



Module 33

Animal Welfare Organisations

Lecture Notes

Slide 1:

This lecture was first developed for World Animal Protection by Dr David Main (University of Bristol) in 2003. It was revised by World Animal Protection scientific advisors in 2012 using updates provided by Dr Caroline Hewson.

Slide 2:

This module will cover the different aims, roles and activities of animal welfare organisations in terms of how they operate. We will also explore how animal welfare organisations are linked to other bodies within the veterinary profession as well as governmental organisations (GOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

First we need to gain an understanding of the animal protection movement.

Slide 3:

The animal protection movement comprises groups concerned with animal rights (including the right to life) and groups that accept the use of animals for human benefit so long as the animals have a good life and a gentle/humane death (animal welfare groups). The different animal protection philosophies are summarised in Module 12.

The activities of the animal protection movement vary – some groups concentrate on particular activities such as lobbying, direct action (rescue work), running shelters and public education. The picture shows a group demonstrating about animal protection issues in Sierra Leone.

This lecture is concerned with animal **welfare** organisations as opposed to animal rights organisations.

Slide 4:

Animal welfare organisations come in different shapes and sizes. They may be run by amateurs or professionals. Some are well-funded, with good access to diverse resources and synergistic links with other organisations, whereas others are under-resourced due to the environment they work in and may even be fully self-funded by the founder(s) of the

organisation.

The values and the focus of an organisation and the way they operate often reflect the values of the culture and society in which they are based. Organisations from countries where charitable giving is the norm, and where scientific and technological development is more advanced, generally have the ability to develop and support more wide-ranging awareness of animal welfare issues, e.g. North America, Western Europe, Australia, etc. Such organisations may be more adequately resourced (because they are positively supported by the local community), have greater access to information and knowledge (information is more easily accessible, communication and information-sharing technology are widespread) and may appear more 'professional' in their operations (more money could result in more programmes, more staff, larger offices and more equipment etc.).

Organisations in developing countries with poor socioeconomic and IT infrastructure may have to struggle for resources due to low community support and limited access to information and communication tools. In societies where people themselves struggle for their livelihood and have a poor quality of life animal welfare organisations may focus on direct action (rescues, shelters) and may have less access to scientific research concerning animal sentience, behaviour and psychological/emotional welfare needs.

Organisations may work on animal welfare at the 'individual animal' level (to improve and ensure the welfare of individual animals) or at an 'issues' level (working to address an issue or problem affecting many animals).

One good example is the issue of dog over-population, which leads to stray dogs living on the streets and local authorities using inhumane methods such as shooting to control the dog population. An organisation rescuing individual dogs, treating them for injury and finding them new homes demonstrates working at the level of the individual animal. The work they do can significantly change the lives of those individual animals, but practically it may become problematic to do this for every stray dog on the street (there may be tens of thousands). A different organisation may choose to lobby the local authorities to stop shooting/killing dogs and help them to implement a sustainable, humane dog population management strategy. The impact of the latter organisation's work, if it succeeds, may ultimately benefit tens of thousands of strays, although this may not be as immediately tangible.

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Small organisations should not be under-estimated – the examples on this slide show how effective strategising can lead to large-scale impacts from small-scale organisations.

Slide 6:

There are also large-scale animal welfare organisations that operate internationally; they will usually have offices or representatives in several countries for key strategic reasons. Most of the larger organisations are now focusing their work with a view to achieving global aims and objectives (at the 'issues' level rather than at the level of individual animal level).

These offices may employ local people to design and implement effective projects at the local level. Additionally, it is important for international organisations to work in collaboration with smaller grass-roots organisations as some projects (or certain issues in certain countries) may be more credible if they are driven by local groups with the resource support of a larger international organisation.

Even though some organisations based in different countries may share very similar names, this does not necessarily indicate that they should be seen as one entity. For example, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) in the UK, the Royal New Zealand Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RNZSPCA) and the Singapore Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Singapore SPCA) are all independent animal welfare organisations.

