

# Democracy for Animals

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# Abstract

The case of Britain demonstrates that unless animal interests and related public opinion enjoy institutionalised representation within governments, they routinely lose political and public policy battles to commercial interests. Developing animal rights movements can learn vital lessons about the need to entrench any social and cultural advances for animals and promote conditions for future progress by achieving structural changes in political systems.

# How do we make a difference?

## Dangers of prioritising individual/agency over systems/structures:

- Flawed understanding of human behaviour and social change
- Atomistic, overly rational view of humans
- Overlooks structural influences
- Naïve view of politics and exercise of power
- Limited to 'sticking plaster' rather than prevention
- Misses huge gap between public opinion and actual treatment of animals
- Closing this gap is essential and is focus of CASJ work

# Typology of animal *policy* paradigms

## **'Animal Use'** - e.g. animal farming & experimentation interests:

- animal welfare of minor, secondary moral relevance
- Wide definition of acceptable harm
- Self-regulation – *critical from practical perspective*
- *Hegemonic policy/government paradigm (in UK at least)*

## **'Animal Welfare'** - most animal protection groups:

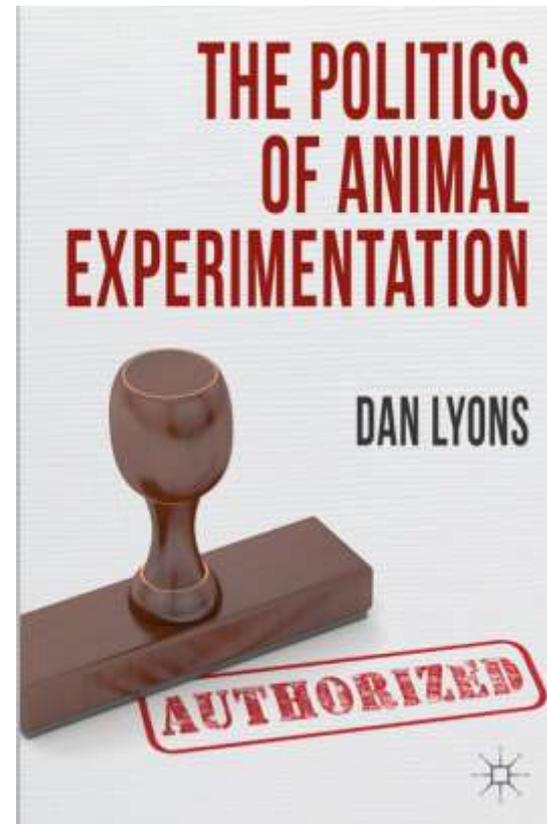
- animal welfare should be given significant weight in cost/benefit assessment
- Narrower range of acceptable harm
- Independent, public regulation
- Corresponds with majority public opinion

# Unique data on research policy

## LEGAL VICTORY



## PHD/MONOGRAPH



# Symbolic Reassurance & Exclusion

## Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986:

- *Apparent* ideological change from 'Animal Use' to 'Animal Welfare' - due to public concern
- But cost-benefit assessment not legally defined
- Implementation still dominated by researcher interests
- Official secrecy conceals regulation – research interests can control information

# Xeno cost-benefit assessment

According to licensing documents:

- 95% of Imutran's experiments classed as 'moderate' severity
- 'Moderate' = limited adverse effects, animals 'sacrificed' before serious systemic illness/death occurs
- Benefit prediction – clinical (human) trials of pig organs in a year

# Actual policy outcomes

- “Uncoordinated limb spasms” and “stroke”
- “in a collapsed state” and (17) “found dead”
- “Gastro-intestinal toxicity, resulting in severe diarrhoea”
- “very distressed”
- “body and limb tremors”
- “grinding teeth, eyes rolling...”
- Failed to achieve initial predicted benefits – understanding and controlling rejection

# UK Farm Animal Welfare Policy

- Minimal progress despite the seminal 1965 Brambell Report due to power of economic/business interests (FAWC)

Fast-growing meat chickens:

- Breeding birds subjected to feed restriction and hence chronic hunger to survive to sexual maturity
- Appears to break EU and UK law
- Badger cull – a more recent example

