



COUNCIL ON ANIMAL AFFAIRS (RDA)
ANNUAL REPORT 2016



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Design: Ellen Bouma, www.ellenbouma.nl

Editing: Martijn de Groot, Elvi van Wijk

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www.rda.nl

Council on Animal Affairs (RDA)

Bezuidenhoutseweg 73

2594 AC The Hague

Netherlands

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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 thirty-five 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 Council on Animal Affairs (RDA) has had a particularly productive year. We have been working on the intention expressed following the death of our former chair, Frauke Ohl, in January 2016: 'We will press on with the efforts made under her leadership'. Those efforts have resulted in advisory reports on the use of antibiotics in livestock farming, breeding and reproductive technologies, production animals, stray cats and means used to capture and kill birds. All these advisory reports have had an influence on policy, the House of Representatives and the social actors concerned.

We also looked for, and succeeded in finding, a new chair, through an open procedure. Pauline Krikke was appointed on 1 November. Unfortunately, we were not alone in recognising her qualities: in early 2017, she was appointed mayor of The Hague, a top administrative prize on which the Council congratulated her. Together with the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the Council resumed its search for a chair, bolstered by the knowledge that its enthusiastic and committed members would continue its work well even without a chair.

I also expect 2017 to be a productive year. This annual report contains an overview of the advisory reports due to be produced in 2017, some of which have now been published. The RDA is proud to be allowed to contribute to the debate on the position of animals in the Netherlands and beyond and is very happy to work on this issue.

Marc Schakenraad
Frist Secretary of the Council on Animal Affairs



Photograph: Paul Voorham



Marjolijn Sonnema

Photograph: Nienke Elenbaas

Director-General for Agriculture and Nature Policy Marjolijn Sonnema:

‘The Council’s members come from a wide range of backgrounds. This is a good thing if we are to reach well-balanced opinions’

Since September 2016, Marjolijn Sonnema has been Director-General for Agriculture and Nature Policy at the Ministry of Economic Affairs. This means the Council on Animal Affairs’ area of activity is also her responsibility.

No, she is not responsible for the Council itself, because it is independent, as Sonnema reiterates yet again: ‘I attach great importance to that independence. It is necessary if we want sound and well-considered advisory reports.’ However, the policy areas which the RDA’s advisory reports frequently influence are those which her Directorate-General deals with on a daily basis.

The way animals are viewed is changing

and has undoubtedly changed considerably already. Marjolijn Sonnema is particularly well-placed to observe this because after the start of her career with the Agricultural Board and the then Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food

Quality (LNV), she worked at various other ministries before ‘returning to the base station’, as she puts it, last year. And she can see now that over the past ten or fifteen years, people have changed the way they view animals. ‘Ten years ago, the animal was still very much a production factor, at least in the agricultural sector. The main consideration was how much milk a cow produced and that it should produce more and more. Now, the intrinsic value of the animal plays a much greater role. And this has raised the question of whether you should be allowed to keep a particular animal: for what purpose is it kept and in what conditions?’, says the senior official, referring to the positive list which was published in early 2016 and

to the RDA recommendation for an Assessment Framework for Production Animals which was published in April 2016. ‘For example, the ban on the use of wild animals in circuses or the ban on mink farming which was upheld by the court last December are significant steps.’ The way wild animals are viewed is also entirely different now compared with the beginning of this century. ‘Look at the reactions when a sperm whale is beached, or when a fallow deer is killed.’

Policy on the use of antibiotics

The discussions are the same, and the perspectives can be widely divergent, as reflected in the advisory reports of the

Council on Animal Affairs, thinks Sonnema. ‘And it is a very good thing that a Council such as this one has members from a wide range of backgrounds, with expertise in many areas if well-considered opinions are to be reached. You don’t make policy overnight, you really need recommendations, too, such as those provided by the RDA.’

There is a widespread belief that advisory reports are gratefully received and then filed away, never to be seen again. Do the RDA’s advisory reports influence the Ministry’s actions?

‘Absolutely. The One Health advisory report, for example, helped to determine the agenda for animal health. And we have based the next phase of the policy on the use of antibiotics in livestock farming which is now starting in part on the recommendation given by the Council on it last spring. That list also includes the recommendation on means used to capture and kill birds. A large part of it has been included in the Implementing Regulation for the Nature Conservation Act which entered into force on 1 January this year.’

Translation into policy

Incidentally, this does not mean that the RDA recommendations could not be better still, in the eyes of Director-General Sonnema. ‘The challenge for the RDA is to have all perspectives represented when it draws up an advisory report, and also to ensure that they contribute

to the outcome,’ she says. ‘That means you will not only have an answer as to what is best for the animal, but will also take account of all other interests. And that the recommendation lends itself to translation into policy.’

So isn’t there a danger that the Council will start adopting the position of ministers?

‘No, definitely not. The Council is, and will remain, an advisory body. I just think that the benefit a recommendation brings could sometimes be better still were it to be geared towards the practical application of the policy.’

Consumer behaviour

Another change which has become apparent in recent years is that people are becoming increasingly engaged in matters to do with animal welfare. Sonnema: ‘Consumer behaviour is changing as far as food is concerned. People are changing the way they view animals and this is beginning to show in shopping behaviour, too. People want to know where their food comes from. This applies to the region; see, for example, the interest in regional products, but also to individual businesses. There is a rising demand for transparency in the chain and for sustainability improvements, and this automatically includes animal welfare. The Beter Leven label is a good example, leaving the freedom of choice with the consumer. Naturally, we as the Ministry have a policy for food. Sustainability improve-

ments, and therefore animal welfare, are an integral part of it. So this is another area where we can put the expertise of the Council on Animal Affairs to good use.’

Level playing field

The Netherlands is a frontrunner in Europe when it comes to animal welfare, Sonnema knows. Throughout Europe, there is a growing interest in the subject, and this is a good thing because it would not be right for our country to stand alone. ‘A Eurobarometer, a European survey which shows that a majority of Europeans thinks more should be done about the welfare of animals used in livestock farming, was published last year. At international level, we are doing much work on corporate social responsibility.’ ‘Together with Germany and Denmark, the Netherlands called on the European Commission and its fellow Member States to commit themselves to introducing better regulations, improving animal welfare, raising awareness and promoting knowledge. Those efforts have now resulted in position papers on pig welfare, transport and, recently, the establishment of the EU platform on animal welfare. After all, our aim is to make considerable headway in the area of animal welfare and it is in Brussels itself that we plan to do that because it is important to the Netherlands that a level playing field is maintained.’





