

ETHICAL ISSUES IN ANIMAL-ASSISTED THERAPY PROGRAMS

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INTRODUCTION

Questions have arisen over the past few years about the ethics of using animals in some or all therapy programs. While some animal protection groups encourage programs involving animal visitations or animal-assisted therapy, others view this use of animals as yet another form of exploitation. In fact, some animal rights activists argue that the mere act of keeping companion animals is an unwarranted form of animal exploitation that is exemplified by such demeaning language as "master" and "pet" (*Harper's Magazine*, 277: 50, August 1988). Yet, while much has been written on animal rights in the past decade, there has been very little detailed analysis of the ethics of keeping companion animals or of the more specialized aspect of animal-assisted therapy. However, people who participate in animal assistance programs are more often than not aware of animal welfare and animal rights, and many either support animal protection activities or consider themselves to be sensitive to these issues.

The goals of this project, supported by the PAL program in Washington D.C., were: (a) to gather specific information about any animal welfare concerns that may have arisen in ongoing programs; (b) to detail a few specific cases of questionable animal treatment; (c) to begin to develop some general guidelines for the use of animals in a wide range of animal-assisted therapy programs; and (d) to outline some of the ethical issues relevant to the keeping of companion animals.

The authors surveyed an assortment of individuals who are involved in animal-assisted therapy programs across the USA. An animal-care questionnaire was distributed to all registrants at the 1988 Delta Society Conference in Orlando, Florida. Phone calls were also made to selected individuals who are very active in animal-assisted therapy to ask them about any concerns that may have come to their attention. The response rate from the questionnaires distributed at the conference was poor (5%). However, those who did return the questionnaires had few concerns and were very open when discussing their programs over the telephone. The low response rate may reflect the fact that many attendees at meetings do not pay much attention to the contents of their conference packets.

The survey was undertaken to identify particular troubling cases rather than to determine the incidence of unacceptable animal exploitation. It is easier to discuss the ethical issues when confronted with an actual case rather than a hypothetical situation. We decided, however, not to identify any persons or organizations involved in the examples mentioned although, in some instances, details of a particular case may identify a program.

THE ETHICS OF KEEPING COMPANION ANIMALS — A BRIEF ANALYSIS

Companion-animal ownership requires a great deal of commitment both financially and personally on the part of the owner. The companion animal is dependent on its owner for food, medical care, and shelter, and, therefore, the relationship may be more subservient than symbiotic. However, symbiotic bonds may be on the increase because animals are being switched from their more traditional utilitarian roles to the role of psychosocial companion (Phil Arkow, pers. com., 1990). Some criticize the keeping of companion animals because of the subservient relationship, but Tannenbaum (1989, 209) argues that the assertion that all people who keep pets treat their animals in a condescending, demeaning, or disrespectful manner cannot be based on empirical observation since many own-

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Nonetheless, Tannenbaum raises a number of questions about the use of the term "human-animal bond." He suggests that a true bond possesses the following characteristics:

1. It must involve a continuous, ongoing relationship rather than one that is sporadic or accidental.
2. It must produce not just a benefit but a *significant* benefit to both, and that benefit must be a *central* aspect of the lives of each.
3. It must involve a relationship that is, in some sense, voluntary.
4. It must be bidirectional.
5. It must entitle each being in the bond to respect and benefit in their own right rather than simply as a means to an end.

A walk through any animal shelter indicates that many owners of companion animals do not meet these requirements. Americans spend four to five billion dollars annually on pet food and three-and-a-half billion dollars on veterinary care (Charles, Charles & Associates, 1983), but the turnover of the companion-animal population is very high, with 20 to 25% of the one hundred million dogs and cats being replaced annually. About ten to fifteen million are killed in the nations' shelters, indicating that they have been abandoned, neglected, or given up by their owners, who nonetheless may still consider themselves as having a bond with their animals. The question then becomes: Is such pet ownership unethical?

