Animal welfare (well-being), the veterinary profession and Veterinary Services

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Summary: Definitions of terms associated with animal welfare are followed by an account of the development of specific legislation in various countries, and a discussion of the roles of the veterinary profession, animal welfare societies and the animal rights movement.


INTRODUCTION

The most important prerequisite determining “animal well-being” can be considered to be health (which includes normal physical, mental and social functions and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity). It may therefore be stipulated that there can exist no state of well-being in animals which are sick, ailing, wounded, suffering or otherwise distressed.

“Those who pursue veterinary medicine as a career are most intimately involved in animal welfare. How else could one describe the contributions of the veterinary surgeon to the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of pain and suffering, the prolongation of life and the promotion of animal welfare and well-being?” (16). The veterinary profession is a vocation. It is the only profession legally permitted (in most countries) to diagnose, treat, control and eradicate disease. The veterinary profession is the cornerstone on which the health and well-being of an animal depends.

Despite the presence of veterinary practitioners world-wide, and the establishment of national Veterinary Services and excellent institutions of higher learning, the task faced by veterinarians is vast and complex. In developing countries, financial constraints may prevent many who own animals seeking treatment from practitioners. The same financial constraints may limit the availability of staff and equipment in national veterinary diagnostic laboratories. In addition, some countries may lack governmental legislation specifically forbidding inhumane treatment of animals. Industrial nations, on the other hand, are plagued with problems of animal overpopulation, the inadvertent introduction of animal diseases through importation, and the need to assess new management techniques to ascertain whether these are compatible with animal well-being. Industrialised countries have also witnessed tremendous demographic changes, with over 95% of the population now urbanised and distanced from the human/animal

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interactions which take place in the rural environment. As a result, few people in these countries truly understand the issues surrounding agricultural production, wild animal population management and species protection. Within these nations, anti-vivisectionists and animal rights societies have their greatest constituencies. While the veterinary profession has long co-operated with legitimate animal welfare societies, the profession is now being attacked by animal rights societies and anti-vivisectionist groups for participating in wildlife management, supporting animal production agriculture and defending research on animals. With each of these problems in mind, the World Veterinary Association (WVA) formed a special Committee for Animal Welfare, Well-being and Ethology in 1988, which proposed the first draft of the WVA Policy Statement on animal welfare, well-being and ethology in 1989. The final draft of this statement (with changes) was unanimously accepted by the General Assembly in 1990, and slight amendments were made in 1992 (Appendix). As Loew (8) stated, “the WVA should serve as the clearing-house and discussion leader on the several national approaches to animal protection and animal well-being issues”.

The WVA Committee firmly believes that the veterinary profession as a whole, and individual veterinarians, should climb down from their “ivory towers” and re-establish their leading role in animal welfare. When discussing animal welfare issues with the public, many misconceptions arise. Many terms have different meanings to veterinarians, the general public and the community of animal rights societies. The problem is more complex at the international level where some terms, such as animal welfare, are not easily translated. The following section—which precedes a review of animal welfare legislation, various animal protection groups and the role of the veterinarian—is an attempt to define the principal terms relevant to this subject.

DEFINITIONS

Animal bioethics

Fraser (7) defines animal bioethics as “a constitution of integrated ethical practices, and of animal welfare principles, in mankind’s use of sentient animals, serving to control suffering”. He further states: “the pursuit, application and maintenance of humane principles in the care and husbandry of sentient animals, in the interest of their well-being, has become the specialty of animal bioethics” (7).

Disease

According to Webster’s Third International Dictionary, disease is “an impairment of the normal state of the living animal (or plant) body or any of its components that interrupts or modifies the performance of vital functions, being a response to environmental factors (as malnutrition, industrial hazards or climate), to specific infectious agents (as worms, bacteria or viruses), to inherent defects of the organism (as various genetic anomalies), or to combinations of these factors”.

Stress

The term “stress” refers to the effect produced by external (i.e. physical or environmental) events or internal factors, referred to as stressors, which induce an alteration in the biological equilibrium of an animal. The response of the animal may vary according to age, sex, experience, genetic profile and present physiological and
psychological state. Stress may be harmless and may actually initiate responses which have a potential beneficial effect (11).

Distress

The National Research Council (NRC) in the United States of America (USA) defines distress as an aversive state in which an animal is unable to adapt completely to stressors and the resulting stress, and shows maladaptive behaviours (11).

Domestication

Fraser (7) defines domestication as "the complex of selection, adaptation, husbandry and usage". The domesticated animals have adapted completely to their "domestic status", feel "at home" in this situation, and would be both confused and endangered if abandoned by humans. In the domestication process, many animals have been made dependent on man for their nutrition, shelter and care. Thus man has a special obligation to provide for these needs of domesticated animals.

Ethology

The term "ethology" refers to the scientific study of the behaviour of animals in their usual environment. "Instinctive behaviour" of animals in the wild is the principal study of the European School, while the study of animal behaviour under controlled laboratory conditions is favoured by the American School. The behaviour of domesticated animals must be studied in the domestic environment of the animals, so that normal and abnormal behaviour may be scientifically determined. Abnormal behaviour can provide an initial indication that an animal is failing to adapt to a stressor and may thus potentially fall into a state of distress. As stated by Odendaal (12): "Ethology must therefore become the basis of the veterinary curriculum, alongside Anatomy and Physiology."