Arjan Stegeman

Photograph: Hans Roggen

Policy on the use of antibiotics in livestock farming: effects and outlooks

Advisory report requested

Question: A policy restricting the use of antibiotics in livestock farming has been in place for some years now. What effects has this policy had on animal welfare, including animal health, is it possible to take further steps in a responsible way and which steps would be taken?

Motivation: The government is developing a follow-up approach in respect of the policy on the use of antibiotics. Livestock farmers and veterinary medicine practitioners are indicating that the present approach could have a negative impact on animal health and therefore on animal welfare. At the same time, there are indications that individual farms which make little use of antibiotics score well in the area of welfare and health. It is important that the consequences of the present policy for animal welfare are recognised when the next steps are taken.

Considerations: We have opted for a two-stage approach, says Arjan Stegeman, chair of the forum* which prepared this advisory report. 'First, we examined scientific literature and then what the practitioners concerned had to say on the matter. The scientific information was limited because

the reduction policy is still so new and it is mainly in the Netherlands that it has been fully set in motion. That is why we have also underpinned our recommendation with information obtained from practical experts. We were able to make use of the existing ABRES Working Groups (resistance to antibiotics) for each sector.'

Not only is little scientific research available, the forum found, but by and large there is also a lack of objective datasets concerning animal health and animal welfare. 'That makes it difficult to formulate a policy,' says Stegeman, who in everyday life is professor of Farm Animal Health at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at Utrecht University. 'For a good policy you really want to be able to make a clear link between practical data on health, welfare and

* Not including the chair, the forum comprised the following people: Dr F.L.B. Meijboom, Prof. F. Van Knapen, Prof. L.J. Hellebrekers, Prof. M.C.M. de Jong, P.J. Vingerling, H.W.A. Swinkels, A.J.M. van Hoof, Prof. D. Mevius and Prof. Y.H. Schukken also joined the forum. The Council was also grateful to have been able to draw on the work carried out by the ABRES Working Groups where parties in the chain collaborate in order to curb the use of antibiotics.

the use of antibiotics.’ Data were available only for dairy farms and veal calf farms which showed, for example, that in addition to the fall in the use of antibiotics in recent years, the calf mortality rate has risen and there are more cases of mastitis.

The various interviews conducted revealed, among other things, that the current guidelines and formularies can lead to the use of insufficiently efficacious drugs. ‘As a result, animals sometimes suffer for longer than they would have had the right drug been used,’ says Stegeman, making another observation: ‘Livestock farmers and veterinary surgeons may, consciously or unconsciously, make a reduction in the use of antibiotics their primary goal. This will defeat the purpose, often at the expense of animal welfare.’ However, there are many positive developments to report, says the forum chair. ‘It has been clearly shown that the present policy on the use of antibiotics has led to a different mindset: greater awareness in respect of antibiotics and greater interest in prevention. In addition, much research is under way, into more robust animals, for example, faster diagnostics and new vaccines with a view to making the use of antibiotics unnecessary’

Recommendation: Ensure that the follow-up policy is accompanied by the proper recording of data on the use of antibiotics and animal health including animal welfare. Introduce workable indicators for animal welfare into practice. Address the significant differences in usage among farms and direct follow-up action primarily at farms which are still using antibiotics on a large scale. Encourage a chain-oriented approach, collaboration and the exchange of information between chain partners to promote animal health and animal welfare. Take into account the sluggish returns in some sectors and in that context also aim at providing financial incentives to encourage the business conduct wished for.

Response: Minister for Agriculture Martijn van Dam, Minister Edith Schippers of Health, Welfare and Sport, Welfare and Sport endorse the recommendations made by the RDA in this advisory report. The recommendations have been included and considered in more detail in the plans for the sectors and the Royal Netherlands Veterinary Association (KNMvD), the policy approach and the research agenda for the years ahead. The advisory report has also been used to support discussions in an international context on curbing the use of antibiotics in livestock, for example, in Europe (European Commission) and the United States (exchange of knowledge between the United States and the Netherlands).



Bacteria cultures in petri dishes

Photograph: iStock

Managing the stray cat population: reducing health risks for humans and animals

An advisory report provided on the Council's own initiative



Photograph: Arenda Oormen

Frans van Knapen

Question: The original question ‘Is there a stray cat problem and if so, how large is it?’ has largely been answered by previous studies, in particular the study conducted by Wageningen University and Research Centre, which was completed after this forum’s work started. An aspect which received less attention was the risk posed by infections in stray cats to the animals themselves and their welfare, to public health and also to other animals. This advisory report centres on that risk and the approach taken to address it.

Motivation: In the last century, public concern arose on a number of occasions when attention was drawn to the role that cats play in the spread of diseases such as toxoplasmosis. More recently, outbreaks of zoonoses such as avian influenza and Q fever have awakened public interest in diseases which can be transmitted by

animals to humans. The Council therefore felt that the hitherto neglected aspect of the risk of infection from stray cats in particular warranted adequate analysis and an appropriate approach.

Considerations: ‘Over the last few decades, significant efforts have been made at an international level to ensure an effective approach towards combating the spread of parasitic diseases by cats,’ states Frans van Knapen, member of the RDA and chair of the forum* which drafted this advisory report. Van Knapen is a Professor Emeritus of Veterinary Medicine at Utrecht University’s Faculty of Veterinary Medicine.

* Not including the chair, the forum comprised the following members: Dr H. Hopster, J.Th. de Jongh and M. van Veen. The forum used the expertise of, among others, the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM).

‘This resulted in internationally standardised prevention and treatment methods. But if you bear in mind that a huge population of stray cats remains beyond the reach of this approach, it is clear that the effect will remain limited.’ Two infections that frequently occur, and that sometimes have serious consequences for the infected humans and animals are *toxoplasmosis* and *toxocariasis*. Infection takes place through an environment contaminated by cats. According to Van Knapen, that makes it advisable for the forum to target the recommendation in particular at the prevention of infection.

