



Towards a framework for resolving ethical conflicts related to measures for disease control

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Veterinary Ethics

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FMD control measures

Ethical challenge for the Veterinary Profession

Contents

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Prediction is very difficult,
especially about the future.
(Mark Twain, Karl Valentin, et al.)

Moral Convictions

Veterinary professionals and the general public

Moral convictions regarding animals:
Where do they come from?

Moral convictions:
They are there!

Moral Convictions

Veterinary professionals

What makes patients special?

“The **dog** – and the **cat** – became **viewed as patients** whose **treatment need not be limited by the harsh economic constraints** of the agricultural sector, and science and sentiment became linked in a promising new future for veterinary medicine.” (Sandøe et al. 2016, 30)

- animals as companions
- family members
- economic constraints are limiting but not prior

Moral protection zone around the animal: changes in human-animal relationship bring about **demands for medical care without regarding the economic value** of the animal

Moral Convictions

Veterinary professionals

Line of reasoning

- P1: Veterinarians** are specialized **medical doctors**
- P2:** Medical doctors should act to promote and protect **health-related interests of patients**
- P3:** Patients in veterinary medicine are animals that are **presented** to the veterinarian and **can benefit from veterinary care**
- C: Therefore, veterinarians should act to promote and protect presupposed health-related interests of animal patients**

Norm: promote and protect the health-related interests of animals

Moral Convictions

Veterinary professionals

Norm justifies even severe harm if it is in the presupposed interest of the animal.

Moral Convictions

Veterinary professionals

**Ideal and norm: Veterinarians are professionals
who protect and cure patients!**

“One of the **Community’s tasks in the veterinary field** is to improve the state of **health of livestock**, thereby **increasing the profitability of livestock farming** and **facilitating trade** in animals and animal products. **At the same time** the Community is also a **Community of values**, and its **policies to combat animal diseases must not be based purely on commercial interests** but must also take genuine **account of ethical principles.**” (Directive 2003/85/EU)

Moral Convictions

Veterinary professionals: Intra-professional conflict

“Foot-and-mouth disease is a highly contagious viral disease of biungulates. Although **foot-and-mouth disease** has **no public health importance**, due to its **exceptional economic importance**, it is on the top of list A diseases of the Office International des Epizooties (OIE).” (Directive 2003/85/EU)

Norm I: promote and protect
the **health-related interests of
animals**



Norm II: promote and protect
the **interests of others**
(economy and trade)

In the case of FMD control measures official veterinarians...

- are not legally bound to **protect** and **cure** animals
- rather, they maybe required to **kill healthy animals as well as curable infected animals**

Moral Convictions

Veterinary professionals and the general public

What do we know about the general public's
moral convictions?

Moral Convictions

General public: Netherlands (Cohen/Stassen 2016)

Empirical survey NL: Cohen/Stassen 2016

- **epidemic outbreaks** in the late 90ies and 2001 and 2003
- **control mechanisms** and **disease interventions**
- rise of an **intense debate** whether the measures taken took **ethical principles sufficiently into account**

Hypothesis: public resistance throughout the Dutch society because of **major changes in our relationship with animals**

cf. Cohen/Stassen 2016

“It was felt that these **values** had been **overruled** by the European and national governments and interest organisations (e.g. agricultural organisations) that **did not acknowledge the fact that other values were at stake.**” (Cohen and Stassen 2016, 142)

Moral Convictions

General public: Netherlands (Cohen/Stassen 2016)

Table 9.1 Respondents' (n=1,999) convictions on the hierarchical relationship, value, doing good, and right to life of animals.

Domains	Position	
1. Hierarchy	<u>Humans are superior to animals</u>	A 67%: humans are superior to animals
	<u>Humans and animals are equal</u>	
	Animals are superior to humans	
2. Value	<u>Animals have value</u>	100
	Animals have no value	0
3. Do good	People should do good to all animals	85
	People should do good to some animals	12
	People don't have to do good to animals	3
4. Right to life	<u>All animals have a right to life</u>	87
	Some animals have a right to life	12
	Animals have no right to life	1

Moral Convictions

General public: Netherlands (Cohen/Stassen 2016)

<div>A: humans are superior to animals</div> <div>B: humans and animals are equal</div>	Rating by the respondents who disagreed with the culling		Rating by the respondents who partly (dis)agreed with the culling		Rating by the respondents who agreed with the culling	
	A	B	A	B	A	B
Animal life is valuable, therefore <u>healthy</u> <u>animals should not be culled to:</u>						
stop the disease from spreading	7.1*	7.9*	5.4*	6.0*	2.6*	3.5*
safeguard the export position of a country	6.1*	7.0*	4.7*	5.7*	3.0	3.5
protect human health (eye infections)	6.1*	7.4*	5.0*	6.2*	3.4*	4.2*
protect human life	5.6*	8.0*	5.1*	6.1*	3.0*	4.2*

¹ The rating on a scale between 1-10 reflects the importance given to the judgement; * $P < 0.05$.