Health

Health is defined by the Collins English Dictionary (Second Edition) as "the state of being bodily and mentally vigorous and free from disease".

Pain

The Concise Oxford Dictionary (Fourth Edition) refers to pain as "suffering or distress of body [...] or mind". Fraser (7) describes pain as "the essence of severe suffering". Recently, in 1992, the NRC (USA) defined pain as "a potent source of stress, that is, a stressor. Pain results from potential or actual tissue damage. It can also be considered a state of stress itself, however, and can lead to distress and maladaptive behaviours" (11).

Preventive medicine

Preventive medicine is a form of applied welfare, which "advises on management practices, prophylaxis and vaccinations and [...] recognises that stress in animals is a component factor in the etiology of many diseases in the modern spectrum of animal illnesses" (7).

Suffering

According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary, suffering occurs when one "undergo[es] pain or grief or damage or disablement". Stephan (19) states that suffering "is an additional reason for the reduction in well-being. [Suffering] is produced by
influences detrimental to the nature of the individual, to its instincts and to its existence. Suffering is more severe than simple discomfort. Furthermore it lasts longer. Examples include keeping cloven-hoofed animals on badly designed and slippery slatted floors, or restricting the animal's mobility, by close physical confinement, by close tethering or by overcrowding.” Fraser (7) states: “The two main characteristics of the behaviour of suffering are depressed activity and agitation”.

**Harm**

Stephan (19) defines harm as a “change of the physical or mental state for the worse. It is often accompanied by disturbances of physiological functions. Examples [include]: starvation of a degree causing loss of weight, artificial weight increase by forced feeding, psychosis, or physical damage. According to German law, if harm is recognised, a violation of the rules of animal protection must be acknowledged, without the need to prove that pain or suffering have been inflicted.”

**Well-being**

Well-being is defined by Moss (10) as “the condition of being contented, healthy or successful”. According to Stephan (19), “a state of well-being means the physical and mental harmony of the individual within itself and with its environment. This includes freedom from pain, suffering and harm.” Stephan (19) further states that meeting requirements and satisfying needs are important aspects of well-being: “It is however difficult to determine whether or not a state of well-being may be assumed. Behaviour, if it is normal in all respects, could be an indication of well-being.” The NRC defines well-being as the absence of excessive stress (11).

**Welfare**

The term “welfare” is defined by the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* as follows: “satisfactory state, health and prosperity, well-being (usually of person, etc.)”. The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) defines animal welfare as: “encompassing all aspects of animal well-being, including proper housing, management, nutrition, disease prevention and treatment, responsible care, humane handling and euthanasia” (1).

“Welfare” can be directly translated into German (*Wohlfahrt* or *Wohlergehen*, both of which are rarely used) and possibly into other Anglo-Saxon languages. However, the term cannot be precisely rendered in Latin-derived languages, semitic languages and many others. (In French, the nearest equivalent is *bien-être*; in Italian *benessere*; in Spanish *bienestar*; in Portuguese *bem-estar*, etc.) The term “animal welfare” first appears in European and North American legislation well after the 1950s. Most laws were promulgated under the term Animal Protection Acts (United Kingdom, 1911; Finland, 1971; Switzerland, 1978; Luxembourg, 1983; Sweden, 1988; etc.). The term “welfare” was first introduced in the USA in the Welfare of Animals Act of 1966. In United Kingdom legislation, the term appears for the first time in the Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1968, Part 1 of which is entitled “Welfare of Livestock”. This was followed by the Northern Ireland 1972 legislation, and later by the Norwegian Welfare of Animals Act of 20 December 1974. Animal welfare is a concept which is readily understood, but which cannot be defined with any exactitude, and certainly not in a way which is satisfactory to the scientific world. The term has been included here because of general use in the literature and within society.
ANIMAL WELFARE LEGISLATION

Two types of legislation are commonly employed in the interests of animal well-being, namely: legislation directed at the control and eradication of infectious diseases (particularly those with public health implications) and legislation directed at individual animal well-being. Laws focusing on the control and eradication of tuberculosis, rabies, rinderpest, etc., were rapidly introduced throughout Europe and North America from the second half of the 19th century. This occurred as a result of the scientific discoveries of Pasteur and Koch, which established the germ theory of disease and the principles of vaccination, and enabled the isolation and identification of specific disease-causing agents. This legislation was complex, involving national acts and enforcement groups often co-ordinated by international organisations, such as the Office International des Epizooties (OIE) and the World Health Organisation (in cases of zoonoses), with the help of the WVA, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, etc. In the USA, the Bureau of Animal Industry was first formed to implement inspection and enforcement of national legislation. This evolved into the present United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) with a designated branch, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), charged with animal health inspection. In addition, each State in the USA has a programme for disease eradication and control, using State bureaux of both agriculture and public health as enforcement agencies.

