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Religion and the Care, Treatment, and Rights of Animals

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Foreword

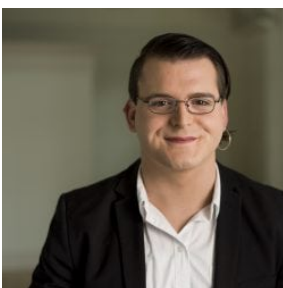
Hello, and thank you for reading.

Religion, and the ways someone's religion influences their needs and decisions, is always changing. This is something those of us who study religion and work in religious life come to understand more and more every day. Particularly in the United States, where the history of immigration, cultural interchange, and violence have created a complicated religious landscape, it is very difficult to predict in what way religion will intersect with the work of something like veterinary medicine. It could rarely come up—it could come up every day.

This resource, in its most recent version, will hopefully help you think about how best to anticipate the challenges that working with clients of different religions might present. In your training as a practitioner of veterinary medicine, you already have many of the tools for navigating these challenges: communication, being a supportive presence through decision-making, connecting with community partners, creating policies for your practice that meet the needs of your clientele, etc. The first section of this resource, which discusses existing research around religion and culture among veterinary clients, helps connect common challenges in working with clients and practice management with the skills you already have. Though not peer-reviewed itself, this section includes references and suggested further reading from contemporary writers about religion, culture, and healthcare.

The remaining bulk of the resource includes local and global demographics for the most common religious movements in the United States, and a variety of perspectives related to animal care from members of each tradition. Some of these perspectives might seem contradictory—this illustrates how much and how potent intra-religious diversity might be even in a tradition that seems to have specific laws regarding animals. These perspectives relate to a few topics: euthanasia, neutering, the theological role of animals (“Do they have souls?” “Do they go to heaven?”), and some approaches in a tradition to grief and animal loss. Having exposure to the ways some members of a tradition approach animal life and medical decision-making is no substitute for building relationships with local community members—but it can help begin that process and facilitate trust building more rapidly.

I hope this resource helps continue your thinking about how best to serve the clients in the community where you practice medicine. As always, feel free to reach out to myself or any of the contacts listed throughout the resource to further this conversation and think collaboratively about the best way to support our clients and care for the patients they bring to us.



Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Walker Bristol". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'W' and 'B'.

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Working with Clients of Different Religions and Cultures

Healthcare providers of any kind working in an environment with clients of different religious and cultural backgrounds are faced with a particular challenge: there may never be an easy answer to navigating competing needs and expectations. What research has illustrated, however, is that several strategies of communication can help in clarifying what those expectations might be, establishing trust, and creating space to find where someone's cultural and religious needs and a provider's recommendations can meet.

Religion in America today is hardly understood to be as distinctly categorized as it once was thought to be, though those categories still can prepare us as providers to be welcoming and collaborative with people of different identities. Increasing movement away from traditional religious institutions and between religious communities has upended researcher's expectations for what religious identity might mean today. As you'll see in the later portraits of different religious traditions and their engagement with animal life, religions individually include various perspectives and interpretations of existing religious laws. That said, familiarizing ourselves with some of those common perspectives and some of the roots of religious understanding can create quick avenues for thoughtful communication across lines of difference.

Working in a multireligious capacity, even in urban centers, will rarely mean working with all or most of the religions discussed in this resource—yet, even traditions that are demographically small may be well represented in a particular locale. In practice, many counties in America will have a significant and established presence of only a few different religious communities within the expected service area of a veterinary practice (Portes 2006). However, while demographics suggest that some of those communities will be Christian (Catholic, Mainline Protestant, or Evangelical Protestant), one or more of them may also be a part of another minority religious tradition that may be well represented among your clientele. For instance, by the 2010 Census, while Catholic and Mainline Protestant congregations were the most represented religious communities in Worcester County, home to the Foster Small Animal Hospital, there are four prominent Theravada Buddhist communities registered in the area whose community members greatly outnumber other minority traditions.

This section will explore some of the challenges that emerge in a veterinary healthcare environment with clients of different religious backgrounds and tools that researchers have suggested in navigating them. First, we will discuss how religion tends to inform different dimensions of veterinary medicine, including ethics, relationship building, and grief. Then, we will propose strategies for responding as providers to those different tensions. Finally, we will propose guidance for reading and using the different perspectives included in the following sections of this resource in relation to these strategies of communication and relationship building.

RELIGION, CULTURE, AND ETHICS

In the Western study of religion, researchers typically describe the relationship between religion and ethics as informing how a community thinks about agency and existence. In some traditions, usually Abrahamic traditions like Christianity, Judaism, or Islam, agency is expected to be understood as referring to the individual person or animal, distinguishing them from other individuals. While this varies for some movements within these traditions, this understanding in relation to other cultural factors informs ethical positions and practices for members of those faiths. In other traditions, the understanding of agency might be more fluid—for instance, the understanding of brahman in Hinduism, a singular reality that underlies all life.

Researchers in comparative religion and philosophy have given some clarity to this relationship. Susan Setta and Sam Shemie, in writing about religious traditions formulating ethical decisions in healthcare, wrote:

Patterns emerge in the comparative study of religious perspectives on death. Western traditions show their rootedness in Judaism in their understanding of the human individual as a finite, singular creation. Although the many branches of Western religions do not agree on precisely how to determine death, they are all able to locate a moment of death in the body. In Eastern traditions personhood is not defined in physical terms. Moreover, the influence of indigenous systems on the religions of Hinduism and Buddhism is significant. From prescribing the location of death, to resisting medical intervention and definitions of death, Hinduism and Buddhism in their many forms, echo these indigenous traditions (Setta 2015).

They go on to explain that, according to their study, Hinduism and Buddhism traditionally believe that the dying process begins with the ending of heart and brain function, rather than ending. In human medicine, this can present practical challenges regarding touching or moving the human body after being declared dead by the medical team. In this way, many standards in Western healthcare operate according to expectations held by Western traditions about the nature of personhood and the event of death.

