LESSON 1 INTRODUCTION

For the past 10,000 years, people all over the world have domesticated animals for various purposes. Some animals such as dogs and cats were domesticated to assist humans in hunting, rodent control and protection. Livestock animals such as cows and sheep were kept to provide products such as meat, wool or milk or even kept as working animals. In the more modern world, we now keep a variety of animals as pets for companionship and for human assistance. Humans have also created exhibitions of animals in zoos which has greatly changed over time to helping the conservation of rapidly decreasing species. No matter what the reason, animals and humans have been connected over an extended period of time.

Optimum health is essential for the wellbeing and longevity of all animals. It is the responsibility of animal owners or carers to ensure the welfare of the animals within their care are met. As part of the general care of animals, we need to be able to identify diseases. The first step in recognising diseases in animals is to understand when an animal is unwell. This generally requires a number of factors: information on the history of the animal, a physical health check, understanding the normal behaviour of the animal, observing the species and specialized testing to identify the cause of the illness.

The following information will help you to recognise some signs of ill health in animals. Identifying these signs can then lead to the most suitable method of treatment. It will guide you on ways in which prevention is greater, and ways to reduce the risks of disease or illnesses. It also provides information on animals affected by particular diseases as well as treatments available to treat particular health problems. Treatment options provided here may either be traditional or natural where available.

CONSIDERING ANIMAL ETHICS

Ethics comes from the Greek word 'ethos' meaning: custom, habit, character, moral nature. It might simply be described as the study of "how we should act and why". Animal ethics is the branch of ethics that reflects on our moral decisions as to what is acceptable and unacceptable in our utilisation of animals. There are many aspects of "animal ethics" to consider when making moral decisions including the psychology and significance of animals' minds; the moral status of animals and significance of different species; issues associated with animal products, farm animals, pets, zoos, hunting, animals for entertainment, safety testing on animals, and environmental ethics. Additional influences on our moral decisions on the use of animals also depends on what we have been taught, the viewpoints of our society or religion, customary traditions etc.

Moral Status of Animals

Humans use animals in such a large variety of ways that anyone with a conscience finds it difficult to make a self-evident decision on which uses of animals are acceptable and which are unacceptable. As a result, it is often difficult for people to deliver consistent, invariable moral views when it comes to animal ethics.

The philosophy of the moral standing of animals is complex but in simple terms it may be categorised into three generic groups: Indirect theories; direct but unequal theories and moral equality theories.

Indirect Theories

Indirect theories deny animals having moral status, or at best, the moral status of animals is deemed unequal to humans, given that they do not experience consciousness, rationality or autonomy. Under these theories, animals only remain unharmed if, by doing so, it causes harm to the morality of the person.

Direct but Unequal Theories

Direct but unequal theories give some regard to the moral status of animals based on the belief that the sentience

Suggested Tasks

What are your beliefs on animal ethics? Do you believe all animals should be treated equally?

Do you believe animals should be treated equally to humans?

Have a think about your thoughts on this, then write a list of your beliefs.

Spend no more than 10 minutes on this task.

of the animal deems it unacceptable to cause it direct harm. These theories do not offer equal moral consideration to animals and humans due to animals having the inability to respect others rights or show mutual respect; and due to their lack of "special human abilities" of self-consciousness, reason and autonomy.

Moral Equality Theories

Moral equality theories believe that animals should receive equal consideration and moral status as humans. These theories do not validate "special human abilities" as grounds for moral superiority. Furthermore, they extend their argument to consider the physiological and mental capacities of human babies and disabled people being similar to animals, thereby adding to the argument for equality.

Ethical Theory

During the last quarter of the twentieth century, people started to identify the need to pay attention to the ethics of human interaction with animals. This has led to the philosophy and development of several ethical theories in regard to animal ethics that can be useful in assisting us to make our ethical decisions. Each theory has its own basis for why we should treat animals in a particular way and its own supporting arguments to justify these acts. Although there are many different philosophies among the ethical theories, each of the widely accepted theories supports the moral consideration of animals and rejects the notion of speciesism (the assumption of human superiority over animals).

WIDELY ACCEPTED ANIMAL ETHICS THEORIES

Kantian Theory

The Kantian Theory is based on the paradigm that what is right and wrong in our treatment of animals should be thought about in terms of our rights and duties. It is based on the principle that interactions between one another involve the right for consent, and the duty to receive consent. Since animals cannot give consent, this theory adopts the notion that our interaction with animals must be in a manner where it is reasonable that the animal would consent, if they could. This means that the interaction is beneficial to both humans and animals and allows the animal to live a reasonable natural life. Under this philosophy, it is feasible to utilise animals as pets and as aids to disabled people, police, rescue workers etc. Using animals for products such as eggs, dairy products and wool is plausible if the animal can still lead a reasonably normal life. Using animals, for example, for food or scientific experimentation is unjustified in this context as it is not possible to suggest that an animal would consent to being killed for food prior to the end of its natural life, nor would it consent to enduring pain.

Virtue Theory

Under the Virtue Theory of animal ethics, acceptable and unacceptable treatment of animals is considered in terms of virtues and vices. In other

words, the most important aspect is treating animals in a way that causes us to feel good or virtuous in our morals, as opposed to making moral decisions on specific actions towards animals. This way of thinking has developed from the many virtues and vices relevant to the moral issues associated with utilising non-human animals. Accordingly, rules such as "act compassionately" and "do not act cruelly" direct appropriate human interaction with animals.

Humean Theory

The Humean Theory is derived from the philosopher and historian, David Hume. Hume theorised that animals are very similar to humans in the principles of their nature, the manner in which they learn and their ability to interpret. Based on these abilities, Hume believed that some animals exhibit rationality, or the ability to reason. It is interpreted from Hume's work that all animal species are placed across a continuum of reason and emotion, where their placement is determined by how similar and different they are from humans. The basis of the Humean theory stems from the attribution that animals can reason and feel and, accordingly, that animals deserve moral consideration and to have moral status. The greater the animal's similarity to humans, the greater the level of moral consideration they are given.

Utilitarian Theory

The most influential theory of animal ethics is the Utilitarian Theory. This theory takes into consideration that animals can perceive and feel and, as such, we must sympathise with the pain they feel. The predominant principle in this ethical approach is that all animals have the capacity to suffer at some level. This approach identifies with a sentiency criterion that the pain and suffering of animals is taken into account when making a moral decision on their treatment. Under this theory, the wellbeing of the animal should be maximised.

Rights Theory

The Rights Theory is derived from the contemporary rights theory that if someone is given a right, then, under no circumstances, can anyone inhibit them from exercising that right. In "animal ethics" terms, this theory is the basis of "animal rights" where animals have a right to not be harmed in their treatment by humans.

Capabilities Theory

The Capabilities Theory states that all animals possess characteristics and capabilities that are unique to a particular species. It expands to philosophise that those species with underdeveloped capabilities require additional support from the environment in order for them to reach the potential of their characteristics. The Capabilities Theory also incorporates an element of the Kantian Theory in that an animal's sentient should be treated as an end in itself; not as a means to an end of others. Through the combination of these two elements, the Capabilities Theory, therefore, supports the belief that humans should respect sentient animals to the end. This means that their attempts to flourish should be supported