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AUTHORS: Martin Whiting

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Animal welfare symposia – bringing stakeholders together

The RVC and CABI have joined forces to host an annual free symposium on key topics in animal welfare opening the opportunity for discussion and networking between stakeholders.

Martin Whiting BSc BVetMed MA DipECAWBM (AWSEL) PhD MRCVS FRSA FHEA, Lecturer in Veterinary Ethics and Law, Royal Veterinary College, Hawkshead Lane, North Mymms, Hatfield AL9 7TA

The ethical dilemma of how far animals can be pushed towards their biological limits, and the associated welfare compromise, was the subject of the '*Animals pushed to the limits*'; the 5th in a series of annual symposia organised by the RVC and CABI, at the RVC's Camden Campus.

The symposium series began as a way of enabling CABI's authors to bring the latest information on animal welfare and behaviour to those interested in the issue. Joining forces with the Royal Veterinary College's Animal Welfare Science and Ethics group, the first symposium, held in 2011, included guest speaker and world-renowned authority on animal welfare, Temple Grandin. Entitled 'Animal welfare in a world concerned with food security' this first symposium built upon an existing relationship between CABI and the RVC and went on to become an annual event in the animal welfare calendar.

Over the years, the symposia have covered range of topics that are relevant to practicing veterinarians, policy makers, and those with an interest in learning more about animal welfare in a global perspective. In 2013, the symposium focused on 'The human-animal bond' (2013), where Prof Daniel Mills (Lincoln) and Prof Alan Beck (Purdue) explored the implication of this bond on both human and animal health.

To celebrate 50 years since CABI published Ruth Harrison's influential text *Animal Machines*, the 2014 symposium was based on 'Animal machines of the future'. Speakers included Prof Don Broom (Cambridge) and Prof Peter Sandoe (Copenhagen). The format of the symposium remains the same each year, with 5 talks from international experts in the area followed by an hour's panel discussion allowing for questions from the audience. There is a reception following the event open for delegates and speakers to network and discuss the topic of the day.

In 2015 the symposium developed into an international event. 'Animals behaving badly'

dealt with problem behaviour in cats, dogs and horses, featuring Dr Lisa Collins (Lincoln) and Roly Owers (World Horse Welfare), which will also be the topic of a symposium in Philadelphia on 26 September 2016 organised by CABI in partnership with UPenn. It is hoped the international uptake of these symposia will continue in future years.

The RVC's Animal Welfare Science and Ethics group is pleased to collaborate with CABI, a not-for-profit scientific publisher. Both organisations have similar missions to bring knowledge and information from research to practice and both are particularly keen that these events are free to attend and open to the public. Public engagement, knowledge transfer and discussion of animal welfare concerns with all stakeholders can only serve to improve our understanding and ability to rectify any problems. The unique element of these symposia is the open discussion between the delegates and the experts at the end of the events, allowing all stakeholders to share their experience and form collaborations to reach resolution.

The symposia take place every June, at the RVC's Camden campus. Free to 170 delegates, the events sell-out every year. Attendees include government, civil service, welfare charities, veterinary practices, academics, students, and the public, providing for an ideal networking opportunity. As an educational resource, or for CPD, these events are recorded and made available for free from: www.rvc.ac.uk/awse.

This year's symposium '*Animals pushed to the limits*' will be explored further in a new book edited by Temple Grandin and myself, and is due for publication in September 2017. To learn more about the book, pre-order a copy, or if you would like to suggest future topics for this symposium please contact David Porter at d.porter@cabi.org.