

# HUMANE EDUCATION: A PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL VIEW

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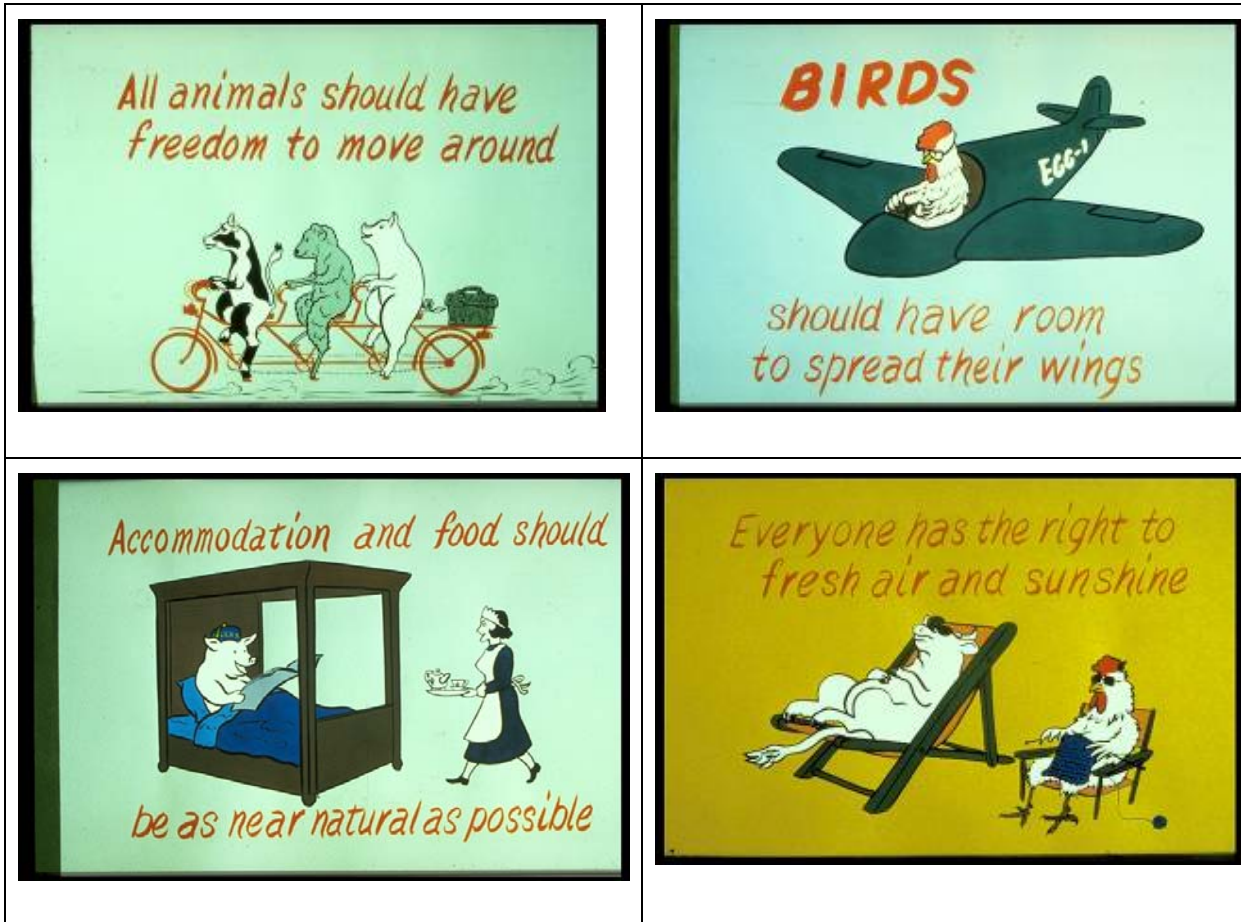
WELFARE AND EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

COMPASSION IN WORLD FARMING (U.K.)

My involvement with Humane Education started in the early '70s, when I was reading environmental sciences as part of a late teenage attempt to save the planet. While studying, I read a book called *Animals Men and Morals*. This book made the case clear to me that the principles I'd been brought up with – that all people were created equal irrespective of race, creed, colour, sex - didn't actually magically break down at the species barrier. Animals mattered too.

I decided to get involved in the animal movement and work through education. So, how do I do that? I became a teacher with the long term aim of a career in humane education. After 20 years of teaching biology in a state school for 13-18 year old pupils in East Anglia in Britain, I became education officer at Compassion in World Farming in 1999, an organisation I had originally joined, as a supporter, in the 1970s.

