

Searching for the Animal of Animal Ethics

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In the name of science? How members of animal ethics committees talk about ethics.

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Abstract

What becomes an ethical issue in animal ethics committees? And what does not become an ethical issue in the same context?

There are seven animal ethics committees in Sweden. Each committee consists of six experts and six laypersons. In interviews with members different views on what “ethics” really mean have become articulated. For one member the difficult ethical dilemma of animal experimentation is the lack of enriched cages for mice. For another the ethical problem lies in regulations restraining research. A third member talks about animals’ right to not be used for human interests.

These different views on “ethics” intersect once a month in the animal ethics committees. There is no consensus on what the ethical problem, that the members should be discussing, is. Therefore personal views - and hierarchies among the committee members - on what “ethics” means, and how it should be used, characterize the meetings. In this paper I intend to discuss how “ethics” become situated (cf. Benhabib 1992) and what implication that might have on the committees decisions.

This case study is included in an ongoing study, *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.