We are gradually moving away from animal welfare occupying a niche space in the communal psyche. The facts of animal sentience are indisputable – animals have the capacity to suffer and a desire to feel joy and live good lives. Successful campaigning from a variety of voices has influenced legislative bodies and decision makers to amend some of the most egregious policies and procedures that directly affect animals in a positive way. However, the change is not systemic yet and neither is it understood or agreed by all as a necessary requirement. Social norms that cause and enable animal suffering still pervade, and knowledge of animal sentience is still the reserve of academia. A corporation will struggle to find the motivation to change their policies unless there is consumer demand for it, and a government won’t introduce legislation unless it feels certain that the majority of citizens agree and can abide by it. Therefore, the concept of animal welfare must continue to move beyond the realms of the elite and into the hands of the many.

The phrase “animal welfare” doesn’t translate all that well into many languages, giving rise to awkward conversations, and underpinning the need for carefully considered and effective communication to audiences. When it does break through the surface into dinner table conversations, it is often seen as a luxury and something sometimes laughable in areas of the world where human welfare is thin on the ground. It is often seen as a trade-off, an issue mutually exclusive to others, rather than a fundamental strand in the interconnectedness of issues as wide-ranging as climate change, food (in)security, disaster preparedness, pandemic prevention, right through to bullying in children and signs of domestic abuse. Recognition of the potential for this antipathy is vital if communication on the issue is to be effective. Those passionately working in the field of animal welfare can be viewed with disdain and easily brushed off, whilst those enabling or implementing systems and actions that perpetuate suffering are seen as villains, giving rise to an unhelpful “them” and “us” scenario.

Poor animal welfare often arises because of human behaviour. That behaviour may be intentional, but in the vast majority of cases there is an unintentional status quo that enables the behaviour to continue. It’s not always the case that outright cruelty, deliberately and intentionally inflicted, is the cause of the suffering. It’s also equally wrong to simply cite ignorance as the principal factor – “If only we could educate more people”. We live in a complex system whereby our behaviour arises from a number of influences. Our knowledge is a fundamental pillar. Education
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– as discussed in detail in this chapter – has a vital role to play. However, what we see others do – especially those we look up to – and how our society behaves as a whole affects our actions and can override what we have been taught and what we know. Societal norms enable us to take the mental shortcuts in decision making, and not exhaust ourselves with ethical debates as to the rights and wrongs of how we should act, which pet we should buy, which, if any, animal we should consume, or which venue we should visit on our holidays. We can change behaviour faster than we can change attitudes with the right approach. However, partnering effective behaviour-change approaches to tackle the most pressing animal welfare issues with longer-term generational change as an insurance policy to ensure sustainability, is hugely powerful. Provision of animal welfare education in a formal sense, therefore, is critical for the long term.

Some of the greatest causes of animal suffering on an industrial scale have occurred because of globalisation in recent decades. The intensive farming industry gives rise to some of the largest numbers of animals affected, and that has only grown and expanded in the last century. Animals are seen as commodities and products or assets, and therefore the industrialisation of the industry has grown because there have been no checks and balances in place. Let’s not make the mistake of talking about the industry as an amorphous mass. It is driven by people. No farmers, policy makers, or senior veterinarians were willing or able to recommend or require the incorporation of animal-based outcomes (animal-centred measures based on meeting their very real needs) rather than human-centred measures, which are by far the most widely used measures in our “dominion-over-all” approach to the world. In developed countries, where industrialisation is at its most advanced, even insurance policies for farms affected by disasters leave farmers in a dilemma as to just how far to go to protect their animals when disaster strikes, and provide very real disincentives to work to reduce losses (Linnerooth-Bayer and Mechler, 2009). In these and other scenarios, the needs of the animals are very far down the list of priorities.

This chapter will explore formal education programmes aimed at children and young people as well as vocational training for professionals working with animals that have the aim of raising the needs of animals higher up that list of priorities. It will investigate the skills needed for effective communication and the roles that those who benefit from formal education and qualifications in the field of animal welfare have in changing the status quo. It will also draw links with human behavioural science and the field of behavioural economics to highlight the fact that all educational and knowledge-sharing approaches benefit from application of these methodologies to result in sustainable change for the benefit of animals, people, and the planet.

