PERPETRATORS OR PROTECTORS? WHY THE VETERINARY PROFESSION CANNOT IGNORE THE RIGHTS OF NON-HUMAN ANIMALS

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Abstract
There is a disjuncture between society’s perception of the caring role that it presumes veterinarians play and the reality on the ground of a profession that is deeply conflicted and in some cases the perpetrator of problematic and unethical behaviour. The paper will provide an overview of current landscape in relation to animal protection, welfare and rights and will examine the veterinary profession and veterinary associations in South Africa in relation to the political and ideological lens they apply to the relationship between humans and non-human animals. It will explore the role of veterinarians in the social construction and exploitation of non-human animals and key gaps in veterinary practices, curricula and policy. It will examine the “wildlife” and vivisection industries as examples of important sites of struggle for why we should be expanding and deepening conversations about human relationships with non-human animals and why there is a need to reshape public discourse, advocacy policy and legislation around controversial practices in South Africa, and what this recast responsibility could look like.
INTRODUCTION
The EMS is a South African based philanthropic Foundation with the purpose of achieving lasting solutions, alleviating and ending suffering, raising public awareness and providing dignity through supporting and sustaining humane solutions, interventions and research for the protection of children, the Aged and wildlife.

In this market-driven, extractive anthropocene and speciesist world, the survival of nonhuman animals, as individuals or as species, is now almost totally dependent on them being categorised as commodities. What we are seeing in relation to nonhuman animals is a totalitarian, global system of surveillance, technological control, and mass murder without moral, spatial, temporal, biological, or ontological limits. The scale and the ferocity of human violence against nonhumans today is without historical precedent: over 150 billion nonhuman animals are slaughtered each year by commercial industries. At the same time, we are living through the greatest mass species extinction event in 60 million years.

“Long before nonhuman animals are obliterated physically, they are destroyed conceptually. From the perspective of capital, other animals are not conscious individuals, beings with experiences, lives, and interests of their own, but exchangeable units - things to be manipulated and disposed of at will. Individual nonhuman animals are never given names by the scientists who vivisect or poison them in their laboratories, nor by the farmers who raise them for slaughter, because they are viewed not as unique beings, but as quantities, as abstractions within a system of abstractions.” (John Sanbonmatsu)

While the roots of the veterinary profession are clearly in the economic value of nonhuman animals with an emphasis on animal health, the 2014 Veterinary Council Code of Conduct document included a commitment to animal welfare. Interestingly this inclusion of animal welfare is not bound to the prevention of suffering. Claims to the discourse of “animal welfare” by and within professional bodies and institutions, such as the veterinary profession, ring hollow. This is because in many ways it is defined by the profit motive (because vets charge fees for their services) and it regularly works hand in glove with the abusive systems of production and in many instances propel it. Indeed vets generally are deeply entrenched in the nonhuman animal exploitation industries, making income from them and reliant on them for income. For these reasons it can be argued that by definition they have a vested interest in supporting the status quo. You cannot talk about being concerned for the welfare of nonhuman animals but at the same time you are braaing them, scoffing down Macdonald’s burgers and actively participating in the exploitive industries themselves.

Given the current training, curricula and the imbedded nature of vets within abusive industries, many stakeholders believe that veterinarians do not have the proper tools and are in no position to provide leadership in issues dealing with “animal welfare”. In the same way that you cannot say that only doctors should be the natural and principal harbingers of human rights discourse, administration and implementation, you cannot say that vets have the skill sets to oversee animal welfare and protection or to ensure that the interests and rights of nonhuman animals are prioritised. In fact, I would say the opposite. They do not and they should not.

Of course, one can also argue the it is precisely because the concept of “animal welfare” does not go far enough, does not question the systemic reasons for speciesism or the rampant commodification of nonhuman animals - that this is exactly why it has been co-opted by
industry, a-la-greenwashing style, as a strawman response to growing public pressure and a critical mass of scientific evidence.

It is not about weighing up competing interests or a touch of schizophrenia. So for example, it is usually put like this: “So how do we as veterinarians maximise both animal welfare and productivity to satisfy the societal demand for good animal welfare and the global demand for food?” This is entirely the wrong question. And somewhat disingenuous. Vets have already taken a side: it is quite clear – the veterinary profession is deeply interwoven with the industrialised capitalist complex which is speeding up and dependant on animal suffering. Where nonhuman animals are viewed as property and ‘the other’, without individual rights on a scale not previously known.

