

## Book Reviews

### **Bearing Witness: Ruth Harrison and British Farm Animal Welfare (1920–2000)**

C Kirchhelle (2021). Published by Palgrave Macmillan, Crinan Street, London N1 9XW, UK. 297 pages Hardback (ISBN: 978-3030627911). Price £29.93, (Kindle Edition free of charge).

*Bearing Witness* is a landmark work in our understanding not only of Ruth Harrison, but a century of debate about animal welfare and animal welfare science.

The book is marketed as a biography of Ruth Harrison and the many political, scientific, and public organisations involved in the struggle over animal welfare issues in the 20th Century. Although this is a true description, the book is also very much a biography covering the birth and the development of the very concept of scientific animal welfare in the English-speaking world. Animal welfare scientists today rarely realise that the fundamental concept of our endeavours is a rather young and disputed concept. But to understand what we do in animal welfare science is very much dependent upon understanding the key concepts that we work with, and here Kirchhelle's book is a veritable treasure trove.

The first part of the book is a highly interesting investigation of the social and family backgrounds that shaped Ruth Harrison into the woman who wrote *Animal Machines*. Kirchhelle shows how this famous book was by no means a random stroke of literature. On the contrary, it becomes clear how *Animal Machines* and the fight for animal welfare and rights was born out of already existing ideological underpinnings, such as Quakerism, socialism, pacifism, vegetarianism, and even *avant garde* art. Thus, Kirchhelle expertly uses the case of Ruth Harrison to show the connectedness of social thinking and societal changes on many levels during the first and early second part of the 20th Century. Ruth Harrison did not, as Kirchhelle phrases it, “emerge by chance.” Especially interesting, and new to me, was the Winstens (Harrison's parents) relationship to progressive thinkers such as George Bernard Shaw and the early animal rights proponent, Henry Salt.

Sometime around 1960 the Crusade Against all Cruelty to Animals pushed a leaflet through Harrison's letterbox. The subject was the many evils of intensive animal farming and the leaflet included images of calves in veal crates. Although she was not moved toward writing immediately, the subject matter would not leave Harrison and, by 1961, she was actively carrying out research for a text illuminating the animal welfare problems in the current animal industry. The timing was not bad as the post-war animal science scene was seeing an increasing break with the positivism and behaviourism of the early parts of the century. Ethology and ethologists were gaining traction, and organisations such as UFAW were actively working to show how proper science and acceptance of and indeed respect for animals' welfare were not at odds with each other. Kirchhelle's description of Harrison's work to prepare her

text shows how *Animal Machines* was, in many ways, a type of meta-study. It was obviously a text written for the general public but drawing upon many scientific sources such as Cambridge veterinary researcher, David Sainsbury's research, naturalist, Roy Bedichek's work on boredom in battery hens, ethologist, William Homan Thorpe's work on animal cognition and, of course, UFAW research. There was, however, one other important inspiration that Harrison drew upon. While she was researching for and writing *Animal Machines* in the UK, Rachel Carson published her seminal work on environmentalism, *Silent Spring* (1962), in the US. Harrison was both inspired by the overlap between the two womens' subject areas and the impact that *Silent Spring* had on the public discourse on environmental protection — an impact that Harrison very much desired for her own book. As perhaps one of the clearest examples of Harrison's talent for public relations work, she convinced Carson to write the foreword for *Animal Machines*. It is difficult to underestimate the importance of this in reaching out to as wide an audience as possible. As Kirchhelle writes “[s]ecuring a foreword by Rachel Carson — whose name appeared more prominently on the cover of *Animal Machines* than Harrison's [...] was a major publicity coup.”

In parts III and IV of the book, Kirchhelle focuses on the impact of the book on both public discourse and, through Harrison's continued activism, on politics and farming policy and regulations. As the rest of the book, this is an extremely fluid combination of a Ruth Harrison personal biography and a related description of the organisational and political landscape of farm animal welfare in the 1960s and 1970s. Indeed, it is one strength of the book in general and of parts III and IV specifically that we are presented with the workings and interrelations between (among many others) the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (and council), British Veterinary Association and State Veterinary Service. Similarly, Kirchhelle skilfully describes the development of animal welfare and animal rights activism during these decades, and especially the way that Ruth Harrison navigated her personal way of activism between the different animal activism organisations and government institutions. Staying, for the most part, away from tight commitments to specific organisations or institutions enabled Harrison in her focus on incremental reform on animal welfare in farming while retaining both allies and enemies on both sides of the debate.

In the last parts of the book, Kirchhelle describes how many of the scientific and policy-related matters much disputed in the early and middle parts of the century slowly develop into the mainstream. For me, as a philosopher, it is also an interesting part because it situates Harrison in relation to the development of modern animal ethics. It is, for example, clear by Kirchhelle's account that Harrison in some sense continues a commitment to a sort of middle ground. Seen by the more traditionalist parts of the RSPCA as radical, Harrison, nonetheless is viewed by the emerging animal

ethicists such as Peter Singer and the so-called Oxford Group as quite the conservative. As Kirchhelle quotes from his correspondence with Singer: “she was for slow incremental reform [...] I wanted more public campaigning, protests, encouragement of vegetarianism etc.”

