

## Book Reviews

### *Mental Health and Well-Being in Animals*

Edited by FD McMillan (2005). Published by Blackwell Publishing Professional, 9600 Garsington Road, Oxford OX4 2DQ, UK. 301 pp Hardback (ISBN 081 380 4892). Price £49.50.

The preface to this volume by 21 contributing authors on *Mental Health and Well-Being in Animals*, edited by Franklin D. McMillan, is worthy of detailed consideration because it encapsulates many issues pertinent to the title of the volume, and also traces the evolution of the subject from the damaging concepts of Rene Descartes, through Charles Darwin to the modern explosion of interest, much of which is contained in this volume. The Cartesian Doctrine held that animals were mere automata, capable of complex behaviour but incapable of speech or constructive reasoning and especially of feeling pain. This refuge of thought has long since been discarded and replaced by an increasing recognition that the quality of life of an animal must be a focal point for future consideration, an issue which is now exercising the British Veterinary Profession via its Ethical Committee.

The issue of Quality of Life ranges across a wide area. In the field of human medicine the World Health Organization has produced a document, WHOQOL (Measuring Quality of Life), which defines the Quality of Life “as an individuals’ perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns. This is a broad ranging concept affected in a complex way by the person’s physical health, psychological state and social relationships...”. The medical profession’s assessment of Quality of Life encompasses decisions made by competent patients and those made by mentally disabled patients. The WHOQOL instruments emphasise the need to focus on an individual’s own views of their well-being, which may provide unappreciated perspectives on disease or infirmity. A patient’s expectation of Quality of Life, on the basis of experience and awareness, may be particularly important and may be equated with consciousness (which the Oxford Companion to Philosophy states “consciousness exists but it resists definition... but also consciousness involves experience and awareness”).

The existence of these faculties in animals (non-human animals) raises difficulties of definition. Nevertheless, from the evolutionary point of view, one generally accepts a continuity of development between all animals and man; therefore, an important question is how close to human consciousness and expectation do animals come in evolution? With the great apes it is now accepted that they have complex mental abilities similar in some important ways to those of humans, including “a sense of self and insight into their own thoughts and feelings, a developed sense of time and purpose, so that they can think about the future and reflect on the past, and an ability to empathise with the thoughts and feelings of other members of their

own species” (Boyd Group). With companion animals (eg dog, cat, horse, some rodents) it is pertinent to ask how far ‘down’ the evolutionary chain do animals lose the abilities ascribed to the great apes? Answers to some of these questions will be found in this volume.

Bernard Rollin opens the presentations with a consideration of understanding animal mentation pointing out that up to now the welfare of an animal, especially a production animal, was defined as its efficiency to produce — how well it fulfilled the human purposes to which it was put. This opening chapter is full of evidence, some anecdotal, but it is well worth the read in order to get a fresh perspective on animal mentation. It also illustrates the increasing importance of an anthropomorphic approach to some issues, if only because as yet there is no other way of getting inside the mind of an animal. This is taken further by Bekoff in Chapter 2, while Cabanac deals with the experience of pleasure in animals in Chapter 3.

In Chapter 4, Marian Dawkins deals with ‘suffering’ — a subject with an enormous range of states — and with the measurement of what animals want. She has sketched out a road map of what has been achieved to date and what faces us in future considerations. From previous experience of her writings, this chapter is well worth special attention.

Panksepp, in Chapter 5, addresses the difficult subject of neural approaches to an understanding of core emotions while in Chapter 6 Wemelsfelder deals with understanding animal boredom and the tedium of animals experiencing confined lives, in production processes as well as the well recognised boredom response in stabled horses and captive zoo animals. In Chapter 7, McMillan addresses the issues of mental well-being while Fox, in Chapter 8, explores the interrelationships between mental and physical health — the mind-body connection. Mental illness in animals is dealt with by Overall in Chapter 9, who makes a plea for precision in terminology and diagnostic criteria while in Chapters 10 and 11 Wright *et al*, and Marder and Posage deal with the treatment of emotional distress and disorders by non-pharmacological methods and pharmacological methods, respectively. An important chapter is that by McMillan (12) on emotional maltreatment in animals, an issue which may well be pertinent to the forthcoming legislation in the Animal Welfare Bill in England and Wales.

The concept of the Quality of Life is addressed by McMillan in Chapter 13 — no small task to define the subject where anthropomorphism assumes importance in reaching a sensible definition. It is a concept beyond welfare and this chapter is one that must be read — possibly it is the most important in the book.

Empowering animals by Markowitz and Eckert, Chapter 14, anticipates future possibilities of animals, possibly aided by computer technology, and this reviewer is of the strong belief that before long we will be communicating with animals in a meaningful manner. Indeed, many owners of

companion animals have no doubt that this is a fact at present. The psychological well-being in animals is particularly addressed by Hetts *et al* and is particularly relevant to caregivers and veterinarians (Chapter 15) and McMillan again asks whether animals experience true happiness (Chapter 16). One needs to read this chapter to learn what is true happiness; in an end-note McMillan states “It is worth noting that, at present, no consensus exists as to how, or even if, happiness differs from *quality of life* in humans. This issue has not been addressed in animals”. In Chapter 17, Rollin takes up a philosophical view on this, again a chapter for essential reading.

