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good is consonant with the rights of other peoples, nations, and animals, as well as the environment as a whole. But when the good of any nation (or interest group) violates such rights, its claim to unquestioned righteousness under the "one nation under God" principle is invalidated. Those persons who purport to be religious are surely right only when

they use religion to further the politics of an ecological, racial, and species egalitarianism that is based upon cooperation, a sharing of resources and respect for each other's interests and rights; and a reverence for the sanctity and dignity of all life, animal and human alike: in brief, a co-creative stewardship of the planet Earth.

## Sex Roles, Companion Animals — and Something More

D.H. Murphy

One of the fundamental convictions that motivates our publication of the *Journal* is that science, and the scientific method, can furnish animal welfare advocates and activists with the exact kind of testable, empirical data that must remain the primary tools of persuasion in a rational society. Precisely because animals cannot speak for themselves, and cannot tell us whether, for example, they prefer a solid concrete or a slatted floor, we can make good use of the carefully controlled techniques of classical science to derive "best guesses" about what kinds of environments foster their well-being. These may include direct methods such as structured observation and choice tests, or indirect methods such as monitoring of blood levels of stress-induced hormones like adrenocorticoids.

What's fascinating about these kinds of well-controlled scientific studies is that more than our preconceptions about animals may fall by the wayside once we peruse the results; other standardized myths about, for example, sex roles, may come into question as well.

As a case in point, several recent articles about how men and women relate to dogs and cats furnish us with some

basic lessons about how we interact with our animal companions. But, in the process, they also shed some interesting light on the precariousness of our beliefs about differences in the sexes. Finally, they provide vital instruction concerning some of the classic foibles that are inherent in the use of some kinds of scientific methods.

First, let's take a look at one way two researchers looked at how people think about dogs and cats. An earlier issue of the *Journal* (4(1):17, 1983) reported on the survey results compiled by two Missouri researchers, who queried over 900 individuals on their opinions on companion animals. Their analysis of the data showed that, among other things, "women become more emotionally involved with their animals and derive a greater sense of security from pet ownership (with both dogs and cats) than do men." Now, this is the sort of result that you might have expected yourself, if you simply walked around the room at a party and queried the attendees about their emotions vis-a-vis dogs and cats. In either case, this method, self-reporting, is well recognized as unavoidably incorporating a sizeable dose of the interviewee's own bias; in other words, people tend to an-

swer in the way they think the survey-taker would like them to respond.

But a second group of researchers, A.H. Katcher *et al.* (*Cal Vet* 2:14, 1983) used a different approach to find out whether there were significant differences in the way men and women interacted with their dogs, specifically, as a source of contact comfort. Two methods were utilized: a questionnaire of 10 items that provided an index of attachment to animals (typical statements: "dog sleeps in bedroom"; "owner confides in dog"), and a study of 110 subjects (veterinary clinic clients) chosen at random, who were observed for 5 minutes each. Unbeknownst to these clients, an observer recorded the percentage of time (for the 5-minute interval) spent touching, stroking, and patting their dog.

Surprisingly, in this study, both methods revealed that there were virtually no differences in the ways men and women deal with companion animals. There were slightly more positive responses to the questionnaire items among women, but these differences were not statistically significant. Similarly,

the groups of men and women spent almost equal amounts of time in contact with their dogs, although there was considerable variance from one *individual* to another.

Is it possible to state categorically that one of these studies has provided us with unbreachable truth, appropriate for chiseling in stone, while the other is merely balderdash? Alas, no; things, as usual, aren't that simple. But we can say, other things being equal, that the *techniques* used in the second study (a questionnaire that assessed opinion indirectly, and the use of an objective observer making quantifiable observations) are more likely to be reliable than those of the Missouri opinion-pollers described in the first. So it is possible to feel some confidence that Katcher *et al.* are onto something important — that men and women alike get tremendous emotional satisfaction out of touching and loving animals. And the *Journal's* belief that the results from well-planned and executed science are crucial to understanding the exact nature of our relationships with animals has been supported yet once more.

## The State of the Economy and Animal Welfare

Michael W. Fox

The economic depression affects more than just the human population. Unemployed people find it harder to feed their pets, and so animal shelters in depressed areas must take in more than their usual burden of dogs for adoption and destruction. Cases of animal neglect and cruelty increase as families disintegrate emotionally: the increased incidence of animal and child abuse is one

tragic consequence of economic and psychological depression.

The hungry and disemployed in the cities have, at least, their soup lines, but not so for those in the depressed rural areas. Here, trapping of furbearers, such as muskrat and raccoon, is on the upswing, as is the hunting and poaching of deer. The negative impact on the environment of this trend is further intensified by