

## **THE NEW ZEALAND EXPERIENCE**

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I thought I would start, as Phil Brooke has done, by telling you a little bit about how I became involved with Humane Education. But first I should tell you a little bit about SAFE, as many people may not be familiar with the organisation.

SAFE stands for Save Animals From Exploitation. We are an animal rights and advocacy group in New Zealand. We've been around since 1932. Our work consists mainly of campaigning, lobbying and educating the New Zealand community about the needs and rights of animals. When we first originated, it was particularly in regards to animal experimentation, but in recent years we've broadened, and we now look at all issues to do with the treatment of animals in our lives.

I've been involved in animal welfare for about 13 years. I started working for Wellington SPCA as the Education Officer in 1994.

At that time, I was completely green about anything to do with animals. I trained as a secondary school teacher. I have a degree in Music and a degree in Geography, which have very little to do with animals! But I saw the job at the SPCA for an Education Officer and I thought it looked interesting. My reason for getting into teaching – and I know it may be the same with many teachers – is because I wanted to make a difference to the community, to our lives, to the environment. So, the job at the SPCA was quite appealing to me.

Once I started working there, I realised how much of a complete sea-change this job was going to be for me, and it really has changed my life. My work at the SPCA was mainly in primary schools. I would go out and do school visits and school talks, promoting generally the caring of animals; this is talked about a lot at primary schools as it fits into the science curriculum. So that's what I was asked to talk about, but nothing much else.

When I started working for SAFE, which was about three a half years ago, I decided that I needed to "up the ante" a bit, because one, we're a national organisation, so I needed to create a national education program, and two, I needed to be able to address it to a higher level of students, because the topics that we're dealing with are not easy topics for younger children to digest, particularly things like factory farming and animal experimentation.

I decided that this education program had to be targeted at secondary school students, and it really needed to fit into the curriculum, because I realised, after those many years of running my education program at the SPCA that secondary school teachers were very pushed for time. They couldn't just invite you in as a guest speaker, because they didn't have time. They're working to a set course of study, unit of study. And if you don't fit into it, you just don't get a look-in.

So when I decided to start putting together my humane education program for SAFE, I did a strategic plan and tried to work out how I could best marry the needs of our organisation in getting these issues about animals out, while at the same time making sure it was relevant to schools and teachers and particularly in the secondary field.

Today I'm going to talk to you about how I did that. One of the most important things I did was have a really close look at the school curriculum, and the values curriculum, which I know has already been discussed and probably will be, to some extent more, as it is an area where animal issues really fit.

Humane education has very strong links to key elements of the New Zealand curriculum, and as I'm not entirely sure of what the Australian values curriculum is like, but I'll tell you a little bit about the New Zealand one.

We have two areas – values and key competencies where it's most likely that we can have some kind of common ground. Values in the New Zealand curriculum are defined as 'deeply held beliefs about what is important and desirable' and they're expressed in the way in which people can connect. As an example I used a picture of a chimpanzee called Buddy, who SAFE actually managed to get relocated to a sanctuary in Africa. It's a perfect example of how people have beliefs and how they express them. The relocation of Buddy to a sanctuary was the result of our beliefs and the actions that we took to make them happen.

So, New Zealand students are encouraged to value innovation, inquiry and curiosity. And by that, they are encouraged to think creatively and critically, which is a very important part of what we are trying to get people to do when they are looking at animals. We want them to think critically about our treatment of animals, not to just accept what is currently happening to animals.

New Zealand students are encouraged to value diversity, and once again, when you're looking at diversity, we live in a society where people have different ideas about things. And so, it's important that we recognise, when we're at school, that people will have different ideas and different values, and there will be people who have different ideas and values

about animals. New Zealand students are encouraged to respect those different values. So once again, this fits perfectly with what we are trying to achieve.

Equity. Of course, equity is, as has already been discussed, often thought of in terms of human rights. But there are definitely areas that can be explored when looking at the human-animal relationship and animal rights.

