Ethics and Veterinary Medicine

• General Ethics
• Animal Ethics
• Veterinary Profession Ethics
General Ethics

• Definition:
also known as moral philosophy, is a branch of philosophy which seeks answers to questions about morality, evaluates man-to-man relationship, as well as the relationship of man to both animate and inanimate environment from the point of view of good and evil.

• Other philosophical disciplines:
  • onthology (existence)
  • gnoseology (knowledge)
  • aesthetics (beauty and perfection)
Development of Ethics

- **Aristotle** (4th century BC) – ethics as practical philosophy

- **Christianity** (1st century AD) – the ultimate good is love to one’s fellow man
Development of Ethics (2)

- **Immanuel Kant** (18th century) – man’s moral principles control our behaviour

- **utilitarists** (19th century) – ethical behaviour brings benefit to the biggest number of people

- **ethical relativism** (20th century) – there are no generally valid principles of good and evil
Principles

on which we build our actions

– our conscience (moral subjectivism)
– relevant social norms (moral objectivism)
– from both (“according to one’s best consciousness and conscience”)
Applying the Principles

Ethical principles are applied:
– above all in a relationship to a man
– less frequently in a relationship to the animate environment, and
– least of all towards the inanimate environment
The most current ethical issues

• wildlife protection
• animal protection
• manipulation with a human being
  – abortions, cloning, organ transplantation, euthanasia
• discrimination of human individuals
  – racial, religious, age
Animal Protection Ethics

• I. Anthropocentric

• II. Non-anthropocentric

• III. Pathocentric
I. Anthropocentric (1)

the man’s point of view

- domestication - violent and painful methods and means of animal subjection by man
  - castration, calibration, cropping
  - whips, spears, chains, collars
I. Anthropocentric (2)

- **Antiquity**
  - **Plato** – animals have immortal souls
  
  - **Aristotle** – animals exist in the wild for humans
  
  - **Rome** – animals are things (legislation)
I. Anthropocentric (3)

- **Christianity** (Bible)
  - the man is the *governor* of the world and the master of sea fish, heavenly birds and all that makes the world go round

- **The Middle Ages**
  - the *devil* takes on the form of animals
    - cats, billy goats, bats, and toads
I. Anthropocentric (4)

- Renaissance
  - The method of getting to know the wild (and animals as well) is like being put to the rack for questioning (Francis Bacon)
  - new categorization of animals
    - useful
    - predators
    - harmful vermin
I. Anthropocentric (5) Modern Period

- universal mechanism (philosophical doctrine)

René Descartes (17th century) based his scientific work on the understanding of all natural objects, non-human animals and human bodies as completely mechanistic automata.

- moaning and howling of animals was a purely mechanical reflex
I. Anthropocentric (6) Modern Period

• experiments on animals
  experimental physiology
  18\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th} centuries
  • laboratories, public demonstrations (cats, dogs, rabbits, frogs and rats)
  • live animals were nailed down onto boards and cut open in order to observe the body functions, eg. blood circulation (vivisections)
I. Anthropocentric (7) Modern Period

the cult of meat

19th century American industry

Mammoth slaughterhouse - Chicago
I. Anthropocentric (8) Modern Period

Animals used for amusement of the masses

- horseracing, fights
- hunts
- circuses
- zoos
II. Non-anthropocentric environmental

• **A** holistic – the Earth (both animate and inanimate nature)
• **B** biocentric – plants and animals
• **C** zoocentric – animals including humans
II/A - Holistic
(the interests of the Earth)

“God sleeps in stones, breaths in plants, dreams in animals, and wakes in men” *(native Indian saying)*

- **The founder** of the modern-day holistic ethics - **Aldo Leopold** (USA, 1930’s) – respect the **needs of the Earth**, including all animate and inanimate nature and the man
II/A - Holistic (the interests of the Earth) (2)

• Creator of modern “deep ecology” Arne Naess (Norway, 1990’s) – change notably the consumer way of life of people for the sake of preserving the values of animate and inanimate nature
II/B Biocentric
(the interests of plants and animals)

- **Albert Schweitzer** (1875-1965)
  German doctor (Africa), philosopher, theologian, musician

  respecting life should become the basis for the ethical cultivation of man dominated by a cold and emotionless intellect of the modern times
II/C  Zoocentric (1)

• Eastern philosophies
  – buddhism, jainism, and hinduism
    • vegetarianism
    • resigning the change of the world

• Christian saints
  – Francis of Assissi – 13th century
    (October 4 – International animal Protection day)
II/C Zoocentric (2)

- Modern-day organized movements for animal protection
  - sentimental romanticists – regressing to the pre-domestication period
  - neo-pagan orientation – supernatural nadpřirozené forces - astrology magic, occultism
  - liberal philosophers – differences in mental abilities between the man and animal
II/C Zoocentric (3)

Universal Declaration of Animal Rights (1977)