Group B significantly valued reasons not to cull of greater importance than group A

Moral Convictions

General public: Netherlands (Cohen/Stassen 2016)

Cohen and Stassen follow from this...

- that the **intrinsic value** of animal life **has a gained a prominent place in public morality** (irrespective of its value to people, such as for food, company, or recreation)
- “As a starting point, it should be acknowledged that in epidemics **harm is done to all**: the animals, the animal keepers, and **society as a whole.**” (Cohen and Stassen 2016, 145)

Conflicting of values (norm I and II):

- within the profession (intra professional)
- between profession and public's expectations



**GENERAL
PUBLIC**



...being torn to pieces.

**VETERINARY
PROFESSIONAL**



ANIMALS



OWNERS

Ethical tools

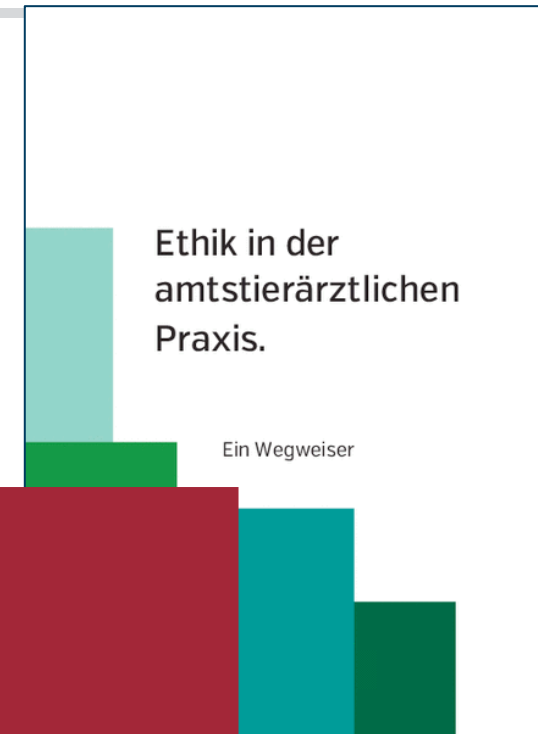
Informing guidance

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VETHICS I: Ethics for Official Veterinarians

official veterinarians and ethicists:

- provide time and space to reflect **professionals' responsibilities**
- test methods to **manage value conflicts**



Ethical tools

Animal Disease Intervention Matrix (ADIM)

Dealing with complexity: ADIM (Aerts 2006)

- **Practice-oriented tool to evaluate** disease control measures
- Core idea: **compare and contrast different scenarios**
- **Steps to take:**
 - **Describe** the animal epidemic at stake
 - **Identify possible scenarios** of disease control
 - **Evaluate the scenarios** on the basis of fifteen practice-oriented objectives
 - **Compare the different scenarios** with regard to their score

- protecting the health of control personnel,
- protecting public health,
- protecting of animal health,
- ensuring of animal welfare,
- respecting the human-animal bond,
- limiting environmental damage,
- limiting the psychological impact on the farmer,
- limiting the psychological impact on the control personnel,
- respecting food,
- Limiting disturbance of social life,
- limiting economic losses in agriculture,
- limiting economic losses in non-agricultural sectors,
- ensuring practicability,
- ensuring food security
- protecting valuable animals.