Legislation directed at the well-being of individual food animals (as opposed to animal populations) generally focuses on four sites (or activities): the farm, the marketplace, transport of animals, and slaughter (10). In many Western nations, these are referred to as anti-cruelty laws/acts and have been extended to protect companion animals and those maintained for exhibition. The first “modern” anti-cruelty act was adopted by the General Court of Massachusetts in 1641 and stated: “No man shall exercise any tyranny or cruelty towards any brute creatures which are usually kept for man’s use” (20). In 1828, anti-cruelty legislation was introduced in New York State, initially concentrating on the well-being of horses (particularly those used in transport). In rapid succession, anti-cruelty legislation spread to all States in the USA. In most States, this law specified: “No person may over-drive, torture, cruelly beat, neglect or unjustifiably injure, maim, mutilate or kill any animal or cruelly work any animal when unfit for labour or deprive any animal of necessary sustenance, food or drink” (3). In Great Britain, the Knackers Act protecting injured animals was passed in 1786, and the Martin Act protecting farm animals was passed in 1822; these were followed by the Cruelty to Animals Act in 1849, with amendments in 1854. The Wild Animals in Captivity Act (1900), Injured Animal Act (1907) and Protection of Animals Act (1911) were subsequently passed to provide protection under specific conditions. The Protection of Animals Act dealt mostly with horses, forbidding “any person [to] cruelly beat, kick, ill-treat, over-ride, over-drive, over-load, torture, infuriate or terrify an animal”. The 1968 Agricultural (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, Part I, Paragraph I (i) states: “Any person who causes unnecessary pain or distress to any livestock for the time being situated on agricultural land and under his control or permits any such distress of which he knows or may reasonably be expected to know shall be guilty of an offence under this section”.

The Swedish Animal Protection Act 1988 deals with this subject simply by stating: “Animals shall be well treated and be protected from unnecessary suffering and disease”. The Finnish Animal Protection Act 1971 states: “Animals shall be treated well, so that they are not caused unnecessary suffering” and (Section 2) confirms: “It is
forbidden to cause animals unnecessary pain or suffering”. French legislation (Protection of Animals Act, Article 9) states: “All animals being sentient beings must be kept by their owner in conditions compatible with the biological needs of their species”. The Swiss Federal Animal Protection Act 1978 states:

1. Animals shall be treated in a manner which best accords with their needs.

2. Anyone who is concerned with animals shall, insofar as circumstances permit, safeguard their welfare.

3. No one shall unjustifiably expose animals to pain, suffering, physical injury or fear.”

These are examples of basic national laws, defining the legislative approach to animal welfare. These are then enlarged upon in more detailed legislation.

The Norwegian Welfare of Animals Act of 1974, Chapter 1 may be cited as an example. Section 2 of Chapter 1 covers the general treatment of animals to which this legislation applies. Section 3 denotes the persons and organisations with the power to inspect animals and premises in which animals are kept. Section 4 defines the principles to be followed in “providing suitable quarters with sufficient space, suitable warmth, enough light and access to fresh air, etc. as appropriate to the needs of the kind of animal in question”. Section 5 deals with care and attention of the animal. Section 6 requires any animal which is “sick, injured or helpless” to be assisted. Section 7 prohibits persons other than veterinarians from carrying out surgical procedures or initiating medical treatment of animals “when there is reason to believe that the procedure or treatment may cause the animal to suffer”. This section also requires that the veterinarian employ general or local anaesthesia (unless there are contra-indications) if there is reason to believe that the procedure or treatment will cause the animal “considerable pain”. Section 8 sets out “prohibited ways of treating animals” and Section 13 lists prohibited operations. Thus, under Section 13 it is forbidden to castrate dogs, cats and poultry (unless there are special circumstances), insert a ring in the snout of pigs or dehorn animals.

Subordinate legislation in Sweden (1988) states, in Section 3, 2:

“The Government [...] may issue further directions concerning:

1. stables and other premises for animals
2. obligation to have such premises inspected prior to use
3. obligation to have new technology relating to animal husbandry pre-tested”.

This follows the example of Switzerland, which pioneered this subject in Article 5 of the Federal Act on Animal Welfare in 1978 as follows:

“Mass-produced housing systems and installations for the keeping of animals for purposes of profit may not be advertised or sold without prior authorisation from a service designated by the Federal Council. Authorisation shall only be granted if such systems and installations provide proper living conditions for animals. (Cost paid by applicant.) This also applies to all new types of equipment introduced.”

All of the above principles are incorporated in the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Animals Kept for Farming Purposes, which all Member States of the European Union (EU) (formerly European Community) are expected to adopt. This Convention clearly states: “Animals shall be housed and provided with food, water and care in a manner which – having regard to their species and to their degree of
development, adaptation and domestication – is appropriate to their physical and ethological needs in accordance with established experience and scientific knowledge” (Chapter 1, Article 3). This article, along with Articles 4 and 5, admits changes based on scientific knowledge gained mainly through ethological studies. This Convention has been accepted by all EU Member States, and enlarged upon by most of these countries in the form of rules and regulations or “codes of practice”.

