Productivity and Farm Animal Welfare

Michael W. Fox
The Institute for the Study of Animal Problems

Follow this and additional works at: https://www.wellbeingintlstorerepository.org/acwp_faafp

Part of the Agribusiness Commons, Animal Studies Commons, and the Business Law, Public Responsibility, and Ethics Commons

Recommended Citation

This material is brought to you for free and open access by WellBeing International. It has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator of the WBI Studies Repository. For more information, please contact wbisr-info@wellbeingintl.org.
Getting Educated at the Zoo

Nancy Heneson

In this issue we present three papers that deal with the subject of the zoo. Although the focal concern of each paper is different and the positions of the authors range from whole-hearted support of the institution to frank skepticism, all express a belief in the potential educational value of zoos. This editorial, however, has a different premise. It is not meant to criticize the other papers, but rather to raise questions from another point of view.

"Educational value" has a fine, humanistic ring to it; as a principle it would seem inviolable. Yet when the means to this admirable end involve the kind of exploitation inherent in the exhibiting of wild animals in confinement, one begins to wonder just what sort of education is being provided, and further, whether even the most idealistic rendition of the educational benefits of zoos can silence the larger ethical questions.

The first question, what sort of education is being provided?, has no definitive answer. One cannot crawl inside the mind of every visitor to every zoo. Thus the answers tend to be prescriptive rather than descriptive (but see Ludwig, this issue), e.g.: Seeing live animals in the zoo should [will] increase one's awareness and appreciation of other life forms, enhance one's respect for wildlife, encourage interest in and commitment to conservation and provide a vital connection with "Nature" in an ever more sterile technological society. There can be no doubt of the nobility and importance of these aims, and it would seem that a major part of the effort to upgrade the facilities and change the image of zoos has been directed toward making this type of educational experience more accessible. A person who sees an ocelot pacing in a bare, tiled cage behind some vegetation in a naturalistic enclosure adds a dimension of education that is missing from a sign whose entire message is "here..." or even concrete tree trunks of concrete with branches of fiberglass, heated, easy-to-clean epoxy grist grids, and plenty of greenery in the viewing area only. Minus the gorillas and orangutans, the place looks like your average solar house in Marin County. Gorillas, unlike orangs, do not brachiate, and spend much of their time in the wild foraging among the vegetation of the tropical rainforest. For them, the "trees" seem to serve the same purpose as a mink stole thrown over the shoulders of a 1930s starlet posing for a publicity shot—they enhance the total effect. They are also much nicer for people to look at than a swinging tire.

There is no dearth of educational aids in this exhibit: display panels discussing habitat, geographical distribution, evolution, social and feeding behavior in captivity and in the wild, breeding and rearing of infants in captivity, and smaller panels with biographies of the individual inmates. However, most people come to look at the animals, to walk right up to the two-way glass and experience whatever it is they see an ocelot pacing in a bare, tiled cage

The erection of a country-club National Zoo in Washington, D.C. replaced small, barren cages with a new Great Ape House—glass enclosures, artificial tree trunks of concrete with branches of fiberglass, heated, easy-to-clean epoxy grist grids, and plenty of greenery in the viewing area only. Minus the gorillas and orangutans, the place looks like your average solar house in Marin County. Gorillas, unlike orangs, do not brachiate, and spend much of their time in the wild foraging among the vegetation of the tropical rainforest. For them, the "trees" seem to serve the same purpose as a mink stole thrown over the shoulders of a 1930s starlet posing for a publicity shot—they enhance the total effect. They are also much nicer for people to look at than a swinging tire.

There is no dearth of educational aids in this exhibit: display panels discussing habitat, geographical distribution, evolution, social and feeding behavior in captivity and in the wild, breeding and rearing of infants in captivity, and smaller panels with biographies of the individual inmates. However, most people come to look at the animals, to walk right up to the two-way glass and experience whatever it is they see an ocelot pacing in a bare, tiled cage behind some vegetation in a naturalistic enclosure.

Getting Educated at the Zoo

Nancy Heneson

In this issue we present three papers that deal with the subject of the zoo. Although the focal concern of each paper is different and the positions of the authors range from whole-hearted support of the institution to frank skepticism, all express a belief in the potential educational value of zoos. This editorial, however, has a different premise. It is not meant to criticize the other papers, but rather to raise questions from another point of view.

"Educational value" has a fine, humanistic ring to it; as a principle it would seem inviolable. Yet when the means to this admirable end involve the kind of exploitation inherent in the exhibiting of wild animals in confinement, one begins to wonder just what sort of education is being provided, and further, whether even the most idealistic rendition of the educational benefits of zoos can silence the larger ethical questions.

