



ISAE Creativity Award 2017

Françoise Wemelsfelder

*Professor of Qualitative Science and Animal Welfare,
SRUC, Edinburgh, United Kingdom*

Françoise Wemelsfelder is widely acknowledged for her contribution to animal welfare science of a novel methodology generally referred to as qualitative behaviour assessment (QBA). Ever since her PhD in the Netherlands, Françoise has been interested in how scientists might include the subjective experiences of animals in investigations of animal welfare. In early papers and book chapters she critically examined the implications of different philosophical models of animal emotion and mind for the scientific study of animal welfare, and was among the first to write about animal boredom. Her approach to animal subjectivity was original and quite unique in that, contrary to received opinion, she argued that subjective experience is empirically accessible through the expressive qualities of behaviour – the ‘how of behaviour’ - rather than being a purely private mental state. To translate these philosophical starting-points into science, Françoise was the first to adapt a method developed in consumer science called ‘Free choice profiling’ for use in animal science, using it to elicit and quantify self-generated judgments from people on animals’ expressive qualities. Subsequent years of research by Françoise and colleagues and other research groups around the world have demonstrated that such judgments can, if properly managed, be scientifically valid, and add an important layer of interpretation ‘from the animal’s point of view’ to more conventional measures of animal welfare.

QBA (either as free choice profiling or pre-selected term lists) is now increasingly applied in animal welfare science, and has achieved significant impact. It has been incorporated into the EU Welfare Quality® animal welfare assessment schemes for pigs, poultry and cattle, and AWIN welfare assessment protocols for sheep, horses and donkeys. In addition it is receiving attention from stakeholders outside the academic community such as animal protection organisations, zoos, and livestock industry bodies, all interested in the practical implementation of QBA in daily animal care.

So through her ability to apply philosophical principles to natural science and the resulting development of QBA, Françoise has made a real creative contribution to animal welfare science, which makes research into animal experience more accessible, and is having practical impact in animal care.

Selected publications

Wemelsfelder, F. 1997. The scientific validity of subjective concepts in models of animal welfare. ISAE Special Issue: Basic and applied aspects of Motivation and Cognition, *Applied Animal Behaviour Science* 53, 75-88.

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Stockman, C.A., Collins, T., Barnes, A.L., Miller, D., Wickham, S.L., Beatty, D.T., Blache, D., **Wemelsfelder, F.,** Fleming, P.A., 2011. Qualitative behavioural assessment and quantitative physiological measurement of cattle naive and habituated to road transport. *Animal Production Science* 51, 240-249.

Wemelsfelder, F. and Mullan, S. 2014. Applying ethological and health indicators to practical animal welfare assessment. *OIE Scientific and Technical Review*, 33 (1), 111-120.