



COUNCIL ON
ANIMAL AFFAIRS

Can sport, relaxation, tradition and entertainment involving animals be enjoyable for both humans and animals?

Prof. Bas Rodenburg
Utrecht University

Member of the Council on Animal Affairs

22 February 2024

Introduction

- Humans engage in many activities involving animals
- Sports, relaxation, local traditions, entertainment
- Positive, neutral or negative for animal welfare
- Increasing societal debate



[Pixabay](#)



Hollandse Hoogte/Reyer Boxem



[Pixabay](#)



Solar 760L Foto/Shutterstock



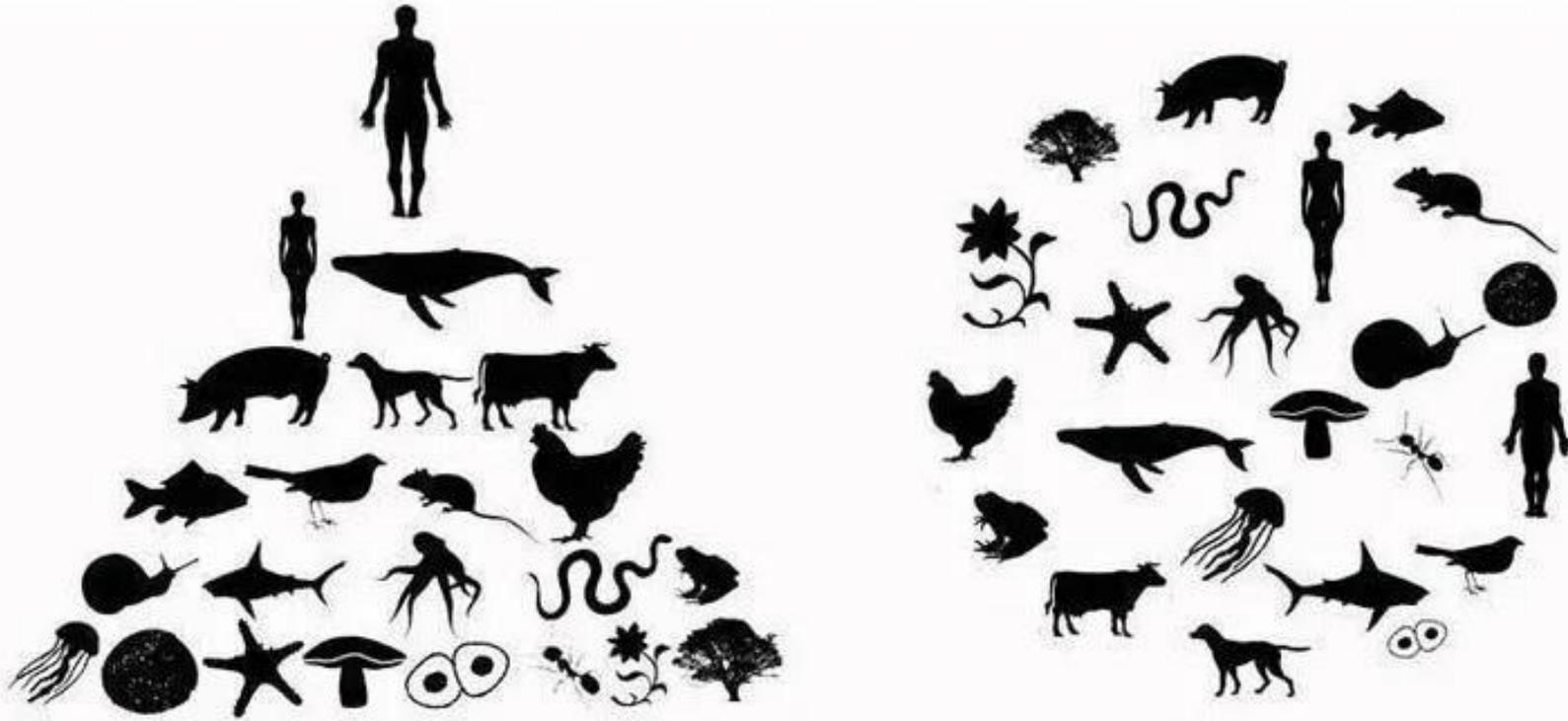
AB Photographie/Shutterstock



[Beleef het lage Noorden](#)