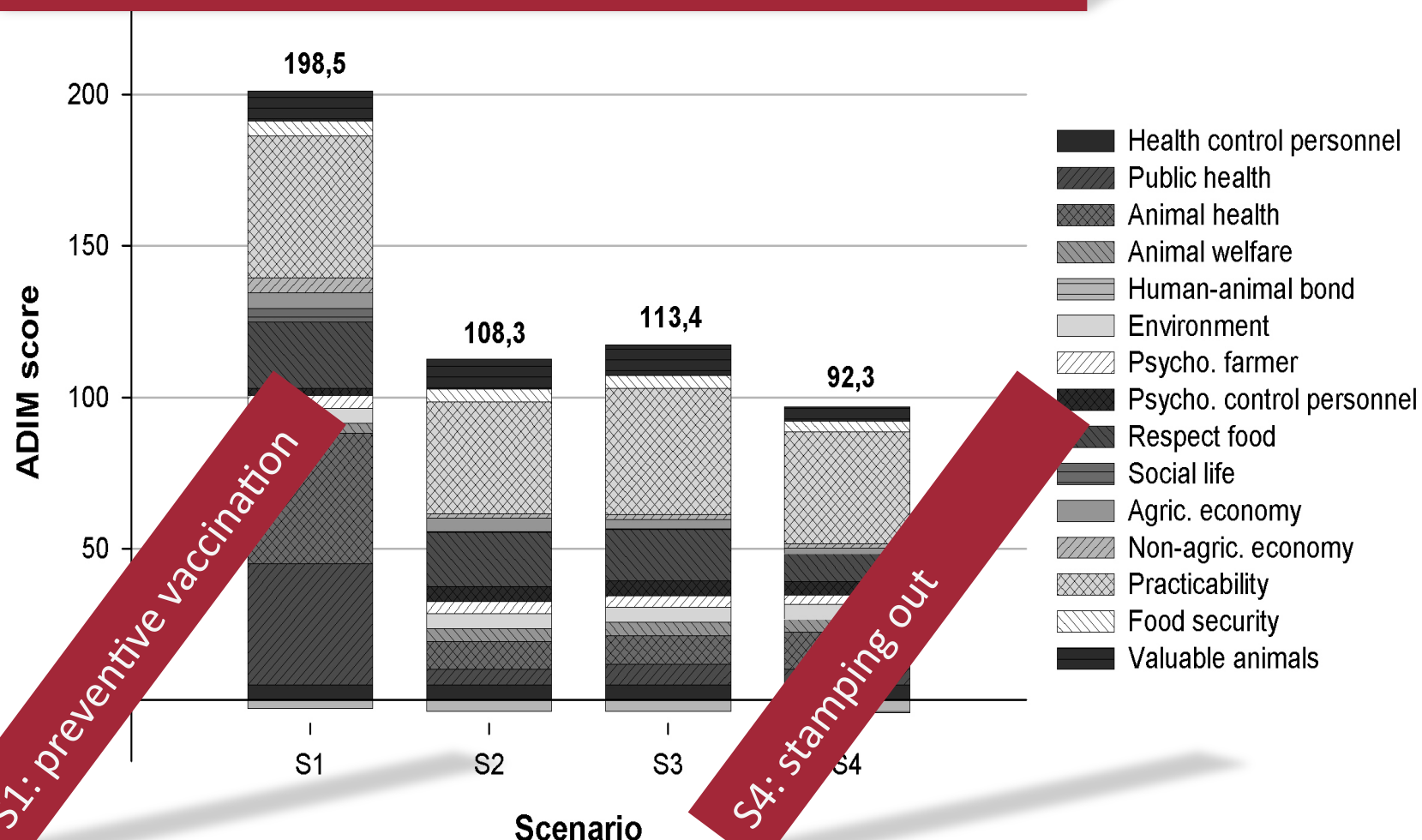
Fifteen objectives

ADIM (Aerts 2006, 116)

Ethical tools

Animal Disease Intervention Matrix (ADIM)

H5N1 AI Simulation (Aerts 2006, 125)



Ethical tools

Animal Disease Intervention Matrix (ADIM)

Workshop with official veterinarians

- **Objectifying** tool
- Clear and **transparent** objectives/criteria
- Helps to **identify normative issues** at play
- Allows to concentrate on “**hot spots**”
- Positive impact on **prospective disease control planning**
- Internal **quality control**

The ADIM informs guidance but quantifications should and cannot replace ethical deliberation.

Individual vet's responsibility...

Ethical tools

Responsibility Check (RP)

What is a “responsibility check”?

- methodology for **ethical analysis**
- works with **analytical questions**
- **focus on individual actors** in their social role
- origin: philosophy of technology
- helps to identify responsibilities and to **clarify responsibilities**
- structures the **complexity of cases**

How does it work?

EN: **responsibility – response**

DK: **ansvarlig – svar**

D: **Verantwortung – antworten**

Giving answers!

...

Ethical tools

Responsibility Check (RP)

Individual responsibility: RP (Ropohl 1994)

- Structure important dimensions of **individual responsibility**
- **Five analytic questions**
- Easy to use

Who is responsible? (e.g. official veterinarian)

What is s/he responsible **for**?

Why does s/he have these responsibilities?

When does s/he have these responsibilities?

To whom does s/he answer?