- all animal species have the same rights
- it is man’s obligation to invest his knowledge into animal service
- killing of animals must be fast and painless
- man shall not interfere with the life of animals living in their natural environment
- domesticated animal must live and grow to a rhythm natural to his species
II/C Zoocentric (4)

- animals selected by man as companions must have a life corresponding to their natural longevity

- working animals must only work for a limited period and must not be worked to exhaustion. They must have adequate food and rest

- experiments on animals are inadmissible

- no animal should be used for entertainment

- action causing the unnecessary death of an animal is cruel and a crime against life, killing large numbers of animals is genocide

- dead animals must be treated with respect
III Pathocentric (1)

18th century to present – modern official ethics

Men and animals share the ability to experience pain, suffering and joy

English artists (18th century poets and painters) - William Hogarth, engravings “Four stages of cruelty”- from animal torture to the murder of a man
William Hogarth

The Four Stages of Cruelty: The Reward of Cruelty 1 February 1751

Etching and engraving

320 x 380 mm

Courtesy of Andrew Edmunds, London
Jean Jacques Rousseau  
(1712-1778)

- French philosopher
  - natural human morals exclude the suffering of slaves, the mentally ill, and animal torture
Ill Pathocentric (2)

- **Jeremy Bentham** (19th century, England)

- English philosopher, the founder of utilitarianism

- Adversary to experiments on animals. "The question is not: Are they capable of thinking? Can they talk? But: Can they feel pain?"

- The only acceptable experiments are those the benefit (goodness) of which dominates over the evil (pain) they cause – utilitarianism
III Pathocentric (3)

• 1824 - The Royal Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals - Great Britain
• 1847 – first Vegetarian Society – Great Britain
• 1850 – Grammont law – a law against torturing animals in public – France
• half of the 19th century - first animal anesthetics (ether and chloroform) - deaths, negative effect on meat quality
• 1861 – draught dogs protection bill in Germany
1876 – law regulating experiments on animals (vivisection) – Great Britain

1906 - Uptona Beall Sinclair’s novel The Jungle – suffering of fatstock in American abattoirs
Ruth Harrison


- **welfare**
  - prosperity
  - benefit
  - success
  - well-being (benefit)
  - social care (public)
  - good
  - social

- Concerned the most endangered and tortured fatstock. Only later did welfare expand to other animal groups differentiated according to their importance to man.

Awarded in 1986 by the Order of the British Empire.
World Society for the Protection of Animals

1981 - merger of the World Federation for the Protection of Animals (WFPA, 1953), and the International Society for the Protection of Animals (ISPA, 1959), the first organisations to campaign internationally on animal welfare issues.

WSPA is the world's largest network of animal protection specialists with 13 offices worldwide and over 400,000 individual supporters.
III Pathocentric (5)

- 1975 - Peter Singer’s “Animal Liberation”
  - philosopher (USA, Australia)
  - no qualitative difference between man and animal (soul), but only quantitative differences (nervous system maturity)
1975 - Peter Singer

Divided animals into 3 groups based on perception of pain, self-awareness and communication:

• creatures without awareness
• self-aware creatures
• persons
Creatures without awareness

- Living beings without central nervous system (CNS) – can be treated as objects
Self-aware creatures

• Animals with CNS - productive farm animals – in justified cases they can be killed, but without suffering
Persons

• Animals as self-aware as human beings – dogs, cats, horses, dophins, chimpanzees, gorillas etc. – may not be killed with the exception of endangering a person’s life.

“A healthy dog is of a bigger value than a mentally ill person” (tolerates euthanasia)
Animal welfare (1)

- 5 basic animal needs
  - food and water
  - space, warmth, light, and air
  - protection from diseases
  - protection from stress and cruel handling
  - natural behaviour conditions (emotional and social needs satisfaction)
Animal welfare (2)

- application of animal etology findings ("animal ethics")
- 1966 – International Society for Applied Etology

Animal welfare (3a)

fatstock and utility animals for nutrition and other materialistic interests of man

cattle, pigs, poultry, sheep, rabbits etc.

• 1978 – European Convention for protection of farm animals

• 1999 – EU directives on layer hens (technological changes in cage housing)
  • space, boxes, lighting, feeding, noise
  • 2012 definitive ban on cage breeding and keeping
Animal welfare (3b)
at fatstock and utility animals for nutrition and other materialistic interests of man

- environmental farms
  - pastures
  - traditional breeding methods with minimal need for veterinary treatment

- research of experiencing pain in farm animals conducted at universities and scientific institutes
  - 1973 – first animal anesthesiology textbook
    - negative effects of pain – self-induced injuries, reduced infection resistance, second-rate meat quality

- advanced regulations on abattoir animals breeding, transport and killing
Animal welfare (4)

animals for sport and amusement

horses, dogs, bulls, cocks, exotic animals etc. Racing, zoos, circuses, corrida

• ethology findings utilization
  – competitiveness
  – natural affection towards man

• specific zoo welfare concept
  • cage – natural environment – specific environment
    » 1828 - London – caged animals
    » 1907 - Hamburg - “Animal Paradise” (barless zoo)
    » 2004 - Prague – Tropical Wildlife Pavilion
  • animal stimulation towards active occupation - games
Animal welfare (5a)
laboratory and experiment animals

mice, frogs, guinea pigs etc.

