

Veterinary education – more than just science is needed

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Animal welfare management – whose responsibility is it?

- Relevant disciplines
 - Veterinary medicine
 - Animal science
 - Philosophy
 - Bioethics
 - Social science
 - Animal welfare studies

Possible activities for veterinarians in relation to animal welfare

- **Practice** – unique role in clinical and non-clinical practice, strengthened by new legislation/codes
- **Teaching** – veterinary and veterinary nursing students in universities and colleges
- **Research** - difficulties of gaining higher degree research training
 - Long, vocationally-orientated degree
 - Lack of specialisation in non-clinical areas
- **Government work** – amending, redefining and administering legislation and codes of practice
- **Other**
 - **Ethical approval of research** – Category A members
 - **Legislation** - expert witness, opinion

Role of veterinarians

- **United Kingdom**

RCVS Oath:

I promise above all that I will pursue the work of my profession with uprightness of conduct and that my constant endeavour will be to ensure the **welfare of the animals** committed to my care

RCVS essential competencies for welfare and ethics

- Be aware of ethical responsibilities
- Awareness of 'emotional climate'
- Ethical codes
- Personal limitations re treatments
- Legislation relating to welfare
- Promotion of welfare
- Euthanase with sensitivity to feelings of owner
- Assessing and implementing welfare records
- Advising on accepted welfare standards

University of Sydney veterinarians: Essential attributes

Research and enquiry: “generation, application and dissemination of new knowledge to benefit animal health **and welfare**”

Personal and intellectual autonomy:

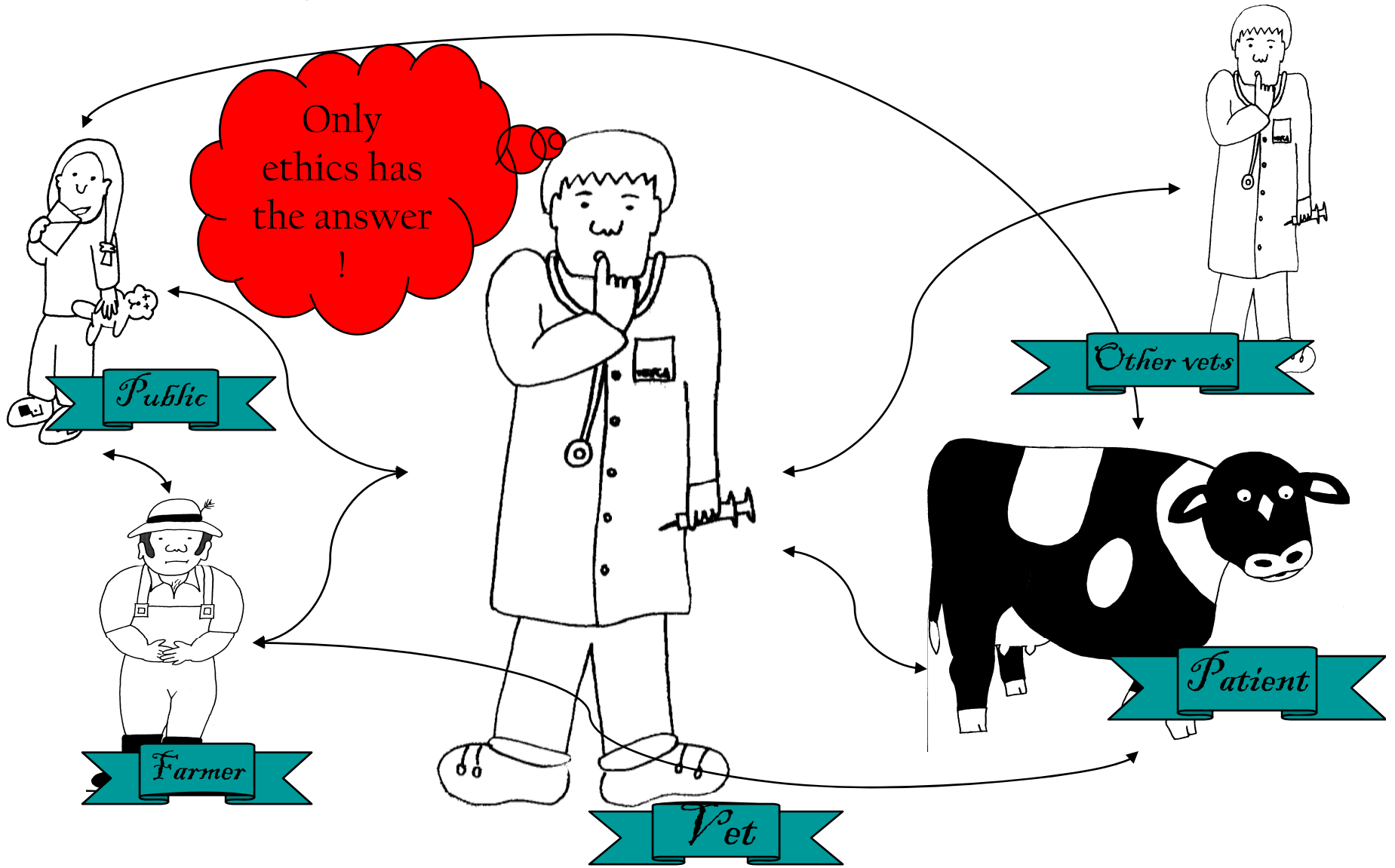
“Make independent, informed professional decisions and implement them in managing animal health **and welfare**”

