

ANIMAL WELFARE -
HOW TO ENSURE QoL
FOR BOTH PARTIES



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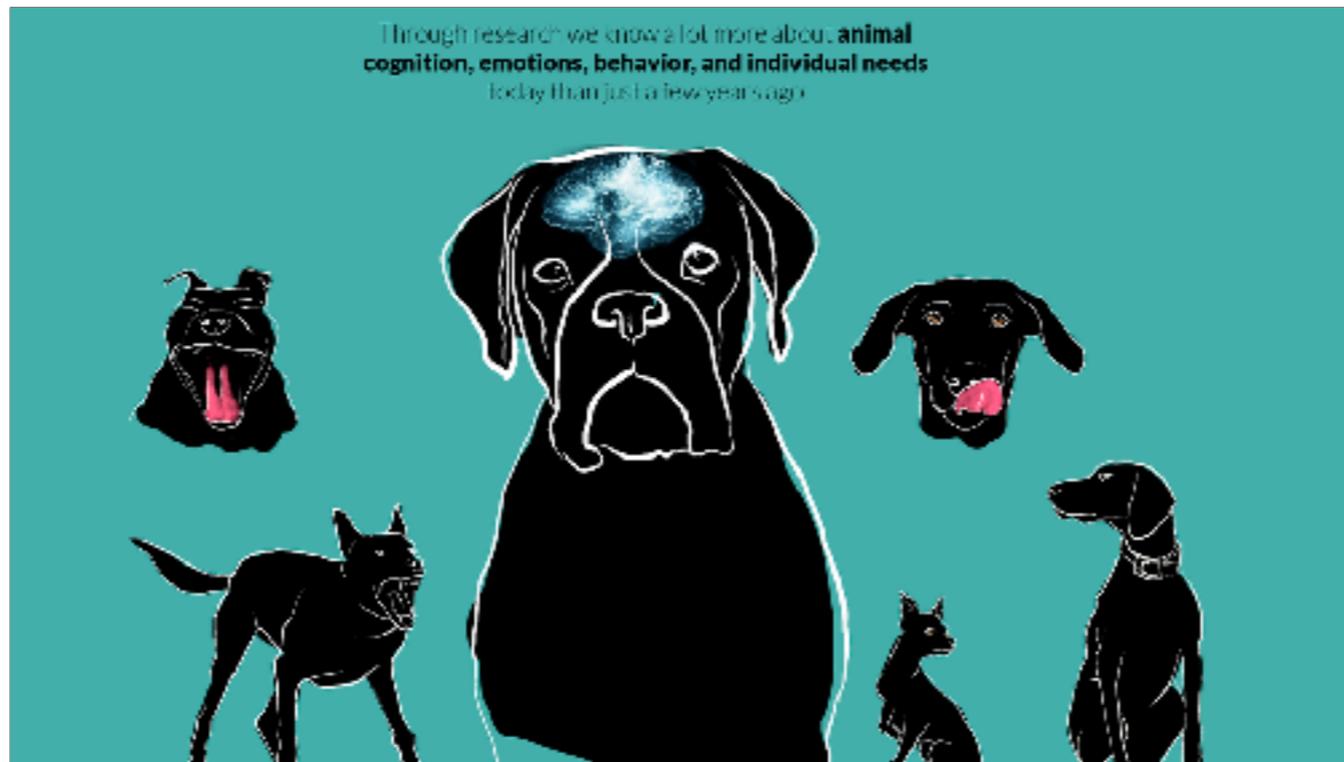
I want to start by thanking Slavka and the organizers for hosting this important conference.



As the field of AAI expands, we gain more knowledge on how to best perform AAI. We are more experienced, and the country borders have been washed out due to the Internet so this knowledge and experience can be transferred from country to country.



In addition, research on human health, in general, has grown. We know more about the clients' needs, and we know more about how interventions should be facilitated.



Luckily, there has also been a great development in knowledge when it comes to animal welfare. Every week new peer-reviewed papers are published, and we know a lot more about animal cognition, emotions, behavior, and individual needs today than just a few years ago.



To ensure quality of life for both parties, and by that I mean humans and animals, we must have knowledge about humans and animals in general. Equally important is to know the clients needs, the animals needs, and how to perform AAI.



In order to meet best practices in animal training, it is necessary to have a good relationship with the animal. At least basic knowledge in ethology must be required, and an understanding of the individual animal's personality. The animal's personality will actually influence how the animal learns, and especially how one shall train together with the animal. Notice that I say «train together with the animal», not just «train the animal». This is because the animal and the handler are a team that trains and works together.



When the handler and the animal work as a team, both parties will influence each other. That means that the handler must know him-/herself as a person, as well as the animals he or her works together with in AAI.



Research has shown that the relationship between humans and animals is of great importance for the animal welfare and behavior, as well as for human wellbeing and safety.

Research has shown that if the relationship between animals and humans is bad, interactions with humans will cause negative feelings like fear in the animals.

This can be observed as behavioral and physiological stress reactions.

Furthermore there is a higher risk of injury and the handling of the animals made more difficult due to flight-or fight-response



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- Interactions in AAI can vary in terms of
- Activities (like structured or unstructured)
- Setting (like classroom, outdoors)
- Human to animal ratio (like group or individual interaction)
- Human-animal contact (like duration of petting, talking, or walking)



Based on my knowledge and experience, I recommend distinguishing the kind of intervention you plan to provide. We can divide AAI into three different types. 1) Look at the animal from somewhat of a distance, typically visiting farms, 2) do work tasks with the animal like feeding, cleaning the barn, typically helping out at a farm and 3) having a close interaction with the animal.

I will now concentrate on nr. 3, close interaction with the animal.



Species that are social and appreciate close social contact with humans are, when well socialized to people, sheep, goats, cows, hens, dogs, cats, horses, and pigs. Of course, breeds within these species have their characteristics of temperament and behavior, and you therefore may find the preferred characteristics in any one of the species mentioned. However, in general, these species have some species-typical characteristics.



Sheep have this characteristic wool that is exciting to touch. In general, they are quite calm and predictable in their behavior. They often enjoy being touched and cuddled.



Goats are **trainable, curious, do unpredictable things**, and are fun to watch. They are **social**, and often initiate contact with people, however, they often don't have time to be in the situation for a long time before they do something else.

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Pigs are calm and exciting to touch. As cows, they are happy to cuddle and to be in close contact with people for a longer time.



Horses are sensitive and reactive animals. They reflect clients' emotions, and their behavior often depends on the client's behavior. Many point out the feeling of mastery when handling a big animal like a horse. I would encourage you to keep in mind that we are not supposed to master animals, we shall care for them, treat them well, and acknowledge their existence as sentient living beings.



Cats are small animals that encourage clients to provide care for them and the feeling that they need to be protected. Their fur is very soft and they prefer close contact with people and can lay on the client's lap for a long time. They are also curious, playful, and trainable. Their characteristic purring provides calmness for the client.