Examples of international animal welfare organisations include the World Society for the Protection of Animals (World Animal Protection), the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and the Humane Society International (HSI). An example of an international animal rights organisation would be People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA).

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In the following slides we will examine what these organisations do, with emphasis on how they may impact on your professional life.

Animal welfare organisations can help to inform society about animal issues in a number of ways which can build people's knowledge of the relevant information and underpin the development of informed attitudes concerning animal welfare.

The degree to which societies are aware of animal issues, including welfare, can vary between and within countries; awareness raising work can bring a particular issue to the forefront within a community. Organisations will work to increase knowledge of animal issues among the general public via the production and dissemination of animal welfare information in the form of leaflets, booklets, posters, radio broadcasts, product branding and the like.

Education differs from awareness raising in a fundamental way. Education is not just the transfer of information, but also the transfer of skills, so that the information can be applied to real scenarios and the individual is empowered to act as a result. Education can be formal (e.g. making use of the curriculum or training frameworks already in place) or informal (e.g. using participatory approaches to deliver community education programmes).

Animal welfare organisations may be involved in formal education by producing educational resources for teachers and other educators, supporting their professional development and helping them become effective animal welfare educators, and possibly lobbying the relevant authorities to include animal welfare within the formal curriculum frameworks (e.g. working to ensure animal welfare is included within the veterinary curriculum). This includes the delivery of practical training courses that help to equip people who interact or work with animals with the necessary knowledge and skills (e.g. practical animal handling courses and humane slaughter courses).

Education may also take place through informal means, for example through community education programmes that involve participatory approaches. These enable community members to analyse a situation, determine the issues involved and why they are a problem, and come up with realistic measures for their improvement.

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Some examples of the formal education that some larger organisations may provide to stakeholders of a project include those listed on the slide. As a practising vet, you may find yourself involved in such a training course at some stage in your career.

For example, in a dog population management project, local authority employees would be trained in how to humanely catch a dog, how to use the catching/trapping equipment, how to care for the animal, transport the animal, etc. Local vets may be trained in how to perform spay/neuter operations, and humane euthanasia procedures. Training of vets may take place in collaboration with local veterinary faculties and veterinary associations. Local animal welfare groups may be trained in how to work alongside the local authorities to monitor their activities, to assist where there is lack of resources, to run public awareness campaigns that promote responsible pet ownership (neutering pet dogs, not letting pets roam uncontrolled in the streets, not abandoning pet dogs) so pet dogs do not contribute to the stray population.

Another example includes working equines projects that involve training for vets in equine dentistry and farriery, as well as education and training for the owners in proper care. Training and education workshops for farmers in how to care for their livestock, as well as training vets for mass vaccination and other veterinary treatments, are also common.

Ideally, the training should lead to high standards of animal care, with the specific needs of both animals and trainees being addressed.

Slide 9:

Animal welfare organisations influence society in three main ways, each of which are intended to alter people's attitudes towards animal welfare issues:

- campaigns – targeted campaigns using the media. These campaigns aim to influence public opinion in order to achieve social, commercial or legislative goals
- lobbying – influencing policy-makers, especially in the commercial and political arenas
- direct animal protection – such as rescuing animals in response to disasters, providing shelter for abused, stray or unwanted animals, and running re-homing operations where feasible.

Slide 10:

Often animal welfare organisations have specific knowledge of certain issues that can be very useful to governments or NGOs. They may be the only source of this knowledge.

The ability to provide practical, technical and ethical input into the law-making process can have a wide influence. Veterinary professionals may be employed by the organisation in order to provide technical expertise.

Animal welfare organisations may want to be proactive by proposing legislation for the future. This will probably be most effective if lawyers or individuals with a thorough knowledge of the legal system are involved in this activity.