Ethical tools

Responsibility Check (RP)

Who is responsible?

Official veterinarian

What is s/he responsible **for**?

E.g. Actions and consequences, such as disease control in accordance with regulations

Why does s/he have these responsibilities?

E.g.: moral norms, professional code, law, etc.

When does s/he have these responsibilities?

E.g.: preventive/before, during or after an outbreak

To whom does she answer?

E.g.: employer, colleagues, conscience, etc.

Ethical tools

Responsibility Check (RP)

Workshop with official veterinarians

- Clarify **roles** and corresponding responsibilities
- Identify **role conflicts**
- Working with the RP helps to prepare for **communication**



Communicating values

You cannot not communicate!

Faced with questions about their work, the **worst thing** animal researchers [official veterinarians; H.G.] can do is to try to **shut the enquirer out**.

Olsson et al. 2003

Paul Watzlawick (1921–2007): **Pragmatics of human communication**

One Cannot Not Communicate: Every behaviour is a kind of communication. Because behaviour does not have a counterpart (there is no anti-behaviour), it is **not possible not to communicate**.

What do official veterinarians communicate if they tried not to communicate?

- ... that they do not care about animals
- ... that they want to hide something

Not if, but how!

Communicating values

Talking about roles and responsibilities

Norm I: promote and protect
the **health-related interests** of
animals

Norm II: promote and protect
the **economic and trade**
interests

**VETERINARY
PROFESSIONAL**

citizen

officials

Taking **active part** in
working with **expert
knowledge** towards
improvements.

experts

Taking on **responsibility as
a professional** actively in
challenging situations.

Communicating values

Living up to professional responsibility

- **Knowing and managing conflicts of values** is part of the professionals' responsibility
- Clarify **roles** and **responsibilities** (RC)
- **Well-reasoned judgments** are expected
- ADIM and RC can help to **prepare**

One voice – different,
transparent, and clarified
responsibilities

citizen

Taking **active part** in
working with **expert
knowledge** towards
improvements.

officials

Taking on **responsibility
as a professional** in
challenging situations
actively.

**VETERINARY
PROFESSIONAL**

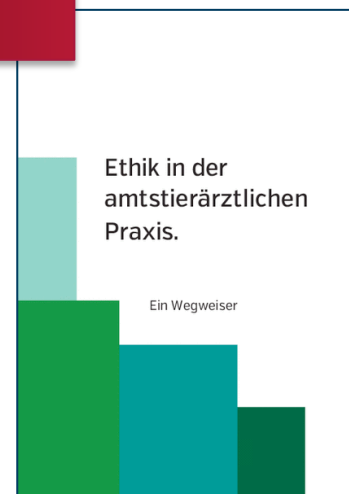
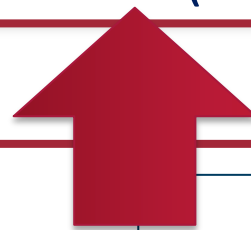
Teaching Veterinary Ethics

Living up to professional responsibility

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VETHICS II: e-learning tool on
veterinary ethics (2016-2018)

VETHICS I: Veterinary ethics
for official veterinarians
(2013-2016)



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GESUNDHEIT

Conclusions

Key messages

- **moral convictions** regarding animals factor heavily in **shaping perceptions** of measures for disease control
- disease control scenarios involve **conflicts of values** and **uncertainties** in how to **communicate** as a professional
- **Ethical tools** like the Animal Disease Intervention Matrix (ADIM) and the Responsibility Check (RC) can **inform guidance**
- **training of veterinarians** relating to understanding and **managing conflicts of values as professional responsibilities** has become increasingly important
- further collaborative studies in the emerging **research field of veterinary ethics** are encouraged to develop evidence and guidance





Towards a framework for resolving ethical conflicts related to measures for disease control

Thank you very much
for your attention!



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Call for papers

PROFESSIONALS — IN — FOOD — CHAINS

Ethics, Roles and Responsibilities

EurSafe Congress 2018

13th–16th June 2018, Vienna, Austria



Background

The EurSafe 2018 Congress in Vienna will focus on the role of professionals and professions in the food chain. Within the public debate surrounding food it is often argued that the key to meeting current challenges is changing consumer behaviour. Professionals and practitioners like farmers, retailers, veterinarians, or researchers are only in the position to better understand and get to grips with current and

**European Society for Agricultural
and Food Ethics**

www.vetmeduni.ac.at/eursafe2018

Veterinary Ethics Network

Teaching Ethics Network

Workshops VETHICS

Congress Topics