As discussions on the risks presented by cats can often trigger emotional reactions, the chair found that it was important to the forum to “formulate the issue itself”, identify its own solutions and stand alongside cat owners.’ The forum approached the Rotterdam Stray Cat Foundation for infor-

mation on the TNR method: *trap, neuter and return* or capture, castrate or spay and return to nature.

Recommendation: Without domestic cats there would be no stray cats, and the Council therefore also focuses on domestic cats. ‘Compulsory registration (“chipping”) of pet cats is already a big step forward,’ explains Van Knapen, ‘because many stray cats are domestic cats that have run away, become lost or been left behind.’ Newborn domestic kittens must also, by law, be castrated or spayed at as young an age as possible. ‘Breeders and other certified institutions can be granted an exemption from this general obligation.’ According to the recommendation, cats must be included on the list of legally permitted pets, the ‘pet list’. Van Knapen: ‘This makes it possible to formulate ownership conditions, including regular worming. Cat owners must adhere to these conditions.’ For stray cats, the Council recommends a consistent policy of TNR. Van Knapen: ‘We have seen that this type of approach can be successful where it goes hand in hand with intensive efforts by a large number of volunteers.’ The Council also recommends research into the feasibility of using these volunteers to worm stray cats regularly. To promote regular worming, availability of the relevant resources must be maintained at pet stores, accompanied by effective training for sellers.

Culling by hunting is undesirable apart from in exceptional cases, for instance where cats are very difficult to capture in woodland areas. Finally, the recommendation mentions a number of other measures relating to vaccinations, sandy soils, shelter, not disposing of domestic cat faeces in the organic waste bin and a national blueprint for tackling the stray cat problem.

Response: The advisory report received considerable attention in the media. Just over a week after the advisory report had been presented to Director-General Hoogeveen of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Minister Van Dam responded to the advisory report in a letter to the House of Representatives: ‘I am familiar with the stray cat problem and am taking the RDA’s recommendations seriously.’ However, owing to the administrative burden and the ‘small contribution it will make to the long-term reduction of the number of stray cats’ the minister did not follow the advice to make the Identification and Registration of stray cats compulsory. The advisory report was presented to stakeholders. A number of parties including the Dutch National Centre for Information on Companion Animals, LICG actively took up the recommendations without delay.



Photograph: iStock



Breeding and Reproductive Technologies

An advisory report provided on the Council's own initiative

Question: The breeding objectives set by humans are applied in breeding. Breeding therefore benefits humans, but not always animals. This gives rise to ethical questions. The interests of human and animal welfare, and of the climate, biodiversity, food supply and the economy must be weighed against each other. Insufficient balance in the assessment may mean considerable consequences for the animals concerned, but also for humans and the environment. It is therefore important that the dilemmas associated with breeding are analysed in depth and then solved. That requires an assessment framework, which will help when decisions concerning breeding and reproduction are made.

Motivation: In 2010 the RDA produced an advisory report on the developments in breeding, and the impact they have on the health and welfare of the animals concerned. One of the recommendations was that 'test polders' should be set up where the government, academic, professional and social organisations and breeders' organisations together examine the usefulness and effectiveness of the assessment framework presented by the Council. An evaluation for breeders of livestock animals has been carried out in test polder projects. New technologies, such as gene editing, the significance of which could not have been foreseen in 2010, have arisen in the last few years. Here, too, it

is important to know whether the assessment framework presented earlier offers sufficient scope to assess how to deal with this.

Considerations: The Council wished to include the results of the 'test polders' in an evaluation. The forum set up for this advisory report also noted that there have been rapid developments in the world of genetics since 2010. 'What was then called marker-assisted selection is now known as genome selection and relates to a much larger number of markers,' states forum chair Prof. Johan van Arendonk*. everydaylife, he is Chief Innovation & Technology Officer at Hendrix Genetics. When this advisory report was being drafted, Arendonk was professor of Breeding and Genetics at Wageningen University. 'This makes it possible,' he continues, 'to make better and, above all, faster selections in breeding, i.e. with much shorter intervals between subsequent generations. Genome selection has changed breeding fundamentally.' But that is not all. 'A technology which we had not even heard of five years ago has arrived on the scene: gene editing. It can be used to make very specific modifications in DNA sequencing. At present, it is being applied on an experimental scale, primarily for

* Not including the chair, the forum comprised the following members Dr F.L.B. Meijboom and the external experts Dr E.E. Ellen and L. Kaal.

Photograph: Guy Ackermans

biomedical purposes. It is still genetic modification, but does not involve heterologous modifications and lacks the technical difficulties associated with this technology until now.' Which then? 'Until now, a piece of DNA would be inserted into the animal's DNA in a fairly arbitrary way. The outcome was a lottery. This meant it could not be used in breeding, and it was impossible to know whether that lottery would be accompanied by harmful consequences for the animal. With gene editing, the location of change can be determined precisely. For genetic modification in its old form, the assessment led to the following conclusion: don't do it! The question now is: does this also apply to gene editing? It is a promising technology but it remains too much of an unknown quantity to be used responsibly. The assessment framework provides points of reference for the answer to this question.'

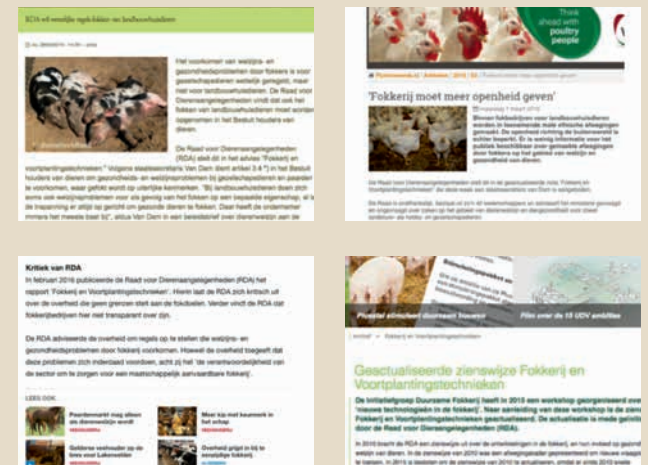
Recommendation: The assessment framework presented in the 2010 advisory report is still up-to-date and can be used for new questions without being amended. All parties involved must make the assessments regarding the use of existing and new breeding technologies quickly, transparently and pro-actively. 'It is important for new technologies,' states van Arendonk, 'that this happens because the technology and its use in breeding, if any, is still in its infancy. In short, breeder organisations should not first invest a great deal in such use and then ask the public if it approves.' The recommendation has the following to say to breeding organisations for hobby animals and pet animals: make sure you also provide a certificate if the consumer makes a purchase, and also draw the consumer's attention to it, so that poor practices pertaining to breeding encountered in foreign countries do not gain a foothold here.



