Teaching ethics to vet students
Animal welfare education

• Welfare = good husbandry & clinical practice?

• What is our impact on animals? : Science
• How should we treat animals? : Ethics
• How must we treat animals? : Legislation
Why teach ethics?

RCVS requirement: “Be aware of the ethical responsibilities of the veterinary surgeon in relation to individual patient care and client relations, and also more generally in the community in relation to their possible impact on the environment and society as a whole.”

Important skill: “I have some doubt that new graduates are sufficiently prepared to handle the difficult judgments and dilemmas that animal welfare issues can pose.” Lowe 2009

Students like it: “Welfare and ethics often seem like an “add-on” that should have more time explicitly devoted to it.” Final year student 2009
Learning outcomes for Animal Welfare Ethics

- Identify common ethical dilemmas seen in practice
- Explain and use a simple ethical decision-making process
- Make and defend an ethical judgement on common ethical dilemmas seen in practice
- Comment on controversial ethical issues concerning animal use using a rational argument
- Apply the following frameworks: Five Freedoms, Four principles and 3 R's
- Identify and analyse the views of relevant stakeholders
- Explain the interaction between science, legislation and ethics
- Explain the difference between professional etiquette and ethics
- Describe the current ethical issues concerning the role of animals in society
- Aware of the principle ethical theories: utilitarian, deontology, animal rights, virtue ethics
- Apply and use an ethical matrix
- Explain the moral basis of informed consent

* Journal of Veterinary Medical Education 2010, 37 : 30-35
Analysis: Ethical theories

Case example: Oscar: 24 year old
Unable to eat but otherwise well
Clin. exam: loose tooth & tartar etc

• Virtue: well meaning
  – Do everything possible / try hardest

• Deontology: rule-based
  – Never GA a cat over 24 year’s old

• Utilitarian: cost vs benefit
  – On balance palliative care is reasonable
Analysis: Ethical frameworks

• Four medical principles
  – Beauchamp & Childress

• Beneficence
  – Providing veterinary treatment

• Non-maleficence
  – Limit time (i.e. distress) in captivity

• Respect for autonomy
  – Short term - providing choice of perches etc
  – Long term – release into wild

• Justice
  – Treat as if owned
Ethics teaching: value of experience

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Year 1: Group project: Science, ethics & law
Year 1: Animal ethics dilemma website
Ethical dilemmas & theories

• Is it right to keep elephants in zoos??
• Deontological or Utilitarian view?

COSTS
- Shortened life
- Boredom
- Sexual maturity at young age
- Lameness
- Quality of life i.e. unnatural environment, diet, family groupings, stereotypies

BENEFITS
- Breeding programmes as threatened species
- Protection from hunting
- Protection from disease
- Conservation
- Research programmes
- Business
- Education
- Entertainment
My opinion

- Can see both ways - conservation & education good in zoos but welfare not
- Inclined to agree with Born Free
- Elephants are so big, very difficult to get the right balance therefore welfare compromised
- Better conservation projects needed but education needed but zoos are form of education so...?!
Ethics teaching resource

Welcome to Animal Ethics Dilemma

On this website you will find a number of interactive ethical dilemmas raising questions about our treatment of animals. Explore the dilemmas and find out how different ethical views influence your own behaviour.

You can use Animal Ethics Dilemma free of charge - just register. Registration does not require you to provide any personal information.

Log in
Please enter your username and password

Username: 
Password: 

First time?
If you are a first time user, please register!

REGISTER HERE!

Go to sites in other languages

Dansk
Svenska
English

About AE

ANIMAL ETHICS DILEMMA
AN INTERACTIVE LEARNING TOOL FOR UNIVERSITY AND PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

Home | Contractarian | Utilitarian | Relational | Animal Rights | Respect for Nature | References
Ethics teaching: value of experience

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**Year 2:** Reflective exercise (Glasgow project)

**Year 3:** Stakeholder discussion (cattle lameness)
Year 3 : Stakeholder exercise

• List the stakeholders that are affected by or who have an influence on dairy cattle lameness

• Students asked to define the key science & law issues

• Discussion focus on role of each party : farmers, vets, retailers, certification schemes, government etc in sorting out problem
Aims of stakeholder discussion  
.....questions that need asking

- Think cow:
  ..........what are all its needs / wants?

- Think farmer:
  ..............how do we encourage change?

