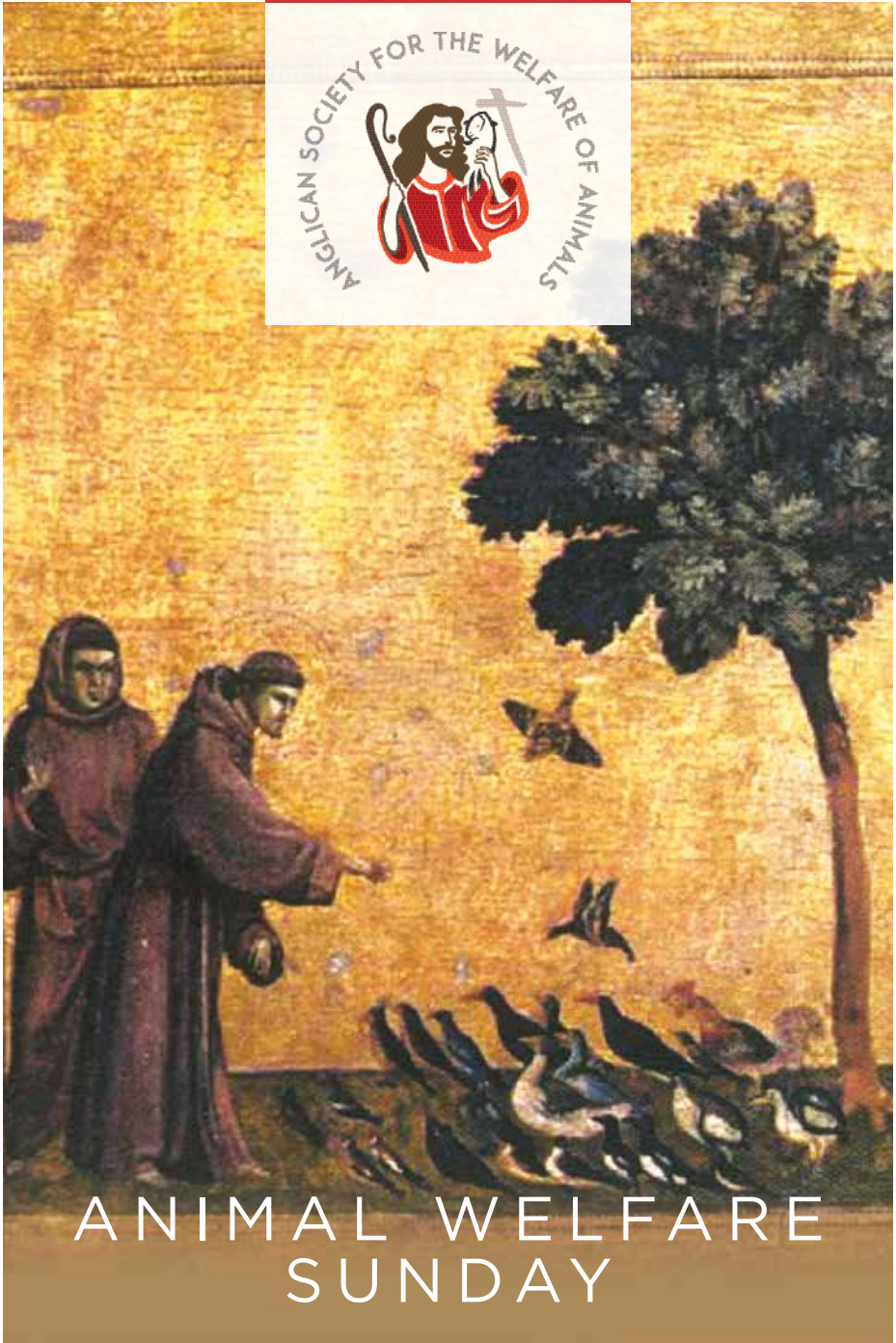


INTRODUCING



ANIMAL WELFARE
SUNDAY

INTRODUCTION

This booklet introduces Animal Welfare Sunday which, at the suggestion of the Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals (ASWA), will be celebrated each October by many parishes within the Church of England. The aim of these special services is to focus on ever-growing Christian concern for the plight of animals in the modern world. We hope you will choose to join those who wish to demonstrate this concern. The designated Sunday has been chosen to fall, each October, within the Octave of the Feast of St Francis of Assisi.

