**Module 27**

# Religion and Animal Welfare

This lecture was first developed for
**World Animal Protection** by Dr David Main
(University of Bristol) in 2003. It was revised
by **World Animal Protection** scientific
advisors in 2012 using updates provided
by Dr Caroline Hewson.

# This module will teach you

**What some of the main religions teach about animals**

⦂ **How some scholars interpret those teachings**

**What science indicates about the consequences of religious belief for animals**

⦂ **Voting on public policy about animals**

⦂ **Slaughter methods**

# What is religion?

**Any specific system of belief about a supreme being or deity**

**Often involves**

⬚ **Rituals**

⬚ **A holy book**

⬚ **A code of ethics**

⬚ **A set of essential beliefs about the deity, humanity and the rest of the universe, including what happens after death**

**There are 19 major world religions, including**

⬚ **Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Judaism**

# Rituals: cultural and religious sacrifice

**Animals are sacrificed in many parts of the world to seek blessings, for festivals, and to appease gods**

# Hinduism and animals (1)
## (Taylor, 1999: Fox, 2003)

**Henotheistic: multiple deities, one supreme**

**Supreme**

- Shiva
- Vishnu: manifests in many forms (avatars) including animals, e.g. snake

**Other deities, e.g.**

- Ganesh: elephant god. Elephants are worked, but also kept in reserves
- Hanuman: monkey god. Monkeys are sacred animals
- Aditi: mother of all the gods. Association with cow

# Hinduism and animals (2)
## (Taylor, 1999; Fox, 2003)

**Reverence for all life: humans not more significant than other living beings**

**Holy texts**

- **Vedas, e.g. refer to the cow as Devi (goddess)**
- **Bhagavad Gita urges people to protect the cow ⇨ cow is sacred**

**Belief in reincarnation**

- **Not killing animals is important for personal purity and to prevent punishment**

# Hinduism and animals (3)
## (Taylor, 1999; Fox, 2003)

**Animals used to be sacrificed, but influence of Buddhism and Jainism 600−800 years BCE**

- *Ahimsa*: not harming any living being, and
- *Aghnya*: not killing other living creatures
- ⇨ Personal purity: helps to prevent you from suffering in future incarnation
- Hence vegetarianism, but can eat dairy products
- Ideals of belief vs. conflicting needs of animals and humans
  Examples of sacred animals

## Examples of sacred animals

- Cows
- Rhesus monkeys

# Sacred animals and Hinduism ①

**Rhesus macaque monkeys in India**

- **~500,000 monkeys**
- **60 per cent live among humans, e.g. ~7,000 in Delhi**
- Pollution, traffic accidents, attack humans

**Long-tailed macaques in Bali and Thailand**

- **Hundreds may gather to be fed at temples (tourism)**
- **Wild monkeys join in**



Credit: iStock.

# Sacred animals and Hinduism 2

**Cows** (Fox, 2003):

- Milk, butter, urine and dung used in religious rites

- Not enough feed for all cattle in India, especially in dry season ⇨ ~120 million cattle starving / chronically under-nourished; road traffic accidents; poor care in shelters

- Slaughter illegal in most states so cattle are transported long distances by road for slaughter

# Buddhism and animals

**Branches**

- **Theravada**

- **Mahayana: includes Zen and Tibetan Buddhism**

**Humans not more significant than other living beings**

- **Compassion for all life ⇨ holiness – *ahimsa***

- **Eating meat is forbidden**

**Belief in reincarnation**

# Judaism, Islam and Christianity

**Monotheistic**

⸬ **Judaism** – **Torah; branches include Orthodox and Conservative**

⸬ **Christianity** – **Bible; branches include Catholicism, Orthodox, Protestantism**

⸬ **Islam** – **Qur'an; branches include Shia, Sunni, Ismaeli**

# Judaism and animals

**In the Torah**

- **Christianity** – **Bible; branches include Catholicism, Orthodox, Protestantism**

