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Role of the Veterinarian on Animal Welfare

Achariya Sailasuta

The importance of animal welfare has been nowadays increasingly recognized by the governments, academic institutions and the general public. The growing of international public concern towards humane practices involving animals. While, the number of animals used in experimentation is declining in some countries, the adoption of humane slaughter methods is also increasing. The improvement in the welfare of companion animals has often lead these general trends. Today the animal products are largely derived from intensive farming systems, which is considered unacceptable on animal welfare. The veterinary profession is privileged to occupy a position of enormous social influence on animal welfare issue which has traditionally understood welfare primarily the scope of animal health and productivity, and the curriculum also has reflected to this approach.

Animal Welfare on Veterinary Education

Animal welfare has been developed into interdisciplinary science and consequently there is a growing amount of researches. However, the teaching of the science and ethics of animal welfare remains underdeveloped in most of the veterinary schools. An OIE (World Organisation for Animal Health) conference on Animal Welfare in 2004, the importance of animal welfare as a discipline has been discussed to be taught in its own right in the undergraduate veterinary curriculum, although animal welfare should also be considered at the clinical level. There are some suggestions from IVSA (International Veterinary Students Association) 2007

workshop that veterinary students should know about the 5 freedoms during lecturers, clinical practicals, farm and clinic visits and training. The communication to the society about animal welfare should be concerned. To encourage the introduction of animal welfare topics into the veterinary curriculum worldwide, the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) and the University of Bristol, School of Veterinary Science launched their CD ROM-based “Concepts in Animal Welfare” syllabus in 2003. Since then many veterinary institutes have expressed interest in the syllabus. The syllabus is available and has been organized a series of conferences, workshops and presentations for about 400 veterinary faculties all over the world; Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Czech Republic and other Eastern European countries, India, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, the Philippines, Cambodia, Vietnam and Thailand. This syllabus is also being promoted for use as a foundation for teaching animal welfare in related courses such as Animal Science, Agricultural Science and other vocational training. The animal welfare syllabus will play an important role in helping veterinarians develop an improved understanding of animal welfare science and issues, not only during their formal veterinary education, but also their entire veterinary career.

Animal Welfare on Veterinary Profession

The Thai Veterinary Medical Association under the Royal Patronage has achieved the overall goals social contribution or to convey assistance to relief problems



on animal welfare aspects in the veterinary profession since 2001, *The Veterinary Volunteer Center (VVC)*. The VVC has 3 working groups according to their responsibility areas as *The Working Group on Veterinary Public Relation, Veterinary Contribution to the Community and Veterinary Information Service*. This activity distributed a modern knowledge and ethics for the benefit of the veterinary profession on animal welfare. The expectations are delivered to the Thai society are; to provide prompt veterinary advice for animal life saving, to widely distribute veterinary services to the general public, to develop and improve standards of animal raising or farming in the country, to improve of people's quality of life relating animal health and food safety issues, to promote and enhance veterinary roles for public acknowledgement, to assist, escort and support the animal welfare issues in the country.

Regards to International veterinary associations, the World Veterinary Association (WVA), Commonwealth Veterinary Association (CVA), World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA), the Federation of European Companion Animal Veterinary Associations (FECAVA), the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) and the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) have all organized major animal welfare conferences in recent years. This suggests that the level of involvement in animal welfare of these organizations and their

veterinary professionals is increasing. That the WVA supports the OIE adopted international standards for animal welfare which recognize the need for humane treatment of sentient animals, while ensuring that these standards are science based. That it is important to achieve acceptance worldwide of animal welfare as an issue of common concern and importance. The Federation of Asian Veterinary Associations (FAVA) has accepted the Universal Declaration of Animal Welfare (UDAW) in the 15th FAVA Congress-OIE Joint Symposium in Bangkok, last October 2008. This establishes the importance of this issue for the animal welfare, which would promote the work of the Federation of Asian Veterinary Associations (FAVA), facilitate regional acceptance and application of international standards.

“The veterinary profession is committed to animal welfare and takes very seriously its obligation to society for the professional management and assurance of animal welfare”

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