

THE *WHY* AND *HOW* OF HUMANE EDUCATION

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I'm not standing here in front of you today as an academic. I'm here as an ordinary person who has had a very longstanding interest in how human animals interface with non-human animals and who does work in humane education when and where I can.

I set myself the task this afternoon of simply recapping, to some extent, on some of what I think are the core messages that we've been hearing over the last couple of days, and the core messages that I really believe highlight why humane education should be an important part of the curriculum at all levels. I then will comment as to how interested teachers might go about accessing and possibly even developing themselves appropriate teaching resources.

A lot of what I'd planned to say has already been said in two or three different ways, so I'll ask you to bear with me. I'll just re-cap and it may be of interest, particularly to those people in the audience today who weren't here yesterday.

We heard from Phil Brooke and Nichola Kriek yesterday on the situations in the UK and in New Zealand and the progress being made there in terms of humane education. We also heard yesterday from practising teachers in the panel and, today, from Katy Wood of Voiceless Animal Clubs, as to just what they are achieving in their classrooms and why they think it's worthwhile.

Joy Verrinder's research highlighted the incomplete understandings that appear to exist in our educational environments about animal issues but, at the same time, we heard about the level of interest that is out there, amongst the Queensland teachers surveyed, and their interest in incorporating humane education into the curriculum.

So, let's just have another look at this question – Why do we need humane education? And what were some of the core messages?

From the people whose work I have just mentioned, I think we've come to some understanding that we do need to increase societal awareness and that non-human animals do matter in the moral sphere. Therefore, we need to seek opportunities to bring about

positive change in societal attitudes for the benefit not only of human animals but non-human animals as well.

We heard yesterday from a variety of people the fact that values education is about what matters ethically. And I believe, after these two days of presentations, that nobody here would argue against that.

Beryl Roberts and Corinne Hanlon helped us better understand that at both university and government levels, and for many reasons, animal ethics is now taken very seriously in this country. This is important because, despite the fact that the Australian animal ethics committee system is, as I understand it, one of the better systems in the world, it is still proving very difficult to stop the increasing use of animals in schools and tertiary institutions.

Dr Tania Signal has clearly outlined for us the potential for further research into the links between animal abuse and human domestic violence and community violence.

Both Dr Gail Tulloch and Professor Clive Phillips have helped us to see that science tells us that animals can and do suffer at the hands of human beings and that science can offer some useful definitions of “animal welfare”. But I think it’s quite apparent that more than just a scientific paradigm is needed to deal with these issues, and to ensure that animals are, indeed, fully included in our circle of compassion.

Senator Andrew Bartlett and Steven White have quite clearly set the political and the potential for a legal agenda for the future of animal ethics. And lastly, Dr Amanda Mergler has very pleasingly outlined how teacher training and development has the potential – as yet perhaps unfulfilled – to enhance the understanding of these issues and their implementation through teacher training and professional development programs.

I will review five aspects of human/animal interaction briefly, as the points they contain have, in fact, been covered. My purpose in putting these points together was to again enable us to have a quick look at the height, depth and breadth of how all-pervasive the use of animals and animal products is, in underpinning our daily lives.

I start with the issue of companion animals. There’s a whole host of related issues, some of which have already been covered at this symposium.

The issue of the huge numbers of animals that are put down in shelters is one which I think is perhaps by now very clear.

Issues such as the sale of animals from pet shops, those relating to animal dealers and unregulated industries such as backyard breeding are also major issues that have not been touched on. Still, as far as I know, nothing is happening in terms of monitoring how the animals are looked after in those situations or indeed determining whether these situations should exist at all.

With our 'food animals' (i.e. animals bred for the human consumption of their product), we have a range of issues that I think have been more than adequately covered during this Symposium. Food animals include not just our easily recognisable farm animals but also native wildlife, introduced wildlife, marine animals, domesticated animals – as in horses and rabbits – are all becoming targets for the food market.

And there is an increasing trend, certainly in Australia today, to look at the problems caused by the so-called 'feral' or 'pest' animals, and one of the solutions that is often posited is, "Let's turn it into a viable commercial industry and farm them for food."

The next set of issues that I think that we should look at relate to clothing, adornment and tourist knick-knacks. We're all too familiar with these aspects of animal use and the final products in our society. But because what goes on to produce the final product is so often hidden from us, we tend to take for granted that all is well in their manufacture.

Sport, recreation and hobbies involve a myriad uses of animals, each with their own inherent welfare problems. And the list goes on...and on.

One of the juggernauts of animal use is animal experimentation. As I said a moment ago, we've learnt how the Australian animal ethics committee system aims to offer strict guidelines and controls for the use of animals in this area, but is still, at this point in time, unable to stop the exponential growth in the number of animals being used, particularly in relation to genetically modified organisms.

