



# **Ethics and Animals: An Introduction**

## **Application to the Animal & Veterinary Sciences**

Purdue University is an equal access/equal opportunity/affirmative action university.  
If you have trouble accessing this document because of a disability, please contact PVM Web Communications at [vetwebteam@purdue.edu](mailto:vetwebteam@purdue.edu)

# What this lecture will do:

- Describe some ways science and ethics differ
- Identify the roles of science and ethics in contentious issues in animal agriculture
- Illustrate how many issues involve both scientific and ethical questions

# Why should animal scientists and veterinarians study ethics?

- Traditionally, animal scientists and veterinarians are not taught to consider ethics
- But science cannot answer all of the questions people raise about animal agriculture
- So we need both science and ethics to resolve issues challenging animal agriculture

# Describing how science & ethics differ

Purdue University is an equal access/equal opportunity/affirmative action university.  
If you have trouble accessing this document because of a disability, please contact PVM Web Communications at [vetwebteam@purdue.edu](mailto:vetwebteam@purdue.edu)

# What issues come to mind when you think about animal use?



Are these "ethical" issues?

# What is ethics?

- A set of norms used in everyday social interaction and written into legal or professional codes of practice, religious texts, folk tales, literature and philosophy

E.g., it's unethical to murder, steal, commit adultery, etc.

- The rules you live by when no one else is watching!

# What is ethics?

- The ideals, values or standards that people use to determine their actions towards others
- It's what we use to judge the advisability and justifiability of what we do
- Ethics are the criteria we use to determine responsibility and justice

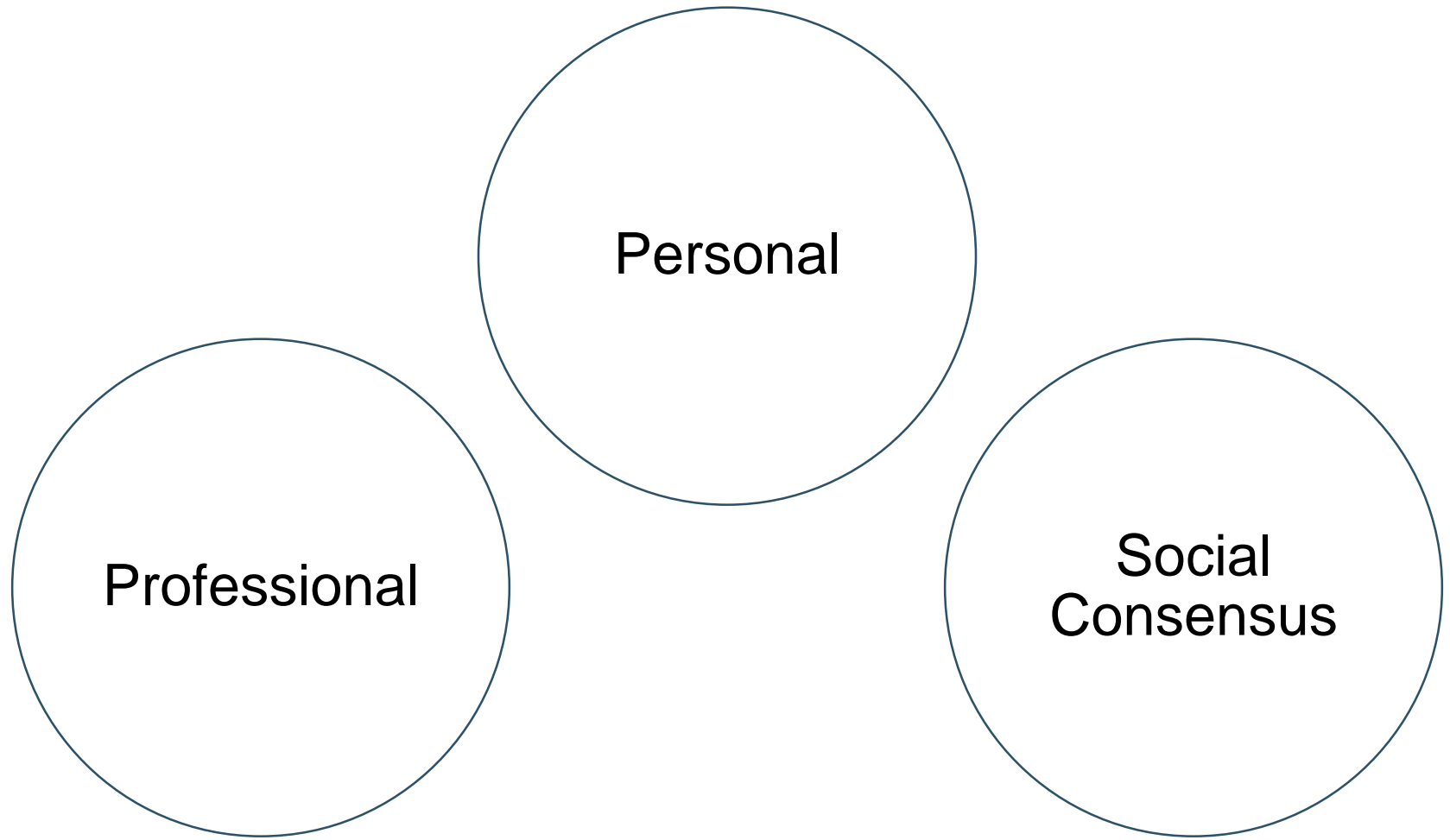
**Bioethics:** has to do with how we treat animals and the environment

