

# EXPLORING CODES OF ETHICS FOR SOCIAL SERVICE INTERVENTIONS WITH ANIMALS

ANZASW Social Workers Day webinar 2016

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# INTRODUCTION & SCOPE



# ANIMAL ASSISTED ACTIVITIES

- Animal assisted activities (AAA) are increasing being seen as an important part of the range of interventions in the helping professions including social work.
- Whilst a code of ethics has been called for (Evans & Gray 2011, Aimers, Walker and Perry 2015) no code of ethics has yet been developed to monitor or scrutinise these interventions.

# ANIMAL ASSISTED ACTIVITIES

- What are the limitations placed around this discussion?
- This presentation is
  - not about speciesism,
  - not about hunting or eating animals,
  - nor about factory farming,
  - nor about research on animals both medical and commercial



Source:[http://www.utahstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Therapy\\_Animals02-for-web.jpg](http://www.utahstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Therapy_Animals02-for-web.jpg)

# ANIMAL ASSISTED THERAPY & LEVELS OF ANIMAL INVOLVEMENT



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# DEFINITION OF TERMS

- Animal-assisted work is generally defined as either;
- Animal Assisted Intervention (AAI) where the intervention intentionally includes an animal as part of the intervention process (eg medical assistant animals); or
- Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) where the animal is deliberately included in a therapeutic treatment plan; or
- Animal Assisted Activities (AAA) this includes visits to rest homes, cat cafes etc – less formal activities primarily social in focus.

# DEFINITION OF TERMS CONT.

- I use the terms ‘tools’ and ‘uses’ as these are the terms used in the literature but I find these terms problematic as they seem to reduce animal to things or chattels.
- I prefer the terms – ‘working alongside’, ‘working with’, ‘animal assistants’ and ‘animal colleagues’ as these recognise that the animal brings a unique set of skills and characteristics that enhance practice.

# VARIETY OF USAGES OF ANIMALS IN HELPING ROLES

Primary (no specific training required – more attitude and matching i.e. calm and tolerant animals to benefit humans (anti stress, companionship, distraction, touch, friendship )

- animal cafes (cat cafes etc.)
- companion animals (Personal in home or in institution companions)
- animals visiting in homes/institutions (cats, dogs, farm animals e.g. Llamas)
- animals living in institutions (the rest home cat, etc.)
- Anti stress animals (micro pigs, puppy rooms and miniature horses)



# ANIMALS AS ASSISTANCE TOOLS

**Secondary - Tools – Assistance or service animal (extensive animal training required – usually by an established organisation before placing animal in the home of the client – ongoing support and monitoring by organisation)**

- **Guide dogs for the blind**
- **Epilepsy Dogs**
- **Dementia Dogs**
- **Autism Dogs**

# ANIMALS AS THERAPY TOOLS CTD

**Secondary - Tools - Therapy - (used in therapeutic situations with clients – some training of animals specifically included around therapy, but not always – may involve use of animals from SPCA)**

- **Dogs in prison rehabilitation**
- **Riding for Disabled**
- **Therapy animals - SPCA and CYFS (on an ad hoc basis) and like organisations both in NZ and overseas (appropriate touching, etc.)**
- **Horses - (It's not about the horse) How you relate to the horse will tell us what you've learned over the course of your lifetime concerning how you relate to all living things. linked to**
- **Equine assisted Psychotherapy and CBT**

# ANIMALS AS COLLEAGUES

- **Tertiary – Colleagues/ fellow professionals - extensive animal training required – usually by the organisation they are embedded within (not necessarily used with clients but always working alongside the professional to enhance their abilities)**
  - **Police dogs (latest story about Thames the police dog lost for seven days in the bush as an example)**
  - **Doc dogs**
  - **Custom dogs**
  - **Search and rescue dogs**
  - **Police horses**

# SCOPE & TARGET OF CODE(S)

- Different Levels – one code not enough
- The possible scope and target of such a code/ codes focuses on the various levels of;
- Primary - being compliant with specific code of animal welfare considerations. (lowest level)
- Secondary
  - being the use of animals by professionals as tools
  - or to offer assistance independent of the professional to the client. (higher level)
- Tertiary - animals being acknowledged as fellow professionals. (highest level)

# ISSUES ENCOUNTERED IN THIS PRACTICE

- Anecdotal evidence from blogs
- Animals used in visiting in homes/institutions (primary) roles may become stressed with too much touching and could become aggressive.
- Riding for Disabled (secondary role) - horses may resist being caught when they see the van arriving carrying the children/adults with a disability, when normally they come to the yard voluntarily to be ridden.