However, the relationship between a person's religious beliefs and ethical principles is always informed by more than just their tradition. People in different geographic contexts, particularly if they have exposure to religious diversity, may live out their tradition's values differently than expected. For instance, Muslims in countries with different cultural norms profess different perspectives on the traditional pillar of the Islamic faith of *salat*, or praying five times a day. Whereas most Muslims in Muslim-majority countries like Afghanistan and Indonesia report praying five times a day, most Muslims in pluralistic countries like the United States report praying once a day—either by necessity given limited spaces in which to pray or by a different understanding of that pillar of faith.

For this reason, a religion's prescribed ethics even as described by other members of the tradition, give only a part of the picture of that person's ethical system. Understanding how many people in a tradition approach certain questions of ethics can help a provider know what to account for in developing a medical practice—for instance in the Muslim case, having available space for prayer in or near the practice building. However, having sustained and trusting relationships and clear avenues of communication are important in clarifying exactly what a particular client's philosophy and needs might be in relation to a patient's care.

RELIGION, CULTURE, AND RELATIONSHIPS

As intertwined phenomena, religion and culture together inform someone's manner of relating to other people as well as their manner of communicating their needs and desires. A common system of encoding and decoding messages—both verbal and non-verbal—is generally what binds people of shared cultural and religious heritage. In healthcare, being conscious of differences between your own cultural of communication and that of your client or patient is a necessary part of aiding them in decision making and supporting them through a crisis.

All interactions in healthcare are intercultural, not only because people even in the same geographic locations can come from different ethnic and religious backgrounds, but because the culture of veterinary medicine is unique in itself. Healthcare carries its own terminology, assumptions, and norms that are different even between different practices and fields within a subculture. Recognizing the importance of cultural sensitivity and awareness is the first step in building cultural competence, although much like with ethics, by nature a provider can never fully step into a culture that isn't their own. Miscommunication, the result of a rift between different cultures, can cause dissatisfaction and stress for both providers and clients (Ulrey 2001).

Both in learning about a new culture and in finding ways of articulating your own that are accessible, notice regular moments of confusion or difficulty understanding. Finding ways to transmit information and to build relationships that cross over intercultural and interreligious barriers requires noticing the pressure points when details tend to get lost or conflict usually arises. In this way, experience working in a particular cultural or multi-cultural environment naturally helps a thoughtful clinician to grow in their understanding and to connect more readily with new clients of a different cultural or religious experience.

Although not yet studied in veterinary medicine, partnerships between community health centers in human medicine and local religious communities have been found to allow for a more well-rounded support and care and new avenues to conflict resolution (Gee 2005). While sometimes programmatic, these partnerships may even just involve clinicians contacting leaders in a religious community to discuss what particular needs they have. As those relationships deepen, community members come to be able to trust a veterinary practice will be attentive to their needs beyond even their own personal experience.

Community partnerships also allow for avenues into public health interventions that can indirectly benefit a veterinary practice. This might involve visits by clinicians to community sites where they have animal companions for screenings, preventative recommendations, and other modes of risk reduction that might escalate into problems more difficult to treat once brought to the clinic (Levin 2016). For instance, Christian communities may have Blessing of the Pets ceremonies where many community members will bring their companion animals to receive blessings by the minister.

Whereas churches with relationships to medical clinics often pair congregational events with screening or preventative treatment for common diseases, events attracting companion animals might be able to do the same with a developed partnership between a veterinary practice and a faith center.

With respect to individual cross-cultural and interreligious relationships, Marjorie Kagawa-Singer and Leslie Blackhall suggest:

When the physician and patient are from different cultural backgrounds, the physician needs to ask questions that respectfully acknowledge these differences and build the trust necessary for the patient to confide in him or her. Physicians can use knowledge about particular cultural beliefs, values, and practices to respectfully recognize a person's identity and to assess the degree to which an individual patient or family might adhere to their cultural background. One way to begin this dialogue is by evaluating patients' and families' attitudes, beliefs, context, decision making, and environment (ABCDE)...The purpose of this mnemonic is to help avoid the dual pitfalls of cultural stereotyping or ignoring the potential influence of culture. In this way, the risk of miscommunication may be reduced.

Much like other approaches to conflict resolution in veterinarian-client relations, clarity in communications and finding the most accessible ways to explain concepts is both important and an ongoing process. In interreligious communication, a clinician may need more information than usual to be able to find the best way to explain a medical idea. The ABCDE evaluation mentioned here helps clarify a particular person's identity and needs, and place them in relationship with their cultural and religious identities and with the medical needs of a patient. You can learn more about this method by reading the work of Koenig and Gates-Williams (Koenig 1995).

RELIGION, CULTURE, AND GRIEF

Religion and culture are intertwined with how grief is processed, both outwardly and inwardly. As discussed earlier, philosophical beliefs about the nature of life and death greatly influence the meaning of the dying process. Religions encapsulate the practices that facilitate the safe passage of a soul from this plane to another—or, for those traditions without a belief in the afterlife, affirm and cherish the memory of someone lost in the world of the living. Culture similarly creates, or limits, the space in which a person is allowed or encouraged to grieve, and offers tools for undergoing the grief journey.

Some research has suggested that, in America, facets of religion—feelings of interconnectedness and space to express that feeling, community, social rituals that legitimize grief—help people process grief more efficiently and with fewer negative consequences like depression or increased anxiety (Alvarado 1995). This does not necessarily mean people who have a religious belief in an afterlife fear death less than atheists or agnostics, but it implies that religious Americans have access to social resources for support that non-religious Americans may not necessarily have as readily. This is also true in terms of meaning making—an important part of finalizing the grief process. Religious communities and practices incorporate a system by which people might understand the purpose of a loss or come to understand it as a part of life, whereas secular systems might require more work or investment on the part of the grieving person (McIntosh 1993).

