Aquaculture—Now, Factory Fish Farming

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"Aquaculture 1983" was the title of a 5-day symposium and industry exhibit held in Washington, D.C., on January 9-13, 1983, sponsored by World Mariculture Society, Catfish Farmers of America, Fish Culture Section of the American Fisheries Society, U.S. Trout Farmers Association, Shellfish Institute of North America, and National Shellfisheries Association. While ecologists, economists, futurologists, and others have touted the virtues and potentials of intensive fish and shellfish farming, this growing industry in the U.S. may become blighted by the same problems that have come to afflict agribusiness' "factory farming" of crops, livestock, and poultry.

Industry exhibits told the story—there were displays on herbicides and algicides to control the proliferation of plant life in overstocked and polluted fish ponds, and aeration systems to help alleviate pollution from fish excrement and rotting food in the water. Antibiotics such as tetracycline and sulfonamides were promoted for incorporation into feed, along with other drugs to control fish parasites and fungal infections. And a variety of autogenous bacterins (vaccines) were also solicited donations to help support the University's Florida Foundation Gator Fund to develop new techniques in alligator production.

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unpleasant to the dog. In the U.K., there is universal approval for a quarantine policy for all dogs being imported. The suffering that may be caused by the 6-month quarantine is more than justified by the fact that the U.K. is thus kept free of a disease which, if introduced, would lead to infinitely greater suffering.

It is vital, though, to pay proper attention to the role of education in solving the problems of irresponsible dog ownership. Much suffering is caused to dogs (and pets of all kinds) through the ignorance and neglect of certain fundamental principles of care and ownership. Most welfare and veterinary organizations are deeply involved in educational programs, but it is essential that governments, at either national or local levels, become involved as well. The way forward would appear to be through legislative control, properly enforced, which would complement and not contradict an educational program.

In addition, a third and important factor in any dog welfare/control program should be recognition of the necessity of harnessing the support of the majority of dog owners, although there will always be a minority who automatically oppose any forms of control, if only on the principle that they infringe upon individual rights, etc. As a first step, therefore, it is incumbent on governments to work with, and gain the support of, leading welfare, veterinary, and dog organizations.

In the U.K., all leading organizations involved in dog ownership have come together under an umbrella organization (non-governmental), which is entitled the Joint Advisory Committee on Pets in Society (JACOPIES). Recently, this example has been followed in Australia, where it is already beginning to produce beneficial results. Proper consultation between government agencies and the other involved organizations should lead to controls that are properly thought out, responsibly administered, and compassionately enforced. Such controls should then produce positive beneficial results for both dogs and dog owners and will, therefore, be accepted by the vast majority of the general public. The risks from zoonotic diseases will be reduced, and the benefit to humans from owning a dog greatly enhanced.

No responsible dog owner should fear controls that are introduced in this way, but it is necessary that inclusion be continued through various representative organizations, so that any future amendments can result from the same consultative pattern.

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

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

Further, to the common man, ownership of dogs is regarded as a distinctly anti-proletarian habit, whereby "thousands of tons of food" that could have been used to feed humans is shunted to "unproductive animals." In fact, Pravda (July 2, 1981) did assert that dog owners benefit from government subsidies to the tune of about 1½ billion rubles ($2 billion) a year, because the retail price of meat in the Soviet Union is held at a level that represents only half of the actual production costs.

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

Just How Free Is a “Free-Range” Chicken?

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

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