Answer given by Mr Byrne on behalf of the Commission

(1 April 2004)

The following reply is in addition to the Commission's reply to the Honourable Member's Written Question E-0760/03.

The Scientific Steering Committee adopted an opinion at its meeting of 10 and 11 April 2003, recommending that the process of combustion of animal fats could be regarded as safe for animal fats derived from Categories 2 and 3 materials under certain circumstances, but cannot be assessed, due to a lack of information, for animal fats derived from Category 1 materials.

Following this opinion, further information on Category 1 materials has been made available for evaluation by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).

The draft proposal in preparation for the approval of alternative processes has been discussed extensively with Member State experts and has been amended on the basis of these discussions. As such the different revisions of the document quoted by the Honourable Member does not have any legally binding effect.

The Commission expects an opinion from EFSA on the alternative combustion process before the end of 2004. The scientific recommendations will constitute the basis for further discussions with Member States and with the industry concerned. At this time it is not possible to predict the wording of the final text approving the process.

Answer given by Mr Byrne on behalf of the Commission

(19 March 2004)

The neutering of cats, notably as a way to deal with the problems of feral animals or for other veterinary reasons, is not a matter which falls within the scope of Community law.

It follows, therefore, that Member States have the exclusive competence to decide the conditions under which such neutering may take place within their territories including the imposition of restrictions on the use of mobile units.

Answer given by Mr Byrne on behalf of the Commission

(4 March 2004)

EU citizens have repeatedly expressed concern for the conditions in which animals destined for slaughter or further fattening are kept, and the EP itself has called several times for an overall time limit for transport of eight hours or 500 km.
This concern regards all kind of animals, whose suffering should be limited by stricter rules.

The EC proposal for a review of the legislation on transport does not include any reference to stocking densities, journey limits, or stops for feeding and watering for poultry.

Several cases of transport of poultry which have involved serious problems of welfare and even death of these animals have been reported; in some cases, hundreds of animals died because the cages in which they were kept were broken by the cages above that crashed on to them.

Strict measures for the protection of poultry need to be introduced as a matter of urgency.

The EFSA (European Food Safety Authority) is currently producing evidence relating to the transport of poultry.

How and when will the Commission introduce standards for poultry within the debate for a new Regulation?

Answer given by Mr Byrne on behalf of the Commission

(2 April 2004)

The Commission is aware of the animal welfare problems that may occur in the transport of poultry mentioned by the Honourable Member. The Commission proposal now under discussion in the Parliament and in the Council already includes general animal welfare requirements for the protection of poultry during transport aimed at improving the current situation.

Furthermore, in October 2002 the Commission requested the Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare to examine the issue in order to elaborate a detailed scientific opinion on the protection of poultry during transport.

As the Scientific Committee for Animal Health and Animal Welfare (Schahaw) had not completed its evaluation at the time of transfer of competence for scientific advice from the Commission to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), the request was taken over by the EFSA Panel and Animal Health and Welfare.

Once the EFSA opinion becomes available the Commission will consider presenting a proposal to introduce additional standards for poultry.

WRITTEN QUESTION P-0709/04
by Pasqualina Napoletano (PSE) to the Commission

(4 March 2004)

Subject: Alcatel crisis (Rieti)

With regard to the decision by the multinational company Alcatel to restructure and even close the facilities at Rieti and Battipaglia, and since several questions have already been put to the Commission highlighting the importance of preserving these facilities in order to safeguard employment and the high level of technology provided in a significantly under-developed area, could the Commission indicate:

1. whether the Italian authorities have referred the serious crisis affecting Alcatel to the European Commission;

2. what initiatives the Commission has it within its powers to take;

3. how it can ensure that the owners and public authorities responsible guarantee the workers' right, in line with principles laid down in current European regulations, to precise and transparent information on a restructuring process that is jeopardising a major technological pole and employment itself?