



Global Conference on Animal Welfare: an OIE initiative

TOPIC: Global Animal Welfare Challenges: various perspectives

TITLE: Animal Welfare in the Veterinary Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

In the 1980s some felt the subject of animal welfare to be trifling, whilst others found it at least novel. The veterinary profession discovered this to its cost in a series of harsh incidents. The first place to teach animal welfare was the Department of Clinical Veterinary of the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom. Donald Broom, who was appointed the world's first Professor of Animal Welfare in 1986, is still the leader in this discipline.

Thanks to a group of visionaries headed by Ely Mayer, from Israel, the World Veterinary Association, at its World Congress in Brazil (1991), produced policies on animal welfare and ethology stating that, "in order to establish an informed position on animal welfare appropriate to the profession, it is essential to include the subject in basic undergraduate education. This calls for the following principles to be adopted:

- a) The subject of animal welfare must be incorporated into the teaching curriculum as an independent subject in its own right.
- b) The scientific discipline of animal welfare must include applied aspects of bioethics, ethology and the concept of suffering and welfare.
- c) The subject must be taught at pre-clinical level and it is acknowledged that it must be extended to the clinical level.

It is considered necessary to make available opportunities for postgraduate studies in animal welfare and in ethology to all veterinarians wishing to specialise in this field".

In 1994, the University of Salvador (USAL) in Argentina made animal welfare and ethology a compulsory part of its veterinary degree course curriculum. It was the first animal welfare and ethology degree course in Latin America and no other public or private universities in Argentina teach the subject or offer it as an option.

As stated in its policies (proposals and definitions) in 1998, the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) promotes education to encourage respect for and responsible stewardship of all types of animal. In this context it is developing "Concepts in Animal Welfare" with the support of the University of Bristol (United Kingdom). This is an extremely useful tool for any faculty wishing to incorporate this new subject, which is essential to any modern curriculum.

In 2001 the Pan American Federation of University Faculties and Schools of Veterinary Sciences proposed that the ideal job profile for Pan American veterinary physicians should include a knowledge of the subject.