Kirchhelle’s fundamental aim of this book is, as I see it, to show us how Ruth Harrison’s life and activism was a vast and multifaceted endeavour. Indeed, after reading *Bearing Witness* one can easily get the feeling, as I did, that writing *Animal Machines* was perhaps not the most important part of Harrison’s life’s work. But it might have been a necessary one.

Although *Bearing Witness* is a biography it is certainly not intended for the general but interested public. It is a fact-, science-, notation-, and interpretation-heavy piece of scholarly work on a significant level. I am currently reading a biography on the logical positivists of the Vienna Circle, and I can read that in bed just before going to sleep. *Bearing Witness* is not a book for such circumstances. Compared, however, with similar scientific works in its field it is very well written, and the narrative is engaging and makes for a genre-wise, joyful read.

I would recommend this book to all those who work on animal welfare, human-animal studies, or animal philosophy. It is a rare and comprehensive work, giving us both new and better insights into the historical, political, and conceptual background of animal welfare.

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### **Practical Canine Behaviour: For Veterinary Nurses and Technicians, Second Edition**

S Hedges (2021). Published by CABI, Nosworthy Way, Wallingford, Oxon OX10 8DE, UK. 312 pages Paperback (ISBN: 978-1789246810). Price £45.00, €52.00, US\$60.00.

A cheeky little confession: as a veterinary nurse working in academia, I bought the first edition of this book when it arrived on the market back in the mid-2010s. It then sat on my ‘must read to remain’ current pile until it became buried in more pressing ‘must reads’ which also remained unread until further buried again in more pressing documents. Such that I have a pristine copy of edition one still gleaming at me from my bookshelf, relegated to the academic shelf of perpetual self-shame and failed good intentions that is probably so familiar to us all. Thus, I was jolted back into a state of intense embarrassment by the recognition that so many years had passed that we were now onto edition two, and I knew I was now both a normal academic and also a self-failed one. I also knew beyond certainty that I must accept the invite to review and expunge this shame from my academic soul. And expunge it I have: this book was such a good read for the behaviour-focused veterinary nurse that I have read it twice — cover-to-cover!

This book is a one-stop shop in canine behaviour for the practicing veterinary nurse. It has strong credentials: the author is both an established clinical animal behaviourist and a registered veterinary nurse with many years of in-

practice experience. This dual background shows in the breadth and depth of coverage and the approach the author has taken to covering the content. This author has clearly written for a readership and market that she knows well and is comfortable interacting with.

With a clear practical focus, this book begins by giving the reader a broad understanding of the ethology of the dog, covering both ontological and phylogenetic aspects. The author then turns her attention to problem behaviour, beginning by considering the influence of physiology, health and diet on canine behaviour, before focusing on the principles of learning theory. The author then moves to problem behaviour, outlining key types of problem behaviours that may be encountered, approaches to modification of behaviour and supportive adjuncts that may be useful when doing so. The remainder of the book is very much applied canine behaviour for the veterinary nurse, and addresses both setting up the veterinary practice experience to optimise canine behavioural health, preventative behavioural advice for new owners (particularly puppy owners), and factors to consider when running puppy classes through the practice. Finally, the author covers behavioural and training problems that may arise and where the veterinary nurses’ support may be sought by owners. Handy flow charts are provided to help the veterinary nurse determine whether this is a problem that can be managed by them and when to refer (and to who). Guidance is also provided on how to resolve some of the more common training-type problems that may occur, along with control and management-type triage and behavioural first aid.

While this book was clearly written by a veterinary nurse for veterinary nurses, it would be a mistake for other readers to gloss over this book as not for them or as lacking sufficient depth to be of interest to the veterinarian. In my opinion, this book provides sufficient detail that it should be of value to the whole veterinary team. Much of the content will also be of value to other canine professionals and the keen dog owner as, while the author’s intention is to provide veterinary nurses with the confidence to behaviourally advocate for their canine charges, the approach taken to the content means that the material is easily transferrable into other contexts too.

In terms of the positives of this book, the breadth and depth of coverage is one of its key selling points. There is very little that this author hasn’t thought to include that should be included. The veterinary nurse purchasing this book will feel exceptionally well supported in developing their understanding of canine behaviour and practically applying this in a safe, effective, and responsible way. I was particularly impressed with the coverage of learning theory, in particular that the author extended this understanding to include concepts such as overshadowing and blocking, as this is a level of depth not always seen in material aimed at veterinary nurses. While it is covering fundamental and sometimes complex concepts, the author achieves this through straightforward, easy-to-understand, explanations. These are supported by visual diagrams, bullet-pointed text boxes and flow charts that quickly summarise the key points. It is a shame that these are not available as A4 print-outs via the