In 1978, about the time I started teaching, Peter Roberts, who was founder of Compassion in World Farming produced a wonderful slide set entitled **ALL ANIMALS HAVE RIGHTS** (one we at Compassion in World Farming wouldn't use now, because we brand ourselves as an animal welfare organisation). Peter argued that animals should be free to move around. They shouldn't, in other words, be kept in tie stalls or sow stalls or gestation crates, but they should be free to exercise. The slide-set included cartoons as well as photographs of animals in confined as well as free-range and other alternative systems.



He included a cartoon slide with the statement that “birds should have freedom, room to spread their wings”. There was a law in Britain that said if you keep a bird in a cage, it must have space to spread its wings. And just underneath where it said that, it said, “provided that this law does not apply to poultry”, which equated to 99.9% of the birds which were kept in cages. Again, Peter produced slides of alternatives to the battery cage.

The next cartoon slide suggested that “accommodation and food should be as near natural as possible”. This was not true for the calf in a ‘veal crate’. These animals were unable to turn around and on an unnatural diet that was low in iron to induce anaemia and prevent myoglobin developing in their muscle, with the result that their meat stays white.

Finally “Everyone has the right to fresh air and sunshine”, but not all of them get it. Given the will of producers and public they could and this was his vision, a vision which is beginning to be substantiated in some parts of the world as more and more animals are being freed from the extreme close confinement systems of the battery cage, the sow stall, the farrowing crate, the veal crate.

We continue Peter's educational work today. Firstly, in the UK, we run a speaker service run by a team of volunteer speakers. We also produce educational resources including films, information booklets and discussion activities which are widely distributed throughout the United Kingdom. They have also been translated into a wide variety of languages and they have also been adapted and separately produced for audiences in Australia, Holland and South Africa.

For me, the central purpose of humane education is to widen the circle of compassion. We are born with compassion, but we apply it selectively. You'll probably have noticed that children like some other children and others not quite so much. Hopefully as we get older, we get more tolerant or even loving towards those whom we originally didn't like so much. And maybe we take it a little bit further.

We might ask a group of children or students "Would you nod your head if you think it is wrong to be racist?" Then you ask, "Will you nod your head if you think it's wrong to be sexist? To discriminate on the grounds of sex?" I usually have one half of the audience engaged at this stage! Finally we ask, "Is it wrong to discriminate on the grounds of religion?" Usually people are getting the idea and many of them, hopefully, are in agreement. This is the human rights idea. Everybody matters as an individual and not because of the group they belong to. To an animal protectionist, it doesn't end here. We are not only humans, but we are also animals and this vital principle that you matter as an individual, not because of the group you belong to, applies to other animal species too. This is, I think, a key philosophical message for animal campaigners, whether the message is animal welfare or animal rights.

This is on the surface an intellectual argument, but it is one people feel very passionately about too. We need to understand that humane education is not just intellectual. It is not enough to understand the principle that animals matter. To make a difference, you also have to care.

Like other animals, I think we are more emotional than logical. To widen the circle of compassion we have to engage the emotions. This is not the same as being emotive, which implies a certain dishonesty. It is about helping children to care.

I see humane education as a craft, not a science. The most powerful stimulus is direct experience of animals themselves, but a film is a good second best. If a picture is worth a thousand words, a video-clip is worth a 100 pictures. Even this understates the emotional impact.

At Compassion in the UK, we have two films, *Farm Animals and Us*, for the 10-14 year old age group, and *Farm Animals and Us 2*, which we use for 15-year-olds through to adults. The films help to deliver the message about farm animal welfare and about caring. We combine fact, knowledge, and emotional engagement to try and get the idea across about the needs of chickens.

The films show the jungle fowl, the ancestor of the modern chicken. It shows them in their open forest habitat. It shows a range of natural behaviours such as perching at night, dust-bathing and scratching for food for themselves and for their chicks.

The films show examples of how modern chickens have inherited nearly all the behaviours of their ancestors. They still need to build a nest before they lay an egg; they still scratch around for food and they still dust-bathe.

This is how chickens behave, but does it really matter to them? *The Farm Animals & Us* films use one really striking piece of footage which shows the importance of the nesting instinct to a hen. This footage comes originally from a film called *Stimulus Response* made by the Association for the Study of Animal Behaviour, and also included in their remarkable primary school film *Let's ask the animals* for 7 to 11 year olds. The footage shows an experiment in which a hen is released from a battery cage, where she's never been able to nest, and is put in a maze, at the end of which there is a nest box. This is a hen on a mission. She's about to lay an egg and she's got to find a safe and secure place for that egg. She has to peck a key. That key enables her to open a door. She's now got to tightrope across this pole. She has to peck a cord three times so that the computer will open another door.

