

Searching for the Animal of Animal Ethics

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Handle with care – making animal experimentalists

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Abstract

This paper deals with some questions that arose during a three week course in laboratory animal science. During this course, participants were taught to handle laboratory animals, both in theory and in practice. Participants are supposed to get to know about the animals in question – mainly rodents – including hands on experiences. In order to give the knowledge necessary for future independent work with animal experimentation, students are fostered to *handle with care*. In this paper I will analyse this course and focus on two main aspects of the making of animal experimentalists: habituation and holism, or, a “feeling for the organism” (cf Keller, 1983). The paper builds on field notes from this course as well as interviews with students and teachers. The case study is included in our ongoing study called *Dilemmas with transgenic animals*, in which notions of culture and nature, risk and safety, innovation and organism, science and technology, are investigated in the scientific production and use of transgenic animals. Transgenic animals provide an arena for an intense “traffic in meaning” (Franklin, 1998), and the practice contains a number of black boxes in need to be unpacked, concerning the scientific knowledge production, ethical decisions and interactions between laboratory humans and animals: How are transgenic dilemmas handled? The question is informed by a broader interest in how to understand the relation between nature and culture, humans and other animals in contemporary techno-scientific culture.