6th African Animal Welfare Conference

The Camel’s Nose is already Inside the Tent: Animal Welfare & Sustainable Development

by

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Talk Outline

• Animal Welfare Science: a Brief History
  • The Brambell Report (1965) – intensification prompts inquiry
  • Farmed animal welfare – 1980-2000
  • WOAH – takes on the animal welfare issue in 2002
  • University degree programs and centers (15+ in North America)

• Definition of Animal Welfare – still a major challenge

• The (Botswanan) Elephant in the Room
  • an example of animal welfare science

• The Politics of Animal Welfare

• Conclusion
Animal Welfare Science History

1964 – Ruth Harrison to the Brambell Report (1965) to FAWC
Brief Hiatus and then Farmed Animal Conference in 1981 in the Netherlands
Europe funds research into animal welfare, Canada too
USA began addressing animal welfare science in 1980s
University animal welfare centers began popping up – mainly at veterinary schools
Degree programs in animal welfare science began to appear – 1995 Edinburgh, Tufts
Academic journals appeared – e.g., Animal Welfare, Anthrozoos, J. Applied Animal Welfare Science, Society and Animals (all post 1985) – now around 20 journals
A professional group of “Animal Welfare Scientists” becomes established
Definition of Animal Welfare

➢ This is still a challenge – hard to pin down relevant (and useful) measures of animal welfare

➢ Not that different to the concept of human welfare/well-being

➢ New measures of Human Well-being rely on surveys – not easy to ask animals what they are feeling

➢ Behavioral measures are now favored (e.g., preference tests) because measures such as blood corticosteroid levels are problematic – measure level of stimulation rather than well-being itself

➢ We are getting better but current approaches leave room for disagreement as regards what is being measured and how important it might be
Botswanan “Elephant in the Room”

➢ There were two mentions of the Botswana elephant population yesterday and it prompts me to address the issue today.
➢ Human-elephant conflict is a big issue in Africa and not easily managed
➢ Botswana has a lot of elephants – estimated around 130,000
➢ Maybe 220,000 in Kavango-Zambesi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KZTCA) – around half the total estimated African population
➢ There are approximately 2.5 million people living in the KZTCA.
➢ What to do? In other places, contraception shown to be an effective alternative to culling – too many elephants in the KZTCA for the approach to be practical.
➢ Nevertheless, animal welfare science has identified useful alternatives to culling for smaller elephant populations (in hundreds/thousands?).
Elephant Fertility Control

- PZP Vaccine – “immunizes” female so eggs are not fertilized
- In seven reserves/conservancies in SA, 1200+ elephant vaccinations – only 2 failures.
- Cows continue to calve for 2 years after vaccination but none after that (intercalving interval normally around 4 years)
- Post vaccination (108 elephant cows)
  - Year 1 – 38 calves
  - Year 2 – 24 calves
  - Years 3-6 – Zero calves
- Science delivers non-lethal elephant population control
Animal Welfare Politics

- Animal welfare has been a significant and growing political concern in Europe, Australasia and North America since the 1960s.
- See, for example, recent decision by British Government to include cephalopods and decapods (crabs & lobsters) as sentient beings (no longer just vertebrates)
- China has seen an explosion of animal welfare advocacy in past twenty years. No animal protection legislation yet but likely soon.
- India (with its tradition of Ahimsa) has long been sympathetic to animal welfare concerns - still movement has grown substantially in last decade.
- In Africa, also see substantial growth – illustrated by this meeting
Conclusions

➢ Barring major global catastrophe – animal welfare is not going to go away as an issue
➢ Europe is talking about eliminating caging for farmed animals
➢ Animal welfare is a growing political issue in the Pacific rim countries
➢ Human (mis?) treatment of animals is intimately connected with many current environmental crises
➢ Morally and Politically – addressing animal welfare now rather than later will be viewed in the coming years as the best decision!