

Education for Animal Welfare

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Animal Welfare Series Preface

Animal welfare is attracting increasing interest worldwide, especially in developed countries where the knowledge and resources are available to (at least potentially) provide better management systems for farm animals, as well as companion, zoo and laboratory animals. The key requirements for adequate food, water, a suitable environment, companionship and health are important for animals kept for all of these purposes.

There has been increased attention given to farm animal welfare in the West in recent years. This derives largely from the fact that the relentless pursuit of financial reward and efficiency, to satisfy market demands, has led to the development of intensive animal production systems that challenge the conscience of many consumers in those countries.

In developing countries, human survival is still a daily uncertainty, so that provision for animal welfare has to be balanced against human welfare. Animal welfare is usually a priority only if it supports the output of the animal, be it food, work, clothing, sport or companionship. In principle, the welfare needs of both humans and animals can be provided for, in both developing and developed countries, if resources are properly husbanded. In reality, however, the inequitable division of the world's riches creates physical and psychological poverty for humans and animals alike in many parts of the world. Livestock are the world's biggest land users (FAO 2002) and the farmed animal population is increasing rapidly to meet the needs of an expanding human population. This results in a tendency to allocate fewer resources to each animal and to value individual animals less, for example, in the case of farmed poultry where flocks of over 20,000 birds are not uncommon. In these circumstances, the importance of each individual's welfare is diminished.

Increased attention to welfare issues is just as evident for companion, laboratory, wild and zoo animals. Of increasing importance is the ethical management of breeding programmes, since genetic manipulation is more feasible, but there is less public tolerance of the deliberate breeding of animals for improved productivity if it comes at the expense of animal welfare. However, the quest for producing novel

genotypes has fascinated breeders for centuries. Dog and cat breeders have produced a variety of extreme forms with adverse effects on their welfare, but nowadays the quest by breeders is most avidly pursued in the laboratory, where the mouse is genetically manipulated with equally profound effects.

The intimate connection between animals and humans that was once so essential for good animal welfare is rare nowadays, having been superseded by technologically efficient production systems where animals on farms and in laboratories are tended by increasingly few humans in the drive to enhance labour efficiency. With today's busy lifestyle, companion animals too may suffer from reduced contact with humans, although their value in providing companionship, particularly for certain groups such as the elderly, is increasingly recognised. Consumers also rarely have any contact with the animals that produce their food.

In this estranged, efficient world, people struggle to find the moral imperatives to determine the level of welfare that they should afford to animals within their charge. Some, in particular, many companion animal owners, aim for what they believe to be the highest levels of welfare provision, while others, deliberately or through ignorance, keep animals in impoverished conditions where their health and well-being can be extremely poor. Today's multiplicity of moral codes for animal care and use are derived from a broad range of cultural influences, including media reports of animal abuse, guidelines on ethical consumption and campaigning and lobbying groups.

This series has been designed to help contribute towards a culture of respect for animals and their welfare by producing academic texts addressing how best to provide for the welfare of the animal species that are managed and cared for by humans. The species focused books produced so far have not been detailed blueprints for the management of each species, rather they have described and considered the major welfare concerns, often in relation to the wild progenitors of the managed animals. Welfare has been considered in relation to animals' needs, concentrating on nutrition, behaviour, reproduction and the physical and social environment. Economic effects of animal welfare provision were also considered where relevant, as were key areas where further research is required.

In this volume, we depart from the previous trend of addressing one species or a group of species to consider one of the most important influences on how we treat animals. Education in animal welfare is generally acknowledged to play a leading role in the development of peoples' attitudes, which in turn often has a far greater effect on the animal's experiences than any amount of scientific research addressing the improvement of the environment for animals. Dr Ted Eadie has had a wealth of experience in industry but has recently devoted his exceptional talents to reducing animal suffering, focusing on the role of law and education. His first book, *Animal Suffering and the Law* (2009), gave us a broad viewpoint on how animal welfare law often fails to provide that broad framework against which we can judge the acceptability of people's actions. In this book, Ted turns his attention to education and animal welfare, finding that major improvements can be achieved if people are educated to treat animals with respect, care and generosity.

With the growing pace of knowledge in this new area of research, it is hoped that this series will provide a timely and much-needed set of texts for researchers, lecturers, practitioners and students. My thanks are particularly due to the publishers for their support, and to the authors and editors for their hard work in producing the texts on time and in good order.

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