

do, and we care about how we set about rectifying matters. There is an ethical dimension in a human taking a wild antelope, whether it be to eat it or to breed from it in captivity. There is no human involvement and therefore no ethical dimension in a wild lion taking the same antelope in order to eat it, though there is an ethical dimension in whether we should interfere with the lion's attempts to take the antelope. Those arguments which are based on the premise that there is a wider ethical sphere than the human one seem to me to be flawed. We cannot stop all suffering in nature, nor can we ensure that predators only eat the less endangered species in their environment, but we can, indeed must, ensure that we human beings act in a rational and humane way, ie in an ethical way, when we interact with nature. That is the human dimension of ethics. It is not that animals have natural rights, it is that humans grant rights and expect themselves and each other to act in recognition of those rights. The antelope has no right not to be caught and eaten in a terrifying and agonizing manner, except at the hand of humans, and not all humans can agree on where the limits are. Reading through the arguments and counter arguments in these essays, I found myself reflecting more and more on the basis of our ethical stances. That is why I find it such a good book.

If I may come back to the importance of the premises on which arguments are based, let me recall the Reverend Sydney Smith walking along the Canongate in Edinburgh and observing two 'wifies' having a ding-dong battle across the street from opposing upper storey windows. 'Alas, they know it not, but they can never agree, for they are arguing from different premises!' It is the search for common premises which is behind the search for a common ethic on the conservation of the wild habitats, the decision to double-bank such conservation by the taking of animals from the wild, the management of such animals and their gene pools in captivity and the decision to return their offspring generations later back to the wild. We have a long way to go before we achieve a species-wide human consensus on each of these subjects. *Ethics on the Ark* will help us get to that consensus.

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Farm Animal Welfare: Social, Bioethical and Research Issues

Bernard E Rollin (1995). Iowa State University Press: Ames. 168pp. Hardback. Obtainable from the publishers, 2121 S State Avenue, Ames, Iowa 50014, USA (ISBN 0 8138 2563 6). Price £29.95.

This book is a concise well-written account of the social, bioethical and research issues underlying the current concern, in Western society, with the welfare of farm livestock. It may, from the European point of view, have the disadvantage of being slanted somewhat towards the North American situation, but this is amply compensated for as it is written by a philosopher who has, over the years, become closely acquainted with the practical realities of the modern method of animal production.

The first fifty or so pages of Part 1 deal with social and bioethical matters. There is an excellent introduction to what is termed the new social ethics for animals. A clear distinction is made between social ethics (based on the consensus view of society) and personal ethics (based on the belief system of the individual) and the problems which can arise when these two ethics come into conflict. The author suggests that human rights should be considered

as a 'fence' placed round an individual's interests to protect him or her from the opposing interests of the group. Animal rights might then be seen as a similar mechanism set up by man to guarantee animals' fundamental interests. He argues that modern methods of animal production, in contrast to the older, less intensive animal husbandry systems, do not usually provide this guarantee of the needs and nature of the animals. In some ways animal rights can be viewed not just as a trendy, impractical liberal belief system but also as a means of returning to more traditional values.

The section on welfare research and scientific ideology makes the point that little work seems to have been done, by the scientific community in the USA, on developing animal friendly husbandry systems. This, he suggests, is due to a number of factors, amongst which are:

- the animal scientist's distrust of the intentions of the animal welfarists and rightists
- the feeling amongst many scientists that science should be value free
- the seeming scientific agnosticism re animal awareness.

All this makes most difficult, any cooperation between the animal scientists, the animal welfarists and the animal rightists.

The 85 pages of Part 2 cover, in a number of separate chapters, the welfare problems and the need for research to overcome these problems in the beef, swine, dairy, veal and poultry industries. There is no mention of sheep. It is in this part of the book that the author displays his sound knowledge of what goes on in these various animal production enterprises in the United States.

In the final piece 'Reflections' Rollin indicates quite rightly that modern animal production systems are largely designed and run to increase efficiency and economic gain. They have been very successful in this but there is, he suggests, a number of hidden costs and disadvantages. The food produced is cheap to the consumer but this cheapness can be at the expense of animal suffering, environmental blight and the disruption of traditional rural communities. The farmer bends to the market forces dominated by the supermarkets or else he goes out of business. Those that remain can be largely contractual serfs to large corporations.

He is making the point that intensive/industrialized agriculture is a result of the way our society is organized and motivated. Any change will have to result from some form of social engineering. On reading all this the reviewer was reminded of that seminal moment at the 1979 European Conference on the Protection of Farm Animals, when during a prolonged discussion a delegate rose in the audience and said, in clear but somewhat broken English, 'before we can do anything for the animals, first we will have to overthrow society'. There was a loud cheer, the meeting broke up and all headed for the bar!

Rollin advocates change and strongly suggests that the farmers themselves are the ones who should initiate the change.

This is a well-informed and wise book. It should be read by all styles and denominations of farmers, agriculturalists, animal welfarists and politicians.

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