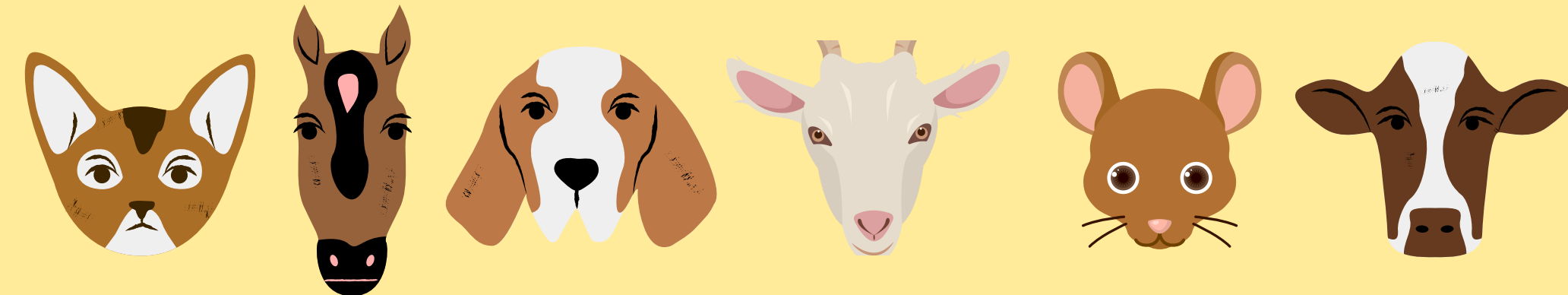


Veterinary Students' Perspectives on the Quality of Life of Teaching Animals

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INTRODUCTION



- Veterinary teaching animals are used in the education of Doctor of Veterinary Medicine students worldwide
- Animals used include dogs, cats, horses, cattle, rodents, poultry and some exotic species
- Uses include training students on physical exams, anesthesia, percutaneous interventions, catheterization, imaging, restraint, etc.
- The use of live animals in clinical skills training raises ethical concerns regarding animal welfare¹
- Doctor of Veterinary Medicine students acknowledge the necessity for teaching animals in veterinary education²

OBJECTIVE:

To investigate the perspectives of veterinary students on the quality of life of the teaching animals used in their education, an area with minimal existing research

METHODS



Participants: 4th-year veterinary students enrolled in an external or internal welfare based clinical rotation at the Atlantic or the Ontario Veterinary College



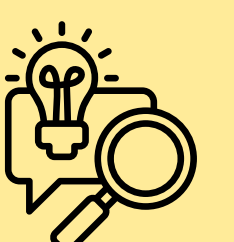
Focus groups (n=10) and interviews (n=2) were conducted with a semi-structured discussion guide



Discussions were audio-recorded and transcribed



Thematic analysis with a qualitative analysis software (Quirkos™)



Analysis identified recurring themes and patterns in the discussion

Cleanliness

"When it comes to the environment for the beagles, I frequently notice feces or urine in their enclosure."



Health Management

"I feel like we do not take care of our teaching animals to the same standard as we take care of our patients in the hospital."

Teaching-Based Medical Procedures

"The procedures that we do are much more invasive, like our animals are stressed, they don't like being manipulated, the cattle are very stressed."



BASIC NEEDS

EXPERIENCE DURING TEACHING

BEHAVIOURAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING



Human-Animal Interactions

"They [beagles] don't get human interaction like they would daily if they had an owner to stay at home with them."

Ethics in Teaching Animal Use

"I feel like a lot of those skills can also be replaced with models instead of distressing animals further."

Environment Allowing Species-Specific Behaviour

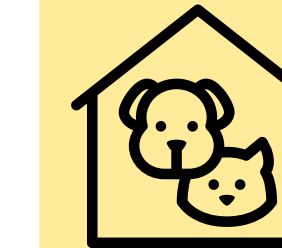
"As far as the horses are concerned, I think when they're out in the field [...], they're living their best life, because they're participating in their natural behaviour of grazing [...], they have a big open space, and a communal group dynamic."

CONCLUSION

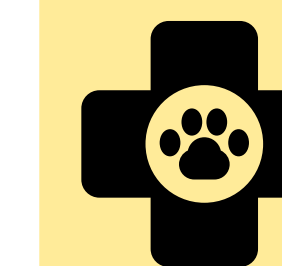
- Many students were satisfied with the level of nutrition and access to veterinary care
- Findings suggest that, although basic necessities are met, institutions must ameliorate enhance care protocols to improve overall quality of life
- Key areas of concern from students were related to animal hygiene, ability to perform natural behaviour and involvement of live teaching animals in medical procedure training
- Future research should explore student-driven recommendations to balance animal welfare with high-quality veterinary training

RESULTS

Meeting the Animal's Basic Needs

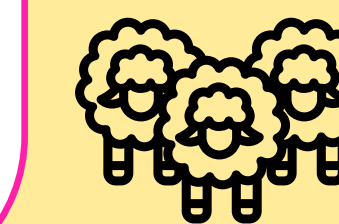


Cleanliness: Specific areas of discussion included animal hygiene and the condition of bedding and enclosures.

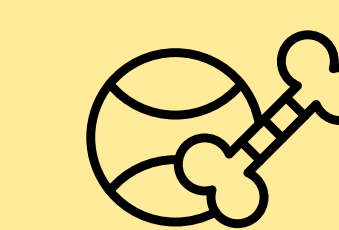


Health Management: Disease presence, access to veterinary care, and nutritional well-being were highlighted.

The Animal's Behavioural and Psychological Well-Being



Environment allowing species-specific behaviours: Students reported on group size, hierarchies, space allowance, natural environments, enrichment, exercise, stereotypical behaviours and natural behaviours.

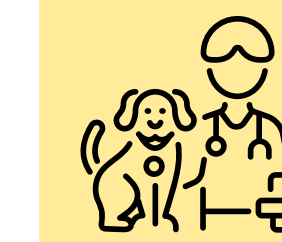


Human-animal interactions: Perspectives focused on animal handling, training, and play.

The Animal's Experience During Teaching



Ethics in Teaching Animal Use: Perspectives dove into the ethical considerations of appropriateness of use, invasiveness, use of alternatives, sourcing of animals, and relocation experience.



Teaching-Based Medical Procedures: Perspectives emphasized that student competence and medical staff interactions directly affected animal welfare during procedures.

REFERENCES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- 2: Baptista, C. S., Oliveira, P., & Ribeiro, L. (2024). An exploratory study of students' perceptions on the use of animals in medical and veterinary medical undergraduate education. Journal of Academic Ethics, 22(1), 115–136. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10805-023-09495-3>.

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