Model of a DNA string

Photograph: iStock

Response: Minister for Agriculture Van Dam responded positively to the recommendations in this advisory report in his letter to Parliament of 22 April: 'I endorse the RDA's recommendations and I am asking all parties to give the public an insight into the assessments they make.' He places the responsibility for 'socially acceptable breeding' squarely with the sector, which could take action itself in this regard: 'within the Sustainable Breeding Initiative Group or other chain initiatives, for example.' The advisory report was presented to those directly involved. There turned out to be much support for the recommendations.



Assessment Framework for Production Animals

Advisory report requested



Photograph: René Verleg

Question: Can an assessment framework be drawn up which will allow a well-balanced opinion to be formed for all animal species as to whether we should be allowed to keep them for production purposes? The basic premise of the Animals Act (*Wet dieren*) is ‘No, unless’, that is to say unless the legislature decides that it is permitted. In that case, the relevant animal species will be included in the list of authorised production animals. The assessment framework aims to offer the government a tool to help perform the necessary assessment in a comprehensive and transparent manner.

Motivation: ‘The Netherlands still lacks a clear method to test whether an animal may be used as a production animal,’ explains Hans Hopster, the chair of the forum which prepared this advisory report for the Council *. In everyday life, he is a professor in Animal Welfare at the Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences and a senior researcher in Animal Welfare for the Animals Sciences Group at Wageningen

* Not including the chair, the forum comprised the following members: H.M. van Veen and Prof. L.J. Hellebrekers.

University and Research Centre. ‘There has been considerable discussion from the outset about the automatic inclusion of production animals on the list even though it has not been ruled out that specific husbandry regulations are also needed for these animal species. The Council has previously developed assessment frameworks for insects, fish and the dromedary. New applications are occasionally submitted for animals which had not previously been included. This underlines the importance of using a methodology which is the same not for just one or two, but for all animal species.’

Naturally, the outcome of the assessment will not necessarily be the same, explains Hopster, because it will depend on the use or the function of the animal and on the information included in the assessment. It may be different for a rabbit if that rabbit is a pet animal rather than a production animal or laboratory animal. ‘However, the same methodology must always be applied to the assessment to ensure that all the relevant questions are asked and the outcome can be explained in all circumstances.’

Considerations: ‘Assessing the question whether an animal should be included in the list of authorised production animals should be a two-step process,’ says Hopster. ‘The first thing you should look at is whether the animal is suitable to be kept by humans without any problem. Should this be the case, the next step is to look at whether this also applies to “keeping the animal for production purposes”. Generally speaking, quite different circumstances obviously apply, including including the animal keeper’s economic incentives.’ To perform the actual assessment for production animals, the assessment framework should be used that was developed during the preparation of previous RDA advisory reports, the latest and most articulated form of which was published in the One Health advisory report. Hopster: ‘Again, the relevant values from the “human”, “animal” and “ecosystem” domains will be taken into account. This includes the three dimensions of sustainable production: *people, profit and planet.*’

Recommendation: The assessment framework presented in this advisory report should be used to answer the question whether animal species should be included in the list of authorised production animals. The suitability of keeping the animal species should first be assessed, before assessing its suitability for production purposes. Any new exemptions should be granted on an individual and provisional basis subject to conditions. This will provide useful input for the animal husbandry conditions that will later be attached to inclusion in the list. Record the findings in a file and ensure that the considerations taken into account when making a decision are disclosed. Also perform this assessment for animals which already have a long history as production animals.



An exemption has already been granted for the use of Black Soldier Fly larvae to accelerate the composting process of organic materials.

Response: In part based on this advisory report, the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) amended the procedure for applying for an exemption from the list of authorised production animals. The Minister for Agriculture is still considering a reassessment of the present list, which lists all animals which may be kept in the Netherlands for production purposes.





Andreas Dijkhuis

Means used to capture and kill birds

Condensed, requested advisory report

Question: The problem as presented by the Minister for Agriculture to the Council related to ten means used to capture and kill birds proposed by the joint provinces. What do they mean for animal welfare and what are the associated ethical aspects, was the question. The need to capture and kill, for example, to prevent damage or nuisance, was taken as read and was therefore not part of the request for a recommendation.

Motivation: Since the beginning of this century, the provinces have had the task of granting licences and exemptions for the capture and killing of birds, explains Andreas Dijkhuis. He was chair of the Council's forum which expeditiously prepared this condensed advisory report in the spring of 2016*. 'Their powers also included deciding whether or not to permit certain means of capture and killing. In agreement with the central government, a specific practice has been developed. In anticipation of the Nature Conservation Act (Wet natuurbescherming), which was set to enter into force on 1 January 2017, the

provinces sought certainty regarding that practice, and the means they would and would not be allowed to be used in future. For that reason, they submitted a number of current means of capture and killing to the central government, through the Association of Provincial Authorities (IPO). Represented by the Minister, it then approached the Council for a recommendation.' This, then, is in fact a recommendation which, in addition to the Minister responsible for animal welfare, also has the provinces as its target group.

