Abstract - Rodenburg

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

Humans engage in many activities that involve animals. This can be for sports, relaxation or because of local traditions. Examples are sports with horses or dogs, animal shows and exhibitions, pigeon racing, fishing, etc. Some activities may be neutral or even positive from an animal welfare perspective, while others clearly affect animal welfare negatively. There is increasing societal debate in The Netherlands on the welfare of the animals that are used for these activities. At the same time, many people enjoy these activities.

For farm animals, the Dutch Council on Animal Affairs has recently proposed the six principles for humane livestock farming, modeled on the Five Domains proposed by Mellor et al. (2016): 1) respect for the intrinsic value of the animal, 2) good housing, 3) good feeding, 4) good health, 5) ability to perform natural behaviour and 6) positive emotional state. Based on these six principles, a process is currently ongoing in The Netherlands to see how we can redesign animal husbandry from the perspective of the animal. Could we use the same methodology to assess the other activities we do with animals? This can provide a valuable framework for organisers of animal activities to think about possible improvements of their activities that will benefit animal welfare.

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