Humane Education

Since the 1800s there has been a conscious effort to teach children kindness – often through exploring their relationships with animals, and in many instances by bringing a companion animal into the home with the express desire to give adolescents responsibility for them (Grier, 1999). Humane Education (HE) is a more recent and more formalised manifestation of this effort. It teaches social justice, citizenship, environmental issues, and the welfare of animals and it recognises the interdependence of all living things. It is based on values that develop sensitivity to all life, appreciation of diversity, and tolerance of difference. It encourages children to become more compassionate and learn to live with greater respect for everyone, as well as provides opportunities for children to develop a sense of responsibility and a duty of care for their surroundings and the natural world (World Animal Protection, 2012).

In addition to introducing animal welfare through the five domains (Mellor DJ et al., 2020), and the ethical considerations around keeping, using, and farming animals for our benefit, animal welfare education (AWE) as a sub-group within HE provides important opportunities to
study issues that are often locally relevant and multi-faceted. For example, children living in communities with roaming dog populations and a fear of rabies need to be taught the essentials of good dog population management, disease control through vaccination, and the skills for effective dog bite prevention – a potentially life-saving skill when we consider rabies is responsible for 59,000 deaths worldwide each year, with 99% of these caused by dog bites, and 40% of deaths occurring in children under the age of 15 (FAO, et al., 2018). Children whose communities are vulnerable in times of disaster learn about disaster preparedness and ways families and communities as a whole can work to improve their own resilience, and improve the outcomes for their animals. Many of the world’s poorest communities rely on working equines whose welfare can be extraordinarily poor. Children can apply the five domains and meet the needs of the animals instantly. Children can be taught to apply the five domains to captive animals and their own choices of pets in the home, leading to an understanding of the global nature of the wildlife trade, and the harrowing journeys undertaken by extraordinary numbers of “exotic” (non-native and non-domesticated) species to provide a reliable supply to the pet trade. With a stark number of children across the world unable to accurately state where their food comes from and how it grows (Hamilton and Surman, 2018), understanding agriculture, and the intensification of farming practices is an important subject area for a variety of reasons. Being able to explore this subject through the lens of animal welfare as well as climate change and environmental protection provides a valuable opportunity to explore personal agency and the role of conflicting consumer choices.

The list of subjects is long, and limited only by the skill and knowledge of the individual providing the instruction. Very young children benefit from topics that encompass animals they see and encounter in their everyday lives. As children grow and experience more of the world around them, so the subject matter can broaden to include animals and issues they don’t find on their own shores. The basics of the five domains remain a fundamental platform from which to analyse and debate a given scenario, and the subject as a whole encourages a message of interconnectivity, safeguarding our planet, living with compassion and respect for living things, and the acceptance that we all have a role to play and we can all make a difference. The importance of instilling these five domains or animal-based outcomes as the significant measure rather than human-based outcomes cannot be overstated and this remains a fundamental goal of AWE. Once we have a generation who instinctively apply animal outcomes to any given life choice or professional decision concerning animals, we are closer to sustainably transforming long-term social norms around what animal use is acceptable.

In the 1990s the link between animal abuse and societal violence, whether that be domestic abuse or violent crime, began to be well documented, with significant studies showing links between children who perpetrated cruelty to animals that then go on to perform aggressive, antisocial behaviour towards humans (Ascione, 1993). The same review showed that witnesses and victims of violence in the home may themselves be cruel towards animals and therefore an additional benefit of AWE is that widespread attention to the treatment of animals, and taking the abuse of animals seriously by professionals in positions of power (including teachers), can lead to interventions at a critical stage. Teaching subjects that foster compassion can build empathy, promote prosocial behaviour, diffuse violence and potentially reduce bullying.

