



Role of Veterinarian in Animal Welfare of Animals

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The role of Veterinarian in animal welfare is broad - a combination of bio-veterinary, husbandry, physical and social sciences to the problems associated with animal welfare. No other stakeholder has better training, professional competency and obligation to handle animal welfare than a veterinarian. In the context of animal welfare, the veterinary oath governs proper conduct based on what is considered good or bad for animals and their welfare. We discussed that the revised Veterinarian's oath clearly identifies animal welfare as one among the top priorities of the veterinary profession. It makes it clear that Veterinarians have responsibilities not only for animals' health, but also for their welfare. We considered veterinarian's many obligations to animal welfare which the Veterinarian's oath emphasized – Obligation to the animal kingdom and their conservation; Obligation to the promotion of animal welfare, prevention and relief of animal suffering; Obligation to the public health; Lifelong professional obligation, and; Animal welfare extension education obligation. We discussed how the eight integrated animal welfare principles are helpful for developing and evaluating animal welfare policies, resolutions, and actions. In serving animals and society, Veterinarians have unique attributes that make them valuable partners and effective advocates in animal welfare.

- ❖ **Relieving Pain and Suffering:** Animal's quality of life is negatively affected by painful conditions. Veterinarians use medicines, surgical procedures or management methods to relieve suffering / minimize pain in order to provide Freedom from Pain, Injury and Disease. Veterinarians apply protocols to relieve pain depending on the characteristics of animals like age, sex, breed treatment procedure followed, trauma condition, behavioral characteristics and health





❖ **Animal Cruelty, Abuse and Neglect:** In common usage, the terms cruelty to animals, abuse and neglect encompass a range of behaviours harmful to animals, from unintentional neglect to malicious killing, and it is difficult to judge them along a scale of acceptability in a variety of cultures (Phil Arkow *et al.*, 2011). In this context, Veterinarians are challenged by conflicting professional, personal, public, and legal standards of animal abuse and neglect (Arkow & Munro, 2008).



- ❖ **Animal Population Control and Care of Unproductive Animals:** - Stray animals and pet population control, Spay/ Neuter of dogs, euthanasia of animals that are unwanted or unfit for adoption are important issues where animal welfare is involved. Professional and transparent conversations must take place between Veterinarians and animal owners keeping in view of welfare of these animals.
- ❖ **Animal Fighting:** - Organizing fighting of animals is a law-breaking offence. In spite of strict regulations and intervention of highest courts, animal fights are being organized during festive seasons in the name of entertainment, culture etc. Examples: Cock fights, Jallikattu etc. Veterinarians have a crucial role to play in animal fighting, which includes: Animal welfare extension to educate the public about the cruelty and welfare issues involved in animal fighting. Condemn fighting events involving animals in which injury or death is intended. Enforcement of laws against the use and transport of animals and equipment for animal fighting. Work together with police with respect to recognition and enforcement of applicable laws.



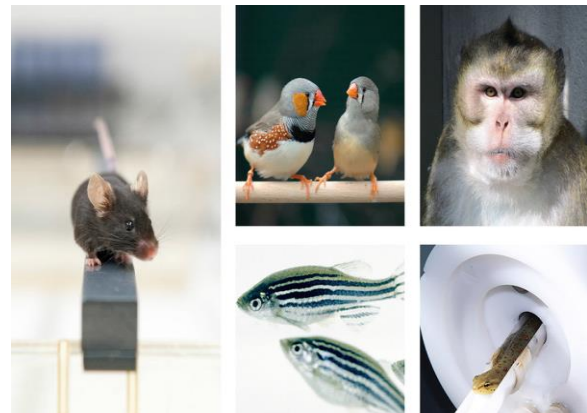
- ❖ **Responsible Ownership:** Veterinarians have a greater role to play in educating the animal owners about the benefits as well as responsibilities. i.e., Selecting the type and number of animals that is suited to your home / need and can provide food, water, shelter, health care and companionship and Providing preventive (e.g., vaccinations, parasite control) and therapeutic health care.





❖ **Laboratory Animals:** Laboratory animals help develop treatments and cures that improve the lives of ourselves and the animals around us. Much of the knowledge can be gained through research using isolated cells or tissues in cultures, or even modelled through computer simulations based upon data previously established from animal studies. However, when necessary, the responsible use of animals in research can provide valuable insight that advances scientific knowledge in ways that are not possible through alternative methods. Veterinarians play an important role in the process of caring for laboratory animals as well as developing alternative research methods to safeguard them from experimentation. CPCSEA in our country is working very well for the control of cruelty in research purpose animals.

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❖ **Protection and Conservation of Zoo and Wild Animals:** Veterinarians in collaboration with forest officials have a greater role to play in the protection, conservation, and welfare of wildlife in their natural habitat. Similarly, Veterinarians can play an important role in the welfare of captive zoo animals.





- ❖ **Disaster Preparedness:** From preparing a disaster plan and evacuation kit, to knowing basic first aid tips, help pet owners to save companion animals from disaster strikes. Large animals (Horses, cattle and buffaloes) and small animals (sheep and goat) pose unique issues for owners during a disaster. Preparing ahead of time and acting quickly are important for protecting them. Wild fires smoke can kill and cause health problems for animals as well as people (Example: Experts say that wild fires in Australia have killed millions of animals including koalas, wallabies, wombats and kangaroos during 2019-20). Veterinarians in collaboration with National / state disaster management agencies can play a key role before, during and after disasters to safe guard the welfare of animals.



- ❖ **Assistance, Service, Emotional Support and Therapy Animals:** Some people misrepresent their animals as assistance / service / emotional support / therapy animals in order to bring them to places where pets are not allowed, to avoid fees, or out of a misunderstanding of the animal's role. It is important for Veterinarians to assist their clients in correctly identifying their animals, and to provide care and advice consistent with the animal's role and their welfare.
- ❖ **Animal Welfare Extension:** Extension role of veterinarians involves communication of animal welfare information to help people form sound opinions and make good decisions in favor of animal



welfare based on science. Therefore, Veterinarians have an important role to play in animal welfare extension by ensuring that appropriate science-based animal welfare knowledge is transferred to all stakeholders so that animal welfare issues are addressed throughout the animal production value chain.



- ❖ **Veterinary Forensics**: The laws and acts protecting the rights and welfare of animals are wide-ranging in India. However, implementation of rules and regulations remains a major issue. The 'Veterinary Jurisprudence and Ethics' has been part of Indian veterinary curriculum for long time and it continues to grow. If veterinarians fail to perform a full and accurate forensic exam or do not know how to properly document their findings, then the case is vulnerable. Therefore, application of forensic science in animal cruelty investigations is one important area where the role of the Veterinarian is crucial.