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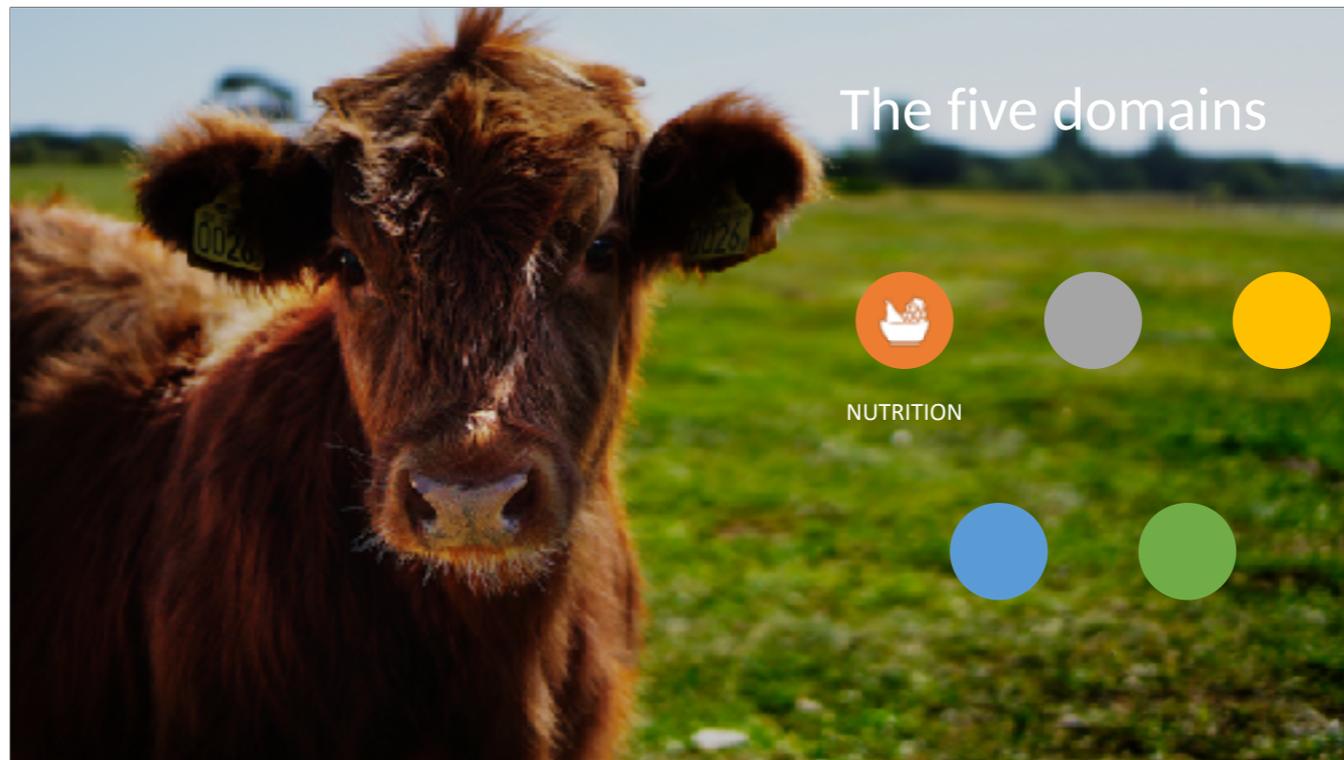
The One Health- institute at the University of California in Davis define One Health as «an approach to ensure wellbeing for people, animals and the environment through joint effort in problem-solving- locally, nationally and globally».

In the light of One Health, i will now present some thoughts on health and well-being for animals involved in animal assisted interventions. I will highlight some risk factors for animal welfare in AAI and point to what can be done to minimise risk of injury and damage.



For many years, the Five Freedoms presented by Brambell Committee report on the welfare of farm animals in intensive systems, has been set as the minimum for animals working in AAI.

Lately, there has become much more concerns regarding the importance of animals having good quality of life, and we can all agree that to have a good QoL, we need more than just the Five Freedoms.

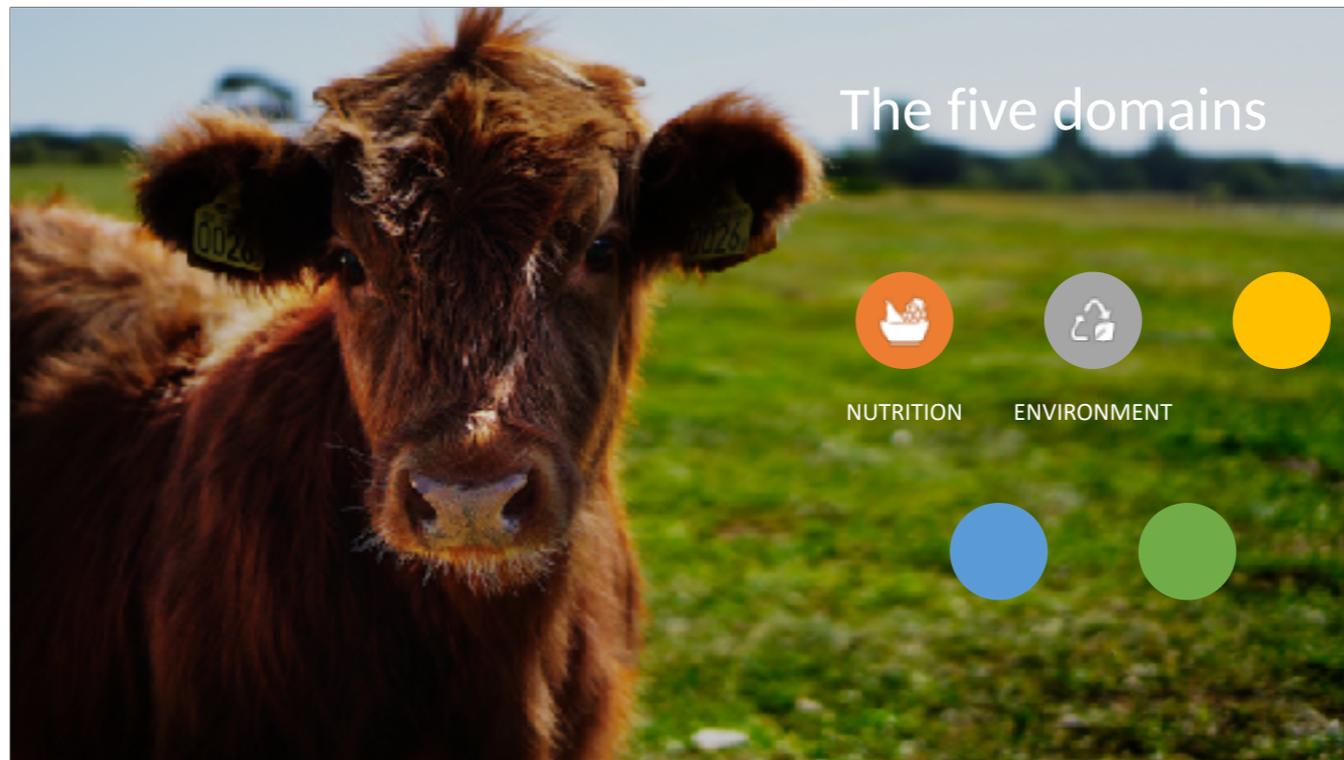


In 1994, the Five Domains was presented, which seeks to assess the impact (both specific and overall) of the physical and social environment on the affective state of an individual.

The Five Domains Model has a significant focus on subjective experiences, in relation to «Nutrition», «Environment», «Health», «Behaviour» and «Mental State».

The Five Domains model helps to clarify the relationships between different circumstances that generate negative and positive states, and likely interactions between those circumstances and the related affects.

The model has value in contributing to the growing contextual shift in animal welfare science thinking towards the promotion of positive states, whilst at the same time continuing to minimize negative states.