Providing HE and AWE specifically to children and young people is powerful because you get three times the return on your investment – if you’re willing to play the long game. Although it is an alien concept to social change organisations, many parallels can (and should) be drawn with the marketing and retail sector when it comes to understanding audiences, and getting them to act in the way you desire. As corporations and marketers know all too well, and as McNeal outlined in his book Kids as Customers ((McNeal, 1992), young people occupy three categories of
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interest. First, they are a primary audience, with agency intrinsic to themselves. They are willing and able to take action, and in the case of brands wanting to sell products – they have disposable income of their own and are discerning and brand-conscious when they make decisions about where to spend it. Second, they occupy an incredibly powerful “influencer” role – both in terms of “upwards education” on welfare issues, where they share their newfound knowledge with their families and wider communities (Vaughan et al., 1999), and in terms of influencing upwards of $130 billion of adults’ spending each year in the USA alone (McNeal, 1992). This is an important factor to remember when designing AWE programmes and campaigns, as family decisions influenced by children can range from which pet to get, which holiday venue or day out to choose, to what items make it into the family shopping basket. Thirdly, and most importantly, young people occupy that space favoured by marketers – the future market. Brand loyalty begins with some of the clever marketing approaches you might find on branded back-to-school stationery for example, or in big brands that offer great kids parties at their restaurants, or in banks that offer a child their first current account (McNeal, 1992). These tactics often result in limited short-term return on investment, but what they do provide is comfort, familiarity, and affection for brands which is likely to result in loyalty, and longer-term gains that outweigh the initial costs. This is fundamental to remember, both in terms of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) wanting to secure a potential future supporter base loyal to the cause (and the brand), but it’s also significant in terms of creating a knowledge base and set of foundational values that children will find it harder to move away from as they progress into adulthood and occupy that future space. Educating the youth of today is a win for the decision makers of the future.

Approaches to implementation

If the end goal is to ensure that young people are exposed to, and effectively taught AWE specifically, and HE in general, then there are a multitude of ways this can be achieved. To date, animal welfare organisations take on the lion’s share of implementation, and as a result diverse approaches are applied.

Commonly, local animal protection organisations will run school visits where they bring one of their shelter animals (usually a well-behaved dog) and give talks to raise awareness and discuss welfare, with classes or whole year groups. These are often a delight to the students, and they can be transformative for individuals in the audience. However, school assemblies are a highly sought-after resource, with all manner of issue-based NGOs, drama groups, and other services vying for a spot. If an animal NGO is lucky enough to secure one, return visits to follow up or build on messaging, or to carry out effective impact assessments are extraordinarily difficult to obtain.

Measuring the impact of education programmes like these has been notoriously difficult to do – not only because of the limitations of return visits to schools. There are also some fundamental flaws in the design of awareness-raising programmes that make measurement impractical. With a gradual increase in emphasis being placed on measuring impact within the not-for-profit sector, the importance of monitoring and evaluating education programmes is gaining traction. In addition, greater prominence is beginning to be placed on education programmes being designed with specific human behaviour-change goals included from the outset, meaning that measurement of the presence or absence of these behaviours is more attainable. Many animal NGOs are working to review their education programmes and their monitoring and evaluation approaches in order to measurably improve the outcomes for animals.

For the precise reason that metrics are hard to come by, alternative approaches have been undertaken directly by academic institutions where researchers have delivered prolonged AWE
programmes in schools to document and measure their efficacy. These are of a set duration, cover a specific syllabus, and often involve traditional evaluation methodologies and control groups to determine impact. These studies enable effective monitoring and often return very positive results that are maintained after the study has finished (Samuels et al., 2016). They demonstrate the positive impact of teaching the subject (something other subjects aren’t expected to demonstrate other than through formal exams), but without definitive inclusion in the taught curriculum, the teaching of the subject remains the exception rather than the norm in classrooms worldwide.

There are benefits in working at a more systemic level, seeking to ensure that animal welfare is included within the national curriculum. Teachers also need to be trained to teach the subject, either whilst they are in-service or through Initial Teacher Training Institutes. World Animal Protection (known as the World Society for the Protection of Animals, or WSPA, during the heyday of the education programmes) ran an education programme that began life as “Respect for all forms of Life” in Costa Rica in 1989, and expanded globally to become the International Animal Welfare Education (IN AWE) programme, and latterly “First Concepts in Animal Welfare” (FCAW) until the programme closed in 2016. The programme gradually evolved into a year-long programme of Continuous Professional Development (CPD), with assignments and criteria for passing the course. According to the internal Project Close Report (overseen by the author of this chapter), this approach resulted in 1,500 in-service teachers qualifying. In those countries where the curriculum did not specify that animal welfare was included, then these teachers created after-school clubs and groups in order to successfully complete their training. These clubs were popular with students and remained in place after the training course had ended. In addition to training teachers directly, the programme sought to ensure that Initial Teacher Training Institutes included the topic to guarantee that newly qualified teachers were capable of teaching the subject. According to the aforementioned report, approximately 30,000 teachers will have now graduated having been trained in AWE principles during their professional training.

