

RESEARCH ARTICLE



Bulgarian contributions to animal welfare

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Abstract

The present paper investigates some of the most important terms and concepts of behavioral research, animal ethology, existence of pathological animal behavioral activities and animal welfare. It's presented an interesting view of the nature of the term "welfare" and three main aspects of animal husbandry that it covers, also is an introduction of new scientific unit - pathoetology. Bulgarian perspectives of animal welfare can give significant contribution in enriching the concepts of animal "welfare" in linguistic and practical aspects.

Much scientific information concerning animal welfare has become available and it's continues to grow rapidly. There is evidence that the behavioral needs and activities of animals are strong linked with animal welfare. If those needs can be met more adequately, stress will be reduced and productivity will be improved. Ethological parameters seem to be adequate when evaluating animal welfare pointing that identify and assess animal pathological behavioral activities are main markers to ensure their welfare. We used abnormal behaviors as indicators of poor welfare and to confirm the issue that animal welfare assessment has been most closely associated with pathoetology. It is concluded that ultimate causation of pathology should become a major focus in order to reach at valid approaches to animal welfare.

Keywords: welfare, animals, patoethology, analysis, classification

The welfare of animals is a term which is already well-known among veterinarians. Even though it is considered that it is only relevant to the veterinary medical specialists, as well as biological ones, including ecologists, geneticists, ethologists, as well as the so-called socio-biologists who emphasise the increasing importance of bioethics. Contemporary science studying a complex of customs regarding the intra- and interspecies relations, as well as those between humans and animals. This is a subject matter that proves the necessity of bioethical relations in every aspect of life [1, 2, 8, 9, 10].

Bulgaria has been a member of the European Union since 2007, yet the influx of European experts into the country began actively and persistently long before that, and they purpose fully and with great confidence organised and "educated" their Bulgarian colleagues with regard to the concept of "animal welfare". It was not like we were unfamiliar with this issue – quite the contrary, we were aware of it and convinced that animals should be seen not only as means of production. This is what we were taught since we were students or at least there was an emphasis on another important subject animal husbandry ergonomics which even today presents norms and requirements that bring the biological

requirements of animals closest to the economic requirements of humans (6). The last statement reflected to a high extent (not anymore) the lack of a short specialised term encompassing the proven scientific fact that **animal are sentient beings**. This is why it was necessary to introduce specific terminology in this regard [8, 9, 10].

This is why we have to point out that the contribution of the west Europeans with regard to animal welfare is more than just in terminology, but not with regard to essence and practice. Proofs for this were and still are the conducted courses in animal welfare, even though rarer. **Most of this has been said in European and Bulgarian manner. Therefore, if we have to talk about European directives regarding animal welfare, we cannot skip noting that they have helped in the development of animal husbandry in a more terminological rather than practical regard. We even believe that Bulgarian veterinary medical science has its sizeable contribution among many others towards this subject matter.** It is also true that animal welfare "came" from Europe and America, yet we also enriched it and even introduced new elements into this matter, which is otherwise hard to understand by most non-specialists who rightfully

believe that providing humans' welfare comes before animals', without considering the fact the natural consequence of animal welfare is wholesome, clean and high-quality food, a guarantee of good health for everyone – **one of the accomplished requirements of contemporary bioethics [10].**

Without downplaying the role and significance of our European partners, which we must admit were the first to theoretically introduce the term “animal welfare”, we are justified to emphasise the modest Bulgarian contribution in this current scientific-practical field. **Up until now, no one has pointed out and analysed the Bulgarian perspectives on animal welfare,** which is unacceptable from a professional and bioethical point of view!

The most significant Bulgarian contribution in enriching the concept of animal “welfare” in linguistic and practical aspect. Why it was first and foremost in Bulgaria that the meaningful suggestion to replace “welfare” with the more appropriate term “wellbeing” of animals occurred. We are supporters of the indicated linguistic change, considering that the term “wellbeing” is more specific in its essence. And even though the term animal “welfare” is currently more popular, we would, as a matter of principle, in three aspects, use the term “wellbeing” in this publication. What does it actually mean? In summary, animal wellbeing is a combination of three significant factors [1, 6, 8, 10].

A/ Hygienic-techno-ecological, which is bilateral: on one hand animals should be bred in a technologically appropriate manner and be protected from the harmful aspects of human industry /waste products from factories, production plants, etc./. On the other hand, the people should also be well protected from harm as a result of animals (manure);

B/ Ethological: if the first requirement has been fulfilled, i.e. it meets the requirements of animal husbandry ergonomics and bioethics, the bred animals would respond with normal behavioural activities /7/, pathoethology would not be detected;

C/ Human protection: in case there are hygienic-techno-ecological and ethological factors in place, as well as humane treatment of the bred animals, i.e. their humane treatment matches their protection. In this sense it is incorrect to talk only about humane treatment because it is a part of their wellbeing. Currently, however, the term is “humane treatment:” is increasingly and inappropriately applied, compared only with the proper “wellbeing” of animals [1, 2, 3, 4, 5].