# ISSUES CTD


- Research based evidence regarding the use of service (assistance) dogs with children with Autism (Burrows, K., Adams, C. and Millman, S. : 2008) note that:
  - Children with autism were significant sources of physical stress for the dogs.
  - Dogs were constantly woken at night by the children leaving them exhausted after following and minding the children in the night and performed badly the next day.
  - Children had “meltdowns” that were often directed at the dog – this included lashing out at the dog.
  - Some dogs started growling at the child after repeated hitting
  - Dogs were not let out to urinate or defecate and had “accidents” for which they were hit as punishment.
  - Health concerns included kennel cough, minor ear and eye infections, allergic reactions, overfeeding and insufficient recreational activities.

# ISSUES CTD

- In relation to therapeutic use of animals (in this case dogs in an SPCA shelter) , (Taylor, N., Fraser, H. Signal, T. and Prentice, K. : 2015) note
- Animals were used to work with 20 children who had shown various tendencies towards being cruel to animals (CTA)(eight of the children had been reported as engaging in some level of CTA in the previous six month period).
- Over a ten week programme: the children had significantly reduced their CTA behaviours - but incidents of CTA still occurred.
- In addition six of the children were reported pre-programme to be touching animals in sexually inappropriate ways - only two showed improvement following the programme.
- They did not measure the experiences of the animals but note there is an urgent need to ascertain what impacts there are on animals in therapeutic interventions.
- This leads me to wonder re the ethical consideration given to the dogs in this research. Programme good for child population but impacted on the animals - unnecessary cruelty.

# CALLS FOR CODES OF ETHICS



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Source: Flickr;  
Author: West  
Midlands Police



# CALLS FOR CODES OF ETHICS IN THE LITERATURE

- Why the need?
  - No guidance
  - No best practice
- Aimers, J. Walker, P. and Perry, C. (2015):
  - “Animals who are considered members of the household can impact substantially on the dynamics of the family system, yet animals are usually absent from social work literature and codes of ethics.”
  - “That social work practice, education, theory, ethics and values needs to move from being exclusively humanist to include animal rights and welfare.”

# CODES IN THE LITERATURE

- Evans, N. and Gray, C. (2012)
  - “While there is a growing consensus in the literature that basic standards concerning animal welfare should be met, there is less certainty regarding the standards themselves; and, of course, adherence is often voluntary.” (pg 612)
  - “Not only is it possible that animals used in AAT within social work practice may be harmed by clients, but the work itself may be stressful for animals (Hatch, 2007) and potentially lead to long term health problems.” (pg 602)

# CODES IN THE LITERATURE

- Taylor, N., Fraser, H. Signal, T. and Prentice, K. (2015).
  - “The ethical legitimacy rests not just on the benefits derived to humans, but whether due consideration is given to the animals’ needs, not just in the short term while the programme occurs but in the longer term, for the full duration of the animals lives.” ( pg 7)

# CODES IN THE LITERATURE

- Serpell, J. Coppinger, R. and Fine, H. (2006) highlight the following freedoms:

- “Freedom from hunger or thirst
- Freedom from discomfort and inadequate shelter
- Freedom from disease and injury
- Freedom from distress and pain
- Freedom to display normal behaviour”

contained within the Brambell report (Command Paper 2836, 1965)

- Serpell, J. Coppinger, R. and Fine, H. (2006) go on to note:
  - “ In contrast to free-living animals, most therapy animals are trapped in systems where they have little or no control over their social lives and where they cannot avoid or escape unwelcome or unpleasant social intrusions” (pg 456)