By the time World Animal Protection closed its education programme Uganda had incorporated Animal Welfare into its Lower Primary, Primary, and Secondary curricula, making it the first country to mainstream the subject. Kenya soon followed suit with a comprehensive inclusion throughout the curriculum. In Vietnam, the Hanoi district also included the subject in its Primary and Secondary curricula. As a result of these official changes, the aforementioned report states that approximately 20 million children are taught animal welfare each year.

The more opportunities young people have to come into contact with the subject of AWE and apply it to real-life scenarios that affect them the better. All of these approaches have merit, and as a holistic approach they all serve to contribute to building a knowledge base around consideration of animals and our behaviour towards them. However, focus must be maintained on reaching the greatest numbers of young people if NGOs are to put what are usually donors’ contributions to the best use. Achieving curriculum change, and ensuring that the education system of a given country takes responsibility for teaching the subject is an important strategy in shifting social norms.

Animal welfare education and animal industry professionals

Despite the efforts of animal protection NGOs across the world, the inclusion of AWE and HE within taught curricula is sporadic, which means that the plethora of animal-based professions have a mountain to climb to redress that balance given that most of the student admissions (globally) will arrive with little or no animal welfare knowledge or understanding. There are a
A wide variety of professions that require direct interaction with animals and the range of training and qualifications required to fulfil those roles varies just as much.

**Veterinarians**

The most obvious place to begin a discussion on the selection, training, and quality assurance of animal-related professions must surely be the veterinary profession. Vets are seen as role models in many parts of the world, and a veterinary career is in many cases an aspirational one. In many countries, veterinary undergraduate courses are hugely popular and oversubscribed, leading to admission being based on acquisition of exemplary grades and in some cases, substantial work experience. Much like human medicine admissions, the very high grades required narrows down the field of entry, even though the academic rigour of the subject matter itself may not require such high grades and high-performing students in order for them to succeed.

This isn’t the case in every locality. Across Asia the veterinary profession doesn’t always enjoy the same status as in other parts of the globe, with applicants seeking out human medicine, law, and other sciences as preferences over and above veterinary training. This brings with it a different set of obstacles to integration of compassion and welfare teaching.

Once admitted into a veterinary faculty, students will be exposed to a wide variety (and quality) in animal welfare teaching. In 2012, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) included knowledge and practice of animal welfare in its recommendations for what it calls “Day 1 Competencies” for graduating vets across the world (World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) 2012). Veterinary associations have also followed suit and taken significant steps to support the inclusion of animal welfare education within veterinary training approaches. Whilst many veterinary faculties and indeed Chief Veterinary Officers look to the OIE and their respective associations for precisely this kind of guidance, and whilst the recognition and inclusion of this topic within the OIE framework was of great significance and much celebrated, there is no single overarching body responsible for veterinary training to ensure it is embedded and taught effectively.

For many years World Animal Protection worked to fill the knowledge gap and encourage the inclusion of animal welfare into veterinary curricula by providing an education resource for veterinary faculties worldwide. In partnership with the UK’s University of Bristol School of Veterinary Sciences the first edition of Concepts in Animal Welfare was launched in 2003 (De Boo and Knight, 2005). The resource itself was hugely popular and went through a further two revisions. The latest edition was launched in 2013 (World Animal Protection, 2013). This resource supported the wider education programme known as “Advanced Concepts in Animal welfare” or ACAW (De Vere, 2014). This programme saw partnerships with veterinary faculties and staff worldwide to build a community of vet schools delivering high quality animal welfare teaching to undergraduate vets.

Due to widely recognised constraints on an overcrowded curriculum, as well as cultural differences and willingness across the faculties worldwide, the inclusion of the subject and its implementation varied from faculty to faculty. Vet schools were able to include the subject at their own discretion and therefore there were broad differences as to whether the subject was embedded within the existing curriculum for veterinary students, or as a separate subject. Either way, the learnings may well be confined to the lecture hall and not transferred when the students physically move to their next subject for the day – to practise clinical and surgical procedures on healthy animals, for example.