This booklet and accompanying service sheet, which you are welcome to duplicate, have been produced by ASWA to provide all the information necessary to compose and conduct an annual Animal Welfare Service. Inviting worshippers to bring their pets to be blessed is not an essential part of such a service. While many find this popular tradition a valuable tool for outreach, especially among the young, others feel it can give the impression that Christian concern centres only on the welfare of companion animals. The decision on whether or not to include a blessing of pets is a matter for the local church but we hope that, whatever decision is reached, the service will focus on wider issues of animal suffering.

We hope and pray that you will decide to celebrate Animal Welfare Sunday this year and every year for the sake of all God's creation.

"I first spoke out against the suffering man inflicts on animals after seeing live animals being exported from Dover – calves to cruel veal crates, sheep on long harrowing journeys to slaughter. I was frankly amazed and overwhelmed by the response: literally hundreds of letters (more than I had ever received on any other issue), so many beginning 'Thank goodness someone from the Church has spoken out at last...'. I was left in no doubt about the deep concern so many feel about the widespread and often unnecessary suffering inflicted on animals in this technological age and their longing for the Church to actively demonstrate its concern."

**The Rt Revd Richard Llewelin,
Former Bishop at Lambeth
Patron – ASWA**



This age of technological advancement, with its ever-increasing tendency to treat animals as machines, has turned our responsibility to weaker creatures into a major moral Christian issue.

Today, Creation is abused as never before. Here are facts on which you might wish to draw in addressing this issue on Animal Welfare Sunday.

PIGS

Intelligence tests demonstrate that pigs are at least as intelligent as dogs and, in many ways, more intelligent. They can be 'house- trained', or trained to 'sit on command', for instance, at an earlier age than puppies. Yet the majority reared in Britain or imported for bacon, pork and sausages are reared indoors in totally barren environments on metal slats between concrete walls. All evidence indicates that they suffer as much as dogs would in such environments. Having nothing to explore other than each other's bodies, factory-farmed piglets resort to fighting and the weakest animals suffer most.

"Needs of animals are not merely elemental ones such as need for food or water... there is no doubt that depriving animals of some sorts of exploratory behaviour is extremely aversive."

Professor D M Broom
Colleen Macleod Professor of
Animal Welfare
University of Cambridge



Britain's most popular meat now comes from chickens bred to painfully outgrow their own skeletons. These pictures compare the natural growth rate of a normal egg-laying chicken with that of a modern meat (broiler) chicken.

EGG LAYER →

BROILER →

POULTRYMEAT

95% of Britain's chickens spend their short seven-week lives in huge overcrowded sheds living on their own excrement. To cut production costs they have been bred to become the fastest-growing creatures on earth. Many suffer chronic pain because their legs and skeletons can no longer support their heavy bodies. The vast majority of other breeds of poultry - ducks as well as turkeys - are now also reared in factory farms and suffer severe welfare problems.

"On the balance of evidence we must conclude that one quarter of broiler chicken and turkey are in chronic pain for approximately one third of their lives. Given that poultrymeat consumption in the UK exceeds one million tonnes per annum, this must constitute, in both magnitude and severity, the single most severe, systematic example of man's inhumanity to another sentient animal."

Professor John Webster,
Head of Bristol University's Veterinary School

LAYING HENS

More than 60% of Britain's laying hens live in cages in conditions of extreme, unquestionable and scientifically proven cruelty. The typical battery cage, measuring 45 X 50 cm, houses five laying hens for life. The birds are deprived of even a base on which to comfortably rest their feet and all their strong behavioural needs are frustrated. Scientific studies demonstrate that hens do not adapt to such confinement. They struggle to groom, despite lack of dust, to flap their wings, despite lack of space. If released they quickly adopt the full lifestyle of free-living birds. Studies in which hens proved willing to overcome all manner of intimidating obstacles to reach nest boxes for egg-laying have demonstrated the intensity of their need to practise natural behaviour patterns.