# CURRENT LEGISLATION



Source: WikimediaCommons; Author:  
Rifiq Jamal

# CURRENT PROTECTION OF ANIMALS

- **Animal Welfare Act (1999)**
  - adopts the five freedoms outlined in the Brambell report as discussed earlier.
  - provides for codes of welfare to be developed. These codes were developed by the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee to specify minimum standards. Breach of the minimum standards in a code is not an offence. Rather, any prosecutions will be for failure to meet the obligations in the Act relating to the care of an animal or for ill-treatment of an animal.
- Codes are wide ranging from circuses to zoos - including dogs, cats, and farmed animals
- Code of welfare for dogs, as an example, cover things such as, ownership, food and water, containment, tethering and shelter, sanitation, breeding, health, behaviour, transportation and euthanasia.
- The Animal Welfare Amendment Bill S.3a, which passed its final reading earlier this year, recognises that animals, like humans, are "sentient" beings.


# ANIMAL WELFARE ACT AND AAA/AAI/AAT

- Despite the calls for codes of ethics covering animals used by the helping professions, we can find no code of ethics for animals involved in helping, companion and assistance roles, or as a part of therapeutic interventions, or as skilled colleagues, either in New Zealand or internationally.
- Even the basic levels of protection under the codes of welfare in this country are voluntary and therefore the only mandatory requirement is that animals being used in such helping situations are not treated in such a way that breaches the Animal Welfare Act (1999)



# ETHICAL FRAMEWORK



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Author: Peple2000

# FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

- **Implications for a framework in AAT/AAI/AAA**
  - Range of capacities recognised and therefore range of obligations
  - Flexibility in theory to be updated as further capacities are discovered/defined.
  - Recognition of not just omission of harm/cruelty/neglect, but active provision of capabilities to “flourish” where that is limited within the realm of possibilities.
  - Ability to vary extent of provision based on individual capacities (i.e. difference between providing capabilities to flourish for a frog versus a dog).
  - Need for responsiveness to animal distress in overt and subtle forms.

# DEVELOPING CODES OF ETHICS

- Codes of ethics could be pitched at different levels depending on the service of the animal in the helping relationship with humans. Social service organisations should consider at each level – i.e. what does providing the appropriate capabilities to flourish mean at each level of service.



Animals being used as part of medical therapy, 1956

- **PRIMARY SERVICE** – this requires little to no training, the animal primarily performs a role which provides relaxation/comfort to others. A code of ethics for animals in this work recognises that addressing the capabilities in the framework set out, essentially provides physiological needs, plus time for play/rest and a stable relationship outside of their service (where appropriate) and protection from harm.

# SERVICE LEVEL CODES

- **SECONDARY SERVICE** - where animals are trained and work with professionals to enhance their practice or to offer assistance independent of the professional to the client
- A code of ethics pitched at this level, would build on the primary code to recognize the higher skills (created through the investment in training) and higher responsibilities.
- Such a code needs to take into consideration that any misguided or intentionally abusive behaviours not only harms the animal immediately, but limits its ability to work with others in the future – consideration of **appropriateness of animal intervention** for each family
- This code when incorporating the provision of capabilities set out in the framework would more explicitly dictate that over and above the basic elements, trained service animals need loving/caring relationships, downtime and interventions to reduce stress. In recognition of their labour, they should be provided with appropriate awards while in service and when reaching old age should be retired (to an appropriate loving and caring environment) from such activities to recognize their previous service and frailty.

# SERVICE LEVEL - CODES



Iraqi Soldier and his dog

Source: <http://www.chelseadogs.com/blog/top-10-army-dogs/>

- **TERTIARY SERVICE** - where animals are highly trained to and do highly skilled work and are therefore acknowledged as fellow professionals.
- A code appropriate to this level of service involves treating the animal with all the respect and rights given to fellow human colleagues.
- This code also includes animals being seen as part of the professional's family with rights regarding not being overworked, getting the same annual leave and retirement provisions and respect as their human colleagues.