And the lingo used by the veterinary profession accentuates this. Take for example the UP Faculty of Veterinary Science, 2016/2017 Undergraduate faculty brochure, and I quote: “Our graduates and research programmes are vital in enhancing public and animal health, promoting biosecurity and welfare, and ensuring our production animals and pets are safe and sound… promoting livestock production, veterinarians contribute to increasing the profitability of commercial and small scale farming enterprises and thereby enhancing food security and economic development of livestock owners...” and in relation to so-called Laboratory animal science: “The veterinarian is an essential member of the team involved in the welfare of laboratory animals, monitoring the utilisation of animals for experimental purposes and giving advice on ethical issues (from the nonhuman animals who find themselves unwilling subjects in research laboratories, veterinarians espousing ethical positions seem paradoxical to say the least.)...In relation to Animal welfare the brochure says: “The veterinarian is intimately involved in animal welfare at welfare organisations. Veterinarians are involved in general matters pertaining to the welfare of animals through the promotion of appropriate husbandry practices, nutritional practices, disease prevention strategies and sound production systems.” So in this context animal welfare is seen more as an employment opportunity.

The specific use of desensitized and detached language, by governments, international bodies, capital, conservationists, and veterinarians, serves to codify, objectify, control, convert, erase, and disembodied living beings. It plays an important role in legitimizing and sanitizing the unspeakable so that there is a deliberate collective forgetfulness about the main actors and the individual victims. Hence, terminology such as “game,” “species”, “wildlife products,” “production,” “off-takes,” “livestock” and “utilisation”. To name a few.

Given all of this, I am extremely concerned that in terms of the Performing Animals Protection Amendment Act the designated National Licensing Officer must be either an Animal Scientist; or a Veterinarian. Not even the State Veterinarian ANY veterinarian. Not that a state veterinarian is in any shape of form the guardian of animal welfare in any case.

“Animal welfare” prioritises humans and the belief that animal value is consistent only with what the market allows. This is why the notion of “animal rights” is almost never discussed positively in formal veterinary education. So “animal welfare” is all there is on the table. Industries which use nonhuman animals claim that animal welfare is at the top of their list of priorities and that they employs vets to ensure this: The scientific community abides by animal welfare "codes of conduct". Farmers say they care deeply about “their animals”, that they treat them well, like family in fact, and only do what is best for them. Animal handlers and trainers say much the same, and maintain that their animals are encouraged to perform
through positive reinforcement. So, supposedly animal welfare is of the utmost importance to everyone from government representatives to leaders of industry to veterinary bodies. But does that mean animals are being well treated? Unfortunately, globally, all the evidence is showing the opposite. As things currently stand, animal welfare provides a framework for basic animal care, while still allowing for routine, institutionalised and widespread suffering and abuse. The only way to ensure that we stamp out our rampant abuse of nonhuman animals is to extend to nonhuman animals the same basic legal considerations we extend to members of our own species.

The human lens of culture and entrenched ways of seeing and behaviour is merely a construction. But there is an objective reality. And that objective reality is that like human animals, nonhuman animals suffer and are complex sentient beings. They have rights that are intrinsic to them and stand outside of and separate from their relationship to humans. The animal rights positions raise deep challenges to the veterinary profession and its support for and involvement with multiple practices that could be threatened and potentially dismantled, from vivisection, to zoos, to the wildlife industry, to breeding and farming.

FOR PURPOSES OF TODAY’S DISCUSSION I’M ONLY GOING TO BE TOUCHING ON VIVISECTION AND WILDLIFE AS A WAY OF TEASING OUT THE TENENT OF MY ARGUMENT.

VIVISECTION
Every year 100s of millions of nonhuman animals are used in research experiments. Experimentation on nonhuman animals, or vivisection, has long been opposed on ethical and moral grounds, and moral and scientific opposition to the practice continues to grow. Increasingly, empirical evidence has come to the consensus that vivisection is not the most efficient or effective way to conduct research. 