In addition to influencing policy-making, the commercial sector and big business all have far-reaching impacts on animal welfare. Organisations may become extremely effective at lobbying key players. For example, supermarkets, pharmaceutical and agriculture businesses have been motivated by NGOs to sign up to standards such as the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection (BUAV) 'Go Cruelty-Free' programme for cosmetics. Some then promote animal welfare by boasting about their standards to achieve a competitive advantage (e.g. Marks & Spencer in the UK).

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Some animal welfare organisations are involved in direct action to prevent suffering, including:

- receiving animals brought to a shelter by their owners, or persuading owners who are not treating their animals humanely to sign over ownership of an animal to the organisation
- caring for the animal and finding them a new home
- treating or euthanising animals who are suffering. Vets are usually employed by organisations for this, although organisations with a limited income rely on vets providing their services for free. The organisation will contact the relevant authorities in cases of inhumane treatment of animals.

Slide 12:

An animal welfare organisation can have a direct effect on the local community through welfare work. For example, the primary aim of a stray dog control programme may be to reduce the poor welfare of these dogs, but indirectly the human population will benefit from this through a reduction in zoonoses, dog bites and level of nuisance.

Some organisations provide veterinary services, often at a reduced cost, to ensure that in a community as many animals as possible are sterilised in order to control unwanted reproduction leading to puppies being abandoned.

Slide 13:

Supranational organisations such as the United Nations (UN) may have an awareness of very large-scale animal welfare problems. They may also have funding to match. For example, they may monitor the spread of diseases such as foot and mouth epidemics. They will often have a particular interest when there is a human health scare linked to animal welfare.

These organisations usually exist with resources and funds from a number of national governments. This allows projects to access the resources of national government organisations, which may already have local staff and knowledge. Many animal welfare organisations are now recognised as legitimate partners when international consultations are taking place in relation to new legislation or animal health or control measures.

Animal welfare is becoming increasingly important to international bodies including such global organisations as the World Health Organisation (WHO), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Office International des Epizooties (OIE), and also international funders such as the Gates Foundation.

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So far we have examined what animal welfare organisations look like and what they do in terms of their aims and objectives, how animal welfare organisations operate, and how they inform and influence various communities. We have also looked at how animal welfare organisations interact and engage with GOs and NGOs.

Next, we will consider how vets, the veterinary profession and animal welfare organisations work together.

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Vets can play a central role in the work of animal welfare organisations. It is important to recognise how a good working relationship between the veterinary profession and animal welfare organisations will be positive for both parties. For example, if an animal welfare organisation achieves a positive response to an education campaign about the benefits of neutering, more animals will be taken to a vet to perform the operation, so increasing the vet's income and customers. On their part, if the vet performs the surgery efficiently with minimal side-effects, this may make more owners willing to take their animals to him/her for neutering. This example shows that if there is mutual respect, good coordination and trust between the parties, they can both benefit.

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As vets you also need to be aware of the potential conflicts of interest that can exist between animal welfare organisations and vets.

Veterinary malpractice: to save costs, some animal welfare organisations may decide to carry out their own treatment on animals (those that they house and those belonging to the public), without utilising licensed vets. This type of conduct is malpractice. Some organisations may use a newly graduated vet or one who has lost his/her licence, to cut costs. This can in turn negatively impact on animal welfare.

Undercutting veterinary fees: some animal welfare organisations offer veterinary services at a much cheaper rate or free for the public, which can undercut the prices that private vets need to charge to earn a decent living and practice a good standard of veterinary medicine. Some believe that this undermines the true value of the work a vet can do.

Undermining the veterinary profession: if unqualified vets practice in an animal welfare organisation context and receive bad publicity this can have a negative impact on both the animal welfare organisation and the veterinary profession in general.

Lobbying against vets: for example, an animal welfare organisation in a country where drugs and medical items can only be sold to or used by vets may want these veterinary-controlled items or drugs to be made accessible to the public (e.g. drugs for heartworm). Vets may want them to remain as controlled items. It is important that individual animal welfare organisations and individual vets have clear positions on these types of issues and focus on working together as positively as possible.