# Ethical Dimensions in Animal Science and Veterinary Medicine

- **Personal ethics**
  - Decision to eat meat
  - Allowing pets into the house
- **Professional ethics**
  - ASAS statement of ethics
  - AVMA oath
  - Ethical requirements for animal research
- **Social consensus ethics**
  - Social accountability and social responsibility
  - Freedom to operate (without impairing rights of others)



# Ethical Dimensions



Purdue University is an equal access/equal opportunity/affirmative action university.  
If you have trouble accessing this document because of a disability, please contact PVM Web Communications at [vetwebteam@purdue.edu](mailto:vetwebteam@purdue.edu)

How we produce our food raises many (ethical) issues that cause different and sometimes strong personal reactions from different people.

“It can be viewed as conflicting with the traditions and values of certain social groups.”

» *From Paul Thompson, Michigan State University*



# Examples

- Ethical questions about animals:
  - Permissibility of horse slaughter
  - Use of animals in research
  - Use of animals in entertainment
  - Confinement housing of livestock
  - Procedures used to alter appearance of companion animals
  - Ban on antibiotics for animals on organic farms
  - Humaneness of slaughter techniques for livestock
  - Others?

# Issues? Or ethical issues?

- What distinguishes ethical issues from issues in general?
  - E.g., political, economic, aesthetic, or managerial issues
- This question may be resolved by first considering what an ethical issue is

# An ethical issue is...

- When a value judgment must be made about whether an action is:
  - good / bad,
  - right / wrong
  - worthy / unworthy
- When an issue can be viewed with regard to impact on others
  - E.g., how we treat animals matters to them

# What is science?

- Science is the human endeavor associated with gaining an understanding and explanation of the universe, its components, functions, and processes contained within
- A ‘scientific fact’ is consensus among scientists within a discipline about “what is”

# What are the roles of science and ethics in contentious issues in animal agriculture?

Purdue University is an equal access/equal opportunity/affirmative action university.  
If you have trouble accessing this document because of a disability, please contact PVM Web Communications at [vetwebteam@purdue.edu](mailto:vetwebteam@purdue.edu)

*“Science alone should be the basis of dealing with animal agriculture.”*

- What exactly does this mean?
- Does this mean that scientists should “write the rules?”
- Why “science alone?”
- Who defines science?



# Science and Ethics

- Science deals with “what is”
  - Dairy cows can produce more than 100 lbs milk per day.
- Ethics deals with “what ought to be”
  - Are there welfare concerns if a dairy cow produces 100 lbs of milk per day?

# Science and Ethics

Question:

***When do science and ethics overlap?***

Answer:

***They always overlap!***

Purdue University is an equal access/equal opportunity/affirmative action university.  
If you have trouble accessing this document because of a disability, please contact PVM Web Communications at [vetwebteam@purdue.edu](mailto:vetwebteam@purdue.edu)

# Isn't science "value-free"?

- No, it is not!
  - Science does not operate in an ethical vacuum, because both science and scientists are influenced by and in turn, influence ethics
- Science is never absolutely objective or completely value free
  - E.g., what research topic is chosen, what methods and subjects (human or non-human) are used, what measures/procedures are utilized are all influenced by people's values

“*Science* alone should be the basis of dealing with animal agriculture.”