Considerations: 'There was not a great deal of time to produce the recommendation because, bearing in mind the impending new law, the government had asked for an opinion on the proposed means to be delivered promptly,' says Dijkhuis who, in everyday life, is director of the Dutch Association of Land Agents. 'We therefore limited ourselves to the ten means proposed and first checked what was already available. The Council had itself provided recommendations in 2012 on the killing of geese, and produced a more general advisory report on the considerations which must be taken into account when dealing with wild animals: Duty of Care, Naturally. We also took into account the existing case law of the Council of State pertaining to the killing and capture of animals in the wild. And finally we used the expertise of the Wildlife Compensation fund, which was still in existence at that time, in this area. Until

Photograph: Arenda Oomen

* Not including the chair, the forum comprised the following Council members Dr H. Hopster, Dr F.L.B. Meijboom and J. Kaandorp. The Council sought external expertise from Dr M.A. Gerritzen (researcher, Wageningen UR Livestock Research) and F. van Bommel MSc. (Ecologist, Van Bommel Faunawerk). Recommendations from the Wildlife Compensation Fund (Faunafonds) have also been included.

then, that Fund had acted as adviser to the provinces in this field. That provided a good initial basis for the requested recommendation.’ The forum chair specifies animal welfare as the key consideration: ‘The Nature Conservation Act states interventions in the wild are justified only where certain interests become apparent. Such interests may include the maintenance of crops, or traffic safety. However, animal welfare is also one of the interests belonging to that list. We used that as a guideline when drawing up this advisory report.’

Recommendation: No generally applicable conclusions on the use of means to capture and kill can be drawn. A careful assessment will have to be made on a case-by-case basis where the species, group, individual and site play a role. Taking into account that basic principle, the Council believes that there are no welfare-based objections to the use of live decoy geese and other decoy birds, provided they have been bred in captivity, decoy whistles and other decoy bird sounds, night-vision equipment and silencers as aids. The use of the Bal-chatri trap is also acceptable from a welfare perspective, provided a number of conditions is met. Some other means are not suitable in normal circumstances but may be used under certain conditions and in individual cases as a stopgap solution: Striking, stabbing and cutting weapons and cervical dislocation.

Response: ‘It is noteworthy that not only was the recommendation drawn up promptly,’ says Andreas Dijkhuis, ‘but also resulted within one year in legislation in which animal welfare aspects are clearly anchored. The conclusions set out in the advisory report were adopted unchanged by the government with the Minister’s letter of June 2016 to the House of Representatives, and later by the House of Representatives itself.’ The provinces will now have to work with it, says Dijkhuis, but they will not find that particularly

difficult because, ultimately, the recommendation is a recalibration of the practice which has developed under their responsibility over the past fifteen years.



Birds can seriously impede air traffic

Photograph: Shutterstock



Photograph: Iwan Wiermans

Impact on animal welfare of price volatility in the dairy farming sector

The discontinuation of the dairy quota system on 1 April 2015 gave the RDA cause to reflect on the impact this may have on the welfare of cows and calves. This was because sharper price fluctuations were expected and the potential effects thereof on the welfare of cows and calves had never been extensively examined.

The key questions were: 1) Will income insecurity in the dairy farming sector resulting from fluctuations in (milk) prices and production costs have an impact on the welfare of cows and calves (including the health of cows and calves and veal calves, the latter also being born of dairy cows)? and 2) What are the perspectives for action in order to safeguard adequately the welfare of cows and calves in the face of rising income insecurity?

According to the Council, the main animal welfare risks, including animal health as a result of increased income insecurity are:

- changes in feed
- the physical or mental condition of a dairy farmer, for example, owing to the pressure generated by rules, external opinions, business growth or other problems.

- risks of infection owing to young stock being reared off the farm
- units (or parts of units) being inadequately maintained or inadequate replacement of bedding in units
- unsatisfactory professionalism on the part of the dairy farmer.

Increased income insecurity and public demands require entrepreneurship and professionalism. The same applies to dealing with environmental targets and constantly changing legislation, for example. Moreover, by definition, professionalism is important to the proper management of the farm as a whole and the animals concerned in particular. Not all dairy farmers are sufficiently equipped to deal with greater price fluctuations and the other developments in the dairy farming sector.

A number of factors could assist dairy farmers here:

- A farmer can limit risks by creating a financial buffer or concluding long-term contracts, for example;
- Quality systems used within dairy establishments can improve animal welfare through the recording of targeted indicators and targeted training;
- Advisers, including veterinary surgeons, can help dairy farmers to deal properly (from the animals' perspective) with price fluctuations;
- Excesses can be limited in particular by the 'Vertrouwensloket' (confidential help desk), where professionals entering farms can report any misconduct;
- Educating dairy farmers and professionals entering farms can contribute to their mindsets and knowledge level.

Price volatility can therefore pose risks for the welfare of animals. However, there are perspectives for action to limit such risks. Risks can be managed satisfactorily and price volatility as such does not impinge on animal welfare. Continuing to invest in quality systems and support for them within the sector is important if we are to avoid unwanted effects on the welfare of cows and calves and, where necessary, remedy any such effects.

Since a closer examination of the results of this concise question show that they fail to contribute sufficiently to the present public debate about dairy farming, the Council ultimately decided against producing an advisory report on it.



Photograph: RDA

The 'Relationship between the nature policy and the policy on animals' forum on a working visit in the Amsterdamse Waterleidingduinen

With its 'Relationship between the nature policy and the policy on animals' advisory report, the RDA seeks to provide guidance for questions concerning animals in the wild where the interests and values of humans and animals can clash and we wonder whether, and how, we should intervene. In October 2016, the forum members visited the Amsterdamse Waterleidingduinen. It was clear here that after years spent wrestling with the question of 'whether or not to interfere with nature', the government and nature reserve managers have ultimately been unable to avoid making a choice.

In 2013, the municipality of Amsterdam, owner of the water catchment area, took the decision to resort to culling, but it was not until 2016 that the foresters actually took up arms. Biologist Ed Cousin said the fallow deer question 'is Waternet's hottest topic.' He is the head of the water company's resource and countryside management department and outlined the course of the decision-making process regarding the management of fallow deer and which arguments played a part. Ecologist Vincent van der Spek of Waternet, also described how difficult that choice really was. He was initially critical of culling, but is now in favour of intervention. 'It is precisely the species characteristic of dunes which are under pressure owing to the presence of a species which does not originally come from here.'

