

## I. Overview of Issues, Ethics and Approaches

Various publications exist that cover animal protection issues in detail, and this chapter does not seek to repeat these. Instead, it sets out to provide an overview of the issues covered by animal protection societies and the various ethical and practical approaches to these – in order to establish a simple contextual framework for this manual.

### **Animal Protection Issues – a Summary**

The potential scope of animal protection work is vast. However, the issues covered can be categorised into broad headings, with key issues indicated: -

#### ***Companion Animals***

Stray control work and responsible ownership including: sheltering, sanctuary, re-homing, fostering, neutering (including neuter and release schemes), veterinary care (including vaccinations and treatments) and responsible ownership education.

#### ***Farm Animals***

Campaigning for abolition (e.g. intensive farming systems) or reform (e.g. for humane slaughter methods), campaigns against companies (such as supermarkets, fast food outlets etc.), education (including consumer awareness to influence purchasing habits towards vegetarian or more humane products) and farm sanctuaries (sanctuaries for rescued farm animals).

#### ***Animal Experimentation***

Campaigning for abolition (e.g. campaign against ‘testing’ companies, cosmetic testing, testing using primates, airlines carrying research animals etc.), or reform (i.e. the ‘3 Rs’ approach, which seeks to Reduce, Refine and eventually Replace animal experimentation), education (including the promotion of ‘cruelty-free’ products that have not been tested on animals), rescue and sanctuary.

#### ***Animal in Entertainment***

Campaigning for abolition (e. g. against zoos, circuses etc.) or reform (e.g. to make horse race courses less severe (especially those with enormously high jumps that cause injuries and deaths), provide environmental enrichment for zoos etc.), rescue and sanctuary and education (including public education e.g. to avoid cruel sports or ‘entertainment’, such as bullfights, cruel acts to animals in Spanish fiestas etc.).

### ***Wildlife***

Campaigning against cruelty, killing and exploitation of wildlife (e.g. hunting, trapping, commercial utilisation etc.) and habitat destruction, rescue, rehabilitation and release into the wild or rescue and sanctuary and education (including public education to prevent human interventions detrimental to wildlife).

Some animal protection societies tackle all issues and some chose to become single-issue groups, focussing their resources on the chosen subject. Decisions on the scope of an organisations coverage and approach are fundamental, and will be covered in the chapter on ‘Strategy’.

There is an enormous amount of information available on animal protection issues. A good starting point for in-depth research is the Web Sites of international animal protection organisations. A comprehensive list is given the WAN Directory, and major organisations (and their Web Sites) are listed in the chapter ‘Is it Working Internationally?’

An excellent and comprehensive overview of issues and approaches is given in WSPA’s ‘Concepts of Animal Welfare’, an educational animal welfare resource for Veterinary Institutes.

### **Ethical Bases for Different Approaches**

Ethics are a set of moral principles or code. There are no uniform standards for ethics – they are personal to each individual, and are developed throughout our lives. They are influenced by many factors, including: -

#### ***External Factors***

Culture  
Religion  
Education  
Up-bringing

#### ***Internal Factors (Personal Traits)***

Level of compassion  
Ability to empathise  
Depth of thinking  
Strength of conscience

Ethics are important to animal protection organisations because they underpin their approach to their work. They also inform the public behaviour and beliefs upon which consensus is built that forms the basis for improved legislation.

Different ethical standpoints lead to the existence of many different viewpoints concerning man’s relationship with animals, ranging from exploitative to liberationist.

Speaking in an article, ‘Clark’s View of Animals and How They Stand’, Stephen R.L. Clark has emphasised the influence of ‘humanism’ on our moral tradition, and the effect this has had on placing animals outside our sphere of moral concern: ‘The

greatest fear of humanistic moralists until recently was that the barrier between animal and human should be broken down.'

The animal liberationists (including key proponents such as Singer and Regan) believe animals should be freed from all human exploitation, whereas animal welfarists believe that animals can be used by man providing their welfare is assured throughout. More recently, animal protectionists have sought to take the animal welfare view a step further; their aim is that animals should live lives free from *avoidable* suffering and that the different purposes for which animals are used by man should be critically and regularly evaluated.

The main approaches to animal issues can be summarised as follows: -

- Animal exploitation
- Animal use
- Animal control
- Animal welfare
- Animal rights
- Animal liberation
- Vegetarianism

*Animal exploitation* represents abuse of animals, outside the law. An example would be those involved in illegal dog fighting.

*Animal use* represents legal use of animals, such as animal experimentation, farming etc.

*Animal control* represents legal (animal population) control - for example, stray control agencies.