- Science is
  - **A synonym for objectivity**
  - Data driven, hypothesis testing (*By this definition Darwin and Einstein were not scientists!*)
  - Consensus opinion of those knowledgeable about the subject matter
  - Simplification, public knowledge, common knowledge, etc.
  - **Human endeavor** associated with gaining a rational understanding of all components that of the universe

# Ethics and science

- Animal welfare is not just about science
  - What is acceptable quality life for animals?
- What science can do
  - Gauge risks
  - What are the effects of system X on animals?
- What science cannot do
  - Decide what level of “risk” is acceptable
  - How should we be treating animals?
  - What is acceptable quality life for animals?”



Swanson, J.C., & Mench, J.A. (2000) Animal welfare: Consumer viewpoints In 2000 Poultry Symposium and Egg Processing Workshop, University of California, Davis.

# How ethics and science are similar

- In both science and philosophy, the objective is the same--the search for truth
- The subject matter is different but the methods used by scientists and philosophers have similarities
- Science = data, evidence, facts, and figures. Is thought of as being objective, unbiased. Is science value neutral?

Example – Science might describe a pen as:

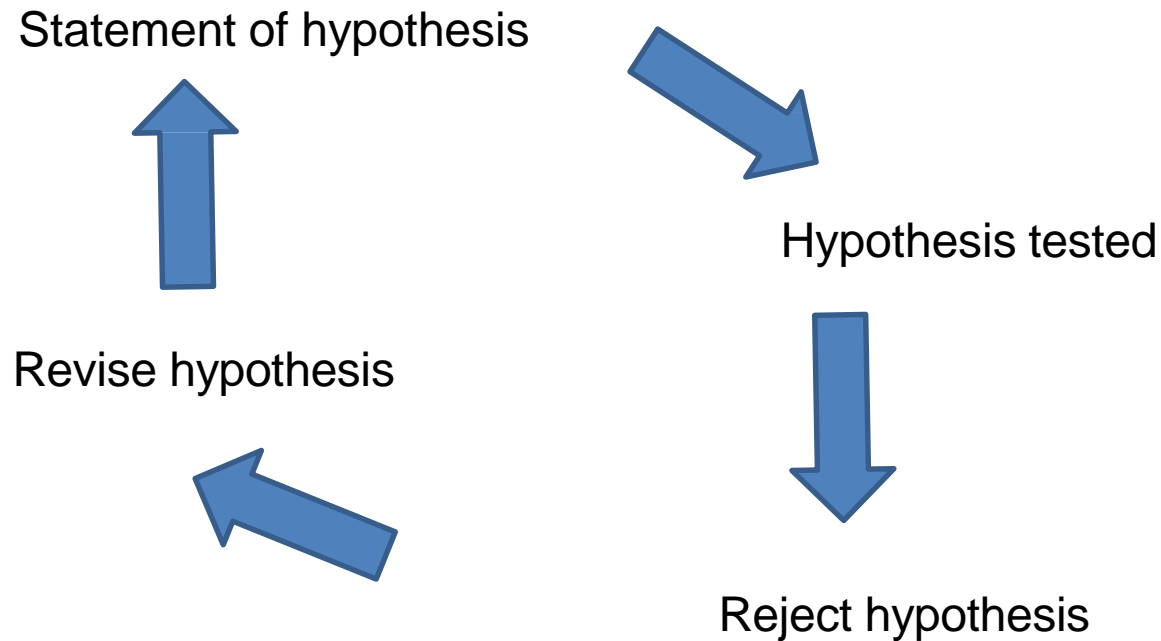
- An instrument for writing
- Length of 14 cm.
- Color
- Components – cap, body, point, ink, mostly of plastic
  
- No amount of personal bias can make it a different material or longer, etc.

# Ethics

- Philosophy = reason, rationale, concepts, arguments. Is thought of as being subjective.
- Animals have rights
- Animals do not have rights, we have obligations to them

So, each way of knowing and describing is true – but one version by itself is incomplete.