Vivisection is intricately woven into the veterinary career. Not only are many of the vivisectors veterinarians but the laboratories are usually overseen by vets or para-veterinarians. Moreover vets themselves are involved in experimentation on nonhuman animals in terms of their own research and behalf of the “pet” and agricultural industries. And representatives of the animal welfare society on the animal ethics committees usually have a veterinary or para-veterinary background. And predictably, the Veterinary Council actively endorses animal experimentation by way of a policy adopted in 1997. This policy has not been updated, as far as I am aware.

By way of illustration, I want to relate an experience I had. One that will always haunt me. In 1996 I was part of an NGO that negotiated the termination of long-running asbestos fibre dusting experiments on baboons at the National Centre for Occupational Health in Johannesburg. Seven baboons were released into our care for rehabilitation and sanctuary. After many months of planning and anxiety, frustration and heartache, we set off from the NCOH on a nine-hour journey to a better life. I wish I could use the words ‘to freedom’ but the unhappy reality is that the impact of laboratory existence is so pervasive, so intense, that total and unscarred recovery would be a miracle. I was shocked and deeply moved from the day I first met the baboons – the so-called ‘Control Group’ as the laboratory detachedly called them. They were so patently sad and yet people in the lab did not see their individual suffering. It was all so unnatural, so immoral, to restrict these normally dextrous, agile wild
primates to one metre by one metre cages. I asked myself, how can society allow this to go on? Six hundred and twenty-four had been killed in the asbestos inhalation experiments there.

Huge numbers had been tattooed across their chests. I immediately gave them names – not just because I wanted to acknowledge their individuality, but also because I wanted the people in the laboratory to feel uncomfortable with that fact. Guinny, Sybil and Rhona were in one room. Rhona’s cage was at the door and she perpetually looked down the passage awaiting her inevitable doom. Stress had caused all of Sybil’s hair to fall out – she was totally naked except for a strange Mohican at the top of her head – and she went around and around in her cage in continuous circular motions. In the next room were Gerald and Nathan, two huge and frustrated males. Gerald shook his cage violently and barked. Nathan was the observer and came to Gerald’s defence whenever he could. Next door were Winston, Toby and Dibs. Winston was sad. So sad that he often cowered in a corner and never moved from there. But, occasionally there was a spark and he would communicate with the others by letting out a loud ‘waaoooh’. Toby was very shy and in pain. He could barely eat because his teeth had been badly affected by the unnatural food he was fed. Dibs was afraid and distracted and spent hours clinging to the top of his cage where he could barely peer out of the window of the room. They had been deprived of their basic and essential social need to touch one another. They were all stressed and afraid: afraid of humans, who prodded them with metal sticks, squeezed them in crush cages and hurt and injured them. For almost a decade this had been their life. It must have been far worse when these rooms were filled to capacity with baboons – screaming and terrified.

We planned to move them at night when it would be cooler and less stressful for them. The day of the long-awaited move arrived. When I reached the laboratory in the early morning they had already began to prepare the baboons for their move into the basement. What I was faced with was an intimate view of what goes on in a vivisection laboratory. It was horrifying. Stress tangibly filled the air. The handlers were talking at the tops of their voices and noisily moving the designated travelling cages into the various rooms where the baboons were housed. Wire grids were deafeningly hammered into their cages and one by one the baboons were callously prodded with metal rods and forced into the section of the cage where they were helplessly crushed and mildly sedated. The baboons knew what was coming. It was obvious from their behaviour that this had happened many times before. Very often it had meant death to their fellow inmates. They screamed in fear and terror, each desperately trying to avoid the unavoidable. By midday they had all been moved to the bad-smelling basement. The handlers were gone, never to return. Our truck was not due to arrive till the evening, so we immediately moved their cages as close together as we could. For the first time they could all see one another. At once there was much smacking of lips (baboons do this as a form of affection and communication), general interest and curiosity about each other. As more volunteers arrived to help with the move the atmosphere became charged with a mixture of excitement and relief. I know the baboons sensed it too. Perhaps they could now begin to allow themselves to believe that they were in the process of being rescued. They were very calm when, one by one, we gently hoisted them aboard the awaiting truck. That night, when we pulled away from the NCOH none of us looked back. We did not want to.