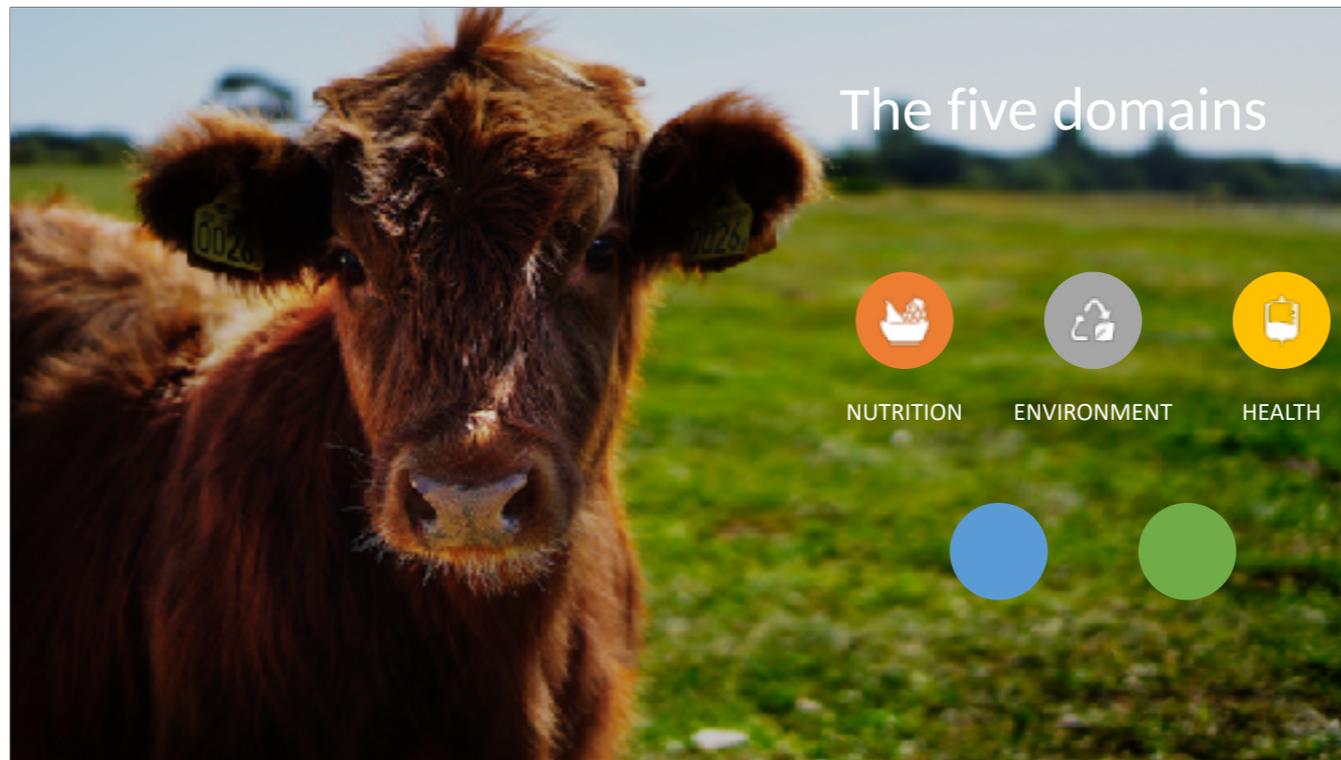


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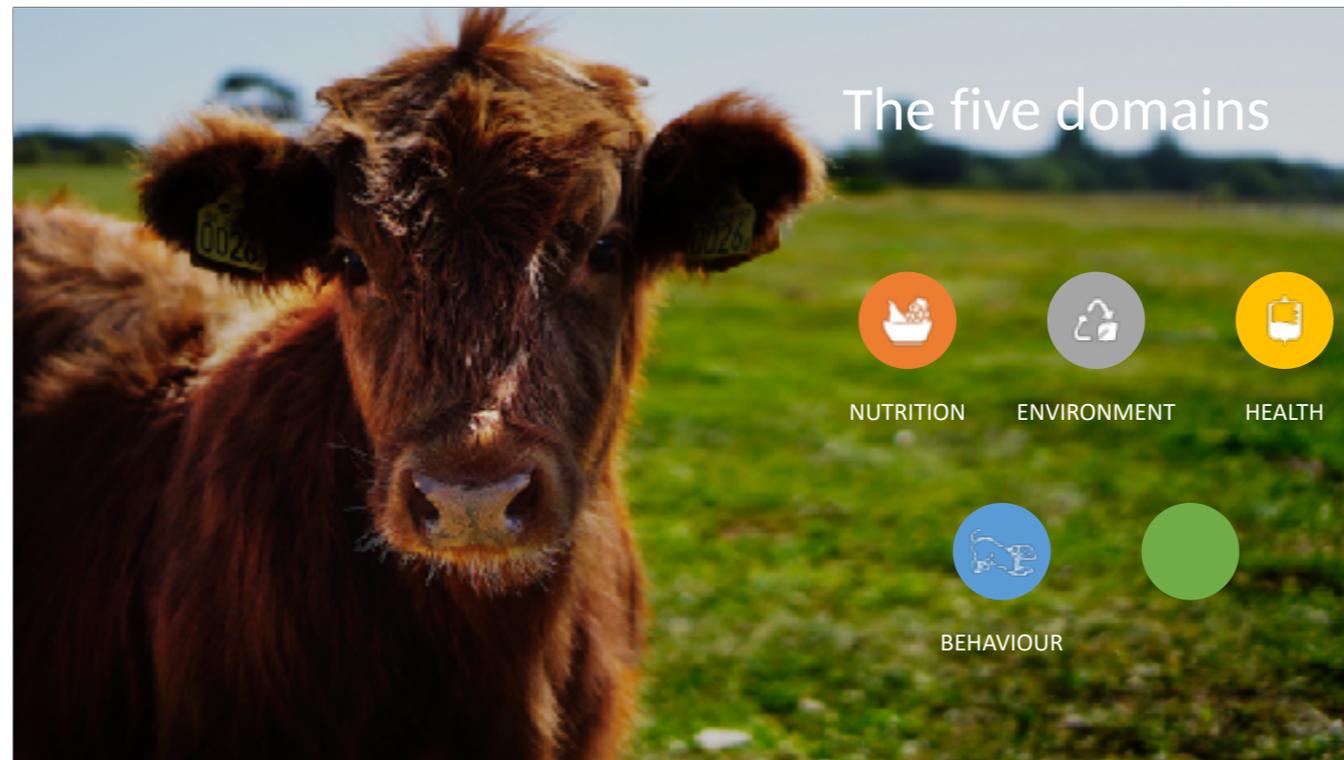