I think that in reviewing some of the core messages and some of the other underlying issues here, we see, at least in some part, why we need humane education programs.

I wondered whether it's helpful to have a definition to guide us in our thinking and resource development.

I cannot reference this particular definition, because I put it together myself. It's a composite of many things that I've read:

“Humane education is about learning to practise compassion, to ensure the ethical and equal treatment of all animals in terms of their species-specific interests and with respect for their natural behaviours and environments.”

When I first started reading about what overseas groups were doing in humane education, some of the early literature put a lot of emphasis on *learning to care*. And perhaps I should have included that phrase in this definition as well, but I asked myself if *learning to care* goes far enough. I’m not the only person in these two days to say this. Practising compassion is about what we do. If we decide we care, if we decide that these issues matter, what are we going to do about it?

So, how can humane education programs be implemented? We’ve heard many ideas over the last couple of days, which I can’t better. For the sake of summary, I think there are four elements here. First of all, we need to find the people who are prepared to put them into practice, to find people interested in being educators at all levels. Animal advocacy groups are also reasonably well-positioned to provide humane education programs on a much more informal and *ad hoc* basis, obviously, than educators in permanent positions in schools. For example, the RSPCA in Queensland does great work with their schools Pet PEP program.

Some government agencies are also in a position to educate. For example, I can only speak for the Queensland situation, but the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F) has a wonderful section on their website called, “Help an Animal Smile”, which is aimed at influencing primary school children to think about these issues.

I add parents to the list as well, because, as we’re talking about focusing on future generations, I think it’s remiss of us to omit them. I think as somebody else also said this weekend – the people who aren’t the littlies or aren’t the teenagers, who aren’t doing pre-service teacher programs, but are just people out there in the community and who are mums and dads have an important role to play.

How can we encourage any initiatives that people want to set up in their educational institutions?

I think we need to make sure that we can support educators who wish to run classes with high quality, accurate and balanced resources. We need to continually bear in mind that the Australian Values Education Framework is there to be used, and it has huge potential, which has been made perfectly obvious to us in the last couple of days. We need to continue to encourage teacher training and professional development programs to actively incorporate compassion as a key component.

There was talk – or concern expressed yesterday – about how are we going to fit all this in to an already overcrowded curriculum, teachers' busy lives and so on? To my mind, it is possible and necessary to include these issues for they are already there in the embedded curriculum and just need to be teased out into the open.

So what do I mean by 'the embedded curriculum'? Really, there isn't a single subject area that can't incorporate one or other animal ethics issue. In English, for example, if you are engaging in teaching students debating skills – instead of debating whether a 12-year-old should have a credit card, why not pick an animal issue e.g., traditional factory farming practices, to debate the pros and cons ?

I think it's fairly obvious natural sciences are a ready-made subject area; mathematics; Study of Society and Environment (SOSE) is also a blatantly obvious choice. What have the great religions of the world got to say about how we should interface with non-human animals? What are the core complementary themes in the world's great religions regarding animals, and what are the differences?

Legal Studies is perhaps the subject of the future, as we have seen, as a domain to address many animal ethical issues. Domestic science; geography; history and LOTE¹; even LOTE is an appropriate forum to discuss the differing cultural attitudes towards how animals are used.

It goes without saying that all of these ethical issues are complex and so they all are going to have at least two sides to the argument. In getting students to even begin to think about these issues as an awareness-raising activity, we need to engage our students in these core skills – critical thinking, analysis and synthesis skills. Dr Gail Tulloch spoke eloquently about Bloom's cognitive and affective taxonomies that provide teachers with a great doorway to the waiting room of animal ethics. Problem-solving skills and debating can be actively engaged using, as the subject matter, an animal ethics issue, rather than a topic that's a little more traditional. All this work can be done within a values framework of kindness, empathy and compassion.

¹ LOTE Languages other than English

RESOURCES

I want to move to talking about what resources are available. And this is probably patently obvious – there are ready-to-go materials: materials that have been produced by expert people that teachers can pick up and run with, virtually immediately. Log onto the websites of any of the world's major animal advocacy groups and you will find such material, often available *gratis*.

There are materials that have been produced by organisations overseas, RSPCA groups and others, that perhaps need some modification for the Australian context.

What format do some of these resources take? Obviously there are print resources. They are available from a wide range of differing organisations. Audio-Visual and multi-media resources are available for the asking. Web-based resources are abundantly available at the moment. Advocacy organizations provide guest speakers. For the teacher wanting to begin this journey with students, there is a plethora of material already out there.