In grieving the loss of a pet or animal companion, this all appears to still be true, though especially in terms of validating that such a loss can be as real and important as the loss of a person. Researchers, however, still only know so much about the specifics of what that decision making and grieving process looks like. Anna Chur-Hansen writes,

Although Williams and Mills (2000) have suggested that religious factors may be important in people's responses to the death of their companion animals, the effects of religious belief have not been investigated empirically. There is also the potential for the religious beliefs of clients to be of significance to practising veterinarians. For example, a client's religion may influence decisions about euthanasia, or how the client conceptualizes and deals with grief. The extent to which people apply a religious framework for understanding human death to companion animal death is unknown. Understanding this aspect of grief in bereaved pet owners may assist vets in providing a sensitive service to their clients. It may also provide owners with formats for rituals that assist them in coming to terms with the loss of their pet. It may influence how they choose to dispose of the body of their animal, which again may be of relevance to veterinarians when offering disposal options (Chur-Hansen 2010).

After euthanasia, many practices offer memorial options such as paw presses or cremated ashes (sometimes contracted out to other agencies which handle disposal). Part of the challenge in developing systems that might work for veterinary practices at large to better accompany clients to the process of a dying animal companion is the diversity of religious and cultural experiences across a pluralistic country like America. For this reason, it becomes all the more important to develop an understanding of and build relationships in the particular environment in which a practice is situated, attuned to its specific demographic makeup. This can inform what, for example, disposal and ritual options might be most common and welcomed by clientele.

Although ethical conflicts seem daunting by nature and, as discussed earlier, by the deep roots of different perspectives, compromise between clients and providers is almost always possible. In human medicine, clinical ethicists begin the process of resolving conflict by gathering as much information as possible while also simplifying the particular issue at hand into as clear and nonspecific terms as can be (such as, patient autonomy or maintaining confidentiality). Reframing the conflict both for the provider and for a client can help in the process of exploring alternatives and making sure all sides of the conflict are heard clearly. For some ethical issues, once framed in general terms, providers can look into existing literature or contact the AVMA to understand how other practices have approached issues. Some circumstances—such as those that would present a major public health crisis—present barriers to compromise that may be insurmountable. Otherwise, communication and clarification are reliable measures for confronting problems of ethics that hadn't been previously anticipated (Kahn 2016).

Establishing standards for your veterinary practice can help depersonalize conflicts of ethics and an accessible culture of care for clients (Jevring-Back 2007). For instance, a hospital in a community with a significant number of Buddhist clients may frequently be expected to leave deceased remains untouched for several hours after a euthanasia. Creating policy changes around this need creates a more welcoming environment for such clients—both by ensuring a euthanasia room can be left occupied for an extended period of time without clinical use and by working collaboratively with local community members to determine how long it might be appropriate to leave a body undisturbed. Although religious conflicts may be unfamiliar or seem to be held more deeply than philosophical commitments, the nature of healthcare in a pluralistic society demands seeking collaborative solution by both clients and providers, and demands a give-and-take on all sides. Building an awareness of the cultural and religious needs of clients in a particular community allows a clinician to not only develop practices that fit those particular needs but also to quickly develop relationships of trust.

Clients' grief responses are reliably unpredictable. Many things inform how a person grieves the loss of an animal in their life, including psychological, social, spiritual, and cultural factors. Accompaniment and clear communication through the entire dying process is important no matter the client's cultural location or religious system, though. Given this, Chur-Hansen suggests:

The provision of clear information by the veterinarian and, possible, time to make a decision [regarding euthanasia] is greatly appreciated by pet owners. In addition, when a pet is to be euthanized, it may be helpful for veterinarians to inform clients ahead of time that it is not uncommon to experience considerable distress after the euthanasia of a pet. Veterinarians are also in a position to offer some more positive alternatives to clients' feelings of guilt and their dwelling on the unpleasant aspects of their pet's death. Reassuring a client that they have acted responsibly as an owner, and drawing their attention back to happier memories of their pet, can be genuinely helpful in their grief (Chur-Hansen 2010).

As discussed earlier, even general knowledge of what a client's particular needs might be as they relate to culture and religion can help a provider facilitate a healthy grieving process. Additionally, asking open-ended questions about what a client believes about life after death and encouraging them to have those conversations with faith and ethical leaders in their lives can sustain a meaningful client-provider relationship and encourage a healthy grief process.

The NC State University College of Veterinary Medicine commissioned a study on beliefs about an afterlife from a diverse selection of clients across the United States. They found that a majority of those who believed in a human afterlife also believed in an afterlife for companion animals (roughly 73%). In general, Christian respondents (both Catholic and Protestant) were more diverse than average in their beliefs about animal life after death, with only about 60% affirming they believe pets go to heaven. By comparison, Buddhist and Mormon respondents were more likely than average to believe in an animal afterlife, with 77% and 81% respectively (Royal 2016).

This data itself doesn't necessarily better prepare us to engage with a particular client, but it indicates how important individual conversations and community partnerships are even in helping clients deal with grief after medical decision-making is over. Building understandings of what clientele in a particular community setting tend to believe about an animal afterlife or animal souls may inform support group practices, memorial services, and even blessings or other religious services to have available for end of life cases.

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BUDDHISM

Number in United States: 1,200,000 (U-T San Diego)

Number worldwide: 500,000,000 (Pew)

US Geographic distribution: California, Delaware, and Hawaii

Local contacts: Priya Rakkhit Sraman || Buddhist Chaplain, Tufts University Chaplaincy ||
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Perspectives:

“We string a bead on our rosary of life when we adopt a companion animal from a shelter instead of buying from a breeder or pet store. We string a bead on our rosary of life when we spay or neuter our companion animals to ensure that no additional dogs or cats come into the world while millions are being killed every year because there are no homes for them.”