The first question, what sort of education is being provided?, has no definitive answer. One cannot crawl inside the mind of every visitor to every zoo. Thus the answers tend to be prescriptive rather than descriptive (but see Ludwig, this issue), e.g.: Seeing live animals in the zoo should [will] increase one's awareness and appreciation of other life forms, enhance one's respect for wildlife, encourage interest in and commitment to conservation and provide a vital connection with "Nature" in an ever more sterile technological society. There can be no doubt of the nobility and importance of these aims, and it would seem that a major part of the effort to upgrade the facilities and change the image of zoos has been directed toward making this type of educational experience more accessible. A person who sees an ocelot pacing in a bare, tiled cage behind some vegetation in a naturalistic enclosure adds a dimension of education that is missing from a sign whose entire message is "here..." or even concrete tree trunks of concrete with branches of fiberglass, heated, easy-to-clean epoxy grist grids, and plenty of greenery in the viewing area only. Minus the gorillas and orangutans, the place looks like your average solar house in Marin County. Gorillas, unlike orangs, do not brachiate, and spend much of their time in the wild foraging among the vegetation of the tropical rainforest. For them, the "trees" seem to serve the same purpose as a mink stole thrown over the shoulders of a 1930s starlet posing for a publicity shot—they enhance the total effect. They are also much nicer for people to look at than a swinging tire.

There is no dearth of educational aids in this exhibit: display panels discussing habitat, geographical distribution, evolution, social and feeding behavior in captivity and in the wild, breeding and rearing of infants in captivity, and smaller panels with biographies of the individual inmates. However, most people come to look at the animals, to walk right up to the two-way glass and experience whatever it is they see an ocelot pacing in a bare, tiled cage behind some vegetation in a naturalistic enclosure.

Getting Educated at the Zoo

Nancy Heneson

In this issue we present three papers that deal with the subject of the zoo. Although the focal concern of each paper is different and the positions of the authors range from whole-hearted support of the institution to frank skepticism, all express a belief in the potential educational value of zoos. This editorial, however, has a different premise. It is not meant to criticize the other papers, but rather to raise questions from another point of view.

"Educational value" has a fine, humanistic ring to it; as a principle it would seem inviolable. Yet when the means to this admirable end involve the kind of exploitation inherent in the exhibiting of wild animals in confinement, one begins to wonder just what sort of education is being provided, and further, whether even the most idealistic rendition of the educational benefits of zoos can silence the larger ethical questions.

The first question, what sort of education is being provided?, has no definitive answer. One cannot crawl inside the mind of every visitor to every zoo. Thus the answers tend to be prescriptive rather than descriptive (but see Ludwig, this issue), e.g.: Seeing live animals in the zoo should [will] increase one's awareness and appreciation of other life forms, enhance one's respect for wildlife, encourage interest in and commitment to conservation and provide a vital connection with "Nature" in an ever more sterile technological society. There can be no doubt of the nobility and importance of these aims, and it would seem that a major part of the effort to upgrade the facilities and change the image of zoos has been directed toward making this type of educational experience more accessible. A person who sees an ocelot pacing in a bare, tiled cage behind some vegetation in a naturalistic enclosure adds a dimension of education that is missing from a sign whose entire message is "here..." or even concrete tree trunks of concrete with branches of fiberglass, heated, easy-to-clean epoxy grist grids, and plenty of greenery in the viewing area only. Minus the gorillas and orangutans, the place looks like your average solar house in Marin County. Gorillas, unlike orangs, do not brachiate, and spend much of their time in the wild foraging among the vegetation of the tropical rainforest. For them, the "trees" seem to serve the same purpose as a mink stole thrown over the shoulders of a 1930s starlet posing for a publicity shot—they enhance the total effect. They are also much nicer for people to look at than a swinging tire.

There is no dearth of educational aids in this exhibit: display panels discussing habitat, geographical distribution, evolution, social and feeding behavior in captivity and in the wild, breeding and rearing of infants in captivity, and smaller panels with biographies of the individual inmates. However, most people come to look at the animals, to walk right up to the two-way glass and experience whatever it is they see an ocelot pacing in a bare, tiled cage behind some vegetation in a naturalistic enclosure.
M.W. Fox

It is as risky to assume that a high production index is indicative of adequate welfare as it is to assume that low productivity is a sign of ill treatment. For example, store-feeding of beef cattle (in which cattle are kept at a low level of nutrition during the winter so that they just maintain their weight and are in good condition to make high rates of gain from grazing the following spring and summer) essentially mimics the natural seasonal cycle of reduced gain in winter, and as Raymond (1980) emphasizes, it is doubtful that there is any evidence that such cattle are under poor welfare conditions during maintenance winter feeding. Taken alone, productivity cannot be regarded as a reliable indicator of animal welfare. Assessment of animal welfare entails an analysis of many factors, including health status, disease incidence, longevity, reproductive performance, physiological and behavioral indices as well as production records. This is the complexity that makes the science of animal welfare a challenging interdisciplinary subject.

