

Updating animal welfare thinking: 'freedoms', 'provisions', aligned 'welfare aims' and 'lives worth living'

David J. Mellor

OIE Collaborating Centre for Animal Welfare Science and Bioethical Analysis, Institute of Veterinary, Animal and Biomedical Sciences, College of Sciences, Massey University PB452, Palmerston North, 4442, New Zealand.

Email: d.j.mellor@massey.ac.nz

The Five Freedoms and aligned Five Provisions concept was first described about 30 years ago. Together the Freedoms (how animal welfare was understood) and Provisions (how welfare could be managed) have profoundly influenced thinking internationally. Scientists, veterinarians, regulators, animal welfare NGO members and others, including the OIE, adopted this concept to focus attention on key areas of animal welfare concern. However, our understanding of the subjective experiences that animals may have which are relevant to their welfare, and which are generated by their internal body states and/or external circumstances, has substantially increased over the same period. Thus, the objective of being 'free' of negative experiences must be revised because we now know that some of these experiences (e.g., breathlessness, thirst, hunger, pain) are essential to motivate animals to engage in particular behaviours that are aimed directly at securing their survival. Also, the main focus of the 'Freedoms' on negative experiences does not easily allow for the fact that animals may also have positive experiences that are relevant to improving their welfare. Accordingly, an alternative Five Provisions/Welfare Aims paradigm has been formulated. The Five Provisions have been updated to direct welfare management towards activities that both minimise negative experiences or states and promote positive experiences or states as specified by the particular Animal Welfare Aims assigned to each Provision. Aspects of the four welfare principles from the European Welfare Quality assessment system (WQ[®]) and elements of all domains of the Five Domains Model for animal welfare assessment have been incorporated into the new Five Provisions/Welfare Aims paradigm. The paradigm is easily understood and provides clear guidance on beneficial objectives for animal welfare management. Although it is consistent with our current detailed scientific understanding, it is not expressed in technical terms. Finally, in emphasising the balance between negative and positive experiences, representing Quality of Life, the new paradigm aims to redirect husbandry from a predominant focus on survival to providing animals with opportunities to have Lives Worth Living.

Key words: negative experiences - new paradigm - positive experiences.