A while back I undertook some research on ‘the state of the nation’ in relation to the use of nonhuman animal experimentation in South Africa. And I’m sad to say that very little if anything has changed for the nonhuman animals caught up in this cruel industry. Drafting the Report was a challenging and frustrating experience. It was an extremely difficult (and often an impossible task) to gather evidence and information so as to provide an in-depth profile
and extent of the animal experimentation sector. In many ways the imperfect nature of that Report underscores the very problems that are at play in South Africa within this sector. What this preliminary investigation clearly revealed was a startling picture – one of widespread secrecy and unaccountability, the inability and disinterest by state agencies to adequately monitor the sector, lack of public awareness, a lack of centralised statistics and data, the complicit role of veterinary and animal welfare bodies in legitimising animal experimentation, insufficient enforcement and a general way of thinking that promotes the use of nonhuman animals in laboratories rather than protection and respect.

Even in countries where there is supposedly some regulation, undercover investigations in the EU, UK and USA have graphically illustrated that guidelines on standards of housing can be ignored; and that no legislation, however well intentioned, can ever ensure that individuals behave ‘appropriately’. Undercover investigations have also revealed that laboratory staff almost inevitably become desensitised to the suffering or distress of the animals they look after, and in some individuals this results in callous or brutal treatment that is inexcusable. Therefore, even the minimal standards required by laws, regulations and administrative measures cannot be ensured; If this is the case in these countries - what is going on in South Africa – where there is no transparency and accountability and no legislation – it can only make the mind boggle.

Because of its secretive nature, historically there are many any examples of vets who played pivotal roles in unethical experiments, in particular clandestine apartheid chemical warfare experiments at the Roodeplaat Research Laboratory (RRL). Onderstepoort was the alma mater to many of the veterinary surgeons implicated in the Chemical and Biological Warfare programme. And as far as I know none of the vets fingered in the TRC hearings were ever censured by the Veterinary Council.

THE WILDLIFE INDUSTRY
In Africa “wild animals” have become merely species and specimens. They have all but lost their agency, individuality, and independence and are no longer ‘wild’ because the spatial, ideological, and economic context in which they live is fashioned and driven by human dominance, greed, and destructiveness. They have been conquered—and the conquered are held in contempt, disrespected, and unrecognized. “Wild animals” have become socially and culturally marginalized and invisible. They do not live parallel or separate lives, but their lives are entangled with ours. This is the prerequisite on which they are allowed to exist. Essentially it is a case of exsunt the “wild animals,” unless they are co-opted as aesthetic props in the capitalist production and construction of notions of wilderness. Simultaneously, the global political economy, the State and “wildlife industry” is actively promoting the notion of “wild animals” and the chimera of wilderness to propel profits, thus paradoxically and concomitantly obliterating and constructing. The perpetually increasing scale of “wild animal” commodification as a result of the nexus between hypercapitalism, globalization, pro-“sustainable use” policy discourse and the growth-dependent, unjust, and ecologically flawed global and local development model should be screaming out alarm bells to those who are concerned about the interests of these tyrannized victims.

In South Africa - within the overarching 'development' framework and under the guise of poverty alleviation the current South African government is spearheading an aggressive 'consumptive use' and 'if it pays it stays' agenda. Historically, South Africa has always taken a pro-consumptive use stance in relation to ‘wild’ nonhuman animals. Under apartheid this was
so a few people, mainly white, could benefit and have private hunting grounds, but today this use is part of the language of development. In the period of transition from apartheid, from 1990 to 1994, the ANC did not initiate any discussions about animal abuse issues and since 1994 there has been no fundamental reassessment of policy. Clearly nonhuman animal suffering is not on our government’s agenda. ‘Wild’ nonhuman animals are becoming one of its biggest commodities. And our government is driving and overseeing the burgeoning trade in wild animals and is also responsible for the way hunting is flourishing. The State is also acting as a conduit to provide polices and legislation (or lack thereof) for industries to continue unhindered. Indeed, it is because the State is not taking any legislative responsibility that it has, to all intents and purposes, outsourced and devolved animal welfare issues to under-resourced NGOs.

Treating living animals as commodities and “consumptive use” practices such as trophy hunting which promotes and sanctions violence against highly sentient creatures essentially accepts and normalises violence more generally in society. Disrespect towards nonhuman animals cannot be neatly pigeonholed, it is part of a continuum of other human behaviours. In South Africa, research is showing that the hunting industry continues to maintain highly racialized and discriminatory practices and perpetuate apartheid-era property and land relations. These findings show that there is an intimate relationship between disrespectful treatment of wild animals and similar behaviour towards humans.

