

around humans to guard them from the sometimes over-invasive interests of society as a whole. This, of course, leads on to the problem of whether or not animals have rights and to what Rollin believes is a fundamental question in veterinary ethics: does the veterinary surgeon have prior obligation to the animal or its owner?

Rollin suggests that in tackling veterinary ethical problems, the veterinarians may find it useful to consider the interplay of five (usually separate) sets of obligations: to client, animal, profession, self and society – and that in contrasting and comparing these obligations at least partial solutions may often be found.

The 82 case histories, which range over a wide selection of the ethical dilemmas that can confront the practising veterinarian, are each presented in a standard way. The problem itself and the basic ethical question(s) are set out on a right hand page, while the professional ethicist's (ie Rollin's) considered response (judgement) is found by turning over the page. This format allows one to initially consider the problem in isolation from the written 'solution'. I found it advantageous to read the case history, make a quick gut-reaction decision, then to think about the five separate sets of obligations (mentioned above) and finally to turn the page over and read the considered opinion of the professional ethicist. The judgements have, at times, a somewhat North American flavour – with perhaps an overemphasis on animal rights – but it is still most revealing to see how the arguments go and the decisions are made. It is obvious that the reader is not always going to agree – in fact I was annoyed, at times, at the ethical stances taken, but at least I had been drawn into the ethical discussion and forced to face up to the possibility of compromise and/or agreement.

The book finishes with a bibliography of some 38 references and an index which takes in both the case histories and the extended essay on the theory of ethics. It is a pity that, at the end of the theory section, Rollin did not include a short, critically annotated list of the ethical literature which might be readily available to the field veterinarian. The 'closet moral philosopher' of the veterinary world might easily be stimulated by this book and yet not readily know where to go to advance his/her understanding. The bibliography is useful, but a critically annotated list would have been better.

In nearly every way, this book is a fine, well-written, well-argued and readily accessible introduction to the theory and practice of veterinary medical ethics. It could form the basis of a good veterinary undergraduate course and it should be in the library of every veterinary institution. More importantly, all veterinary practitioners, field workers, researchers, nurses and students should read, think about and be willing to act upon the critical issues it raises.

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Equine Behaviour: Principles and Practice

D Mills and K Nankervis (1999). Blackwell Science Ltd: Oxford. 230pp. Paperback. Obtainable from the publishers, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0EL, UK (ISBN 0632048786). Price £19.99.

The ground covered by this book meets the very broad basic needs of many undergraduate life science students. A couple of minor errors and the occasionally bewildering cartoon do not detract from an exemplary textbook that makes few assumptions regarding the reader's level of equestrian experience or training in behavioural biology. The reader is taken patiently through such core principles as taxonomy and neural transmission as well as a discussion of Lamarck versus Darwin. This elemental and thorough approach reflects the

text's embryonic origin as lecture material for students of equine science. The result is exceedingly rich in principles – but perhaps a little less packed with practical applications.

After Parts I and II ('Understanding Behaviour Concepts' and 'Mechanisms of Behaviour'), the remainder of the text deals with the flexibility of behaviour and its management. This is where the juicy stuff flows thicker and faster as the authors explain why some of the traditional stable management dogma that emerged from such hallowed establishments as Weedon's cavalry school is likely to cause equine distress. The bit and spur are correctly discussed under negative reinforcement and not labelled 'aids' (surely an approach designed to cause human confusion). The work of the 'maîtres nouveaux', Monty Roberts, Pat Parelli *et al*, is also considered – mostly using the language of learning theory. Unfortunately, the jargon terms coined by these outstanding horsemen have not been replaced completely by more accessible, not to say accepted, labels.

The inclusion of discussion prompts (or were they examination questions?) at the end of each chapter is innovative and welcome. Indeed, it is a tribute to the authors that this 'tempting topics' technique leaves the reader wishing that the issues they underscored were not left unaddressed but instead formed more of the main text. It is a case of the old 'more questions than answers' phenomenon. With a chapter devoted to welfare, the book nonetheless sets the stage for creative innovations in our approach to horse management. The publication, perhaps via an equine behaviour forum website, of choice students' responses to the discussion prompts would foster more communication, coordination and coherence (see the chapter on learning) by horse owners.

For me, the implications of this book for horse welfare are positively correlated with the size of audience it should reach. The book would be best used as a textbook for those who genuinely wish to enhance the welfare of horses by understanding their behaviour. If assessment drives learning, then horses can only reap benefits from the data offered by Mills and Nankervis when trainee riding instructors and stable managers are examined more thoroughly in behaviour and welfare. If the British Horse Society (an example of a national equestrian governing body that has always claimed guardianship of horse welfare while largely dismissing the significance of equine behaviour) recommended this book for all those undergoing their examination system, then we might see some of the sacred cows of war-horse management finally put out to pasture.

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