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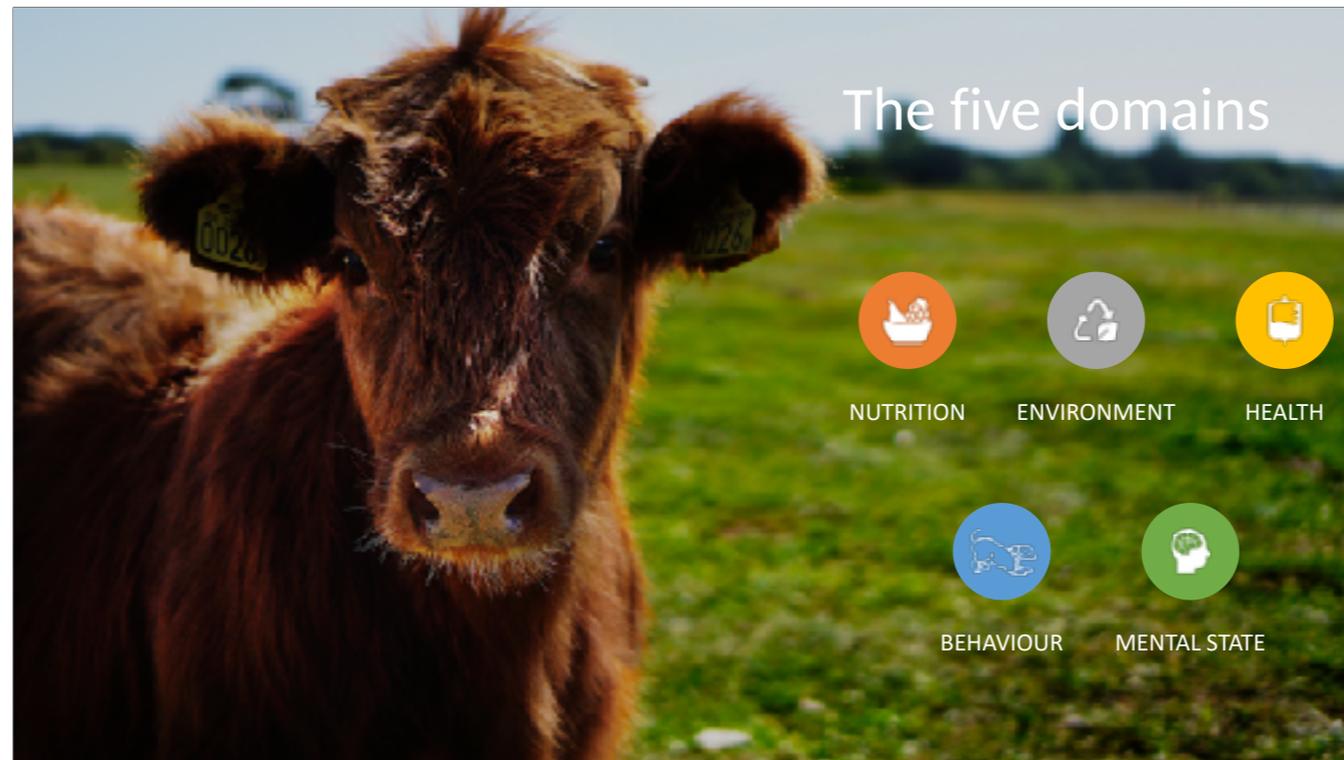


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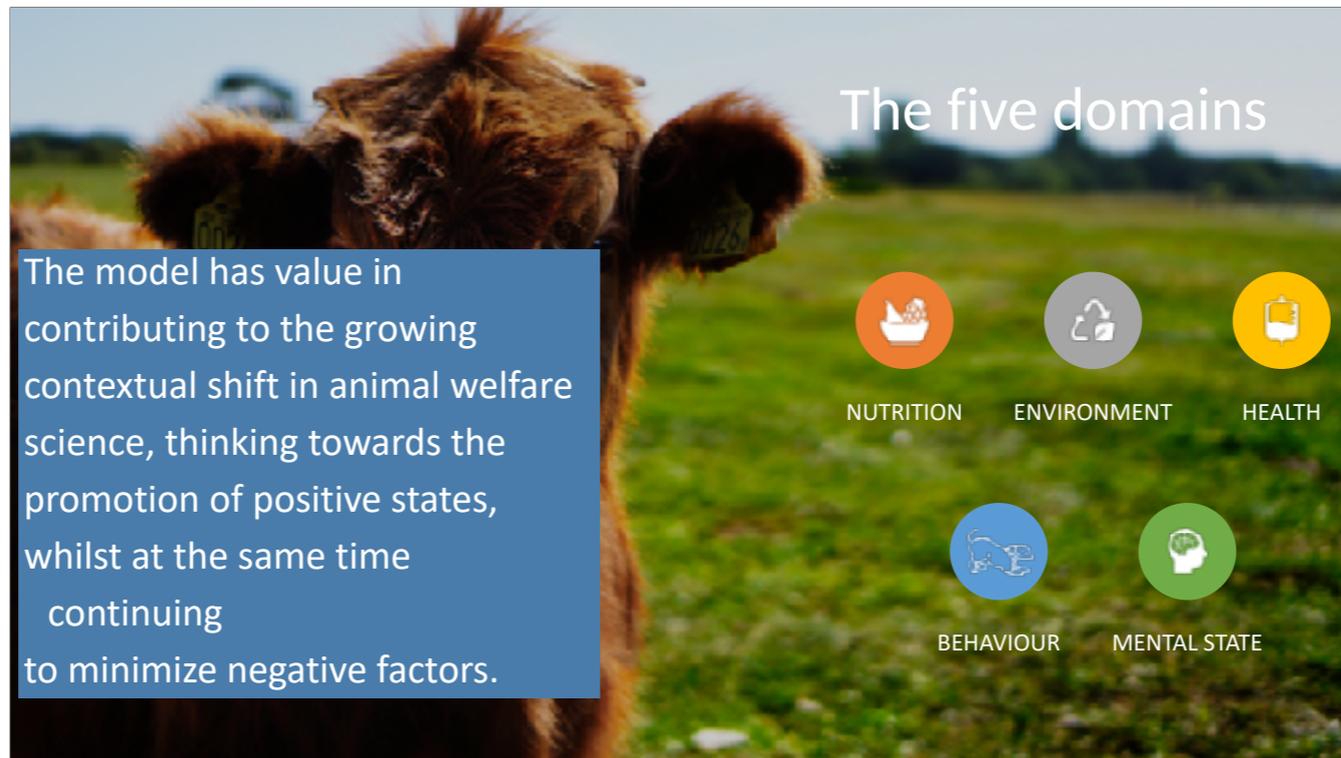


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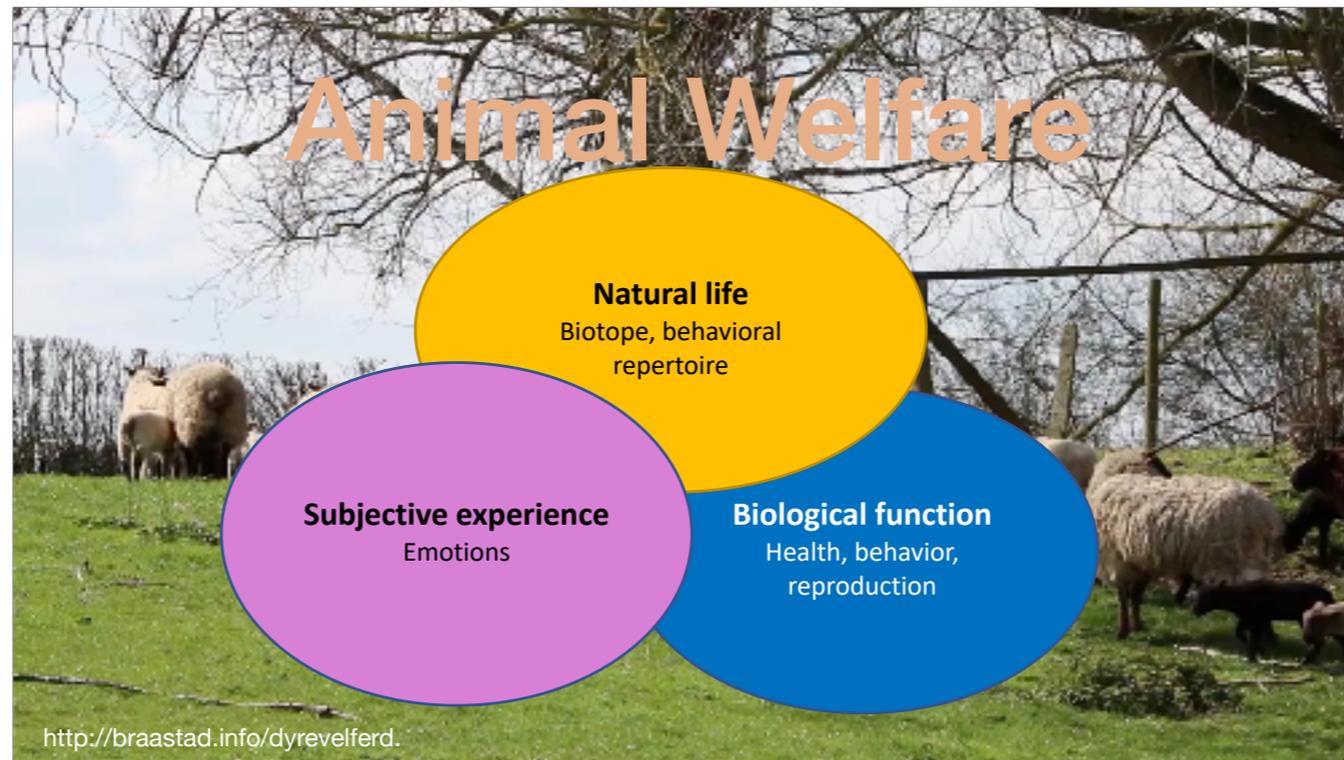
We need to involve animals, that are happy about life in general, animals that enjoy being close to people and who meet difficulties with a positivistic attitude.