Codes of practice exist for every domesticated species of farm animal in the United Kingdom, throughout the British Commonwealth, and in many other countries. These codes of practice cover the following species: cattle, sheep, pigs, poultry (domestic fowl, ducks and turkeys), rabbits and deer. Such codes usually contain four main sections, as follows:

a) housing (including ventilation, climate control, lighting and mechanical equipment)

b) space (according to species, sex, age and system)

c) feed and water

d) management (cleansing, disinfection, handling, isolation facilities, etc.).

These codes have been recently enlarged and now include laboratory animals in most countries.

Of special interest to the veterinary profession are “prohibited operations” (United Kingdom Code of Practice, 1987). A number of operations are prohibited outright, including penis amputation, tongue amputation in calves, hot branding and tail docking of cattle, and de-voicing of cockerels, while castration of cattle, pigs, goats, sheep and rabbits cannot be performed on animals over two months of age. Removal or prevention of the growth of horns in cattle must be performed before cattle are six weeks old. Restrictions are also placed on the docking of tails in piglets (before four days of age), lambs and puppies (before eight days), docking of the horny parts of the beak of poultry, etc. (German Law on Animal Protection 1986, Section IV, Article 5). Comparable legislation exists in most Western countries. (The EU has issued Directives dealing with laying hens, pigs and calves.) In the USA, recommendations for veterinary procedures involved with the welfare of farm and companion animals are published by the AVMA (1).

Legislation dealing with the transportation of animals is provided by an EU Directive (77/489/EEC), and subsequent amending Directives, based on the European Convention for the Protection of Animals during International Transport (1968). International animal transport requirements set out by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) have been adopted by the OIE and included in the OIE International Animal Health Code (13). (A veterinarian sits as a permanent member on the IATA board.) Most Western countries have also established national transit legislations covering the transport of animals, especially the transport of farm animals from production sites to slaughter. National transport and transit acts forbid the transport of highly pregnant animals (last two weeks of pregnancy and 48 hours after giving birth), ill or injured animals (Norway 1984, and Article 52-56 of the Swiss Federal Animal Welfare Act 1978). The American Animal Transportation Association has an international membership, disseminates information and encourages uniform national and international regulations (16).

Humane Slaughter Acts have been introduced in most countries (e.g. United States Federal Humane Slaughter Act of 1978), stipulating the practices and equipment
necessary to induce unconsciousness and death painlessly and rapidly. In most countries, these operations are overseen by qualified veterinarians. The WVA encourages all member nations to slaughter food animals as close as possible to the site of production (Appendix).

Special laws and regulations have been implemented in many countries (including most European countries, Canada, the USA, Australia, New Zealand, Israel and Japan) to deal with animals used in research. These rules cover all aspects of research animal use from the moment of birth until the final disposal of the animal. National offices (e.g. the Home Office in the United Kingdom) or committees (e.g. Institutional Animal Care and Use Committees in the USA and Canada) are charged with the review and approval of proposed research procedures (15). In some countries, multiple laws are used to protect animals in research. For instance, in the USA, research animals are protected by the Animal Welfare Act (1966) and the Health Research Protection Act (1985), which are enforced by the USDA (Regulatory Enforcement and Animal Care unit) and the Public Health Services (PHS), respectively. In addition, many States have their own specific laws, and one city (Cambridge, Massachusetts) has developed a municipal act. Also in the USA, recommendations for animal euthanasia have been published by the AVMA (2). Additional regulations have been adopted in certain countries to protect animals used in exhibition. In the USA, these rules are published and enforced by the USDA and cover all wild, warm-blooded animals, birds and marine mammals.

With rare exceptions, the formulation of all the above legislation has involved active participation by the veterinary profession. It is imperative that this practice continue in the future, in the light of new scientific knowledge acquired through both physical and behavioural studies and testing, devoted mainly to those fields in which well-founded, specific information is lacking. For most industrialised nations, the current legislation is more than adequate to protect all animals if enforced. Therefore, effective implementation is needed. Both the publication and the implementation of animal welfare legislation are the task of central Government. In most countries, this task falls to the Government Veterinary Services, which usually form part of the Ministry (or Department) of Agriculture or Health. In Sweden, this work is the responsibility of the National Board of Agriculture, while in Norway the State Police are responsible, assisted by regional Animal Welfare Boards which include a veterinarian (District Veterinarian or other) appointed by the Ministry of Agriculture as an active member. In the USA, both the USDA and the PHS enforce national legislation, with veterinarians playing the principal role in each agency. State anti-cruelty laws are enforced by a variety of organisations, including the inspectors of the State Department of Health or Department of Agriculture (usually veterinarians) or appointed societies (e.g. the Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals). The German Minister of Food, Agriculture and Forestry states, in the 1986 Protection of Animals brochure under the heading “Everyone is responsible”:

“Legislation alone cannot create animal lovers. All it can do is to delimit the reasonable and permissible, and lay down basic standards for protecting animals.

No doubt, even in the future, public opinion will remain divided on such fundamental issues as livestock farming or experiments on animals. However, compromises must be reached to impose at least minimum standards to protect the interests of animals; they will not please everyone.
Government measures such as laws and regulations alone cannot protect animals. Responsible, considerate behaviour by every citizen is far more important.

