Letters

Turtle Excluder Device

As a quoted source in the article entitled “Sea Turtle Excluder Device” (Int J Stud Anim Prob 2(5):231-232, 1981), I would like to offer some corrections and also clarify one of my comments in the article.

I commend the Journal for the attention paid to the sea turtle excluder device (TED). The TED may well provide a technological solution to the problem of incidental capture and drowning of sea turtles in shrimp trawl nets. This is the real new device and is not the Department of Commerce, not the Department of Interior as stated in the article.

Thank you for your attention to these issues.

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Equine Behavior Problems


Cribbing is also an indication of the amount of pain endured. Veterinary surgeon G.J. Baker, MRCVS, noted this in his report in Equine Behavior, Spring 1979. "Horses progress from door chewing to true cribbing...as a result of pain." A month prior to his death, my 28-year-old gelding began chewing wood in his box stall, as well as showing deterioration in general condition. He later succumbed to arterial myosynery thrombosis and spontaneous twist of the ileocecal junction. A summary of the case, and the horse's behavior near the time of death, is described in Equine Behavior, Summer 1981.

Throughout the 11 years I cared for him, the same gelding had a habit of alternately circling in midair and sometimes pawing, using alternate forelegs, while eating grain and occasionally, hay. This behavior seemed to be similar to that seen in nursing kittens—a rhythmic extension and retraction of the claws, or in human babies who drum with a spoon while being fed.

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Editorials

Journal Developments

Andrew N. Rowan

A number of changes need to be announced concerning the management and production of the Journal, although I would emphasize that the editorial policy will remain unaltered.

The publisher of the Journal will no longer be the Institute for the Study of Animal Problems. In the future, our parent organization, The Humane Society of the United States, and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in England will jointly assume the role of publisher. Decisions on day-to-day editorial policy will remain in the hands of the Editors-in-Chief, as before, except that one of these Editors-in-Chief will now be David Wilkins of the RSPCA, who replaces Dr. Michael Fox. This change reflects two facts: that the RSPCA has provided a substantial contribution to the Journal, and that we need to extend our coverage of European developments and events. Dr. Michael Fox will be an Associate Editor.

We also are sorry to announce that Nancy Henneson, our first editor, has decided to leave us and is currently working as a freelancer. She was an important and beneficial influence on the Journal in its formative stages and certainly made my job much easier. However, nobody (not even an Editor-in-Chief) is indispensable and we have appointed Dana Murphy, who has a Masters degree in Science and extensive experience in science writing and the editing of scientific papers, as our new editor.

On the production side, we are being hit hard by rising printing and mailing costs. We have therefore decided to economize by producing only four issues a year, rather than raising subscription prices. While this will mean fewer issues per year, we hope to maintain our annual output of approximately 350 pages. This change will allow us to accept longer papers for publication, if necessary. To aid our readers, several selected major articles in each issue will be supplemented with abstracts in German. We also plan to convert the whole Journal to a double-column format, since the single-column copy is tiring to read. The major articles will still be distinguished from the news and analysis pieces, however, by use of a slightly different layout.

For those readers who are interested, we have just passed the 1000-subscription mark and we thank you all for your support and interest. We hope to continue our excellent rate of growth.

The "Show Dog" Syndrome

M.W. Fox

I have received many letters on the problem of "show dog" syndrome from owners who send their dogs to compete at various dog shows throughout the country. Owners describe this syndrome as follows. The dog literally "goes to pieces" in the show ring and becomes a "nervous wreck." The typical pattern is one of a healthy, outgoing dog with a seemingly stable temperament and of sound lineage having a complete breakdown.
Often, but not invariably, the dogs that do develop the syndrome are not accompanied on the show circuit by their owners. They are under the charge of one or more different handlers. However, the competence and reputation of the handlers do not seem to contribute to any significant degree, although a possible connection between cruel or negligent treatment and this syndrome should not be ruled out. The following case history is illustrative of the etiology and fate of these dogs.

"Spice," a three-year-old Belgian sheepdog, was loaned by her original owner to a friend who wanted to have a dog so that she could compete in the dog show circuit. The dog went to several shows and then was returned to the original owner, who soon after went abroad and left the dog with a handler to be "finished" at a number of other shows. The dog subsequently went to pieces at one show, resisted going into the ring, and when in the ring, acted fearfully and was defensive when approached. When the dog returned to the handler's home, "she curled up and went to sleep," showing little interest in food and acting unresponsive to the handler. Veterinary examination ruled out any organic cause underlying this behavior. The handler gave the dog to a breeder and trainer of Belgian sheepdogs, who, after several weeks, was successful in drawing the dog out of what symptomatically resembled reactive depression.

One may reason that the frequent changing of ownership undermined the dog's sense of emotional security, which ultimately led to complete withdrawal, analogous in many respects to reactive depression in man. This syndrome has been demonstrated in dogs by Overmeier (1981) under controlled laboratory conditions, using intense unavoidable electrical shock. In spite of the questionable ethics of these so-called "learned helplessness" studies (which comparative psychologists regard as animal models of reactive depression in man), Overmeier has successfully shown that it is the element of insecurity, of inability to predict and control traumatic environmental stimuli, that underlies the development of this syndrome. Dogs that are able to predict when the shock will occur, and/or are able to avoid the shock, do not develop learned helplessness or reactive depression. It may be argued, therefore, that a dog that has the security of its owner or a close emotional attachment to one particular person while on the dog show circuit would be less insecure than a dog being handled by one or more strangers or persons with whom the dog has not developed a close bond. Owners of show dogs should therefore be advised to accompany their dogs whenever possible to the shows, provided of course their dogs are emotionally attached to them. As an alternative, they should endeavor to place their dogs with the same reputable handler so that the animals may develop a strong secondary social attachment (Scott and Fuller, 1965). This attachment should be sufficient to provide the animals with the emotional security that will help protect them from developing the "show dog" syndrome.

This syndrome may be particularly relevant to those researching the companion animal-human bond. Further research is needed to verify that the "show dog" syndrome is a consequence of treating dogs as mere "objects," during which time the animal's emotional bond is disrupted, leading ultimately to complete withdrawal and reactive depression.

References

Animal Liberation — The Modern Revival
A.N. Rowan

The current interest in animal welfare and animal rights often leads to questions as to why this issue should have suddenly burst upon the scene and also why so many of the protagonists seem to have been raised and/or educated in Britain. Neither of these questions is easy to answer and perhaps there are no clear and unequivocal causal connections. There are many persons who are interested in animal issues and who do not have the British connection — Professor Teutsch in Germany and Professors Regan and Rollin in America being notable examples. Comments have also been made about the British love of animals. But this aspect definitely does not have anything to do with animal rights and animal liberation; if anything, "loving" animals may preclude any notion of animal rights. It is respect for animals which is important.

Leaving the issue of the British connection — why should there have been the sudden growth of interest in animal rights? The republication of Henry Salt's first-rate book, Animal Rights, by the Society for Animal Rights clearly indicates that the ideas and arguments enunciated by Peter Singer are anything but new. In fact, Singer himself acknowledges this in the preface to the 1980 version of Salt's book. However, the growing interest in the environment may have been a predisposing factor as may purely fortuitous events — such as the gathering together of a group of interested philosophy students and other academics in Oxford at the end of the
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