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# Animal Ethics and Marine Studies

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## Level

7+

## Key question

Why are ethical considerations important in studying science?

## Key outcome

To clarify views on the use of animals in marine studies and allow students to develop their own code of practice for studying the marine environment.

## Introduction

Increasingly, people are questioning the ethics of using animals for scientific experiments and challenging the views of those who wish to hunt for sport, to fish and to use animals in the classroom. These worksheets have been developed for students to use following field work at Camden Park Education Centre and can be adapted for other sites and situations.

## What you need

Work sheets  
Pencil

## What you do

Individuals complete worksheets one and two. Then the class discusses some of the ethical issues.

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## Worksheet 1

Look at the list of uses for which humans employ animals. Tick those that you have supported, either directly or indirectly (whether or not you agree with them now):

Students can keep this worksheet and refer back to it after completing the following activities. Ask students if their opinions have changed.

Working search and rescue hearing dogs guide dogs drug squad pets as therapy police dogs police horses guard dogs		Transport horses camels donkeys elephants	
		Entertainment circus zoos	
Religion sacrifice		Teaching dissections whale handling experiments	
Food fish poultry beef milk veal pigs lamb horse		Pets companionship	
		Sport fishing hunting fighting racing	
		Showing dogs cats cattle sheep horses chickens	
Clothing wool leather snakeskin fur		Breeding dogs/cats	
Research medical drug trials cosmetic drug trials pesticides chemical warfare physical injuries			

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## Group discussion

Below are some of the views of a well known animal ethics author (from Rollin, 1981). Divide into small groups (no more than five per group) and discuss each point. Declare whether or not you agree with the statement and decide what it means for the way we treat animals.

- Animals deserve to be treated as objects of moral concern because they are aware (as opposed to plants and bacteria).
- An animal's right to life is not absolute. For example, a snake which endangers a child's life should be killed; dogs should be desexed to make them more suitable for living within a human community.

This means that respecting animal's rights should not mean subordinating humans' rights, although the resolution of any conflict of interest should consider the interests of the animal).

- Quality of life is important.

Are we guilty of double standards when we can euthanase suffering animals but not humans legally?

Still in groups, discuss the following questions and statements:

- Do we need to use animals for food?
- Do any animals actually benefit from human exploitation?
- Do animals feel pain as humans do?
- If so, which ones?

mammals

birds

reptiles

fish

crustacea

echinoderms (e.g. sea stars).

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## Worksheet 2: Identify Your Own Views

Rollin sees the most important thing is that moral issues be explored and discussed and that personal opinions can be rationally justified. The activity below should help you identify some of your own beliefs about using animals. There are no right or wrong answers but avoid double standards. Examples of double standards might include: saying you are against all killing of animals when you eat meat, or that you are against the use of animals for human recreation but you enter a sweepstake for the Melbourne Cup, or you are against the use of animals in research but you have received a vaccination for protection against tetanus.

Answer these questions individually, then join your group for discussion.

1. Circle the animal below which you would prefer to kill and eat.

- a worm
- a sheep
- a cat
- a lizard

Give the reasons for your choice.

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2. Circle the animal you would prefer to dissect.

- an oyster
- a fish
- a seal
- a penguin

Give the reasons for your choice.

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3. Place a cross on the line below to show where your values lie between the two extremes.

A. Humans should not hurt or kill any living thing, not even disease-causing bacteria.

B. Humans should be allowed to do whatever they like to any living creature.

A \_\_\_\_\_ B

Explain the reasons for placing the cross where you did.

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4. Place a cross on the line below to show where your values lie between the two extremes.

A. Humans should not hunt any animal for any reason, including for sport, research, education or pest control

B. Humans should be allowed to hunt any animal, any time.

A \_\_\_\_\_ B

Explain the reasons for placing the cross where you did.

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5. Circle the option with which you agree (circle as many as you like).

It is all right to fish when

A. it is for sport and all fish are killed

B. it is for research/education and all fish are killed

C. it is for sport and all fish are tagged and released

D. it is for research/education and all fish are tagged and released

E. fishing is not acceptable for any reason

Explain your answers.

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6. Using animals in experiments is all right when

A. the animal is an invertebrate, such as scallops

B. the experiment is for development of new medicines

C. the animal suffers but the results are likely to benefit its species

D. only where there is no alternative and the number of animals involved is kept to a minimum

E. the experiment is for development of new cosmetics

F. the experiment causes the animal(s) psychological, rather than physical distress

G. Using animals in experiments can never be justified

Explain your answers.

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## Extension

Develop your own code of practice. This includes a list of the sorts of activities in which you feel you would be happy to take part. Your teacher may allow some negotiation over how some parts of your course are taught but be prepared to discuss alternatives. For example, if you strongly object to the use of fish for educational dissections the number needed may be reduced if it can be done as a demonstration rather than as a practical session. Alternatively, a computer simulation program may be available.

Below are a number of possible animal uses in marine studies on which you should determine your position. Remember that you should be able to back up opinion with a rational, well thought-out reason. No doubt your course will include many other animal issues which you should also consider here.

- vertebrate dissections
- invertebrate dissections
- collection and live storage/release
- collection and preservation
- catch and kill
- catch and release
- catch for food
- detailed observation of invertebrates/fish/seals/whales
- experimentation with invertebrates/fish
- anchoring in delicate ecosystems such as seagrass beds and coral
- others.

## Extension

Design a field activity about rock platform animals which takes into account your group's feelings about animals and ethics. Do you need to draw a balance between learning about animals in detail and avoiding any hurt or damage to them?

## **Reference**

Rollin, 1981, *Animal Rights and Human Morality*, Prometheus Books, New York.