From the earth. To the earth.
Implementing veterinary and animal welfare regulations in semi-natural pastoral landscapes in The Netherlands

Dr. Ed G.M. van Klink and Ing. H. Kampf
Introduction

- Veterinary and animal welfare legislation ↔ management in nature areas

- Track A:
  - Zuid-Kennermerland
  - Oostvaardersplassen
  - Veluwezoom

- Multifunctional management (track C)
- Semi-natural management (track B)
- “Near-natural” and assisted natural management (track A)
Introduction 2

• Contents of today's presentation:
  • Recap veterinary legislation
  • Most important standing issue: welfare of animals
Veterinary and welfare legislation in the semi-natural grazing areas

• Farmer community: perceived legal inequality

• Animal protection organisation: perceived low level of responsibility and care for animals

• Operation track A areas followed closely:
  • Pressure groups
  • Media
  • Politics

• Oostvaardersplassen most attention: showcase
Veterinary and welfare legislation in the semi-natural grazing areas 2

- Solutions in veterinary law:
  - cattle stays out of livestock trade entirely
  - Rendering laws are fully applicable (cattle, horses, NOT deer)

- Animal welfare legislation:
  - No European legislation applicable
  - The Netherlands:
    Animal Health and Welfare Act (Gezondheids- en Welzijnswet voor Dieren)
    - Provide necessary care
    - Prevent unnecessary suffering
      → relative concepts
Veterinary and welfare legislation in the semi-natural grazing areas 3

• Lot of attention due to mortality of Heck cattle at the end of winter
  • Feed is running scarce towards the end of winter
    • Older bulls
    • Yearlings

• Foaling season:
  • newborn foals of young inexperienced mothers

• Action expected:
  • Supplementing with feed
  • Overpopulation control: “Necessary care” and “unnecessary suffering”
The animal welfare discussion carried forward 1

• Controversy:
  • Animal protection organisations: not enough care
  • Nature conservation organisations: intervening measures undesirable

• Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality
  = responsible for animal welfare and for nature

• Threatening deadlock:
  • Ethical guidelines Staatsbosbeheer (State Forest Service)
The animal welfare discussion carried forward 2

- Ethical guidelines Staatsbosbeheer:
  - Principles:
    - Moral position changing: intrinsic value to be respected
    - Care for animals: all animals
    - Animal-ethical approach:
      - No unnecessary harm of health and wellbeing
      - Integrity of animal to be respected
    - Eco-ethical arguments: development or maintenance of a healthy ecosystem is central
    - Interests of individual animal not disregarded
    - Interest of the species in its ecosystem more important
The animal welfare discussion carried forward 3

- Animal-ethical and eco-ethical arguments:
  - Strong combination, not contradiction

- Reconciling both approaches:
  - Integrity:
    - Self-sufficiency
    - Natural behaviour

- For free living animals:
  - Ability to live independently
  - Interference should be minimum
  - Prevention of suffering
The animal welfare discussion carried forward 4

Intervention justified:

- Harm to the environment (destruction or pollution) or capability to be self-sufficient restricted (barriers and obstructions)

- Trust in capability to be self-sufficient unjustified

- Prevention of serious suffering:
  - Obligation to prevent suffering higher weight than obligation to respect self-reliance
The animal welfare discussion carried forward 5

Behavioural guidelines for management of nature areas:

- Animal sick or wounded; suffering seriously or desperately: animal to be killed painlessly
- Animal sick or wounded; intervention only if advantages outweigh disadvantages
- Wellbeing of individual animals: if problems can be expected: (re)introduction or extreme climate
- Not overburden carrying capacity: natural mechanisms preferred; if not possible: “looking with the eyes of a wolf”
- No supplement feed, except: lack of essential minerals or threatening population crash
- If legally possible, carcasses left field
The animal welfare discussion carried forward 6

Guideline Large Grazers:

- Political demand

- January 2000: sent to Parliament

- Approach: judicial rather than ethical
  - Animal Health and Welfare Act
  - Rendering Act
  - NOT Flora- and Fauna Act
  - Red deer excluded!
The animal welfare discussion carried forward 7

Code of conduct comparable to Ethical Guidelines

• Every animal will be cared for; shape of care depends on area, circumstances and de-domestication

• Animals in near natural areas: non-kept animals

• Overpopulation must be addressed

• Only if identified and registered (European law) use for consumption

• Only if identified and registered (European law) transport to other nature areas

• Standards for outbreaks of animal disease
The animal welfare discussion carried forward 8

International Committee on the Management of large herbivores in the Oostvaardersplassen (ICMO)

- Oostvaardersplassen in focus of attention
- Guideline and Ethical Guidelines worked well, but discussion continued
- 2004 – 2005, animal protection organisation:
  - food situation and correctness of use of Guideline contested
- 2005 court case on Staatsbosbeheer to supplement feed
- Political lobby increased

Ministerial advisory councils:
- Council for Animal Affairs: opposing the current practice
- Council for Rural Areas: supporting the current practice
The animal welfare discussion carried forward 9

- 2005: International Committee on the Management of large herbivores in the Oostvaardersplassen (ICMO) appointed

- ICMO to give “final” assessment, parties to accept the outcome
  - 9 experts, 2 secretaries
  - Three questions to be answered:
    1. Possible to maintain ecosystem with large herbivores in OVP, acceptable animal welfare?
    2. What conditions?
    3. Impact of ecological corridor between OVP and Veluwe on OVP ecosystem?
Impact of ecological corridor between OVP and Veluwe on OVP ecosystem?
The animal welfare discussion carried forward 10

Guiding principles:

- Main objective: suitable habitats for birds by grazing
- Populations in OVP treated as wild animals
- Different value systems for animal welfare in The Netherlands
- Routine culling of healthy animals not preferred
- Present management practice is not a predator model
The animal welfare discussion carried forward 11

• Regulation of the population:
  • No intervention
  • Proactive culling
  • Reactive culling
  • Contraception
The animal welfare discussion carried forward 12

Some of the recommendations:

- Artificial control of reproduction not supported
- Reactive population management
- Ecological corridor to Horsterwold needed
- No supplementary feeding
- Review after 5 years
The animal welfare discussion carried forward 13

Three questions:

• It is possible to maintain ecosystem with large herbivores
• Needed: proactive cull or cull of weak individual animals
• Impact of ecological corridor: benefits for all herbivore species and stability of the system
Discussion 1

Large herbivores in nature reserves:

- Welfare increasing issue → solved
- Political problem in The Netherlands → solved
- Guidelines worked for management in the field
- ICMO: transparent assessment of practices, in recommendations: aspects of guidelines found
- Recommendations of ICMO satisfying for all parties
Discussion 2

Political issue over?

- Results accepted by nature organisations, animal protection organisation, politicians
- But: progress has to be monitored closely
- New rounds of discussions because of buying out farms?
- New discussions after severe winters?
- Carcasses now discussed at European level
Thank you for your attention!