We will now explore the ways in which vets and animal welfare organisations work together to this effect.

Slide 17:

Animal welfare organisations and the veterinary profession can work positively with each other in four main ways:

- by ensuring career opportunities related to animal welfare for vets and veterinary nurses
- by supporting advances in animal welfare in a variety of ways
- by supporting animal welfare in veterinary education and training
- by supporting the veterinary profession's reputation.

Rather than being mutually exclusive, these areas are interrelated and work synergistically. For example, when animal welfare organisations employing vets provide their veterinary education and training, the quality of veterinary work may be improved on a wide level, which therefore helps to advance animal welfare and uphold a positive reputation for the profession.

It is important to recognise that the extent to which different animal welfare organisations are able to support veterinary work may vary according to factors such as organisation size, resources (in terms of staffing and finances) and geographical region.

We will now explore each of the listed forms of support for veterinary work in more detail.

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Animal welfare organisations may work with the veterinary profession and individual vets by providing career opportunities for vets and veterinary nurses, who may work in hands-on roles with animals in the clinic, rescue shelter (e.g. in shelter medicine) or the field, or may work administratively in a managerial, educational or advisory capacity. Working in all of these roles, vets are given the opportunity to act as ambassadors for animal welfare.

Veterinary experts may provide advice on policy issues, individual animal welfare cases or projects (e.g. promoting alternatives to the use of animals in veterinary education such as simulators and models). Vets may also provide practical expertise, e.g. in neutering clinics.

Animal welfare organisations may use general veterinary research to determine policies or actions; for example, incidence of disease in animal populations. Any organisation with animals in their care (e.g. shelters, sanctuaries) will need to work closely with a vet, and often may need to employ a vet.

The backing of veterinary organisations can also give scientific weight to animal welfare campaigns. The UK organisation Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) organised a special petition for use by veterinary surgeons to add weight to its campaign to end the long-distance transport of animals throughout Europe. Veterinary and animal welfare organisations working together can create much more effective and scientifically informed animal welfare campaigns.

Essentially, by employing vets and providing diverse roles within which they can work, animal welfare organisations help to encourage the veterinary profession to safeguard animal welfare, while also ensuring that the work of the animal welfare organisation itself is as effective as possible.

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For example, the World Society for the Protection of Animals (World Animal Protection) employs more than 20 vets. They contribute to World Animal Protection's research, campaigns and education programmes and help coordinate its disaster response work. Veterinary practitioners are uniquely placed to affect the humanitarian response to animals in disasters and health scares, and welfare is an essential concern in any such operation.

World Animal Protection demonstrates how vets who work within the organisation are leading the way in animal welfare in its *Vet Files* publication (2011), which may be downloaded from the World Animal Protection website at www.wspa-international.org/Images/WSPA_Vets_Final-sml_tcm25-22189.pdf

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Animal welfare organisations and the veterinary profession can bring about advances in animal welfare by:

- raising the standards of practice. If an animal welfare organisation is practising exemplary standards in terms of sanitation, handling procedures, general care, etc., it provides healthy competition and incentive for other vet practices and professionals to do the same
- reducing veterinary malpractice; for example, allocating resources to assist with the reporting or collecting of evidence of malpractice by 'fake' vets who are practicing illegally
- making veterinary services accessible to those who are unable to access veterinary care due to geographical or economic reasons; for example, making veterinary services accessible through the provision of mobile clinics in rural areas or offering subsidised veterinary fees to those in financial difficulties
- instigating new research/technology in veterinary medicine, providing advances, for example, in terms of paediatric neutering, non-surgical sterilisation, developing new vaccine protocols, epidemiology (e.g. rabies control), and disaster preparedness. Alternatively, animal welfare organisations may provide funding for research to be conducted at veterinary schools on aspects of animal welfare such as welfare assessment, the use of analgesia, husbandry techniques and management of stray populations or veterinary attitudes towards animal welfare
- developing new veterinary specialist areas; for example, animal welfare, shelter medicine and veterinary forensics.

