

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF ANIMAL WELFARE.

Judith K Blackshaw

### 1. Introduction and historical background

It is illegal in virtually every country in the world to inflict cruelty on an animal. *Cruelty* is defined as the wilful or wanton infliction of pain, suffering or death upon an animal, or the intentional or malicious neglect of an animal

The movement against cruelty to animals is rooted in antiquity

**Pythagoras** - taught kindness to all sub-human species as a matter of duty.

**Romans** - despite their circus barbarities had some feelings about animals. When Pompey the Great put on a particularly revolting slaughter of elephants, the people rose up and cursed him for his ruthlessness.

**René Descartes** - the French philosopher believed animals had no souls, therefore could not think and feel and so were unable to feel pain. He thought of animals as machines. This view caused a century of controversy.

**Jeremy Bentham** - an Englishman phrased the matter so the argument was moved into reality. He wrote "The question is not can they reason, nor can they talk, but can they suffer?" This influenced theorizing about "the animal question" and moved it to the English political arena.

**Lord Erskine** - 1809 - Scottish lord presented a bill in parliament to prevent the malicious and wanton cruelty to animals such as horses, pigs, oxen and sheep. The bill passed the House of Lords in the face of sarcasm, but was defeated in the House of Commons.

**Richard "Humanity Dick" Martin** - 1822 was responsible for the actual passing of a law. It was the world's *first* anticruelty law - MARTIN ACT. Although it only applied to large domestic animals and excluded cats, dogs and birds, it was a landmark. The Martin Act made cruelty *per se* an offense.

**The society for the prevention of cruelty to animals** - 1824 was the world's first animal welfare society. The Royal was added in 1840 at Queen Victoria's behest.

**France** formed a similar society in 1845 and an act similar to the English statute (Loi Grammont) was passed in 1850.

Other countries followed with both laws and animal welfare societies, including Ireland, Germany, Austria, Belgium and The Netherlands.

**In USA** both laws and a society did not come until much later and they were due to the efforts of one man, Henry Bergh, Abraham Lincoln's minister to Russia. He saw a Russian horse being beaten in St. Petersburg and from then through all his life he campaigned for animals in every area from bullfighting to antivivisection.

By the late 20th century, almost all countries had laws against cruelty to animals and there were many societies protecting animal's welfare. The largest international anticruelty societies are

- i The World Federation for the Protection of Animals, with headquarters in Zürich
- ii The International Society for the Protection of Animals, with headquarters in London
- iii Fund for Animals, Inc. with headquarters in New York

The publication in 1964 of Ruth Harrison's book, *Animal Machines*, raised many controversial issues in intensive farming, in England, Europe and USA. The British Government responded by setting up a parliamentary inquiry in 1965, conducted by Professor F W R Brambell. This resulted in the publication of the *Brambell Report* - "The Welfare of Animals Kept under Intensive



Husbandry Systems" (1965) This report generated many changes and veterinarians were given the power to enter farms to check that animals were not in pain

The publication of Peter Singer's book in 1975 - *Animal Liberation - Towards an End to Man's Inhumanity to Animals* initiated the formation of animal rights groups in Australia

Animal Liberation was set up in 1977 to expound Singer's philosophy, which questioned the right of humans to exploit animals They are active in lobbying for the cessation of many husbandry and farming practices, the use of animals for sport, entertainment, experiments and live animal exports.

In response to this interest in animal welfare issues Codes for the Welfare of the pig, poultry, animals transported by road, rail, air, intensive husbandry of sheep, intensive husbandry of rabbits and animals at slaughtering establishments have been produced by the Standing Committee on Agriculture, Animal Health Committee (subcommittee on Animal Welfare) Some state Agriculture Departments have also published some codes of practice for the welfare of animals Probably the most significant event was the Senate Inquiry into Animal Welfare issues which began in November 1983 and is still continuing. Recommendations from this inquiry include those for export of live sheep, kangaroos, dolphins and whales in captivity, sheep husbandry, animal experimentation, intensive husbandry of pigs and poultry and an interim report on the racing industry.

## 2. Philosophy of animal rights

Organisations using the term animal rights, of which Animal Liberation is the dominant group, generally advocate the complete cessation of all human "exploitation" of animals

A term Singer uses - speciesism - is useful to define. It is "a prejudice or attitude of bias toward the interests of members of one's own species and against those of members of other species". Singer goes on to say that any belief that mankind has any inherently greater right to exist or any right to subjugate another species is "speciesism" and is considered as great an evil as racism or sexism.

Singer also states that animals and humans share the capacity to suffer pain or experience pleasure and it is this capacity that gives an individual interests He does admit that it is difficult to compare suffering between members of different species

He says that it is just as wrong to kill animals under the same conditions, we would not kill humans.

