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NEWSLETTER
CANADIANS FOR ETHICAL TREATMENT OF FOOD ANIMALS

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In an article in the National Post of November 19, 2001, titled "Smarter than they look" Margaret Munro tells of some interesting discoveries made by researchers.

SMARTER THAN THEY LOOK...

Cows are much more sophisticated than most people realize, researchers say

BY MARGARET MUNRO

Jon Watts was walking by a cow pen a few years ago when he noticed a strange phenomenon: The cows seemed to head for a steel shed when they wanted to call their calves. Not only that, they did it repeatedly and deliberately, as if they had somehow figured out the shed would amplify their voices.

Dr. Watts, a researcher at the University of Saskatchewan, admits it would be difficult – if not impossible – to prove the cows have such powers of reasoning. But, like many other scientists engaged in the study of farm animals, he would not be all that surprised. Socially and cognitively, the researchers say, there is more to domestic animals than most people realize.

Sheep, for instance, have remarkable memories, a recent British study suggests. Pigs have sensitive feelings, Canadian research shows. And cows, Dr. Watts says, are much more sophisticated than most people realize.

They form social hierarchies. They engage in clever, even deceptive, behaviour – such as when young bulls feign disinterest in cows in heat until dominant bulls are out of sight. And, when over-stressed, they can exhibit disturbing social behaviour, says Dr. Watts, who recently was awarded a postdoctoral fellowship from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council to study the social life and cognition of cattle.

"The intention is not to prove how smart or stupid cows are, but to understand how they function in their own world," says Dr. Watts.

Oddly – considering the millions of creatures housed on farms – there has been little research to probe the animals' mental and social worlds. Behavioural scientists, who often consider domestic animals mere shadows of their wild ancestors, have largely ignored them. And agricultural researchers tend to focus more on maximizing milk and beef production.

"It wasn't a priority," says Dan

Weary, a professor at the University of British Columbia. Dr. Weary heads a team of young scientists who are attempting to look at things from the animals' perspective.

They study phenomena most milk-drinking, meat-eating – and soft-hearted – consumers would prefer not to think about: the pain felt by 12 million piglets castrated in Canada each year without painkillers; the trauma and distress experienced by young heifers thrown into milking parlours a day after they give birth; the plaintive calls of hungry, lonely calves in their stalls.

By acknowledging and documenting the animals' social interactions and distress, the scientists hope to come up with workable alternatives for farmers to help make the animals' lives a little easier.

One such alternative is the artificial teats Dr. Weary and his colleagues have rigged up for young calves at UBC's dairy farm and research centre, which is nestled beside the mountains in the Fraser Valley, east of Vancouver. The teats protrude from the walls of the calf stalls and are connected to large pails of milk. The newborn calves can trot over for a swig whenever they want. And drink they do.

"About 10 litres a day," Dr. Weary says as he leads a visitor to the communal stalls that are home to a half-dozen teat-fed calves.

The calves grow at twice the rate of their crying counterparts all alone in smaller stalls nearby. Unlike the teat-fed animals, who seem oblivious to Dr. Weary's presence, these calves start bawling as soon as they hear him walk

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BILL C15B - The First Step towards an animal welfare breakthrough

Bill C-15 has now been divided into two bills. In a recent letter, Martin Cauchon, the new Justice Minister states, "Bill C-15A, *An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to amend other Acts*, contains provisions dealing with the protection of children and criminal procedural reform. Bill C-15B, *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (cruelty to animals and firearms) and the Firearms Act*, contains the animal cruelty provisions."

This Bill C-15B still faces opposition although, as we are told by the Minister, "the proposed amendments do not target or modify existing laws or regulations pertaining to lawful practices involving animals such as farming, hunting, or trapping, which are carried out responsibly and humanely." The proposed amendments do increase the penalties for cruelty convictions and send a message that animal welfare matters.

