

WHO urban pests book launched



Speaking at the launch. Left to right: Kevin Sweeney, Joan Walley MP and Graham Dukes.

The eagerly awaited book entitled *Public Health Significance of Urban Pests* was finally launched by the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe on 26 June 2008 in London.

The first sighting of this new title was at Chadwick Court (the Chartered Institute

of Environmental Health [CIEH] headquarters in London) to an invited group of press representatives. Introducing the book, Graham Jukes, CIEH Chief Executive, explained something of the book's background. He said: "During the latter half of the 20th century the CIEH became increasingly concerned about the lack of a comprehensive approach to policy creation and implementation in pest control. Its absence was wasteful of national resources and ineffective. We set out to address this by talking to national governments and international agencies who were reluctant to address the issue without the benefits of such an approach being quantified.

"A comprehensive evidence base was called for to identify the costs of not having cohesive policies and legislation in place and to stimulate renewed thinking," explained Mr Jukes.

This cause was taken up by Xavier Bonnefoy of the WHO Regional Office for Europe who championed the publication of the book. On a sad note, Xavier Bonnefoy did not live to see the book finally published due to his untimely death earlier this year.

Evidence based

The book's prime objective of providing an evidence base has certainly been achieved. *Public Health Significance of Urban Pests* considers the main urban pests i.e. insect species, birds, ticks, mosquitoes and rodents, the medical conditions they create and the resulting economic burden of disease. It proposes technical and policy options to enable governments to implement adequate surveillance and contingency plans. Interestingly, there is a complete chapter on pesticide risks and benefits written entirely from a public health perspective – as most such reviews you find cover agricultural pesticide uses. In addition, each chapter is supported by a second-to-none list of independent international references.

Perhaps surprisingly, it shows how modern living and certain practices e.g. wall-to-wall carpets, cavity wall insulation, walks in the countryside etc considered exemplary by government or ethical by 'good citizens' can encourage pests and pest-borne diseases into the urban environment.

Kevin Sweeney, one of the principal authors who was seconded to WHO from the US Environmental Protection Agency went on to say: "The effects of these conditions and changes need to be properly monitored and understood. Recent developments in pest-borne diseases, such as cases of West Nile fever in the US and the spread of Lyme disease in both Europe and the USA, have signaled strongly the crucial need to carefully assess the potential threat of urban pests."

In the afternoon of the same day, the book was introduced to a much larger audience gathered for the inaugural meeting of the CIEH-organised Associate Parliamentary Group for Environmental Health held at Portcullis House, the Houses of Parliament, London. Chaired by Joan Walley MP, the event was attended by several representatives not only from BPCA, but also from across Europe.

Robert Stuyt, the President of the European Pest Management Industry Association (CEPA), said: "The conclusions of the report are very much

in line with the strategy of CEPA in promoting the broader recognition of the value and role of the pest management industry in supporting the continued development of a healthy and hygienic environment for all European citizens".

This view was echoed by Oliver Madge, BPCA CEO who added: "BPCA would strongly encourage members to promote awareness of the book's conclusions and implications at local level."

A useful 48 page summary of this 569 page book prepared by the CIEH can be downloaded from www.urbanpestsbook.com.

This summary is available now in English, German and Spanish with French, Dutch, Polish and Russian versions to follow shortly. Copies of the book will be available to buy from WHO at www.who.int/bookorders/ There is also a downloadable PDF copy from www.euro.who.int/housing.



Robert Stuyt, CEPA President, with Rob Fryatt, CEPA Director General, after the book launch in London.

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