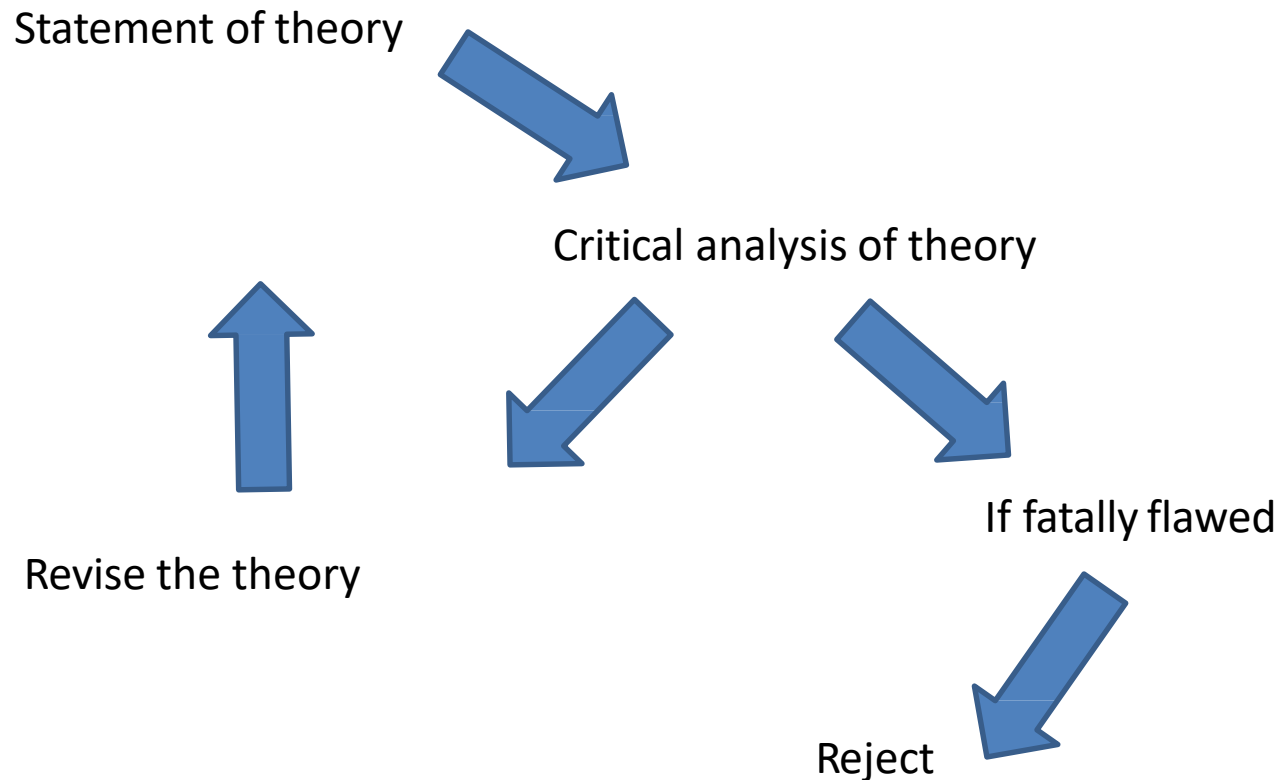
# The scientific method (searching for truth)



Purdue University is an equal access/equal opportunity/affirmative action university.  
If you have trouble accessing this document because of a disability, please contact PVM Web Communications at [vetwebteam@purdue.edu](mailto:vetwebteam@purdue.edu)



# Philosophers, in their search for the truth, use a method that is similar in many respects to scientific methods



Purdue University is an equal access/equal opportunity/affirmative action university.  
If you have trouble accessing this document because of a disability, please contact PVM Web Communications at [vetwebteam@purdue.edu](mailto:vetwebteam@purdue.edu)

# Cases that illustrate the interaction between ethics and science

Purdue University is an equal access/equal opportunity/affirmative action university.  
If you have trouble accessing this document because of a disability, please contact PVM Web Communications at [vetwebteam@purdue.edu](mailto:vetwebteam@purdue.edu)

# Science and ethics: hunting of Ossabaw Island pigs

- Permit hunting of pigs on Ossabaw Island that have become a “pest” species
- Scientific question
  - What are the effects of Ossabaw Island pigs on the local ecosystems?
- Embedded ethical issues
  - Should wild species be eradicated simply because they become problematic to local farmers/local environment?
  - What takes precedence—the right of animals to “do what they do” or the need to maintain environmental integrity/ecosystem integrity?

