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Is welfare all that matters? A discussion of what should be included in policy-making regarding animals

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Abstract

Policy-making concerned with animals often includes human interests, such as economy, trade, environmental protection, disease control, species conservation etc. When it comes to the interests of the animals, such policy-making often makes use of the results of animal welfare science to provide assessments of ethically relevant concerns for animals. This has provided a scientific rigour that has helped to overcome controversies and allowed debates to move forward according to generally agreed methodologies. However, this focus can lead to policies leaving out other important issues relevant to animals. This can be considered as a problem of what is included in welfare science, or of what is included in policy. This suggests two possible solutions: expanding animal welfare science to address all ethical concerns about animals' interests or widening the perspective considered in policy-making to encompass other important ethical concerns about animals than welfare. The latter appears the better option. This requires both a 'philosophy of animal welfare science', a 'philosophy of decision-making about animals', and greater transparency about what is included or excluded from both animal welfare science and the politics of animal policy.

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