



COUNCIL ON ANIMAL AFFAIRS (RDA)
ANNUAL REPORT 2015



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RAAD VOOR DIERENAANGELEGHEDE

Aims and activities of the Council

The Council on Animal Affairs (RDA) is an independent expert body that provides the Minister for Agriculture with solicited and unsolicited advice on multidisciplinary issues relating to animal welfare, including animal health. The RDA currently has approximately forty members with very varied backgrounds and fields of expertise, who participate in a personal capacity and without outside influence.

The Council on Animal Affairs considers issues across the full spectrum of animal policy, covering domesticated and captive animals, non-captive wild animals, hobby animals, companion animals, farm animals and laboratory animals.

The Council presents the outcomes of its deliberations in advisory reports. An advisory report summarises the scientific and social background of an issue, and presents advice on the directions that policy should take and on approaches to the resolution of dilemmas. Consensus is not essential: an advisory report may contain minority views.

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Foreword

The year 2015 was a distinctive year for the Council on Animal Affairs. It was the year in which an evaluation was delivered on its performance as an independent advisory body – an evaluation which endorsed the direction in which the Council has developed and at the same time encouraged the Minister to make more frequent and wider use of the Council.

It was also a year in which preparations were set in motion for many new advisory reports, requested and unsolicited, whose publication took place after the end of the calendar year. This annual report provides information on the advisory reports published in 2015 and also on those which have been published since then or which are still in production.

Finally, 2015 was the year in which the RDA was faced with the terminal illness of its chair, Prof. Frauke Ohl, which resulted in her death in January 2016. The death of Frauke Ohl, with her unique combination of fighting spirit, sense of harmony and powerful intellect, is a blow to the Council. However, she has left behind a strong Council and we mean to go on as we have started. This annual report contains a report of the memorial event which the Council and Utrecht University's Faculty of Veterinary Medicine held for her.

M.H.W. Schakenraad
Secretary of the Council on Animal Affairs



Photograph: Roel Rozenburg



Photograph: William Hoogteijling

In Memoriam Frauke Ohl

‘Our chairperson Frauke Ohl died at the early age of 50 on 28 January 2016. Although we were aware of the seriousness of her illness, her death came very quickly and we are deeply moved and saddened.’ These were the opening words of the RDA after the sudden passing away of its chairperson.

Prof. Frauke Ohl was born in Germany where she trained as a biologist. She was a member of the Council on Animal Affairs from 2008 and was its chair from 2012. She was also a professor of Animal Welfare and Laboratory Animal Science at Utrecht University’s Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and chair of that faculty’s Animals in Science and Society Department. She performed many advisory functions, usually in the role of chair, for the Ministry of Economic Affairs. ‘The RDA received a boost with Frauke as its chair,’ the obituary notice goes on to say. ‘Without her, the Council would not have become what it now is. She had an admirable, natural authority. She had the ability to bring people and opinions together and always knew the right thing to say or the right question to ask, at the right time. She would quickly get to the heart of the matter. She never wanted to have the last word, but nearly always did when it came to the substance of the matter at hand. Open and always

helpful to others, never demanding attention for herself.’

Frauke Ohl was buried privately with only family members present. On Friday, 5 February 2016, a memorial event was held for her at the Beauforthuis in Austerlitz. There, in the presence of her close family, her brothers and various speakers from her professional life looked back on her life and her many qualities. Frauke’s brother, Michael, shared his memories of a common academic background: both studied biology and also obtained their doctorates in that subject – albeit in very different directions. He being more the studious bookworm, whilst she was the socially gifted one with a practical, hands-on approach. ‘Frauke had a vibrant life’, said Michael, ‘and I am happy to have been close to her for a large part of mine’.

Henri Kool, director of the Animal Supply Chain and Animal Welfare Department at the Ministry of Economic Affairs, praised her powerful intellect.

He described her as ‘pleasant, friendly, charming and having a good sense of humour’ and expressed his gratitude for ‘the significant role Frauke Ohl played in her recommendations, the talents she possessed and in who she was.’ As well as recalling her single-mindedness, Chair Herman Koëter of the National Advisory Committee for the Protection of Animals Used for Scientific Purposes also mentioned Frauke’s sense of reality: ‘she knew when to stop, and she always took account of social acceptance of policies.’

‘Many advisory reports were set in motion while she was chair. It is sad that Frauke is no longer able to be involved in their publication.’

‘Under her chairmanship, we established various outlooks. It is very sad that Frauke did not live to see them published.’

Council member Ludo Hellebrekers spoke on behalf of the Council on Animal Affairs, noting how well Frauke Ohl performed the role of chair. She could spend a long time just listening, but when she finally joined the discussion, eyes would usually quickly turn to her expectantly, he said. Hellebrekers also mentioned the basic principle that animals as ‘sentient beings’ are entitled to the duty of care incumbent upon human beings, regardless of their species or environment, which was embraced while she was chair. The same applies to the assessment framework upon which many of the Council’s recommendations were and still are based. ‘Many things were put in motion while she was chair including a large number of advisory reports which are being worked on now. It is sad that Frauke is no longer able to be involved in their publication.’

Dean Wouter Dhert of Utrecht University’s Faculty of Veterinary Medicine described Frauke Ohl as one of those people who make a difference. In her short life, she has already given so much, said Dhert, and it is such a shame that it could not continue for longer. A shame for society, her colleagues and above all for those closest to her. Colleagues Pim Rooijmans and Saskia Arndt paid particular attention to Frauke’s parents and her partner Achim, thanking them for allowing them to ‘share’ Frauke with them. They praised her leadership of the Animals in Science and Society Department and her warmth. Finally, in a personal address, Council member and



Photograph: Joop Fama

former colleague Ludo Hellebrekers highlighted Frauke’s qualities as a ‘passionate biologist, fascinated by the relationship between emotions and behaviour in all its aspects.’ He also praised her efforts, and ability, to get things done. ‘Frauke Ohl was able to bring the most diverse people and worlds together, motivate them and to encourage them to work in parallel,’ said Hellebrekers. ‘And she succeeded in doing that both in her professional and her private life.’

