

Dr. Andrew F. Fraser

M.R.C.V.S. Glasgow Veterinary College, 1950
M.V.Sc. Ontario Veterinary College, 1961

International Society for Applied Ethology, Honorary Fellow



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A short biography of Andrew Fraser, written by him in March 2008

As a working veterinarian among farm animals in Scotland, starting in 1950, I was always pleased to hear that the sick animal I had been treating was "okay", and back to normal. Normal meant that it had returned to its old ways, that it was behaving normally again. I didn't recall getting much information about normal behaviour in animals at vet school, but since I had a farming background, I had a good understanding of what was meant. Increasingly I became interested in the details of such normal behaviour and sought literature on the subject. None existed. When I asked the very kind librarian of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons for any books on the subject, I was told, "None of our old gentlemen would approve of the purchase of such non-veterinary literature."

To pursue my interest, I joined The Society for the Study of Animal Behaviour in 1955. This was a British group, made up of biologists, many of whom were in ornithology. I recall that there were about six or so veterinary members. I read their journal avidly; it was then called their Bulletin and was edited by a veterinarian named Alistair Worden. I waited in vain to read any article on farm animals. They kindly published a couple of mine on bull behaviour and displacement activities. I found a few articles on livestock behaviour in German and had them translated, but my hunger for behavioural information was not being satisfied.

In 1959 I was accepted as a graduate student at Toronto University's Veterinary College at Guelph, Ontario, Canada, which was considered to be a world leader in veterinary education at that time. I wished to study animal behaviour, obviously, but had to compromise that, by mixing it in with animal reproduction. However, I took a wide variety of courses which were relevant in some degree to ethology, the new title for this subject. My research project was on the reproductive behaviour of the domestic goat and I obtained my master's degree in this in 1961. I was in the field of veterinary farm animal

medicine in Jamaica before returning to Scotland.

I joined the teaching staff at Edinburgh University's Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies in 1963. Although my teaching subject there was animal reproduction, my department head (a wonderful person, Professor J.A.S. Spreull) encouraged me to engage in the promotion of ethology as it was relevant to domestic animals. In 1965 a small committee of six in Edinburgh discussed the possibility of creating a society for veterinarians who might wish to build a body of knowledge on domestic animal behaviour, based on their own experiences. It was decided that there would be sufficient interest to proceed with this proposal.

At a convened meeting of 31 interested persons, the Society of Veterinary Ethology was formed in Edinburgh University in 1966. A constitution was adopted and office-bearers were appointed at that meeting. For my troubles, I was appointed as President. An ethological paper was presented at a scientific session following the business meeting and the enthusiasm for the project was obvious. The evident sentiment was to have an international society that was not linked to any veterinary association, and that the society's office bearers should be changed frequently to prevent control by any clique.

Meetings were held in various locations at six monthly intervals and contributions were given from a wide variety of sources. In time it became clear that some people with similar interests wished to join and the Society then opened its membership readily to others who had relevant credentials outside of the veterinary field. It was decided to put every contribution on record, to be published in the Society's Proceedings. I was asked to be the person responsible for that. In time, The British Veterinary Journal carried these Proceedings and the Society began to attract more non-veterinary members. Meetings were then held in various other countries in Europe to expand the project.

In 1973, Europe's major scientific publisher, Elsevier in Amsterdam, Approached me enquiring if there could be a sufficient number of papers forthcoming from all sources around the world to justify the publication of a scientific journal on applied ethology. I assured them that there would be. In 1974, Elsevier launched the journal called "Applied Animal Ethology", with a large international editorial board. I was appointed as Editor-in-Chief and I put as much pressure as I could on people known to me who were capable of producing suitable papers. The journal came out when there was sufficient accepted material. Soon it came out quarterly, then six times per year.

A crisis developed when the journal's sales fell behind its cost of production and there was talk of the termination of the journal. To promote it further, it was renamed "Applied Animal Behaviour Science" and it was published monthly. The directors of Elsevier were very sympathetic to the case I made to them that this new science needed a little more time to be appreciated as an advance in education. As a commercial enterprise the journal finally paid all its bills and Elsevier must be honoured for "hanging in" with us, when the journal's going was tough. I retired as Editor-in-Chief in 1990 when I was preparing for my academic retirement from Memorial University of Newfoundland which gave me an academic seat in its medical school for 12 years and provided all the secretarial backing to handle all my editing work. The journal firmly established the discipline of applied ethology, as we enjoy it today. (*Dr. Fraser resides in Carbonear, Newfoundland, Canada, 3-Mar-08. -Editor*)