In recent years, a number of researchers have developed psychometric instruments that attempt to distinguish what might be considered a human-animal bond from mere instrumental ownership. For example, Albert and Bulcroft (1987) reported that 80% of pet owners consider their animals to be very important members of the family. One can start to distinguish among these owners on the basis of how much money they are willing to spend on caring for their animals. Almost 50% said they would spend as much as was necessary. At the other end of the scale, 17% said they would not spend more than one hundred dollars. Other studies report that from 75% (Netting, Wilson, and Fruge 1988) to 90% (Stallones et al. 1988) of the elderly are attached to their animals. Among adults,

imately 70% are attached and 30 to 40% are very attached to their animals (Stallones et al. 1990). These figures provide some indication of how many owners are bonded to their animals, as opposed to merely owning them.

Animal protection organizations have been campaigning for many years to develop and institute programs that would address the problem of the throwaway pet. There is some evidence that the problem has declined in the past fifteen years (Rowan and Williams 1987) but many owners still discard companion animals at the first sign of inconvenience. While this is to be deplored, it does raise questions about how much inconvenience owners should be expected to endure. Little serious effort has been made to determine the appropriate human response to animals with serious behavioral or other problems. The questions grow even more complex when one considers that some of these problems are the result of human intervention in animals' lives. One could point, for example, to over-indulgent owners who treat their companion animals inappropriately as humans, leading to such indulgence disorders as obesity or chocolate poisoning, or to breed requirements that encourage the breeding of animals that are deformed and have shortened life spans as a result of their genetic makeups.

Companion animals serve many different roles within the dynamics of a family (Wilbur 1976). An animal is often considered an esteemed member of a family and allowed many privileges within the household. However, in some circumstances, companion animals serve primarily to meet one or more needs of their owner(s), sometimes at the expense of their own well-being.

Status

People often keep exotic animals because such ownership confers some degree of status. Cats also frequently function as status symbols (21% of owners, according to Wilbur 1976). Owners who keep pets as status symbols are often ignorant of the animals' health needs. Most exotic species have very specific nutritional requirements. If these are not met, the animals can

owner may simply replace the animal if it becomes ill or dies, rather than taking the time to learn how to care for it correctly.

Decoration

Animals are also kept for decorative purposes, as is the case with tropical fish. Aquariums that also serve as coffee tables and lamps that are currently being marketed illustrate the functional and decorative purpose some home aquariums serve. These animals may be well cared for, but their owners rarely become emotionally bonded to them. Cats, too, are acquired for decoration, and every shelter has its story about the owner who surrendered a cat because it no longer matched the new decor.

Recreation

Companion animals often serve a recreational function within a household. Some animals are kept primarily for sporting purposes and can be the objects of considerable admiration and care. However, such animals may also be discarded or destroyed when they can no longer fulfill their functions or cease to amuse (Council for Science and Society 1988).

Some people keep animals specifically for breeding and hobby purposes. These animals are usually very well cared for although a proportion of those in any one household may be viewed more as means to achieving success through exhibits and shows than as valued and respected companions.

Companionship

The individual who becomes a pet owner purely for the sake of companionship comes closest to achieving a true human-animal bond (at least, 84% of the dog owners, for example; see Wilbur 1976). Pets kept as companions are treated as members of the family, with rights, privileges, and respect regardless of their function or ability. The animal is thought of as a partner rather than as property.

part of the pet owner or from too much love and devotion. Veterinarians report that they treat many cases of indulgence. For example, a large percentage (10 to 20%) of the animals brought to veterinary clinics are morbidly obese due to their owners' misjudgments about nutrition. Health problems that result from inadequate or inappropriate exercise are also quite common. Problems can also emerge when there is a misfit between the personality of an owner and an animal. For example, giving a frail elderly woman a large active dog that requires a lot of exercise is not fair to the human or to the animal.

