ROLE OF EDUCATION IN IMPROVING THE PROTECTION OF ANIMALS AGAINST SUFFERING INFlicted BY HUMANS

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Abstract: Many species of animal, particularly vertebrates, are sentient beings capable of suffering pain and distress, and individual animals are in need of protection from such suffering inflicted by the actions of humans. Education in a range of interrelated contexts has an important role to play in reducing animal suffering, and education is regarded in the broad sense of creating awareness and facilitating change.

Themes for improving animal protection through education

- Recognition of animals as sentient beings that suffer pain and distress.
- Moral basis for improving animal protection.
- Encouragement of humans to think about animals, and the effect of human actions upon them.
- Reduction in human discrimination against animals based solely on species.
- Understanding the basic needs of captive animals.
- Appreciation of provisions and exemptions in general animal protection legislation, including the existence of sanctuaries.
- Achievement of effective animal protection education and legislation on a global basis, including the establishment of international agreements.
- Creation of greater transparency regarding the treatment of animals by humans.
- Role of transparency in changing human attitudes towards animals, improving morality, influencing consumer behaviour, and stimulating lobbying of government for legislative improvements.
- Contribution of science in recognising animal suffering, improving living conditions for captive animals, and finding alternatives to animal use.
- Consideration of vegetarianism as a means of reducing animal suffering.
- Contribution of animal welfare education in training professionals, carers, and users involved with animals.

Examples of animal suffering inflicted by humans

- Any deliberate or thoughtless acts of cruelty or neglect towards animals.
- Animal farming practices such as mulesing of sheep and hot iron branding of of cattle.
- The living conditions of intensively farmed animals such as veal calves, breeding sows, and caged layer hens.
- Testing of cosmetics on animals as in the eyes of rabbits.
- Capture of wildlife such as chimpanzees for the illegal export trade.
- Cruel practices used in exterminating so called pest animals such as rats, mice, and foxes.
- Slaughter of whales under the pretext of scientific research.
- Keeping bears in small cages for extraction of their bile.

Animal categories

- Companion animals
- Farmed animals
- Animals used for work, sport, recreation, or display
- Animals used in research and teaching
- Wildlife animals
- Aquatic animals

Educational contexts (often interrelated)

- Parental and pre-school education
- Primary and secondary school systems
- Higher education and research
- Vocational education
- Industry training
- Community education
- Animal protection organisations
- Professional associations
- Government administration and agencies
- Parliamentary legislation and regulation
- Public media
- Informative advertising
- Personal interactions
- Self enlightenment

Scope for education in reducing animal suffering

- Appreciation of animal sentience
- Recognition of animal suffering
- Encouraging kindness to animals
- Changing human attitudes towards animals generally
- Devising improvements in living conditions for captive animals
- Getting humans to think more about animals, and recognise the consequences of their actions
- Achievement of greater human enlightenment and improved morality in relation to animals
- Understanding the needs of animals under human control
- Provision of animal welfare training for professionals, carers, and users involved with animals
- Creating greater transparency regarding animal treatment and practices by humans
- Learning of provisions and limitations in existing general animal protection legislation
- Achievement of legal and other reforms to reduce animal suffering
- Internationalisation of improvements in animal protection

References