There are many proponents of animal liberation and there are many arguments that lack logical theory. An example is Frank's (1979) article on factory farming in which he claims a baby pig suffers abuse just like its mother He comments about teeth clipping and ear notching as abusive practices and continues to give a view of good non-abusive farming with cows grazing in an ideal pastoral setting A more extreme view of the animal rights position is expressed by Tom Regan (1986/87) He states that the fundamental wrong is in the system that allows us to view animals as our resources, here for us to eat, surgically manipulated, or exploited for sport or money He goes on to argue that this attitude allows us to farm animals without really worrying about it, and claims that if we made the rearing methods of farm animals "more humane" it would require the total dissolution of commercial animal agriculture Regan's four main points are

- i The animal rights movement is part of, not antagonistic to, the human rights movement Those involved in the animal rights movement are partners in the struggle for human rights.
- ii In the case of animals in science the rights view is categorically abolitionist
- iii For commercial animal agriculture, the rights view is an abolitionist position

- iv His image of philosophy is *disciplined passion*. He comments tears come to his eyes when he sees animals suffering and lonely, sees their innocence and their death

Narveson (1986/87) argues against Regan's (1986/87) views that animals have concepts, desire, belief, self-consciousness, intention, a sense of future, with the comment that linguistic ability is surely evidence of mental complexity. He also argues against Regan's view of inherent rights for animals because they have inherent value. Narveson (1986/87) feels there is no logical reason why the grounds for prohibiting harm to individuals with inherent value couldn't be *different* from the grounds for prohibiting the same harm to other individuals who don't have the same inherent value.

The conclusion Narveson arrives at is that there is no good case for a general extension of rights to animals. We can eat meat and perform animal experimentation in good conscience

*It is important to look at the politics of Animal Liberation* A disturbing article by Townend and Mowbray (1986 from the School of Social Work, Univ. NSW) states that animal welfare problems are often effects of the exploitive nature of capitalist society. The authors comment that for Animal Liberation to achieve reforms, broader transformation of society is necessary

Future strategies should be based on much more co-operation between progressive forces (e.g. animal liberation, the environmentalists, anti-nuclear power groups) than previously. Such co-operation should be directed at *building a different kind of society* - one based on justice and equality.

Another statement says ... the end of the class-divided society is a necessary condition for building a better world. The article then describes current Animal Liberation tactics: Extensive media use through news items, investigative articles and advertising; public speaking, general public education; newsletters, pamphlets; lobbying of politicians and journalists, in-house training programs; and action through Democrats

The authors claim that a socialist economy, wherein the profit motive would not be paramount, is one necessary prerequisite for abolishing exploitation. Programs should be orientated towards overall transformation of society by:

- i formation of alliances with other progressive and left organisations,
- ii support some sort of an alternative economic strategy, at least on an interim basis
  - workplace democracy with more authority at level of production,
  - better communication between consumers, producers and government to ensure more humane treatment of animals;
  - more effective regulation of production methods and processes on the grounds of health, safety and morality;
- iii use of appropriate technology to free people from menial tasks, thus creating freedom to pursue labour intensive practices where they are socially desirable,
- iv extensive co-operative and other non-profit forms of enterprise could be promoted

Work with animals that would obviate the need for barbaric factory production processes

The authors are careful to comment that their views are expressed and should not be attributed to Animal Liberation. This seems farcical as it is Townend who often speaks for Animal Liberation.

### 3. Senate select inquiry into animal welfare

I briefly mentioned the inquiry and the published recommendations. The public has been able to put forward views on each issue and the recommendations can be implemented by each state government

It has been argued that nothing will come out of the inquiry but I think this is a very negative attitude. Several important points have been made:

- i* Welfare issues are regularly commented on in the media
- ii* After the release of each set of recommendations there have been discussions and seminars
- iii* There has been an improvement in monitoring of the live sheep trade.
- iv* Animal experimentation with the vigilance of ethics committees has been tightened
- v* A wealth of information has been collected and documented
- vi* All views of animal welfare have been heard and considered and the animal rights opinion has not been more influential than any other views
- vii* It has documented public opinion and scientific facts
- viii* It has given Australia a very good reputation in animal welfare issues

#### **4. Animal welfare**

Animal welfare advocates are concerned about the conditions under which animals are kept and *used*. This includes concerned farmers, pet owners, veterinarians, animal researchers, husbandry officers and members of the public

##### **What is welfare?**

The 1965 definition of welfare which was presented by the Brambell Committee to the British Government stated. "Welfare is a wide term that embraces both the physical and mental well-being of the animal " This is an extremely broad definition and offers no practical guidance in the humane treatment of animals. Welfare measures are often relative, rather than absolute and welfare parameters vary within species. We have no trouble accepting the needs of a pig may differ from a pet dog but many people have trouble realizing an animal's needs may differ from a human

Certainly there are two aspects that must be considered.

