

# The ACC Connection

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**WELCOME** to the 19<sup>th</sup> edition of the **ACC Connection**, a bi-monthly newsletter designed to help researchers with questions regarding animal research at the University of Connecticut Health Center. Our 19<sup>th</sup> issue is designed to familiarize animal users with the ethical considerations and expectations of animal users at the University of Connecticut Health Center. The issues of animals and ethics and the use of animals in biomedical research are ones that are important for all researchers and personnel who use animals to take some time to think about. It is not the intent of the Animal Care Committee to tell you how you should feel about this topic; however, it is important that information be available to the research and animal care community so that each individual can explore these topics.

How would we define the issue of animals and ethics and the use of animals- whether in biomedical use, exhibition, or as pets? Does common sense play a role in this? Is it a philosophical issue or a moral debate? Is it a personal choice or a societal dilemma? These questions are not easily answered- we can only say that it is a deeply divided issue and a long-standing subject for debate.

Before we can go into the various philosophical theories, we have to ask: what is the moral status of animals? They seem to exist on the borderline of our moral status. Some individuals accord animals strong moral status, others deny them any moral status at all. Still others are in the middle. What place should animals have in an acceptable moral system? Examining the moral status of animals requires some measure of theorizing in an area of philosophy known as ethical theory.

## Indirect Ethical Theories

Indirect theories state that animals do not warrant our moral concern on their own, but they may warrant concern only as they relate to human beings.

### Religious Theories / Worldview Theories

Some philosophers deny that animals warrant direct moral concern due to religious or theories of the nature of the world and the proper place of its inhabitants. Aristotle (384-322 B.C.E.) was one of the earliest and clearest to express this kind of view. He stated that there is a natural hierarchy to living beings. While plants, animals, and human beings are all capable of taking in nutrition and growing, only animals and human beings are capable of conscious experience. This means that plants, being inferior to animals and human beings, have the function of serving the needs of animals and human beings. Likewise, human beings are superior to animals because human beings have the capacity for using reason to guide their conduct, while animals lack this ability and must instead rely on instinct. Therefore, the function of animals is to serve the needs of human beings.

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) stated that only beings that are rational and capable of determining their actions are the beings that we should extend concern "for their own sakes". He believed that, if a being cannot direct its action then others must do so, so these beings are merely instruments. Instruments exist for the people who use them, not for their own sake. Since animals cannot direct their actions for their own sake, they exist for people's sake.

Remnants of this type of view exist in the concept of "the food chain"- a chain of higher and higher animals until you come to the "highest" animal of the chain (e.g., human beings). Since this type of behavior is "natural", then it does not require any further moral justification.

### Kantian Theories

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) developed a moral theory which stated that autonomy is a necessary property to be the kind of being whose interests are to count directly in the moral assessment of actions. Morally permissible actions are those that could be willed by all rational individuals in the circumstances. **Willing** is very important. Both animals and humans

have desires that can **compel** them to action but only humans are capable of standing back from their desires and **choosing** which course of action to take. Since animals lack this ability, they lack a will, and therefore are not autonomous. Without this, they have no intrinsic value.

### Cartesian Theories

Cartesian theories state that animals deserve no direct concern because animals are not conscious; therefore they have no interests or well-being to take into consideration when considering the effects of our actions. Someone who holds this position might agree that **if** animals were conscious then we would be required to consider their interests to be directly relevant to the assessment of actions that affect them; however, since they lack a conscience, there is nothing to take directly into account when acting.

Rene Descartes (1596-1650) was one of the first individuals to deny that animals had consciousness. He was writing during the time when a mechanistic view of the natural world was replacing the Aristotelian conception of the world and believed that all of animal behavior could be explained in purely mechanistic terms. He preferred to explain animal behavior by relying on the simplest possible explanation of their behavior.

There are more recent proponents of this view. Peter Harrison has recently argued that the *Argument from Analogy*, one of the most common arguments for the claim that animals are conscious, is hopelessly flawed. This *Argument from Analogy* relies on the similarities between animals and human beings in order to support the claim that animals are conscious. Peter Carruthers is another individual who suggests that animals are not conscious. He notes that there is a difference between conscious and non-conscious experiences in that conscious experiences are available to higher order thoughts and animals do not have higher-order thoughts and therefore, they are not conscious.

### Direct but Unequal Theories

In direct but unequal theories, people account moral status of animals but not on an equal basis- not with regard to species. They claim animals have a direct moral status because of the following argument:

1. If a being is sentient, then it has direct moral status;
2. (Most) animals are sentient;
3. Therefore, (most) animals have direct moral status

The usual manner of justifying the claim that animals are not equal to human beings is to point out that only humans have some property and then argue that property is what confers full and equal moral status to human beings. However, lacking rights does not entail lacking direct moral status; although rights entail duties it does not follow that duties entail rights. So although animals may have no rights, we may still have duties to them. So to this, people have added that only human beings are rational, autonomous, and self-conscious, only human beings can act morally, and only human beings are part of a moral community.

### Direct and Equal Theories

#### Utilitarian

You cannot talk about utilitarian theory and not mention Dr. Peter Singer; Professor Singer has been very influential in the animal rights field and the debate concerning animals and ethics. The publication of his landmark book *Animal Liberation* in 1975 sparked the beginning of a growing and increasingly powerful movement in both the United States and Europe.