For those who would like to read an overview or the full text of the Bill, it can be found on the Animal Alliance website. On www.animalalliance.ca, go to Projects, then Cruelty to Animals. On that same site, under Projects, Food Animals, the report can be found: *Anything Goes, An Overview of Canada's Approach to Animals on Factory Farms*, by Lesli Bisgould, Wendy King & Jennifer Stopford.

SMARTER THAN THEY LOOK... *(continued from page 1)*

into the barn.

"They're hungry," he says. Real hungry, judging by the way they call and lick any hand within reach of their big, pink tongues. Scientific research shows the calves suck back their four-litre-a-day milk ration in about a minute. (Like most calves at Canadian dairy farms, they are given their milk in pails twice a day.) And they grow at a third of the rate of calves left with their mothers.

Dr. Weary knows he is on to a good thing with the teats, and has been talking up the concept with farm groups.

"It sounded like a recipe for disaster," says Nelson Dinn, the farmer who manages UBC's herd of 450 animals, recalling his initial reaction to the teat idea. Mr. Dinn feared the calves would get diarrhea if allowed to drink milk whenever they wanted.

But the growth and apparent contentment of the teat-fed calves convinced him otherwise. Mr. Dinn now says he is "pretty sold" on the idea, and is helping his parents install teats in their calf stalls at their nearby farm.

Dr. Weary's team has also examined the effects of tail-docking on dairy cows. Its practitioners say it improves cleanliness and prevents disease, but Dr. Weary has shown the practice has few measurable benefits and appears to frustrate cows who can no longer swat flies off their hind quarters.

And they have analyzed the

unusually high-pitched squeals of young piglets being castrated within two weeks of birth. Dr. Weary says the animals are in such pain they should be given painkillers.

While animals have a lot to gain from such work, the scientists say farmers will also benefit from a better understanding of the social and emotional dynamics at work in their livestock.

Dr. Weary notes many dairy cows, made to stand on cold, manure-coated concrete floors, develop premature lameness and other medical problems. His team's ongoing "cow comfort" studies are aimed at designing more comfortable stalls for the animals and finding out if they have bedding and flooring preferences. Along with reducing stress on the animals, Dr. Weary says being more sensitive to their comfort may keep them healthier and more productive.

Dr. Watts in Saskatoon also sees practical applications. He points to a strange behaviour known as Buller steer syndrome, common in cattle feedlots where more than 250 animals are crowded into the same pen. Dominant steers endlessly harass weaker ones, chasing them and riding them until they are so weak many collapse.

The syndrome, Dr. Watts says, appears to be a symptom of "chronic social stress." He suspects that, with more than 200 crowded into a pen, the cattle are incapable of forming a stable social hierarchy. As a result, the domination issue is never resolved

and the weak steers are worried non-stop by animals vying for superiority. In groups of less than 150, however, the animals quickly establish a social hierarchy with a clear leader.

To test the hypothesis, Dr. Watts is designing experiments to discover how animals get to know each other, and how they use that knowledge. He plans to train cattle to push buttons or levers when they see animals they recognize. (They will be rewarded with food when they push the right button.)

He also plans to show videos to them, to see if they recognize their penmates by sight alone or if they need to be able to smell and hear them as well. "Crazy as it may seem to be training cows to push buttons and watch movies, it's real science," says Dr. Watts, who hopes the work will lead to a clearer picture of the "social rules" at work in the animal world.

"Almost everything about the way they are kept is abnormal," he says. "They've been bred over generations to stay healthy despite what we do to them, and to produce lots of lean meat and milk." But their behaviour, he says, has not changed all that much.

"From a psychological point of view, they are a wild animal stuffed into an artificial containment system. I think we should be as concerned about how we treat domestic animals as people are about how we treat zoo animals, because basically they are the same."

*Reprinted with permission
© 2001 National Post, November 19, 2001*

UBC Animal Welfare Department hosts "Beauty and the Beast: Making Sense of Animal Welfare in Today's World"

On February 19, at UBC's Robson Square campus, guest speaker Dr. Caroline Hewson described the historical and global aspects of animal welfare issues. Her lecture provided insight on the influence of international trade agreements which make it difficult for countries to raise animal welfare levels – cheaper exports from countries with lower welfare standards undercut the market for those providing humanely raised meat. Dr. Hewson also mentioned that university animal welfare centres were formed as a result of public concern and that animal welfare legislation is only effective when it is strictly enforced.

