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# SVME Newsletter

Newsletter of the Society for Veterinary Medical Ethics

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## IN THIS ISSUE

*President's Message, page 1-2*

*President-Elect's Message,  
page 3*

*Treasurer's Report, page 3*

*Critical Book Review, page 4-6*

*SVME Officers, page 6*

*Editor's Note, page 7*

*Dues Notice, page 8*

*Announcements-Programs-  
Meetings, page 9-*

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: EVERY DAY ETHICS

**E**ach day ethics affects our lives in some way. In addition to the ethical decisions that must be made frequently, ethical topics seem to be of greater concern to many organizations in society. Within the last two weeks four requests for ethical information have been presented to me. The first occurred as a part of an honor code violation within our student body. The individual who was accused of a violation of the code admitted that what they had done was wrong and apologized to the Honor Board, the instructor and the student body. The Board, as was their duty, developed a punishment for the individual. The interesting ethical concern in this case was that a number of individuals saw the accused person perform the supposed violation. None of these individuals had the courage to report the case or they didn't know what they were supposed to do when the code clearly states what is to be done. The Board chose to take no action in the latter situation. What would you have done?

A second request for ethical information concerns research ethics. Each summer the college sponsors a research scholars program for talented veterinary students who have expressed an interest in research. As a part of this program, students are provided with information on ethical concerns about research. There are many issues to cover, some good and some not so good. Most students are aware of the ethical issues related to the use and care of animals in research. Many of them are not, however, aware of appropriate experimental design, data analysis and interpretation. Intellectual integrity is imperative in research. Students are shown why it is important to not force the data to conform to expected results. They learn that every experiment does not yield positive results. They also are exposed to ethical aspects of authorship including plagiarism, research conflicts of interest, and the potential ethical vagaries of grantsmanship. Are there other issues that should be covered?

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Another request for ethical information came from a non-profit organization that wants to develop a code of ethics for its executive board. A question that arises with respect to organizations is when is it appropriate to have a code of ethics versus a code of conduct. Are they the same? There are hundreds of models for ethical codes. The Illinois Institute of Technology has established a Center for the Study of Ethics in the Professions. Through a NSF grant, the Center has established the "Code of Ethics Online" that can be accessed at <http://csep.iit.edu/code/>. This site provides Internet access to the ethical codes of over 850 professional organizations. If you are interested in how veterinary medicine compares to other professions with respect to ethical codes, you may want to visit this site.

The fourth request for ethical information came from the Iowa Attorney General's Office. An attorney from this office represents the Iowa Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners. Recently the Board has decided to require continuing education in the field of ethics for many of the individuals who are found in violation of the state's veterinary practice act or other federal and state rules and regulations. To date, they have required anywhere from 10 to 20 hours of continuing education in the area of ethics. This is an interesting opportunity and challenge. The following is the approach that we have taken. A contract is formed between the practitioner and myself. The contract states what is expected of each party and what each is to contribute. All individuals are required to read specific sections of Tannenbaum's *Veterinary Ethics* and Rollin's *Veterinary Medical Ethics*. The required sections relate to the unethical conduct of the practitioner. Coupled

with these reading assignments, the practitioner is required to review the process of moral reasoning when making ethical decisions. Subsequently they are required to practice moral reasoning and ethical decision making by analyzing ethical cases that are similar to the ones in which they were involved. In this process, individuals are exposed to ten principles of ethical analysis. They must be able to demonstrate if each principle applies to the case and if so, how. They must determine several ways in which to handle the ethical dilemma and then choose what they think is the best alternative. Further, they must be able to justify their decision using a combination of the ethical principles of analysis. Does this system work? I do not know. What I do know is that most of the individuals that have been involved in the program have volunteered to visit with the ethics class or other classes about what they have done. In all cases, they had the students undivided attention. In all cases, they have delivered a powerful message.

We look forward to seeing many of you at the AVMA meeting in Boston. Dr. Bill Folger, our incoming president, has arranged an outstanding continuing education program for us. Please take advantage of this unique opportunity to hear some excellent speakers and to engage in what promises to be an interesting dialogue. The ethics seminars are a part of the Professional Growth and Development division of the AVMA Convention. They will be held on Saturday July 14, 2001. See you there.