The explanation given to the RDA forum members showed that Waternet and the municipality of Amsterdam proceeded carefully when they made the decision to cull the deer. The forum members went home wondering whether their advisory report, which will be delivered in 2017, would be of benefit to the debate and the decision-making process.



Photograph: RDA

One of the many fallow deer in the Waterleidingduinen



Photograph: RDA

Ecologist Vincent van der Spek giving an explanation to RDA secretary Marc Schakenraad and the forum members Marijke de Jong and Jacques van Alpen (from right to left)

New Council members

In 2016, three new members joined the Council on Animal Affairs. They have provided some information on themselves for you in the following pages.



Photograph: René Verleg

Ynte Schukken: 'The treatment of animals should be a matter that concerns society as a whole'

'I have been working in this world for a good thirty years', says Ynte Schukken when asked about his involvement with animals. The world he refers to is the world of livestock farming and health. Coming from a family of livestock farmers, Schukken studied veterinary medicine and then followed in his father's footsteps as a practising veterinary surgeon. He subsequently spent fifteen years engaged in research into the health of dairy cows at America's Cornell University, only to return three years

ago to start work at GD Animal Health (GD), where he is now general director.

'I have participated once on a Council forum, which had to do with the use of antibiotics in livestock farming, and I was struck by the wide range of perspectives from which topics are approached, how all aspects are considered and the high level of the discussions of those topics in substantive terms.' That played a part when Schukken was asked to become a member of the Council, and also prompted him to say: 'I consider the positioning of animals in society to be very important. Emotions play a major role in public debate and I think it is no bad thing to include level-headedness and rationality as well.' The Council shares that view, and Schukken finds its discussions meaningful and 'extremely encouraging'. Schukken thinks the Council's work is important. 'We need to ensure the Netherlands is a place where citizens and livestock farming can co-exist. The public should be aware of, and broadly support, the way animals are treated, and the Council can make a useful contribution here.'

The GD director, who is also still a professor at Wageningen and Utrecht, personally believes that his knowledge of animal diseases based on practical experience and his work with GD Animal Health, can contribute to the Council's deliberations. The Council will also benefit from his familiarity with livestock farming: 'I go to many farms, often with veterinary surgeons. I enjoy this and think it is worthwhile, and I look forward to bringing that knowledge to the Council.'



Photograph: René Verleg

Katrien Termeer: 'Brede adviezen met maatschappelijke meerwaarde'

'*Wicked problems*' is the term used by social scientists to describe persistent problems whose resolution often brings with it new questions. Katrien Termeer is a public administration expert and is happy to tackle such questions. This is one of the reasons why the Council for Animal Affairs' work appeals to her: 'It often involves interrelated topics such as animal welfare, the health of humans and animals, the environment and nature, and sometimes today's solution may become tomorrow's problem.'

Termeer can see that Council applies the broad approach required to deal with such questions and feels at home here. So far, her own involvement in animal matters has been in the agricultural sphere. She studied land and water management at Wageningen, moving on to the public administration department at Rotterdam, where she obtained a doctorate based on a study concerning manure policy. Other interludes in her career include the two years she spent working as policy adviser at the then Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, finally ending up back at Wageningen where she is now professor of Public Administration.

Termeer finds livestock interesting because the sector not only has its own fair share of wicked problems, but is also an area where there is great public involvement. 'Where this is the case, social acceptance is very important and this in turn requires the openness which is occasionally lacking in the decision-making process concerning livestock farming.' Termeer conducted a study into the way such decisions are made – for example, concerning mega-farms – and into public trust in the sector.

'Animals are the source of much debate within society,' notes Termeer, 'and when they crop up within the Council I think it is important that the social and public administration aspects have a clearly defined place in those discussions. I hope the Council will continue to provide wide-ranging recommendations – recommendations which genuinely provide social added value – and I also intend to try to contribute towards this.'



Photograph: René Verleg

Hans Heesterbeek: 'Considering topics which you can see coming'

'I am by nature a polymath; there is no specific specialist field to which I wish to limit myself,' Hans Heesterbeek reveals, and his background and work are perfect illustrations of this. Initially, he studied plant pathology at Wageningen, followed by mathematics in Amsterdam, before moving on to Leiden where he obtained a doctorate based on a study on the dynamics of infectious diseases in humans and animals. He is still engaged in research into dynamic systems. At Utrecht, Heesterbeek is chair of two departments of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine

– one being an interim post – because he enjoys administration and management. In the course of his research, he often collaborates with researchers from different disciplines such as biologists, ecologists, geophysicists, economists and sociologists.

Heesterbeek also sees this multidisciplinary focus reflected in the problems dealt with by the Council on Animal Affairs and this appeals to him. He also says 'As head of the Animals in Science and Society department, which is concerned with matters similar to those dealt with by the RDA, I think such problems merit consideration. And finally, I might be able to go some way to restoring the epidemiological expertise which the Council lost with the departure of two colleagues.' Discussions within the Council are in fact never one-dimensional, says Heesterbeek. 'The problems are always complex, involving many aspects, otherwise, of course, the Minister would not have needed an advisory council. Those problems require structured discussions by people from different backgrounds, and I should very much like to play my part in them.'

The RDA provides recommendations not only when asked to do so by the minister concerned, but also on its own initiative. Heesterbeek thinks this is a good thing. 'It can be very useful, when you can see several topics on the horizon, to say: why don't we think seriously about this with a group of experts. You can then use the conclusions drawn to recommend research to ensure that you are better informed when the question actually arises.'

Looking ahead to 2017

Addressing the problem of dog bites Prevention of serious dog bites in humans and animals

Advisory report requested

Photograph: Nationale Beeldbank



This advisory report centres on the following questions:

Is it possible to distinguish between dogs with a high bite risk and other dogs? How could such a

distinction be made? Should separate ownership rules be drawn up for such high-risk dogs? If so, what should they entail?

Forum: Dr H. Hopster, J.Th. de Jongh, H. M. van Veen and Dr J.W.G.M. Swinkels (chair).

This advisory report was presented on 23 February 2017 by forum chair Han Swinkels and chair of the RDA, Pauline Krikke, to the Minister for Agriculture, Martijn van Dam.