A full account of the memorial event will be produced as a joint publication of the Council on Animal Affairs and the Faculty of Animal Sciences. In the four years in which she was its chair, Frauke Ohl meant a huge amount to the Council on Animal Affairs. ‘She inspired our Council and gave it fresh perspectives. She advocated open dialogue regarding the place and use of animals in our society. With scope for a rational and emotional approach. Above all, she was a warm woman and it was

‘She was in favour of an open dialogue on the place and use of animals in our society, giving a space for both reason and emotion.’

a pleasure to work with her,’ says the RDA’s notice on her death. This, too, is evidence of our certainty that we will continue to benefit from Frauke’s contributions for a long time yet: ‘The RDA has lost its figurehead, but means to go on as it has started under her leadership with added inspiration.’



Hans Hoogeveen

Photograph: Henriette Cuest

Director-General Hans Hoogeveen of the Ministry of Economic Affairs:

‘The Council has a crucial position in public debate about the position of animals’

‘The focus of public debate about the position of animals has widened further, and the RDA has secured a prominent and crucial position within that debate.’ This is Hans Hoogeveen’s response when he is asked to review the Council’s development. After nine years as Director-General for Agriculture and Nature at the Ministry of Economic Affairs, a position which also involves a consideration of the work carried out by the RDA, Hoogeveen is set to leave the post shortly.

‘The main issues now are not just animal health and animal welfare,’ says Hoogeveen when describing the process he refers to as ‘the socialisation of animal husbandry’. ‘Consumers are becoming increasingly involved in the products they buy, and also in food in general. They look carefully at its quality, how it was produced and where it comes from. How are the animals kept and under what conditions. Which animals should you actually be allowed to keep in captivity and how should they be killed? Such questions are also raised about products which do not appear in shops. Society is showing a much greater engagement and interest in animal husbandry. As a corollary, the position of the Council on Animal Affairs as the provider of advice and insights related to the issues raised has become increasingly important.’ This is in part also due to the fact that the

Council as a body brings together a whole range of expertise and operates from an independent position, stresses the senior official. ‘That independence contributes to the quality of the advice, as does the fact that you represent more disciplines. You receive useful recommendations because you examine a specific problem from several angles. And then there’s the fact that we need to consider not only health aspects but also the angles based on societal involvement.’

‘You receive useful recommendations because you examine a problem from several angles.’

Provinces

Evidence of that usefulness was proved once again in an advisory report produced by the Council at very short notice about the capture and killing of *wild birds*, says Hooegeveen. This is also an area which can be left to the provinces. The responsibility for the nature policy, which covers such birds, has been relocated from the central government to the provinces in recent years. Does that also mean that the RDA will also have to approach the provinces with its recommendations on wild animals now? Hooegeveen: 'The Council can give requested and unsolicited recommendations. This gives us some latitude in this regard, but you must always consider your priorities. I imagine that the IPO (Association of Provincial Authorities), the provinces' consultative body, will approach the Council for advice. Our experience with the recent advisory report showed that this can result in a successful outcome.'

European Welfare Platform

The RDA also occupies a significant position internationally, observes Hooegeveen. 'The Netherlands currently holds the Presidency of the European Union. This means you can try to put topics in the field of animal welfare on the agenda, such as setting up a welfare platform at European level. One is now going to be set up. Such discussions show that our country is in an advanced position with an RDA which provides recommendations of this quality. We would like to roll this out in Europe. Our aim is to ensure that the multi-disciplinary nature of the RDA also becomes a basic value for the European platform.'

Animal welfare is gradually becoming a more important topic within European agricultural policy, according to the Director-General. 'Examples include controlling outbreaks of animal diseases, where we now know that the

mass killing of animals is no longer seen as an acceptable approach in other EU countries either. What alternative approach could we take and how can we make a success of it? However, animals' quality of life is increasingly becoming a topic where citizens and politicians are looking across the border. For example, if we buy products from Lithuania, we want to know how a cow or hen is kept there, and we could find out by making use of modern ICT, through a barcode, for instance. In the Netherlands, we already have meat which is marked with a Dutch Society for the Protection of Animals star. This kind of thing is a response to consumers' wishes and ensures that there is a distinction between products on offer on the market. The RDA has already pointed this out in one of its advisory reports. You need not regulate everything produced through the market mechanism, but that market is also European so the debate on that quickly reaches EU level. With our RDA and its multi-disciplinary recommendations, we are the frontrunner in such debates.'

Social forces

During the reporting year, at the request of the Minister for Agriculture, the RDA produced a recommendation on the exhibiting of genetically modified animals (*Visibly Changed*). 'No one had expected the recommendation made,' Hooegeveen says now, 'but it was a good one.' The Council was asked whether measures could be taken against the exhibiting of such animals, and the recommendation was that no measures should be taken. The recommendation states that there are enough laws and rules which the organisers responsible can draw on, and also that we should and can rely on their own sense of social responsibility. 'It is an important issue which will undoubtedly come up again in future, at the RDA, too. It is the subject of passionate social debate, but sometimes

you simply have to leave things to social forces.' Another advisory report, which was published just after the end of 2015, was the report on *One Health*. 'The RDA responded well to the growing feeling that the distinction between the veterinary world and human healthcare is being less relevant,' says Hooegeveen. 'You can see this, for example, very clearly in the problem to do with antibiotics, which was also the subject of an advisory report published slightly later.' To tackle the issues on the basis of a One Health approach, the RDA published an assessment framework, a model which includes all factors which should be considered when making the decision. The decision itself is left to the management board member or policy person. As a result, the recommendation simply increases in value, Hooegeveen believes. 'In some cases, as a council you can say: do this or do that. However, for recommendations on a slightly larger scale, it is right and proper that the council does not adopt the position of a minister, but rather outlines what should be considered before a decision is made.'

'It is right and proper that the council does not adopt the position of a minister, but rather outlines what should be considered before a decision is made.'

Specific and fundamental

For the future, Hooegeveen hopes there will be the same variation in the horizon and scope of the RDA recommendations: 'A minister likes to be able to approach the Council with very specific, topical questions rather than more fundamental questions. And the Council is able to deal with both types of question.'



Marc Schakenraad

Photograph: René Verleg

Evaluation gives an additional boost to the Council, which has shifted into a higher gear

The RDA has experienced much change in recent years and all those changes fit neatly under the heading: greater activity, more initiative, and higher profile. The RDA has shifted into a higher gear, you could say. That process was already fully under way when the evaluation of the Council by the Andersson Elffers Felix (AEF) consultancy firm was published in early 2015. The report endorsed the direction in which the Council has developed and at the same time encouraged it to press even more firmly on the accelerator.