Our views on animals change

From anthropocentric to ecocentric



Council on Animal Affairs

- Dutch Advisory Council for the Minister of Agriculture
- Own initiative to focus on animal welfare during activities with animals
- Main question: Can activities involving animals be enjoyable for both humans and animals?



What is the dilemma?



[Andrea Lightfoot/Unsplash, 2020](#)

What are the
effects on the
animal?



[Pixabay](#)

A passion for animals

- Positive for human welfare
- More than a hobby or a profession
- Part of their identity



[Balkster Courant, 2023](#)



[Bit magazine](#)

Example Utrecht

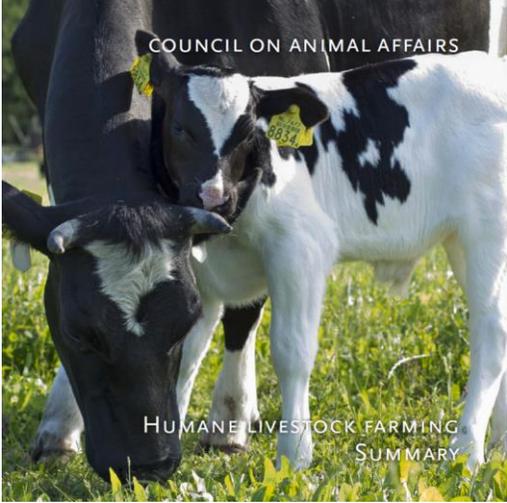
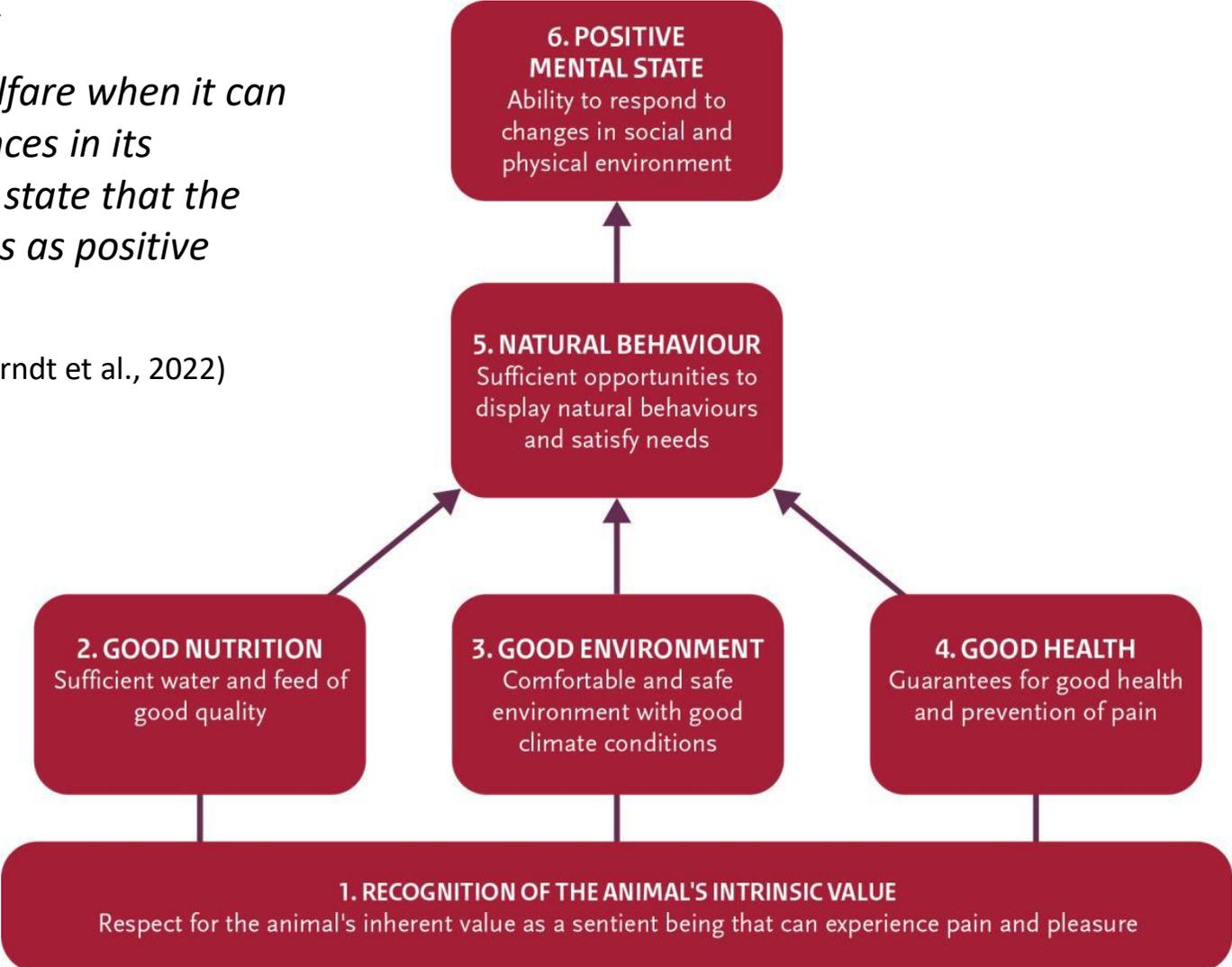
- Short horse race (300 m)
- City centre
- Long tradition
- Adjustements: no whips
- Acceptable?



