

## Study of Animal Behaviour Society

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### Description

Behavioural studies are of great importance in increasing our understanding and appreciation of human and nonhuman animals. In addition to providing knowledge about the diversity and complexity of behaviour in nature, such studies also provide information crucial to improving the welfare of animals kept in laboratories, agricultural settings and zoos, and as companion animals. The use of animals in behavioural research and teaching does, however, raise important ethical issues.

### Animal Behaviour

While many behavioural studies are non-invasive and involve only observations of animals in their natural habitat, some research questions cannot be addressed without interaction with and manipulation of animals in the laboratory or field. Deep consideration must be given to identifying appropriate marking techniques to allow individuals to be distinguished, and to evaluating the manipulative procedures, surgery or humane killing that may be necessary to achieve the aims of the research. Studies of captive animals may mean obtaining them from the wild and necessarily involve confinement.

Other studies involving wild animals may require trapping and manipulation. In both cases, end points may result either in humane killing or subsequent release of the animals. Studies of free-living animals in their natural habitats can cause disruption to the animals' population or the wider ecosystem, particularly if feeding, capture, marking or experimental procedures are involved. While the furthering of scientific knowledge is a proper aim, and may itself advance an awareness of human responsibility towards animal life, the investigator must always carefully weigh the potential gain in knowledge against any adverse consequences for the individual animals, the populations under study and the wider ecosystem. This is equally true for the evaluation of animal use in animal behaviour teaching activities. In fact, animal behaviour courses provide an excellent opportunity to introduce students to the ethical obligations a researcher accepts when animals are studied.

During ethical assessment of papers submitted to animal behaviour, the costs and benefits are weighed on a case-by-case basis to assess whether costs have been minimized, the benefits maximized, and whether the benefits outweigh the costs, before

making a recommendation on publication. For this review process to function effectively, it is vital that authors supply detailed information on the ethical treatment of their providing sufficient details of the capture, handling, housing, care, marking, treatment and subsequent release or disposal of their study animals to allow the benefit analysis. The request of this information is not meant so much as a checklist, but as a means for the editors, reviewers and eventually readers to understand the ethical constraints and concerns faced by the researchers.

### Animal Behavior Society

To help both researchers and teachers make what are sometimes difficult ethical judgements about the procedures involved in the study of animals, the Association for the Study of Animal Behaviour (ASAB) and the Animal Behavior Society (ABS) have formed Ethical and Animal Care Committees, respectively, and each appoints an ethics editor that serves on the editorial board of animal behaviour. These committees jointly produced the following guidelines for the use of all those who are engaged in behavioural research and teaching activities involving vertebrate and invertebrate animals. Given the diversity of species and the study techniques used in behavioural research, these guidelines are by necessity general in scope. There are, however, a variety of sources available that give more details on the principles on which the guidelines are based. These guidelines are used by the ethics editors and reviewers of animal behaviour in assessing the acceptability of submitted manuscripts. Submitted manuscripts may be rejected by an editor, after consultation with the appropriate ethical or animal care committee, if the content is deemed to violate either the letter or the spirit of the guidelines. We hope, however, that these guidelines will be widely used to guide experimental design and animal behaviour projects as researchers perform their work with ethical considerations at the front of their mind, independently of where they aim to publish such studies.

The ethical acceptability of manuscripts considered for publication in animal behaviour is assessed in terms of the benefit trade-off. Costs to the animals might include compromises of animal welfare, any pain or distress (irrespective of the efforts to minimize this), reduction of likely survival rates or reproductive success. Other costs include adverse impact on the environment or reductions in the quality of science. Benefits are considered to be the value of the specific

scientific insights sought to humans, other animals or the environment (whether the science is of good quality and addresses questions of importance). Any study that allows or precipitates great costs to animals for research must have both the highest potential benefits and the highest ethical justification. Great costs can be 'offset' in the benefit analysis by achieving a high quality of research and answering very important questions.

The process endorsed here uses the same logic followed by national, state or institutional ethical licensing bodies. It is important to note that these guidelines act to supplement the legal requirements in the country and/or state or province in which the work is carried out. They should not be considered an

imposition upon the scientific freedom of individual researchers, but rather as an aid to provide an ethical framework that each investigator may use in making and defending decisions related to animal welfare.

Investigators should choose species and strains for study that are appropriate and best suited for investigation of the questions posed. Choosing these requires knowledge of natural history, physiology and phylogenetic relationships. Knowledge of an individual animal's previous experience, such as whether or not it has spent a lifetime in captivity, is also important. Recent advances in genetic characterization of many laboratory animals may also allow the investigator to control for the effects of genotype on expected behavioural traits.