‘Our profile was a key point for AEF’, explains Council Secretary Marc Schakenraad. ‘It was clear to the consultancy firm that too few people and parties were aware of what we do, but that situation has now changed completely. The Council often makes itself heard and frequently tackles key issues on its own initiative. The *One Health* recommendation, with which the Council set a new course internationally as well, is an example of this. The same applies to the recommendation concerning stray cats which is due to be published in the next few days. And all the recommendations are published in the form of valuable and accessible summaries for the public to read. Since 2014, we have also resumed publication of clear and well laid-out annual reports. We publicise what we do through our website, press releases and modest activities using social media.’ On other fronts, too, the RDA is actively disseminating

‘Proven expertise, necessary visibility’

AEF evaluated the performance and working methods of the RDA in the years 2008-2014. The report entitled ‘Proven expertise, necessary visibility’ was published during the reporting year; Minister Van Dam responded to it in his *letter* to Parliament of 18 December 2015. As the title suggests, AEF praised the Council’s expertise and its members. It notes that there is a need for an independent and authoritative advisory body in the field of animal health and animal welfare, and that the Council should demonstrate its expertise more emphatically. The firm formulated four recommendations:

1. The RDA should bring order to its prescribed structure.
2. The Ministry of Economic Affairs should develop an approach for the deployment of the RDA, translate it into practice and safeguard its independent position.
3. The RDA should be allocated and receive more of the available budget.
4. The RDA should develop a coherent communication policy.

The Minister expressed his ‘delight’ at the positive evaluation and the appreciation expressed by AEF and foresaw that when it implements the recommendations, the Council ‘will start to perform its role even better than before as an active and relevant advisory council in strategic policy formation.’



Photograph: Roel Dijkstra

State secretary of Economic Affairs Martijn van Dam informed the cabinet that he was satisfied with the transformation of the Council.

results and gathering responses, adds Schakenraad. 'We are also taking active steps to ensure that some advisory reports feature on the agenda of stakeholder meetings. The Vaarkamp Lecture, which was again organised last October together with the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, is another example.' The drive towards greater visibility has been laid down in a new communication plan for the years ahead, which has been approved by the Council. 'And needless to say, the basis remains a sound advisory report.'

Relevant expertise

The Andersson Elffers Felix evaluation was on the agenda because the law prescribes that such an evaluation should be carried out eve-

ry six years for an advisory council. Added to that was the fact that the previous evaluation, in 2008, had recommended a substantial transformation. The Council was told it should abandon its role of consultative body positioned between all manners of sectors involved and become an independent council of experts, independent and not bound by any instructions. The consultative firm said it would then assess whether that transformation had proved successful and this has proved to be the case. 'AEF concludes that the transformation of the RDA from a consultative body to a panel of experts has worked out well,' wrote Minister Martijn van Dam to the House of Representatives, 'and that the RDA is performing its new brief properly and based on expertise. AEF states that RDA's expertise is regarded universally as substantial and relevant. The wide scope of its members, with backgrounds in the area of science, policy and practical experience, ensures high-quality advisory reports which are not influenced by passing fads.'

Cash on the nail

In saying this, the minister touched on another aspect raised by AEF: in 2016 the Council would lose many of its current members, whose term of office could not be extended, and therefore also their expertise and experience. The replacement process might occasionally bring about a dip in the Council's ability to provide advisory skills. However, Schakenraad says he is very satisfied with the way in which the Council anticipated this. With

effect from this year, a large number of members with varying but considerable expertise have been appointed. 'According to the Minister, the Council's members come from a very wide range of backgrounds and he thinks that is important, too. It is a reflection of the debate on the place of animals in society. Its members include not only professors but also people from social organisations and practitioners, for example.' This means the Minister's thoughts on the Council's role are now perfectly clear – a clarity which AEF had also called for. Schakenraad: 'He wants an independent council which, with strategic recommendations, can play a part in putting forward, putting on the agenda and fostering possible solutions. He has also stated that, to this end, he intends to call on us more frequently to produce: three to four strategic recommendations each year and also tailor-made recommendations, for example, brief recommendations, meetings or talks.' The RDA has received cash on the nail for this because two requests for a recommendation on the capture and killing of birds and a protocol for horse markets were received in quick succession.

Working methods are more transparent

As a follow-up to the evaluation, the prescribed structure of the RDA was updated and laid down in new internal rules. 'A number of ambiguities in respect of working methods required clarification', explains Schakenraad. 'And we have made the method used to put

together a forum more transparent in one fell swoop. In the past, only the chair would decide on this; now everyone can raise his hand to join in. The Council's expectations of members have also been made clear to all of them: for example, they will have to participate in a forum at least twice within a term of office of four years. The secretary's financial mandate has been increased and the office staff establishment boosted in order to steer the Council's work in the right direction and to implement the recommendations from the evaluation, such as working towards greater visibility.' Schakenraad: 'We now have six people to enable us to meet all the demands placed on the Council and the Minister. This is a major improvement.' The difference is clear to see in the increased productivity of the Council both as a unit and in the way publicity is given to the former, says the Secretary. 'We have re-examined our approach and mission carefully.'

This is borne out by the Council's work. It is reflected in a large number of advisory reports and this development is also set to continue. Not only have we drawn up and adopted a communication plan, we are also implementing it by publishing summaries for the public to read, at present routinely in Dutch and English, by managing our press contacts more actively and successfully, and by continuing to work hard on an updated, more accessible and more informative website – which is essential when it comes to disseminating information about our activities.'

Nine new Council members

Gé Backus: ‘Support politics and policy as widely as possible’



Photograph: René Verleg

‘Throughout my career I have been dealing with issues to do with livestock farming,’ says Gé Backus, director of the DLV subsidiary *Connecting Agri@Food*, a company which specialises in bringing together the links within the food chain to ensure that consumers have access to food they can identify. Backus grew up on a pig farm and was later always involved in

the sector as a researcher and expert. He thinks the interaction between society and agriculture is ‘intellectually challenging’, for example, in matters concerning intensification, or the question of how we will soon have to feed nine billion people in the world whilst paying proper attention to the welfare of animals. These are matters ‘that truly matter,’ says Backus. Backus believes RDA’s existence is important ‘because it is essential that politics and policy should receive support that is as broad as possible from independent bodies and people. They can explain the available options and how they can best be used.’ This is what happened in the RDA forum on animal welfare and market forces in which Backus participated. A good approach, in his opinion. As a member of the Council, he brings much knowledge about all links in the livestock farming chain ‘from the farm to the table’ and, thanks to the many foreign research projects he has been involved in, a large international network.

