

Animal Voice

Special Report

April 2005

Scientists call on the UN to acknowledge the sentience of animals



**"Grey parrots have the intelligence of a four-to-six-year-old human child and learn in ways that are similar to those of a human child."
- Scientist**



Scientists from around the world voted unanimously in London on 18th March 2005 for the United Nations to recognize that animals are sentient beings, capable of suffering.

The scientists were among the 600-strong vote that was the culmination of a two-day conference on animal sentience held at the QE II Conference Centre in London. Entitled *"From Darwin to Dawkins: the science and implications of animal sentience"* the conference was organised by the British-based organisation *Compassion in World Farming Trust*.

Giving the keynote speech, world renowned primatologist Dr Jane Goodall, who was appointed a UN Messenger of Peace in 2002, said: "Back in 1960 – when I first started my work with chimpanzees – a conference like this could not have taken place. Today, we are beginning to understand that we are not the only beings on this planet with personalities, minds and

feelings and the blurring of the line between 'them' and 'us' raises tremendous ethical concerns because of the way we treat them (animals)."

600 delegates from 50 different countries voted that animals are neither 'things' nor 'products' – but sentient beings, capable of pleasure and pain, happiness and misery, contentment and terror. (As if we didn't already know!)

In paper after paper, animal scientists gave the conference insight into the feelings of animals from parrots to pigs.

At the end, Professor John Webster of the Department of Veterinary Science, University of Bristol, received resounding applause and support for the following statement to be conveyed to the relevant international bodies: *"This conference calls on the UN, the WTO, the World Animal Health Organisation (OIE) and their member governments to join us in recognizing that sentient animals are capable of suffering and that we all have a duty to preserve the habitat of wild animals and to end cruel farming systems and other trades and practices which inflict suffering on animals."*

Many delegates said they believed that the conference would be seen by history as a watershed between the old world perception of animals as products and property, and the emerging new world acknowledgement of animals as deeply sentient beings.

To Do!

See Sentient Being Petition insert.

The world's top animal scientists gave impassioned appeals for a fairer deal for animals at a two-day conference in London, March 2005

Dr Jane Goodall

"Back in 1960 - when I first started my work with chimpanzees - a conference like this could not have taken place. Today, we are beginning to understand that we are not the only beings on this planet with personalities, minds and feelings and the blurring of the line between 'them' and 'us' raises tremendous ethical concerns because of the way we treat them (animals)."

- Dr Jane Goodall, world renowned primatologist who was appointed as a United Nations Messenger of Peace in 2002.



Professor Marian Dawkins

"We should not assume that we automatically know what it is like to be another sentient being. We should have the humility to allow their eyes to tell us what we should see and their voices and behaviour to tell us what we should know."

- Marian Stamp Dawkins is Professor of Animal Behaviour in the Department of Zoology at the University of Oxford.



Professor Irene Pepperberg

"Grey parrots have the intelligence of a four-to-six-year-old human child and learn in ways that are similar to those of a human child."

- Professor Irene Pepperberg, Department of Psychology, Brandeis University, USA. She has studied the cognitive abilities of Grey parrots for the last 30 years.



Professor Donald Broom

"The rules of morality require us to help others, not harm others. Animals show similar rules of conduct such as co-operation, affection, sharing food and even reconciliation behaviour. People understand that we should not do things that harm us but where does the 'us' begin and end? Does 'us' mean close relatives? Our community? Our countrymen? The world? Does this include animals? ... Most people would say that we do have obligations to animals, especially to those that are sentient. However, we should not assume that beings with simpler brains are better able to deal with pain. It could be the opposite."

- Donald Broom is Professor of Animal Welfare, Department of Veterinary Medicine, Cambridge University.



53 billion animals are killed for food every year.

Professor Peter Sandøe

"It is fair to say that animal consciousness per se is not a central preoccupation in today's science. But, given that the well-being of animals is a major concern in most of the western world, scientists should make their skills available for improving the lot of animals."

- Peter Sandøe is Professor of Bioethics at The Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University in Copenhagen, Denmark.



