

Parliamentary questions WRITTEN QUESTION E-2183/00

By Caroline Lucas (Verts/ALE) to the Commission (3 July 2000)

Subject: Force-feeding for foie gras production

The great suffering imposed on ducks and geese kept for foie gras production was highlighted by the Report of the Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare, Welfare Aspects of the Production of Foie Gras in Ducks and Geese, adopted on 16 December 1998, which concluded that force-feeding, as currently practised, is detrimental to the birds' welfare. Force-fed birds have a mortality rate 10-12 times higher than birds reared normally, and insertion of the feeding pipe can result in bruising and even perforation of the oesophagus. Force-feeding results in the birds' liver swelling to 6-10 times its normal size. What plans does the Commission have to publish a proposal for a Directive banning the force-feeding of birds for foie gras production or to implement the recommendations of the Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare on the Welfare aspects of the Production of Foie Gras in Ducks and Geese?

Joint answer to Written Questions E-2183/00 and E-2618/00 given by Mr Byrne on behalf of the Commission

(11 September 2000)

Two Recommendations for the protection of ducks and geese bred for the production of foie gras were adopted in June 1999 in the framework of the European Convention for the protection of animals kept for farming purposes. The Commission and the Member States actively participated in the process of drafting and adoption of these Recommendations. The report mentioned by the Honourable Member was used as reference for the finalization of the above mentioned Recommendations. The Recommendations recognize the necessity to keep the birds in social groups and prohibit the use of small individual cages which are currently used. This prohibition will come into effect on 31 December 2004 for new or replacement accommodation and for all accommodation on 31 December 2010 at the latest. The Recommendations also call for further research to develop alternative techniques that do not require force feeding for the production of foie gras. It has been agreed that until new scientific evidence on alternative methods and their welfare aspects is available, the production of foie gras shall be carried out only where it is current practice and then only in accordance with standards laid down in domestic law. Council Directive 98/58/EC of 20 July 1998(1) provides the main principles for the protection of all species of animals kept for farming purposes in the Community. It constitutes a legal instrument for the preparation of future proposals in the field of animal welfare ensuring the uniform application of the Council of Europe Convention on the same subject in the Community. The Directive currently addresses the welfare requirements to be applied for the protection of animals kept for the different types of production, including the production of foie gras. Based on the same Directive the owner or keeper of the animals has to ensure that minimum welfare requirements are respected. If necessary, in accordance with the provisions of Article 5 of Directive 98/58/EC, the Commission will submit to the Council further appropriate proposals for the uniform application of the above mentioned Recommendations.