*Don*

**Don Draper**, DVM, PhD, MBA  
President, SVME

## PRESIDENT-ELECT'S MESSAGE

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE ETHICS SECTION FOR THE AVMA MEETING IN BOSTON

The Ethics Section of the AVMA convention in Boston, conducted by the SVME, is as follows:

- |         |         |   |  |
|---------|---------|---|--|
| 7-14-01 | 8:00am  | Dr. W.W. Armistead                            | “What is a Profession?”  |
|         | 10:15am | Dr. W.W. Armistead                            | “What are the Ethical Foundations of the Veterinary Professional?” |
|         | 1:00pm  | Dr. Duane Flemming and Mr. Jerrold Tannenbaum | “Ethical Considerations in Online Veterinary Services, Part 1.”    |
|         | 3:15pm  | Dr. Anthony Schwartz                          | “Ethical Considerations in Online Veterinary Services, Part 2.”    |

The focal point of the morning session is to introduce veterinarians to ancient and current concepts in the professions and ethics. Dr. Armistead is a fascinating speaker with phenomenal knowledge of the history of our profession. He is the former Dean at Texas A&M, Michigan State University, and the University of Tennessee veterinary schools, and he was Dean of the College of Agriculture at the University of Tennessee.

The afternoon session is designed to provide point (Tannenbaum/Flemming) and counterpoint (Schwartz) discussions and should prove quite entertaining. This subject will become more important in the next 10-20 years, and the SVME will be the first to present this discussion.

*Bill*

**Bill Folger**, D.V.M., M.S., A.B.V.P (Feline)  
President-Elect and Program Chair, SVME

## TREASURER'S REPORT

The present assets of the SVME are \$365.94 in the checking account, and \$24,749.71 in the savings account (total of \$25,115.65.), as of 5/1/01.

There were no recent expenditures.

*Mary*

**Mary D. Kraeszig**, DVM  
SVME treasurer

## BOOK REVIEW, A CRITICAL APPRAISAL:

Although he is known mostly for his controversial treatise *Animal Liberation*, Peter Singer claims academic credentials as a philosopher. A major basis for this claim is the book *Practical Ethics*, published in 1979, which laid the framework for Singer's philosophy. Rather than review Singer's latest treatise on his philosophical principles entitled *Writings on an Ethical Life*, I have chosen instead to critique the primary source of these philosophical principles.

From the start, the viability of the philosophy proposed in his book, *Practical Ethics*, is subject to question. On page 2, after noting that the terms *morality* and *ethics* would be used interchangeably, the sexual behavior of humans is divorced from the subject of ethics. While this book was written prior to the realization of the AIDS epidemic, recognition of the need to regulate sexual activity to sustain social groups has been accepted for countless centuries in virtually every human society. Yet the philosophy proposed in *Practical Ethics* excludes consideration of sexual activity from ethics and morality.

Utilitarianism, the guiding principle of the philosophy proposed in *Practical Ethics*, is introduced on page 3 with the statement "The classical utilitarian regards an action as right if it produces as much or more of an increase in the happiness of all affected by it than any alternative action."

Immediately thereafter, religion is excluded from ethics as irretrievably flawed because of its self-serving assertion that God is good. Yet is the "happiness" described in *Practical Ethics* any less self-serving? And is religion any less of a practical ethic? Not unlike a marketing strategy that disparages a competitor's product, the repudiation of religion as a moral philosophy is based on the inability of a set of rules to deal with exceptional circumstances, such as protecting Jews in Nazi Germany. However, little consideration is given to the perils inherent in

Author: Peter Singer  
Cambridge University Press  
Cambridge, England, 1979  
237 pages  
ISBN 0-521-29720-6  
(Out of print, but can be obtained  
through [bookfinder.com](http://bookfinder.com) or  
[bibliofind.com](http://bibliofind.com))

Utilitarianism's provision of a carte blanche to any behavior, however deranged, carried out in the belief that it will increase the happiness of all affected. For example, the criminal acts of animal rights extremists such as the "Animal Liberation Front" are often justified by the perpetrators as having been inspired by the philosophy from Singer's *Animal Liberation*.

Having rejected the rigidity of religious rules, the next plank of *Practical Ethics* is that "...ethics is not relative or subjective" (p.4). However, in an attempt to avoid contradicting the consequentialism that is considered to be a virtue of Utilitarianism (cf. p. 3), the existence of an objective measure of ethics is denied and reason is declared to be the ultimate arbiter of ethics (p. 8). The main fault in this argument is that it presumes every individual faced with an ethical decision has complete knowledge of the net effect of their actions on global happiness.

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I encourage any member who would like to review any other books that could be of interest to the members for future issues to let me know.

Sylvie Cloutier, PhD  
Editor, SVME

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## CRITICAL REVIEW (CONTINUED)

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The impracticality of this expectation is not lost upon the proponents of Utilitarianism. To compensate for this untenable uncertainty, an **inviolable law of Utilitarianism** has been enacted. As stated in *Practical Ethics*, “Ethics requires us to go beyond ‘I’ and ‘you’ to the universal law, the universalizable judgment, the standpoint of the impartial spectator or ideal observer, or whatever we chose to call it” (p. 11). Thus, no matter how much wrong is ultimately caused by the actions of an individual, that individual must be judged as having acted ethically if their actions were taken without considering their own self-interests (p. 9). Thus, the terrorists who fire-bomb research institutions and thugs with baseball bats who attack researchers obtain not only inspiration but also absolution from Utilitarianism.