*Animal welfare* usually denotes the desire to prevent unnecessary animal suffering (that is, whilst not categorically opposed to the use of animals, wanting to ensure a good quality of life and humane death). Animal welfare is actually the physical and psychological well-being of an animal, and its ability to live in accordance with its natural needs (which would, in practice, be compromised by many of the situations that animal welfarists accept...).

*Animal rights* denotes the philosophical belief that animals should have rights, including the right to live their lives free of human intervention (and ultimate death at the hands of humans). Animal rightists are philosophically opposed to the use of animals by humans (although some accept 'symbiotic' relationships, such as companion animal ownership).

*Animal liberationists* are fundamentally opposed to animal use/ownership by humans, and will resort to illegal activities to release/rescue animals, because they believe that they have moral right on their side, and that existing laws are inadequate (some will also damage property, and the most radical will even risk injury/death to people and animals). The term does not have a uniform meaning internationally, leading to distinct difference of approach from animal liberation groups in different countries and continents.

**Vegetarians** - The reasons for people becoming vegetarian are numerous, but for many it is through an ethical objection to eating the flesh of dead animals and/or concern about the suffering of animals - particularly in intensive farming systems. Vegans do not consume any animal products (including eggs and milk) often this is because they believe their production is inextricably linked to farming systems involving animal suffering.

The term '**animal protectionist**' is a general one encompassing all categories of people seeking to improve the status of animals and/or protect animals from unnecessary suffering: it covers a wider span of beliefs than the category 'animal welfare' given above and embraces all the protective categories, including animal rights. It is thus a unifying generic term.

The ethical standpoint of animal protectionists is based on the belief that each individual animal has an intrinsic value, and should be respected and protected. Animals are sentient beings with biologically determined instincts, interests and natures, and can experience pain. They should, therefore, be permitted to live their lives free from avoidable suffering at the hands of humans.

### ***Difference Between Conservation and Animal Welfare***

The key difference between conservation and animal welfare is that conservation cares about species (and extinction) whereas animal welfare cares about the individual animal (and its suffering). The conservation movement has gathered momentum in the last 30+ years, whereas the animal welfare movement has been around for over 150 years. Animal protectionists believe that heightened moral awareness and empathy are needed to ensure that the importance of individual animals is not neglected in the process of conservation.

### ***Impact of Ethics on Approach***

These varying ethical positions can lead to different practical approaches to animal protection work. However, it is perfectly possible for an ethical animal rightist to have a pragmatic approach towards his/her work. For example, an abolitionist working on animal experimentation issues may take a tactical decision to press for university courses to permit 'conscientious objectors' to opt out of animal experiments (in favour of 'alternatives' as an interim achievement goal, rather than pressing for all experiments in higher education to be banned outright. The end goal remains the same, but is broken down into interim achievement steps for tactical reasons. Many animal rightists recognise the need for incremental changes along the path of final acceptance of their goals. However others can only bring themselves to fight from an abolitionist standpoint. Thus, whilst approach is influenced by ethical standpoints, these are not always the only or predominant factor in this regard.

***Radical Pragmatism***

A good example of 'radical pragmatism' is the fast food chain programme of PETA, USA, (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals). PETA is well known for its hard-hitting campaigns, including those against famous fast food chains, such as MacDonald's and KFC. It campaigned against these massive corporate interests for many years – exposing and attacking. Then the corporate doors opened in surrender, and PETA crossed the line to negotiate with their former 'enemies'. Many purist animal rights' groups attacked this move to negotiate, but PETA's pragmatic approach probably caused the fast food giants to raise their standards significantly. Their uncharacteristic engagement definitely won for the animals.

**Practical Differences of Approach**

There are three main categories of animal protection activity: -

**➤ *Service Delivery***

The largest and most prominent animal protection societies, including the SPCAs, are those that provide animal protection services. Such services include: stray control, euthanasia, sheltering, fostering, re-homing, veterinary care for animals of the disadvantaged, disaster relief/rescue, inspection and enforcement, and training, instruction and advice on animal protection issues (in particular to the authorities).

**➤ *Campaigning***

Animal protection organisations campaign to improve the status and welfare of animals. They are the movement's 'engine for social change', and have already won some groundbreaking changes for animals.

**➤ *Education***

Humane education is carried out to sensitise individuals to the plight of animals, generating empathy and thus improved treatment of animals. It is carried out at all levels of society, particularly in schools, higher education and in respect of supporters and consumers. The process of 'changing hearts and minds' is a long-term investment that changes both the practical treatment of animals and the social climate in favour of change.

These are broad categories that could be further broken down. However, they suffice to indicate the broad roles that animal protection societies fulfil. Some animal protection societies, for example, point to another function – that of 'practical projects'. But when analysed such projects tend to fall into either the service delivery or educational categories. It is useful to recognise the distinction. Some organisations separate their educational function from their vocational training packages (for example, stray control programmes), whereas these are in fact related. Many of the 'practical projects' of international animal protection societies are actually educational in nature (as they seek to train and establish programmes, rather than to run these in perpetuity). The provision of educational materials and training can form an effective and invaluable part of international support.