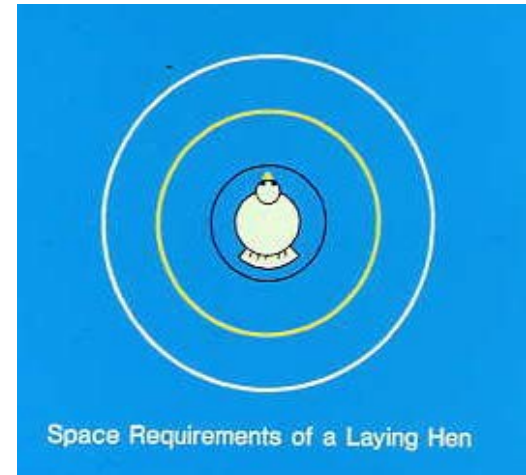
# How should we rear laying hens?



Purdue University is an equal access/equal opportunity/affirmative action university.  
If you have trouble accessing this document because of a disability, please contact PVM Web Communications at [vetwebteam@purdue.edu](mailto:vetwebteam@purdue.edu)

# Considerations for laying hen housing

- How much space does a hen need?
  - To turn around?
  - To stretch her wings?
  - To dust bathe?
  - To engage in social behavior?
  - To engage in courtship and mating?
  - To fly?
  - To roost on a perch?
- Science can determine how much space is needed for a hen to perform a given behavior
- But science cannot determine whether or not a hen “ought to” be able to perform these behaviors.
  - **This is an ETHICAL question!**



Purdue University is an equal access/equal opportunity/affirmative action university.

If you have trouble accessing this document because of a disability, please contact PVM Web Communications at [vetwebteam@purdue.edu](mailto:vetwebteam@purdue.edu)

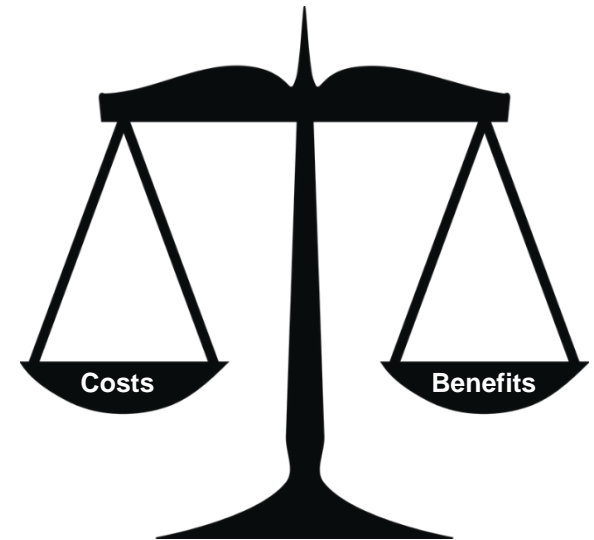
# Animal Agriculture, Ethics and Science

Clearly many of the current challenges of modern animal agriculture (e.g., animal welfare) are *not* just about science

And, we need ***both*** science & ethics to resolve them

# Goals of ethical animal agriculture

- Minimize the costs to:
  - animals
  - environment
  - humans (health, worker safety, rural society, etc.)
- Maximize the benefits to each party



***“We must move **quality of life** of food animals from a **cost** to a **benefit**.”***

Purdue University is an equal access/equal opportunity/affirmative action university.  
If you have trouble accessing this document because of a disability, please contact PVM Web Communications at [vetwebteam@purdue.edu](mailto:vetwebteam@purdue.edu)

# Assignment

- Science is not value-free paper
  - Many people, including leaders in animal and veterinary science believe that all decisions should be based solely on science.
  - Find a paper or popular press article articulating this argument and write a response based on what we have discussed





Funded by a USDA Challenge Grant  
# 2014-70003-22509

Co-hosted by Purdue University and University of Maryland in collaboration with Michigan State University, University of Alaska, Anchorage and Texas A&M University.

Purdue University is an equal access/equal opportunity/affirmative action university.  
If you have trouble accessing this document because of a disability, please contact PVM Web Communications at [vetwebteam@purdue.edu](mailto:vetwebteam@purdue.edu)