To do that, we need to involve animals, that are happy about life in general, animals that enjoy being close to people and who meet difficulties with a positivistic attitude.

Because, animals, just like humans, can be described as positivistic or negativistic in their attitude towards life.



Recently, there has been a growing awareness of the need to not only reduce negative emotions but also to promote positive emotions in animals.



The Norwegian professor Barne Braastad at the Norwegian university of life sciences states that good animal welfare means much more than that the animal is in good health. Animal welfare consists of three dimensions, as outlined in the figure

Biological function - whether the health is good and whether the behavior is normal."

Natural life - whether the animal lives in a natural biotope, an«environment» that is natural for the animal species, where the animal shows a broad behavioral repertoire that is natural for the species.

Subjective experiences - how the animal itself experiences its situation, something we can assess based on whether it shows positive or negative emotions.

Animal Welfare

Animal welfare is the individual's subjective experience of his mental and physical condition as a result of his attempts to master his environment.



<http://braastad.info/dyrevelferd>.

The ethology group at NMBU define animal welfare this way:

Animal welfare is the individual's subjective experience of his mental and physical condition as a result of his attempts to master his environment.



The individual
animals
experience.

The new factor in the Ethology groups definition is the emphasis on how each animal perceive their own situation, both psychologically and physically. How does the animal really feel, right now? It is not enough that the veterinarian, the biologist or the farmer thinks this pig should be alright, if it is not.



Since the welfare level of an animal is a sum of positive and negative factors, we like to distinguish between positive and negative welfare indicators.



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Therefore, it is common for us to focus too much on negative welfare indicators.

This is of course important in itself, because it tells us that we must do something to change the situation.

There are both physiological and behavioral (ethological) welfare indicators.



Physiological indicators of poor welfare are of course injuries and symptoms of diseases, but also signs of parasites such as ear mites and ticks, or hairless areas in the coat that can mean everything from worms to hair loss.

If something like this is discovered, you must take the animal to the vet. Blood tests and other tests can measure the level of cortisol in the blood and any signs of disease.



Negative welfare indicators

Behavior indicators:

Signs of stress, fear, anxiety, abnormal aggression, apathy, behavioral disorders.

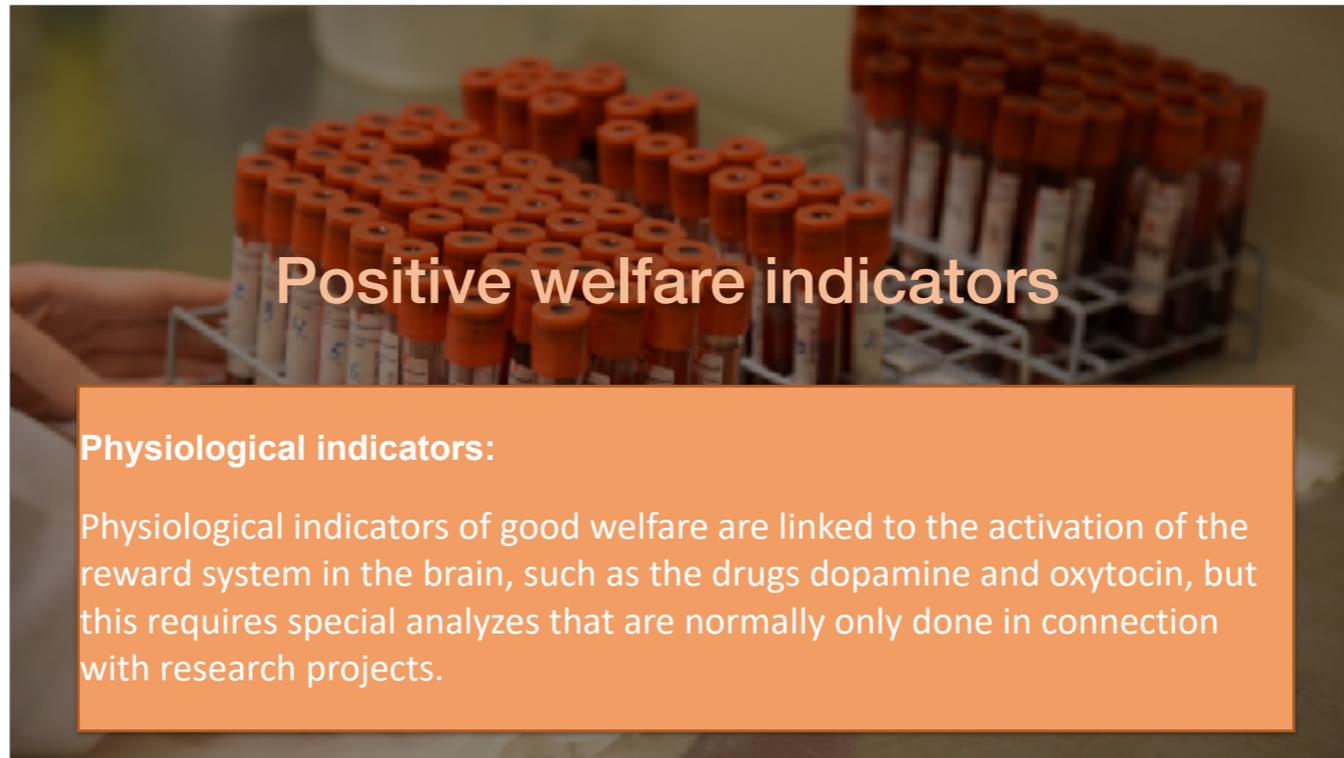
Behavioral indicators of poor welfare are all kinds of behavioral deviations in relation to what is normal for the individual, signs that the animal is stressed, shows fear, anxiety, abnormal aggression, apathy or more special behavioral disorders.

Poor animal welfare can also be reflected in incomplete body care, reduced activity, social problems and the fact that the animal never plays.