# Institutionalised welfare law evasion

- Vague welfare standards
- Only must take 'reasonable steps' rather than actually comply with standards
- Government and judges reluctant to challenge (illegal?) established practices
- Industry interests dominate law and policy
- *Focussing on particular policy areas without structural change is futile*

# 'Resources' = power

- financial wealth

## Qualitative and structural resources:

- helpful laws
- supportive public opinion (potentially)
- knowledge and information
- alignment with dominant élite values and governmental power distributions
- perceived contribution to national economic prosperity

# Impact of group resources

- depends on dominant values of policy process
- animal welfare not valued in animal use areas
- animal advocates peripheral insiders to give false legitimacy to policy
- highly stable animal use policy structures
- Even the UK hunt 'ban' is example of symbolic reassurance (minimal impact on animal welfare)
- Lack of systemic govt representation for animal interests

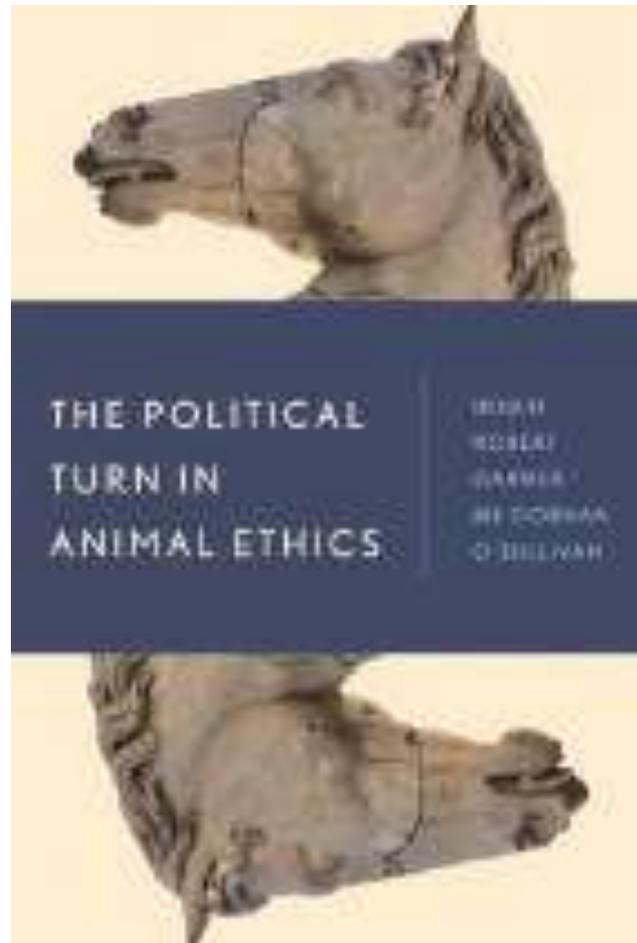
So, how can we achieve essential change?

# Representing animal interests

Counterbalancing political power of animal harm interests:

- Democratising animal policy-making (deliberative democracy SA dog/cat jury)
- A Govt Institution: 'Animal Protection Commission'
- Legal/political status of animals
- Govt strategies and targets – impact assessments

# Towards 'Public Responsibility' for animals



THE POLITICAL  
TURN IN  
ANIMAL ETHICS

HEIDI  
ROBERTS  
JAMES  
R. COWAN  
O. BILLMAN

# Potential gains

- EU Welfare Quality study: 50% of EU farms fail to comply
- At least half of experiments fail public position on cost-benefit
- See why industry prefers self-regulation and exclusion of public accountability!

*'the animal's dignity must prevail over the profitability of the industrial activity'*

Luxembourg Govt

# Some key reading

- Marsh, D. and Smith, M. (2000) 'Understanding Policy Networks: Towards a Dialectical Approach', *Political Studies*, 48: 4-21.
- Moran, M. (2003) *The British Regulatory State: from stagnation to hyperinnovation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
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- Garner, R. (2016) 'Animal rights and the deliberative turn in democratic theory'. *European Journal of Political Theory* (online Feb 25) [CASJ-funded]
- Garner, R. & O'Sullivan, S. (eds) (2016) *The Political Turn In Animal Ethics*, London: Rowman and Littlefield International.
- <http://yoursay.sa.gov.au/decisions/citizens-jury-dog-and-cat-management/about>