"For the person who knows something about animals it is truly heart-rending to watch how a hen tries again and again to crawl beneath her fellow cage-mates, to search there in vain for cover... Their instinctive reluctance to lay eggs amidst the crowd of cage-mates is certainly as great as the one of civilised people to defecate in an analogous situation."

Scientist Konrad Lorenz
winner of the Nobel Prize



ANIMALS REARED OR TRAPPED FOR FUR

Although fur-farming is being phased out in Britain it is estimated that, world wide, more than 30 million animals - mainly mink - are killed on fur farms each year and more than 10 million wild animals are trapped for their skins. The RSPCA believes mink farming is inhumane and cruel. These naturally highly active animals are confined in extremely small wire cages and often resort to neurotic behaviour (one study found that 70% performed stereotypical behaviour) and self mutilation. None of the methods commonly used to kill them is considered by the RSPCA to be humane.

Wild animals killed for fur often suffer even more cruel deaths. Despite efforts by the European Union to ban one of the most notorious methods, the leghold trap, World Trade Organisation agreements make it impossible to prohibit the import of fur from animals trapped in this way.

"Animals caught in the leghold trap suffer intense pain and injuries ranging from torn flesh and muscle to broken limbs and amputated toes. When used in water, leghold traps are usually intended to hold the animals under the surface causing death by drowning. Beavers can take up to thirteen minutes to die."

The RSPCA

ANIMAL EXPERIMENTATION

More than 2.5 million experiments, many of which cause suffering, are conducted on living animals in Britain each year. Approximately 50% are conducted without the use of anaesthetics. Genetic engineering is now the most rapidly expanding area of animal experimentation in Britain. In addition to medical and drug research, many animal experiments are conducted to test new chemical ingredients in the pursuit of non-essentials such as new brands of home, garden and DIY products. Examples of those which have involved animal testing include garden chemicals, moss killers, lavatory cleaners, fabric fresheners, dyes, glues and paint strippers. Because most animal experimentation is commercially driven by competing companies there is a great deal of repetition and many more animals are used in experimentation than is strictly necessary, even in the pursuit of human luxuries.

"The RSPCA is opposed to animal experiments which involve unnecessary repetitions, scientifically trivial ends, techniques to which satisfactory alternatives not using living animals have already been developed, the use of animals in testing inessential substances such as some household products and food additives."

The RSPCA

SERMONS

SOME SUGGESTED THEMES

LOOKING THE OTHER WAY

'A man was on his way from Jerusalem down to Jericho when he fell in with robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went off leaving him half dead. It so happened that a priest was going down by the same road; but when he saw him, he went past on the other side.'

Luke 10: 30-32

'No one must shut his eyes and regard as non-existent the suffering of which he spares himself the sight.'

Albert Schweitzer

The parable of the good Samaritan is among the best-known in the New Testament and you may wish to link it with these words by Albert Schweitzer which emphasise that it is equally important not to 'turn a blind eye to' or 'look the other way from' those ills which we cannot see. In this



The modern cow has been engineered into producing three times the milk of her pre-war predecessor, which results in painful udder and foot problems and a much shorter life.

quotation, Schweitzer focuses on the main cause of human indifference to the massive suffering of animals in the modern world. While in biblical days people lived with their animals, today the vast majority of those used for food and other purposes are hidden from sight. Although most people are aware, at least to some extent, of the suffering involved in factory farming, or animal experimentation for instance, a common reaction when faced with the facts is 'Don't tell me, I don't want to hear about it'. Is this a truly compassionate or Christian reaction? Does the parable of 'the man who looked the other way' need to be applied to the 'unseen', even more than the 'seen' in contemporary situations of both human and animal suffering? Is it enough only to be kind to our pets and our immediate neighbours?

