



## Module 4

# Introduction to Animal Welfare Ethics

## 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:

We will start by looking at what people mean when they talk about 'ethics' in everyday life and conversation.

We will also address the common criticisms that ethics are 'just subjective' or 'just preferences'.

We will then focus on common ethical theories that have been applied to the question of how we ought to relate to animals.

### Slide 3:

In Module 1 of this course, we noted that animal welfare concerns how sentient animals experience their lives in terms of their physical functioning, mental state/feelings and natural behaviours. To understand these three aspects requires science – hence animal welfare science.

We also noted that animals' experience of their lives is affected by our values – how we think we should treat animals, and what we think is important for them. Science helps us to understand some of these issues. Ethical theory, then, provides a logical framework by which to weigh up that knowledge with knowledge of other important factors such as the need to earn a living by farming, or to clear land and build houses. Using that framework, we can decide how we should treat animals.

Today's lecture introduces you to the most common theories about how we should treat animals so that you can begin to understand the underlying reasons why people may disagree about this issue.

## Slide 4:

Before we investigate ethics and philosophy and how they relate to animals, we should review what is known about animal sentience.

'Sentience' is the capacity to have feelings and to experience suffering and pleasure. It implies a level of conscious awareness.

Animal sentience is the fact that animals can feel pain and suffer but also experience many positive emotions, such as joy and pleasure.

Animal sentience is recognised in legislation around the world (e.g. the Lisbon treaty).

Studies have shown many animals can experience complex emotions which are often thought to be unique to humans, such as grief and empathy.

The acceptance of animal sentience is based on decades of scientific evidence from the fields of neuroscience, behavioural sciences and cognitive ethology.

## Slide 5:

When we think about ethics in everyday life we start by considering that many of the decisions we make all the time have moral dimensions.

That is, they have components which extend beyond self-interest and involve concern for others. In particular, we are concerned that our actions may make others worse off – i.e. they may be harmed or deprived.

Because of this concern we all have views about which actions are 'right' and which actions are 'wrong'. These views are our 'moral values'.

Often the ethical part of everyday decisions remains hidden because it is part of a routine or forms part of widely accepted practice. However, when we examine our decisions and the moral values behind them, we find that our values are influenced by societal norms, professional ethics, personal ethics, and – if we have studied ethics – ethical theory. We will now discuss each of these in turn.

- **Societal norms** are a social ethic: they are rules that have emerged to enable us to live together. Social ethics may evolve and change as new factual information is gained or collective preferences develop in line with increasing or decreasing prosperity. For example, in many countries there is an emerging social consensus that animals need formal protection and consideration because they are sentient. This has led, in turn, to stunning becoming permissible at slaughter for halal meat in some countries, and forced moulting of hens being illegal in several countries.
- Next, as vets, our views of right and wrong in regard to animals may also be influenced by **professional ethics**. Those guidelines vary from country to country. They may evolve with social ethics, or they may be a response to it, or sometimes they lead it. For example, cosmetic surgeries in dogs and cats are permitted by some veterinary jurisdictions and are widely accepted within the social ethic too. In other countries, the social ethic may be

ambivalent on the subject, but the veterinary regulations are that performing those surgeries are grounds for censure and, possibly, losing your licence to practice.

- Our **personal ethics** also affect our views of what is right and wrong. Our personal ethics develop from our personal experiences. For example, you may visit a variety of dairy farming systems ranging from extensive farms with small herds, to large-scale, intensive production systems, causing you to have a personal preference for the more traditional, extensive system. These experiences and your associated feelings may result in a change in your behaviour – therefore, your personal ethics may lead you to vote for a change in farming methods.
- If you also subscribe to an **ethical theory** – about virtuous behaviour, for example – you might also buy dairy products from extensive, free-range farm systems (if they are available), even if they are more expensive, and regardless of whether that will have an impact on those dairy cows who remain in intensive systems. (Please note that this is only an example, not a suggestion. We will see in a moment that none of the ethical theories is absolute.)

### Slide 6:

Our moral values may be informed by ethical theory – that is, ‘ethics’ in the academic sense.

Ethics is the branch of philosophy concerned with the study of the logic behind our moral values – the reasons why we **ought** to relate to others in certain ways. Animal ethics is the study of how we **ought** to relate to animals.