Chapter 2, “Equality and its implications,” puts forth arguments in opposition to racism and sexism primarily based on the failure of an intelligence quotient to serve as a valid criterion for discrimination. However, the argument then reverses itself, and racism and sexism are used as bases to justify preferential treatment of minorities and women. This leads to the unavoidable comparison of the Utilitarianism of *Practical Ethics* with the hallmark principle of Marxism, “From each according to his ability, to each according to his need” (p.36). Rather than attempt to divorce Utilitarianism from Communism, the failure of Communism is blamed on Capitalism (p.37), thus maintaining the foundation established in Chapter 1, that self-interests must be subordinated to those of others. The anti-Capitalistic sentiment reaches a crescendo with the

*Terrorists who fire-bomb research institutions and thugs with baseball bats who attack researchers obtain not only inspiration but also absolution from Utilitarianism.*

question, “So do we have to abolish private enterprise if we are to eliminate undeserved wealth?” which is answered “... to work for wider recognition of the principle of payment according to needs and effort rather than inherited ability is both realistic and, I believe, right” (p.39).

Chapter 3, “Equality for animals?” is a restatement of arguments against speciesism first described in *Animal Liberation* in which speciesism is analogized to racism. The supposition that speciesism is bad derives largely from the fact that there is a Darwinian continuum between species. But if, as the author has suggested, anti-Darwinists have exaggerated the gulf between humans and other animals (p. 62), one could view the bias in this book as being no less prejudicial and inaccurate in its underestimation of the difference between humans and other animals. In the framework of *Practical Ethics*, differentiation between species is seen as no less arbitrary than differentiation between humans based on skin colour (pp.50-51). An even stronger bias is revealed in an 88-word sentence accusing humans of causing avoidable suffering that Utilitarianism will prevent (p.53). Rhetoric against animal agriculture abounds in this chapter: “Animals are treated like machines that convert fodder into flesh.” “Their flesh is a luxury...” “...animals are made to lead miserable lives” (p.55). This argument culminates with the unsubstantiated statement, “The lives of free-ranging animals are undoubtedly better than those of animals reared in factory farms” (p. 56). Indeed, this reviewer’s appraisal of the quality of the lives of agricultural animals, in contrast to those of wild animals, contradicts this conclu-

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## CRITICAL REVIEW (CONTINUED)

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sion. This chapter also denigrates animal research and animal testing in a manner similar to that applied to animal agriculture. Surprisingly, there is a cogent argument in support of speciesism presented on page 67, which is at best weakly refuted with a suggestion that elimination of speciesism might improve our treatment of humans. that is then contradicted in the succeeding chapter.

Posed as a question, Chapter 4, “What’s wrong with killing?” is an introduction to arguments in favor of euthanasia of humans who do not meet specific criteria for having a meaningful life. This devaluation of human life belies the promise of the previous chapter to *improve* human life. This chapter also marks the introduction of a devious ploy that attempts to incorporate the reader as a contributor to the inferences of the book. On page 78, it is suddenly *We* who have “broken down the doctrine of the sanctity of human life...” and *We* “who have seen that the former claim cannot be defended.” And, now that *we* are

accomplices to Utilitarianism, surely we agree that murders committed in complete secrecy do not violate any Utilitarian principles (p. 80). Astonishingly, in the summarization of the value of a person’s life, none of the 4 reasons for giving value to a human life includes the value of that person to loved ones (p. 84). Sadly, recognition of this value of human life was not appreciated by the proponent of these principles until his closest relative became an Alzheimer’s disease victim, and her life then failed to meet the previous 4 criteria for having value.

Critiqued by  
**Robert C. Speth, PhD**

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This critique will be continued in the next issue, starting with Chapter 5 of *Practical Ethics*, which compares human abortion and euthanasia to the killing of animals. Author Peter Singer has been contacted to offer his response to this critique of his work. If received, his rebuttal will also be carried in the next issue of the SVME Newsletter.

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### OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY

<i>President:</i>	Don D. Draper, DVM, PhD, MBA
<i>President Elect:</i>	William R. Folger, DVM, MS, ABVP (Feline)
<i>Treasurer:</i>	Mary D. Kraeszig, JD, DVM
<i>Secretary:</i>	Ione Smith, DVM
<i>Parliamentarian:</i>	Al Dorn, DVM, MS
<i>Historian:</i>	Jerry Tannenbaum, MA, JD
<i>Immediate Past-President:</i>	Ronald L. McLaughlin, DVM
<i>Past-Presidents:</i>	Robert Shomer, VMD Albert Dorn, DVM, MS Jerry Tannenbaum, MA, JD John R. Boyce, DVM, PhD Bob Speth, PhD

## EDITOR'S NOTE

I, once again, urge all SVME members to consider contributing to the Newsletter whether it is a book review, an opinion piece or simply information about professional activities. The next Newsletter will be out in September 2001. If you consider contributing to the Newsletter, please send your text before September 1, 2001. All members who are considering contributing to the Newsletter can contact me at <scloutie@vetmed.wsu.edu> or c/o Department of VCAPP, College of Veterinary Medicine, Washington State University, PO Box 646520, Pullman, WA, 99164-6520.