# FRAMEWORK IN PRACTICE

<h2>Ethical Framework Elements</h2>	<b>EXAMPLE 1:</b> <b>Resthome visiting dog</b>  -low skill -small risk	<b>EXAMPLE 2:</b> <b>Police Dog</b>  -high skill -high risk
<p>Provision of the basic necessities of life: food, water, shelter, acknowledging animals preferences</p> <p>Provision of security from cruelty, harm and pain</p> <p>Provision of freedom for natural behaviour and/or exercise and play (inter/intra-species)</p>	<p>Appropriate housing and diet</p> <p>In the service setting, need to protect dog from injury or harm, through oversight, etc.</p> <p>Down time provided outside of “service”</p>	<p>Appropriate housing and diet</p> <p>In the service setting, need to protect dog from injury or harm, through appropriate training and health and safety</p> <p>Down time provided outside of “service”</p>
<p>Recognition of guardianship versus ownership</p> <p>Establishment of authentic, stable, and reciprocal relationships either within or adjunct to the service setting</p>	<p>Recognition of dog’s feelings towards service on any given day</p> <p>Need for relationship outside of the resthome setting</p>	<p>Appropriate training for tasks required, respect for animals “instincts” and skills</p> <p>Relationship provided with “partner”/handler</p>
<p>Reward/recognition for labour and skill</p>	<p>Post visit rest/play, treats and affection as appropriate.</p>	<p>Recognition as colleague, provision of annual leave, downtime, incorporation into partner’s family, etc.</p>

# PRINCIPLES FROM THE LITERATURE

- Serpell, J. Coppinger, R. and Fine, H. (2006) outline the following
- “Basic ethics principles for use of the therapy animal
  - 1. All animals utilized therapeutically must be kept free from abuse, discomfort, and distress, both physical and mental. [primary]
  - 2. Proper health care for the animal must be provided at all times. [primary]
  - 3. All animals should have access to a quiet place where they can have time away from their work activities. Clinicians must practice preventative health procedures for all animals. [primary]
  - 4. Interactions with clients must be structured so as to maintain the animal’s capacity to serve as a useful therapeutic agent. [secondary]
  - 5. A situation of abuse or stress for a therapy animal should never be allowed except in such cases where temporarily permitting such abuse is necessary to avoid a serious injury to, or abuse of, the human client. [?????]” (Pg 471)

# PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

- “Implications of procedure for ethical decision making regarding therapy animals
  - 1. If the intervention is unduly stressing the animal, the clinician should suspend the session or the interaction. **(primary)**
  - 2. Therapists using therapy animals must provide downtime for the animal several times a day **(primary/secondary)**.
  - 3. Animals that due to age are unduly stressed, should have their service scaled back or eliminated entirely. Attention should also be given to transition the animal as s/he begins to retire. This will help with the animal’s sense of wellness **(secondary)**.
  - 4. In a situation where a client, whether intentionally or unintentionally, subjects a therapy animal to abuse, the basic needs of the animal must be respected, even if this means terminating the animal’s relationship with the client. In a case where a therapist suspects that a client may be likely to abuse the animal, a therapist must take precautions to protect the animal’s welfare. When any evidence of stress or abuse becomes evident, the therapist must terminate the animal’s relationship with the client. **(primary)**
  - 5. Clients who severely abuse a therapy animal may thereby destroy the animal’s capacity to help others. Clients in this situation thus violate principle 4. **(secondary)**” (pg 472)



# CHALLENGES FOR SOCIAL WORK AND THE HELPING PROFESSIONS



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- Current research – initial data

### **Emerging issues re**

- **The choosing of the animal – are they bred for the purpose, what criteria is used, a retirement plan or ad hoc**
- **ownership of animals - Whether owned by an organisation or individually, and**
- **There are links with international organisations to monitor and set standards for practice in NZ based on an organisational rather than a whole of industry response.**
- **No ethical framework used – but welfare and best practice apparent at tertiary level – esp police and customs and SAR dogs: And at secondary level in some situations such as for dogs working with the blind.**

# CHALLENGES MOVING FORWARD

In the helping professions, but especially social work, we actively fight against oppression and the exploitation of clients, workers and the general public. Therefore, in AAA we need to give similar consideration to animals. In social work we have a code of ethics that protects clients against unethical behaviours and inspires professional behavior. Codes of ethics relating to AAA need to provide similar protection for animal assistants and colleagues.