Every law and regulation is only as good as the measures taken to enforce and observe it. This is the job not only of the authorities but also of every individual citizen."

This is, and has been, the “job” of both the veterinary clinician and the Government Veterinary Services. As soon as the treating veterinarian diagnoses a “herd health” problem, an immediate clinical epidemiological investigation reveals whether this is due to:

a) faulty management (nutrition, ventilation, temperature control, overcrowding and malfunctioning equipment), or

b) disease: whether contagious disease (notifiable to the Official Veterinary Services) or infectious disease (from calf entero-pulmonary syndrome and parasitoses to foot rot).

Treatment, preventive measures or management modification must be instituted as soon as possible. Non-compliant animal owners should be warned and, if resistant to change, reported to central authorities. The clinical veterinarian, who is one of the most frequent outside visitors to larger herds, is well positioned to observe abnormal behaviour in animals and recognise flawed management practices. To provide every veterinary clinician with the knowledge necessary to make these pre-clinical and clinical veterinary assessments, schools and colleges must incorporate animal welfare and ethology as basic subjects. This education must begin with a thorough understanding of the normal behaviour of healthy animals in their usual environment. This should be followed, in the clinical years, by study of herd health and the application of both physical tests and behaviour assessments in herd monitoring. The ability to perform and properly interpret these assessments is critical for the next generation of veterinarians who will be charged, at some level, with evaluating new husbandry practices and equipment.

**ANIMAL WELFARE SOCIETIES**

Historically, the first “modern” law promulgated for the Protection of Animals was adopted by the General Court of Massachusetts in 1641. This was followed by the Martin Act (Great Britain, 1822), protecting farm animals against cruelty. Significantly, the population was almost entirely agrarian in both cases. In the United Kingdom, the Industrial Revolution had only just begun to make an impact, and urbanisation was expanding slowly. To farmers, the cruel treatment of animals is anathema and cruel practices were the first to be condemned. In fact, the prevention of cruelty to animals was the motivation of all animal protection societies until well into this century.

These two Protestant agricultural communities (in Massachusetts and Great Britain) were deeply religious, and their only reading matter except for almanacs was the Bible, mainly the Old Testament. This ancient code of moral, ethical, practical and religious law forms the basis of the Judeo-Christian faiths, and contains many specific instructions with regard to the humane treatment of animals. Other major religions also have laws forbidding cruelty to animals, especially those which uphold a belief in the transmigration of the soul.

During the 19th century, profound demographic changes created new and often cruel situations for animals. The Industrial Revolution which occurred in many Western nations in the second half of the 19th century brought many people together in
overcrowded metropolitan centres, where raw materials could be centrally received, and manufactured products could be created and easily distributed. Some animals, mainly draught animals, followed this move into the urban areas, where horses were harnessed to pull wagons and trolleys. Although these animals ensured almost all urban transportation, their living conditions were often poor. Cattle were housed in entirely enclosed, non-ventilated buildings, high-quality feeds were difficult to obtain in bulk, requiring owners to resort to other less nutritive feedstuffs. Primarily as a result of these changes, rather than the routine care of animals on family farms, national legislation was promulgated against cruelty to animals and animal protection societies were formed.

In 1822 the Martin Act, protecting farm animals, was enacted in Great Britain and in 1824 the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) was founded to ensure the enforcement of the Act (20). The society was endorsed by Queen Victoria and became the Royal (R)SPCA in 1840. The American SPCA (ASPCA) was founded in New York in 1866 by Henry Bergh. Mainly intended to protect beasts of burden, the ASPCA has greatly extended its mission to cover overpopulation of pets, animal trapping and research animal issues. The ASPCA became the enforcement agency for the New York State anti-cruelty law, and regional SPCAs were charged with enforcing the anti-cruelty laws of many other States. In fact, laws protecting animals from cruelty preceded similar laws to protect children in the USA, and the first child abuse case tried in the USA cited the State law against cruelty to animals.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, new societies were founded to protect animals across North America. In the USA, the American Humane Association and later the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) were formed. Each parent organisation has a slightly different mission, although animal protection underlies them all. At present, over 7,000 societies (and their respective branches) are registered in the USA. In Canada, 112 member societies united in 1957 to form the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies (CFHS).

The RSPCA in the United Kingdom was instrumental in founding the International Society for the Protection of Animals (ISPA), with headquarters in London and field offices in Europe, India, Africa and North America. Stray dogs, and the welfare of livestock during transportation and slaughter were the main concerns of the ISPA (16). The ISPA overshadowed the Swiss-based World Federation for the Protection of Animals (WFPA), which was active mainly in Europe. The WFPA took some initiatives in animal control, outlining animal welfare legislation for Europe (including the Eastern bloc). The HSUS was able to encourage the WFPA to merge with the ISPA, thus forming the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA), a powerful organisation with headquarters in London. The WSPA continued activities in pet population control and influenced slaughterhouse reform, exerting influence through literature in various languages. The WSPA also opposed the hunting and trapping of seals.