Professor Dan Weary

"Animals are routinely subjected to painful procedures such as tail docking, castration, dehorning and surgeries. Yet it is only in the last decade that animal pain came into some sort of focus. No analgesics were used on animals after surgery, before a decade ago."

- Professor Dan Weary, Animal Welfare Program, Faculty of Agricultural Sciences, University of British Columbia, Canada.



The blurring of the line between 'them' and 'us' raises tremendous ethical concerns.

- Jane Goodall

Professor Per Jensen

"We no longer consider animals as our friends and do not concern ourselves about their needs. Our mentality is that 'farm' animals have been domesticated and have adapted to life on the farm. However, 15 000 years is a very short time in terms of evolution and while there has been an unprecedented change in physiology as a result of selective breeding (such as can be seen in the broiler chicken), basic behaviours of domesticated animals remain virtually unchanged when compared with their wild ancestors ... We need to remember that increasing production levels of farm animals does not come for free. Animal welfare pays the price."

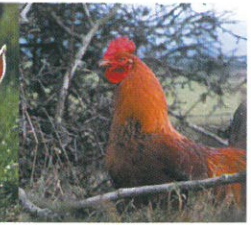
- Professor Per Jensen, Department of Biology, Linköping University, Sweden.



"While we are worrying about whether they have feelings or not, they must be wondering whether we have any feelings at all."

- Commentary on BBC Television News on 17th March 2005.

Scientists call for a fairer deal for animals



Dr Marek Spinka

"When you separate dairy cows from their calves, there is very real distress experienced by both. A cow will still be looking for her calf 50 hours after separation."



- Dr Marek Spinka, Research Institute for Animal Production, Prague, Czech Republic.

Dr Song Wei

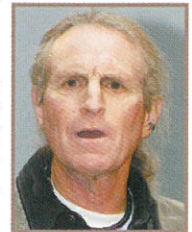
"There are no laws or regulations for animals in China. Public concern in China is not about ethics but about profits."



- Dr Song Wei, Director of the Law Institute, University of Science and Technology, China.

Professor Marc Bekoff

"Do animals have emotions? We need to take the sceptics to task and say: prove that they don't. Future generations are going to look back and ask us, if we are still around, 'how did you do what you did to the animals?'"



- Professor Marc Bekoff, Dept of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, University of Colorado, USA.

Reverend Professor Andrew Linzey

"Those who want to exploit animals often say, 'well, animals are different from us. There are two kinds of suffering: human suffering which is very important, and then there is animal suffering which really isn't anything to worry about.'"

I suggest that there is something very dreadful, very satanic even, in harming those who cannot defend themselves."



- Reverend Professor Andrew Linzey, Faculty of Theology, University of Oxford and Senior Research Fellow in Ethics, Theology and Animal Welfare, Blackfriars Hall, University of Oxford.

Steven Wise

"Any being who can desire something and who can act to achieve that desire - who has a sense of self, so that what happens to that being matters, then that being should have autonomy sufficient for two basic legal rights - bodily integrity (cannot be eaten, mutilated etc) and bodily liberty (cannot be deprived of liberty)."



- Steven Wise, United States lawyer, author of *Rattling the Cage* and *Unlocking the Cage* and founder of the Center for the Expansion of Fundamental Rights and the Animal Legal Defense Fund.

Professor Christine Nicol

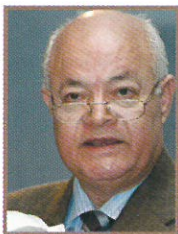
"Every bird or mammal we intend to eat or use is a complex individual. They are neither exactly like us nor so unlike us that we can exclude them from moral concern. We need to respect these animals for what they really are. The cage system for laying hens poses inherent problems for the hen. Free-range can be managed well and should be the best system. However, free-range is not consistently well-managed."



- Professor Christine Nicol, Division of Farm Animal Science, Department of Clinical Veterinary Science, University of Bristol, UK.