- Think big:
  .............who can and **should** make a difference?
Maximising the Value of Farm Placements

• Collaborative project began in 2009

Overall aim:
• To enhance veterinary students’ learning from pre-clinical extra mural study

Objectives:
• Improve students’ ability to assess welfare
• Improve students’ ethical awareness
• Improve students’ communication skills
• Develop an EMS welfare/ethics learning package for all UK vet schools

Dorothy McKeegan / Carole Batchelor / Vicki Dale
David Main / Siobhan Mullan / Annie Kerr / Federica Monte

www.bva-awf.org.uk
Animal Welfare Associated Reflective Exercise (AWARE)

1. Description of an “animal welfare related event or issue”
   - Personal experience during farm experience
   - Event e.g. cow that was not given veterinary treatment
   - Issue e.g. routine tail-docking of lambs

2. Initial reflection
   - ‘spontaneous moral reaction’ / feelings

3. Ethical reflection
   - Identify affected parties and their interests
   - Construct arguments using different ethical approaches

4. Summing up
   - Reflect on your role / opinion

Carole Batchelor

c.batchelor.1@research.gla.ac.uk
Animal Welfare Associated Reflective Exercise (AWARE)

This exercise is to be used following PCE-EMS on cattle, sheep and horse units. It aims to provide you with an enhanced learning experience from your EMS placement through encouraging you to reflect on your own practice within 2 weeks of finishing.

3. Personal Reflection

Reminder of Ethical Fact
- There are three ethical frameworks: - balances costs and benefits
- The human-centric view (thinking the view is that all humans and their needs matter and that all animals are valuable).
- The rights-based view (thinking that animals have intrinsic rights to not be exploited or harmed).
- The biocentric view (thinking that all animals are important and have intrinsic value).

Most people's views do not fall neatly into one framework, but rather into a mix of different frameworks.

Please choose up to three words below to describe your initial reaction/feelings having experienced the event/issue/eventual outcome (if applicable). Consider how you feel towards both the animal and the people involved:

ANGRY UNHEALTHY UVULUS REASONED FEDERATE BEMUSED
SHOCKED INCOMPETENT HELPFUL UNINTERESTED EIGHT CONCERNED
NERVOUS UNCOMFORTABLE HAPPY UNSURPRISED SORROW SUDDENLY
CONFUSED INSECURE CONTENTED REGRET UNHAPPY UPSET PLEASED

If none of these words appropriately describe your feelings, please add your own here:

1. ____________
2. ____________
3. ____________

If you would like to expand on your feelings please write them below:

What do you think was the situation that made you feel this way/have this reaction?

Why do you think this action was taken (include any justifications given by the person/person involved and why you thought the action was taken)?

Thinking about the action taken, did you agree with the action? (describe, justifiable as reasonable)

Yes, I would have done the same.
No, I would have taken a different action.

Was the action done and felt comfortable doing so?

Yes, I feel comfortable doing so.
No, I do not feel comfortable doing so.

Which of these ethical frameworks does your own personal view most closely resemble (if any are applicable):

Contractarian
Utilitarian
Deontologist
Hybrid

Please give reasons for your choice:

5. Round up

Was this the first time you had seen such an event/issue? Yes No

Did you share your feelings about this event/issue at the time? Yes No

If yes, with whom?

Please summarise how this placement affected you, for example, did it have any impact on your views or attitudes towards farm management practices, animal welfare or accepted ethical practice? How did it affect your actions/behaviour in the future?

Did you consider how in the future you might deal with a similar situation? Yes No

If yes, describe what you might do.
Validation of the AWARE

• Compared content of AWAREs and unstructured reflections
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Year 4: Group discussion: quality of life
Year 4: Lecture using voting system
Is this procedure .... ? : VOTE NOW

1. Acceptable
2. Not acceptable
3. Not sure

41%  42%  17%
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CPD: Evening meetings
Case example: Fracture in a kitten
Option A: internal fixation fracture repair costing £500 with a 98% success rate
Option B: splint repair costing £100 with an 85% success rate.
If you strongly believe they cannot afford option A, Do you:

1. Only offer A
2. Offer both but recommend A
3. Offer both with no clear recommendation
4. Offer both but recommend B
5. Only offer B
Ethics: recognising interests

**Owner interests:**
- Finance
- Guilt
- Companionship

**Animal interests:**
- Quality of life,
- Quantity of life

**Vet interests:**
- Profitability,
- Academic

Expensive
Teaching ethics

• What are we trying to achieve
  – Awareness & Analysis
• When to teach ?
  – Use experience
  – Make it fun & relevant !!