Farming ‘wild’ animals and the local and international trade in ‘wild’ animals is enormous and ever-increasing. The impacts on the suffering of its victims is overwhelming. Given the role vets play in abusive industries it is therefore not surprising that vets in South Africa are deeply entrenched in this industry, aiding and abetting it and allowing it to accelerate, particularly because ‘wild ‘animals are being converted into “agricultural products”. While Africa’s wild animals are becoming extinct in their natural habitats, on the other hand, in South Africa, they are being commercially bred purely for the purposes of killing and naked profit. The recasting of wild animals as disposable commodities without intrinsic value, is taking place as the Earth is reaching finite limits and “resource use” is intensifying as a consequence.

The violent geography of the trade in Africa’s wild animals is extensive, lucrative and ever-expanding. The international trade (legal and illegal) involves millions of animals every year and is one of the key drivers of species extinction, population decline, suffering, abuse and death. The trade in African mammals, birds and reptiles has grown dramatically since the early 1990s. Profit motivated dealers and middlemen, and a seemingly bottomless market, drive this trade.

The role of vets in perpetuating, legitimising and accelerating ‘wild’ animal misery is ever-present and clear in every aspect of the wildlife trade. Let’s be clear, it’s not about safeguarding the interests of animals but about ticking boxes in relation to the transmission of diseases across borders etc. – so trade in sentient beings per se is not the problem and therefore by definition neither is animal suffering. As the animal health professionals, vets are also falsely identified as the doyens of animal welfare. Vets, very problematically, sign off on the papers which allow wild animals to be traded internationally. Surely these vets have no idea where these animals are really going and what their fate and future holds? Cynically I would argue they don’t care. It’s just profitable paperwork to them. We have been told that some of the animals have been injured in their crates while still on the tarmac at the
airport. Where were the vets then? Instead of reporting cases of animal mistreatment in these instances they are facilitating them.

We recently received a lot of permit information as a result of a Promotion of Access to Information Act application. It is littered with examples of vets actively and intricately involved in selling off indigenous animals into the international trade – from lions, tigers, jaguars, cheetah, leopards, rhinos, tortoises, meerkats and giraffes to destinations in the United Arab Emirates, Libya, Iraq, Laos, Vietnam, China and Thailand, to name a few.

Apart from actively trading in animals – for example companies such as Savannah Game Services (Chris Kingsley) and Wildlife Assignments International (Charles van Niekerk) - vets are also deeply entrenched in the “wildlife industry”, including breeding, capture and translocation, and in some cases, hold key leadership positions in the industry, such as Dr Peter Oberem who is President of Wildlife Ranching SA and Prof Gerry Swan who is the Director of the South African Crocodile Industry Association.

Vets have also been implicated and involved in facilitating the illegal activities of gangs and syndicates in relation to the illegal trade in rhino horn including:
- Dehorning 100s of rhinos and laundering their horns into the trade;
- falsifying permits;
- the illegal hunting of rhinos – by darting them with M99 and removing their horns – this is referred to as chemical poaching;
- Vets buying rhinos on behalf of people who had been charged with multiple crimes involving the illegal trade in rhino horn – for example Dr Karel Toet bought rhinos on behalf of Dawie Groenewald to conceal his involvement.
- Vets were paid to identify rhino farmers to host rhino hunts by pseudo hunters from Vietnam.

These vets are still in practice. Generally the Veterinary Council response to these kinds of cases is poor at best. Possibly suspension for 6 months, which is suspended for 10 years on the condition a fine is paid, an article is written and the person is not found guilty of a similar transgression during the period of suspension;

Other questionable activities and transgressions vets are involved with in relation to wildlife include:
- The breeding and marketing of phenotypic colour variants within a species specifically for trophy hunting;
- Capturing and marking techniques which have harmful welfare impacts
- The drugging of animals in zoos to ensure they make suitable ‘exhibits’;
- The tranquilizing of animals taken to auction;
- The supply of veterinary drugs to wildlife traffickers and poachers – including Ketamine and M99;
- Support for rhino dehorning;
- Assistance in so-called “green hunts”;
- Working with private zoo traders and circuses;
- South Africa has developed a terrible and inhumane industry from the elephants they deliberately orphaned through culling, namely the elephant-back safari industry. Over and above the “cull orphans” other young elephants were allowed to be deliberately abducted and kidnapped from their mothers and families by the industry. This would not have been able to take place without the vets actively participating in it. South
Africa has the largest elephant back riding/elephant interaction industry in Africa with more than 100 elephants held in captivity for these purposes.