Ted van den Bergh: ‘The interests of animals and the interests of people are not mutually exclusive’

In his everyday life, Ted van den Burgh is director of the Triodos Foundation, a foundation which seeks to contribute to the transition to a new, sustainable economy. ‘We encourage developments which cannot be brought about using commercial funds, and many of them pertain to the field of animal welfare. For instance, we were the first to support projects to do



Photograph: René Verleg

with ‘Keeping Calves and Cows Together’, at a very early stage. The foundation collaborated with Utrecht University on the policy for the protection of animals used for scientific purposes; for example, it created a knowledge base concerning change, improve, and replace. As a boy he kept hens. ‘Absolutely wonderful creatures; I would recommend them to anyone.’ And giving a voice to animals is what he is keen to do as a Council member. ‘I will be independent and not bound by any instructions, simply looking to the future. The idea I have in mind is to build bridges and eliminate barriers. What I would really like to see is the government, business community, the public and the scientific community on the same side – each helping the other.’ This could result in steps in a direction where the interests of animals and humans coincide. ‘That’s possible; we just need to want it to happen.’

Leo den Hartog: 'When science and practical experience meet'

'What I see as one of RDA's strengths is the way a wide range of expertise is used objectively. Added to that is the fact that the backgrounds and fields of work of the Council members are similarly wide-ranging.' These are the words of Leo den Hartog, director of Research and Development at animal feed producer Nutreco and professor by special appointment of Animal Nutrition at Wageningen University. Having grown up on a farm and completed a degree in Animal Science from Wageningen University, Den Hartog has previously worked at, among other



Photograph: René Verleg

places, the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at Utrecht University, the National Agricultural Advisory Service of the former Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, the Research and Advisory Station for the Pig Farming Sector and Practical Livestock Farming Research in Lelystad. 'I have been allowed to see all angles of the Golden Triangle', he says, laughing, referring to the collaboration between the government, the business sector and the research community for which the Netherlands enjoys international renown. 'And I have also had dealings with a host of animal species.' Den Hartog has noticed that the RDA does not take a one-sided approach when dealing with matters to do with animal welfare, for example, from the perspective of those involved in production or people who keep animals as a hobby, and he thinks that is important. 'And then there's the fact that it seeks to provide a scientific basis for its recommendations. Seeing science and practical experience meet appeals to me.'

Annechien ten Have-Mellema: 'Level-headedness and a practical view of things are important'



Photograph: René Verleg

own farm. For example, I took part in the LTO's and Dutch Society for the Protection of Animals' project involving Comfort Class units for pigs. However, I am also actively involved in the efforts to stop the practice of castrating piglets. I was one of the first people to experiment at my farm with farrowing crates allowing freedom of movement, and I am developing an idea to put free-range meat from fattening pigs onto the market.' These activities are not limited to the Netherlands: 'I have travelled extensively throughout the world looking at practices and have given lectures in a number of countries on subjects including, for example, a lecture on group housing for pregnant sows in Brazil, or concerning the husbandry of piglets and non-castration of pigs.'

It is important that the primary sector is properly represented within an advisory body such as the Council for Animal Matters, believes Annechien ten Have-Mellema: 'with a level-headed and practical view on things.' And that is precisely where she can make a contribution, running an agricultural business involving sows, fattening pigs and a sizeable arable farm, and as a former LTO (Federation of Horticultural and Agricultural Organisations) director. She has always been heavily involved in animal welfare. 'I have done much in this area, including at my

Arnold van Huis: 'The multidisciplinary nature appeals to me'

'One of the things I have learned from working with social scientists,' says tropical insect expert Arnold van Huis, 'is that people have ideas which may change and that this means what the public regards as the truth will also change.' In saying this, the Professor Emeritus at Wageningen University is alluding to the importance of



Photograph: René Verleg

an institution such as the RDA where in addition to insights provided by science and practical experience, there is also room for social ideas. 'The interdisciplinary nature of the Council appeals to me.' Van Huis believes it is worthwhile taking a holistic approach when dealing with animals: Respect the three "e's": ecology, economy and emotional value'. Since the 1990s, Van Huis has been much involved in the use of insects as food for people and animals. A year's study with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in 2010 resulted, in 2013, in a *publication* concerning 'Edible insects and the Future of Food and Food Security', which has so far been downloaded seven million times. 'With a subject such as this one all manner of questions arise concerning the large-scale production of insects and, of course, animal welfare.' Van Huis anticipates that the main contribution he will make to the Council will be in relation to matters concerning 'the slightly lower animal species'.

Bas Kemp: 'The Council provides sound recommendations'



Photograph: René Verleg

As adaptation physiologist, Bas Kemp, professor at Wageningen University, deals with the needs of animals in the environment in which they live. These are usually production animals. 'We know, for example, that pigs need a varied environment. What is the origin of that need; what happens when you fail to meet it, as is often case in practice? We are investigating this and will try to translate our findings into innovative housing concepts.'

Kemp is keen to share his knowledge with the Council. 'I think we know pretty well how animals should be treated. My colleagues and I are constantly searching for solutions to ensure that health, welfare and economy can go hand in hand. This is an area with which the Council is also concerned.'

The RDA can contribute to the public's acceptance of new developments in livestock farming, for example in relation to the housing in which animals are kept. 'Its members provide a broad representation of society. That might not always make it easier to decide on a recommendation, but the recommendations are all the more powerful because they are broadly supported and have been made independently. The Council's advisory reports I have seen are also sound and certainly no weak compromises.'

Marion Koopmans: 'Dealing with the risks of interaction between animals and people'

Marion Koopmans, professor of Public Health Virology at the Erasmus University, describes 'looking at how we can prevent infections spreading from the animal world to human beings' as 'her thing'. Alongside her role as professor, Koopmans is also head of the Virology department of the Erasmus Medical Centre.