ANIMAL APARTHEID

'I will remember my covenant which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh.'

Genesis 9:15

'Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God.'

Luke 12: 6

In these and many other biblical quotations emphasis is given to the fact that God created ALL creatures, and therefore all require our respect.

Yet, in the modern world many choose to reverence some - companion animals and those which are both wild and beautiful - and feel no responsibility towards others. You may wish to enlarge on the fact that an animal apartheid system prevails in our compassion and concern. In recent decades, even before the advent of genetic engineering, humans have used breeding methods to radically alter the bodies of animals (hugely enlarging the udders of cows, the growth and shape of poultry and pigs for instance) yet scientific research reveals that these creatures still retain their God-given nature and behavioural needs. That which is of God cannot be changed. Christ demonstrated, over and over again, God's special concern for the poorest of the poor and the weakest of the weak. If he sees and cares for every sparrow and every beautiful free-living swan, how much more does he care for and share the suffering of the scrawny imprisoned battery hen. And so should we.

CHRISTIAN CHALLENGE TO UTILITARIANISM

'So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them ... God made wild animals, cattle, and all reptiles, each according to its kind; and he saw that it was good.'

Genesis 1

It is a popular view, not least among Christians, that animals exist for the

benefit of humankind and that their value is consequently dependent upon their 'usefulness' to society. The Genesis story of Creation, however, rejects this utilitarian approach and affirms the value of God's creatures in their own right, quite independent of the human species. When God brought them into existence, he 'saw that it was good'.

If we as Christians embrace this outlook, we will find ourselves asking some searching questions about the way we 'use' (or abuse) animals by some of the widespread practises described in this booklet. Are we entitled to condemn wild animals to cruel deaths so that we can enjoy the luxury of their fur; pigs and poultry to lives of stark misery in factory farms so that we can eat excessive quantities of their flesh; laboratory animals to painful experimentation in order to indulge ourselves in yet another hair spray or paint-stripper? Are we confusing animals with commodities and valuing them simply for their 'usefulness'?

In his book *How to Rescue the Earth Without Worshipping Nature*, Tony Campolo, the well known evangelical leader and speaker, reflects on the conditions endured by factory farmed chickens: 'When God creates, He creates for 'good' (Genesis 1). God instils a potential for a 'good life' in all His creatures and these birds never realise that potential. There is reason to believe that when God creates He creates creatures whose satisfactions and sufferings, become His own. I believe that the sufferings of these chickens are sufferings He feels.'

CHRISTIAN ACTION

These are some of the many practical and effective ways in which Christians can demonstrate their compassion for other living creatures.

FOOD SHOPPING CHOICES

Christians should give attentive consideration to how animals were reared in making their food purchases. The labels “organic” and “free-range” indicate more humane rearing systems. By supporting such products shoppers can help to move agriculture towards more humane and extensive systems. Nutritionists recommend the consumption of less animal products and more plant-based foods so “pay more, eat less” is a good maxim for both spiritual and physical health in relation to animal products. Alternatively, an increasing number of people are choosing the vegetarian option. Vegetarian diets have been found to be healthier and less expensive than the average British diet.

OTHER SHOPPING CHOICES

An increasing number of beauty and other products now carry the label “Not tested on animals”. Again, concerned Christians can seek out and choose such products.

THE POWER OF THE PEN

MPs and members of the media pay a great deal of attention to letters received from members of the public. This is one of the few ways in which they can assess the degree and depth of public concern about an issue. Christians who take the trouble to write, email etc., particularly on topical animal issues, are performing a valuable service for voiceless animals.

Pet choices

It has been suggested that for every puppy bred, one dog which cannot be homed will have to be destroyed. Christians seeking pets might choose to follow the increasingly popular trend of choosing a dog or cat from an animal rescue centre.

Animal welfare organisations

There are many reputable animal welfare organisations which Christians can join and support.



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