

## ISAE Creativity Award 2014

**Ruth Newberry**, Associate Professor at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Norway

Ruth has made major contributions to advance our knowledge in Applied Ethology and Welfare. She has worked extensively in understanding the behavioural biology of farm animals, focusing particularly on poultry and pigs. Her work has contributed broadly to building knowledge regarding basic behavioural principles that have been essential for further developments and applications with great impact for the welfare of animals.

She is the author of one of the most cited papers on environmental enrichment. In this paper, she stressed that the biological relevance of any enrichment to the animal is a key factor for a successful enrichment program. Ruth recognized the potential relevance of cover to poultry and conducted the first experiment that demonstrated it. This ground-breaking study was the basis for the development of cover panels to address management issues and to improve welfare in poultry in a very simple but ingenious way. A common problem with environmental enrichment programs is the difficulty of sustaining the interest of animals in the objects of enrichment, as their interest quickly wanes. This problem makes enrichment less effective in practice. In a basic study, Ruth and her team demonstrated that restricting the exposure of piglets to new objects to less than 2 days rekindles the interest of pigs when these objects are reintroduced again later. This, as suggested in the paper, permits rotating objects over time to maintain sustained interest of the pigs, facilitating the application of enrichment programs in real life situations.

Besides research that has led to field applications with real impact on the welfare of poultry and pigs, Ruth has conducted basic studies on acoustic communication and play behaviour in pigs, as well as on exploration and use of space, social dynamics, cannibalism, and learning in poultry. Her work is filled with new, fresh and original ideas (you just have to glance through the titles of her publications to see this). In addition, Ruth has an altruistic nature when it comes to sharing knowledge with peers, nurturing students and sharing her passion for science.

### Selected references

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