

The response reproduced below was submitted to the consultation held by the Nuffield Council on Bioethics on the ethics of research involving animals during October-December 2003. The views expressed are solely those of the respondent(s) and not those of the Council.

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Question 1

I believe that very little information obtained can relate to the body of another species, so far, much research seems to have not been transferable to humans in practice. I also note that a laboratory (title forgotten) in the USA has had TWICE to retract its claims, because of faulty workmanship (The organisation involved in any investigative work MUST accept its ultimate responsibility for checking in the first place.)

I am basically against the use of animals for research on human diseases/disabilities, there is so much that is different in the composition of a species body and metabolism that results from one species cannot be always regarded as valid for another species. I would suggest that where an investigation is NOT life-threatening, a volunteer human being be sought, and where it IS life-threatening, the work be abandoned before starting.

It is my feeling that all mammal species feel pain in the same way that we do, the fact that they may not utter sound to indicate suffering, does not invalidate my feeling, some species have little or no voice with which to protest. Some individuals may have a higher pain threshold than others, mine is very low. See the distress in an animals eyes when it is hurt, see the reactions of a dog or cat when you tread on their tail, for example. All levels of pain are abhorrent.

Question 2

GM animals are the result of human interference in their genes, they must have the same feelings as the species from which they arose. I DO consider that GM animals are unnatural, they have not been obtained by the processes of nature itself, but by human interference, we cannot know what effects that may have in the long term, varying types of animal derived by breeders fall into a different category altogether.

Animals derived from a cross between two species that could not normally cross, should not be developed, How could you cross a pig with a horse? I do NOT favour the artificial inducement of any form of disease into another animal, IF it happened by natural means, that would be different, then there might be justification in experimentation and investigation FOR THE BENEFIT OF THAT SPECIES.

I am worried about the use of animals to find out the extent and type of damage inflicted through exposure to atomic weaponry, or use in nuclear "medicine." Such considerations as the use of animals at testing sites, as at Eniwetok, if my memory serves me aright.

Question 3

I DO consider that there is a great need for investigating the use of alternatives to living animals in medical experimentation, there is a possibility I feel of the development of newer technology in the future, if not already developed. Funding for such work should arise from pharmaceutical companies and governments in a close partnership, for the good of all, after all, we do hear of vast profits being made. Alternative methods should be used always in teaching situations, and should be developed further for use in experimental work. We hear too much about the use of primates in experimental work of a probable and an actual harmful situation, they are becoming more rare in the natural world, especially the great apes, and should be left alone.

There appears to be competitive experimentation being carried out in laboratories within the same country, and between countries, this appears to be an unnecessary duplication of work in the first place, and there can be little justification for such work on such a large scale. There are scientific and medical journals which could easily publish results (and do in some cases, at least, as in USA, Great Britain, for example) and thus save some needless duplication. There should be great concern about such cases as have been recently reported regarding one establishment in USA which has had to retract statements made in American journals about work which was found to be in doubt, i.e. use of inappropriate investigative techniques due to faulty labelling of investigative liquids.

I am not able to comment on the approaches listed, I am not a worker in the field.

Question 4

It appears that a large proportion of the human race have little influence on what is done in the field of research on animals, there is also a number of people who have no opinion one way or another, of those left, a growing number are very positively against such experimentation, whilst of those that work in the field, all must be taken as in favour, or not to have considered the work as harmful. Those who practice cruelty to animals must be expected not to have the same feelings of compassion for life as those who frown on such behaviour. Beside this, mosquitoes cannot have the same sort of feelings as a donkey, for example.

IF a vet found an animal suffering from a disease that was also common to humans, then it is that person's duty to treat that animal with the same care and attention that a doctor/surgeon would give to a human patient, not to use it as an object of experimentation. I am not the Deity, and cannot lay down hard and fast rules, but I hope I would not agree to an animal being used to provide me with a cure, but then I do not know how much my health has benefited over my lifetime from treatment derived from animal experimentation in the past.

Yes, we most definitely can extend concepts such as listed to animals, I have kept both dogs and cats and seen the pleasure in their behaviour when a 'fuss' is made of them, unhappiness when scolded or rebuked, similar reactions to bullying, and greed. Pain is obviously felt when a dog or cat has a paw or tail trodden upon, suffering is apparent in the behaviour of a neglected animal as shown in TV programmes about veterinary care for the sick or injured. I cannot speak for all animals, , but many species from my own experience and from what I have read (the paperback book about Elephant Bill and his two elephant companies in the Burma campaigns of World War 2) show that both physical and psychological pain ARE felt. If you cannot assess the degree of pain felt during research, don't do anything that could cause pain, simple as that.

If recordings of brain patterns indicate levels of pain suffered by humans, then I am willing to assume that much the same reaction is felt by an animal. I cannot comment on awareness or consciousness of self., except to say that my own experience has shown that both dog and cat are aware that they have offended, AFTER they have done something for which they can expect a good scolding! Much can be learned from careful observation of an animal's behaviour and consideration of the things that are important in that animal's normal life, such as need to feed, rest uninterrupted, hide from a predator, escape from danger, attract a mate. Why has there got to be invasive investigation? Konrad Lorenz and others have found out much from observation and harmless experimentation, as with stickleback behaviour and herring gull chick attraction to the red spot on the parent's beak, without invasive techniques.

We could well start by asking ourselves if we would like to be treated in such a manner, before so treating another species.. I am not in favour of using animals of ANY sort, for food, nor sport, nor clothing, except ruing or shearing of a fleece. If treated in a humane and friendly fashion, a pet can be of immense delight to its carer, and give great pleasure to the pet, as when I kept chickens, and they accompanied me when I was gardening, taking delight in searching for interesting things that I turned up, or when I fed them from my hand. Use of animals for research is an entirely different matter, involving use of them purely for our gain, which is not guaranteed anyway.

What importance doe the environment have on the well being of the captive animal? Look at wild animals kept in close confinement in zoos where they have little of interest to them and become bored to distraction , a bear standing in a small pen, swaying from side to side, a big cat walking backwards and forwards over the short distance of freedom its enclosure allows. There is a saying, happy as a pig in shit, but if an animal is permitted, I will keep itself clean, and be the happier for it, pigs too!

Question 5

I do not think that current provisions are adequate always, battery hens are not happy creatures, otherwise they would not feather pluck, or peck each other until blood is drawn. Keeping animals in wire pens may well suit the keeper, for

cleaning purposes, but is not a comfortable and enjoyable situation for the captive. Welfare assessments should be continuously carried out, before, during and after a project. Regulations would have to be carefully drafted and be very comprehensive, if to cover all possible situations and individual species, otherwise there is the likelihood of loopholes being discovered later.

All GM animals should be banned from creation, keeping and developing. We have no idea of the possible dangers of interfering with natural processes in this way. IF research is to continue, then it must be kept in the open and above board. All results must be made public, in order that anybody interested enough, can examine these things for himself and question his own conscience.

Question 6

Is the research proposed likely to be life threatening, pain causing or distressing in any way, if so, it should not be carried out. Dissemination via press, radio and TV as news items, with short programmes relating what is currently taking place, say on a weekly basis. I would not trust institutions like Huntingdon Life Sciences at all, nor such departments as Cambridge University is currently proposing for research. I feel investigative journalists with some training might well cover the needs of publicity. I do think that medicines developed using animals should be so labelled, thus giving the public the option of use/non-use, the level of information about development should state whether or not animal life has been threatened or lost or pain caused in the development of the labelled product.