There is a broad range of evidence to suggest that students may well arrive with high levels of empathy and compassion; however, during the course of their studies and precisely because of the cultures they are learning within, these decline over the course of the training (Self D
This decline can be measured using a number of important indicators such as lower levels of analgesia being administered in later years of the course (Hellyer et al., 1999) – a finding mirrored in human medicine students (Neumann et al., 2011). This desensitisation towards animals reflects a commodification of the animals themselves, possibly a response to the clients being the human “owners” rather than the animals, and potentially a mechanism of self-preservation on behalf of the students themselves in order to deal with the emotional burden of the profession – something referred to as compassion fatigue (AVMA, 2021).

The culture and learning environment within the vet school – and when in placements with community vets – have a fundamental effect on this desensitisation. There are significant gender differences – with trends towards 80% of today’s trainees across the globe being female (RCVS, 2018), whilst most of the generation before them (and therefore those doing the teaching and role modelling) are predominantly male. Given that female students inherently ascribe significantly higher sentience to certain animals than their male counterparts (Clarke and Paul, 2019), there are very real experiences of trainees feeling as though they need to “man up”, resulting in the need for students to hide their empathetic responses to scenarios in order to pass the course and fit in. It is also widely understood that as humans we learn predominantly through imitation, and so regardless of what we are taught, we will behave the way others behave, and that approach will be learned as the “true north”. If leaders and role models behave with little regard for the welfare of the animals in their care, then students will follow suit – regardless of whether they have just completed a course in animal welfare down the hall. If the faculty offers a course on animal welfare, and yet the faculty’s own animal shelter houses animals in squalid conditions, then an unwritten lesson is learned by the students. Regardless of whether they can recite the five domains, if the faculty requires students to practise invasive procedures on healthy animals when they have little skill and experience in doing so, then there is indeed a “hidden curriculum”. In his seminal paper exploring human medicine faculties, Hafferty defines the hidden curriculum as the structural and cultural influences within a department that often stand in contrast to the taught curriculum, suggesting that there is a fundamental distinction between what students are taught, and what they learn (Hafferty, 1998). He concludes by making a number of recommendations, including to restructure learning environments to be more consistent, rather than focusing on curriculum change.

Recognising the parallels within veterinary training, and in order to address this shortfall, World Animal Protection embarked on a more holistic approach. In 2016 they developed the “Standards of Excellence in Animal Welfare: A Guide for Veterinary Schools” (World Animal Protection, 2016), a set of clear guidelines to enable the inclusion of animal welfare practice and principles across all areas of vet schools. They show a clear line of progression for schools just starting out on the journey towards improvement, as well as offering a target for those schools already demonstrating leadership in the field. It recommends recognition for schools that achieve centre of excellence status and encourages veterinary associations and the veterinary community to come together and create such an award.

**Veterinary nurses and paraprofessionals**

There are wide-ranging jobs globally that fall under this umbrella. Similar titles can confer wide-ranging job descriptions and entry requirements. Veterinary nurses in one country may be classed as veterinary technicians elsewhere, although veterinary technician roles can vary widely with those in Australia forming more theoretical and research specialties, for example.

Veterinary nurses or technicians provide indispensable support to veterinary surgeons and an important focus on the welfare of the animals in their care. With duties ranging from general
husbandry and care and comfort of patients, to assisting with clinical procedures, it is a skilled profession. As a career path, veterinary nursing is gaining traction and maturing in terms of professionalisation worldwide, although countries vary widely with regard to what qualifications (if any) are required to fulfil the role. The UK and Ireland have standardised the qualification and have made a qualification compulsory to obtain the title of “Registered Veterinary Nurse”, whilst other countries are working towards establishing standardised credentials (Yagi, 2019). In the UK, many colleges offer a diploma accredited by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS), and there are also a number of universities that offer degrees in veterinary nursing too. There are minimum entry requirements based on high school grades or previous work experience.

As an alternative, a veterinary paraprofessional has training in certain elements of animal care and husbandry – and in some instances has training in carrying out simple acts of veterinary surgery. They operate under the direction of a veterinarian and their role is to protect animal health and welfare. As with veterinary nursing, there are wide variations in regulation and accreditation for paraprofessionals, and it is a maturing profession with the UK’s RCVS Council approving regulation and accreditation relatively recently for example (RCVS, 2019). The world Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) recognise the important value of paraprofessionals worldwide and have published Competency Guidelines for Veterinary Paraprofessionals in line with their Day 1 Competencies for Graduating Vets, in order to assist in the standardisation and quality assurance of practising paraprofessionals (World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), 2018). Animal welfare is included within these guidelines.