- In the Social Work field I support Aimers, Walker and Perry (2015) call -
  - “We urge the Social Work Registration Board (SWRB) and the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW) to initiate and support a collaborative project with animal welfare organisations and other professional groups with an interest in AAA/AAI/AAT to develop a cross-sectorial New Zealand Code of Ethics and Conduct, with the ultimate aim of including AAA, AAI and AAT within their competencies.”
  - “People have raised the idea of a separate code of welfare for assistance animals so I’m sure that will be looked at by NAWAC at some point.” Mojo Mathers

# CHALLENGE TO ALL PROFESSIONS:

This call needs to be extended to all organisations and professions in the general helping professions who work with animals to enhance their practice to adopt appropriate codes of ethics that reflect working with animals in the primary, secondary and tertiary schema outlined here or to combine together as organisations/professions to develop a nationwide adherence to a common agreed upon code/s.

Department of Sociology,  
Gender and Social Work



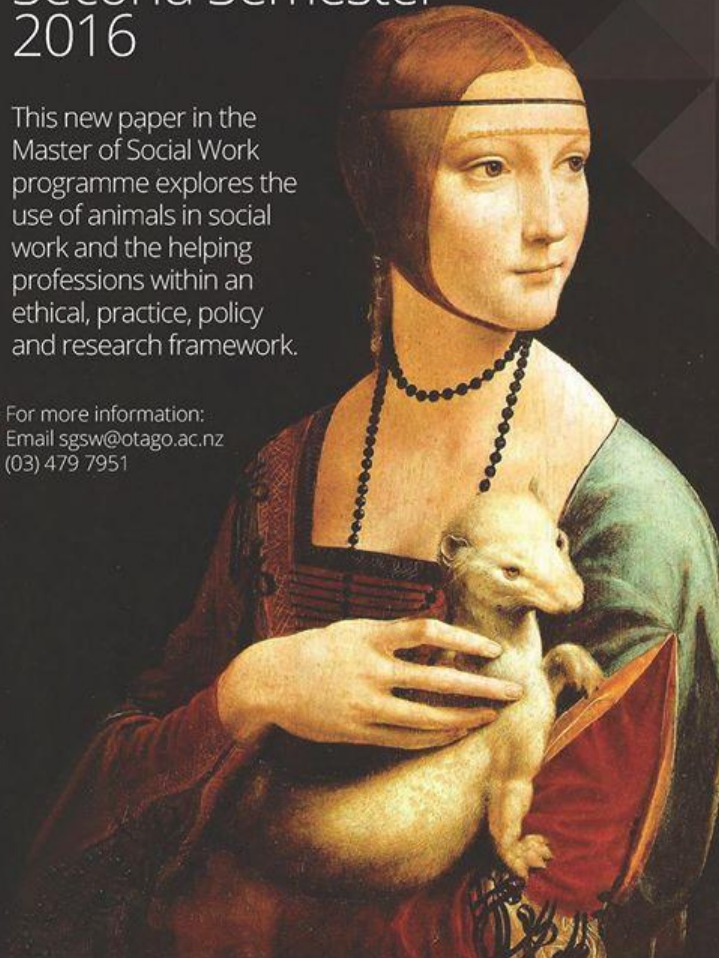
# SOWK522

## Animals and Social Work

### Second Semester 2016

This new paper in the Master of Social Work programme explores the use of animals in social work and the helping professions within an ethical, practice, policy and research framework.

For more information:  
Email [sgsw@otago.ac.nz](mailto:sgsw@otago.ac.nz)  
(03) 479 7951



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