- i* *Physical welfare* - this includes the provision of water, food, and suitable environmental conditions. It includes also the absence of disease and injuries. It is relatively easy to recognize an animal whose physical welfare is not optimum.
- ii* *Mental welfare* - this is difficult to measure. How can we measure if an animal is bored, happy, unhappy, frustrated or frightened

The correlation of behavioural studies with the levels of blood stress hormone and other physiological measurements, although far from perfect, is providing data which can aid in the assessment of mental welfare

Some areas which are now being scrutinized include transport of animals, design of animal facilities, education of pet owners about the behavioural needs of their pets, and the humane slaughter of animals

In conclusion animal welfarists believe that humans have a duty to ensure the humane treatment of animals and they talk a lot about human obligations

The Australian Veterinary Association philosophy on animal welfare (Appendix 2, p24 of Code of ethics) clearly states that when humans use animals or interfere with their habitat a level of care merited by a *sentient being*, should be bestowed on them

The level of care should be *humane*. This is defined in the Oxford dictionary as "behaviour or disposition towards others as befits a man. It is marked by sympathy and consideration for the stress of others; the feeling or showing of compassion and tenderness towards human beings and lower animals".

The code continues that by virtue of their training veterinarians have a particular responsibility to see that animals used or affected by people receive proper care

Some modern veterinary courses have training for veterinary students in animal behaviour and welfare issues. One area which is important is the assessment of pain and distress

## 5. Stress, pain and distress

There is no argument from anyone who is interested in animal welfare that animals can feel pain

Pain is subjective, and the assessment of pain in animals is therefore unreliable. The anatomic and chemical pathways of pain in humans and animals are similar so conditions painful in humans are assumed to be painful in animals (Potthoff and Carithers, 1989).

Species-related differences have been observed and animals seem to recover sooner after operations and tolerate some diseases better than humans do.

Acute pain stimulates reactive behaviour but chronic pain may be very difficult to identify in animals. The difficult question, when using animals for experimentation, is to determine how severe different procedures are and how much pain they cause.

Behavioural studies using low levels of electric shock, animals deprived of their instincts by breaking pair bonding or maternal deprivation may cause a different degree of distress or perhaps pain than food deprivation. What distress is caused by clipping a dog's toenails or restraining a cat for examination? Unless one adopts a hardline attitude that animals cannot feel pain it should be assumed that various signs of pain can be recognised (Morton and Griffiths, 1985)

At present there are no reliable biochemical markers for pain so we are left with solely clinical assessment. This is why a knowledge of normal animal behaviour is essential. The signs we look for which may indicate pain, distress or discomfort in both experimental, companion and production animals include:

- i* posture - a client might say the dog "looks sad"
- ii* overall appearance - failure to groom, discharges.
- iii* vocalisations
- iv* change in temperament - becoming lethargic, aggressive, agitated
- v* change in locomotion.
- vi* reduced food and water intake.
- vii* loss in weight.

Assessment should then involve a clinical examination and then treatment

It should also be assumed that an animal needs post operative care for pain

## 6. Deer industry and animal welfare

In Australia there are no national codes for the conduct of *deer farming*. I have contacted the deer farmers group who do not appear very interested in producing a code

This is in complete contrast to the Australian Deer Association (Deer Hunters) and their sister organisation, The Australian Bowhunters Association. Their national code of ethics was drafted in 1988 and covers how hunters should behave towards landowners, the environment and the deer. It also has strict codes covering safe hunting practices, use of firearms, removal of shot animals from the bush, stalking, hunting sambar with hounds and bow hunting. This organisation joined the Australian Federation for the Welfare of Animals after their codes were approved

An area of welfare concern is *antler removal* in the velvet stage. The RSPCA, Victoria is opposed to the removal of antlers in velvet for commercial sale as a medicinal product

The only acceptable method for removal of antlers in velvet is for the animal to be appropriately restrained, deep narcosis or general anaesthesia to be administered by a veterinary surgeon, and the antlers removed in the presence of the vet

Hardened antlers may be removed at any time provided that the animal is restrained and tranquilised to minimise shock or fear.

It is time the Australian Deer Farmers Federation were pressured to have a proper code for the welfare of farmed deer similar to those put out by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Foods, U K. 1989. These codes cover the need for understanding the behaviour of different breeds, handling and inspection, use of dart guns, deer taken from the wild, pens, stocking rates, provision of shelter, fencing, feed water and housing and field slaughter

## **7. Conclusions**

Issues are gradually becoming resolved as those interested in animal welfare get codes of recommendation and laws put into place. There will never be agreement with some animal rights philosophies about human use of animals, but views are much more balanced than they were 8 - 10 years ago. Perhaps the veterinary profession can assist the Deer Farmers Federation in preparing some codes for the welfare of farmed deer.

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