Paraprofessionals hold a particularly important role in many countries in Africa, where qualified vets are few in number, and most occupy roles in government or in urban centres. In these cases, paraprofessionals outnumber vets in rural areas and they deliver most of the much-needed interaction between animal owners and any form of veterinary expertise for treatment or advice. As with other countries, they are required by law to work under the authority of a registered vet, but they perform almost all of the veterinary care. Students train to become paraprofessionals in Agricultural and Livestock Training Institutes (ALTIs) and Animal Science faculties, and thanks to World Animal Protection’s partnership and train-the-trainer programme, effective incorporation of animal welfare principles and practice has been achieved in diploma and certificate courses in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Namibia, and Sierra Leone.

**Other animal-facing roles**

Beyond veterinary and animal care services providing treatment for and prevention of sick animals, there are many roles that require or oversee interactions with and care of animals. Animal care staff can have job titles as varied as their duties and they can be found in all manner of places, from farms, zoos, sanctuaries, kennels and laboratories, to police and enforcement departments. The one unifying factor in the majority of these functions is the provision of on-the-job training, rather than entry requirements, and a few exemplars are mentioned here.

**Farmers** are frequently trained through hands-on, practical experience. Degrees in agriculture are available, as are courses in farming and land management or crop and livestock production, although these are not compulsory.

**Animal care workers** generally are not required to have any formal qualifications, with many positions offering the opportunity to enrol in work-based courses to learn the skills required. In many countries animal care courses are available to enhance an individual’s prospects of securing the position, but these are not mandatory and there is little or no regulation, accreditation, or quality assurance from licencing bodies. “Animal handling” (specialising in humane handling and restraint to reduce stress and risk of injury in the animal) can be deter-
mined as the primary role, or a duty within a wider animal care role, and similarly, courses are available for on-the-job training, or apprenticeships may be available.

**Care staff**, focusing specifically on research and laboratory animals, are not necessarily expected to have gained certification or specific training prior to obtaining the position, although if they do arrive without formal training, they will often be expected to complete training before they can handle animals, and undergo certified or accredited CPD throughout their tenure. The specific requirements are determined by the institution’s own ethics committee. Ethical concerns over the treatment of animals used in research have led to a variety of legal frameworks across the globe and the oversight and approval of research is the remit of the ethics committees to ensure these legal frameworks – and the welfare of the animals concerned – is adhered to. Most of these frameworks are built around the 3Rs (Replace, Reduce, and Refine methodologies to avoid or minimise the use of and impact on animal “subjects”, although there is a growing chorus of support for collaborations such as “BioMed21” involving animal protection organisations, research funding bodies, academic, corporate, and regulatory bodies, who are providing the research and evidence to support the replacement of animal models entirely (BioMed21, 2021)). Ethics committees vary in size and composition from one institution to another, and will usually require representation from a qualified veterinary surgeon and someone with qualifications and experience in laboratory science and research. An independent member is also expected to sit on the panel, although panel membership may often be unbalanced, with insufficient representation of animal interests (Hansen, et al., 2012).

**Animal transporters**

Those responsible for the transport of animals have varying levels of regulations to jump through depending on their geographic location. Some countries in the European Union, and the UK, have included mandatory training for livestock transporters, such as the requirement for a certificate of competence and training dependent on species (UK Government, 2021). A number of other countries, including Canada and the USA, are seeing voluntary commitments to transporter certification which has led to a variety of training programmes.

**The role of animal welfare specialists**

Whether through formal education in the classroom, through veterinary practitioner training in all its forms, or through the myriad CPD courses, diplomas, and certificate courses, there is a wider societal function required of specialists qualifying in animal welfare or related fields. This chapter began with the recognition that animal welfare concerns arise as a result of human behaviour, and behaviour arises out of social norms. The animal welfare movement requires each and every person graduating from these courses to play a vital role in challenging the environment that enables the status quo.