Forcing her way through these doors is not very comfortable for her, but she's determined. Lastly, she has to jump across water – again, something hens don't much like doing – and at the end of this obstacle course she has a safe and secure place to make a nest and lay an egg. A lady called Ros, who used to do talks for Compassion in World Farming in schools in London, found this very hard to believe because she knew hens and she rescued them. But then she met Meg, a free-range hen who had lost a leg in an accident and was brought to an RSPCA rescue centre. Meg was treated and bandaged up. Ros took Meg home and, for the next few days, Meg recovered in the kitchen. The children named her Meg. One morning Meg becomes restless. She hopped all over the kitchen. She found the cat door and somehow managed to force her way outside, hop across the yard, find an open rabbit hutch – and you've guessed the rest - hop inside, make a nest and lay an egg.



The point of telling the story is to get across the message that Meg is not just a food-making machine. She's a sentient being. In other words, she has feelings that matter to her and that is one of our key themes. As an educationalist, I ask the rhetorical question. "What is the purpose of a hen?" Is her purpose to lay eggs cheaply for people to eat; to make a profit for an over-pressed, hard-working farmer; to make a profit for a supermarket? Or is the purpose of a hen to have a good life which is fulfilling from her point of view, and to be able to live a life as a hen?

Now, some people can quite legitimately say that both of those are justified. Our point is, the second must be at least as important as the first. And I sometimes say to students "Can I ask an equally outrageous question – What is the purpose of a human?" I suggest that each student will have many roles later in life. As a son or a daughter, as a friend; as a boyfriend or girlfriend; as a husband or wife; as a father or mother; or as an uncle or aunt. Each student will have roles in work which enable them to make the world a better place for people, for the environment or for animals. Each student will do lots of things in life, but none of them is as important as they are. It's the same with our farm animals. The pig is more important than bacon and the chicken comes before the egg.

This raises another issue in humane education, which is about developing self-esteem. We're not trying to say that people are bad. We're trying to tell people that they're valued, that they're good. Any good educator will build up the self-esteem of their students. It's about a balance between yourself, the way you treat your friends, the way you treat the rest of the world, the environment and animals. All of those should be part of a holistic process. We're not trying to create people who are obsessive about animals or obsessive about anti-racism. Those who learn to like and live with themselves are easier to live with, nicer to the rest of us. And that's a key objective of humane education.


Humane educators come from different philosophical perspectives and ideologies. This much, I hope, will be common to us all.

Compassion in World Farming has clear messages, but central to the paradigm of education is that people make up their own minds. A lot of our resources are aimed at small group discussion. As a teacher, I found that I could sometimes run a really good discussion with a whole group, while sometimes it was completely impossible. However, when the whole group discussion was difficult, you could often get those same students to have a really good discussion in small groups. In preparing the discussion activities for the *Farm Animals & Us* teachers' pack, I used ideas that I got from a fantastic book, *Earth Kind: A Teacher's Handbook on Humane Education*, produced by David Selby for the organisation Earth Kind, which is now sadly defunct.

Professor Selby, now at the Centre for Sustainable Futures at the University of Plymouth, is an expert from the fields of development education, peace education and justice education. He was persuaded that animals were part of this process, and having produced books on all of these other things, produced a fantastic collection of activities for humane education in its widest sense, for all ages. *Earth Kind: A Teacher's Handbook on Humane Education*, is a key source-book of ideas and available from <http://www.trentham-books.co.uk>.


In one activity in Selby's handbook, called *Where Do We Draw the Line?*, you have a series of cards with opinions on them and try to decide as a group whether you agree with these. In the *Farm Animals & Us* teachers' pack we have adapted this approach to examples of farming. So, is it all right to keep animals in cages and small pens? You have that on a card. You discuss in a small group and you move the card from extreme left to extreme right, or in the middle, according to how acceptable or unacceptable you find this to be.

### Rearing pregnant pigs in sow stalls



At present, most European sows kept indoors spend their pregnancies in sow stalls. The purpose is to make pigs easier to manage.

This system is illegal in the UK. The sows cannot turn round. They are caged for months without a break. Is this cruel?




My opinion of rearing pregnant pigs in sow stalls

-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3

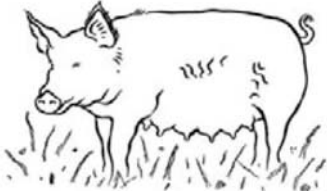
Totally unacceptable Totally acceptable

### Breeding pigs outdoors



This has proved to be economical, as well as being a kinder way of keeping sows. It is labour intensive and may provide more employment.