### **SVME web site and discussion list**

The past year has seen a few changes for the society. The SVME listserv and web site have moved. The address for the new SVME web site is [http://www.vetmed.wsu.edu/org\\_SVME/](http://www.vetmed.wsu.edu/org_SVME/)

The listserv address is [svme@listserv.vetmed.wsu.edu](mailto:svme@listserv.vetmed.wsu.edu)

If you want to access the listserv (to check previous messages, for example) the web site address for the listserv is:

<http://listserv.vetmed.wsu.edu>

The web site is not completed yet. Many sections are still under construction. Anyone having suggestions to improve the site is welcomed to contact me. It is my hope that the SVME web site becomes a primary source of information on Veterinary Ethics and all related questions. I welcome your suggestions regarding matters you would like to see in the Newsletter and on the web site. I would like to thank the people who made these changes possible, Ron McLaughlin, Don Draper, Bob Speth, Jeanne Jensen, and Cheryl Dhein.

### **All SVME members:**

I can be contacted at <scloutie@vetmed.wsu.edu> or c/o Department of VCAPP, College of Veterinary Medicine, Washington State University, PO Box 646520, Pullman, WA, 99164-6520.

*Sylvie Cloutier*, PhD  
SVME Editor

## SVME DUES NOTICE

**Donald D. Draper, DVM, Ph.D., President**  
**William Folger, DVM, President-Elect**  
**Ronald L. McLaughlin, DVM, Past-President**  
**Ione L. Smith DVM, Secretary**  
**Mary D. Kraeszig, JD, DVM., Treasurer**  
**Albert S. Dorn, DVM, Parliamentarian**  
**Jerry Tannenbaum, MA, JD, Historian**

**May 2001**

### DUES NOTICE

Dues for 2000-2001 are now payable. We appreciate your past support and look forward to a new and even better year for the Society. The dues payment of \$20.00 (\$5.00 for students) is payable to: *Society for Veterinary Medical Ethics or SVME*. Membership will be in force from July 1, 2001 to June 30, 2002.

Send checks to: SVME c/o Mary D. Kraeszig,  
541 Quail Valley Drive,  
Zionsville, IN 46077

Payment Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Check Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this section of the form with your dues payment (see amounts above) to help us keep our records up to date.

NAME and ADDRESS CORRECTION IF NECESSARY:

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

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FAX NUMBER: ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_

ELECTRONIC MAIL ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

Check this box  if you are not on VETETHIC and would like to be.

(Email address is required)



**ISAZ 2001:  
Human-Animal Conflict at UC Davis**

The International Society for Anthrozoology (ISAZ) will hold its 2001 conference at the University of California, Davis, on August 3-4, 2001. The theme of the meeting will be human-animal conflict. For further details please contact: Dr L. Hart, Centre for Animals in Society, University of California, Davis, CA 95616, USA; email: lahart@ucdavis.edu.

**ISAE International Congress at UC Davis**

The 35<sup>th</sup> Congress of the International Society for Applied Ethology (ISAE) will be held at the University of California, Davis, on August 4-8, 2001.

The ISAE is a member organization of scientists and others interested in research on the behavior and welfare of domesticated, captive, and managed wild animals. The primary themes for this Congress are “Companion Animal Behavior” and “Influence of Genetics on Behavior and Welfare”.

The deadline for early registration is June 1. PLEASE NOTE that people are asked to register on-line for the Congress this year.

For further information or to register, please go to the Congress website

<http://animalwelfare.ucdavis.edu/conference/ethology/sitemap.html> or contact Dr. Joy Mench, Center for Animal Welfare, University of California, One Shield Avenue, Davis, CA 95616; email address: [isae2001@asmail.ucdavis.edu](mailto:isae2001@asmail.ucdavis.edu)

**International Conference on Human-Animals Interaction**

The 9th international conference on human-animal interactions will be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on September 13-15, 2001. Presentations are expected to examine all aspects of our relationships with animals.

To receive further information, send your title, name, address (including country), telephone, fax number, e-mail address, and occupation/ profession to: Conference Secretariat: AFIRAC, 32 rue de Treviso, 75009 Paris, France; Tel: +33 1 56 03 12 00; Fax: +33 1 56 03 13 60; email: [rio2001@i-et-e.fr](mailto:rio2001@i-et-e.fr). Web: <http://www.iahaio.org> and <http://www.afirac.org>.

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