Six Principles Humane Livestock Farming

An animal has good welfare when it can adapt to the circumstances in its environment to reach a state that the animal itself experiences as positive

(Ohl en van der Staaij, 2012; Arndt et al., 2022)



1. Recognition of the animal's intrinsic value

- Treatment with respect
- Activity should fit with the animal's nature
- Animal integrity should not be violated



[Speurhonden Instructie School](#)

2. Good feeding

- Adequate amount feed and water
- In line with animal's nature
- Does activity lead to disturbance of normal patterns?



[Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek Welzijn Duiven](#)

3. Good environment

- Suitable environmental conditions
- Minimize exposure to negative stimuli
- Opportunity to adapt to situation



[Jumping Amsterdam](#)

4. Good health

- Fitness of the animal
- Activity should not result in a reduced lifespan
- Professional supervision and care



[van Erik Rietman/Noordholland Dagblad](#)

5. Natural behaviour

- Freedom not to participate
- Possibility to withdraw from human contact
- Appropriate training methods (positive reinforcement)
- Knowledge and attitude of participants



[Pixabay](#)

6. Positive emotional state

- Meeting principles 1-5 allows animals to adapt
- Reach a situation that they experience as positive
- 'A life worth living'



[Raad van Beheer](#)

Main recommendations

- Strive for activities that indeed are enjoyable for both humans and animals
- Look at activities from the animal's perspective
- Develop animal welfare plans
 - Meeting the six guiding principles



Way forward

- Develop animal welfare plans
- Consider animal welfare in local permits for activities
- Engage with organisations to develop guidance
- Activity does not meet the six guiding principles?
 - End activity in the future
 - 3Rs can be used during the transition (replace, reduce, refine)

Way forward

- Develop animal welfare plans
- Consider animal welfare in local permits for activities
- Engage with organisations to develop guidance
- Activity does not meet the six guiding principles?
 - End activity in the future
 - 3Rs can be used during the transition (replace, reduce, refine)



COUNCIL ON
ANIMAL AFFAIRS



Thank you for your attention!

Prof. Bas Rodenburg

Utrecht University

Member of the Council on Animal Affairs

t.b.rodenburg@uu.nl

22 February 2024