- **Cruelty to animals is prohibited**

- **Hunting for sport is forbidden**

- Humans are created in God's image

- Responsibility to be kind to animals and show compassion requires us not to kill them (Fuchs, 2003)

                                        vs

- vs.Human life has more value than animal life and any evidence of harm to animals must be evaluated against whether the alternatives would still meet human needs (Solomon, 2003)

# Judaism and animal slaughter ①

**Torah ⇨ guidelines on eating animals**

⬚ **Only certain parts of certain animals**

⬚ **Animal must be healthy and without prior injury**

⬚ **Method of restraint not specified, and humane handling required**

⬚ **Method of slaughter = *shechita* (*shehitah*):**

⬚ Specially trained Jewish slaughterman called a *shochet,* who is trained in laws of shechita and anatomy and pathology; apprentices with experienced shochet

⬚ Uses single stroke from a very sharp, smooth instrument called a *chalaf* ⇨ must sever trachea, oesophagus, carotid arteries and jugular veins, but not tear the tissues

# Judaism and animal slaughter ②

**Shechita (shehitah) (continued):**

- Shochet must inspect to confirm killing has been done correctly (e.g. animal allowed to bleed out) and that the animal did not suffer from any abnormality that would render it non-kosher

- Stunning before the cut is not permitted

- Produces kosher meat

# Christianity and animals
## (Taylor, 1999; Linzey, 2003)

**Bible**

- **Humans created in God's image**
  - Therefore human life has more value than animal life
  - Humans are rational but animals cannot reason therefore humans can use animals
  - Must treat animals kindly
  - God's ultimate will is for peace and, therefore, not harming (or eating) animals. However, the world is not yet perfect, and part of that means that we may use and eat animals, although it is hard to justify that now (Linzey, 2003)

**Diet: self-purification**

- **Abstaining from red meat or animal products is required on certain days (e.g. during Lent; Orthodox monks)**
- **Some Christian communities are vegetarian (e.g. Benedictines)**

# Islam and animals
## (Forward & Alam, 2003; Masri, 2007)

**Humans are different from animals because we can make moral judgements ⇨ moral obligation towards animals**

**Can use animals for food, clothing and transport, but must treat kindly**

**Qu'ran, sharia law and hadith (tradition)**
- *Halal* (permissible) vs. *haram* (harmful)

**Many guidelines about humane treatment of animals, e.g.**
- **Not killing for sport**
- **Giving pack animals adequate rest and food**
- **The keeping of some animals is prohibited, e.g. dogs**
- **Humane slaughter**

# Islam and animal slaughter ①

**The slaughterer must**

- Be a sane adult Muslim

- Say the name of God before making the cut

- Kill by cutting throat with single, continuous back-and-forth motion of sharp knife that will not tear the wound

- Sever at least three of: trachea, oesophagus, each carotid artery, jugular vein

- Not sharpen the knife in the animal's presence

# Islam and animal slaughter ② 2

**Animals must**

- Be well treated before being killed

- Not see other animals being killed

- Not be in an uncomfortable position

- Be allowed to bleed out

# Halal and shechita slaughter

**Death by exsanguination, like secular methods**

**Best practice when developed: very clear and detailed guidelines**

**Zoonotic disease transmission**

# Summary so far

**What some of the main religions teach about animals**

⁘ **How some scholars interpret those teachings**

**Next: What research indicates about the relationship between religious belief and animal welfare**

⁘ **Voting on public policy about animals**

⁘ **Slaughter methods**

# Religion and voting on public policy
## (Videras, 2006)

**Florida, USA: 2002 vote on whether to ban gestation crates for sows**

**Census data ⇨ religious affiliation**

**Religion accounted for 8 per cent of the variation in data**

- **Catholics more likely to support the ban than other Christians or Jews**

- **Not clear if that was due to a direct association with religious belief or compounded by other factors, e.g. political persuasion, economic factors**

# Religious slaughter

**Religious slaughter was 'best practice' when introduced**

**Of concern today if animals are not stunned first = pain, fear, distress**

- From restraint?