Dogs and cats are the most common companion animals in the United States. The majority are kept by persons who value, love, and take appropriate care of their animals (Serpell 1986). However, a significant minority either neglect their animals or acquire them as playthings to be discarded at any time. From the data presented earlier, one could speculate that around 20% of owned animals are at risk.

Assistance Animals

Animals used as helpers, as is the case with guide dogs and working dogs for the handicapped, provide their owners with practical assistance and companionship. This new role as facilitator puts animals in an ambiguous position somewhere between human and animal. The benefits that these working animals can provide have been documented in the literature (Hart et al. 1987). They can promote a sense of calmness and relaxation, increase social interaction, help individuals cope with isolation, and encourage nurturant behavior (Council for Science and Society 1988). Many of the humans who have such animals value and respect them as much or more than nonhandicapped owners do theirs, but the costs to animals used in this manner have not yet been determined.

Utility

Arkow (pers. com., 1990) points out that some people keep animals for protection or as work-

likely that the owners of such animals see them in a very different light from those who own animals for companionship or status purposes.

THE ETHICS OF ANIMAL-ASSISTED THERAPY

The most common concern raised in both the interviews and the questionnaire responses was animal fatigue and burnout. The question of fatigue is especially relevant in institutional settings, where residential animals are often on duty twenty-four hours a day with little time for rest. The agreement regarding the maximum length of visitation sessions was also noteworthy. Respondents commented that visitations should be limited to a maximum of one hour, and many stated that animals began to show signs of fatigue if visits continued for a longer period. However, pet visitation is only one type of animal-assisted therapy.

Animal-assisted therapy programs can be divided into six general categories: (1) pet programs for the elderly and other clients; (2) service animal programs; (3) institutionally based residential programs; (4) visitation programs; (5) equine programs; and (6) wild (nondomesticated) animal programs. Each of these different program types presents unique animal welfare dilemmas. All share a common philosophy that animals can promote well-being and improve the quality of life of people, and all involve using animals in some way as therapeutic tools.

Pet Programs for the Elderly and Other Clients

Most shelter programs seek to adopt out animals and succeed in placing anywhere from a small (around 10%) to a very high percentage of their animals. This range is usually due to differences in shelters' attitudes regarding appropriate approaches to adoption programs. In animal-assisted therapy, a number of programs are working to place animals with the elderly. The elderly have much lower rates of animal ownership than the rest of the population but are perceived to be the segment that would benefit the most from the companionship of animals. One

the elderly has also devoted considerable attention to ethical issues, and the following discussion is based on their response to our survey.

When this program began placing animals with the community elderly, they ran into problems when volunteers placed unsuitable (because of breed, behavior, and/or temperament) animals with elderly clients. As a result, the program was forced to become much more selective when accepting animals and had to impress on the volunteers that it was a human program that used animals rather than another way of saving animals from the shelter. The animals were then given to elderly clients, who became their *legal* (and hopefully the emotional) owners. There are periodic checks on the elderly clients, and the vast majority of placed animals receive regular health care. The most frequent problems encountered are overfeeding and underexercising. Occasionally, more severe problems occur that have to be addressed through personal counseling and contact.

Despite all efforts, some animals have died prematurely as a result of excessive feeding (congestive heart failure—one animal), being allowed to roam (killed by cars—two animals), freezing to death when left outdoors on a winter's day (one animal), and strangled by a leash while unattended (one animal). None of these cases led to prosecution, although the freezing death provoked much debate. (It was the result of several factors. A veterinarian who knew the dog indicated that it was old and had a heart condition that made it particularly vulnerable. It was shut outside during the afternoon because the owner forgot to leave a garage access door open. Therefore, the owner's behavior did not constitute a problem of gross neglect.) In all cases, it was determined that the harm was not intentional and that legal sanctions would aggravate the owner's guilt and grief.