Professor Mahfouz Azzam

"Kindness to animals is an act of worship. Man will be rewarded if he observes this and will be punished if he does not. Islam forbids the separation of animals from their offspring or using an animal as a target for shooting."



- Mahfouz Azzam is Professor of Islamic Philosophy and Head of the Philosophy Department of Minieh University, Egypt.

Professor Tom Regan

"I am a proponent of moral rights for animals. To possess moral rights is to have the right to protection - like a No Trespassing sign - that other beings are not morally free to harm us."



- Professor Tom Regan, Department of Philosophy and Religion, North Carolina State University, USA. He is author of more than 20 books on animal rights.

Professor Joy Mench

"Chickens have a very highly developed visual system - they actually see in ultra-violet. They have about 31 different vocalizations. Chicks vocalize to one another from within their eggs as well as to the hen sitting on the eggs."



- Professor Joy Mench, Department of Animal Science, University of California, USA.

French philosopher René Descartes denied that animals were sentient and concluded that vivisection posed no ethical problem.

Scientists call for a fairer deal for animals



Professor Temple Grandin

"We've got to stop 'bad' from becoming 'normal' when it comes to animal handling ... We must not let insurance pay for bruises. The trucker must pay for the bruises and in this way big changes in animal handling are brought about."

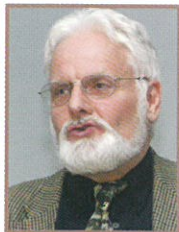
- Professor Temple Grandin, Department of Animal Science, Colorado State University, USA. She is a world expert on humane handling and slaughter of farm animals.



Professor John Webster

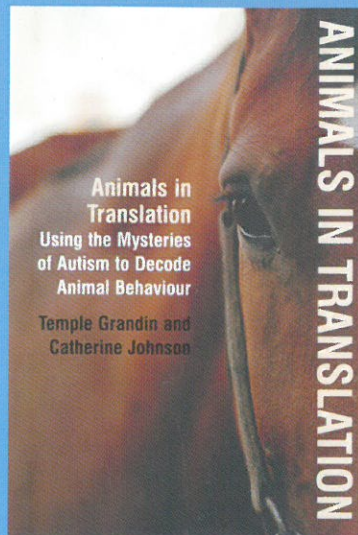
"We have a social contract with farm animals. We contract them to work and to die for us. We owe them lives worth living. This is only fair. Suffering is an emotional state and has nothing to do with cognitive abilities. The suffering of a Downs Syndrome child may be more intense precisely because of lower cognitive abilities. The single most important task is to disseminate as widely as possible an awareness that farm animals are sentient creatures and this recognition carries responsibilities from our side. The main driver for improvement is the consumer who can demand higher standards of welfare."

- Professor John Webster, Emeritus Professor at the University of Bristol and founding father of the Bristol Animal Behaviour and Welfare Science team.



Cows show an excitement response when they solve problems from which they can benefit. According to research by Professor Broom, their hearts race and they even jump for joy.

Animals in Translation is an insightful, quirky, funny and absolutely absorbing read.



Temple Grandin's new book (above) is a must read for anyone who would like to take a look inside the minds of animals

Published by Bloomsbury (2005) ISBN 0 7475 78575

Dr Mike Appleby

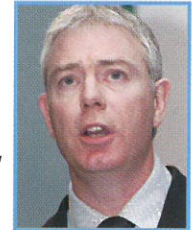
"98% of animals killed for food in the USA are chickens and they are excluded from the Humane Slaughter Act."

- Dr Mike Appleby, formerly of the Poultry Research Centre (now Roslin Institute), University of Edinburgh, and now Vice President of The Humane Society of the United States



Keith Kenny

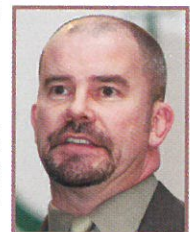
"We were the first company in the UK to switch to 100% free-range eggs. We have made a good start. We also recognize that there is much more we have to do."



- Keith Kenny, Head of Food Strategy, McDonald's UK.