Photograph: René Verleg

'I trained as a vet and my work has actually always involved the interaction between humans and animals', says Koopmans, when asked about her relationship with animals. 'We want the interaction to go be good. Contact with animals brings many benefits. For example, we know from research that such contact has a positive impact on older people. However, there are also negative aspects and one of those is the risk of virus infections.' The professor is much concerned with emerging infections, which frequently reach us from the animal world and have therefore added to the popularity of the *One Health* concept, about which the RDA has also published an advisory report. 'We are emerging from a period where there was a wall between public health and the veterinary world. This is now changing and I find that interesting.' Koopman's perspective is always of public health, and the same applies to the contribution she makes to the RDA. She thinks it is good that it exists: 'It is a positive thing when a group made up of a wide range of experts, unencumbered by individual "hats", can discuss the role of animal husbandry in society'.

Martin Scholten: 'Researcher indebted to the public'

Twelve hundred researchers work within the Animal Science Group (ASG) of Wageningen University and Research Centre, where science and applied research join forces, led by Martin Scholten as the general director. They conduct research into farm animals, wild animals and marine animals. 'We are keen to share the knowledge generated by that research,' says Scholten, who feels 'indebted' to the public.

The Council on Animal Affairs (RDA) is one channel which can be used to do that. 'It is a platform where knowledge can be made available to the public in the form of recommendations.' Scholten seeks this as one of his tasks as a Council member in the period ahead. In addition, as director of the IMARES institute since 2002, he brings specific knowledge of the fishing sector and fish farming.

Scholten grew up in a family of butchers and cheese-makers, taught on the vocational training course provided by DIBEVO, the pet industry organisation, studied plant ecology, found his way to fish through marine research, after which he became involved in animal research in a broader sense: 'I have seen the entire spectrum.'



Photograph: René Verleg

Animal care or stewardship is very important to Scholten. It was he who devised the 'conscientious livestock farming' concept which is elaborated upon in, among other publications, a collection of *essays* published by Wageningen University and Research Centre.

Ruud Tombrock: 'There is considerable brainpower within the Council'



Photograph: Arenda Oomen

'Compassion for struggling people and animals is a theme in my life,' says Ruud Tombrock about his career. After some pressing, because he thinks this is 'a bit personal'. Tombrock is now Europe director of the World Animal Protection (WAP) organisation. Earlier, he spent years working for the Red Cross.

His work took him to many parts of the world. WAP is a global organisation and self-evidently the European directorship means he has many European contacts. Tombrock sees 'the introduction of the international element' as something he has to offer the Council. 'Government policy on animal welfare is often limited by the pursuit of a level playing field in Europe. This is understandable. In the area of production animals this can be a decisive factor because if producers can produce animals more cheaply elsewhere, they will go elsewhere. And then a Dutch welfare policy will have the effect of whistling in the wind. So this must be done at international level, and that is a world in which I am already operating.' Tombrock thinks the RDA is a strong body: 'There is considerable brainpower within the Council. The finest minds from the business sector, science and NGOs. However, I do not think the animal welfare angle is sufficiently well represented yet. And that is where I can make a contribution.'

Photograph: Nationale Beeldbank



Advisory reports at the preparation stage

Animal breeding and reproduction technologies 2016

Forum members: dr. F.L.B. Meijboom, prof.dr. J.A.M. van Arendonk (chairman)

External experts: dr. E.E. Ellen, ir. L. Kaal

Main issue: the application of breeding and reproduction technologies raises the following question: 'to what extent should animals be adapted to serve human interests?' The Council presents an assessment framework on how to deal with this type of dilemma. *This outlook was published on 29 February 2016*

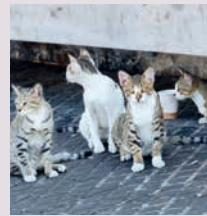


Photograph: iStock

Stray cat management

Forum members: dr.ing. H. Hopster, J.Th. de Jongh, drs. H. van Veen and prof.dr. F. van Knapen (chairman)

Main issue: what risks do stray cats pose to human and animal public health, and what are the options for reducing these risks? *The expected publication date for this outlook is June 2016*



Photograph: Stichting Zwerkkatten Rijnmond

Antibiotics policy in animal keeping: effects and perspectives

Forum members: prof.dr. L.J. Hellebrekers, A.J.M. van Hoof, prof.dr.ir M.C.M. de Jong, prof.dr. F. van Knapen, dr. F.L.B. Meijboom, H.W.A. Swinkels, P.J. Vingerling and prof.dr. A.J. Stegeman (chairman)

External experts: prof.dr. D.J. Mevius, prof.dr. Y.H. Schukken

Main issue: what were the effects of the antibiotics policy on animal welfare, including animal health; is it possible to take further steps in a responsible way and, if so, what steps might this involve? *This outlook was published on 7 March 2016*



Photograph: Twan Wiermans

Animal welfare for sale

Forum members: dr.ir. G.B.C. Backus, dr. H.M.G. van Beers-Schreurs, W.T.A.A.G.M. van den Bergh, A.L. ten Have Mellema, dr. S.A. Hertzberger, ir. M.H.A. Steverink, dr.ir. J.W.G.M. Swinkels, drs. R.A. Tombrock and prof.dr. ir. J.C.M. van Trijp (chairman)

Main issue: what role should the government play in enhancing animal welfare via market forces? *The expected publication date for this outlook is mid-2016*



Photograph: Roel Dijkstra

Assessment framework for production animals

Forum members: prof.dr. L.J. Hellebrekers, drs. H. van Veen and dr.ing. H. Hopster (chairman)

Main issue: Is it possible to develop an assessment framework that provides a well-considered assessment for all types of animals on whether they should be kept for production purposes?

This outlook was published on 14 April 2016



Photograph: Dierenbeeldbank

Dairy farming

Forum members: dr. H.M.G. van Beers, A.J.M. van Hoof, dr.ing. H. Hopster, ir. M.H.A. Steverink, H.W.A Swinkels, drs. H.M. van Veen and ir. F. van der Schans (chairman)

Main issue: do price fluctuations affect the welfare and health of dairy cows and calves?