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Physiological indicators of good welfare are linked to the activation of the reward system in the brain, such as the drugs dopamine and oxytocin, but this requires special analyzes that are normally only done in connection with research projects.



Positive welfare indicators

Behavior indicators:

An animal with good animal welfare has exploratory behavior, a normal level of activity, body care and social contacts with humans and other animals.

There are several behavioral indicators of good animal welfare:

An animal with good animal welfare has exploratory behavior, a normal level of activity, body care, social contacts with humans and other animals.

Behaviors that indicate that the animal has a positive expectation, looking forward to something, is a strong positive indicator.

We can achieve this by giving the animal a signal that it will receive a reward, for example to be served its favorite dish, but wait to give this reward for a while. Repeated cases of positive expectation can act as "stress therapy", both for animals and humans.



Other signs of positive emotions such as satisfaction and joy.

Play does not occur when animals are stressed, and when your animal is playing, other and more basic needs are covered.

Play can help the animal gain experience with the unforeseen, which can also contribute to better stress management skills.

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Animal assisted interventions is a field that is gaining in popularity. More and more people are offered animal assisted interventions.

Great, isn't it?

When more and more clients are offered such interventions it means that more and more animals are exposed to close contact with unknown humans.

Do we really know what the animals are feeling
in these situations?



Do we really know what the animals are feeling in these situations? How can we make sure that Animal assisted interventions are a source of mutual benefit for both clients and animals- as is the intention of “One Health”?



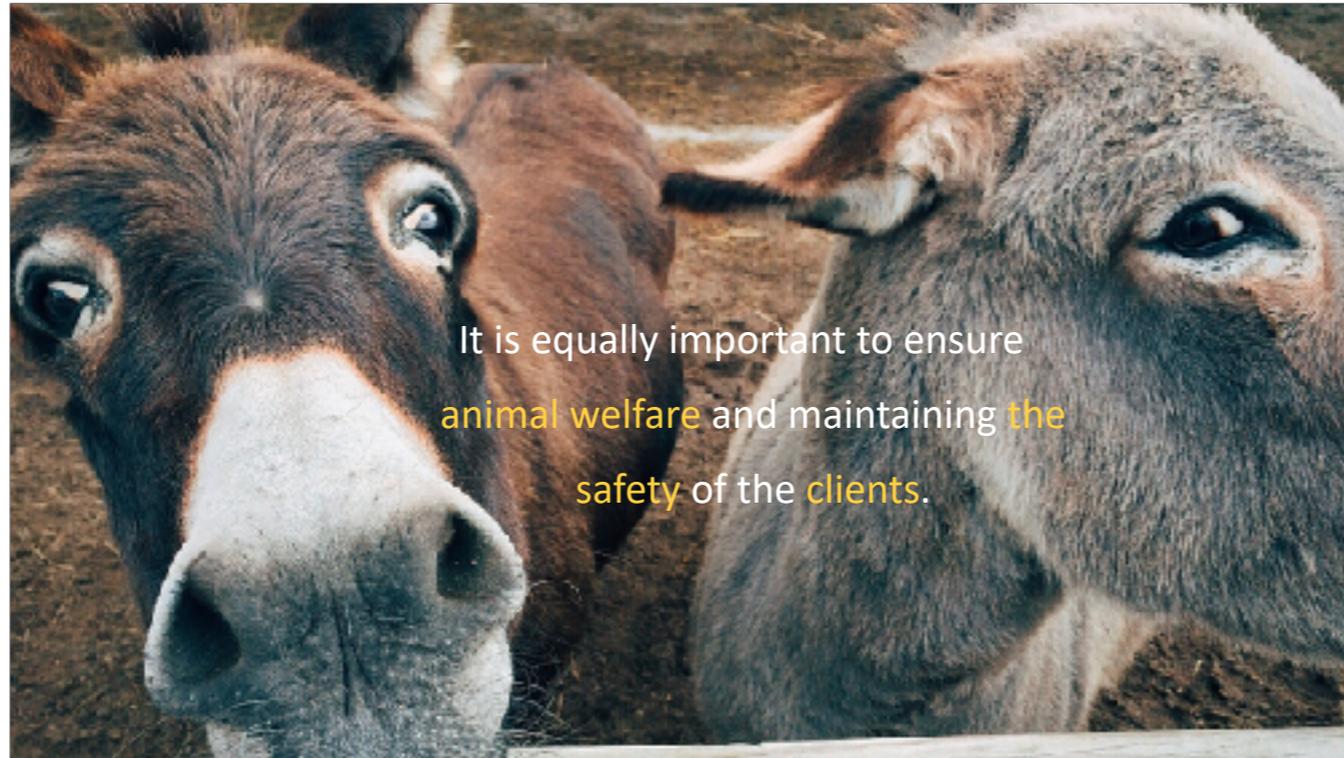
Some
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To work in AAI is demanding, and we must make sure that they enjoy their work. They should be safe, happy, in harmony.
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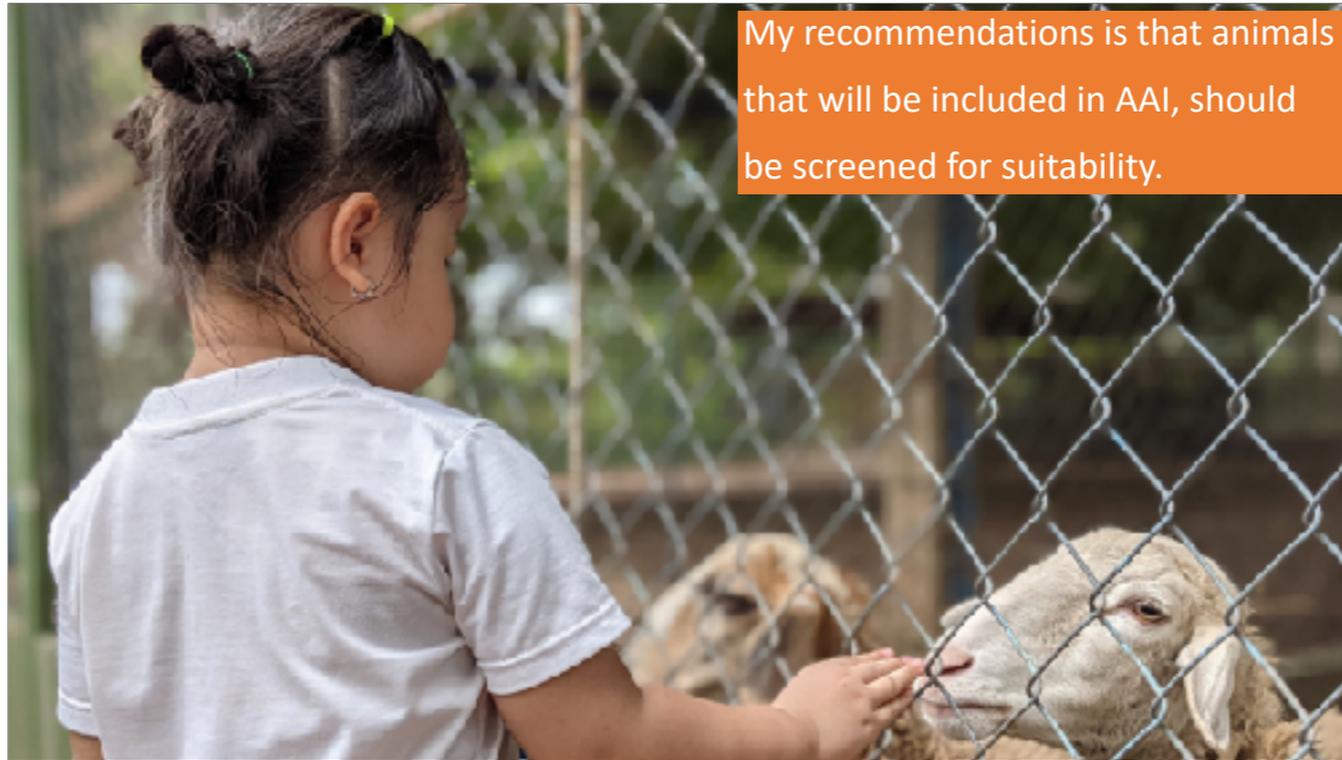
To place an unqualified animal in active service as a therapy animal can have serious consequences. Firstly, an unsuited animal can not give the wanted effect when needed.