Dr. Hewson is the research chair at the Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre of the University of PEI. Her lecture was the first Peter Stratton Memorial Lecture.

Cheap Food

On April 8 2002, the University of York UK, The British Society of Animal Science and the Scottish Centre for Animal Welfare Science will convene a meeting with the theme "What price cheap food?" The text accompanying the notice was of interest:

"Pressure for cheap food production has been a major factor in many negative developments: problems for animal welfare, reduced food safety, unreliable farm incomes, pressures on small-scale producers, reduced food security, loss of competitiveness for third world producers and environmental damage. Cheap food – or rather, apparently cheap food – involves other 'prices' that are not reflected in the monetary cost."

Website: www.isauek.freeserve.co.uk



A CETFA member called Dr. Weary in January, 2002 after reading the article "Smarter Than They Look..." (reproduced in this issue). The conversation with Dr. Weary focused on castrating piglets and the de-horning and tail docking of cattle.

CASTRATING PIGLETS

The article stated that 12 million piglets are castrated in Canada each year without painkillers. Dr. Weary explained that piglets are castrated to avoid the 'boar taint' that can give an off-flavour to the meat. This flavour makes the pork from non-castrated males unpalatable to many consumers. Thus the meat from intact males is more difficult to sell and is only suitable for some products like spicy sausage that mask the flavour. It is interesting to note castrated pigs grow more slowly. Therefore the producer has to balance the economic implications of castrating to increase market value of meat against the slower growth rate causing more expense to produce.

Further clarification from Dr. Weary were his comments: "Pigs not only experience the pain associated with castration, but also experience distress associated with being caught and held during the procedure. Thus the vocal and behavioural responses during the procedure are due to both the pain of castration and the distress from handling. Some potential interventions, such as use of a local anaesthetic, do reduce the pain but actually prolong the restraint. Thus the best approach may be to change

the farming practices so castration is no longer needed. In the UK, for example, piglets are normally not castrated. This is possible because pigs are slaughtered at a younger age than in North America, and the meat from these younger males does not normally contain the boar taint."

(In the case of piglets, castration takes only seconds.)

DE-HORNING OF CATTLE

Cattle are de-horned to prevent injuries that cattle with horns can cause one another. With some types of cattle, farmers can breed them to be genetically horn-less thus producing calves without horns. When this is not possible calves normally have their horn buds removed at an early age. This procedure is normally done with either a hot iron (thermal burn) or with a caustic paste (chemical burn). Both methods are known to be painful. As with the piglets, the calves respond to this pain and to the distress associated with restraint during de-horning. With hot-iron de-horning the iron is usually applied for 30 seconds to 1 minute per horn bud and is very painful.

Dr. Weary recommends to farmers that they work with their vets to

provide suitable interventions that reduce the pain and distress associated with de-horning. For example, a sedative can be used to calm the calf before the procedure and remove the need for restraint. A local anesthetic can prevent pain during the procedure and analgesics can be used to reduce the post-operative pain.

TAIL DOCKING OF DAIRY COWS

Dr. Weary's team has also examined the effects of tail-docking on dairy cows. Proponents of this procedure have argued that tail docking improves cleanliness and prevents disease, but Dr. Weary and colleagues have shown this is not the case. They are now taking this research out to farmers to show them that tail docking provides no advantages. Indeed, docking leads to the obvious disadvantage that cows can no longer swat flies off their hind quarters!



It is with great appreciation that we thank Dr. Weary for taking the time to speak with CETFA and to expand upon written comments.