The EU and the European Parliament created the Eurogroup for Animal Welfare in 1980, of which the WSPA became a member. This group is a consortium of national animal welfare organisations, and its objectives are: “to identify areas of concern in the treatment of animals and to lobby for the introduction and enforcement of legislation at a European level. Its policies are determined by its 13 members representing animal welfare organisations in each of the 12 [EU] Member States along with the WSPA” (16). This organisation has become an influential group on animal welfare issues. The Eurogroup for Animal Welfare encourages the humane treatment of animals, which is dependent on public awareness of human responsibility towards all living animals, and has recently become involved in environmental issues relating to animal welfare.
In urban areas of the industrialised nations, moral concerns with regard to the status of companion animals, livestock, laboratory animals and wildlife have intensified in recent decades, mainly due to the activity of SPCAs and animal welfare societies. The work of these bodies is highly laudable, and has contributed enormously to both public awareness and animal welfare legislation. Many of these organisations have veterinarians on their boards, while others have active veterinary divisions. The veterinary profession is proud to co-operate with such bodies, and a call has been issued by the WVA for all national veterinary associations to co-operate fully with these organisations and lend any necessary professional assistance.

**ANIMAL RIGHTS MOVEMENT**

The present plethora of animal rights groups is the result of dissatisfaction in some sections of the public with the “conservative” animal protection societies, which are seen as not making progress rapidly enough (17). The turning point came with the campaign against the Canadian seal hunt. The portrayal of the hunt each March on most international television channels created public protests, leading to the involvement of Greenpeace and the United States Fund for Animals. A flood of donations followed, which were used to form the International Fund for Animal Welfare.

In the 1970s, Ryder published his “Declaration against Speciesism”, stating: “We do not accept that a difference in species alone (any more than a difference in race) can justify a wanton exploitation or oppression in the name of science or sport, or for food, commercial profit or other human gain.”

Orlans (14) believes that “the recent rise of the animal rights societies movement dates back to the publication by Peter Singer in 1975 of his revolutionary book *Animal Liberation*. Orlans further believes that Singer is misinterpreted; in the view of Orlans, Singer does not feel that animals are equal in moral status to humans, but rather that equal harm should be counted equally and not downgraded for animals.

Animal rights groups subsequently proliferated all over the world. Vegetarians, for reasons of religious or familial beliefs, joined the movement. There exists a wide spectrum of viewpoints among those claiming to speak for the animals of the world (16). Most animal rights groups believe that the intrinsic right of animals should guarantee them freedom from being eaten, used for sport or research, abused or killed (except as an act of mercy) (14). At one end of the spectrum are those who would terminate all uses of animals for any purpose beneficial to humankind, including the possession of pets, while at the other end are those who would wish all animals to be back in their natural surroundings, with no human (even veterinary) involvement whatsoever. In 1988, G. Cave (President of Transspecies Unlimited) declared: “States should not be controlling wildlife populations... wild animals should be left to the demise of nature, disease and famine” (6). Some of the animal rights groups were instrumental in promoting animal welfare legislation. On account of their enormous advertising efforts (US$50 million in the USA alone) and over 10 million paying members, these 200 registered animal rights groups in the USA constitute an important electoral force, and have outspoken supporters within the United States Congress.

It is a matter of concern that the more extreme of these animal rights movements pursue their cause by the deliberate release of distorted or inaccurate information and seek the active or passive support of terrorist groups (such as the Hunt Saboteurs'
Association, the Animal Liberation Front, the Hunt Retribution Squad, the Band of Mercy, etc.). With statements such as “scientists torture animals and continue to use them for personal gain” and “most experiments are redundant and unnecessary”, Ingrid Newkirk (founder of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals [PETA]) attempts to secure public condemnation of all scientific investigations.

But PETA is not alone when it comes to misinformation of the public. C. Amory has stated: “Experimenters are unable to cite a single case where their experiments have benefited humans”. In response, J. Wyngaarden, former Director of the United States National Institutes of Health, stated: “Virtually every major medical discovery in the past century has been derived from studies involving laboratory animals. On the average, Americans will live 20.8 years longer today due to medical advances that depended on animal research.” While former United States Surgeon General E. Koop stated, in 1990: “We must strive harder to communicate to the public why animal research is imperative for improving the health of the people”.

While Wyngaarden and Koop refer only to the use of animals to advance human health, let us not forget the important achievements of animal research conducted to study and combat specific animal diseases and the many advances in human medicine which have been applied in animals to their benefit.

The above facts and achievements are opposed by the philosophy of many animal rights groups, which can be perfectly summed up in the following statement by P. Feral (President of Friends of Animals): “Animal experimentation is just plain wrong. Human beings have no right to the knowledge gained from experimentation on animals even if it is done painlessly” (9).