The animal can behave inappropriately, for instance with aggression when exposed to unknown situations or sharp sounds. Potentially, the animal may present a danger to the client or themselves.



It is equally important to ensure
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My recommendations is that animals that will be included in AAI, should be screened for suitability.

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To help determine which animal is suited to be involved in AAI, we have developed The personality assessment for domestic animals. This is a personally test based on validated and reliable tests for animals of different species.

The PADA seeks to assess the personality of the animal. It is based on ethological assessments that is validated and reliable. Basically we assess the animals reaction to different stimuli. They are exposed to elements of the open field test, the human approach test, strange novel objects, sudden noise, the open door test.



Agriculture is a dangerous workplace. Every year, farmers or other people are injured by cows or oxen. It is important to know how to handle these large animals.

In Norway, every fourth accident that affects the farmer occurs during work and handling of animals.



It is important that we inform about how to handle the animals and the dangers of this
It is especially important to provide information both on the species and at an individual level

It is important that we inform about how to treat the animals and the dangers of this.

It is especially important to have in-depth training on people who will work with the animals.

It is important to prioritize explaining why one does things, so that the client has an understanding of why one does as one does.

It is essential to know the consequences of one's actions especially when dealing with living individuals.



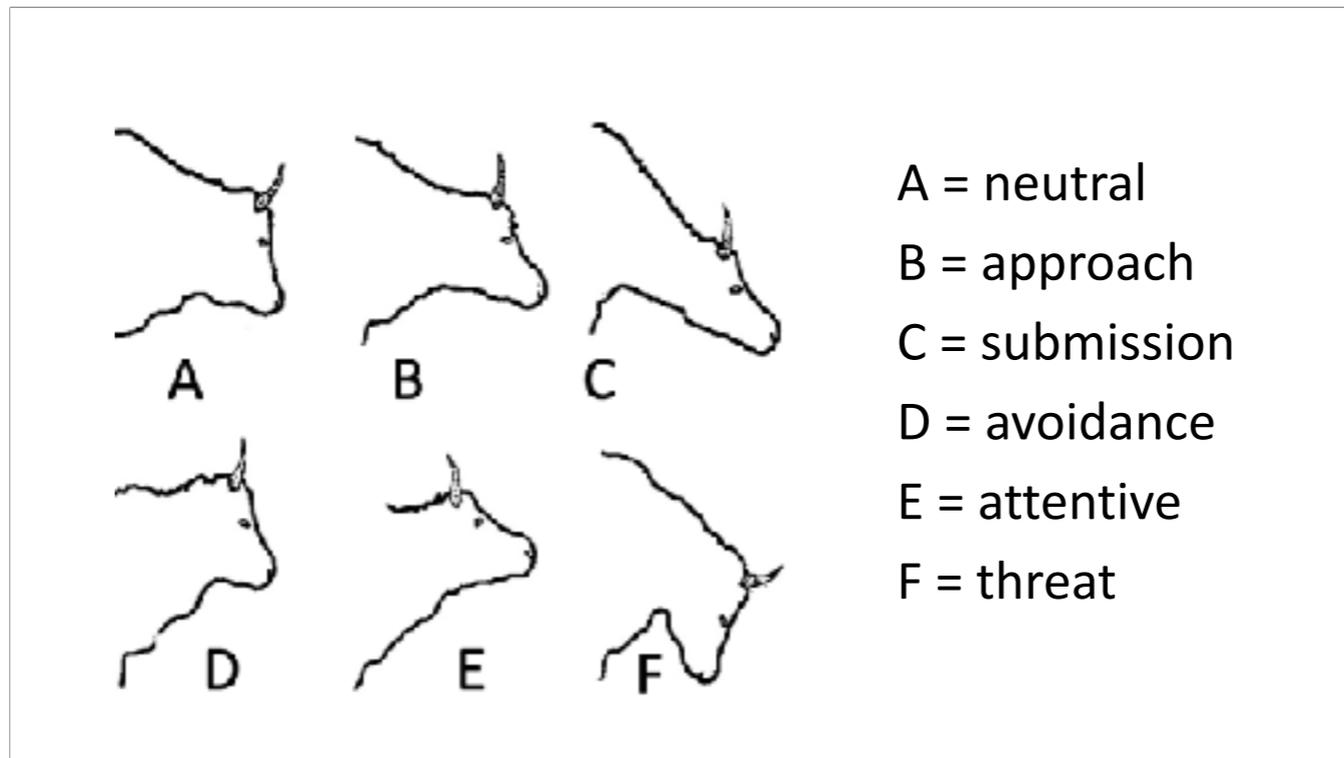
The clients needs adequate education in handling of the animals

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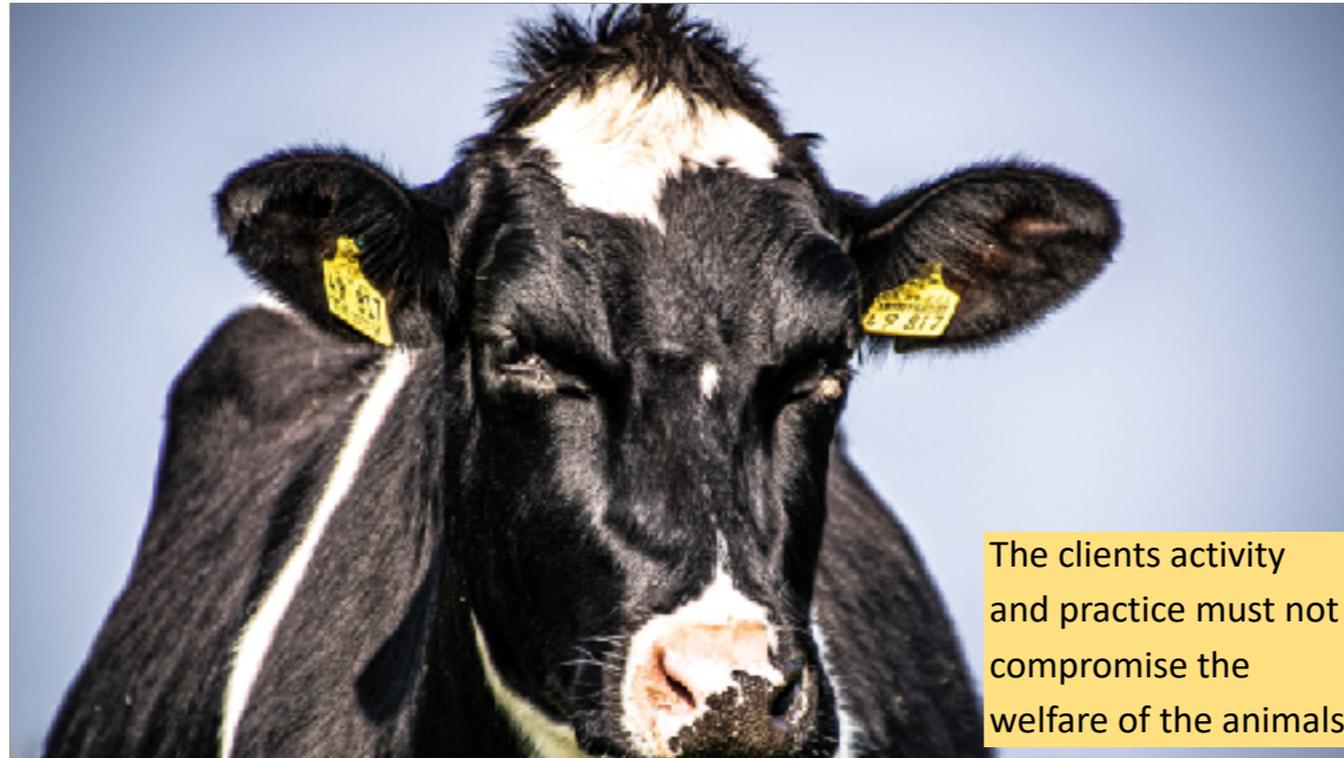
Most accidents with, for example, horses occur on the ground.

