



Keynote speaker Jonathan Balcombe with conference facilitator Bob Kerridge.
 INSET: Auckland Mayor Len Brown.

A joyous affair

Words and photography by **Fiona Maddison**

AUCKLAND was sunny and the welcome was warm for those who attended the 22nd New Zealand Companion Animal Council (NZCAC) Conference.

Themed "The Joyous World of Animals", the conference attracted people from around the world and from a wide range of animal welfare organisations, businesses and individuals with an interest in companion animals.

Conference facilitator and NZCAC Patron Bob Kerridge, helped by hostess Sheila Heeler, emceed the two-day event at the Stamford Plaza Hotel.

Auckland Mayor Len Brown set the tone for the event with his memories of a happy childhood with animals.

Keynote speaker Jonathan Balcombe, an animal activist, scientist and writer from the United States, shared his research and views on the inner lives of animals, showing them to experience a wide range of emotions similar to our own.

Other lively topics of interest included:

- A celebration of 250 years of the veterinary profession presented by vet John Hicks (see John's story on page 16), David Bayvel (Director of Animal Welfare, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry) and Julie Hood (CEO, New Zealand Veterinary Association).
- A fascinating study into the lives of chickens presented by Dr Annie Potts (Associate Professor and Co-Director, New Zealand Centre for Human-Animal Studies).
- A report on the RNZSPCA's successful efforts in bringing free-range eggs to the market presented by Juliette Banks (RNZSPCA Accreditation Manager).
- How the Australian state of Victoria helped dogs keep their tails, presented by Russell McMurray.
- A look at animal rescue after Christchurch's earthquakes presented by Steve Glassey (Massey University), Geoff Sutton (SPCA Canterbury), Ritchie Dawson (SPCA Wellington) and Hayley Squance (VERT, Massey).



Christchurch earthquakes discussion ... (from left) Steve Glassey, Geoff Sutton, Ritchie Dawson and Hayley Squance.



Great Debate panellists ... (from left) Mike Heron, Anita Killeen, Catriona MacLennan, David Carter, John Haigh and David Bayvel.

At the annual awards dinner a Halloween theme prevailed and entertainment by the Conartists kept everyone amused. Five nominees received Assisi Awards for their outstanding contributions to the animal world.

As always the conference included the popular Great Debate. This year's panel was headed by Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries David Carter and included David Bayvel and lawyers John Haigh QC, Mike Heron, Anita Killeen and Catriona MacLennan.

Introducing the debate, Bob Kerridge said the ultimate welfare of animals in New Zealand rests with the laws that are in place to ensure animals' total well-being.

"The responsibility for the creation of such laws sits firmly on the shoulders of our Parliament and the Ministers who have been entrusted to ensure that such laws are fair, just and reflect the will of the people and, above all, provide the optimum needs the animals deserve and are entitled to," Bob said.

"It is the Minister in office who will be a major force in determining the direction such laws may take. Our current Minister, David Carter, has signalled, both by word and deed, that he does indeed have the welfare of animals firmly in his sights.

"David was recently quoted in *Animals' Voice*, describing animal welfare as a 'very, very high priority' both for him and his government.

"Of more importance, he has called for a complete review of the Animal Welfare Act to modernise and improve legislation to protect New Zealand's animals."

David Carter said: "New Zealand has a good reputation for animal welfare but we can't afford to be complacent. We want everyone to take responsibility."

The review of the Act "is an important opportunity to address issues such as the legal status of codes of welfare". Also, MAF was heading the development of a national animal welfare strategy and a full public ▶