Some people are sceptical about the value of ethics. This is understandable, especially given what we have just seen about the complexity of moral values and given the variety of ethical theory. Two common criticisms that you may hear are:

- ethics is ‘just subjective’
- ethics is ‘just preferences’.

Those criticisms are not valid, however, as we shall now see.

### Slide 7:

First, moral values and ethical theories are not simply an infinitely varied collection of subjective, private judgments. In reality, there is general agreement on objective reasons why certain actions are right and others wrong.

Ethical consensus within any one society enables us to live harmoniously and thrive. If ethics was simply subjective, it would be likely to result in societal breakdown. The fact that many societies avoid that and can correct it when it does happen points to common reasoning and agreement about what is right and wrong. For example, the principle of the ‘golden rule’ (do unto others as you would have them do unto yourself) is found in most religions, most societies, and it is a component of some ethical theories.

The rigorous logic of ethical frameworks also makes ethics more than ‘just subjective’.

## Slide 8:

Personal ethics are different from personal preferences. For example:

- 'I like peas' is a preference statement. It requires little rational defence because it does not attempt to make other people like peas, and it does not matter if anybody else shares this preference
- in contrast, the sentence 'We ought to avoid eating animals and get our dietary protein from peas instead' is a statement of moral values and attempts to tell others what to do. As such, it requires rational justification.

The difference between moral values and preference values is more subtle.

- Our moral value about avoiding eating animals and eating peas instead is different from a preference value such as 'It is better to get our dietary protein from peas than from animals'.
- Preference values are comparative and they include a positive or negative value such as better or worse, or more important vs. less important. (Note that this is different from a simple comparative statement of fact such as 'peas are smaller than sheep'.)
- Neither statements of our preferences for peas, nor statements of our preference values about eating peas, nor statements of fact about the comparative size of peas requires anyone to change his/her behaviour, but they might influence our own behaviour and choices.
- However, our moral values about eating peas instead of animals may compete with other preference values we have that are concerned with, for example, our income, our social standing, existing laws, etc. So if those preferences are stronger than our preference for peas instead of meat, then this may lead to actions that are inconsistent with our moral values.

Getting back to the bigger question of why ethics are not just preferences:

- we have seen that statements about how people ought to act require some justification and that statements of what the speaker prefers are not an adequate justification
- instead, you need a more impartial and logical standpoint for ethical statements so that the reasons can be recognised and weighed up, not just by the person making them but by people generally
- ethical theory helps here, because it gives us a set of reasons that lead us to a conclusion.

## Slide 9:

Taylor (1999) reviews the positions on the moral status of animals as seen by philosophers over time and these views are summarised in the next few slides. One answer to how we should treat animals is that animals have no moral status and therefore we have no duties towards them in their own right. The only consideration is in regard to how their treatment may affect us – their treatment does not matter to them.

The reason why animals do not have moral status in their own right, according to this approach, is because, unlike us, they lack sufficient consciousness to reflect on their experience. In some views, animals could not have moral status because they lack a soul.

Philosophers who argued from this general perspective have included Kant and Descartes. For example, Descartes denied that animals could suffer, but Kant did not deny that animals could suffer, but argued that their suffering did not matter because they are not rational.

The extension of their views was that, because animals lack language, consciousness and the power of reflection, they cannot take part in mutual arrangements and they cannot reciprocate any moral consideration that is given to them.

These arguments are purely intellectual and they do not match what we see in animals and what we know of their behaviour. Therefore, they do not seem to be common sense.

### Slide 10:

Module 27 looks at religion and animal welfare, and it is important to know that several world religions provide explicit guidance on the importance of how we should act towards animals. For example, Buddhism and Hinduism apply the concept of *ahimsa* which means not harming any living creature. Practising *ahimsa* helps to ensure personal purity and avoid suffering in a future incarnation. This is a consequentialist argument, where how we should act is guided by the potential consequences of our actions.

Judaism and Islam both have very clear guidelines about the treatment of animals and the avoidance of, for example, pig meat.