Not when riding, where you might think that injuries occur.

It constantly happens that animals and humans are put in situations where neither the animals nor the humans are safe.



It is easy to forget things that one has been told, so it is clever to put up posters with information around, so that the clients can look at them during their workday.



The clients activity and practice must not compromise the welfare of the animals

Before you give the participants responsibility and let them work more independently, they should be safe in being with, and handling the animals.

The clients activity and practice must not compromise animal welfare.

When I received training in the barn, a lot of focus was placed on how to treat the milking machine, so that I did not get any dirt or dust into the milking system.

No one talked about the welfare of the cow.



You have to make sure that the animals have a place to retire if they want, here the animals have no opportunity to withdraw.



When you want to take people out to visit a herd of animals on a field, it can be an advantage that everyone hold together, no one should be allowed to move out of the group.

And when you get to the herd, it is an advantage if you let the animals come to you. Then only the most social animals will approach you, and the less social ones can stay in the background.

Someone who knows the animals should be between the animals and the crowd.

One must also make sure that everyone stays in front of the herd, it is important that no one gets lost in between the herd. If so, people can get hurt because they can get in the middle of the animals' internal conflicts.



Prevention

In this barn you can see that the environment is customized so that the goats can retire from the children if they want, the rest area is quiet and calm and the goats can have a break from the children



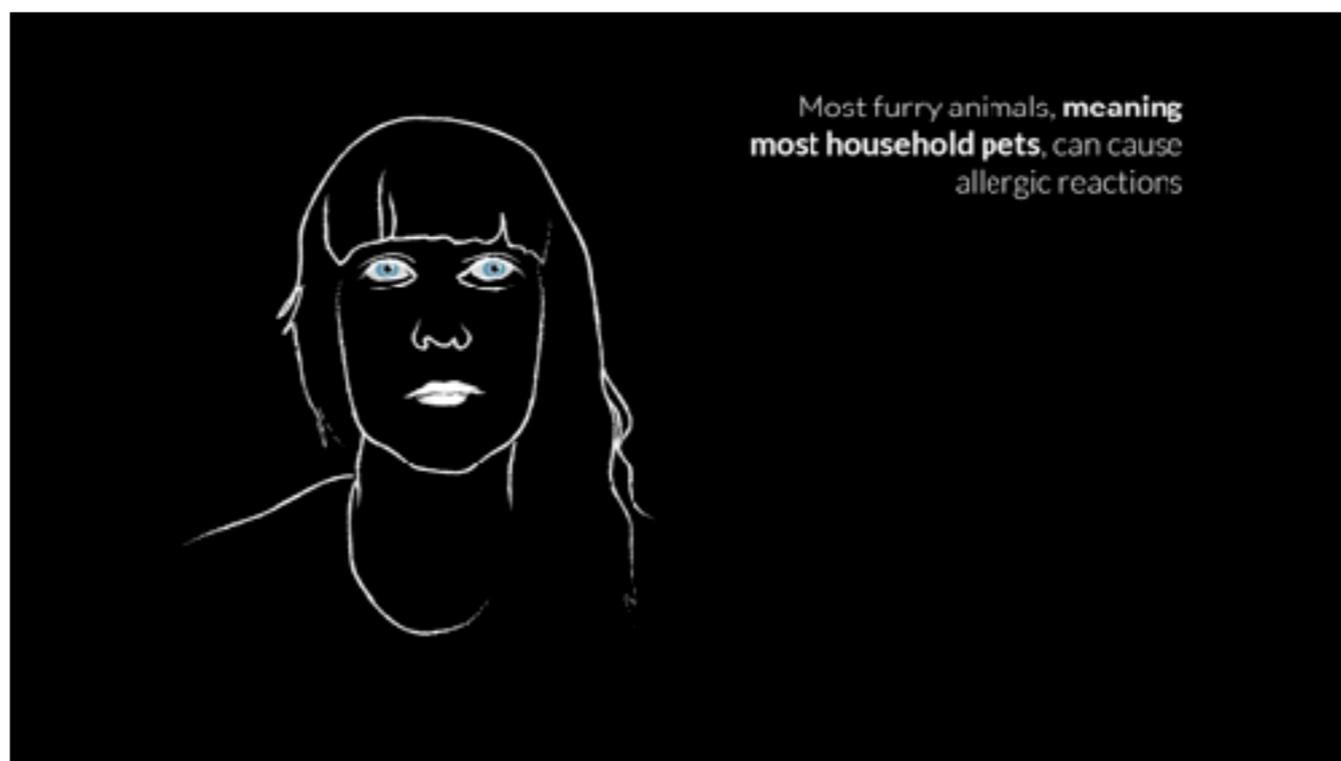
Here are pictures of horse and cat bites

It can be very frightening and not least painful to be bitten

In addition, being bitten can affect the clients self-esteem and sense of mastery.

By selecting the right individual and giving client training in handling the animals, this should be avoided

An animal that has experienced being able to get out of difficult situations by biting should not participate in AAI



Fur animals pose a real health risk too many people with allergies and they reduce accessibility, lead to poor health and reduces quality of life for this group.

The incidence of allergies and allergic-triggered asthma is increasing, especially among children.

On a farm, there is grass and hay in addition to animals that people may be allergic too.

People who are very allergic to animals or plants should not participate in animal-assisted interventions on the farm.

If you have children from classes where there are children who are allergic, it is good if you are careful that the children change and shower before they go back to class.



It is important to have both **client** and **animal welfare** in focus

Choosing the **right animals** for AAI is an important factor

The farmer should have a **good relationship** with the animals and **know them well**

Teaching the **clients** to **handle** and **taking care** of the animals are essential

It is important to have **rutines** around **HSE**, **allergy** and **reporting** of unexpected **incidents** or **accidents**

So, I hope that you have gained new knowledge about how to ensure QoL for best parties, and that you have new thoughts around these key elements regarding animal assisted intervention on farms. I will encourage you to never forget that you work on a team with your animal and that you must provide the best care both in the intervention as well as in everyday life. Make sure that the animal thrives working together with you, and you will have the best coworker ever.

FEEL FREE TO GET IN TOUCH!



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