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International Companion Animal Management (ICAM) Coalition is an alliance of several international NGOs that work on dog and cat population management. They develop protocols and guidelines on the welfare aspects of population management in order to promote best practice.

One welfare organisation that supports a lot of veterinary research is the UK's Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW), which publishes the scientific journal *Animal Welfare*.

Animal welfare organisations may also conduct their own research. For example the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals (PDSA) is an organisation whose mission is to care for the pets of people in need by providing free veterinary services to their sick and injured animals and promoting responsible pet ownership. They have produced the PDSA Animal Wellbeing (PAW) Report - the largest survey of its kind ever conducted to assess whether the UK's pets are having their five welfare needs met (see www.pdsa.org.uk/pawreport).

The Alliance for Contraception in Cats and Dogs is a good example of an organisation that pushes for the development of new technology and research in the development of safe, non-surgical methods for controlling reproduction.

The Association of Shelter Veterinarians champions the new field of 'shelter medicine', which may become a field of veterinary specialisation in the future.

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As vets need to be knowledgeable about many animal-related subjects, individual vets or the profession as a whole can benefit from the specialist knowledge of animal welfare organisations. Animal welfare organisations may support the veterinary profession and individual vets through:

- **Animal welfare education.** For example, this World Animal Protection *Concepts in Animal Welfare* syllabus was first created in collaboration with the University of Bristol Veterinary School in 2003 and disseminated to over 450 veterinary and animal science faculties around the world in order help provide a basis for animal welfare to be included in course curricula. Educating vets in animal welfare is an essential first step in equipping them to become welfare educators amongst their peers and society as a whole.
- **Encouraging and supporting engagement with animal welfare research.** For example, UFAW offers a 'University Links' programme to connect universities that teach and do research on animal welfare, including many vet schools. This programme offers small grants to help students hold conferences about animal welfare locally (see www.ufaw.org.uk/links-news-events.php for more information).
- **Providing training.** This may be to help support the development of veterinary knowledge and skills in surgery, internal and preventative medicine, or animal behaviour/training/handling.

Slide 23:

The examples of community-based training given on the slide show animal welfare organisations working with local and national governments, professional bodies, veterinarians and other NGOs.

Slide 24:

Vets and animal welfare organisations can work together to promote the wider reputation of the veterinary profession by:

- building awareness and respect for the veterinary and veterinary nursing professions. If veterinary services are offered to those who have never had access to veterinary care for financial or other reasons, this can help to foster appreciation for the importance and value of veterinary services and the profession in general
- positioning the veterinary profession and vets as the 'go to' professionals for animal welfare.

Animal welfare organisations can also promote the veterinary profession through their campaigns, and vets working for animal welfare organisations may help with campaigning and trying to influence veterinary attitudes and procedures. For example, vets who work for

animal welfare organisations can champion welfare-focused positions on animal use and management issues, e.g. the early neutering of cats/dogs, amongst their peers and to society as a whole.

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For example, as a veterinary animal welfare organisation, the PDSA (discussed previously) often takes the lead in providing position statements on various animal welfare issues and, by doing this, places the veterinary profession at the forefront of championing improvements in animal welfare.

Vets Beyond Borders is an Australian organisation that helps to promote the reputation of the veterinary profession internationally by providing veterinary training in India and China and welfare education for vets, which also helps to raise veterinary standards. Qualified vets from a number of developed countries are supported to provide training to local vets in developing countries and also train government vets and department officials on epidemiology (rabies) and humane dog population projects.

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To conclude, we have explored the following:

- how animal welfare organisations may have different aims, roles and ways of operating
- how animal welfare organisations deliver on their objectives and may work with GOs and NGOs
- the central role of vets and the veterinary profession to the work of animal welfare organisations and how positive links between them can be mutually beneficial and promote better animal welfare.