Care for the environment, once again, is always to do with generally the human impact on the environment, although it is becoming a lot more – we are beginning to slowly open our eyes to how we treat animals and how that is also affecting the environment, and integrity. So through learning about these values, they're then expected to have learning experiences. And via learning experiences, students are encouraged to think about their own values and the values of others, which I was just discussing.

So, what do I actually feel about animals? T A placard reading 'animals are not machines' is such an easily debatable topic about machines. "Are animals machines?" It's one thing we look at and debate constantly. Should we be treating them like they're machines? Why was this concept established? Why do we think about animals as machines? Well, you can look at the philosophies of Descartes and people like that. There's so much potential.

Different kinds of values help students learn about moral, social, cultural, aesthetic and economic values. Once again, animals fit perfectly into all of these areas. Animals impact our lives in all of these areas, and the values of other peoples and cultures. So once again, there's a lot of scope.

Once students have learnt about these issues — had these learning experiences, then it's hoped they'll develop abilities. The abilities are that they are able to express their values, so they don't just understand they have values, but they are able to express them. That they are able to explore, with empathy, the values of others, and that they can critically analyse the values and actions based on and discuss disagreements that arise from differences in values. And an image of people protesting about blood sports is a good example of how young people might decide to do that – and they *do* do that. It would be great to be able to have these sorts of debates in the classroom. Why are people protesting about blood sports? Why is it important to them? Why do people have disagreements about these issues? What's behind them? There's just so much potential.

Students can then make ethical decisions and act on them. Anybody who's been involved in animal welfare or rights, certainly myself for many years, base their life on ethical decisions. It's changed the way I live my life. It's very important to open that door to people's minds

that this is another area that they can think about. And it's a very compassionate area to think about.

So, to reiterate values and key competencies are the two areas of the curriculum that most relate to humane education. The key competencies of: relating to others; participating and contributing; and thinking. Critical thinking about the way we interact with each other, the way we treat animals, the way we relate to others, and how we are active members of the community.

So how do we bring animals into values education? Well, as the previous speaker said, values education in New Zealand – and it sounds like it's the same in Australia – very much overlooks the animal. Animals are lumped in as part of the environment a lot of the time. Not looking at these links means that we ignore a vast reservoir of important knowledge and experiences in school: the importance of animals and developing empathy, tolerance and respect..

There is plenty of scope in New Zealand to include human education studies that explore the relationship between human and animals.

Teaching advantages to using a humane education approach include the increased capacity to follow a particular human-animal theme through several years of a syllabus. We already saw from the last presentation that various issues were brought up out of that study that could be explored in depth. There's a huge amount of topic, or resource material that can be used and currently isn't being used. A focus on animal themes will encourage students to draw on existing enthusiasm and knowledge.

Now, so many young people love animals, and in my work, working as an Education Officer over the years, I could barely leave the classroom, sometimes, because students almost wouldn't let me out the door, they wanted to talk to me about their animals. This was, of course, younger children. But there is a huge amount of interest that students have already, in animals and animal issues that can be tapped into.

It also gives the opportunity for us to think critically about how animal imagery and interactions are embedded in our everyday lives – and they really are everywhere. You could just sit down with a group of students and ask them to even look at the things they're wearing, and how are animals contributing to that? If you omitted animals completely from your lives, how much of an impact would that have on your life? These sorts of things, we just take for granted, television, children's movies, books. They are just absolutely

everywhere. And it's incredible to me that we haven't brought this into our curriculum, into our teaching and learning in a more deep and meaningful way.

And so, preparing for the future. Of course, the purpose of any values-based humane education program is to prepare students for the life after secondary school. By looking at human-animal relationships, students will be equipped with important tools needed to ensure they are mature and informed, thoughtful and compassionate members of society. In these two ways linking values education, and taking the curriculum and making it stronger has huge, huge potential benefits for young people.

In New Zealand we now have opportunities at tertiary level. The New Zealand Centre for Human and Animal Studies, where you can take a course in Human and Animal studies, has recently opened at Canterbury University. I can personally vouch for this, because I'm currently taking one of those papers! It's a way in which the humanities and social sciences can look at animals and their interactions with humans and how they're portrayed and help shape human communities and culture.

