

Obituary

Klaus Vestergaard (1944-1999)

Klaus Vestergaard (born 14th September, 1944) died on the 16th November, 1999, after a hard struggle with cancer. We were all very impressed by his will and mental strength during the 3-year period of the incurable disease. He never lost his enthusiasm in relation to ethology and farm animal welfare and his working capacity was indeed enormous until the last few weeks of his life. Klaus was a real scientist with a great interest and knowledge not only concerning his own subject ethology but also in biology in general. The science of ethology, as well as the biological basis of animal welfare, has suffered a very big loss by the far too early death of Klaus Vestergaard.

Klaus graduated in biology in 1974 from the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, with a Masters Degree in Ethology. The same year he was employed at The Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University in Copenhagen on a project

concerning the behaviour and welfare of the laying hen. This subject in fact was Klaus' main interest throughout his life. From 1982 to his death Klaus was Associate Professor in Ethology at RVAU.

Most of Klaus' scientific work was related to feather pecking and dust bathing in the fowl and in 1994 he defended his thesis on this subject. His theory on the motivational and developmental aspects of feather pecking is known world wide. Until his death, he was convinced that feather pecking is very closed linked to dust bathing behaviour due to a mis-imprinting on feathers in the very young chicken. Many of us believe that Klaus' theory will in future have a great impact on the solution of the biggest problem in modern egg production.

Although chicken behaviour was Klaus' favourite subject, he also did a vast amount of scientific work on pig behaviour and welfare. His collaboration with Alex Stolba, David Wood-Gush and Per Jensen from Switzerland, Scotland and Sweden respectively has been of great importance for our knowledge of the ethogram of the domestic pig and for work on the establishment of alternative housing systems within commercial pig production.

Klaus was an international person. He studied ethology in many countries in Europe and overseas and he collaborated with many outstanding colleagues within the field of ethology. He was known not only as a very skilled ethologist but also as a very friendly and helpful person. His eagerness to welcome young applied ethologists in discussion of their work at ISAE meetings was a hallmark of his generous spirit. These personal qualities were very important not only for his scientific work but also for his teaching of many undergraduate and postgraduate students. Klaus was a very inspiring teacher and his interest and enthusiasm in relation to animal behaviour and welfare has been of great importance for many students not only from Denmark but also from other countries.

From 1982 until his death, Klaus was a very active member of the board of The Danish Society for Protection of Animals. His great biological skill and his compassion for wild and domesticated animals was of the greatest importance in the development of animal welfare work both in Denmark and internationally.

We shall all miss Klaus S. Vestergaard and our thoughts are with his wife Dorte and their children Ole, Lars and Maj.

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