- welfare is based on principles of utilitarism which calls for minimal animal suffering according to their usefulness to man (medicine - cosmetics)
- 1959 birth of the 3R rule
  - Refinement of experiment conditions
  - Reduction of experiment duration and animals
  - Replacement by tissue structures or organs wherever possible
Animal welfare (5b)  
laboratory and experiemnt animals

• exercising of these principles resulted in:
  - animal experiments reduction especially in the field of production and commerce
  - legalization of professional qualification for animal experiments for scientific and other purposes
Animal welfare (6)

pets

cats, dogs, canaries, rabbits, guinea pigs, …

  - share in treatment of the ill (pet therapy, canistherapy, hippotherapy)
  - improving life quality in children, the elderly, and the mentally ill
  - ban on surgical procedures improving physical appearance of animals (cropping, teeth extraction, declawing, vocal cords extraction)
  - stray animal protection (shelters)
Development of Animal Protection in Czech Lands (1)

• 1899 Austria-Hungary
  – first animal torture regulations
    • Torturing of draught animals in public
      – 20 crowns fine

• 1939 Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia
  • torturing of all animals even in private
    – upto 5,000 crowns fine and 14-day imprisonment
  • definition of torture: “Any act by which severe pain or suffering is intentionally inflicted on an animal without any reasonable or justifiable reason”
Development of Animal Protection in Czech Lands (2)

• 1950 Czechoslovakia
  • CZK5.000 fine or 7-day imprisonment

• 1987 Czechoslovakia – Veterinary Treatment Bill
  • torture is a violation of the law
  • CZK5.000 fine
Development of Animal Protection in Czech Lands (3)

• 1992 – Act no. 246 for animal protection against torture
• 1995 – Ordinance no. 245 about large farm animals slaughter
• 1997 – Ordinance no. 311 about experiment animals breeding and use
Ethics in Veterinary profession

• Definition of a profession
  occupation enjoying high esteem and reputation
  than it is usual with most common jobs

• Profession characteristics
  mental activity dominates over the physical
  university education is a must
  irreplaceable by another profession
  flexible working hours
  its members form professional organizations
  respect řídí the principles of ethically correct professional behaviour
  – so called tzv. Code of Ethical Conduct – in their relation to
  clients,
  other members of the same profession,
  state institutions and social standards (traditions, religion)
Ethical principles of veterinary profession (1)

1. Benefit of veterinary profession precedes the benefit of an individual veterinarian. Veterinarians are required to represent their profession in both veterinary practice and private lives.

2. Veterinarians are expected to have deep professional knowledge and also deep sense of integrity, righteousness, conscientiousness, and absolute moral correctness.
Ethical principles of veterinary profession (2)

3. Veterinarians act independently in their choice of treatment methods and means. With the authority of their profession they are bound to combat any demonstration of brutality towards animals.

4. When evaluating animal products, veterinarians are bound to consider people and animals health risks and protection first.
Ethical principles of veterinary profession (3)

5. Advance in medical knowledge requires constant self-improvement and professional knowledge enrichment of veterinarians.

6. Public voicing of negative opinions about other veterinary profession members is considered unethical and inadmissible. Evaluation of the work of other veterinarians can be realized only on the grounds of a professional organization or upon state authority request.
Ethical principles of veterinary profession (4)

7. Advertising of veterinary services may not be misleading, deceptive or inaccurate.

8. Relationships between veterinary profession members are based on mutual respect, understanding, and willingness to provide colleague help especially in relation to the ill, the retired, and young veterinarians.
Professional Regulations

Article 1

Responsibility of a veterinary surgeon

1) The profession of a veterinary surgeon is a freelance occupation defined by Act no. 381/91 of the Code of Law on the Chamber of Veterinary Surgeons Czech Republic (hereinafter as Chamber).

2) While exercising their profession, veterinary surgeons must follow the principles of professional ethics:
   a) towards the patient…
   b) towards the keeper…
   c) towards the public…
   d) towards their colleagues…

3) Unprofessional behaviour means both intentional and careless violation of professional duties. A veterinary surgeon cannot be prosecuted for faulty diagnosis if the conducting of a corresponding examination is proved.
Principal work on Veterinary Ethics

Jerrold Tannenbaum: Veterinary Ethics, USA 1989. 615 s.
Thank you for your attention
and enjoy the study of one of the
most remarkable fields of medicine

Pavel Brauner, DVM
Head of Department of foreign Languages and History of Veterinary Medicine UVPS Brno