Ethical, social and professional understanding: “practice veterinary science professionally with primary consideration to **the welfare** of animals and to uphold the ethical standards...of the profession. The principles of **animal welfare** must be applied to the humane management and euthanasia of animals”

Skills required by veterinarians

- Disease detection and reporting, including epidemiology
- Preventive medicine
- Surgery
- Drug therapy
- Manipulation of behaviour, nutrition, reproduction to prevent/cure disease
- Make treatment decisions in accord with ethical norms
- Know and apply relevant animal law and codes of practice
- Correct handling of patient
- Correct management of owner
- Business management

Why do vets need ethics?



Current core subjects in veterinary medicine

- Animal husbandry
- Animal behaviour
- Anatomy
- Physiology
- Biochemistry
- Pharmacology
- Pathology
- Parasitology/virology/bacteriology
(biology of infectious diseases)
- Epidemiology
- Oncology
- Reproduction
- Nutrition
- Species medicine
- Clinical practice

Optional subjects

Professional practice – usually focused on: client and business management, communication skills, information management

May include animal welfare management:

Animal welfare

Wildlife/exotic animal medicine

Poultry medicine

Detailed ruminant nutrition

Skills possessed by veterinarians

- Clinical: unique surgical skills supported by sound medical knowledge
- Paraclinical: animal behaviour, epidemiology, production medicine, nutrition – usually good skills
- Non-clinical: health and welfare management, including economics, animal ethics, role of animals in society, client management – variable skills

Changing skill requirements

- Transition from farm to small animal work requires more paraclinical and non-clinical skills:

Animal behaviour

Nutrition

Client management

Animal ethics

Leading Australian veterinary school

“We teach very little animal welfare science in the veterinary science curriculum at because of time restraints”

University of Sydney

Professional practice outcomes:

- Know the range of views on welfare and ethics
- Understand the importance of sentience and consciousness to animal welfare
- Understand the balance between welfare and economics
- Understand main welfare issues involved in the varied animal uses