Not all land is suitable for keeping pigs outdoors. The piglets may be kept intensively after being removed from their mother.



My opinion of breeding pigs outdoors

-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3

Totally unacceptable Totally acceptable

We have the same – and this is closer to the original David Selby idea – with a range of philosophical viewpoints in a series of activities called *How Do Animals Matter?* This actually is a much longer exercise. I've had adults take eight cards like this and talk for an hour. Simple statements lead to a much more open discussion. Because many of these statements are in contradiction to one another and encourage students to consider different points of view. People are challenged, discussion is promoted and thinking is encouraged.

Fig 1

There is no reason to believe that a pig or chicken matters less to itself than I do to myself.

+3 +2 +1 0 -1 -2 -3

Totally agree Totally disagree

Fig 2

Intensive farming may not be best for the animals, but it does produce food cheaply. This is the important thing.

+3 +2 +1 0 -1 -2 -3

Totally agree Totally disagree

My favourite activity in the Farm Animals & Us teachers' pack is the Personality Test. It is a series of 10 questions about how we treat animals. The diagram below shows the first question about whales.


1. The number of whales in the sea has been declining because they have been killed for their meat and oil. Some species are close to extinction.

a) It is wrong to kill whales. They are highly intelligent and sensitive creatures. We have no right to exploit them for our own gain.

b) The methods used to kill whales are often cruel. They should be left alone at least until more humane methods of killing them can be found.

c) Whales should be left alone until their numbers have returned to normal. Then we should control the numbers killed so that whale populations do not drop again.

d) Whales are a good source of food and oil and whaling is important in the traditions of some cultures. Scientifically-controlled whaling should be allowed.



There are ten questions like this, each with opinions from four different philosophical perspectives:

- a. An animal rights view
- b. An animal welfare position
- c. A conservationist or sustainable development position
- d. An anthropocentric or "humans come first" view

This is an idea which can be adapted to cover any animal issue. Once students have filled this out you get a chance to find out which letter most often came closest to the way they felt about the issue. Results vary. I have had A, B, C and D audiences.

It's a fun way of getting people to think about a whole load of issues, in this case, not for discussion, but for self-thought. Nearly everybody loves personality tests. In the end, you say, "Right, you've all got brilliant personalities. There isn't a right answer." The educationalist doesn't tell you the right answer, but you work through the opinions of all in a positive way.

One of the touching things I've found, if I show a film after this exercise, is that people who came out D are often just as moved by the emotional impact of what we do to animals as those who come out A. This is an essentially intellectual exercise. Emotional responses are not always the same. The capacity to empathise with animals can cut right across intellectual opinions.

We also produce an online resource called the Ethical Matrix which is designed to take rigorous ethical decision-making further. Available at [www.ethicalmatrix.net](http://www.ethicalmatrix.net) it is an entirely balanced exercise, where students investigate the pros and cons of organic vs intensive animal farming from the point of view of farmers, consumers, animals and environmental protection. This activity is designed for students of 16 or over, but the idea can be readily adapted for younger pupils.

Compassion in World Farming also provides resources for individual subjects such as science. We have resources discussing genetic engineering, selective breeding and human food chains. Our resource on selective breeding gets more web-hits than any other, presumably because it is a syllabus subject which few others address.

For primary schools, we distribute a film called *Let's Ask the Animals*, mentioned earlier, which is produced by the Association for the Study of Animal Behaviour. To go with this, we have produced a range of materials including a *Needs of Animals* exercise. Groups of children are each given an animal, which could be a dog, a cat, a pig or a sheep or a human. It could even be a plant or a watch. The children are asked, "What does your animal need? What don't they need, but what would they still like? And what don't they need?"

In short, we produce a range of resources including films, discussion activities, worksheets and an information booklet. It is the films which are used most. I receive positive evaluations for all our materials, but for every teacher I meet who uses one of my discussion activities – and lots of them do – I'll meet 10 that use the *Farm Animals and Us* films. We've

had some of these films translated into a range of languages. A few examples of the original *Farm Animals and Us* have even been translated, or produced with sub-titles, into Chinese.

The film has been adapted as well as translated. For Australian schools we have produced a version, adapted from both the UK films, called *Farm Animals and Us in Australia*. There are also South African versions and Dutch versions.

Mostly we look at the curriculum to see what resources we should produce, but we also lobby exam boards to include humane education topics in the curriculum.