This particular program has placed several hundred animals. The mishaps recounted above represent only a relatively small proportion (1 or 2%) of the total program population. It is unlikely that most shelters, even the many with stringent standards, could claim as good a record, even if they performed similar follow-ups to determine the adopted animals' fates. More-

more will emphasize service rather than research and follow-up, and the incidence of animal neglect and abuse may rise to unacceptable levels, especially since some shelters argue that any alternative, even an irresponsible owner, is better than euthanasia for an animal.

Service Animal Programs

Service animals include guide dogs for the blind, hearing dogs for the deaf, and assistance animals for the handicapped. Some programs breed their own animals. Others train animals obtained from local shelters, which would otherwise be euthanized. Although few shelter animals are used for this purpose, this practice does save some dogs.

Programs that train service animals have grown in popularity over the past ten years. For example, Canine Companions for Independence has grown in fifteen years to an organization with a multimillion dollar annual budget. For the most part, all of these programs share a common goal, but their training protocols differ. Some only use positive reinforcement conditioning, while others also use negative-reinforcement methods.

Within hearing dog programs, follow-up was mentioned as an important aspect of the training protocol, since dogs lose their skills if their behavior is not continually reinforced. Follow-up visits also ensure that animals are well suited for the particular households in which they were placed.

Assistance animals that carry personal items or pull wheelchairs raised some concerns among those surveyed. Some respondents reported worries about stress to the spine in animals used to carry heavy packs, but dogs that pull wheelchairs were a particular concern. Dogs have been used as draft animals for many centuries, but there are questions about the relative size of the dog in comparison to the overall load that the animal is required to pull. One respondent described a medium-sized dog that was used to pull the wheelchair of a grown man and questioned the appropriateness of the load. Some respondents had observed dogs pulling wheel-

that dogs might pull chairs for short periods of time but that they should pull from the front to avoid strain to the lumbar spine. Specialists in veterinary orthopedics need to be consulted on this issue.

Another issue that was brought up was the attitude of disabled people toward their animals. One respondent described a case in which a disabled individual seemed to ignore the dog, which spent most of its time looking depressed and trying to avoid being jerked around or run over by the wheelchair to which it was tethered. Some individuals may not be appropriate beneficiaries of service dogs because of their general attitudes toward animals. It should also be noted that wheelchairs and crutches pose risks to assistance animals.

Institutionally Based Residential Programs

Institutionally based residential animal-assisted therapy programs have been increasing in popularity. Settings include prisons, nursing homes, psychiatric hospitals, and long-term-care hospital settings. While the care of animals has a long history in institutional therapy and rehabilitation, there are potential risks to resident animals.

Animal fatigue is one possible problem for a resident animal if it is not allowed adequate time for rest, free of attention from residents. While competent residents are often allowed to take an active role in caring for resident animals, it is important that the staff at facilities with these programs also make a strong commitment to the animals' care. Resident animals *must* have routine medical examinations that review both immediate preventive health measures and the stress status of the animals.

The potential for animal abuse is quite high within some institutions (such as prisons and psychiatric institutions). Despite concerns expressed by some in the animal protection movement, however, there have been relatively few accounts of such abuse. However, those that have occurred have involved significant harm to the animals. Incidents have been reported of abuse to resident animals by the guards working at the prison that housed them. There have also been reports of resident birds being killed and

come very attached to the animals. Reconciling the risks to the animals with their rehabilitation value is neither simple nor easy unless one follows the dictum that animals absolutely should not be used as means to an end.

Visitation Programs

Visitation programs are by far the most widespread type of animal-assisted therapy program. In general, these programs are run by a staff of volunteers who use their own animals for visitation. Visits are made to nursing homes, hospitals, and, in some cases, private homes. The animals must be both temperament-tested and obedience-trained to participate. Organizations such as Therapy Dogs International provide certification that an animal has met the basic standards and is suitable for participation in a visitation program. Visits are usually made weekly depending on the availability of the volunteer.

