves... shown romping about in large pens... interacting with each other (are) apparently content and productive." A picture caption sums up his trenchant opinion: "The results have been mixed, but still tend to favor stall housing."

What's conspicuously missing from the article, which is based on the final results from the *two* completed trials, are specific figures for the standard production data, as were furnished for the first trial by Paxman, which one can assume would be of keenest interest to veal raisers. Instead, the article seems to serve principally as a vehicle for rebutting the concerns of animal welfare advocates, so that the status quo of crate-raising can be comfortably rationalized

for a long time to come.

In particular, while Paxman commented on the excellent health of the calves in the first trial, *Feedstuffs* observes that all the calves caught pneumonia (from which, however, they recovered). Straw, too, mentioned only as a factor that led to increased costs in Paxman's letter, is blamed for a whole complex of problems in *Feedstuffs*: failing to protect the calves against the cold; serving as a food item for the animals, even though it was contaminated with urine and other waste; neglecting to raise much interest in the calves as a diversion; and increasing labor costs because of the greater time required for cleaning the pens.

So, in the second trial, bare concrete floors were used in two of the pens (in contrast, Paxman had suggested simply switching to corn cobs or some other bedding for the second trial). The concrete floors, Mallman claimed, were a decided success: they eliminated the moisture problems, and cut the costs entailed in cleaning pens and in buying, storing, and disposing of straw.

But perhaps most important are the article's assertions of "similarity between calf behavior in pens and stalls." According to Mailman, the group-raised calves "spent most of their time lying in the same place in the same position," and so got little benefit from being released from the total restraint of the confinement stall. Yet it is never stated that a trained ethologist in the field, such as Ted Friend, was employed to monitor calf behavior on a scientific basis during the trial; there are only vague allusions to observations by unspecified "recognized authorities in animal care and behavior."

In a move that would appear to be a giant step backward toward square one, Mailman concluded the article by stating that he would continue to investigate further modifications in loose-housing methods and, somewhat more ominously, in applying group-pen findings to "improvements in stall-housing."

Sometime later, we wrote to Mallman at Provimi, asking him to explain the gaping discrepancies between the results of the trial as set forth in Paxman's

report and those described in the *Feedstuffs* article. Specifically, we asked for production data on the two trials, e.g., daily weight gain, food conversion ratio, and mortality.

The response from Mr. Mailman left us even further confused. The letter refused to comment on the *Feedstuffs* piece, only noting that "Rod Smith is a very creditable reporter and... his article is accurate." Our request for production data was brushed aside with the brusque "I would be very reluctant to supply you with any research information since I am in no position to assess your ability to interpret it." This statement seems a bit extreme, given our fastidious avoidance of *any* editorial comment on the material supplied to us by Philip Paxman.

At this point, it can only be hoped that the actual hard data from the second group-pen venture conducted by Provimi will, eventually, find their way into some other scientific publication.

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### **Where There's a Whale, There's a Way: Japanese History and Her Intransigence on Whaling**

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Japan's recent decision to ignore the International Whaling Commission's ban on all commercial whaling has generated a small flurry of protest, and a great deal of frustration among most western nations.

But instead of simply damning the Japanese for inscrutable pigheadedness, a number of recent articles have begun to look more closely at Japanese society (with relative degrees of reportorial accuracy), in order to tease out the historical, religious, political, and social factors that may be at work in motivating Japan's opposition to the whaling ban.

A *New Scientist* (96(1335):661-663, 1982) piece began by carefully tracing the long history of the Japanese fishing industry. While most western nations killed whales principally for lighting oil, the Japanese took whales for their meat. This was because Buddhist teaching forbade the taking of life for food among

terrestrial animals, but exempted the animals of the sea. For the same reasons, in the 1930's when the whaling industry had begun to decline in the West, to be relegated to mythology and seaport museums, the Japanese were just starting to commercialize whaling on a grand scale, using new devices like the harpoon gun. Whaling on a large scale continued until the mid-1960's, when catches suddenly began to drop dramatically. Therefore, by 1978, whale meat comprised only 1.5 percent of total Japanese meat consumption- a luxury item - even though the Japanese delegation to the IWC continued to think in terms of a vast commercial whaling operation and asserted that whale meat is still an important staple in the Japanese diet.

But the *New Scientist* article contends that the most important factor at work in Japan's dissent may well be based upon her long history of animosity toward western intrusion in what she views as her own internal affairs. Yet once more, the white man seems to be taking up his colonialist burden, and foisting off her own insular values upon the Japanese. Nor can Japan correctly be labeled anti-conservationist in any broad sense: she has 27 national parks and 50 quasi-national parks scattered throughout the country.

The author concludes by advising that the aggressive techniques used by groups that seek to disrupt whaling operations at sea will only increase the resolution of the Japanese to oppose IWC decisions. Better campaigns might involve efforts at enticing the Japanese to work within IWC to, for example, formulate more accurate mathematical models for estimating whale populations. However, the *New Scientist* author, in this conclusion, appears to be sadly behind the times: disruptive activities have all but ceased, and population estimation techniques have become highly sophisticated.

Peter Singer, also puzzled by the Japanese mind-set about whaling, visited Japan under a grant from the Australia-Japan Foundation. Before his journey, he felt that the slaughter of dolphins by Japanese fishermen, like the stubborn

continuance of whaling, showed a "pattern of apparent Japanese disregard for the lives and suffering of cetaceans."

In the Spring 1982 issue of *Outcry*, he described his unsettling, and at times contradictory, findings about the Japanese people.

He found virtually no opposition to the killing of whales among the Japanese, but there were many different kinds of reasons and feelings underlying this single attitude. First, the Japanese have a long tradition of not interfering in each other's business, and in particular are loathe to criticize another's actions. Second, Japan has no real animal welfare movement in Japan - the only such organization was founded by British residents, and confines its concerns, in the main, to dogs and cats. Third, the environmental movement is much less prevalent or vocal than in the West. The Japanese, Singer discovered, tend to place a higher priority on business interests and, in addition, are more human-centered than westerners. Fourth, the Buddhist message of reverence to all life forms seems to have been severely diluted over the years; for example, very few Japanese Buddhists are vegetarians.

Finally, the Japanese believe that western opposition to whale-killing represents a classic instance of cultural near-sightedness: Japanese see no difference between taking whales for meat and the slaughter of cows and sheep for the same purpose.

Nonetheless, there are still some fascinating paradoxes that lie behind the Japanese public bluster on whaling. In an article in *Australian Outlook* (35(3): 283-294, 1981), K.D. Suter first quotes from the radical language used in a brochure handed out by the Japanese Whaling Association at a 1980 IWC meeting:

*Japanese people and whalers have the right to maintain their culture and traditions. Dietary habits are aspects of specific cultures and traditions, and these naturally differ by country. Trying to enforce value judgments on others unilaterally is tantamount to imperialism or, at worst, fascism.*

Yet in the same paper, Suter reports that all signs indicate that the Japanese whaling industry is actually winding down. He notes that in recent years a drastic reduction in work opportunities has occurred, and few young men have shown much inclination to enter an industry with such a bleak future.

But perhaps the most perplexing bit of information comes from the magazine *Agenda* (3(1):7, 1983). The Nippon Research Center, the Japanese affiliate of the Gallup Poll, published a study on October 30, 1982 which indicated that more than 75 percent of those Japanese sampled *favo ed* acceptance of the whaling ban. So perhaps the phenomenon of apparently entrenched Japanese opposition to the IWC decision may represent less a manifestation of cultural complexities, and more the obstreperous and well-organized voice of the native fishing industries.