

James Rennie Bequest

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Report on Attendance of the 35th International Congress of the ISAE,
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I received a travel grant from the James Rennie Bequest to allow me to attend the 35th International Congress of the International Society for Applied Ethology (ISAE). The ISAE is a leading international society promoting research and education into the behaviour and welfare of farm, laboratory, companion and zoo animals. The society holds an International Congress each year, at which talks and posters are presented. I was particularly keen to attend the congress this year as one of the special topics was 'Influence of Genetics on Behaviour and Welfare', the subject area of my PhD project. I hoped to meet other scientists working in the field, and have some discussion about my project with experts in the area.

The conference opened with a plenary talk on Companion Animal Behaviour Problems - the first special topic of the conference. The speaker outlined the difficulties in diagnoses of behaviour problems and problems with classifying them into distinct entities. Then two sessions ran in parallel, one following this theme, and the other on Weaning Behaviour, mostly on farm animals and horses. Companion Animals continued in the afternoon, with talks ranging from temperament in horses to cats in road traffic accidents. Alongside this ran a session on Animal Management, which included some interesting discussions on whether tail-docking young calves causes them pain. The day finished with 3 workshops, one of which was a lively discussion of the impact of applied animal behaviour in improving animal welfare. It included a debate on who should fund such research, and the responsibilities that animal welfare scientists may have in disseminating results from their work.

The second day began with a plenary talk on how animals of different species are able to discriminate between humans, and the impact of this when interpreting research conclusions. Then followed two simultaneous paper sessions, one in Animal Experience and Ethics, and another on Human-Animal Interactions. These sessions were followed by a workshop to discuss introducing ethical guidelines for the ISAE. The third day began with a heartening lecture on how the results of behavioural research have been used to make practical improvements in industry in the handling, transport and housing of farm animals. This was followed by paper sessions on Handling and Transport, and Environmental Enrichment. After lunch papers on Laboratory Animals and Social and Sexual Behaviour were presented.

The fourth day was the most interesting for me as it ran a session on the Influence of Genetics on Behaviour and Welfare. It began with a plenary talk on the widening of breeding goals for farm animals to incorporate welfare traits alongside production traits, with a warning against breeding animals that produce in ethically unacceptable conditions. Then followed talks on the effects that genetic selection for other traits has had on the behaviour of mice, pigs and chickens, and a talk, of great interest to me, on the identification of putative genetic markers for handling and stress response traits in

cattle. Alongside these and other talks ran sessions on Nesting and Maternal Behaviour, and Abnormal Behaviour.

Along with the 75 papers, 125 posters were presented, on the same widely ranging topics. I presented a poster ('Identifying Temperament Traits in Cattle for Quantitative Trait Loci (QTL) Analysis'), which summarised some of my work so far on looking for the location of genes that are involved in behavioural traits in cattle. I had quite a bit of interest in the poster, and met a few people who were working on very similar projects. I found it very beneficial discussing my work with them. On my first trip to an international conference, I found the ISAE conference an extremely friendly and enthusiastic forum for discussion, and I look forward to contributing again in the future. The wide range of topics presented also gave me much food for thought on possibilities for a future career in animal behaviour and welfare research. I would like to thank the James Rennie Bequest Committee for helping to make my trip possible with the award of a travel grant.