I'd like to just pause and take a moment to talk about the web-based resources, in particular. A couple of weeks ago, I just Googled the words 'humane education' and I was offered a smorgasbord of almost two million sites. And I thought, "Oh, yes, well, where do we start?" So I browsed several – certainly not 2 million! It was interesting, because I found the sites so very varied. I'll just give you a quick idea of the sorts of issues that many of these sites are covering.

Some of them deal explicitly with the issue of compassion; the fair treatment of animals; what science has to say about animal welfare and its implications for their treatment; the right of consumers to know about the origins of their food; how human health may be affected by animal industries; and, not least importantly, how these issues might be brought to bear in a meaningful way within an existing crowded curriculum. In short, there is a lot of information out there, just on the web alone. In accessing these, please ensure that you are engaging with a well known and reputable animal advocacy group.

I have a number of pages of annotated websites that might be of interest and will be happy to provide that electronically to anybody who simply wants to send me an email (cynthia@powerup.com.au).

Some 'must-look-ats' follow, for anybody who is interested in perhaps tackling some of these issues for the first time in their own environments, beginning with **international groups**:

- How could I not put *Compassion in World Farming* at the head of the list? www.ciwf.org Compassion has a variety of materials available, including primary and secondary school resources (visual and printed), dealing with animal sentience, science and ethics, agricultural extension and farm animal specific publications that can be used in the classroom for older students. They are also available via Compassion's representative in Australia by e-mailing: ciwf@alphalink.com.au
- *Animal Aid* www.animalaid.org is another amazing English group that puts out exciting and interesting resources, readily usable for teachers as well. See <http://www.animalaid.org.uk/h/n/EDUCATION/> or e-mail education@animalaid.co.uk
- *People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals*, www.peta.org is a slightly more "pushing the boundaries" kind of group, providing excellent literature and videos.
- The *International Network for Humane Education* – (InterNiche www.interniche.org) – is a website of specific interest to people in tertiary institutions. That network focuses on life science; the use of animals in life science programs at a tertiary level.
- The *International Institute for Humane Education* <http://humaneeducation.org/home> is an interesting one, because it is the only one I've become aware of which has, as its main brief, the training, the formalised professional development of existing practising teachers – we're not talking about pre-service teachers at the moment, but existing practising teachers – and this Institute offers Certificate level and Masters level courses in humane education, so that existing teachers who may have been out there, teaching for 20 years, who want to become involved in humane education, can get the training and go back into their schools and implement the programs.
- The *Humane Society of the United States* www.hsus.org also has some very worthwhile material but a lot of it would need to be adapted to suit Australian circumstances.
- The *World Animal Net* <http://.worldanimalnet/humane-ed/html> is a very good place to start to find relevant resources.
- And the *UK RSPCA* www.rspca.org.uk produces some amazing resources as well. . They really get right into schools in similar fashion to *Compassion in World Farming* with resources well tailored to suit the national curriculum and key learning areas.

Closer to home there are a number of **Australasian groups**:

- We have the *Australian Humane Educators' Network* that, as I mentioned when introducing Michelle Read-Zorn, was set up to offer a networking opportunity for teachers, and I'd encourage all of you to take up that opportunity. www.ahen.org
- *SAFE* - New Zealand's largest and most well respected animal rights organisation www.safe.org
- *Voiceless, the fund for animals* here in Australia. www.voiceless.org
- The *RSPCA* in each State and Territory.
- And *Animals Australia* www.animalsaustralia.org (Currently Animals Australia's website is being completely revamped. The old humane education pages have been removed but I anticipate there will be some new ones in the near future. In the meantime there is much general information on animal welfare available on the website that can be used in the classroom.)

As Phil Brooke of Compassion in World Farming has said, the visual is a very highly effective tool. Was it Confucius who allegedly said "What I hear, I forget. What I see, I remember. What I do, I understand."

As to **educational packages**, you should be aware of the following:

- *Share the World – Everyone matters* is a resource that Animals Australia collaborated on with the Research & Education Foundation of PETA in the United Kingdom. It was originally a British resource and was modified to better suit the Australian curriculum. 8,000 of these have been circulated in the last four or five years to Australian primary schools.
- The PETA Research and Education Foundation also financed the production of a secondary pack – a very simple pack consisting of a dozen or so reproducible master copies. *Humane Education: Animals in Today's Society – Why do they Matter?* Over 5,000 of these have already been distributed to Australian secondary schools.

- The book, *From Guinea Pig to Computer Mouse*, is the cutting edge book for those of you interested in alternatives to harmful animal use in educational programs – in particular, life science programs at all levels.

I commend these resources to you and encourage you to take up the very important challenge of engendering new attitudes towards human stewardship of non-human animals in the next generation and beyond. Touch the future – Teach!