Animal care professionals will find themselves advising colleagues, animal owners, and others on appropriate care for the animals and the methods by which good, positive welfare can and should be achieved. The more that animal-based outcomes can become the norm in the course of these conversations, the more that mindsets begin to shift. Holding a specialist qualification in animal welfare provides an ideal opportunity to contribute to policy setting in all manner of forums – from organisational and institutional policies, to government policies. All practitioners can and should participate in the associations and professional bodies that represent their specialties, and the more senior among them may well find opportunities to define and update legislation and regulation as it pertains to animal welfare in their respective countries.
One overarching responsibility of these professionals (second only to upholding the welfare of animals in their care), is to communicate about animal welfare to a wide variety of audiences. Communicating about positive animal welfare can take a variety of forms – and the wider the variety, the better. It includes traditional scientific channels such as peer-reviewed journals and reports for academic and professional audiences. But it must necessarily include communication with different stakeholder groups and the public at large through diverse channels and using a variety of means.

Framing is key, and the use of language can sow seeds as much as it can reveal an unconscious bias, or worse, result in the opposite outcome to what was intended. Frames are the words we use that are associated with broader themes. The people we are communicating with use them as a shortcut – whether we mean them to be or not – and therefore we need to be careful not to accidentally reinforce undesirable actions by using damaging phrases. One really simple example is to look out for when we or our friends in the media refer to animals as “he”, “she”, and “they”. When we hear or read about animals described as “it”, the idea that they are commodities or assets is reinforced. Even if we’re desperately trying to communicate about respecting “its” needs within the five domains, we undermine our own efforts. A superbly useful tool is the Framing Nature Toolkit (Public Interest Research Centre, 2018) and whilst it focuses on conservation and wildlife, the learnings are transformative and applicable to communication about animal welfare.

The skills required for effective communication go far beyond knowledge of the subject and sensitivity to framing. The best tools to communicate a subject that can be contentious and confrontational such as animal welfare are humility and the ability to listen. It is our responsibility to acknowledge when we’re communicating something based on assumptions, and replace it with evidence, based on what we have heard from the person, group, or community we need to communicate with. Employ market research or focus groups if necessary (McKenzie-Mohr, 2011), or simple conversations free of judgement or reproach in order to listen. Offering pragmatism, and a focus on problem-solving, rather than demonising is essential – remembering that being part of the problem can sometimes help one to become part of the solution. It is recognising that providing information (often misconstrued as imparting knowledge or educating others) is not the same and not as effective as understanding why a person or industry behaves the way they do, and identifying the need that they are trying to meet. In the midst of all this understanding, the animal care professional must adhere to the principal that animal-based outcomes should become the norm in decision making that involves animals, but pragmatism and understanding the human need that underpins the behaviour (and the decision making) can lead to a very positive outcome for all concerned.

In a field of animal welfarists often brimming with knowledge and expertise in animal behaviour, understanding human behaviour is just as fundamental to achieve change. There is a growing field of “human behaviour change”, and a growing recognition of its importance in achieving positive social change for animals. Understanding that we’re sometimes predictably irrational and will follow the crowd, even when it is against our own better judgement (and against what we’ve been taught), is an essential leveller in the effort to mainstream animal welfare – and a fundamental starting point when we’re attempting to communicate on the subject. Recognising that behaviour can be changed rapidly, and can subsequently facilitate attitudinal change is an essential ingredient for change makers, and they can use hugely effective behavioural tools (collectively known as behavioural economics) such as “nudges” and “prompts” to bring decisions back into the conscious mind rather than letting habitual decisions continue. This enables people to refer to new information they might have received through education or other means, and determine whether a different course of action is in order. Equally, “choice
architecture” (or the means by which environments are laid out to enable people to make different consumer choices) is an essential mechanism for altering human behaviour in the very short term (Sunstein and Thaler, 2008). When partnered with effective education that begins in the early years and is both values-based and founded on the indisputable academic principles of animal sentience, we have a winning formula.

Conclusions

When behaviour-change approaches are overlaid onto a backdrop of effective AWE that delivers on the requirement that any decision that impacts the quality of life for an animal is measured with animal-based outcomes, we stand a very real chance of sustainably transforming the outlook for animals.

Behavioural economics are a hugely powerful and underutilised tool and can deliver instantaneous results when applied appropriately. Many of them can result in sustainable shifts in behavioural patterns. However, we must remember that we find ourselves in a world that needs to change because humans used innovation and creativity to solve big problems (such as feeding the world and making more money) and didn’t have the foundational values of animal-based outcomes to check their decision making. We need effective AWE in all of its glorious forms to foster an understanding of sentience and a duty of care towards animals in order to prevent us from continually falling into this trap.

References


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