

Animal welfare organizations : responding to ethical challenges

GRÉEA/CRÉ/Montreal SPCA Workshop

Montreal, 14-15 March 2019

Organization : Kristin Voigt, Valéry Giroux and Élise Desaulniers, with the precious help of Frédéric Côté-Boudreau et Hosanna Galea

Montreal SPCA

5215, Rue Jean-Talon Ouest

Entrance on Mountain Sights street

Salle de formation

Participation is free but space is limited. If you'd like to participate, please RSVP to valery.giroux@umontreal.ca, by 5 March.

The Montreal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), one of Canada's most prominent animal rescue organizations, carries out a wide range of activities, such as sheltering abandoned animals and arranging adoptions, providing veterinary care for companion animals and urban wildlife, investigation and enforcement of violations of animal welfare legislation, and advocacy work. The day-to-day work of animal welfare organizations involves a host of ethical challenges. This includes questions about when to euthanize animals with medical conditions, behavioural problems or who are unlikely to be adopted; about which among the many pressing animal welfare issues to focus on in advocacy efforts; and, more broadly, which activities -- advocacy, shelter work, legal campaigns -- to prioritize. Resource constraints and reliance on private donors with their own views about which objectives and activities are the most valuable further add to these challenges. The Montreal SPCA's current policies provide little or no guidance on these issues, leaving already overburdened individual practitioners with the task of making these difficult and complex decisions.

In October 2018, a team of academic researchers working in animal ethics conducted interviews with the Montreal SPCA's staff in order to identify and better understand the ethical challenges they face in their work. The research team then began to develop a set of detailed and concrete suggestions for addressing these ethical challenges.

On March 14-15th 2019, the research team will again meet with SPCA staff on the Montreal SPCA's premises. The first day of the workshop will be devoted to presenting and discussing the suggestions prepared by the research team on how the Montreal SPCA might respond to the ethical challenges it faces. This will be an opportunity for the staff of the Montreal SPCA as well as colleagues in philosophy and animal ethics to give their feedback. Following the workshop, the research team will finalise the policy document, taking into account the feedback received.

The second day of the workshop will be devoted to the presentation and discussion of several academic papers written by members of the research team, which will ultimately be published in a collected volume. These papers provide a more detailed analysis of broader problems that animal welfare organizations face in their work.

Participants:

- **Nicolas Delon** (New College of Florida)
- **Sue Donaldson** (Queen's University, APPLE)
- [Valéry Giroux](#) (CRÉ et GRÉEA)
- [François Jaquet](#) (CRÉ et GRÉEA)
- [Will Kymlicka](#) (Queen's University, APPLE)
- **Agnes Tam** (Doctorante, Queen's University)
- [Angela Martin](#) (Université de Fribourg)
- [Angie Pepper](#) (University of Birmingham)
- [Kristin Voigt](#) (McGill University, CRÉ et GRÉEA)

With the precious logistical and scientific help of :

- **Hosanna Galea** (Étudiante, McGill University)
- **Frédéric Côté-Boudreau** (Doctorant, Queen's University)

Thursday March 14th – Policy document

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| 9:00 – 9:30 am | Breakfast and informal welcoming of the participants |
| 9:30 – 9:40 am | General presentation of the project |
| 9:40 – 9:50 am | General ethical framework |
| 9:50 – 11:40 am | Overarching and ‘meta’ issues |
| | 9:50 – 10:10 am: Shaping norms around our relationships with animals |
| | 10:10 – 10:55 am: Position on the exploitation of farmed animals and on animal exploitation more generally |
| | 10:55 – 11:40 am: The value of animal life |
| 11:40 – 11:45 am | Break |
| 11:45 am – 1:00 pm | Internal structure and decision-making |
| | 11:45 am – 12:30 pm: Relationship between departments and respective budgets |
| | 12:30 – 12:45 pm: Decision about controversial issues |
| | 12:45 – 1:00 pm: Ethical commitments among staff |
| 1:00 – 2:00 pm | Lunch |
| 2:00 – 2:15 pm | Relationship with the general public, the donors, the industry and the government, and Inspections |
| 2:15 – 3:45 pm | Shelter operations |
| | 2:15 – 3:00 pm : Plant-based food for shelter animals |
| | 3:00 – 3:45 pm : The killing of animals |
| 3:45 – 4:00 pm | Break |
| 4:00 – 4:15 pm | Animals not living on SPCA premises |
| 4:15 – 5:00 pm | Issues for staff welfare |
| 5:00 – 6:00 pm | General discussion |

Friday March 15th – Academic papers

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| 9:00 – 9:30 am | Breakfast |
| 9:30 – 10:30 am | François Jaquet – “Antispeciesism in an Awfully Speciesist World” |
| 10:30 am – 11:30 pm | Agnes Tam and Will Kymlicka – “The Role of Social Norms in Applied Ethics : A Case Study from Vegan Advocacy” |
| 11:30 am – 12:30 pm | Angela Martin – “Decision-making under non-ideal circumstances: avoiding pitfalls and injustices” |
| 12:30 – 1:30 pm | Lunch |
| 1:30 – 2:30 pm | Nicolas Delon – “Uncertainty and the harm of death: philosophy is not policy” |
| 2:30 – 3:30 pm | Angie Pepper – “Caring in Non-Ideal Conditions: Animal Rescue Organisations and Morally Excusable Killing” |
| 3:30 – 4:30 pm | Sue Donaldson & Will Kymlicka – “Transformative Animal Protection” |
| 4:30 – 5:30 pm | General discussion |