ANIMAL WELFARE AND THE VETERINARY PROFESSION

The WVA established an Animal Protection Committee over 20 years ago – replaced in 1988 by the Committee on Animal Welfare, Well-being and Ethology – and the opening plenary session at the 24th World Veterinary Congress in Rio de Janeiro was devoted to these subjects, in addition to one symposium, three oral sessions and a special General Assembly. In 1984, the British Veterinary Association set up an Animal Welfare Foundation, creating the first University chair in animal welfare at Cambridge in 1986. The AVMA has created an Animal Welfare Committee, which presented the definition of animal welfare given above (see “Definitions” section). In trying to define “animal rights”, this Committee concluded that the present definition was incompatible with the responsible use of animals for human purposes (such as food, clothing, companionship and research) and that this definition was therefore unacceptable (4). The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association established a Humane Practice Committee as early as 1968, and considers farm animal welfare to be “one of the most prominent issues” of the last decade of the 20th century. This concern for the welfare of farm animals has great veterinary support. In Sweden, since 1971, new animal buildings must be approved from both the health and animal welfare points of view by veterinarians belonging to a special scientific unit at the Department of Animal Hygiene at the Veterinary Faculty in Uppsala. In Switzerland, all new methods and equipment used in livestock production must be similarly tested.

The Brambell Committee Report (Report of the Technical Committee to Enquire into the Welfare of Animals Kept under Intensive Livestock Husbandry Systems, United Kingdom, 1965) played an essential role in demonstrating the relationship
between animal husbandry, farm animal ethology and animal welfare (5). The report
essemphasised the lack of behavioural studies on farm animals (especially under intensive
production conditions), which was due to farm animals being considered unsuitable and
“not natural” subjects for such studies. The Committee stated that all animals are
capable of showing unmistakeable signs reflecting pain, exhaustion, fright, frustration,
rage and other emotions, any of which may indicate a degree of suffering. Suffering thus
became the focal issue, “surely resting on an analogy with human suffering showing
similar signs” (7).

The International Society for Applied Ethology (previously named the Society for
Veterinary Ethology) was founded in 1966 in Edinburgh during a meeting of
approximately thirty veterinary specialists. At this meeting, the Society adopted the
view that “animal behaviour is the overt and composite functioning of animals
individually and collectively, and that behaviour is also the means whereby the animal
mediates dynamically with its environment both animate and inanimate” (7). Mainly
due to the efforts of Fraser, Ethology was established as a formal subject for
examination in the undergraduate curriculum at the veterinary school in Edinburgh in
1970. Ethologists introduced their subject into the universities of other countries soon
afterwards, e.g. in Sweden (Professor Ekesbo into Skara), Germany (Professors Zeeb,
Sambraus, later Stephan and Unshelm into Hanover and Munich) and the Netherlands
(Professors Grommers, Van Putten, Wiepkema and Wierenga into Wageningen,
Utrecht and Schoonoord). Behavioural studies of farm animals have been published in
Germany since 1911 (18). The *Journal of Applied Animal Ethology* was founded as a
quarterly in 1980 (edited for many years by Fraser, this now appears as the monthly
*Applied Animal Behaviour Science*). Studies on farm animals greatly dominated, with
82.2% of papers published dealing with this subject. Animal husbandry accounted for
42% of articles, the most common topics being the following: social, sexual, feeding,
housing and maternal behaviour (7).

Rowsell (16) states: “The general public has bestowed upon the veterinarian the
mantle of responsibility for providing leadership in all issues relating to animal welfare
and well-being. [...] The veterinary profession in most countries, particularly those with
a history of established animal welfare societies, has demonstrated a willingness to
accept this significant responsibility. While it is undeniable that the animal welfare
societies have drawn attention to the animal welfare issues and lobbied the regulators
and members of the elected governments in this regard, it has been the veterinary
profession that has played a significant role in preparing the related terms and
regulations. Most veterinary associations world-wide have taken an increased interest in
ensuring that their profession is recognised as being concerned with animal welfare in
their respective countries.”

CONCLUSION

George Bernard Shaw once wrote: “I can’t talk religion to a man with bodily hunger
in his eyes”. This is also true with regard to animal welfare. We face a problem of moral
relativism here (8). The extreme notions of animal rights and condemnation of the so-
called “exploitation” of animals find support in countries with the highest standards of
living and income. Outlawing the use of animals in developing countries – where
animals form the backbone of agricultural production and most transportation – would
mean condemning entire populations to starvation. In those countries where human
malnutrition is chronic, it is obvious that agricultural animals also suffer from the effects
of malnutrition. However, the owners who need these animals for their livelihood are doing all in their power to keep them as well provided for as possible. Instances of cruelty may exist in these countries, and these must be combated. Laws against cruelty to animals exist in almost all developing countries, but at present the only aspect of applied animal welfare which can be introduced is the control of prevailing infectious and parasitic diseases. This should be accomplished with the support of the more prosperous countries. The implementation of measures to reduce animal diseases is the most practical concern, and one in which the veterinary profession, by introducing veterinary service programmes, can make an impact.

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 LA PROTECTION (LE BIEN-ÊTRE) DES ANIMAUX, LA PROFESSION VÉTÉRINAIRE ET LES SERVICES VÉTÉRINAIRES. – E. Mayer.

 Résumé : L'auteur définit d'abord la terminologie concernant la protection animale, puis il présente l'évolution des législations spécifiques correspondantes dans plusieurs pays ; enfin, les rôles respectifs des vétérinaires, des sociétés protectrices des animaux et des mouvements de défense des droits des animaux sont discutés.


