

# Challenge: Ethics Teaching in Animal Science

Prof. Bart Gremmen

Chair Ethics in Life Sciences; Adaptation Physiology Group

Wageningen University



WAGENINGEN **UR**  
For quality of life

# EAAP Ethics & Welfare Working Group

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1. Appointed in 2003 as Ethics Working group it deals with specific scientific and development problems related to ethics applied to animal production.
2. Extended to Welfare Matters in 2008.
3. To co-operate with EAAP Study Commissions and working groups and organize joint meetings with them
4. Example: tomorrow Wednesday 27th, 8.30 – 9.30, Session 28, Discovery session: Ethical aspects of animal breeding (G. Gandini)



# Overview

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- Introduction
- Ethics in Wageningen (Bart Gremmen)
- Ethics in Copenhagen (Trine Dich)
- Discussion

# Introduction

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- In the past decades societal debates on animal production have become more numerous and intense.
- Many of the debated issues have an important ethical component: killing day old male chicks; tail docking; use of antibiotics;
- Sustainability, biodiversity and animal welfare are just a few of the relevant societal values involved
- Policymakers, industry and NGO's attempt to steer animal production in an ethical acceptable direction.



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- In this session we focus on the role animal scientist's play in this process as experts developing and using new knowledge and technology.
  - What is their moral responsibility?
  - Can they be blamed when things go wrong?
  - How can they learn to prepare themselves on their possible contribution and roles?



- Ethics teaching in academic programs is an important key in this process of preparation.
- In some cases professional ethicists have developed ethics courses, which they teach in animal science programs.
- However, often it is not possible to hire professional ethicists,
- Results could also be counterproductive: necessary hands-on experience with *real* and *actual* cases is often lacking.
- In those cases *animal scientists* could try to integrate ethical material in their regular courses.



# Questions in this session

1. Which ethical attitudes animal science students develop during their studies?
2. How do senior researchers function as role models during the education?
3. How are the students engaged: to find and provide case material, and invite stakeholders?
4. How is ethics made practical (ethical tools, web-games)?
5. How are students thought the norms of good scientific practice?
6. How to assure a gradual build-up of ethical competence during the full length of the educational trajectory?



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- In this session we will start with a short introduction of a few examples of the integration of ethics in animal science and veterinary curricula
  - Goal is to bring together best practices, material and tools from all over the world and put them on the EAAP Ethics and Welfare Working Group web-site



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# Animal Sciences

## Wageningen University

### Bachelor

#### Elsbeth Stassen & Bart Gremmen

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- 1th year: Global & Sustainable Animal Production in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (3 x 4 hours, 90 students)
- 2th year: Animal Science and Society (1 week out of 4, 65 students)
- 3th year: Integrated course pig/poultry (4 hours, 55 students)
- 3th year: Health, Welfare, Management (55 students)
- Possibility to write Bachelor thesis on Ethics



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# Aimal Sciences

## Wageningen University

### Master

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- MSc Adaptation Physiology II (cases)
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- Possibility to write Master Thesis



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# Animal Sciences

## Wageningen University

### PhD Programme WASS

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- Possibility to write PhD thesis
- Possibility to write a chapter in PhD thesis
- Ethic course Graduate School WASS (obligatory, 4 days (34 hours)  
(scientific integrity: The Lab (free interactive video on the web)

# Remarks on the courses

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- Students find ethics a difficult topic;
- Students do not like ethical issues: as if they personally were attracted by critical NGO's;
- Students like to discuss and give their opinion (this is often on the same level as a pub discussion)
- Animal Science professors like ethics but they regret their lack of background theory;
- There are a many interesting cases: we could develop them into excellent course material.