Such practices are seen as necessary for personal health and spiritual purity, and some of them are followed because animals are God's creation and, as such, require respect and kindness so that they do not suffer from ill-treatment. This guidance is a combination of a consequentialist position that is human-centred (maintaining personal purity) but also animal-centred (avoiding suffering). The guidance also includes a concept of duties as well as the potential consequences of different actions; the duties to animals follow from the human's special status as a rational creature.

Christianity does not have such explicit teaching on animals, but it does share sacred texts with Judaism and so shares teaching about treating animals kindly. Moreover, the Christian tradition has drawn heavily on the ancient Greek view of the world as a 'great chain of being' with humans at the top and animals being necessarily excluded from moral consideration because they are not rational and cannot speak. This understanding of the world has of course changed considerably because of scientific knowledge, and much modern Christian thinking would now consider animals because we know they can suffer.

### Slide 11:

Note that some modern philosophers share the view that animals do not require moral consideration, for similar reasons to thinkers of the past. For example, in a book published in 1992, the philosopher Peter Carruthers argues that animals have mental states but are not conscious of them, and therefore they cannot suffer and do not require moral consideration.

Another philosopher, Jan Narveson, has argued that our interactions are driven by self-interest which causes us to enter into contracts of reciprocal consideration with each other. Because animals cannot speak, etc., they cannot enter into such contracts with us. Therefore we do not have duties towards them for their own sake. However, we must treat animals well because harming them would be an indirect harm to other humans – with whom we do have contracts.

Narveson's argument leads to a related point about how to treat animals. That is, animals do not require moral consideration, but it is important to treat them well because it is important that we behave well and act kindly: if we do not, we damage our own moral character, which may have adverse consequences for us and for others. As we have seen, that is similar to the argument of some religions wherein mistreating animals has consequences for us, perhaps in the afterlife.

### Slide 12:

Contemporaries of Descartes and Kant felt unease at their arguments that animals do not require moral consideration in their own right. Other people of that time noted, for example, that babies and people with certain disabilities cannot use language or reflect on their actions or return any moral consideration that is given to them. However, those groups of people have moral status. It follows from this that language, etc. is not a reasonable basis for deciding who should receive moral consideration. Instead, the capacity to suffer makes more sense logically and intuitively. As animals can suffer, they therefore deserve moral consideration.

The philosopher who is most famous for having made this point was an Englishman called Jeremy Bentham in the late eighteenth century. However, he actually only made that argument in passing, as part of a bigger argument about the treatment of people.

### Slide 13:

This slide summarises what Bentham wrote concerning animals. The very last part is widely quoted in animal protection arguments: "The question is not, can they reason? nor can they talk? But, can they suffer?"

This kind of ethical framework is termed 'consequentialist' because it is the 'consequences' of our actions that matter – in this case, the ability to suffer and, its logical opposite, the ability to experience pleasure.

In the modern era, animal welfare science supports the idea that animals can suffer from pain and negative emotions. Other modules in this course look at a variety of scientific evidence about this (e.g. the similarity of the emotional circuits in the human brain to those of some other animals; the role of analgesic drugs in routine surgeries in farm animals and the

structure of the pain pathway). Research is also starting to examine the capacity of animals to experience positive emotions such as pleasure, and its importance to them.

As vets, we can easily relate to the argument that animals deserve moral consideration because they can suffer as a result of human actions. However, moral consideration of suffering leads to the problem of how best to calculate and then weigh up the suffering and the pleasure caused to the different groups who may be affected by the action concerned.

We could avoid that problem by arguing that animals require moral consideration not just because of suffering that our actions may cause, but also because they have value in their own right: that animals have 'intrinsic value'.

### Slide 14:

This approach differs fundamentally from the two earlier ones. The previous positions state that animals can be used as long as this does not cause them suffering or have adverse consequences for us. There, animals have value only because of their utility for us. Their value is 'extrinsic' or outside themselves.

In contrast, if we say animals that have 'intrinsic' value we mean that the animal matters for the animal's own sake, independent of effects on others. The reasons for this include:

- animals have an interest in living – they seek to survive and their lives matter to them. They can make choices and direct their lives
- animals have potential to fulfil
- animals are sentient; they experience mental states and can suffer.

The existence of inherent qualities mean that we owe animals treatment that respects these attributes. That is, we have duties to them and unlike the logic of utilitarianism, we should not cause animals to suffer for the purpose of benefitting others.