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 LA PROTECCIÓN (EL BIENESTAR) DE LOS ANIMALES, LA PROFESIÓN VETERINARIA Y LOS SERVICIOS VETERINARIOS. – E. Mayer.

 Resumen: El autor empieza por definir los términos relativos a la protección animal; expone a continuación la evolución de las legislaciones específicas en varios países; por último, examina el papel que les incumbe respectivamente a los veterinarios, a las sociedades de protección de animales y a los movimientos de defensa de los derechos de los animales.


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Appendix

WORLD VETERINARY ASSOCIATION POLICY ON ANIMAL WELFARE, WELL-BEING AND ETHOLOGY

This Policy Statement was drafted by the special committee created in 1988 under the chairmanship of Dr E. Mayer (Israel) and accepted by the Permanent Committee (now General Assembly) of the World Veterinary Association (WVA) in May 1990. It was slightly amended by the General Assembly in May 1992. The amendments have been included.

The WVA accepts the primacy of the veterinary profession in the diagnosis, treatment, control and eradication of diseases in animals. It also recognises its responsibilities in the need to alleviate suffering, pain and distress and the promotion of animal welfare.

It has therefore created within its framework an international body of veterinary specialists representing all the continents, in order to define policy. This is approved as follows.

Animal ethology and welfare

In accordance with world-wide sensitivity regarding the use of animals, the veterinary profession fully embraces the two disciplines of ethology and welfare. The veterinary philosophy relating to the two fields can be stated as follows:

Ethology puts the emphasis on knowledge which is scientifically based. Its aim is to clarify:

a) need(s) that can be fulfilled, and
b) harm that can be avoided.

With this knowledge animals can be cared for in the best manner. Only with optimum management and care (animal welfare) can the animal live and produce to its potential. This is also an ethical approach.

Clearly, man is the species responsible for the environment and for all other species. The veterinary profession is pre-eminent in this work. We firmly believe that animals can benefit most from the point of view that man is responsible for the provision of animal welfare and well-being.

Freedoms of animals

It is recognised that certain provisions of care are essential to welfare in the form of five freedoms and every practical effort should be made to achieve them. Modified from various sources in applied ethology, these freedoms can be stated as follows:

i) freedom from hunger and thirst
ii) freedom from physical discomfort and pain
iii) freedom from injury and disease
iv) freedom from fear and distress
v) freedom to conform to essential behaviour patterns.
Animal welfare in veterinary education

In order to establish an informed position on animal welfare, appropriate to the veterinary profession, it is considered essential to have this subject dealt with in undergraduate education. For this purpose the following principles should be adopted.

1. The subject of animal welfare should be incorporated as a discipline in its own right within the veterinary curriculum.

2. The overall scientific discipline of animal welfare should incorporate applied aspects of ethology, bioethics and the concepts of suffering and well-being.

3. The subject should be given at the pre-clinical level of veterinary education, although it is recognised that it must have extensions into the clinical level.

It is also considered necessary for postgraduate opportunities in education to be available to veterinarians wishing to specialise in ethology and welfare.

Animal experimentation

According to our present knowledge in our increasing struggle to control diseases of both humans and animals, we must accept that experimentation with animals, in certain cases, is unavoidable. However, this should be kept to a minimum. Every effort should be made to discover or utilise alternatives to animal experimentation. There should be legislation or administrative measures to cover all institutions where animal experiments are carried out. Experimental animals must be kept under optimal conditions at all times. The experiments should be thoroughly scientifically planned and not unnecessarily duplicated. All animal colonies used for experimentation should be under the control and responsibility of a veterinarian suitably qualified for this specific purpose. The supply of animals for research should be regulated.

Transport and slaughter of animals

The transport and slaughter of animals are two particular subjects requiring carefully drafted legislation. Animals destined for slaughter should be transported as little as possible and should be killed as near to the point of production as possible.

Conservation of wildlife

We endorse all the efforts of veterinarians or others, to conserve our wild animals and protect endangered species. In all aspects of the control, capture, translocations and the housing (if necessary) of wild animals, their welfare and care should be paramount and under veterinary responsibility.

The veterinary profession recognises the need for non-veterinary expert support.

Welfare legislation

We believe that all legislation pertaining to animal health, welfare, well-being and the prevention of cruelty, should be drafted in close co-operation with veterinarians and veterinary associations. We strongly recommend that, in those countries where no Animal Protection Acts have been promulgated, the National Veterinary Associations should initiate such legislation. We, the WVA, are willing to render all possible help.

Addendum

The World Veterinary Association Resolution on Welfare Service

The animal-owning public welcomes the guidance of the veterinary profession in connection with all aspects of animal well-being. While education of the community,
conservation of species and the prevention of cruelty to animals are also possible responsibilities of animal welfare societies, they would all benefit greatly from veterinary expertise. So, veterinarians should make themselves available to co-operate with these societies for the welfare and well-being of animals. Members of the profession are urged to participate in this work.

Source: WWA Bulletin, June 1993

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REFERENCES