(www.agsci.ubc.ca/animalwelfare)

SPCA CERTIFIED

According to a communication from the BC SPCA, "Consumers in British Columbia will soon have another choice on how to spend their food dollars – the pilot phase of the BC SPCA's 'SPCA Certified' program is about to begin. The independent third party certification system will provide consumers with eggs and meat certified from animals raised according to BC SPCA standards of farm animal care. The pilot project will be limited to a small number of producers and retailers to allow for systems checks and balances. However, market demand for animal-welfare friendly products is growing, and this program may offer farmers a competitive advantage and long-term growth potential – both locally and globally."

The criteria for chickens and eggs:

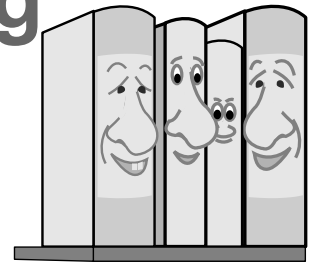
- ✓ no battery cages
- ✓ no antibiotics (except for treatment of a sick individual)
- ✓ careful handling
- ✓ The time from beginning of catching to end of slaughter should be no more than 12 hours, preferably 8 hours.

According to information on the website, these standards embrace the

Worth Reading

The Food Revolution – How your diet can help save your life and our world

John Robbins
Conari Press, 2550 Ninth St, Suite 101, Berkeley, CA
ISBN 157324-702-2



This beautifully written book not only reveals disturbing facts but it links the reprehensible treatment of animals in factory farming to adverse effects on human health, and irreparable harm to our land and water. John Robbins traces how our health is held captive by the greed of industry, which has undermined any moral relations with other living creatures. While I feel that Chapter 11, "Misery on the Menu" should be required reading everywhere, perhaps Chapter 19, "The Turning of the Tide" can give us hope for the future.

Patricia Oswald

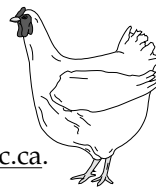
concept of the world-recognized Five Freedoms, originally set out in the Brambell Report (1965) which are:

1. Freedom from fear and distress
2. Freedom from pain, injury and disease
3. Freedom from hunger and thirst
4. Freedom from discomfort
5. Freedom to express normal behaviour

'SPCA Certified' products will be found in March 2002, in Capers stores, including West Vancouver and Victoria. Detailed information on the program will be available in March at www.spc.bc.ca/farm.

Phone number for the BC SPCA is 604-681-7271.

Email is farminfo@spca.bc.ca.



ACTION CORNER

WRITE to congratulate the BCSPCA and Capers on their efforts to provide consumers with the chance to choose humanely raised food products.

Farm Animal Program Coordinator
BCSPCA Head Office
322 - 470 Granville Street
Vancouver, BC V6C 1V5
604 647-1319

Capers Head Office
2nd Floor, 2285 West 4th Avenue
Vancouver, BC V6K 1N9
604 739-6640 Fax: 604 739-6649

VISIT your local Capers store in March 2002 and buy something humanely labeled. Help assure that this initial trial will succeed and be followed by an expansion of the program.

LOOK around in your usual grocery store. Many local producers are implementing their own improvements to animal welfare and their products can be found in many stores. Your purchases can make a difference. **"Vote at the Retail Level!"**

WRITE AGAIN in support of Bill C-15B to Martin Cauchon, the new Justice Minister. We need to let him know that Canadians support improvements to animal welfare legislation and want to see this bill passed.

Martin Cauchon, Minister of Justice
House of Commons
Parliament Buildings
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Also write your local MP and let him/her know that you want Bill C-15B supported.

* Postage is not necessary for letters mailed to a Member of Parliament. Call 1-800-463-6868 for the name and address of your MP.



**Canadians for
Ethical Treatment
of Food Animals**

Annual Membership
\$10.00

Application for New ___ Renewal ___ Membership

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City: _____ Postal Code: _____

*We believe that animals raised for food should have
a pain and stress free life and a humane death.*

I might be able to help with:

- Writing Letters
- Assisting at information tables
- Maintaining Website

Please make your membership fee payable to:

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Box 18024, 2225 West 41 Avenue
Vancouver, BC V6M 4L3