*Farm Animals & Us 2* and the Teachers' Pack can also be used in colleges and universities. We have also recently produced a resource specifically targeted at agricultural and veterinary colleges entitled *Animal Welfare Aspects of Good Agricultural Practice – pig production*. This includes a book, film and PowerPoint Presentation, all available on DVD. The book can also be downloaded from the website [www.gapanimalwelfare.org](http://www.gapanimalwelfare.org).

These include case studies from across the world, including Australia. The film and the PowerPoint presentations include pictures and video clips of:

- Natural behaviours of wild boar, the ancestor of modern pigs
- Similar behaviours in modern pigs
- Comparisons between intensive, enriched indoor and free-range systems for keeping pregnant sows, farrowing sows with their piglets and growing pigs

Ultimately I think these clips of pigs, both in good situations and in bad ones, can tell you more than I can. Video remains our most powerful resource.

Our approach to humane education at Compassion in World Farming is essentially practical. We produce educational resources, we promote them and we conduct talks at schools and colleges. We don't produce educational tracts, but I hope our philosophy and pedagogical approach will be clear from the examples of our materials which I have illustrated. We aim to engage students to empathise with animals and to understand the ways in which they can make the lives of animals matter. We use resources and approaches which respect a child's right and duty to form their own opinions and to make their own ethical choices.

Humane education is about creating rounded people. A part of humane education is about creating a world that is better for animals.

**Q – Delegate:**

*I wonder if you could briefly just give us a bit of a statistical indication of the size of this education program? How many teachers per annum would you train? How many schools would be visited? And perhaps what sorts of numbers of students are exposed to this kind of information?*

I wish I knew the answer to all of those. I don't directly train teachers. There's one of me and a whole country, if not a world, to cover. So I do it by producing educational resources.

We have distributed well over 5,000 of the *Farm Animals and Us* and genetic engineering films. When I visit science teachers' exhibitions, lots of people come and say, "What have you got next?"

We also do between 150 and 250 school talks, mostly undertaken by volunteer speakers who go into schools. I do more of the college ones. It's not a huge operation; my approach is to produce good resources that work well and then promote them. It is essential to evaluate the resources in the classroom to check for suitability and effectiveness. That's also very much what Carole's trying to do over here.

**Q – Delegate:**

*Phil, you mentioned with the pig production that about 40% are in more welfare-friendly systems?*

The parents live outside, the mothers live outside, yes.

**Q – Delegate:**

*Can you estimate, perhaps, how that has come about? Has it been, do you think, partly from the educational process to do with the community and young people? Or have there been other activities within the industry to help bring about those changes?*

It's a mixture. In the case of the outdoor systems, they became common shortly after we banned the sow stall. But it also became common, because it's a much cheaper system to set up. The capital investment's small, you don't need the buildings, you need a few huts, some straw for bedding, a water system for wallowing and so on, and an electric fence to keep them in.

This has developed as a cheap way of producing piglets. Piglets will still often be kept intensively, but the sows are kept outside. Furthermore, if the pig price goes down, you can withdraw from it and come back into it without risking a lot of capital. But there's also, now, an increasing demand for free-range pork, currently up to 2%, but we expect this to rise much further. Here the piglets, as well as their mothers, will spend their lives outside.

So, as a result of education, as a result of campaigning, and because animal welfare organisations have been plugging these issues for years, progress starts to build. A key development is the marketing of the free-range egg. More free-range eggs are sold in Britain than battery eggs. However, don't forget the ones in cakes will still be battery eggs. So about a third of the eggs produced in Britain are now free-range. A note for the farmers is that that third are worth more money than the 60% that come from caged hens. Farmers are increasingly realising that animal welfare is also good for rural economies, because it is creating a market for higher value products.

Incidentally, education isn't just about work in schools. My campaigning colleagues are educators too. Everybody who lobbies is an educator. All contribute to the evolution of a humane culture.

**Q – Delegate:**

*It's interesting that you show the animals suffering in some of your resources, which I personally think is very good, because it's unveiling the truth about factory farming. I'm just wondering, have you come across any problems with parents or children complaining about the things they see, the things that you show?*

Over the years we have had very few complaints. We are not promoting vegetarianism and we avoid showing the most graphic material. For example, in schools we don't show film of cruel methods of animal transport or slaughter. We don't set out to shock. If we did, half the teachers out there would quite properly choose not to use it. I try to take a largely positive approach. I make sure we don't say anything negative about anybody, including farmers, and as a result of that, it hasn't come back to us, except very occasionally.

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