University of Glasgow position

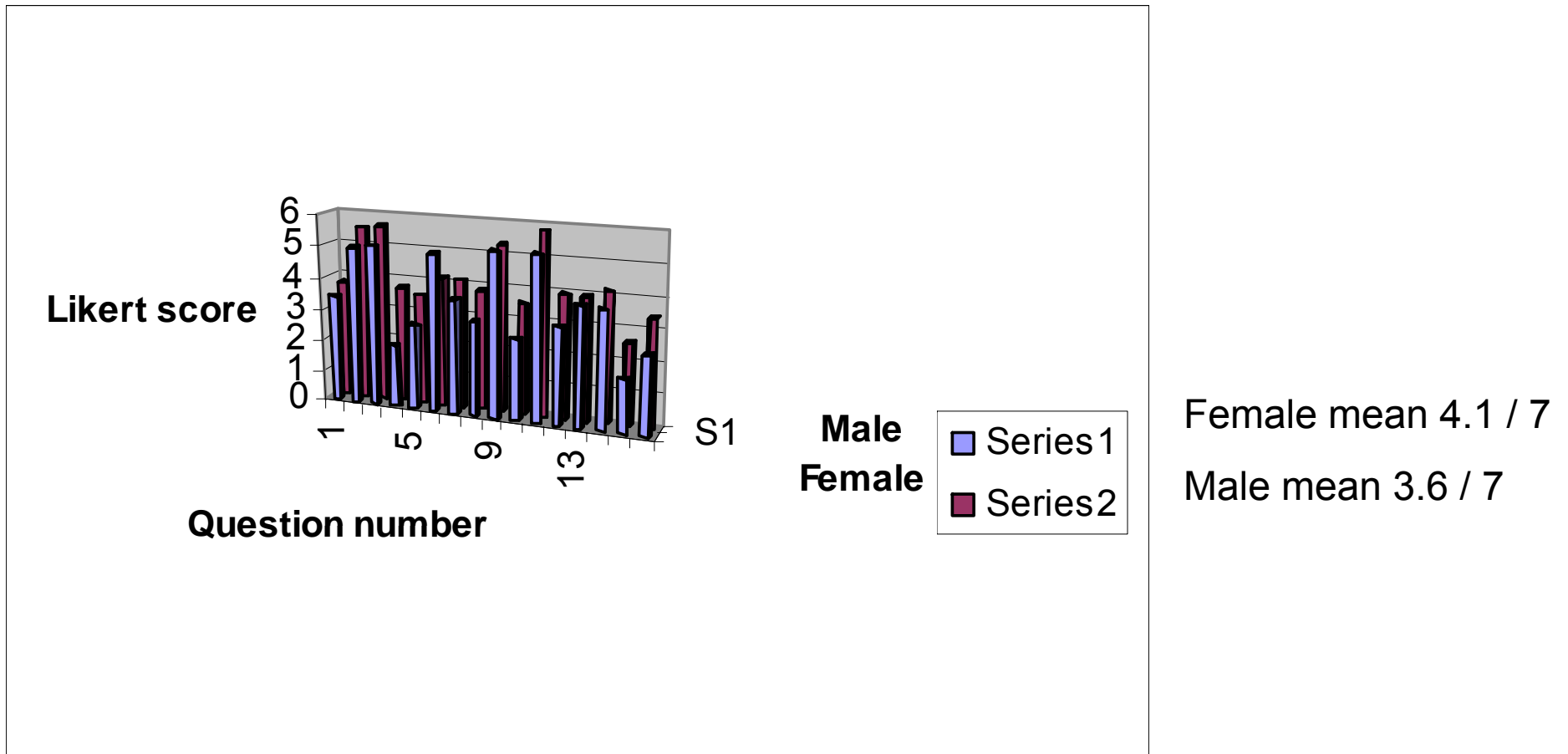
“Dedicated welfare and ethics teaching will continue to develop and there is scope for expansion within a planned new curriculum”

“student feedback on ethics tutorials... was very positive and resulted in more time being devoted to this topic”

The gender switch in veterinary education

- 1980 → 92 % male, 8% female
- 2007 → 20-30% male, 70-80% female
- Reason: females perform better academically in late teens, female emancipation (across discipline trend), job characteristics (low salary, long hours), transition from farm to small animal work, females more patient
- But the increasing science content favours men
- Women keener to work with animals and have good workplace relationships than men
- Soon majority of all employed veterinarians will be women

Gender effects on student attitude to animal welfare



Phillips and McCullough, 2005. J. Biol. Educ. 40, 17-24

Teaching correct attitudes to animals: Terminal surgery

- Risk of desensitisation to unnecessary death
- Risk of stress/trauma to students
- Responsibility lies with the Animal Ethics Committee (Veterinary Ethics and Welfare Committee in UK)
- Many veterinary schools have no conscientious objection policy

Objectors' concerns

- Pound dogs
 - Welfare impact
 - Ethical impact of *using* animals to support veterinary skills learning
 - Trauma associated with killing animals
 - Learning incorrect attitudes to killing
- Learning about food production animals
- Visiting abattoirs
- Lack of specialisations

Glasgow and Sydney Universities

- Live animals only used for non-invasive teaching and demonstration (clinical cases, handling and examination)
- All basic surgery training is on cadavers
- Glasgow anticipate that “use of live animals may decrease somewhat with the increase in innovative alternatives”

Alternatives

- Donated cadavers
- Pound-sourced cadavers
- Models
- Videos
- Guided learning in commercial practices, shelters or pounds
- Relatively unguided learning on 'surplus' animals or animals in developing countries

Responses to objectors

- Refer the issue to
 - Animal Ethics committees
 - Authorising bodies, RCVS, ACVS, AVMA etc
 - AVMA/RCVS have accredited Schools with no harm/kill policy
- Suggest counselling where required
- Devise conscientious objectors policy

Conclusions

- Veterinary profession is changing – more females and more companion animals
- Longterm trend - course is increasingly scientific in response to public demand for advanced medicine
- Students are increasingly concerned about the ethics of animal use
- Options include lengthening the course and/or introducing specialisations