### Slide 15:

This view that we should make decisions about how we treat animals based on duty – as against consequences – is termed 'deontological'. That word comes from the Greek *deontos*, meaning obligation.

Deontological ethical theories hold that there are some actions that are right in themselves whatever the future consequences. These are obligations. Therefore, human rights theory states that we should treat other humans as ends rather than means: we should not use our fellow humans in ways which do not respect their inherent worth, even if good consequences result. For example, we should not throw one person out of a lifeboat, even if that might stop the boat from sinking and save everyone else in it. It follows that if our intrinsic worth gives us rights, and we agree that animals have intrinsic worth, then animals must have rights too.

### Slide 16:

To sum up so far: we have seen why ethics is not just subjective or preferences, but is a system of reasoning that helps us to know how we should act towards others.

We have just looked at three of the most common arguments that have developed over the centuries regarding how we should act towards animals. The arguments have centred on whether or not animals have certain attributes: language, the capacity to suffer, and intrinsic value.

As we have looked at those arguments, we have also come upon the concepts of consequentialist versus deontological positions, and the concepts of extrinsic and intrinsic value.

### Slide 17:

We shall now go through five ethical theories about animals that have arisen from these debates. You will recognise some of the arguments in the theories.

### Slide 18:

In 'contractarian' theory, we operate as a moral community based on self-interest. Because we can talk and agree, we enter into contracts with others and, if we break a contract by treating someone badly, he or she may retaliate. Therefore we are motivated to treat them well, and vice versa.

Because animals cannot talk, they cannot enter into contracts with us nor us with them. Therefore we do not have moral obligations to them. We must treat them well only insofar as it benefits ourselves or other people with whom we do have contracts.

We came across this earlier when reviewing the historical evolution of the argument that animals do not require moral consideration. The difficulty with this view is that it is anthropocentric – it only considers the needs of humans.

### Slide 19:

The second ethical theory is 'utilitarianism'. This emphasises the consequences of actions. In particular, we are obliged to maximise 'utility', meaning happiness or the balance of pleasure over pain. So, we should aim to act in order to achieve the greatest good for the greatest number.

We saw earlier that Jeremy Bentham believes that beings who can suffer should be included in this theory.

Utilitarianism seems simple and flexible. However, it can be confusing when it demands we break certain moral rules in order to bring about the best consequence. For example, people in an overloaded lifeboat may calculate that more people will survive if they prevent more people climbing aboard, even if those refused help will drown. However, it would normally be a strong moral imperative to help others in mortal danger.



How exactly we make the calculation is also unclear, especially when the costs and benefits are borne by different individuals. For example, a utilitarian form of cost–benefit analysis is often used by those deliberating on whether the use of animals in an experiment is worthwhile. If we need 100 rabbits to suffer moderately in order to have a 10 per cent chance of producing a vaccine against a mild human illness, how do we make the calculation? Do the costs and benefits balance at all when some individuals bear **all** the costs, and different ones gain **all** the benefits? Both the costs and benefits may also be unknown. In the example given, the costs (the suffering of the rabbits) are known, but the benefits (possible alleviation of the human illness) are uncertain.

Another argument that was made in Jeremy Bentham’s time and has been made since is that the human experience of happiness is in a different category from that of animals because humans are rational. For example, how can you balance the pleasure that a pig experiences while wallowing with the pleasure that a person experiences from reading a novel?

## Slide 20:

Another form of utilitarianism considers the value of consequences beyond simply pleasure and pain. This argues that we should maximise the satisfaction of preferences. If animals have preferences, then they should be included in our calculations.

The most famous current exponent of this view in regard to animals is Peter Singer. His thinking has formed the basis for the notion of animal liberation. Broadly, his arguments are:

- animals are sentient and can have preferences, but that does not include sufficient awareness to have a desire to keep on living
- it is therefore acceptable to kill animals for food if the following conditions apply:
  - they have had a good life (one in which they could satisfy their preferences)
  - they are replaced by other animals who would not otherwise have been brought into the world and given the chance to enjoy a good life, and
  - the animals can die painlessly and without suffering.

Based on this view, Singer argues from that because modern farming does not allow animals to have a good life, we should not eat animal products.