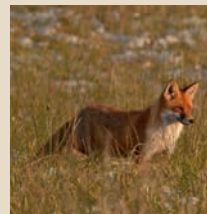


Photograph: Twan Wiermans

Animals in nature

Forum members: mr. A.G. Dijkhuis, J. Hesterman, ir. M. de Jong, prof.mr. A.A. Freriks, prof.dr. S. Haring, ir. M.H.A. Steverink, prof.dr. J.J.M. van Alphen and drs. J. Kaandorp (co-chaired)

Main issue: how can the assessment framework used as a guideline for the duty of care related to animals in the wild (among other things) also be applied to (various) animal species in practice?



Photograph: iStock

Philosopher Bas Haring on the second Vaarkamp Lecture:

‘Give animals a short but very good life’

The second Vaarkamp Lecture¹ was held at the University Hall in Utrecht on Monday, 5 October 2015. Vets, students, researchers, and officials were among the audience, as well as livestock farmers, representatives of organisations and many other people involved in the lives and welfare of animals in the Netherlands. The lecture, which is intended to be a regularly recurring event, was initiated on the initiative of the House of Representatives in memory of the former chair of the Council on Animal Affairs, Prof. Henk Vaarkamp, who died in 2011. It is a co-production of this Council and Utrecht University’s Faculty of Veterinary Medicine under the responsibility of the Ministry of Economic Affairs.

The plan was that the lecture should be in the form of a dialogue: ‘*Sustainable livestock farming, a dialogue*’. RDA chair Frauke Ohl and philosopher Bas Haring were going to ask each other questions covering the topics of welfare, economy and sustainability. However, Ohl had to withdraw for health reasons – it would later emerge that this was prompted by the illness which resulted in her death in January 2016. Both speakers had prepared well for the dialogue they were due to have on 5 October – well enough for Haring now to conduct the ‘dialogue’

successfully on his own: ‘Philosophers are used to reasoning with themselves.’ However, before that stage was reached, the then Minister for Agriculture Dijksma opened the event with a more general plea for dialogue. According to her, it remains necessary: between farmer and the environment, within the chain, with the consumer, between the scientific community and practitioners, and between countries forming part of the European Union. Dijksma also made reference to Henk Vaarkamp, who hoped to make the Netherlands

‘champion of Animal Welfare’. She expressed her satisfaction with the trail-blazing role played by the Netherlands in European agreements concerning the castration of pigs and the imminent ban on battery cages, national rules pertaining to tail docking of pigs and pain management during the dehorning of calves. At the same time, though, she urged us to go further.

Haring gets straight down to business: ‘Can’t we create animals which would happily be eaten?’ An interesting questi-



Photograph: Joop Fama

¹ These pages contain a summary of the report on the Vaarkamp Lecture which was published as a pamphlet: <http://www.rda.nl/home/37>



on because killing animals for our own human ends is a regular subject of debate. According to Haring, if the animals we kill were to stop minding being killed, at least one element of the larger problem would be resolved. He identifies and lists the concerns of the audience but rapidly reaches the conclusion that we should not reject the idea. He goes on to raise the term 'well-being'. An animal's sense of well-being is based on its survival, he says. If it feels safe somewhere, that will contribute towards its sense of well-being. After all, had this not been the case, the animal species in question would probably no longer exist. When a cow is given the opportunity, she will go into the barn because she would expect to find fewer predators there, suggests someone in the hall. Haring swiftly counters this: 'Perhaps we will soon have cows that enjoy living in a barn. This, then, will be an alternative to cows in meadows.' Does that mean we can influence the way cows think, asks another person keen to put forward an argument. 'A thing will be pleasant or not pleasant', reasons Haring. 'This will depend

entirely on the person experiencing it. If I were now to create a cow that enjoys living in a barn, who will I be harming?'

And the conversation continues along these lines. On intrinsic value: 'If you take the intrinsic value of the animal as the starting point, you are actually saying everything should stay the same as it is now.' That term is no use to us when it is applied to the way we treat animals, Haring goes on to say. 'An animal will always choose life over death. If you take the intrinsic value of the animal as your starting point, you will have to stop most forms of livestock farming because you will not be allowed to kill an animal. However, this also holds true when the animal is living in wretched conditions because even then it will choose to continue to exist. So in that case there's no need to complain about those conditions, I'd say!' This is actually what it boils down to, according to the philosopher: we need animals which live a short life for our benefit or pleasure and should ourselves regard that short life as a very good life. The

audience largely agrees. 'We like the idea of animals enjoying life,' says someone, 'so we also benefit from animal welfare. However, in that case, to keep their lives enjoyable, the animals should not have any expectations for the future because animals do not themselves seek death: 'If we don't know that for certain, won't we simply be making animals with no expectations for the future?' One question which is raised, but not really answered, this afternoon was the one about the possibility of simply keeping no animals at all, at least not on an economic basis. This merits serious consideration, according to the philosopher, 'because it is not a given that animal proteins are the best thing for us.' But this is not a matter for this afternoon's debate.

Everyone agrees that with the ideas he introduced at this Vaarkamp Lecture Haring has given us much food for thought. The day's chair Rens van Dobbenburgh notes in closing that the man lending his name to the event, Henk Vaarkamp, might have said: 'Today, we have again gone a little way to improving the world. And I would not disagree with him.'



Professor Van den Bergh, the first chairman of the RDA, is handed the first copy of the brochure with the report on the Vaarkamp lecture by RDA secretary Marc Schakenraad.

Visibly changed; biotechnology and exhibiting animals

Requested advisory report



Photograph: William Hoogteyling

Franck Meijboom

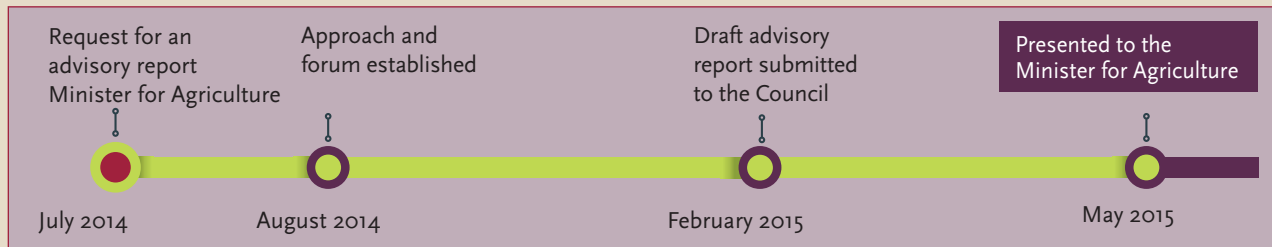
Question: Are there ethical or social considerations which mean we need new laws and rules to stipulate whether genetically modified animals may be exhibited and under which conditions?

