



Animal welfare education in Bangladesh: An optimist's view

- Dr. AMAM Zonaed Siddiki

It was only recently at CVASU when we first made a change in the undergraduate veterinary syllabus for incoming DVM students that incorporated a new subject "Animal Welfare" after widespread consultations. Unfortunately it took nearly 17 years to modify our course curriculum into a modern and updated one. Since its establishment in 1995, this institute (formerly CGVC) was very keen to play unique roles in veterinary education and service in Bangladesh and it was well-acclaimed by the concerned communities as evident by its subsequent up-gradation into a full fledged veterinary university (CVASU) in 2006. We believe like its existence as the lone specialized University of its kind, we do have unique role to perform. This is why we have made significant changes in our recent curricula and we hope it will be revised every year according to the need of the new generation vets who gonna be graduating to serve the society not only as a vet but also as a researcher, academician or even a conservationist. I believe other contemporary veterinary degree awarding institutes inside Bangladesh should also take necessary steps to incorporate this subject in their undergrad veterinary syllabus.

Animal welfare education is apparently a new issue for Bangladesh although in my own experience of undergrad DVM class during 1994-1998 we had an opportunity to have some idea about it under the subject "Veterinary jurisprudence"- as much I remember. However we are now facing enormous changes in our everyday life and thus there are growing needs to incorporate new subjects and areas where both human and animal has different common interests to share. We appreciate the role of animals as our companions and we have been using them for a wide range of purposes including food, sources of milk, hide, skin, guide dogs for blind people, lab animals for animal trials for in-vivo experiments, helping disaster victims, tracking drugs or explosives like landmines or even to help space expeditions. We cannot deny the whole range of sufferings that animals may face during any of those cases and we need to play our role as a human being to reduce these sufferings. I do agree that in a developing country like Bangladesh where poverty is a big hindrance to help the animals, still we can develop awareness among our communities starting from schools, colleges and other higher education institutes about the significance of animal welfare and steps to reduce the sufferings of animals around us.

It is really encouraging that WVA has announced this year's World Veterinary Day with a timely theme of Animal Welfare. I believe there is ample opportunities for us especially veterinarians and animal practitioners to work together to promote the issues related to safe animal handling, transportation and ultimately the reduction of their stress as much as possible. I believe the social media like electronic and prints media can play crucial role in promoting animal welfare issues to develop community awareness and school kids can be involved with some practical visits in animal and farm houses to enable them have some idea about the role of animal in our livelihood and how they should care their pets at home. The different types of NGOs who are working with animal owners can be approached with some structured guidelines which they can pursue to be followed by their stakeholders could be an option to promote animal welfare at grass-root level. The farmers and animal owners also can be introduced with different fact sheets which indicate that an healthy animal can provide maximum production compared to an animal raised in stress.

it would not be wise to consider animal welfare as an issue to be dealt by veterinarians only. People from other disciplines can play substantial role as well. The researchers from agricultural extension, sociology or anthropology background may try to find out the existing animal handling practices and how they can be improved for the betterment of the animal with little change in practice. The economists can measure the quantitative benefits that a well managed farms can ensure compared to a

compromised farm with less attention to animal welfare. It would be interesting to see cross-professional strategies to evolve how to reduce the animal sufferings from any particular stressful scenario and undergrad students from different background may be invited to join their thoughts on that topic. I think CVASU can arrange similar competitions to stimulate its students perception to a particular animal welfare issue and how they can be alleviated.

Finally I believe with some little change in our attitude we can ensure better animal health and welfare in Bangladesh. The rules and regulations are already in place and concerned authorities need to ensure that they are implemented perfectly. The most important challenge would be educating people to respect issues related to animal welfare and we need to work together to find out most effective way to promote this subject in our community. The new syllabus at CVASU might be the whistle-blower of animal welfare education in Bangladesh and future innovative initiatives from our stakeholders will certainly help develop public awareness on this crucial subject of modern age. Together we can make the change possible....that is my view as an optimist!



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