Norm Phelps, [The Great Compassion: Buddhism and Animal Rights.](#)

<http://www.amazon.com/The-Great-Compassion-Buddhism-Animal/dp/1590560698>

“When one kills with a true bodhichitta intention, with a heart filled with Dharma wisdom and compassion, the act actually becomes one in which it is ‘beneficial to kill.’ ‘This pure motivation behind the altruistic decision to end another sentient being’s suffering – putting them out of their misery by ending their present life while knowing absolutely that one could at that very moment be creating the karmic causes for one to be born in the hell realm – makes such a killing beneficial.’ Rinpoche went on to explain that the vow of non-killing refers to abstaining from killing that is associated with and backed by ignorance and negative attachment. It is that kind of killing that creates negative karma. Only killing with a motivation that is ‘totally pure’ becomes a virtue. Of course, one in such a position must do everything within their capacity to prevent such a compromising decision, to ascertain that there is no alternative treatment or other method at all possible – and even then, the decision is not an easy one.”

Leah Richards, “Euthanasia with a Good Heart,” *Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition.*

<http://fpmt.org/mandala/archives/mandala-issues-for-2004/october/euthanasia-with-a-good-heart/>

“The Buddha was very clear in His teachings against any form of cruelty to any living being. One day the Buddha saw a man preparing to make a animal sacrifice. On being asked why he was going to kill innocent animals, the man replied that it was because it would please the gods. The Buddha then

offered Himself as the sacrifice, saying that if the life of an animal would please the gods then the life of a human being, more valuable, would please the gods even more.

Man's cruelty towards animals is another expression of his uncontrolled greed. Today we destroy animals and deprive them of their natural rights so that we can expend our environments for our convenience. But we are already beginning to pay the price for this selfish and cruel act. Our environment is threatened and if we do not take stern measures for the survival of other creatures, our own existence on this earth may not be guaranteed. It is true that the existence of certain creatures is a threat to human existence. But we never consider that human are the greatest threat to every living being on this earth and in the air whereas the existence of other creatures is a threat only to certain living beings.”

The Venerable K. Sri Dhammananda Maha Thera, “The Buddhist Attitude to Animal Life.”

<https://www.budsas.org/ebud/whatbudbeliev/170.htm>

“The traditional understanding of the First Precept, Do not kill, is not restricted to its literal meaning. Peter Harvey, a Buddhist scholar and ethicist at the University of Sunderland in the UK, points out that, “Each precept has a positive counterpart.”¹

And American Buddhist scholar

at the University of Virginia, and former translator for His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Robert Thurman, tell us that “Not merely not killing, but preserving lives is the first of Buddhism’s commandments.”²

This precept has always been understood by all denominations of Buddhism to apply to all sentient beings. Thich Nhat Hanh, the Vietnamese Zen teacher who is, along with the Dalai Lama, one of the two Buddhist teachers best-known and most-revered in the West, tells us that, “In every country in the world, killing human beings is condemned. The Buddhist precept of non-killing extends even further, to include all living beings.”³

And Nhat Hanh goes on to say,

“I am determined not to kill, not to let others kill, and not to support any act of killing in the world . . .”

Dharma Voices for Animals, “Buddhist Teachings on Animals.”

https://www.humanesociety.org/sites/default/files/archive/assets/pdfs/faith/buddhism_by_dharma_voices_for.pdf

CATHOLICISM

Number in United States: 78,200,000 (Georgetown University)

Number worldwide: 1,200,000,000 (World Christian Database)

US Geographic distribution: Rhode Island, Connecticut, Massachusetts and New Mexico

Local contacts: Lynn Cooper || Catholic Chaplain, Tufts University Chaplaincy ||
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Perspectives:

“God entrusted animals to the stewardship of those whom he created in his own image.¹⁹⁸ Hence it is legitimate to use animals for food and clothing. They may be domesticated to help man in his work and leisure. Medical and scientific experimentation on animals is a morally acceptable practice if it remains within reasonable limits and contributes to caring for or saving human lives.”

Catechism of the Catholic Church, Pt. 3, Sec. 2, Ch.2, Article 7: “The Seventh Commandment.”

http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p3s2c2a7.htm

“For Catholic theology, steeped as it is in scholasticism, animals have no moral status. If we have any duties to them, they are indirect, owing to some human interest involved. Animals are not rational like human beings and therefore cannot possess immortal souls. Even the most hard-boiled scholastic would now probably admit that animals feel some pain but, if so, their pain is not regarded as morally relevant or truly analogous to human pain. In consequence, animals have no rights.... To grant animal rights is to accept that they can be wronged... Animals can be wronged because their Creator’s own creation can be wronged.”

Rev. Andrew Linzey, “The Theos-Rights of Animals.”

http://www.sparelives.org/index.pl/animals_in_christianity

“Since animals are not made in the image and likeness of God and do not have immortal souls, it is acceptable to euthanize an animal humanely. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* doesn’t cipro without prescription say directly say that pets will or will not go to heaven but it does give some guidance. All living things have a soul (it’s what makes a body alive) and when it does, the soul is separated from the body. In man, the soul is immortal so it keeps on living but the soul of an animal, or plant even, is not immortal and simply ceases to exist once the body perishes.”

“Euthanizing and Eternal Life of Pets,” St. Michael Society.

<http://stmichaelsociety.com/2011/07/11/dear-gabby-euthanizing-and-eternal-life-of-pets/>

“We preach that all of human life is sacred, from womb to tomb. Not everyone agrees with that sentence. But I further believe that, since all life comes from God, all of life is sacred. We see each other as individuals because that’s how our limited senses perceive each other. But God sees us all as one. Over the years, the death of an animal was final. There was no belief of an animal’s continued existence. That’s why the pain of the loss of an animal friend was so profound. This was it. There is no future chance of seeing the animal again. However, looking at it today through eyes of love, I believe we will see our pets in eternity. After all, how can we be perfectly happy when an important part of our happiness is missing? Life doesn’t die. Love wouldn’t allow it! Our mind may not be our friend, but God is!”