The last few chapters deal with specific groups of animals: Grandin on the mental well-being of farm animals, how they think and feel (Chapter 18), while King and Rowan assess the mental health of laboratory animals (Chapter 19) pertinent, of course, to the validity of experimental work as clearly expressed by Markowitz and Timmel (Chapter 20).

The final chapter by Seibert (21) is on mental health issues in captive birds, some only a few generations from the wild. The range of species is remarkable, for example the family Psittacidae contains 280 species of parrots, macaws etc. An understanding of the native behaviour is obviously important because many have an ancestry of flock-living but end up in isolation.

This book is the first of its kind to bring together the numerous facets of physiology, behaviour and sentience. It is only with a deeper understanding of the many facets of these that a sensible approach to animal welfare can be made. It is a book well worth having both for ones personal bookshelf and certainly in the libraries of zoology departments and veterinary schools. To veterinarians it will be particularly valuable because they have the privilege of assessing the quality of life expectancy of a patient and if it fails to measure up to what is at present an arbitrary standard of assessment of the quality of life the veterinarian can advise euthanasia. It is increasingly believed that veterinarians in practice are rejecting euthanasia as an option, either because it is a challenge to modern medicine to explore the medical and surgical options available or because euthanasia is viewed as a sign of failure. In such cases it would be helpful to have a set of benchmarks, the majority having to be met before euthanasia is performed; this book will assist in providing guidance toward those guidelines.

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### ***In Defense of Animals: The Second Wave***

Edited by P Singer (2005). Published by Blackwell Publishing, 9600 Garsington Road, Oxford OX4 2DQ, UK. 264 pp Paperback (ISBN 1405119411) Price £9.99.

On the cover of *In Defense of Animals: The Second Wave*, the publisher states that “it brings together the best current ethical thinking about animals”. Edited by Peter Singer, who made ‘speciesism’ an international issue in 1975 when he published *Animal Liberation*, this new book presents the state of the animal movement that his classic work helped to

inspire. More prosaically, this book consists of a collection of essays by 20 authors on the general subject of animal liberation. Two things this book is *not*: it is not a book by Peter Singer and it is not a book about animals.

The essays are grouped according to three themes: ‘Ideas’, ‘Problems’ and ‘Activists and their strategies’. Four of the five chapters in Section 1, on ‘Ideas’, have been written by philosophers; the exception is one entitled *The scientific basis for assessing suffering in animals*, written with the rational and compassionate excellence we have come to expect from Marian Dawkins. Unfortunately, it tells us no more than we have come to expect because it has been reproduced exactly from the previous book with this title published in 1985. Therefore, although it can introduce new readers to the scientific analysis of animal behaviour and motivation, there is no review — here or elsewhere — of the tremendous progress that has been achieved over the last 20 years in our study and understanding of animal suffering and the motivational basis of behaviour.

The other chapters on the philosophical and religious foundations that have governed our treatment of the non-human animals follow the conventions of most philosophical treatises since the death of Socrates; that is they quote writings from other philosophers that have been selected to add weight to the point of view advocated by the author (Socrates, being first, was able to argue almost exclusively from first principles). Therefore, the usual villains (Aristotle, Descartes and the Catholic Church) and heroes (Bentham, Buddhism and Schopenhauer) duly make their appearance. The most novel chapter in this section is that by David DeGrazia entitled *On the question of personhood beyond Homo sapiens*. This develops the original Singer argument to consider what it takes for an animal to become a ‘person’. DeGrazia reviews the extent to which this might require complex forms of consciousness, rational self-awareness, virtuous behaviour and ‘freedom of the will’. He is careful to avoid simplistic definitions and concludes (I think) that only sentient humans fully qualify as persons, but that primates and dolphins class as ‘borderline persons’. However, DeGrazia concludes, in common with Bentham, that “even if personhood proves to have some moral significance, sentience is far more fundamental and important”.

Section 2, on ‘Problems’, is made up of five chapters that deal with specific cases of man’s exploitation of animals and the suffering that may ensue. Richard Ryder presents a brief and constructive review of ‘vivisection’, or, more accurately, the suffering that may be inflicted on animals used for scientific procedures. He selects some of the worst examples of pointless abuse, where the suffering (of the animals) has been severe and the benefits (to us) negligible. However, he also draws attention to the considerable progress that has been achieved (particularly in the UK) through legislation, and through intelligent and compassionate application of the Three Rs: *Replacement*, *Reduction* and *Refinement*. Two chapters have been commissioned on farm animal welfare: the chapter dealing with farm animals in the USA is little more than an outpouring of grief and horror — arousing but