

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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Just a few thoughts re your invitation to contribute responses to your consultation document on the ethics of research involving animals.

1. There needs to be some agreement as to what animals feel, and how they feel, when injured, threatened or under stress. There is much controversy here, and I take the liberty of enclosing something I have written concerning animal welfare science, and its relevance, if any, to the debate about hunting. My own view is that animals do feel pain exactly as we do and that this imposes a moral obligation on us to minimize that pain. I have doubts, however, about comparing their fears with ours, or about reckoning stress as something clearly defined and always to be avoided.

2. There is no limit to the possibility of medical advance, and ~~also a~~ widespread assumption that medical advance is a good in itself. I take issue with this assumption. What is good in itself may nevertheless cease to be good when taken in excess, since it may then interfere with other and greater goods. I believe that increased longevity threatens to produce moral, spiritual and ecological disasters, and that we ought to direct medical research to the alleviation of pain rather than the vanquishing of the natural processes of decay. This means that some kinds of medical research cannot, in my view, be justified, and therefore a fortiori that animal suffering cannot be justified in order to engage in them.

3. Genetic engineering is so controversial in all its forms that it is likely to be just as controversial when used in experiments on animals. It is now however routine practice to use genetically engineered species of mice in order to carry out research into diseases of certain kinds. I think this is uncharted territory ethically and always will be so, since - as Aldous Huxley surely showed - the basis of moral judgement is rapidly

cut away by the assertion of this kind of power over the natural order of things. Nevertheless, whatever should guide our conduct towards ordinary animals, ought to guide our conduct towards genetically engineered animals too. They should not be engineered to suffer, and while they may not suffer from their deformity, we are demeaned by the impious ease with which we produce it.

4. Piety, to which I have just referred and which so few people seem now to understand, is the root of many moral feelings, as I try to show in *Animal Rights and Wrongs*. One of these is the disposition to treat animals with more respect the nearer they are to us in their habits and affections. For this reason I believe that obstacles should be put in the way of carrying out humiliating and painful research on apes, unless the apes themselves can be shown to benefit from it.

5. There are also animals which have established links with us and come to share our lives and our fate in historically complex ways - particularly dog, cat and horse. I think these links should be respected, even if the animals themselves have no knowledge of them or of their social and cultural significance. For in disrespecting these links, we disrespect ourselves.

6. I try to refute the belief that the other animals have rights in the book referred to, and also to show that other species really are different from us in morally relevant ways. This too is controversial, though I have not been persuaded by any counter-argument.

[Roger Scruton also submitted to the Council an article he had written entitled, *Ethics and Welfare: the Case of Hunting*]