## Slide 21:

‘Equal consideration of equal interests’ allows different treatment of different animals, but asks that we give equal weight to their morally relevant similar interests. So, if it hurts a goat as much as it hurts a human to be hit, we ought to avoid causing this sort of pain in both goats and humans.

Under this principle, unequal treatment of animals and humans is justified only if there are morally relevant differences between humans and that animal. For example, the freedom to practise religion is very important to some humans, but providing this freedom to farm animals

is not necessary. This principle does not necessarily imply that all animal lives are as valuable as human lives. However, neither does it imply that all humans have a higher moral status than all animals of other species.

The second point, 'speciesism', was developed by Singer from earlier thinking (particularly by Richard Ryder). Speciesism is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as "discrimination against or exploitation of certain animal species by human beings, based on an assumption of mankind's superiority".

The principle here is that it is unjust to treat animals differently from ourselves simply because they have different biological characteristics. Again, if they are capable of similar experiences to us, this must be respected when we make decisions about how to treat them.

Many people would agree that it is permissible to raise farm animals and then kill them while they are young and healthy so that we can eat them. However, many people disagree with Singer that farming cannot provide animals with a good life. We have seen earlier that, for some people, an animal's good physical functioning is enough for them to say that the animal has a good life, while for others an animal's mental state or natural behaviour are important. In reality, welfare comprises all three elements and balancing them is certainly a challenge. However, many people would disagree with Singer and would say that farming can give animals a good life before we kill them.

Another point about Singer's view of farming is that it does not typically take into account economic and other factors that have led to modern practices. That has in turn, perhaps, allowed activist groups to take a very confrontational view of farmers and accuse them of deliberate cruelty, without considering other possible reasons for their farming practices, or the animals' experience of them.

## Slide 22:

We now move on to our third theory, which is 'rights theory'. This is deontological – decisions are based on obligations rather than consequences.

Rights philosophy was emphasised by Kant, whom we encountered earlier, although he excluded animals on the grounds that they are not rational.

'Moral rights' are very strong claims that cannot be overridden merely to produce beneficial consequences, and rights flow from the very basic interests of those that hold them.

The theory of animal rights was developed by American philosopher Tom Regan. He argues that mammals and birds are "subjects of a life". That is, they are more than just alive and conscious – they have beliefs, desires, memory, emotional life and various other mental capacities. All this gives them an inherent worth, from which flows their rights. The most fundamental right is their right to have their inherent worth respected.

This right sets a rigid rule which forbids the use of animals as resources for humans, no matter what the benefits may be. Therefore this approach is 'abolitionist', and does not allow any use of animals, including the use of animals for food, clothes, experimentation, entertainment or luxury items such as fur.

### Slide 23:

Using rights theory to make decisions does not require weighing different consequences. It only needs us to consider whether the decision respects the individual animal's dignity and preserves that.

In contrast, in utilitarian philosophies, individuals are considered as parts of a whole group and the aim is to maximise the good for the most individuals.

Therefore rights theory protects the individual, no matter how many others may or may not benefit. This view of animals is seen as radical and is at odds with common practices around the world. For example, most people accept that we can kill animals for our ends, e.g. food, clothes, etc. However, rights theory forbids this.

Sandøe and Christiansen, who are ethicists at the University of Copenhagen veterinary school in Denmark, note that, while many people may not grant animals the right not to be killed, they may accept that animals might have the right to be protected from suffering. These authors note that much European legislation about animal welfare tends to offer this protection and that the principle of the right to be protected from suffering is gradually becoming a legal right.

### Slide 24:

Arguments against animal rights include the following.

- You cannot always respect everyone's rights, even with humans. Regan does not discuss particular cases but, as with all ethical theories, it is impossible to apply animal rights consistently, all the time.
- For example, Regan allows killing animals for self-defence (which is a human interest) but not for laboratory research on life-saving medication (another human interest). It is inconsistent to be permitted to kill animals to save one's life in one context but not in another.
- Other arguments against the assumption of animal rights is that they ignore the unique inherent value that humans have as moral agents, and that as moral agents we must enact the responsibilities that come with having rights. Animals cannot enact responsibilities, so they cannot respect other animals' rights. Therefore the concept of rights for animals is faulty.