References

D.B. Wilkins

Animals in Film and Television

Animals are entertaining. This undoubtedly fact has been exploited by human beings for centuries and to the commercial advantage of many people. The ways in which we have exploited both the natural and unnatural behavior of animals have varied from the straightforward exhibition of an animal in a zoo to the perversity of dog-fighting, in which animals are allowed to fight until one or other is killed or badly injured. Entertainment implies both amusement and enjoyment, and it is incredibly to realize that even within our so-called advanced Western civilization there still are people who can gain enjoyment from either directly torturing and killing animals or by witnessing animals inflict pain and death upon each other. North America and most countries in Europe have rightly condemned and outlawed bear-baiting, cock-fighting, and dog-fighting. There is no doubt, though, that these last two still have their followers and that organized events take place. The vast majority of people are appalled when they read stories of illegal dog-fights taking place, but is there any real difference in principle between that and bull-fighting in Spain, fox-hunting in Europe or the use of the cinch strap on horses in rodeos in North America? Each of these is a form of entertainment or sport which depends to some degree on the infliction of pain and suffering on animals.

One justification for "sporting activities" such as hare-coursing or dog-fighting is that the animals are behaving naturally. This must be a distortion of the truth as a fight between male dogs in the natural environment seldom ends in the death of the vanquished. Greyhounds and other similar breeds will always chase hares and will frequently kill them, but hare-coursing as a sport relies on the chase and the kill to take place before spectators. This requires an artificial staging of the event; therefore the natural factors that would control such happenings in the wild are no longer influential.

Other activities that involve animals suffering in some form or other are excused or justified by those people involved on the grounds that they are traditional. Recent advances in our ethological knowledge and an increasing public awareness of the humane issues involved have meant that one of the only arguments left in favor of a circus is that it is a traditional form of entertainment. Most hunting of animals is based on our ancestors' method of obtaining food even though the end result these days is no longer necessary as a source of nutrition.

People have always had a fascination for large, "exotic" types of animals and as a result many zoos were set up all over Europe and North America. For many years there was a great deal of money to be made from exhibiting animals, and very little regard was paid to their welfare.

With the advent of cinema and television we have come to appreciate these animals in their own environment. Some modern zoos have attempted, therefore, to reproduce a type of natural surrounding for the larger species of animal, but the compromise between providing an animal with its natural environment and still allowing it to be seen by the public is not easy to attain, and there has always been a tendency to err on the side of the public. This tendency to favor the viewing public rather than the animals has resulted in concern about the way in which animals are exploited for films and television. These are modern problems, and they come under two distinct headings.

The first is a moral one and concerns the effect of animal suffering, whether real or simulated, on the viewing public. This subject is of considerable concern to the medical profession, sociologists and also politicians because it is now accepted that violence toward humans depicted on the film or television screen can be reflected by violence in real life. Does the same consequence follow the showing of scenes depicting violence against animals? Recent studies have shown that children appear to be more disturbed by a scene showing physical damage to an animal than to a human. Apart from the psychological disturbance to a child or adult of witnessing violence toward animals, the other direct consequence could be to encourage certain people to copy what they see presented in front of them in the form of entertainment. This is not to say that any scene involving animal suffering should be automatically censored; it must depend on the way in which it is presented and the conclusions that can be drawn, either consciously or subconsciously. Although it is perhaps an oversimplification, one could follow the previously accepted approach to crime, namely that you can show a person robbing a bank, but you have to show that person being caught before the end of the film.

A film that sets out to depict the horrors of game-poaching in Africa and includes scenes where animals are killed and maimed by poachers is morally defensible on the grounds that it is designed to stimulate public outrage against poaching. Is it equally defensible, however, for the film-maker to hire poachers and then arrange for them to kill animals, in front of previously set-up cameras, in order for the film to be made? I do not believe so although some would argue that this was a borderline case.

References
With the advent of cinema and television we have come to appreciate these animals in their own environment. Some modern zoos have attempted, therefore, to reproduce a type of natural surrounding for the larger species of animal, but the compromise between providing an animal with its natural environment and still allowing it to be seen by the public is not easy to attain, and there has always been a tendency to err on the side of the public. This tendency to favor the viewing public rather than the animals has resulted in concern about the way in which animals are exploited for films and television. These are modern problems, and they come under two distinct headings.

The first is a moral one and concerns the effect of animal suffering, whether real or simulated, on the viewing public. This subject is of considerable concern to the medical profession, sociologists and also politicians because it is now accepted that violence toward humans depicted on the film or television screen can be reflected by violence in real life. Does the same consequence follow the showing of scenes depicting violence against animals? Recent studies have shown that children appear to be more disturbed by a scene showing physical damage to an animal than to a human. Apart from the psychological disturbance to a child or adult of witnessing violence toward animals, the other direct consequence could be to encourage certain people to copy what they see presented in front of them in the form of entertainment. This is not to say that any scene involving animal suffering should be automatically censored; it must depend on the way in which it is presented and the conclusions that can be drawn, either consciously or subconsciously. Although it is perhaps an oversimplification, one could follow the previously accepted approach to crime, namely that you can show a person robbing a bank, but you have to show that person being caught before the end of the film.

A film that sets out to depict the horrors of game-poaching in Africa and includes scenes where animals are killed and maimed by poachers is morally defensible on the grounds that it is designed to stimulate public outrage against poaching. Is it equally defensible, however, for the film-maker to hire poachers and then arrange for them to kill animals, in front of previously set-up cameras, in order for the film to be made? I do not believe so although some would argue that this was a borderline case.