Fr. Joseph Breighner, “The loss of a pet and the power of love,” *The Catholic Review*.

<http://www.catholicreview.org/article/commentary/father-joseph-breighner/the-loss-of-a-pet-and-the-power-of-love#sthash.wDEwlaCO.dpuf>

“O God, you have done all things wisely; in your goodness you have made us in your image and given us care over other living things. Reach out with your right hand and grant that these animals may serve our needs and that your bounty in the resources of this life may move us to seek more confidently the goal of eternal life. We ask this through Christ our Lord.”

Blessing in the Rite of Blessing of the Animals.

CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF THE LATTER DAY SAINTS (MORMONISM)

Number in United States: 8,150,000 (LDS 2013 April General Conference)

Number worldwide: ~15,300,000 (Mormon Newsroom)

US Geographic distribution: Utah, California, and Idaho

Local contacts: John S. Thompson || LDS Chaplain, Harvard University Chaplains ||
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Perspectives:

“Says one, "I cannot believe in the salvation of beasts." Any man who would tell you that this could not be, would tell you that the revelations are not true. John heard the words of the beasts giving glory to God, and understood them. God who made the beasts could understand every language spoken by them. The four beasts were four of the most noble animals that had filled the measure of their creation, and had been saved from other worlds, because they were perfect: they were like angels in their sphere. We are not told where they came from, and I do not know; but they were seen and heard by John praising and glorifying God.”

Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*.

<http://scriptures.byu.edu/tpjs/STPJS.pdf>

"Are these great weaknesses to be found in the birds of the air, in the fishes of the sea, or in the beasts of the field? No. The animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms abide the law of their Creator; the whole earth and all things pertaining to it, except man, abide the law of their creation.”

Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses* Vol. 9.

<http://jod.mrm.org/9>

“So we see that the Lord intends to save, not only the earth and the heavens, not only man who dwells upon the earth, but all things which he has created. The animals, the fishes of the sea, the fowls of the air, as well as man, are to be recreated, or renewed, through the resurrection, for they too are living souls.”

Joseph Fielding Smith, “Conference Report (1928).”

<https://www.lds.org/ensign/1972/08/the-gospel-and-animals>

HINDUISM

Number in United States: 2,230,000 (ARIS)

Number worldwide: 1,000,000,000 (Pew)

US Geographic distribution: Connecticut, New Jersey, California, and Texas

Local contacts: Swmai Tyagananda || Hindu (Vedanta Society) Chaplain, Harvard University Chaplains || swami_tyagananda@harvard.edu

Perspectives:

“Deer, camel, donkey, monkey, rats, creeping animals, birds and flies - one should consider them like one's own children, and not differentiate between one's children and these creatures.”

Bhagavata Purana 7.14.9.

“Cats are not killed by Hindus. If any cat is killed even accidentally, it is considered as a sin and this impious act can only be compensated and atoned by offering a golden replica of the cat; as an act of penance. List of sacred animals in Hinduism is quite exhaustive...all said and some cow, bull and serpents are generally worshiped by Hindus.”

Dr. Shiv Sharma, [Brilliance of Hinduism](#).

<http://www.amazon.com/Brilliance-Hinduism-Shiv-Sharma/dp/8128800825>

“Animal sacrifice is a part of the major rituals of Hinduism, but the keeping of pets-even by the gods-is a central feature of Hindu life, and cattle are set apart for special treatment. The most advanced Hindu contemplative leaves human community and realizes his unity with all of nature. The doctrinal Hinduism of the Vedas and Upanishads sees scientific work, and the use of animals in science, as a distraction from the higher knowing that people should seek. The use of animals in research is difficult to justify, with the possible exception of medical uses. Popular Hinduism is more tolerant than are the philosophical schools, syncretistic and practical.”

David H. Smith, “Religion and the Use of Animals in Research,” *Ethics and Behavior*.

http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1207/s15327019eb0702_5

“Reach out to friends, family, colleagues and veterinary professionals to talk about your loss. Conducting rituals may help you accept the situation openly. Lay your pet to rest in your backyard, carve a tombstone and write a eulogy, you can also choose to rest him in a pet cemetery or conduct a memorial service for your pet. If there are children in your family, explain it to them patiently and encourage them to

participate in the farewell ceremony. They can sketch a picture of your pet, write a letter, plant a tree at the burial site or throw in the pet's favourite toy while laying him to rest...Our relationship with our pets is of unconditional love and acceptance. ”

Nivedita Kumar, “Coping with the death of a pet,” The Hindu.

<http://www.thehindu.com/features/metroplus/Coping-with-the-death-of-a-pet/article11088037.ec>

HUMANISM

Number in United States: ~50,000 (American Humanist Association); ~9,000,000 atheists (Pew)

Number worldwide: ~5 million (India Humanists); ~980,000,000 unaffiliated (Pew)

US Geographic distribution: Vermont, New Hampshire, and Washington

Local contacts: Walker Bristol || Humanist Chaplain, Tufts University Chaplaincy ||
walker.bristol@tufts.edu

Perspectives:

“Humans are an integral part of nature, the result of unguided evolutionary change. Humanists recognize nature as self-existing. We accept our life as all and enough, distinguishing things as they are from things as we might wish or imagine them to be. We welcome the challenges of the future, and are drawn to and undaunted by the yet to be known.”

“The Humanist Manifesto III,” *The American Humanist Association*.

http://americanhumanist.org/humanism/humanist_manifesto_iii

“To start, we know that animals suffer. If we don’t think souls are necessary to explain consciousness, then we can’t treat all animals like Descartes did—as unfeeling meat-machines that only seem as if they experience. Instead, we know that at some point in the branching tree that connected our simplest ancestors to our most recent primate ones, consciousness developed. We can dispute where that line is, but it’s hard to peg that line lower than the animals we farm and eat.”