Animal rights theory continues to be debated. For example, more recent animal rights philosophers and legal scholars such as Daniel DeGrazia, Steve Sapontzis and Gary Francione have argued against the notion that humans' moral agency should be an obstacle to rights.

Another scholar is the Christian theologian Andrew Linzey who has argued that animals have rights given to them by God as their creator.

## Slide 25:

The first theory discussed here (contractarianism) excluded animals from the moral arena on the grounds that they are not rational and cannot engage in contracts. The last two theories discussed (preference utilitarianism and animal rights) tend to dominate discussions of the ethics of animal use. Two important features of both of these are that they are impersonal and impartial: all sentient animals are considered equally. For any matter of equal moral concern, such as the need for painkillers at surgery, no individual or group is entitled to privilege or special consideration.

By contrast, however, some philosophers disagree both with the principle of impartiality and with the exclusion of animals from the moral arena. They have taken the realities of our relationships with animals as a more practical starting point for understanding how we should act towards them.

In that school of thought, human beings tend to be in personal relationships, and we care instinctively when we see distress in others. Their distress is a moral concern because it means that the subject is suffering harm. Our concern for that distress does not start with a logical assessment of, for example, whether they are rational, or can suffer or have rights. Instead, our concern arises from some instinctive understanding that combines natural sympathy for their distress and our desire to live a good life and show compassion.

This is broadly called 'care ethics'. It was developed largely by feminist philosophers such as Mary Midgley, Nel Noddings and Carol Adams in the second part of the twentieth century, and continues to be refined.

These scholars argued that rights were too legalistic an approach to animals, especially within a system which was quite patriarchal. Instead, our actions towards animals should be guided by our natural tendency to build relationships with animals and show compassion, which in turn gives us a duty of care to them, as they are dependent on us.

Related to that desire to show compassion is the much older idea of 'virtue ethics' first promulgated by Aristotle. Here a good life consists of living according to one's nature, and our nature is to be happy, which we can achieve in part by doing good in relation to others.

Some philosophers pointed out that failing to act kindly to animals predisposes us to act badly to other people. Recent research into cruelty to animals bears this out, as we will learn in Module 30, on human–animal interactions.

This brings us to another relational view, extended from care ethics, which is rooted specifically in the human–animal bond and also involves the notion of virtuous behaviour.

## Slide 26:

This bond-related argument rejects the notion that we should not be partial in our treatment of animals.

Instead, how farmers ought to treat farm animals – and, by extension, how any animal owner should treat his/her animals – is necessarily partial and personal because of the dependent relationship animals have with their owner. That relationship means that owners are ‘trustees’ of the animals: it is true that they do not have a formal contract with their animals, but they do have an unspoken and implicit commitment to care for each one.

Moreover, the owner’s daily interaction with the animals does create a bond of empathy with some of them, at least.

The animals, in their turn, have expectations of care. This does not necessarily imply complex conscious expectations. Other modules in this course look at how animals’ experience involves the brain’s evaluation of present sensory input against past knowledge or memories, and how this evaluation results in changes in physiology and behaviour to maximise positive sensory input and avoid negative or unpleasant input. The success or failure of the animals in that regard in turn creates expectations of what a particular stimulus represents.

It follows from this that animals rely on their owner. If the owner treats them cruelly or, in a lesser way, does not optimise their welfare, that person creates an injustice.

## Slide 27:

Our final theory today is called ‘respect for nature’ and is less concerned with individual animals.

In this view, the preservation of the species within the ecosystem is more important than the wellbeing of individual members of the species. Here, for example, selective culling of healthy animals is permissible to preserve the wellbeing of the group, e.g. to reduce competition for food.

In this view, the individual is not as important in their own right, but only as a representative of the larger group.

This ethical theory is commonly applied to how we should act in regard to wildlife. Individual domestic animals come second to the preservation of the wider ecosystem. Moreover, the artificial selection that has been used to develop domestic species has disrupted their genetic integrity, which makes it difficult to talk in terms of preserving those species within a domestic ecosystem.

Conventional farming is of particular concern for reasons including:

- its use of drugs, which the animals excrete into the environment, affecting the local microbial and helminth populations
- its reliance on concentrate feed with ingredients sourced from around the world, which affects local species and ecosystems and the wider ecosystem.

