



Module 1

Introduction to Animal Welfare

Student Activities

Questions

1. The discipline of animal welfare is made up of many different strands, including animal welfare science, ethics and law. How would you describe the difference between these three elements?

(3 marks)

- Welfare science considers the effect on the animal from the animal's point of view, i.e. it provides a framework of understanding.
- Welfare ethics considers human actions towards animals, i.e. how to apply animal welfare science.
- Welfare legislation considers how humans must treat animals, i.e. how society can enforce those decisions via the legal system.

2. a) Animal welfare is often described as being made up of three interlinked concepts – what are these?

(3 marks)

- Mental (feelings)
- Physical (fitness)
- Naturalness (*telos*)

b) Using an example of laying hens in an intensive farming system, explain how welfare could be compromised in each of the above concepts:

(3 marks)

- Naturalness (*telos*) – restricted social behaviour and/or movement, e.g. a lack of foraging opportunities
- Physical – injuries, e.g. pecking injuries from other birds
- Mental – frustration, e.g. from restricted stimulation

3. What is the difference between the quality and quantity of life in respect to animal welfare?**(2 marks)**

- Welfare concerns the quality of an animal's life and the manner of its death.
- Death affects the quantity of life that an animal has, i.e. its lifespan, but may not be a welfare concern on its own.
- Both may be the subject of ethical concern by humans.

4. Once an animal is dead, there are no longer welfare issues attached to it. However, in what circumstances could death be relevant to welfare?**(2 marks)**

- The manner of death is relevant, e.g. method of slaughter is important in terms of pain/distress.
- High death rates can indicate poor welfare conditions, e.g. poor husbandry, leading to disease and death.

5. What is critical anthropomorphism?**(2 marks: 1 mark for briefly describing anthropomorphism; 1 mark for briefly describing the limits of this type of thinking and how it can be modified for use with animal welfare)**

In the context of a discussion on animals, anthropomorphism is the attribution of human characteristics or behaviour to an animal.

Humans are a type of animal and have some very similar basic needs to other animals. However, as mentioned above, different types of animals have different behavioural needs, and need to be treated accordingly.

In trying to assess welfare, it is often a useful starting point to think about the animal's needs in terms of our own needs – i.e. putting ourselves in the animal's place and thinking about what we would need in a similar situation.

However, we must modify this according to their specific needs. Although we can use human needs as a starting point, we need to think of them in terms of the animal – does the animal also require fulfilment of these needs, or are there others that a human does not require? This concept is called critical anthropomorphism.

In-class activity

Debate

Allow 30 minutes for this activity.

In this activity students will be divided into four groups, with each group representing a different opinion on the animal welfare of a rabbit in one of three different scenarios.

Each group will have an appointed spokesperson, and the remaining group members will provide talking points to their spokesperson to be used in the debate. The discussion can be moderated by the lecturer or another nominated person.

Group 1

One rabbit is kept by a pharmaceutical company for use in laboratory experiments. It is kept indoors in highly social and stimulating conditions and is physically well looked after. It is killed humanely aged two, having undergone numerous non-invasive medical procedures.

Spokesperson 1 is the laboratory animal welfare manager for the pharmaceutical company, who believes that laboratory animals need to be kept in a high welfare state, both for the sake of the animals and for the accuracy of the experiments being performed.

Group 2

One rabbit is kept as a companion animal. The rabbit is kept alone in a small hutch, is physically well looked after, but has no access to outside space. The rabbit lives to ten years of age, when it dies of flystrike.

Spokesperson 2 is the companion animal owner, who thought of the rabbit as part of her family. She did not have a large apartment, and was reluctant to provide a partner rabbit due to associated expenses. She believes that rabbits should only be kept as companion animals, and that it is intensely cruel to keep them for other purposes.

Group 3

One rabbit lives wild in the open countryside. It has unlimited open space, lives in a highly social environment, and has access to food and water. It is inhumanely killed at three years of age by a farmer, who considers it a pest for digging up his crops.

Spokesperson 3 is the farmer who believes his crops are being destroyed by the local rabbit population. He views rabbits as pests who need to have their population controlled in whichever way he sees fit.

Group 4

One rabbit is kept by a cosmetics company for use in laboratory experiments. It is kept by itself in a small hutch. It is exposed to invasive procedures for the cosmetics industry.

Spokesperson 4 is the laboratory manager for the cosmetics company, who struggles to believe that rabbits are sentient and can feel pain. He feels that any pain or suffering caused is necessary, as the safety of humans outweighs the suffering of non-human animals.

Debate topic

Your country is embarking on the development of legislation to protect the welfare of rabbits in laboratory scenarios. You have been selected to participate in this focus group to determine public opinion.

Some suggested moderator prompts:

- In each of the scenarios, how do you think you can fairly judge the rabbit's welfare?
- Does the age at which the rabbit is killed affect its welfare?
- How much does the environment, i.e. a hutch or a laboratory, play a role in maintaining the rabbit's welfare?
- Do different scenarios call for different requirements and guidelines?