Vlad Chituc, “Why Atheists Should Be Vegans,” *Nonprophet Status*.

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/nonprophetstatus/2014/09/09/why-atheists-should-be-vegans/#sthash.xXK7IFDn.dpuf>

“That’s the key: needless suffering...even today populations living in certain climates, such as the Inuit in the arctic, simply can’t survive without hunting and fishing. (Moreover, ethical animal experimentation is a current necessity of our modern survival and thriving, and psychologists tell us that certain house pets are good for our emotional well-being.)”

Fred Edwards, “An Omnivorous Animal Agenda,” *Humanist Network News*.

<http://americanhumanist.org/HNN/details/2011-03-an-omnivorous-animal-agenda>

“So insofar as their rights are derived from their value, they may have many rights (or at least the most important ones). Humanists can argue that cows have the right to graze (rather than be fed a chemical diet) because it's in our best interests to eat such cows (and not the ones pumped full of steroids and what have you). And I can argue that because my happiness depends on chessie's happiness, she has a right to be happy (and therefore will get a new stuffed toy for her birthday). In fact, the more we understand that we live in a complex web of life, that we depend on the ecosystem's stability for our survival, the more favourably we'll consider the other lifeforms in that ecosystem. So humanists may argue that plankton have rights too.”

Peg Tittle, “A Humanist View of Animal Rights,” *Humanist Association of Canada*.

<http://www.pegtitle.com/Articles/A%20Humanist%20View%20of%20Animal%20Rights.pdf>

ISLAM

Number in United States: ~3,300,000 (Pew)

Number worldwide: 1,600,000,000 (Pew)

US Geographic distribution: Illinois, Virginia, New York, and New Jersey

Local contacts: Dr. Celene Ibrahim || Muslim Chaplain, Tufts University Chaplaincy ||
celene.ibrahim@tufts.edu

Perspectives:

“The seven heavens and the earth, and all beings therein, declare His glory: this is not a thing but celebrates His praise; And yet ye understand not how they declare His glory! Verily He is Oft-Forbear, Most Forgiving!”

17:44, *The Holy Quran*.

“Most Muslim scholars agree that the saliva of a dog is ritually impure, and that contact with a dog's saliva requires one to wash seven times...It is to be noted, however, that one of the major Islamic schools of thought (Maliki) indicates that its not a matter of ritual cleanliness, but simply a common-sense method way to prevent the spread of disease. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "Angels do not enter a house wherein there is a dog or an animate picture." (Reported by Bukhari) Many Muslims base the prohibition against keeping a dog in one's home, except for the case of working or service dogs, on these traditions.”

Huda, “Dogs in Islam.”

<http://islam.about.com/od/islamsays/a/Dogs-In-Islam.htm>

“Cutting ear or tail of a dog or castrating it is not permitted without any necessity since this act is a kind of changing Allah's Creation which is forbidden in Sharia...Imams Tabari and Syoothi have reported in their Tafseer from many righteous ancestors that the prohibition of changing Creation of Allah in [The Holy Quran 4:118-119] means castrating them. However, some Muslim scholars permitted such an act if there is any benefit for doing so such as to diminish their sexual desire to protect them from fighting to control females.”

Islamweb Fatwas, “Veterinary treatment of dogs.”

<http://www.islamweb.net/emainpage/index.php?page=showfatwa&Option=FatwaId&Id=83701>

“Abu Hayyan [al-Andalusi] seems to accept that all animals, human or nonhuman, will enter either heaven or hell, and possibly continue to live on there forever. Al-Razi relates that in the opinion of the Mu'tazilis, after compensating nonhuman animals for their suffering in this life, it is possible that God will allow some of them to reside in heaven (R31:26). Al-Tha'labi cites an opinion according to which the dog of the Dwellers of the Cave (18/al-Kahf: 22) and 'Uzayr's ass (2/al-Baqara: 259) will dwell in heaven. Sheep, as indicated in the tradition attributed to the Abu Hurayra, are also said to be among the animals of heaven.”

Sarra Tlili, *Animals in the Qur'an*.

“Muslims do recognize animal rights, and animal rights means that we should not abuse them, torture them, and when we have to use them for meat, we should slaughter them with a sharp knife, mentioning the name of Allah (SWT)...So, Muslims are not vegetarians. However, if someone prefers to eat vegetables, then they are allowed to do so. Allah has given us permission to eat meat of slaughtered animals, but He has not made it obligatory upon us.”

Muzammil Siddiqi, “Fatwas on Vegetarianism.”

<http://www.islamicconcern.com/fatwas.asp>

JUDAISM, ORTHODOX

Number in United States: 529,000 (United Jewish Communities Report)

Number worldwide: ~8,000,000 (Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs)

US Geographic distribution: New York, Maryland, and southern Florida

Local contacts: Rabbi Dr. Naftali Brawer || Executive Director, Tufts Hillel || naftali.brawer@tufts.edu

Perspectives:

“If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying down under its burden, you shall refrain from leaving him with it; you shall rescue it with him.”

Exodus 23:5, *The Hebrew Bible (English Standard Version)*.

“It is a violation of Jewish law to neuter a pet. The Torah prohibits castrating males of any species (Lev. 22:24). Although this law does not apply to neutering female pets, neutering of females is prohibited by general laws against tza'ar ba'alei chayim (causing suffering to animals). Please note that, while the law prohibits you from neutering your pet, it does not prohibit you from owning a pet that is already neutered. If you want a neutered pet, I strongly encourage you to adopt from one of the many reputable shelters, such as Spay and Save (where I adopted a cat), Kitty Cottage (where I adopted two others) or the Delaware Humane Association.”

Tracey R. Rich, “Treatment of Animals.”