Motivation: A museum in The Hague applied for a licence to show an artwork involving genetically modified organisms – Thale Cress and Zebrafish embryos – at an event concerning art and nature. This is what promoted the Minister for Agriculture to request a recommendation. At the same time, the Minister for the Environment asked the Genetic Modification Committee (COGEM) for an ‘alert’ on the same topic. It has since been published.

Considerations: The request for this recommendation was prompted by an unusual case: the planned exhibition where genetically modified Zebrafish embryos would be on display. This caused two Ministries to consider whether there might be a gap in the rules. ‘We have legislation on biotechnology and legislation on the exhibiting of animals,’ explains Dr Franck Meijboom. He was chair of the forum which prepared this Council recommendation. ‘However, there are no rules for combining the two.’

The reach of the Animals Act (Wet Dieren) which contains many provisions on animal welfare was also unclear. ‘A Zebrafish is a vertebrate which means it can suffer pain and is therefore covered by the Animals Act. However, this is not strictly true of a Zebrafish embryo. It turned out that there is very little legislation concerning the question of what should be deemed an organism and what should not.’ In general, the forum dealing with this topic focused in particular on the question of whether existing laws and rules would suffice, says Meijboom, who in everyday life is attached to Utrecht University’s Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and Faculty of Humanities. Should new rules be necessary, they would have to satisfy a substantial number of differing opinions held by the public and other considerations. Such considerations, in turn, are based on a variety of circumstances, sectors, animal species and the purposes for which they are exhibited.

‘It turned out that there is legislation covering all individual elements. However, the exhibition element is absent from the laws on biotechnology and the rules on exhibitions do not contain provisions allowing for people to make use of biotechnology.’ The forum found that this situation means that, where appropriate, legislation



should always be viewed in conjunction with other legislation. ‘Doing this will generally give you a solid basis upon which to assess such a case.’ This does not mean that there are not further discussions to be had. ‘Such as: For what purposes may you exhibit an animal? Or: everything that is possible may be done? Or: under which conditions and in which circumstance does an organism merit protection?’ Such discussions will have to be had on a case-by-case basis, argues the advisory report.

Recommendation: In the main, this should be left to the personal responsibility and common sense of the parties concerned. New legislation is not required because a host of rules is already in place, primarily with regard to safety for people and the environment, animal welfare and the use of biotechnology in respect of animals. In most cases, this will suffice if rules are looked at in conjunction with other rules. That said, artists putting on exhibitions may be asked to give clear accounts of what they are doing including, and in particular, when they apply for licences.

Response: The Ministers for Agriculture and the Environment presented the advisory report to the House



Photograph: www.gfish.com

of Representatives on 8 October 2015, together with the ‘GMOs on display’ report by the Genetic Modification Committee. The ministers endorse the RDA’s conclusions in the accompanying letter to Parliament. There is no obvious need for new regulations for the reasons

indicated by the RDA. The basic principle remains that artists and museums must continue to give proper consideration to the benefits and necessity when they contemplate exhibiting GMO animals.

One Health; an assessment framework for policy decisions

Unsolicited advisory report



Photograph: Hans Roggen

Arjan Stegeman

Question: How, with the aid of a *One Health* approach, can the body of human, animal and ecosystem interests be assessed in a transparent and even-handed way? Which aspects of animal welfare should be taken into account, how do they fit alongside aspects of the human and ecosystem domains within a comprehensive assessment framework and how can such a framework be used in practice?

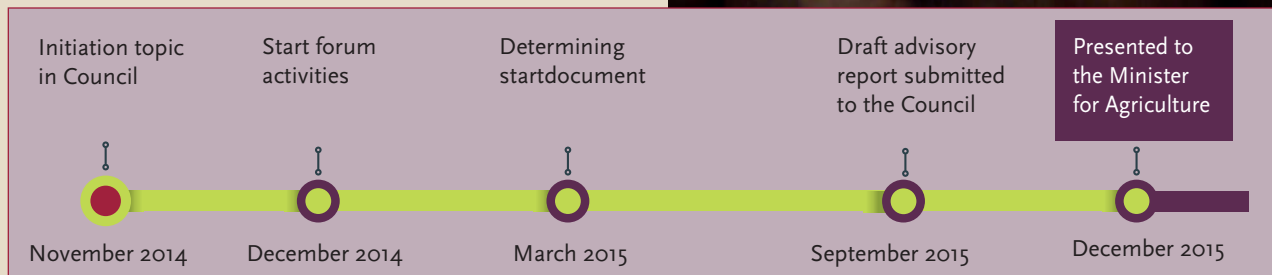
Motivation: An outbreak of Q fever a few years ago demanded a strong approach which also involved the killing of pregnant goats. Many people became infected and some died. The question of whether this was an adequate approach remains a topic of debate. A similar question had arisen earlier still, in the 1990s, when the need to kill 64 thousand calves from the United Kingdom to combat Mad Cow Disease (BSE), which could potentially result in humans contracting Creutzfeld-Jakob disease, was questioned. The link between the use of antibiotics in animals and resistance to antibiotics in humans is also regularly highlighted to this day. To be able to tackle such questions transparently and coherently we needed a consistent assessment framework. It would ensure that, where applicable, all relevant aspects from the human, animal and ecosystem domains would be given a clear place in the decision-making process.

Considerations: As Arjan Stegeman, chairman of the forum which developed the advisory report stressed, our primary concern when developing the framework was not the intended outcome. ‘We identified which factors should feature in a well-balanced assessment, and the connection between them. This therefore enables a user of the resultant assessment framework to see how to reach substantive conclusions, but does not tell the user which conclusions to reach.’ This was deliberate because the Council does not make policy choices. Whenever appropriate, the director or the policy-maker will do this by attaching weight to the various values in the framework. Stegeman, who in everyday life is Professor of Animal Health at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at Utrecht: ‘If as the person responsible for policy you are challenged on a particular decision, you can show that you have taken all factors into account, and how you did so. For example, you can show that the inherent dignity of the human often carries more weight than the intrinsic value of the animal or the ecosystem.’