Service delivery organisations often seek to redress the shortcomings and failures of government. Whilst a campaigning organisation would most likely take the path of exposing the government's shortcomings and demanding a satisfactory official solution, the service delivery organisation takes the decision to meet the need itself. The most appropriate strategy will depend on a number of factors including the country's level of support and acceptance of animal protection activity, its susceptibility to campaigning (and the underlying ability to campaign due to factors such as media, legal situation, police policy etc.), its resources and the abilities and resources of the animal protection society.

### ***Stray Control Example***

Some animal protection societies decide to take on a service delivery role in desperation when the authorities repeatedly fail to act and they are faced with endless animal suffering as a result. A prime example of this is stray control. In many countries, government stray control systems are still primitive 'catch and kill' systems. Many dogcatchers are inhumane and brutal and unconcerned as to whether they are catching strays and/or loved companion animals. Killing methods are frequently inhumane. In this situation, even poorly resourced animal protection societies can be tempted to take over the stray control duties. They attempt to do this in a number of ways – neuter and release, humane catching, sheltering and/or fostering, with or without humane killing, and re-homing. Some receive government acceptance (many will be pleased to abdicate responsibility for this controversial duty) and/or funding, but others struggle on against official opposition – attempting to compete with the existing official system. Many result in disaster – bankruptcies, mental breakdowns, overcrowded shelters, authorities killing neutered and vaccinated animals etc. Others are successful, and this can also have mixed consequences. Some governments become apathetic, assuming they can leave stray control duties to animal protection societies. Others learn by the example, and begin to improve their own stray control systems.

Much reflection is needed before a service delivery role is adopted. Many of the services taken over by animal protection societies are, in fact, a government responsibility. It is broadly agreed that an optimum solution would be for the authorities to have their own humane and effective animal protection structures and systems – including animal welfare officers (whose duties include not only animal control but also education), strong legislation and effective and proactive inspection and enforcement, disaster relief including animal victims etc. This would leave animal protection societies to focus their resources on monitoring, investigating and exposing any shortcomings, rather than suffering the whole burden (and often cost) of enforcement. Even when this utopia is not feasible, these duties should be recognised and confirmed as the responsibility of governments and any animal protection service delivery fully compensated by government. Using voluntary sector funding to pay for this is tantamount to hidden taxation.

Some animal protection societies have long-standing service delivery roles, adopted in times when governments were unwilling or unable to take responsibility for these. These should also be reviewed in the light of current conditions, and relevant governments confronted. At the very least, government contributions should be

forthcoming. Prime examples are SPCAs in ‘developed’ countries who carry out a significant proportion of national animal protection legislation enforcement. Where animal protection legislation exists, its enforcement is clearly a government obligation, and should be financed by government.

Service delivery organisations need to be professional and effective. They must be scrupulous about recruitment, training and staff standards (paying market rates and dismissing those who do not make the grade). They tend to be more tightly managed organisations, and suffer the bureaucracy that accompanies this.

There can be distinct animal protection advantages in animal protection societies carrying out service delivery activities, as they are likely to pay greater attention to animal welfare aspects. Thus, providing government responsibility is acknowledged and satisfactory financial recompense given, this can be an effective solution to service provision.

One good example of effective service provision is the work of Wood Green Animal Shelters in the UK. Wood Green recruits, trains and equips (including specially designed vehicles) first class animal welfare officers (stray control), who are then leased out to local authorities. They also hold full animal welfare officer’ training courses which they make available – at commercial rates - to local authority staff, as well as their own animal welfare officers.

More usual is a local authority financing a local animal shelter to undertake stray control activities for its area.

There can be considerable tension when a single organisation attempts to be both a service deliverer and a campaigning organisation. The most effective campaigns organisations tend to be led, rather than managed. They are based on a cause, often inspired and fuelled by a charismatic leader. Their administration needs to be effective – meetings, research, literature, events etc. – but this is very much subordinate. Bureaucracy needs to be kept to a minimum for creativity and inspiration to thrive. The society is more of a movement than an organisation and attracts the ‘mission driven’. In short, it requires different structures, systems, conditions and staff from a service provider.

There is also potential conflict between the close relationship a service provider has with government and the role of a campaigning organisation to ‘shame and expose’ government’ shortcomings. This often leads to situations where an organisation that is both a service provider and a campaigns organisation voluntarily ‘holds back’ from the effective combative cut and thrust of campaigning. The service provision relationship has neutralised the organisation.