Paul Littlefair

"It is true that examples of animal cruelty still abound in China, from fur farming to catch-and-kill campaigns against dogs and, in some zoos, the feeding of live pigs to lions and tigers. However, the pet boom is gradually raising awareness of sentience and animal welfare among many Chinese people, and may eventually lead to anti-cruelty legislation."



- Paul Littlefair, Senior Programme Manager, East Asia, RSPCA International.

To possess moral rights is to have the right to protection – like a No Trespassing sign.

– Professor Tom Regan

Professor Tim Lang

"Human health is part of the animal welfare agenda because the one is the flip side of the other."

- Tim Lang is Professor of Food Policy at the Institute of Health Sciences, City University, London.



"The love for all living creatures is the most noble attribute of man."

– Charles Darwin.

Animals are routinely mutilated, genetically manipulated and subjected to horrific slaughter.



Chicks are debeaked to fit them for life in a battery cage.



Pigs are castrated without anaesthetic and sows are confined in crates.

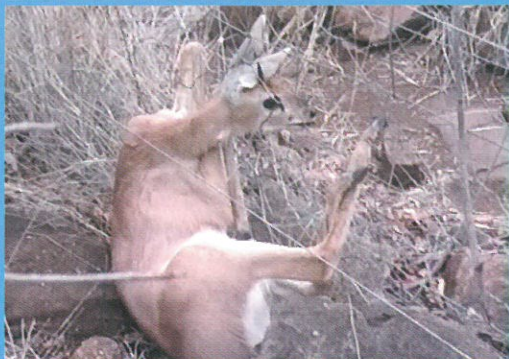


Cows are injected to produce more milk - calves are torn from their mothers.

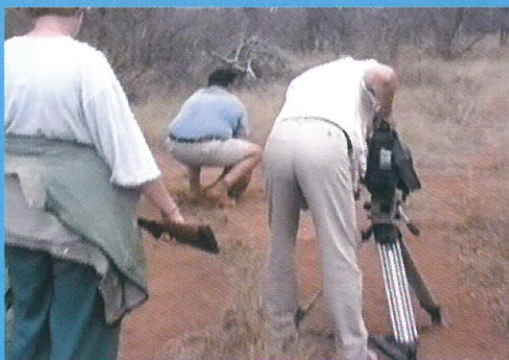


Broiler (meat) chickens grow faster than their bones can develop.

Sheep and other animals are often slaughtered fully conscious.



Undercover footage shows this little Dik-dik was placed in a leopard enclosure for a documentary on a 'wildlife kill'. She broke her back against the fence in her efforts to escape ...



The game ranger extracted her limp body from the fence and placed her in the middle of the enclosure ...



Fully conscious but paralysed, she bleated pitifully ...



Bred in captivity, the leopard appeared to be perplexed and had no idea how to kill the buck ...

Letter from the Ed

Dear Supporters,

As South African representative for Compassion in World Farming (CIWF), I was privileged to be sponsored by CIWF to attend the 'Darwin to Dawkins' conference. It is absolutely clear to me that for as long as animals are labelled by our law as 'things' and 'products', they will be treated as such.

As a first vital step in bringing about a new dispensation for non-human beings, we need our law to acknowledge that they are 'sentient beings'.

Six years ago, Animal Voice and Beauty Without Cruelty started a petition for the reclassification of animals from 'things' to 'sentient beings'.

With the nation behind us, 100 000 signatures were ultimately collected and presented to government on 14 March 2000. But perhaps this petition was before its time.

Hopefully, the world has evolved sufficiently now to look at animal sentience with new eyes. Please join forces once again to bring the massive injustice we do to animals by refusing to acknowledge their sentience, to the attention of government.

Only a perverse disregard for suffering and an intention to continue, willy-nilly, our callous and cruel exploitation of animals despite all evidence as to their deeply sentient state of being, can prevent government from granting them their rightful status in our law. Please sign the petition insert. The animals need your voice.

With appreciation,

Louise van der Merwe

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The buck finally died from terror / exhaustion after her paralysed body had been tossed by the leopard for almost an hour.

This happened in the 'new South Africa'. Video footage available on CD.