Horse markets in The Netherlands – Tell it like it is

Advisory report requested

The Minister requested information to support his efforts to separate horse markets from ‘stressful events’ and to limit the risk of incidents. To ensure it could provide a full answer, the Council extended the scope of the question to include options to safeguard the welfare of horses at horse markets, including the transport to and from markets.

Photograph: ANP



This advisory report was presented on 13 March 2017 by forum chair Hetty van Beers to the director of the Ministry of Economic Affairs Animal Supply Chain and Animal Welfare Department, Henri Kool.

Animal welfare for sale! The government’s role in market mechanisms concerning animal welfare

An advisory report provided on the Council’s own initiative

Photograph: ANP



to achieve this, namely through the market. However, it appears that there is still significant untapped market potential in the Netherlands. Reason enough for the Council to examine the barriers to market mechanisms regarding animal welfare,

Forum: Prof. M. M. Sloet van Oldruitenborgh-Oosterbaan, J.Th. de Jongh, H.M. van Veen and Dr H.M.G. van Beers (chair), assisted by Dr Kathelijne Visser.

as well as the government’s role in responding to this.

Forum: Dr G.B.C. Backus, Dr H.M.G. van Beers, W.T.A.A.G.M. van den Bergh, A.K. ten Have-Mellema, Dr S.A. Hertzberger, M.H.A. Steverink and Dr J.W.G.M. Swinkels, R.A. Tombrock and Prof. J.C.M. van Trijp (chair).

Social aspects of insects and other invertebrates as production animals

An advisory report provided on the Council’s own initiative

Photograph: Nationale Beeldbank



In view of the upscaling of insect production expected imminently, the RDA decided to develop an approach in respect of the various interests and ethical aspects concerning the large-scale use of insects and other

invertebrates. In so doing, the Council hopes to obtain a clearer picture of the need, if any, for an additional policy, additional legislation and greater knowledge. The key question here is: which social issues are relevant to the growing large-scale breeding of insects?

Forum: Prof. J.J.M. van Alphen, Dr G.B.C. Backus, A.L. ten Have Mellema, M. de Jong, Dr F.L.B. Meijboom and Prof. A. van Huis (chair).

Relationship between the nature policy and the policy on animals

An advisory report provided on the Council's own initiative



With this advisory report, the RDA seeks to provide guidance on issues concerning animals in the wild, where the interests and values of humans and animals can clash and we wonder whether, and how, we should intervene.

Forum: Prof. S. Haring, A.G. Dijkhuis,

Prof. A.A. Freriks, M. De Jong, J. Hesterman, M.H.A. Steverink, Prof. J.J.M. van Alphen (sharing the chairmanship) and J. Kaandorp (sharing the chairmanship).

Welfare of fish

An advisory report provided on the Council's own initiative



For this advisory report, the Council will reflect on the government's position in relation to the welfare of fish and consider whether there is cause to revise that position. Moreover, it will examine any lobbying for improvements in the welfare of fish, which

forces at play have an influence here and identify the impediments, if any, to fish welfare.

Forum: Dr F.L.B. Meijboom, M. de Jong-Timmerman, J.Th. de Jongh, A.G. Dijkhuis and Dr M.C.Th. Scholten (chair).

Children's Council

Since 2016, the RDA has been collaborating with the Missing Chapter Foundation (MCF), an initiative launched by Princess Laurentien. The Missing Chapter Foundation seeks to make children's voices heard by bringing about dialogues concerning topical dilemmas and issues between decision-

makers within companies and organisations and children. In 2017, the children from year 7/8 of the Openbare Dalton-school De Reiziger in Apeldoorn, will deliberate, in the form of a Children's Council, on how humans and dogs can live together harmoniously.

RDA Framework

Terms such as animal welfare, intrinsic value and natural behaviour frequently feature in the RDA's advisory reports. Definitions of such terms are multi-layered so confusion can easily arise. The Council considers consistency and transparency in decision-making to be important and also seeks to avoid confusion and ambiguity in its own advisory reports.

By developing a 'RDA framework', the Council has provided an insight into the way it defines terms which feature frequently in advisory reports.

The forum comprises: Dr F.L.B. Meijboom, Prof. B. Kemp, M. de Jong, R.A. Tombrock and Dr H. Hopster (chair).

RDA at an international level



The RDA has noted that the international component in thinking about animals is becoming increasingly important. In a number of advisory opinions the Council emphasises the importance of a level playing field within the international context. One example of this is the 'Animal Welfare for sale!' advisory report. This is why a forum geared towards the international context of the policy on animals has been established.

This forum will contribute to advisory reports and suggest recommendations which could be made to the Minister for Agriculture. Finally, this forum will reinforce the Council's international network.

The members of this forum are: Dr S. A. Hertzberger, A. K. ten Have-Mellema, Dr M.C.Th. Scholten, Prof. L. A. den Hartog, H.W. A. Swinkels and R.A. Tombrock (chair).

Photograph: Novum

The Council at work

The Council's working methods

The requests for recommendations considered by the Council come from the government. However, third parties, for example, members of the House of Representatives, provinces, social organisations and sector organisations can also ask the RDA for an advisory report, whether or not through the minister concerned.

The RDA consists of representatives from the scientific community, the business sector and social organisations. This broad range of backgrounds ensures that the Council can deal with multidisciplinary questions and that recommendations can be assessed from different perspectives. The members are appointed personally by the Minister for Agriculture and have a seat on the Council where they can be independent and not bound by any instructions. The RDA may comprise a chair and a maximum of 49 other members. The RDA tests a request for a recommendation against the following criteria:

1. Does the question pertain to animal matters, in particular animal welfare, animal health and/or ethical questions?
2. Is there insufficient access to the expertise sought within or outside the Ministry of Economic Affairs or is the Ministry seeking an independent, long-term recommendation?
3. Is the request for a recommendation one for which the minister requires a very broad representation of the social forces at play?

If all these criteria are met, the Council may decide to deal with the subject. In preparation for an advisory report, what is known as a forum comprising a number of relevant members is established. Where necessary, this form is extended to include expertise from outside the Council.

