

It is perhaps a pity that more was not made of the difference, at the practical level, between stress, overstress and distress. In the reviewer's opinion there is a need to distinguish between these terms. All animals while alive are subject to stressors and show stress responses. As Selye stated in his 1974 book *Stress Without Distress* 'Complete freedom from stress is death'. The UK legislation makes it an offence, in general terms, to cause unnecessary pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm. It would have been helpful for field workers to have had further discussions in the text re realistic working definitions of overstress and distress.

This criticism is perhaps a little undeserved as the book does not pretend to be a practically orientated text, although there is a substantial section entitled 'Ethology Pure and Applied – Issues of Animal Welfare'. Nor does the book attempt to cover all aspects of stress: it concentrates, as the subtitle suggests, on the underlying concepts and biological mechanisms. These areas are covered superbly.

This is an excellent book which should be widely read and thought about by all scientists interested in the general area of stress, and more particularly by those applied scientists having to grapple with the welfare aspects of man's use and misuse of animals.

**Reference**

Selye H 1974 *Stress Without Distress*. J B Lippincott Co: Philadelphia, USA

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***After the Ark: Religious Understandings of Ourselves and Other Animals***

Martin Palmer and Elizabeth Breuilly (1996). Forbes Publications: London. 96pp. Paperback. Obtainable from Compassion in World Farming Trust (CIWFT), Charles House, 5A Charles Street, Petersfield, Hampshire GU32 3EH, UK (ISBN 1 899527 03 6). Price £8.95.

This book was commissioned by Compassion in World Farming Trust, and is essentially a teaching and learning manual for use in secondary schools, or indeed for any youth group wishing, or needing, to study and get engaged in the issues surrounding the welfare of animals.

I found it a challenging and perceptive publication and, despite some uncomfortable reservations concerning the selectivity of some of the information, I think that teachers in Religious Education and allied disciplines within schools, youth clubs or church, will find it a very useful resource.

Its style, for the most part, is refreshingly open and questioning and, as it states in the introduction, it 'encourages both students and teachers to think, to discuss, to disagree, and to decide for themselves'. Nearly every chapter begins with a series of questions, for example 'God only knows – does he?', 'Are we the most important part of the Universe?', 'Do all animals deserve the same?', 'Where do these rights come from?' These are usually then followed by some background information derived from a variety of selected religious and other texts and supported by challenging stories or poems. Most chapters conclude with a series of suggested and imaginative activities for the class, group or individual. It seems to me to be all very clear and interesting and, as an example for educational method, I cannot fault it.

The whole book challenges one to think very seriously about how and why we treat and use animals in the way we do. It starts at the beginning with Creation, and moves on to consider the bases of our relationship with animals. The reference points are widely drawn, although I was concerned about the almost complete absence of New Testament, and therefore specifically Christian texts, if for no other reason than to balance the many Old Testament texts that are quoted and also those drawn from Hindu, Islamic and Buddhist writers. Whilst I recognize that the historical track record of much so-called Christian thinking and practice in relation to animals has been quite dreadful and misinformed, I cannot help but think that the model of, for example, the Good Shepherd required reference and attention; in fact sheep barely get a mention in the book!

What also concerned me as I read on, and particularly when I got to the chapters on 'Farming information' and 'Action', was the feeling that I was almost deceptively being drawn into a position and stance which had already been set, the feeling that there was after all a hidden agenda, and that all the openness and freedom of debate, so clearly promoted in the early chapters, gradually got lost.

The authors in the chapter 'Farming information', are right to highlight many of the husbandry practices which are, or have been, unacceptable to the welfare of farm animals, and our sensitivities need to be continually sharpened and alerted by such reminders. But for me this chapter fails to promote a proper balanced debate by painting a far too bleak picture of farming and husbandry in general, and is quite unfair to the majority of farmers and veterinarians who are themselves so much concerned about the welfare of the livestock in their charge. I think that this was a mistake for it feels quite out of keeping with the rest of the book. Perhaps the problem is with the title 'Farming information', for to me that suggests just facts, whereas actually there are a lot of opinions inferred and conclusions drawn, which if one is not careful read as facts. The previous chapters set out to separate the two, this one patently doesn't. For example, the notion of what is 'natural' appears as an accepted 'norm' or 'fact' and is used to underpin many of the assessments of farming practices. Whilst what is 'natural' may be a useful starting point for welfare considerations it merely remains a matter for debate. The apparent absence of veterinary input in this chapter is noticeable, and I note that no veterinary professional body is included in 'Useful addresses'!

My concerns are reinforced in the next chapter 'Action', where no guidance is given to teachers and students to spend time on farms and with farmers and farm animal veterinarians. Time spent in this way would seem to me to have considerable educational merit and should precede taking some of the actions proposed.

Happily, the balance of the book is restored in the final chapter, which gives ideas and suggestions for use in assemblies. I sincerely hope that these are taken up, not only in school assemblies but wherever youngsters, and for that matter adults, can be influenced to make sure that animals are treated with proper care and attention.

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