

Care-full stories: Story 2: Do we care? (NHP)

November 2022



Set up

Background:

This story is meant to highlight issues for discussion around: different kinds of care and empowerment to speak up

Setting:

Unspecified.

Set up:

In person:

Three people sitting or standing in a triangle. Who is positioned where in the triangle does not matter. Everyone should be visible. They move one spot to their right at the specified points.

Online:

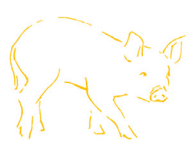
Read as is (ignore stage directions related to movement). Do not make eye contact with any other reader.

Characters:

- **Animal Technologist** (Animal Tech)
- **Researcher**
- **Named Veterinary Surgeon** (Vet)

They are discussing a situation they were involved in together.

Stage directions in italics



Script

Animal Tech: Perhaps one day we will reach a time when we don't need to use animals at all. Until that time I will do my best to give them the best possible care. I am their voice. But I am also here for the science. I care.

Researcher: The scientific aims and objectives of my research are paramount. But of course I also appreciate the need to care properly for all animals, to adhere to the 3Rs, to identify humane end points. I know I take responsibility for my animals and we have a good team. I care.

Vet: Animal care must be a priority. I will care for any animal in the best way possible to help the Licence Holder fulfil their responsibilities. And more. I care.

Researcher: There are so many things to consider in our work. So many perspectives and priorities. The well-being of the animal, the importance of the science, staff, institutional obligations and commitments –

Vet: – the health of the animal, its role in a scientific study, doing no unnecessary harm –

Animal Tech: – the every day care and welfare of the animal. The science and the animal both benefit from good care and the best possible treatment, but there was this one time –

Researcher: I do my best by the animals and people involved in my work, but there was this one time –

Vet: Usually there is a clear understanding and unity between the animal care and the science, but there was this one time –

Animal Tech: I didn't know what to do. It just didn't feel right. I was worried about the animal.

Researcher: The project was progressing well. There wasn't long left. Some final tests and then the project would end. But I was feeling the pressure.

Vet: It was a complicated situation. I felt conversations needed to be had.

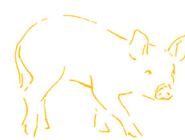
Animal Tech: I wasn't happy. I kept being told everything was fine, the animal is fine.

Researcher: The Animal Tech seemed worried about the animal. But I reassured them that everything was fine, the animal was fine.

Vet: There's a conversation I always have with new Licence Holders in determining whether an animal is fine. And it really hit home again on this case I was handling.



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All move one chair to the right

Animal Tech: The plug cap on his head looked awful. It was raw, it looked infected. He kept scratching at it, making it worse. He was suffering.

Researcher: The animal was quite old, it looked like it was reacting a little bit. Feeling slightly irritated perhaps, but nothing it couldn't manage or that affected the research. It wasn't suffering.

Vet: The main thing you have to get your head around, as a vet, is that you are not thinking about saving an animal. Your job is not to prolong the life of the animal unnecessarily. Part of our job is to help alleviate and prevent suffering. And sometimes, to do that, we have to euthanise the animal.

Animal Tech: I remember when he arrived. Young, gregarious, really cheeky. Three years ago tomorrow, as it happens. I was with him every day.

Researcher: I remember when it arrived, with the others, six in total. A large chunk of my budget was dedicated to them. About three years ago or so, I think. We did great work together.

Vet: We had a good and agreed care plan for the whole group. We established this collaboratively when they arrived three years ago. A great group.

Animal Tech: I called him Greg. He was full of personality, a real character. I loved spending time with him.

Researcher: We get taught to not get attached to these animals. That it plays with your objectivity.

Vet: Anyway, as I was saying, you have to look at it and ask "Will this animal be a good scientific subject?"

Animal Tech: It got worse and worse for him. It was awful to witness. But nobody listened. Eventually I only had one choice left.

Researcher: I didn't agree with the Animal Tech. I was surprised by what happened next.

Vet: Then you have to advise the Researcher accordingly. You can inform the researcher of your assessment of the animal's condition, but after that it's ultimately up to the Researcher.

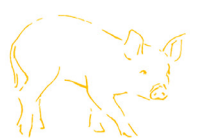
Animal Tech: I pulled the whistleblowing clause. This was definitely a situation where I needed to tell someone, an authority, my concerns.

Researcher: It complicated my project. I lost money. I lost data.

All move one chair to the right



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Animal Tech: I struggled a lot with my decision. But when you don't feel heard your options become limited.

Vet: It's difficult when you give advice and you don't feel listened to. You don't really have any further options.

Researcher: It's hard when others don't seem to understand your perspective. Your decisions become more difficult.

Animal Tech: If you don't look out for the animal you're not respecting it.

Vet: Providing information for good decision making is part of respecting the animal.

Researcher: You don't want to give up early because then the animal will have suffered for nothing. That's not respecting the animal.

All move one chair to the right

Animal Tech: That poor monkey.

Researcher: That great monkey.

Vet: That NHP has been removed from the study and euthanised.

Animal Tech: Did I provide good care for that animal? And who cares for me?

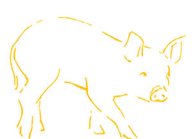
Researcher: Didn't I provide good care for that animal? And who cares for me?

Vet: What does care look like? Do we...care?

*** end of script ***



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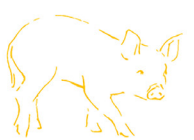
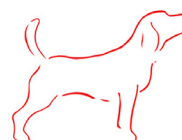


Questions for discussion

1. Was good care provided here? Where?
2. Who feels empowered to speak up here?
3. Do you have any similar experiences? Would you like to share any of them?
4. What are the different perspectives existing here?
5. Does good care look different for different species?
6. What, if any, other questions are raised for you in this scenario?



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Acknowledgements

The Care-full Stories Project was led by Prof Beth Greenhough (beth.greenhough@ouce.ox.ac.uk), with assistance from Hibba Mazhary and Dr Manuel Berdoy, and supported by the University of Oxford's KE Seed Fund (KCD00043), ESRC Impact Acceleration Account (2105-KICK-666) and the Wellcome-Trust funded Animal Research Nexus programme (WT205393/A) www.animalresearchnexus.org. We would also like to thank the following collaborators who have helped to guide and facilitate this work: Angela Kerton (The Learning Curve Development Ltd.), Sally Robinson (CRUK, Animals in Science Committee AWERB Hub Subgroup Chair), Lucy Whitfield (OWL Vets Ltd.), Sara Wells, Mark Gardiner and Jackie Harrison (Mary Lyon Centre, MRC Harwell), Jordi Lopez-Tremoleda (QMUL), Penny Hawkins (Animals in Science Department, RSPCA), James Bussell (University of Oxford) and Ida Berglöw Kenneway.



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