

Searching for the Animal of Animal Ethics

IX Annual Swedish Symposium on Biomedicine, Ethics and Society,
11-12 June 2007



Sex with animals – An interscandinavian comparative study

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Abstract

Recently, both the Danish Animal Ethics Council and the Swedish Animal Welfare Agency published reports on humans' sexual relations with animals. Both reports were made on requests from the ministries in charge of animal welfare legislation and discuss the need for a complete ban of the sexual practises. The animal welfare legislations in Denmark and Sweden are today similar on this matter; yet, despite having access to the same information these two advisory bodies reached different conclusions. The Danish Animal Ethics Council found that the current animal welfare legislation gives sufficient protection for the animals and drew attention to the tradition to respect sexual minorities as long as their practises cause no harm. In contrast, the Swedish Animal Welfare Agency concluded that the legislation does not offer animals sufficient protection and that a total ban is necessary.

A closer look at the two reports reveals that very different ethical values underlies the arguments in these three main areas: 1) Animal welfare, e.g. potential positive experiences; 2) Animal integrity, e.g. the question of dignity; and 3) Other concerns, e.g. the interests of sexual minorities and the society in general. Taking as an example the use of animals in pornography, these differences will be presented. Furthermore we will argue that a strict focus on animal welfare does not cover all ethical concerns, but that widening the scope may raise fundamental questions about what animals are. Finally we will discuss whether there is a danger that appeals to "integrity" are actually moralism in disguise.