<http://www.jewfaq.org/animals.htm>

“The suffering of animals in the service of human needs may not be discounted as morally inconsequential. Surely this higher sensitivity should be applied to areas of questionable human necessity...The Talmud states that the Jewish people are praiseworthy for their desire to serve God beyond the letter of the law. This expression of religious devotion has been applied to many ritual precepts; should we not apply it with equal diligence to precepts that affect other living creatures? Moreover, this directly benefits God's works and improves the world. By engaging in acts of compassion, we become worthy of receiving the blessing of our sages: that God will show mercy to those who are merciful.”

Rabbi David Sears, “Compassion for All Creatures.”

<http://canfeinesharim.org/compassion-for-all-creatures-longer-article/>

“An animal’s natural desire to take care of its young is at its greatest in the few days immediately following birth. We must be sensitive to its feelings, and we must leave the calf, lamb or kid with its parent at this time (Leviticus 22:27)...The commentaries explain that the Torah is instructing us [in Exodus 23:12] to allow our animals to rest and appreciate Shabbos—which does not mean incarcerating them in a pen, but rather allowing them to wander and graze freely.”

Rabbi Natan Slifkin, *Man and Beast: Our Relationships with Animals in Jewish Law and Thought*.

“A person’s attachment to a pet, as you mention in your question, a ‘beloved dog,’ can be great and very important. When my daughter and son were young, their pet hamster “Shlumiel” died. Naturally, they were ‘broken hearted’ and we buried the deceased pet. The children wrote notes to the pet that we included as we shoveled in the earth. They were also encouraged to ‘say a few words’ of their love of their hamster. In no way did I feel that this encroached on sacred Jewish tradition, nor did I feel that they had lost sight of the enormous deference accorded human life (and death) as distinct from the loss of animal life. While in the process of driving to the Jewish cemetery one day, I noted a pet cemetery where pets were buried in very elaborate funeral ceremonies. I can understand the depth of emotion of losing the ‘family pet,’ however, at the same time there may be a blurring of the place in Judaism of humanity. Everything must be done to preserve our love of human life and not equate human-kind with animal-kind. To do so, may have the undesirable result of losing our Jewish perspective on all life.”

Rabbi Sanford Shudnow, “Is it wrong to light a yahrzeit or want a memorial service for a beloved dog?”
Jewish Values Online.

<http://www.jewishvaluesonline.org/697>

JUDAISM, REFORM

Number in United States: ~1,800,000 (Jewish Daily Forward)

Number worldwide: ~2,200,000 (World Union for Progressive Judaism)

US Geographic distribution: New York,

Local contacts: Rabbi Dr. Naftali Brawer || Executive Director, Tufts Hillel || naftali.brawer@tufts.edu

Perspectives:

“Another significant debate exists regarding the inclusion of sterilization within the Noahide laws (*Sanhedrin* 56b). While some scholars believe that gentiles are also included in this proscription, many decisors assert that non-Jews have the prerogative to perform these procedures (*Aruch Hashulhan* 5:26)... Nonetheless, it remains prohibited for Jewish urologists or veterinarians to perform nontherapeutic sterilization for non-Jews. Moreover, as with other prohibitions, a Jew may not ask a non-Jew to sterilize for himself (*amira le'akum*), even in a subtle or indirect manner (EH 5:14), although using non-Jewish doctors may be preferable in certain cases of legally mandated procedures.”

Jerusalem Post, “Ask the Rabbi: Neutering animals.”

<http://www.jpost.com/Jewish-World/Judaism/Ask-the-Rabbi-Neutering-animals>

“We should also note that the castration of animals was prohibited and this has always been considered as a form of maiming, which was forbidden (*Shelat Yaabetz* 1.11). We may summarize this by relating that our tradition demands kind treatment of animals...Human life must be saved if it is at all possible...When dealing with experimental animals we should be quite certain that they are not subjected to pain or used for frivolous reasons as for example cosmetic experimentation.”

Central Conference of American Rabbis, “New American Reform Response: Jewish Involvement in Genetic Engineering.”

<https://ccarnet.org/responsa/narr-247-252/>

“...[T]he care of animals was always an important part of our tradition. We would, therefore, say that the heirs [of a man who left behind a cat when he died] are duty bound to either care for this animal which was important to their father or to find an appropriate home for it. They may certainly not put it to sleep or abandon it.”

Central Conference of American Rabbis, “New American Reform Responsa: Responsibility Toward Pets.”

http://press.ccar-ebook.com/Questions_and_Reform_Jewish_Answers/155

“The death of a beloved pet is a traumatic experience and it is important to find an appropriate and meaningful way to mark the loss. Our tradition does not offer an ancient ritual for this because it is only in contemporary times that humans have formed the type of close emotional attachment to our pets that we find natural. Although it is entirely appropriate and I would suggest important to create a ritual for the loss of a pet, it is not appropriate to incorporate our traditional mourning/memorial liturgy (i.e. Eil male rachamim and Kaddish) for this purpose. Although we love and adore our pets and they are significant members of our families, they are not human. It is important that we remain cognizant of the boundaries that do exist as a part of the natural world--raising up and honoring our creature companions without debasing the responsibilities, benefits and privileges that come with being human.”

Rabbi Janet Offel, “When A Beloved Pet Dies,” Kalsman Institute on Judaism and Health at Hebrew Union College.

http://kalsman.huc.edu/articles/Offel_WhenABelovedPetDies.pdf

PROTESTANTISM, EVANGELICAL (SOUTHERN BAPTIST, PENTECOSTALISM, AME, etc)

Number in United States: 100,000,000 (Wheaton College)

Number worldwide: 285,000,000 (Pew)

US Geographic distribution: Tennessee, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and Alabama

Local contacts: Daniel Bell || Protestant Chaplain, Tufts University Chaplaincy || daniel.bell@tufts.edu

Perspectives:

“Then Jesus said to his disciples: ‘Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds!’”