Among the three factors cited above (hygienic-techno-ecological, ethological and human protection) exists a straight correlation. If one of them is disturbed, the other two are affected as well [9, 10].

Western European researchers, as well as the American ones are aware of everything mentioned thus far, yet the directives, statements, definitions, norms, etc. presented by them are not so well summarized and detailed like the definition of animal wellbeing presented above.

We can't skip noting that this is a purely Bulgarian contribution, one we are proud of because one such detailed definitive characteristic gives a fuller and specific idea of the complex nature of animal wellbeing;

2. Second among the Bulgarian contributions is the introduction of a new scientific branch (*pathoethology*) studying only pathological behaviour of representatives of the fauna exhibited only when wellbeing is not provided. We believe that the differentiation of pathoethology is mandatory for the more structured and easier characterisation and study of behavioural deviations in animals with disturbed wellbeing.

3. Third is the proposal for a simplified division of animals as a principle. A Bulgarian proposal originating from a number of European statements, conclusions and directives regarding their sensitivity, on the ground of which the theory of ensuring their wellbeing is formed.

We believe that all animals are social because every species or category among them serve society in their specific and unique way (from société – society in French). For example, zoo animals serve society by entertaining people and increasing the level of their animal awareness. Circus animals serve a similar function as well. Through test animals, experiments in service of society are organised and carried out /10/.

Considering the fact that all animals are social, they are divided into two main groups – working and productive.

Working animals are the ones that create no produce for humans, yet “work” and thus are in service of society. For example, horses are used for work, yet produce nothing for humans. The animals in the jungle are also working, as they serve for the shooting of documentaries, for example, they are observed, studied and the results lead to valuable scientific conclusions.

Productive animals are the ones that create produce, mostly food, but also hides, wool, feathers, fluff, etc.

In short and schematically, social animals are divided as follows:

SOCIAL ANIMALS

Productive

Working

/creating produce/ /not creating produce, yet working/

The thus indicated representatives of the fauna are united, however by one major characteristic, they are proven to be sensitive beings and have their rights, as defined in the “Animal rights charter” by the European Union (9, 10). As a member of this union, our country has to follow these regulations. Therefore, in this aspect, one such simplified division of the animals is related to the theory of ensuring their wellbeing due to their proven sensitivity because it includes absolutely every representative of the fauna (from the ant, through the larger ruminants, to the elephant), to which we are obliged to provide it on the grounds of their rights (1, 8, 9).

Some of us accept such a conclusion rather sceptically, yet we shouldn't because today we talk of contemporary sciences such as socio-biology and bioethics, which encourage exactly this.

Many of the presented things will continue to change, develop on the grounds of new and deeper analyses and profiles due to specific circumstances and facts. For example, our European partners are now reluctant to accept terms like “intensive animal husbandry” – again, due to the theory of animal wellbeing, **in accordance to which “intensity” should be replaced with “nature-friendliness”, not only from the perspective of capacity, but also technology.** Nature-coordinated breeding of animals reduces to the greatest extent stress, which ethologically leads only to negative phenomena – from reduced productivity to the impossibility to fully accomplish the animals’ genetic potential. Despite all this, in Bulgaria there is still a fair amount of “hovering” around “intensive” breeding, even though it is proven to lead to “technopathies”, which is evidence of its inappropriateness with regard to animal wellbeing /6/.

This undeniable fact, as well as the European directives and analyses, do not bother some of our colleagues (researchers) who persistently continue conducting scientific studies under the conditions of

intensity, even defending dissertations in this regard. **It is unacceptable from the perspective of the new requirements expected from animal husbandry, which we have to provide and then observe!**

Significant issue regarding animal wellbeing is abnormal behaviour in animals as Bulgarian view in scientific unit pathoetology. Pathoetology is increasing in veterinary science in relation to the implementation of modern technology in animal production. Ethologists thinks that the natural way an animal behaves and possibilities to express it, influence on ensuring its wellbeing. Ethological and pathoetological parameters can be used to evaluate wellbeing of animals and can often supply acceptable parameters, important for assessment of animal wellbeing.

There are numerous analysis and statements regarding animal wellbeing. The fact stems from the circumstance that science develops in general, dynamically, in many directions and purposefully. That is why there are constant surprises, changes, continuity more or less, as well as constant interest.

It is good, however, to also realise that some of the phenomena should be seen as a constant because this is the only way to receive better results in animal husbandry. The constant in this case is the proven sensitivity of animals, regardless of their species and category, which humans should respect, providing for their wellbeing. The sooner this is realised by all, the better!

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