- Vets are supporting the captive elephant industry by keeping bulls on GNRH virtually permanently. GNRH (Gonadotropin-releasing hormone) was developed for use in pigs yet vets are dispensing and using it for use with elephants. According to an industry insider, “Many can only operate their facilities if bulls are on GNRH – if they took them off they would not be able to handle them”.

CONCLUSION
The most portentous connections of our time are the chains linking animal exploitation, human exploitation, and environmental degradation. Humans are animals too and we need to awaken our sensibilities and capacity for compassion, mercy and empathy toward other animals killed by the billions annually in our name. Animals have a life before they turn into food, trophies, etc. Animals have agency. Indeed, they have their own cultures and traditions. There are systemic commonalities which oppress both humans and nonhumans, and we need to make connections between multiple forms of oppression, power and privilege. It is these systems of oppression that we collectively need to unpack, understand and dismantle. What I am advocating is a commitment to the promotion of inclusive justice, of showing compassion across the species barrier and building a better future in a post-Apartheid South Africa.

Vets need to see animals as sentient beings and individuals not property and both the SAVA and the veterinary council needs to change, adapt and build their policies, codes, legislation etc. accordingly. In this regard I would like to bring to your attention the recent unanimous and landmark Constitutional Court judgement handed down in December last year in the NSPCA vs the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development and Another. This Judgement not only elevated the welfare and protection of nonhuman animals to a constitutional concern, but also significantly related their welfare and protection to biodiversity. The Court emphasised that constitutional values dictate a more caring attitude towards fellow humans, animals and the environment in general and that this obligation was especially pertinent because of South Africa’s history. Of particular interest is that the Constitutional Court held that:

- The rationale behind protecting non-human animal welfare has shifted from merely safeguarding the moral status of humans to placing intrinsic value on animals as individuals.
- Non-human animals are sentient beings capable of suffering and experiencing pain.
- Non-human animals are worthy of protection.
- Guardianship of the interests of non-human animals reflects constitutional values and the interests of society at large.
- The protection of non-human animals safeguards the moral status of humans and the degeneration of human values.

The Court also made the following important declarations:

- Humans and animals have a storied relationship, one that is a part of the fabric of our society, homes and lives. Animals have shifted from being “mere brutes or beasts” to “fellow beasts, fellow mortals or fellow creatures” and finally to “companions, friends and brothers.”
- To protect these voiceless companions, individuals have time and again stepped in when animals are mistreated.
- The desirability of preventing animal cruelty and protecting animals against cruel treatment is entrenched in South African law.
• Our courts now afford increasingly robust protection to animal welfare.
• That it has been recognised by the courts that animals are worthy of protection not only because of the reflection that this has on human values, but because animals “are sentient beings that are capable of suffering and of experiencing pain”.
• That “[c]onstitutional values dictate a more caring attitude towards fellow humans, animals and the environment in general”.

This Con Court judgment means that the rationale behind protecting animal welfare has shifted from merely safeguarding the moral status of humans to placing intrinsic value on animals as individuals. It goes without saying that bodies such as the VETERINARY COUNCIL and SAVA need to take heed of this judgement and adjust their existing policies, guidelines, legislation, etc. The veterinary curriculum also needs to be adjusted to reflect this.

It is not just public discourse that needs to be reshaped, but veterinary training too. The veterinary profession in South Africa needs to foster more interdisciplinary collaboration by introducing the humanities and social sciences into it learning and teaching. There is something similar at UCT- it’s called the Medical Humanities at Primary Health Care Directorate, which works at the intersection of the medical and the humanistic traditions in South Africa and on the African continent. Simply put it is an attempt to move beyond the binaries that have separated the worlds of the medical and the scientific from the domains of the personal and the humanistic.

Finally, in closing I’d like to read an extract from the he German Veterinary Association for the Protection of Animals codex:

“Veterinary action for the welfare and protection of animals is guided by the principle of respect for life and the awareness that the animal has a dignity which is to be respected. Therefore protection and care for an animal cannot be dependent on its economic value… veterinary surgeons should let themselves be guided by the principle: "When in doubt, support the animals!"