Following discussions within the Council, what is known as an advisory report is published on a specific question. All advisory reports produced by the Council are made public, including by publication on the RDA's website. The first condensed advisory report was published in 2016. Within a period of six weeks, the impact on animal welfare and other ethical aspects of the various methods used to capture and kill birds were examined and reported on.

The Council in 2016



Photograph: René Verlaag

Pauline Krikke was appointed chair of the Council on Animal Matters in November of the reporting year. She succeeded Frauke Ohl, who died in early 2016. Shortly afterwards, on 17 March 2017, Pauline Krikke was appointed Mayor of The Hague. Since it is impossible to combine both positions, the

RDA, in consultation with the Minister for Agriculture, has re-started the recruitment procedure.

In 2016, the Council had approximately 35 members. The Council convened twice that year; on 13 April and 9 November. The spring meeting took place at Kasteel Groeneveld in Baarn, and members convened in autumn at Kasteel Oud Poelgeest in Oegstgeest. The first meeting was attended by 21 members and the second by 23.

In 2016, 44 forum meetings were held to discuss and prepare various advisory reports.

The Council received three requests for recommendations from the Minister for Agriculture, Martijn van Dam in 2016. In February the minister asked for an advisory report on methods used to capture and kill birds, in March, for an advisory report on horse markets, and in June, for an advisory report on preventing serious dog bites in humans and animals.

In the requested advisory reports, the RDA deals with topics which have already been reasonably clearly delineated and have attracted the attention of the public and politicians. The RDA also deal with some topics on its own initiative in 2016. Such unsolicited advisory reports often have to do with topics which are still 'under the radar' and less clearly delineated. In 2016, the Council began developing unsolicited advisory reports on the welfare of fish and the public response to the growing large-scale breeding of insects. Moreover, the Council has been developing a 'framework' since 2016. It will use it to provide an insight into the way it defines terms which occur frequently in advisory reports, such as animal welfare and intrinsic value.

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-Schreurs

Pig farming; veterinary medicine
Science, Practice

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

Financing
Practice

A.G. Dijkhuis

Fauna management, spatial planning
Practice, Policy

Prof. mr. A.A. Freriks

Animals and legislation, 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. J.A.P. Heesterbeek

*Farm Animal Health department,
Animals in Science and Society*
Science

Prof. Dr L.J. Hellebrekers

Veterinary medicine, pets/companion animals
Policy, Science

Dr S.A. Hertzberger

Retail
Practice, Policy

J. Hesterman

Hobby animals
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

M. de Jong-Timmerman

Animal protection
Policy

J. Th. de Jongh

Pets/companion animals (professional)
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

Pauline Krikke

chair as from 1 November

Dr F.L.B. Meijboom

(Animal) ethics
Science

Prof. F. Ohl, Chairwoman

†28 januari 2016
Behavioural biology, animal welfare
Science

F.C. van der Schans

Agriculture and environment
Science, Policy

Dr M.C.Th. Scholten

Aquaculture and fishing, research strategy
Science, Policy

Prof.dr. Y.H. Schukken MBA

Animal Health
Science

Prof. M.M. Sloet van Oldruitenborg-Oosterbaan

Horse farms, equine medicine
Science, Policy, Practice

Prof. J.A. Stegeman

*Health care and agricultural pets/companion
animals*
Science

M.H.A. Steverink

Organic livestock farming, chain management
Practice, Policy

H.W.A. Swinkels

Veal farming
Practice, Policy

Dr J.W.G.M. Swinkels

Sustainable livestock chains
Policy, Practice

Prof.dr.ir. C.J.A.M. Termeer

Public Administration
Science, Policy

R.A. Tombrock

*Dutch Society for the Protection of Animals
& international animal welfare*
Policy

Prof. J.C.M. van Trijp

Market science, consumer behaviour
Science

H.M. van Veen

Animal protection, labels
Policy, Practice

P.J. Vingerling

Chain management
Practice

Stepped down from the Council

Prof. J.A. Stegeman

P.J. Vingerling

Personnel and organisation

Staff establishment

The RDA team supports the activities of the Council and the forums, is the everyday point of contact and comprises:

- M.H.W. Schakenraad, Secretary of the RDA
- A.A. van der Togt, office assistant
- P.A. van Bladeren, management assistant, employed as from 19 May 2016
- R.L. van Oudheusden MSc, deputy secretary (RDA Framework, Relationship between the nature policy and the policy on animals, Stray cats, Means used to capture and kill birds, Children's Council)
- Dr M.A. van der Gaag, deputy secretary (Horse markets in the Netherlands and Fish Welfare), employed since 13 June 2016
- E.E.C. van Wijk (Animal welfare for sale!)
- Dr B.B. Houx (Social aspects of insects and other invertebrates as production animals), employed since 13 June 2016
- G.H.M. Vosseveld (Addressing the problem of dog bites) employed since 5 September 2016

The following employees have left the RDA team:

Juliska Petronella, finance assistant, as at 1 April 2016;
Tosca ploegaert, deputy secretary, as at 13 October 2016;
Maartje Oonk, deputy secretary, as at 1 November 2016.

In 2016, the RDA supervised the following interns:

- Daniëlle Hartman was on an internship at the RDA between 1 January 2016 and 1 May 2016 for her Management & Policy minor (Master's in Veterinary Medicine). The report she wrote subsequently calls for the issue of biting incidents among dogs to be addressed and discusses enhancing the role of the veterinary surgeon (practice) in reducing the number of biting incidents. The report can be found on the RDA's website.
- Anouk Mast was at the RDA on an internship between 1 May 2016 and 1 August 2016 as part of her Master's in Veterinary Medicine (specialisation in (Equine) Healthcare). She conducted a desk study for the 'Horse markets in the Netherlands' advisory report and spoke to the various stakeholders. The result is included in the 'Horse markets in the Netherlands' – Tell it like it is' advisory report.
- Rimke van Nesselrooij was at the RDA on an internship between 1 June and 1 November 2016 for her Management & Policy minor (Master's in Farm Animal Health). Rimke developed further one of the recommendations from the RDA's 'Policy on the use of antibiotics in livestock farming' advisory report. To that end, she interviewed people from a variety of backgrounds. She included her findings in her internship report, which can be found on the RDA's website.

Photograph: Nationale Beeldbank