It is a fascinating paper, and incredible that they're actually doing this sort of thing. Human-animal research can include looking at a range of concepts, the human, nature, culture, society, civilisation, the native, the exotic, the primitive.

The photo of neuroscientist and cetologist Dr Paul Spong is a perfect example of the combined approach of looking at the human and nature culture; Dr Paul Spong, was working with the captive Orca 'Skana'. He spent a lot of time with her and discovered that she liked flute music. I think he was trying to communicate with her in other ways, and with success, but she was getting bored with some of his tests. At one point she actually refused to do them. He conducted a test and she got every answer wrong. She clearly did that on purpose because she was sick and tired of his tests.

Then one day he played the flute to her and she was absolutely fascinated. Apparently, she would even let him sit on her head and swim around the pool with him, as he played his flute, which must have been quite an unusual-looking situation!

Through these types of experiences and relationships we can look at the human-animal relationship in more depth. Other things that are looked at in the New Zealand Centre for Human and Animal Studies include: examining the place and treatment of animals, the representation of animals, researching the history of humans changing attitudes towards relationships with animals. I've found in the short time that I've been doing this study, that there is so much material, it's quite staggering. You may think, well, is there going to be

enough academic material to actually do this sort of work? But there's an absolute ton of it, and it's just waiting to be used. So it's a very exciting development in New Zealand.

So what am I actually doing as regards as education? Well, as I said, I've been developing an education program, and it's called *Animals and Us*. The vision of *Animals and Us* is that SAFE education will advance knowledge and critical thinking about the relationship between human and non-human animals and foster attitudes and values of compassion, respect and empathy.

It took me about 18 months just to develop the program and how it was going to take form. The mission is that we will provide professional resources specifically designed to the New Zealand curriculum framework. I've tried to marry what's required in the curriculum and particularly the values component, with the types of materials that we can provide on animal issues in a professional way. And we're trying to advance knowledge and critical thinking about all of these various issues to do with the relationship between human and non-human animals.

It's expected that it will complement the curriculum, so, we've put together a variety of lesson plans. The first booklet that we've designed is about battery hen farming in New Zealand. We've put together a resource specifically about this topic and it's centred on the English curriculum. We've made it as easy as possible and tried to spoon-feed teachers all the material and lesson plans, so that they can just take it and run with it.

What the program actually offers is a website, a 136-page resource booklet and a DVD. As Phil Brooke of Compassion in World Farming has said, , video is very, very important. The website provides teaching material related resources and lessons for NCEA. In New Zealand, we have NCEA, the National Certificate of Educational Achievement., The programme all fits into that and also has ideas for particular achievement standards.

The feedback has been absolutely incredible. We've had over 70 teachers order copies and, six schools are already using it. The Minister of Education has approved it and they are promoting it on their website in New Zealand, which is incredibly positive. There has also been much positive feedback from teachers, I am happy to make available to those interested. (Alternatively, response can be accessed via our website [www.safe.org.nz](http://www.safe.org.nz)).

**Q – Delegate:**

*Nichola, you mentioned the acceptance of the resource into the curriculum. Can you give an approximate time-frame for how long it took you to get this accepted and what processes you had to go through?*

I had the website completed, and I got in touch with the Ministry of Education and said, “Look, we’ve got this new resource that we’re going to be distributing to every secondary school in New Zealand for free. We’d like it to be promoted by you.” And they said, “Well, we won’t do that unless it’s been quality assured. So, I just had to wait. I sent them a copy of what I had put together; they took it and had a look at it. It took about two months, and I had to chase them a little bit! But they came back to me and said, “Yes, this is fine.” And so they quality assured it, and advertised it on their website.

**Q – Delegate:**

*In Australia, there’s been quite a bit of resistance against humane education, particularly in country areas. Do you have the same experience in New Zealand?*

Not so far. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. In November, I will carry out some evaluation by initially sending out a survey to every school that has received the resource. And I’m sure that rural schools might not be as interested in it as other schools, but we’ll see.

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