Several issues were mentioned by the respondents to our survey. Animals have limited access to water during visits, and many people expressed concern that the high temperatures within most nursing homes might cause problems. One respondent argued that the combination of heat and dehydration was very stressful and could lead to exhaustion. In general, everyone agreed on the need to limit the length of the visits to no more than one hour, and during a discussion at the 1989 annual meeting of the Delta Society, some suggested that a limit of thirty minutes was more appropriate. The question of the frequency of the visits is also important. Some commented that no animal should be expected to participate in more than three visits per week. One discussant had found that two one-hour visits a week to a group of ten to fifteen residents was too much for her dog.

It seems clear that visitations are stressful on the animals. Breed-specific temperament issues also come into play. As with humans, abilities to manage and cope with stress vary from individual to individual and even from one visit to the next. Some people allow their animals to volunteer for a visit: after having associated a particular signal (a red bandanna, for example, or a colored collar) with the visits, they pick up the

The use of shelter animals in visitation programs can be problematic from both an ethical and logistical point of view. Animals should not be taken from shelters unless they have been temperament-tested and shown to be responsive to their handlers' commands. Handlers should be aware that behavior problems are more likely with shelter animals. It was also agreed that using young puppies and kittens in visitation programs is problematic. Puppies overheat rapidly and may not have received all their vaccinations.

Arkow (pers. com., 1990), however, has commented that the use of puppies and kittens has posed few if any problems in his experience, as long as the obvious safeguards are taken. He notes that young animals have very predictable temperaments and elicit very strong nurturing responses. The play and handling experience of the visit may be more enriching and may enhance their maturation/socialization more than the sterility of the shelter, and their chances of adoption are improved by community outreach activities. Arkow also argues that the risks of transmitting zoonotic diseases are very small, provided normal precautions are taken. Others disagree with his position, but there are clearly advantages and disadvantages to both sides, and the correct answer is not immediately obvious.

Equine Programs

Equine programs for the handicapped have become more and more popular. Therapeutic riding provides an opportunity for an otherwise nonambulatory individual to experience a sense of empowerment and the feeling of ambulation. It can be an important treatment adjunct for physical therapists. Such programs are already monitored, and therapists must have specific training and certification in order to work with clients.

Individuals involved in therapeutic riding programs report that the majority of clients are children and that both the animal and client are closely monitored. If a client should become abusive to an animal, s/he will be immediately expelled from the program. All of the programs surveyed reported that no horse is ever used for

Some of the horses used have retired from competitive work, and participation in therapy programs helps them keep active and productive, although if an animal is seriously injured, it is usually retired completely or euthanized. One individual did report some concern about the relative lack of animal welfare laws to protect horses. This individual felt that dogs in general are much better protected from abuse than are farm animals (including horses). This is probably because the public, for the most part, views dogs as valuable companions and farm animals simply as working animals.

Wild (Nondomesticated) Animal Programs

Several animal-assisted therapy programs using wild (nondomesticated) animals are in existence, and these programs raise a number of concerns. First, there are questions about taking wild animals from their normal habitats and forcing them into close contact with humans. Humans appear to be particularly attracted by the opportunity to handle and stroke a wild animal. There is a long-standing belief that, if one is trusted by a wild animal, one must be a good person (Hill 1987). Second, handling or ownership of a wild animal appears to confer status. Therefore, program coordinators must take care that visitation or animal-assisted therapy programs that use wild animals be undertaken with appropriate self-criticism and for the right reasons. Third, wild animals are, by definition, not acclimated to close contact with humans or to human handling. A captive wild animal may be tamed or trained and grow accustomed to its immediate handlers but is still likely to be more stressed by strangers than would be a domesticated animal that has been selected over hundreds of generations for its tolerance of human contact.

Dolphin Swim Programs. A number of dolphin swim programs have been designed to give humans an opportunity to swim with wild dolphins in the wild, with wild dolphins in lagoons, wildlife lagoons, or aquariums, or with captive-bred dolphins in lagoons or aquariums or to interact with them at the water's edge. While such

they are not popular with either animal activists or some dolphin trainers (Capoldo 1989).