## Slide 28:

Some thinkers, however, would also argue that respect for nature applies to individual domestic animals. In particular, Bernard Rollin has applied an idea from Aristotle which is that animals have an inherent nature or *telos*. This is genetically determined and is represented by their species-typical behaviours and traits.

Animals have behaviours that are important to them and that they are highly motivated to carry out, even in very unnatural domestic environments. Rollin's point is that we should respect the interests that domestic animals have as a result of their *telos*. For example, pigs have a strong interest in being able to root and, sometimes, to wallow. Hens have a strong interest in nesting before they lay an egg.

Unlike philosophers of the respect for nature school, however, Rollin does not see artificial selection as unnatural, so long as the interests of the resulting individual are respected.

## Slide 29:

The last few slides have reviewed the five main ethical theories (contractarian, utilitarianism, animal rights, relational views and respect for nature). This slide summarises the main logical arguments of these theories:

- animals cannot enter into reciprocal arrangements with us (contractarian)
- animals are sentient and their suffering or pleasure is of concern (utilitarianism)
- animals' lives do matter to them (animal rights)
- we do have bonds with our own animals and a particular duty of care towards them (relational views)
- harming animals can tend to make us more likely to harm people (relational views)
- a species as a whole is different from the individual, and preserving the species may require sacrificing the individual. (respect for nature)

However, the theories conflict on some or many points.

## Slide 30:

For example:

- Rights theory does not allow the raising and killing of animals for our purposes.
- Utilitarianism and relational views allow farming and meat consumption, under certain conditions, but disagree about the degrees of moral responsibility that are involved for owners, as you see on the slide.
- The utilitarian takes a universal, impartial approach where we all share in the responsibility to ensure the animals have a good life, a humane death and are replaced.

- In contrast, the human–animal bond implies partiality and means that a farmer has particular responsibilities to his/her animals, which are more binding than his/her responsibility to farmed animals generally.
- Meanwhile, the respect for nature theory is more concerned about the wider ecosystem and, inasmuch as it applies to farmed animals, will allow farming and meat consumption if this does not disrupt the overall balance of the ecosystem and the animal's *telos*.
- With the 'respect for nature' theory, some organic farming standards may not permit prompt use of drugs for, e.g., mastitis, and so cause preventable suffering in individual animals. That would not be consistent with a relational or utilitarian approach.

### Slide 31:

Because no one ethical theory adequately addresses all possible moral concerns, and because elements in each are compelling, many people do not subscribe only to just one view, but pick components from each.

In his book *An introduction to veterinary medical ethics*, Bernard Rollin calls for a hybrid view of consequentialist and deontological ethics for animals.

This view invokes:

- utilitarianism to protect animals from suffering; recall that this is a consequentialist theory
- rights, to allow animals to live as far as possible according to their nature; that is our obligation in respect of animals having species-specific characteristics. Recall that this makes it a deontological theory
- the relationship/bond by which we continue with the 'ancient contract' of mutual advantage between stockperson and animals, e.g. the provision of shelter, food, comfort and all the other needs of a dairy cow in exchange for her milk and, ultimately, her flesh. This ancient contract creates obligations which make this ethical approach deontological.

Unlike rights, this emerging social ethic does not take the completely abolitionist position of animal rights. It allows for laboratory animals, and farming and keeping pets if their wellbeing is protected and cared for. It also allows animals to be killed for our benefit. However, it does not allow what Rollin calls "frivolous usage" such as hunting, trapping, entertainment, etc.

An example of this pragmatic view was found in a study of vets and shelter workers in Canada (Schneider, 2001), which indicated that vets used a combined ethic like this in making decisions on how to treat companion animals. Therefore they did not permit intense suffering and sought to protect animal welfare, but they allowed euthanasia of healthy animals in shelters.

## Slide 32:

This concludes today's introduction to animal welfare ethics.

- You now have an overview of what people mean by 'ethics' in everyday life and conversation.
- You know why ethics are not 'just subjective' or 'just preferences'.
- You are aware of the common ethical theories that have been applied to the question of how we ought to relate to animals, and how those arguments have evolved.

The second lecture on ethics (Module 12) will look at how ethics can be applied in different situations concerning animals and people.