The combination of service delivery and campaigning can work, but it is a difficult tightrope to walk. Des Wilson, former Director of Shelter has said that a campaigning organisation has a moral responsibility to put its expertise into practice and pass it on to others and the public. He said: “What I loved about Shelter was the moral combination of daily helping families and campaigning. It was a wonderful healthy

balance.’ Similarly, Gene Bauston of the USA’s Farm Sanctuary pointed to the benefits of in-depth understanding of farm animal husbandry when lobbying the government – through keeping different species of farm animals in optimum conditions, he could speak from a position of authority with government and industry.

Also, there is doubtless a time when a service delivery organisation becomes almost an institution, and then it is in a position of strength and authority from which to campaign. The UK’s RSPCA was considered ‘soft’ on campaigning for many years, but has now taken a stronger line to great effect.

Many animal protection AGMs (Annual General Meetings) have witnessed the concealed debate between service delivery and campaigning. The plea to bring a single animal back from a holiday destination, at exorbitant cost, made by a passionate member who when refused berates the organisation for turning its back on its mission to care for the individual animal. The professional chair responding in terms of value for money and the benefits of tackling the problem at source – for example by using their international network to campaign for neutering schemes and support for local animal protection societies.

Another organisational consideration as to whether to combine service delivery with campaigning is the benefit of ‘sticking to the knitting’ (Tom Peters) – that is concentrating resources on one approach rather than setting up two different sections of the organisation. How much simpler and resource-efficient to select a simple path and excel at this? Indeed, this may be a necessity for many small and medium sized organisations.

As regards humane education work, although not undertaken by all animal protection organisations, it is generally recognised as the bedrock for all other animal protection functions. It is the investment in the future, the long-term hope. It is a useful support to both service delivery (stray control work, for example, has a large educational component) and campaigning. The only conflict could be that a strong campaigning organisation often has its educational motives and materials viewed with scepticism – however balanced these are.

Disaster relief work is carried out by a number of large national and international animal protection organisations. If it is carried out in a practical, rescue manner, it is service delivery. If an assessment and/or investigation is carried out, followed campaigning for governmental and intergovernmental action, then a campaigning approach has been adopted. Governmental and intergovernmental organisations carry out disaster relief for human victims, so surely the time is overdue when this should include animal victims? Disaster relief work is always a good fundraiser for animal protection societies – the disaster is likely to have high media interest, and animal lovers are placated to see ‘somebody’ helping the affected animal victims. But in terms of long-term, sustainable impact how much more effective it would be to channel this public concern towards campaigning objectives?



## **Movement for Social Change**

*-A movement whose 'time has come'?*

Another vast difference in perception is in terms of the animal protection movement itself. Some organisations and individuals view this as simply a compassionate welfare activity, whereas others view it as a real movement for social change: they see the underlying injustice in the way that current systems treat our fellow animals and burn with the desire to see the situation righted, not just 'sticking plaster' solutions applied to the existing flawed, unjust and cruel system.

In reality, the animal protection movement is quite clearly one of the great movements for social change, although it has taken a relatively long time to 'come of age', and is in different stages of development in different countries. It is interesting to note that many individuals who championed causes of human welfare also campaigned against cruelty to animals (for example, William Wilberforce and others who campaigned to abolish slavery; great Victorian reformers such as Lord Shaftesbury, Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill; black spokesmen such as Toussaint L'Overture of Haiti; and even Abraham Lincoln). The principle of justice and compassion are indivisible.

Our ethical foundations (especially in the West) have evolved as a human-biased morality, but the past 30+ years have brought a significant change. Both the animal rights and the Green movements have shifted the focus of attention to include the non-human world.

This perspective is, in fact, not at all new. The ancient, yet living traditions of Native Indians and Aborigines show a reverence and understanding for the natural world, which combines a respect for the sustainability of the environment with a care for the individual animal.

Thankfully, as with many fields of moral concern, the ethics of animal protection are following an evolutionary trend, and the current climate is one in which the status and well being of animals is attracting well-deserved attention even though "exploitation of them has become ingrained into our institutions"(Midgely). The current climate, though, is one in which leading philosophers and religious figures actively debate and write about various viewpoints on animal welfare; the media frequently highlights welfare issues; governments throughout Europe and beyond feel growing pressure from their concerned electorates in respect of animal welfare issues; consequently, parliaments (including the European Parliament) debate and legislate on animal welfare and respected fora such as the International Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the Council of Europe (the bastion of human rights in Europe) prepare standards, conventions and recommendations covering the protection of animals in different situations. Even organisations such as the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations and the World Bank, with vastly different priorities are considering their policies on animal protection matters, and how to integrate these concerns into their work.

***The tide is turning, and the flow cannot be held back. It is vital that animal protection societies around the world take advantage of this momentum and unite to fight for the necessary social change for animals.***

You may delay, but time will not.  
*Benjamin Franklin*