Keeping dolphins in captivity for the sake of providing a recreational, therapeutic, or educational experience for humans has been challenged by a number of people and organizations. For example, the Australian Senate Select Committee on Animal Welfare (1985) concluded "that the benefits of oceanaria in Australia for humans and cetacea are no longer sufficient to justify the adverse effects of capture for captivity" and recommended that the practice of keeping cetacea in oceanaria be phased out. In the USA, such strong action has not been recommended, and the number of swim program applications has increased in recent years. Nonetheless, some attempts have been made to address the ethical concerns.

One program in Florida does not actually confine the dolphins, which are housed in a pool in a canal that connects to the ocean. Moreover, the participants in this program are required to follow strict guidelines regarding their interaction with the dolphins. They are told that they are only guests and that they must follow the rules set by the dolphins. Nonetheless, dolphin trainers worry about the bad habits that the dolphins learn (they enjoy startling novice humans) and warn that a dolphin can cause serious injury if it chooses to ram its beak into a human swimmer.

The freedom to leave also raises contentious issues. One person involved with dolphins notes that dolphins fed regularly by humans have to be retrained to eat live fish. In addition, dolphins in seawater swim programs tend to be brought in from some distance away (dolphins are very territorial), and it was suggested that the dolphins cannot leave their new environs without increased psychological stress. Finally, dolphins are very social and form close bonds with other dolphins, which would inhibit the departure of individuals from the group.

One animal-assisted therapy research program was undertaken to examine "communication responses from autistic persons" (Smith 1984, 156). However, Capoldo (1989) argued that the number of projects that might seek this end without using captive dolphins is vast (for

therapy programs for autistic children; see Redefer 1989) and suggested that the specific objectives of the work with autistic people, namely "to establish an environment allowing the autistic person to act in a spontaneous way" (Smith 1984, 154) do not justify the use of a captive wild animal.

A number of other questions have been raised about dolphin swim programs. The therapeutic benefits for the human participants remain to be defined and proven, yet some programs are making inflated and unsubstantiated claims that dolphins can heal organic disease, and many hotels are now beginning to apply for permits to start them. The dangers to the dolphins are all too evident. New programs will increase the demand for wild dolphins, but the Marine Mammal Protection Act has no category for swim programs to regulate this demand. Instead, such programs have to be judged as educational exhibits.

No research has examined the effects of swim programs on dolphins, but human contact is not necessarily beneficial to them. Dolphins have very sensitive hearing. Swim program environments undergo little or no acoustic monitoring, and it is likely that they are very noisy and stressful. Necropsies of captive dolphins show enlarged adrenals, especially in animals exposed to many human beings. It seems clear that much more attention needs to be paid to the well-being of dolphins in captivity and that swim programs should be discouraged until more data have been collected.

Monkey Assistance Programs. Another wild animal program involves using capuchin monkeys as personal care assistants for quadriplegics. Despite the laudable goals, this project also raises ethical concerns. Once again, these are wild (nondomesticated) animals, yet they are trained to live within a household and perform tasks such as picking up dropped items, playing a cassette recorder, and spoon-feeding the quadriplegic owner.

The one capuchin program has reportedly matched fifteen capuchins and quadriplegics throughout the country (Queiro 1989), although

program lists only nine simian aides. According to the director of the program, seventeen monkeys had been placed as of March 1990, but six placements had been ended because of one quadriplegic death, three lifestyle changes, and two incompatibilities. Since 1984, the program has had its own breeding colony of animals and has established a foster home program to socialize the young monkeys to humans. The socialization starts when the young animals are six to eight weeks old.