Luke 12:22-24, *The New Testament (New International Version)*.

“Animals share some of the privileges of God's people, and so the Sabbath rest applies equally to them: “Six days do your work, but on the seventh day do not work, so that your ox and your donkey may rest” (Exod 23:12 ; cf. Lev 25:7 ; Deut 5:14). Further, an ox treading the corn was not to be muzzled (Deut 25:4 ; quoted in 1 Col 9:9 ; and 1 Tim 5:18, ; where it is applied to people) and a fallen ox was to be helped to its feet (Deut 22:4 ; cf. Lev 22:27-28 ; Deuteronomy 22:6-7 Deuteronomy 22:10). Jesus also pointed to the humanitarian treatment of animals on the Sabbath (Matt 12:11-12 ; Luke 13:15 ; 14:5) and argued from this that he should free people from illness on the Sabbath. This sense of responsibility for the welfare of animals is summed up in Proverbs 12:10: “A righteous man cares for the needs of his animal.” Thus, animals are owed some of the basic obligations we extend to fellow human beings.”

Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*.

<http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/animals.html>

“I believe that humans are made in the image of God and given a special responsibility for stewardship of the whole of creation. Human arrogance, among other sins, leads us to justify the horrific abuse of God's creation for our own selfish means. I believe that through grace, created beings have the opportunity to be reconciled with one another, with creation, and with God. Grace is a gift from God, not earned or deserved.”

Sarah Withrow King, *Animals Are Not Ours: An Evangelical Animal Theology*.

<https://wipfandstock.com/animals-are-not-ours-no-really-they-re-not.html>

PROTESTANTISM, MAINLINE (UNITED METHODIST, PRESBYTERIAN, UCC, etc)

Number in United States: 36,000,000 (Pew)

Number worldwide: ~36,000,000 (Pew)

US Geographic distribution: South Dakota, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin

Local contacts: Daniel Bell || Protestant Chaplain, Tufts University Chaplaincy || daniel.bell@tufts.edu

Perspectives:

“Praise the LORD from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths, lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do his bidding, you mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars, wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds, kings of the earth and all nations, you princes and all rulers on earth, young men and women, old men and children. Let them praise the name of the LORD for His name alone is exalted; His splendor is above the earth and the heavens.”

Psalm 148:7-13, *The Old Testament (New International Version)*

“We United Methodists do not teach that animals have souls and therefore need redemption and forgiveness or heaven in the same way that humans do. However...we support regulations that protect and conserve the life and health of animals, including those ensuring the humane treatment of pets, domesticated animals, animals used in research, wildlife, and the painless slaughtering of meat animals, fish, and fowl.”

United Methodist Church, “What We Believe.”

<http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/do-united-methodists-believe-that-animals-have-souls-and-go-to-heaven>

“The doctrine of creation demonstrates that God's covenantal relationship with and continuing providential care of animals, exercised through human dominion, should be understood as benevolent stewardship rather than as autocratic despotism...even if animals are excluded from heavenly paradise, however it is understood, this simply puts a greater burden on us to ensure their benevolent treatment in this life. The most important argument Christian theology supports, though, is that the purpose of animals is much more than simply their instrumental value to humans.”

Donna Yarri, *The Ethics of Animal Experimentation*.

<http://www.amazon.com/The-Ethics-Animal-Experimentation-Constructive/dp/0195181794>

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISM

Number in United States: ~200,000 (UUA)

Number worldwide: ~600,000 (Adherents)

US Geographic distribution: New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Wyoming, and Washington

Local contacts: Rev. Greg McGonigle || University Chaplain, Tufts University Chaplaincy ||
greg.mcgonigle@tufts.edu

Perspectives:

“[UU Rev. Eliza] Blanchard also serves as chaplain to animal caregivers such as rescue workers and vet technicians. Both jobs are high stress and linked to a post-traumatic stress disorder known as compassion fatigue. Employees in veterinary offices often start and end their day with euthanizing animals—decisions they don’t always agree with—and see as many as five times more deaths as other medical providers. One client, who rescues dogs on death row in shelters, grapples with good and evil on a daily basis: witnessing dogs that have been starved, burned, and maimed by abuse. Blanchard encourages these caregivers to counter the negative images through spiritual practices such as prayer, guided meditation, gratitude journals, or art. “I firmly believe people have the answer within,” she says.”

Kimberly French, “Caring for all creatures,” *UU World* (Winter 2012).

<http://www.uuworld.org/articles/pet-ministry>

“Our goal[s] in UU Animal Ministry [are]...To work, along with other people of humane and compassionate beliefs, toward the exclusion of cruel, wasteful and repetitive testing of commercial products; duplicative, unnecessary, wasteful and even frivolous biomedical research using animals; the widespread abuse of "food" animals on factory farms and in transit to slaughter, the destruction of fur-bearing animals for profit; "sport hunting", and events which mistreat animals for entertainment; To encourage UUs and others to explore and adopt a more humane lifestyle, focusing on ethical consumerism, vegetarianism and veganism, the use of cruelty-free products and the development of alternatives to the use of animals in research and products testing.”

Unitarian Universalist Animal Ministry, “Forming a UUAM Chapter.”

<http://uuam.org/formchapter.php>

Additional Resources

“Ethics guide: Animal Ethics.” BBC Religion Ethics.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/animals/>

“Religion and Animals Project.” Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics.

<http://www.oxfordanimaethics.com/what-we-do/religion-and-animals-project/>

“Rivers of Faith.” The Pluralism Project at Harvard University.

<http://pluralism.org/religions/>

Lisa Kemmerer. *Animals and World Religions*. Oxford University Press. 2012. Giles

Legood. *Veterinary Ethics*. Continuum. 2000.

Jerrold Tannenbaum. *Veterinary Ethics: Animal Welfare, Client Relations, Competition, and Collegiality*. Mosby. 1995.

