

Neutering

Statement submitted June 2001

Summary

The animal protection act is not consistent regarding permission to neuter animals. For some species neutering is prohibited, while other species may be neutered by lay people without anaesthesia. The Council for Animals Ethics believes that there is need for a thorough review of the legislation.

In their evaluation, the Council emphasises considerations for animal's integrity and their possibility for a natural life. The Council believes that it is not acceptable to remove body organs from healthy, normal animals in order to make them better suited for production or as family pets. In general terms, neutering should be prohibited. However, it cannot be denied that in our keeping of animals it is necessary to put some limitations on the natural behaviour of animals. Many adult domestic animals never have the opportunity to express natural sexual behaviour. A general ban on neutering will not lead to a situation where most animals express natural sexual behaviour, but rather to a situation where their sexuality is controlled by other means. This control could be source of considerable frustration for the animals. There is no doubt that some animals may be granted greater freedom and possibly have a better existence after neutering, such as for example bulls that can be let out on pasture after castration. If the animal's integrity and natural behaviour is emphasised in decision making, one may argue for neutering rather than against it in many situations.

The Council believes that it should be determined by law that in the decision to neuter an animal emphasis should be given to the individual animal's integrity and its possibility for expressing natural behaviour. Permission to neuter should be given in situations where this is in the interest of the animal or that it has a minor effect on the animal's natural behaviour and situation. In the Council's opinion this will not open for routine neutering of dogs, but that the individual animal's living situation must be considered before neutering is performed. Neutering for convenience should not be permitted. It should be an absolute requirement that without exception neutering of animals should be performed under anaesthesia and with post operative pain management.