The program seeks to place monkeys with individuals who live alone and have been disabled for at least one year. The capuchin acts as an assistant in the home, supplementing to the human caretaker and providing the option of two to eight hours of independence for the quadriplegic. A number of observers have commented on the strong bond that appears to exist between quadriplegics and their monkeys and on the benefits that accrue to the quadriplegics. However, the benefits have been reported mainly in the popular media rather than in peer-reviewed publications. In the one research paper on capuchin helpers, the authors comment simply that they are convinced "that this partnership represents one of the most unique and dramatic illustrations of the human/animal bonding phenomena [sic]" (Willard, Levee, and Westbrook 1985, 106). For anybody wishing to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of the program, reliance on newspaper, magazine, and uncritical anecdotes from the disabled is unsatisfactory.

Many questions have been raised about the program, especially in the last two years. It has been criticized for not providing sufficient support and advice for the foster families—caring for a lively and inquisitive capuchin is more complicated than caring for a puppy. Questions have been raised about the stress caused by removing the young animals from their mothers, and then again from their foster families, some of whom are unwilling to relinquish their adopted capuchins.

There are conflicting reports about the use of shock in the training programs. The director of the program notes that only positive reinforcement is used for task training. However, a shock pack is used to back up the shadings train-

merely to startle. Others have claimed that any use of shock gives an animal diarrhea, and one expert argues that all shock will be distressing since the animal cannot relate easily to such an abnormal stimulus (Charles Sedgwick, pers. com., 1990). For this reason, some of the monkey trainers discipline their charges by biting them on the hand, which is a natural signal that a monkey can easily interpret.

The fact that the animals have all their teeth pulled before they are placed has also raised questions. According to the director of the program, this is done to prevent injury to health-care providers, who might be attacked by the simian aide if they are perceived to be a threat to the quadriplegic. One wildlife health expert has reported that capuchins that have formed close-knit ties with individual humans will indeed continue to view human strangers as threats and that even a toothless monkey can deliver an unpleasant bite (Charles Sedgwick, pers. com., 1990). Since attacking strangers is not a problem with properly trained and selected canine assistance animals, the need to pull assistance monkeys' teeth affirms concerns about the use of socialized but nondomesticated animals.

At present, there are many more questions than answers about the use of capuchins as assistance animals. These questions have led the California Fish and Game Commission to recommend against permitting the program into California (P. Bontadelli, memorandum to Robert R. Treanor, executive secretary of the California Fish and Game Commission, November 1, 1990), and most animal protection groups have expressed reservations about or total opposition to the program.

As mentioned, very little detailed and critically reviewed information on the program is available. The single paper that has appeared in the scientific literature (Willard, Levee, and Westbrook 1985) consists mainly of reviews of other studies of animal-assisted therapy. No impartial data describe the case history of each monkey, including information on the breeding and fostering program, health status, training, and placement details. Given the acrimony of

are viewed with suspicion, and the lack of detailed information hurts the credibility of the program. At this stage, only an independent review panel (including persons appointed by both the program and its critics) could resolve the dispute. In the meantime, in the absence of data untainted by ideology or self-interest, the ethical concerns remain unanswered. However, because the program involves wild primates (no matter that they are bred in captivity and fostered in human homes) that are not adapted to living freely in association with humans (leading to the need to pull teeth and discipline with electric shock), we would argue that it is ethically questionable. We must emphasize, though, that our conclusion is based more on generalities than on specifics. The absence of detailed data to resolve the conflict leads us to err on the side of caution.

CONCLUSION

In summary, while the efficacy of animal-assisted therapy programs has yet to be proven conclusively, there is clearly some potential for inappropriate animal use and exploitation. Nonetheless, most animal-assisted therapy programs appear to have a relatively benign impact on the animals, especially when compared with the incidence of abuse among companion animals. However, this preliminary analysis leads us to question the appropriateness of programs that use wild animals. Anybody who decides to employ wild animals in animal-assisted therapy incurs the special burden of justifying why the same ends could not be achieved with domestic animals or in some other way. Some general ethical guidelines also need to be developed and implemented for companion-animal programs (Arkow 1989), especially those employing resident animals in some high-security institutional settings.

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