Utilitarian theories are concerned with choosing the action that will bring about the greatest good for the greatest number of individuals. When making these calculations to determine whether or not an action is morally right, you sum up the total amount of good that will be the result of a particular action and compare it to the total amount of harm that it will cause. This gives rise to a few inherent flaws (e.g., if we view animals as sentient creatures capable of perceiving pain and pleasure, we have to include these factors when determining whether an action is morally permissible, these calculations seem to require us to have advance knowledge of an outcome of research which we do not know). Classical utilitarianism has been criticized because it fails to take into account the inherent rights and respect owed to individuals (human and other living species) when determining whether an action is morally right.

Singer gives the interests of animals the same weight as the interests of humans. He states that equality is a moral idea, not a simple assertion of fact: if possessing a higher degree of intelligence does not entitle one human being to use another for its own ends, how can it entitle human beings to exploit nonhuman beings? (Singer, 1985) He speaks about what he calls the "Principle of Equal Consideration of Interests" which he describes as follows: "The essence of the

Principle of Equal Consideration of Interests is that we give equal weight in our moral deliberations to the like interests of all those affected by our actions".

## Animal Rights

Tom Regan is another individual who is influential in the animal rights movement. His influential work, *The Case for Animal Rights*, covers the topic of animals and ethics. Regan argues that animals have rights in just the same way that human beings do. He thinks it is a mistake to grant equal moral status on utilitarian grounds, as Singer does, but that they have the same moral status as human beings grounded on rights not utilitarian principles. He relies on a concept of inherent value- any being that is alive has inherent value. Anything that has inherent value is a being towards which we must show respect. In order to show respect to such a being, we cannot use it merely as a means to our ends.

## What is Expected from Animal Researchers at UCHC

The University of Connecticut Health Center's Animal Care Committee (ACC) is committed to the humane care and use of laboratory animals. The ACC expects the researchers to be equally committed to this standard. The ACC has adopted a policy of a code of ethics for animal use (<http://clacc.uchc.edu/ACC/Policies/CodeofEthics.htm>) and expects all personnel who use laboratory animals to follow this policy. Section 19 of the animal care and use protocol application, known as Investigator's Assurances, states ***"I hereby certify that the foregoing information is complete and correct and that professionally acceptable, ethical, and humane standards governing the care, treatment, and use of animals will be followed"***.

Using animals in research requires that some specific conditions be met. The procedures involving animals must be designed and performed with due consideration of their relevance to human or animal health, the advancement of knowledge, or the good of society. The animals selected for a procedure should be of an appropriate species and quality and the minimum number required to obtain valid results. The proper use of animals, including the avoidance or minimization of discomfort, distress, and pain when consistent with sound scientific practices, is imperative. The view that we, as human beings, have the right to make these decisions is based on various philosophical arguments, some of which have been described above.

### Scientific Justification

For research based on an animal model, the validity of the science is the model. It is dependent upon the extent that the experimental findings in the animal model can be generalized to other species; in particular, human beings. All research involving vertebrate animals must be reviewed for scientific justification; it is a requirement of government regulations.

### Ethical Justification

Ethical justification of animal research is, in some ways, more difficult than the scientific justification as an individual's personal beliefs can affect the way they may view the research. It can converge with the scientific justification and can, at times, depend on it. It boils down to the following: is the ethical cost of the research (the pain of the animals, the ultimate death of the animals) either balanced or outweighed by the potential value of the research to human or animal health, the advancement of knowledge, or the good of society? All research involving vertebrate animals must be reviewed for ethical justification; it is a requirement of government regulations

It is also expected that individuals will report instances of animal neglect or misuse and instances of non-compliance with protocols, laws, regulations, policies, or procedures affecting laboratory animals. All instances reported to the ACC are investigated (<http://clacc.uchc.edu/ACC/Policies/RepCons1.htm>).

## Frequently Asked Questions

### *How do I go about reporting what I see is animal misuse or non-compliance?*

There are a number of ways to report an incident of concern. If you want to know the outcome of the investigation, the best way to do this is to make a report to the ACC coordinator by phone or email. All reports are treated as confidential. If you wish to make an anonymous report, you can send it to the ACC coordinator; be aware that you will not be notified as to the outcome of the investigation. Please review the ACC policy on reporting animal welfare concerns, located on the ACC website: <http://clacc.uchc.edu/ACC/Policies/RepCons1.htm>.

### *How do I deal with animal right activist inquiries?*

Laboratory personnel may get calls from animal rights activists. Direct all calls to our FOIA officer- Dr. Scott Wetstone, or the AVP for Research Administration, Emeritus. Any statements should be handled through the Department of Communications; contact the AVP for Communications, Mr. Jim Walter.

## Upcoming Training, March 2009 – April 2009

### New Animal Users Initial Basic Core Training

|                 |                    |                             |
|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Monday, March 9 | 9:00 am – 12:00 pm | Building 20 conference room |
| Monday, April 6 | 9:00 am – 12:00 pm | Building 20 conference room |

### NIH Webinar- “Reporting Non-compliance to OLAW”

|                   |                   |                             |
|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| Thursday, March 6 | 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm | Building 20 conference room |
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## New Institutional, State, or Federal Regulations

### Institutional

None

### State

None

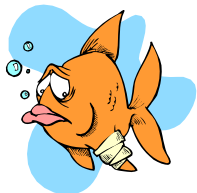
### Federal

None

## Important Reminders to Principal Investigators

⦿ When an individual leaves your laboratory, and is no longer an active animal user, you **must** contact the Animal Care Committee Office ([ooacc@uchc.edu](mailto:ooacc@uchc.edu)) with this information.

⦿ If you, or anyone in your laboratory, receive requests for information involving your work with animals (by phone, mail, or e-mail)- and you do not know this requesting individual- please forward all requests to Dr. Scott Wetstone, Director, Health Center Administration, MC-3800.



## Next Issue: Pain and Distress in Lab Animals

### CONTACTS

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