- From cut?

- Because conscious while haemorrhaging
  – can take too long to become unconscious?

- Because blood aspirates into trachea and lungs?

# Religious slaughter research ①

**Restraint causes distress** (Grandin, 2010)**?**

⊞ **Yes, in veal calves, if rotated** (Lambooij et al., 2012)

**Pain from cut?**

⊞ **Not significant if knife is long and skin does not close over the knife during the cut** (Grandin, 2010)

⊞ **Guidelines very clear re knife being sharp and smooth**

⊞ **EEG in veal calves suggests cut is very painful in conscious animals** (Lambooij et al., 2012):

⊞ Average 80 seconds to achieve unconsciousness

# Religious slaughter research ② 2

**Too long to lose consciousness**
**(Gregory et al., 2008, 2010; Grandin, 2010)?**

- **Anecdotal: 94 per cent lose consciousness within 17 seconds – sheep sooner than cattle**

- Halal slaughter, Belgium: 174 cattle

- Median time to final collapse: 11 seconds

- ~14 per cent (N = 25) collapsed and then stood up again – drifting in and out of consciousness

- ~8 per cent (N = 14) failed to collapse within 60 seconds: associated with false aneurysm in cephalic ends of severed carotid arteries ⇨ protracted perfusion of brain

# Religious slaughter research ③

**Cutting the neck (halal, shechita, secular)**
**(Gregory et al., 2010, 2012)**

⬡ **False aneurysms in cephalic ends of severed carotid arteries**

⬡ **Develop within 7 to 21 seconds of the cut (in stunned cattle too)**

⬡ **⇨ Protracted perfusion of brain in ~5–14 per cent of animals, e.g. more than 60 seconds to lose consciousness**

⬡ **Minimise by making cut at C1, not traditional C2– C5**

# Religious slaughter research ④

**Pain because blood aspirated** (Gregory et al., 2009, 2012)**?**

- **Blood flows onto glottis and enters trachea and alveoli**

- **Cut traditionally severs recurrent laryngeal nerve and vagus nerve so animal cannot feel blood or cough in response**

- Glottal sensations could be transmitted by cranial laryngeal nerve (level of C2)

# Religious slaughter research ⑤

**Study of halal, shechita and secular slaughter** (Gregory et al., 2009)

- Religious slaughter: time to collapse (losing consciousness) averaged 16–33 seconds (range 6–180 seconds)
- Blood in trachea and bronchi (30–80 per cent), all methods
- Red foam in alveoli: 10/123 shechita (8 per cent); 19/124 halal (15 per cent); 0/109 secular (0 per cent)

**In religious slaughter, some animals experience irritation of trachea / lungs but are unable to cough because the vagus nerve has been cut**

# Religious slaughter and stunning

**Permitted by some authorities at or immediately after the cut**

**However, electrical stunning may cause more pain and distress?**

- **C.f. electroconvulsive therapy in people** **(Zivotofsky & Strous, 2012)**

**Importance of auditing** **(Grandin, 2010)**, **e.g.**

- **Percentage vocalising during restraint**
- **Time to collapse**
- **Time to final loss of consciousness**

# Conclusions

**Religious practices and attitudes have both positive and negative effects on animal welfare**

⠿ **E.g. some species have a sacred status in major religions, but this does not automatically imply better welfare**

**Awareness of animal welfare is increasing in religious communities**

⠿ **Scientific research can clarify issues of concern about the animal's experience**

# Feedback:
# Please let us know what you think

- How have you used this module?

- What did you like about it?

- What did you not like?

- Do you have any tips to share?

Please take part in our 10 minute survey here:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/BKP3D6H

Your feedback will help other teachers like you

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