Advice: the advice consists of a table which shows the various elements that should be part of a consideration, and a list of points to take into account. How this can be done is shown in two examples (included as annex). The first, related to BSE/Creutzfeldt-Jakob in the 1990s, is derived from political history, while the second is based on a self-chosen fictitious case.

Response: the state secretary of Economic Affairs presented the outlook plus his response to the cabinet in March 2016. He stated that the assessment framework offered good tools for assessing One Health issues and would be applied in policy decisions. The definition of values helps make considerations, involve stakeholders, improve communication and make eventual policy decisions.

Photograph: Iwan Wiermans



The Council at work

The composition of the Council

The RDA is an independent body of experts which advises the Minister for Agriculture on matters relating to national and international policy on animal health and welfare. It does so both on request and at its own initiative. The issues under consideration are often complex and multidisciplinary in nature, whereupon the Council strives to base its findings and recommendations on the most recent scientific, social and ethical

insights. According to its statutes, the Council comprises one chair and no more than 49 other members, all of whom act in a personal capacity and are neither accountable to, nor influenced by, any external parties. Sector experts therefore do not have a lobbying role within the Council. During the reporting period, the Council had approximately 35 members. Members are appointed by the Ministry of Economic Affairs minister. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Ministry of Public

Health, Welfare and Sport may propose members in consultation with the Council.

Meetings and requests for recommendations:

The Council convened twice in the reporting year: on 15 April and on 11 November. Both meetings took place in Kasteel Groeneveld in Baarn. The first meeting was attended by 21 Council members and the second by 25.

The Council received two requests for recommendations: one concerning the policy on the use of antibiotics in livestock farming, received on 12 May, and one for an assessment framework related to production animals, received on 21 August.

The Council also began preparations for six unsolicited advisory reports: the ones concerning One Health, the dairy industry, wild animals, stray cats, breeding and reproduction technologies 2016 and animal welfare through market mechanisms. The One Health advisory report has since been published and is summarised in this report; the one concerning breeding and reproduction technologies was also published in the spring of 2016.

The second Vaarkamp Lecture took place at Utrecht University's University Hall on 5 October. A separate report on the lecture, given by Council member and professor of philosophy, Bas Haring, has been published. It is summarised in this annual report.

The Council presented the Minister for Agriculture with its updated internal rules and the 2016/2017 communication plan on 8 December.



Photograph: De Nationale Beeldbank

RDA members and their backgrounds

Name

Area of expertise

Focus (Practice, Science and/or Policy)

Prof. J.J.M. van Alphen

Animal ecology

Science

Dr G.B.C. Backus

Agriculture and Food

Practice, Policy

Dr H.M.G. van Beers

Pig farming; Veterinary medicines

Science, Practice

W.T.A.A.G.M. van den Bergh

Financing

Practice

A.G. Dijkhuis

Fauna management; Regional planning

Practice, Policy

Prof. mr. A.A. Freriks

Animal & Law; Environmental law

Science, Practice

Prof. S. Haring

Philosophy and computer science

Science, Practice

Prof. L.A. den Hartog

Animal Feed & Agricultural industrial chains

Science, Practice

A.L. ten Have Mellema

Pig Farming

Practice, Policy

Prof. Dr L.J. Hellebrekers

Veterinary medicine; Pet animals

Policy, Science

Dr S.A. Hertzberger

Retail

Practice, Policy

J. Hesterman

Hobby farming

Practice

A.J.M. van Hoof

Dairy farming; Animal health

Practice, Policy

Dr H. Hopster

Animal welfare

Science, Policy

Prof. A. van Huis

Entomology

Science

Prof. M.C.M. de Jong

Veterinary epidemiology

Science

J. Th. de Jongh

Pets (Professional)

Policy

M. de Jong

Animal protection

Policy

J. Kaandorp

Zoo animals

Science, Practice, Policy

Prof. B. Kemp

Animal physiology, animal behaviour and animal husbandry

Science

Prof. Dr F. van Knapen

Veterinary public health

Science, Policy

Prof. Dr P.A. Koolmees

History of veterinary medicine

Science

Prof. M.P.G. Koopmans

Virology

Science

Dr F.L.B. Meijboom

(animal) Ethics

Science

Prof. F. Ohl, Chairwoman

†28 januari 2016

Behavioral biology, animal welfare

Science

F.C. van der Schans

Agriculture and the environment

Science, Policy

Dr M.C.Th. Scholten

Aquaculture and fishing, research strategy

Science, Policy

Prof. M.M. Sloet van Oldruitenborg-Oosterbaan

Horse management, equine medicine

Science, Policy, Practice

Prof. J.A. Stegeman

Health care farm animals

Science

M.H.A. Steverink

Organic livestock production, supply chain management

Practice, Policy

H.W.A. Swinkels

Calf meat industry

Practice, Policy

Dr J.W.G.M. Swinkels

Sustainable livestock production chains

Policy, Practice

R.A. Tombrock

Dutch Society for the Protection of Animals

& international animal welfare

Policy

Prof. J.C.M. van Trijp

Marketing consumer behavior

Science

H.M. van Veen

Animal protection; quality marks

Policy, Practice

P.J. Vingerling

Chain management

Practice

Stepped down from the Council

As at 1 May 2015:

W.H.B.J. van Eijck

Prof. W.H. Hendriks

Prof. R.B.M. Huirre

M.J.B. Jansen

As at 1 January 2016:

Prof. J.A.M. van Arendonk

Prof. M.C.M. de Jong

Personnel and organisation

Staff establishment

Secretary **Marc Schakenraad** and management assistant **Angela van der Togt** were employed by the Council throughout 2015.

The following new members of staff also joined us:

- Margot van Eggermont, deputy secretary of the RDA, employed between 2 March 2015 and 3 June 2015 inclusive;
- Fiona van Kaam, Veterinary Medicine student, employed between 11 March 2015 and 10 December 2015 inclusive;
- Rosanne van Oudheusden, deputy secretary of the RDA, employed as from 24 March 2015;
- Tosca Ploegaert, deputy secretary of the RDA, employed since 15 June 2015;
- Maartje Oonk, deputy secretary of the RDA, employed since 18 June 2015;
- Juliska Petronella, Financial assistant of the RDA, employed since 12 October 2015;
- Elvi van Wijk, deputy secretary of the RDA, employed since 12 November 2015.

Photograph: iStock



