



# Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Children's work edition May 2013 Issue 75



## Difficult questions about using animals in science

### Getting ready

This issue raises the question of how we react to the use of animals for scientific research that is aimed at improving the lives of humans and other animals. It asks us to reflect upon how we see the position of animals in relation to us, particularly, where we stand on the question of the 'rights' of animals when they come into contact with humankind, and our needs. We need to read the following statement from the *Foundation for Biomedical Research*:

*Animal research has played a vital role in virtually every major medical advance of the last century – for both human and veterinary health. From antibiotics to blood transfusions, from dialysis to organ transplantation, from vaccinations to chemotherapy, bypass surgery and joint replacement, practically every present-day protocol for the prevention, treatment, cure and control of disease, pain and suffering is based on knowledge attained through research with animals.*

In the animal world such animal research is used to benefit our pets and domestic animals, along with wild, and especially endangered, species.

There are alternatives to the use of animals in research - taking human tissue samples and testing the effects of potential medicines etc. on them in laboratory conditions, carrying out experiments using computer models and programmes, looking at lots of statistics of the effects of medicines etc. on people. These are valuable alternatives and much is being done to increase the number of situations in which they can be used. It is widely agreed in biomedical research that the use of animals will continue for the foreseeable future in order for human and animal health to continue to improve, and the focus must be on minimising animal use and ensuring animals used are looked after well, to minimise their suffering.

### Gather

Set out chairs in a circle – allow room for adults to sit in the circle. Have images of new-born and young animals and of sick or injured humans and animals laid out in clear view. See *Additional Resource 75.A*. Go around the circle, asking everyone to say their name and if they have lived with an infant, whether a younger sibling or a young pet. Encourage the children to think about life, how precious it is, even to ponder whether the word 'sacred' can be used about it and what that might mean.

Now encourage them to think of when someone they love was ill; what was that like? How much did they hope that the doctor, the medicine given, the love they could give, would help the sick person to get better. Finally, encourage the children to consider how different it would feel if the patient was a stranger they were told about, but had never met or even seen, a pet, a wild animal they could see in the garden...a wild animal they were told about, but never saw. Listen, talk and respond very carefully.

*Journeys in the Spirit* offers resources and ideas to Quakers engaging with children and young people.

This children's work edition comes out monthly. It offers resources and ideas to Quakers engaging with 5–12 year olds in a Quaker setting.

It provides opportunities for exploring, creating and learning in an atmosphere of worship in partnership on our shared journey in the spirit.

### Important note:

Make a careful judgement about the age group with which you use the information and activities in this issue. We suggest that it is used with 8 – 12 year olds. Make sure you talk through the questions this issue raises with co-volunteers.

*Additional Resource 75.A* can be found at: [www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children](http://www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children)

# Engage

Tell the children that you are going to tell them the story of a job that people did that is hard to talk about and may be upsetting. Also say that it is about some very important things that happen in the world.

Tell this story:

“My name is Terry. As I write this, I am thinking about my new grandson, born just two weeks ago, and who we saw, along with his ‘big’, 5 year old, sister within hours of his birth; it was wonderful to see him looking so perfect, so well. I am also remembering a film I saw whilst watching ‘Children in Need’ on the television, of the sadness of children who were very sick themselves, or whose mother was very sick.

The story I tell here is true; it happened to me.

I was a student, researching into how a very small animal, a sort of shrimp, lived in a river estuary in Scotland. One of my best friends there, Martin, was doing some different research, on how reproduction, producing eggs, hatching them and rearing them was done by ducks called eider ducks. How any animal reproduces is controlled by tiny amounts of chemicals called hormones, produced by glands in the body. (Lay down pictures of eider ducks from *Additional Resource 75.B.*)

Whilst mostly these glands work very well and all goes as it should, sometimes they do not. If this happens in a person who is trying to have a baby, this will not happen, causing them great unhappiness. If it happens in an animal, someone’s pet or a valuable farm animal, they too will be unable to produce babies. Sometimes it happens in very endangered species of wild animal, because there are so few of them they have ‘inbred’, bred with close relatives. When it does so, that species can easily become extinct.

Martin was studying the hormones in eider ducks and drakes, females and males, as they went through the breeding cycle. When breeding, they all nest close together. The mothers sit on their eggs until they hatch, but then the ducklings are looked after by ‘aunties’; young females not breeding that year. (Lay down pictures of a nest and ‘aunties’ from *Additional Resource 75.B.*)

During breeding all of the ducks are very tame, so very easy to catch. The way Martin got most information for his research was by taking blood samples from the birds, quite painlessly, with a needle, but, around the time the mothers were on their eggs, a very special time, when big changes occur, he needed more information, from the very hormone producing glands themselves. The only way to do this was to kill the bird, and he needed three mothers to get enough information!!!

Because the ducks are so tame, it was easy to do; just lift them off the nest and kill them. The eggs could then be hatched in an incubator and the ducklings reared by the ‘aunties’. Easy to do, but heart-breaking. Unable to do it alone, he asked me to help him, and I did. It was one of the hardest things I have ever done, and neither of us has ever forgotten it, but the information he obtained enabled him to write an important piece of research work which has directly benefited the captive breeding of endangered bird species, for release back into the wild, and indirectly has helped research on human fertility.

So, the death of three ducks has enabled several species to survive in the world.....but we had to kill them and they seemed so trusting!”

When you have finished telling this story leave a pause for a few moments - then ask if anybody has any questions. Remember that it is OK to say that you don’t know the answers. Move onto the questions and activities in Respond.

## References & other resources

Quaker Faith and Practice:

Advices and Queries 1.02 and 1.07



The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds website has lots of information about eider ducks at:

[www.rspb.org.uk/wildlife/birdguide/name/eider/index.aspx](http://www.rspb.org.uk/wildlife/birdguide/name/eider/index.aspx)

One of the very difficult questions that may be asked is, ‘how were the birds killed?’

The answer is that the ducks were killed by the scientists pulling their necks very hard – it does sound awful to say (and it is very hard to do) but its death is instantaneous.

*Additional Resource 75.B* can be found at:

[www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children](http://www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children)

## References & other resources

[www.kids4research.org/kids/](http://www.kids4research.org/kids/) is a

website that is quite open about explaining to children the benefits of using animals in scientific research. There are activities here that could be used as part of a Respond session.



[www.allaboutanimals.org.uk/PT-Testing.asp](http://www.allaboutanimals.org.uk/PT-Testing.asp) is a

webpage that sets out the competing arguments quite simply



*Additional Resource 75.C* can be found at: [www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children](http://www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children)

## Respond

**Talking some more.** Below are some questions that can be used to promote discussion of the issues raised by this story. On *Additional Resource 75.C* there is a simple activity to help children work out their thoughts, feelings and positions on this and related questions.

- Do we ever have the right to kill an animal for our own purposes? We find the idea of killing human beings horrible, so, is it any different if it is an animal? If so, why?
- We know that animals can feel *pain*. Can you think of any examples which show clearly that an animal you have known has felt pain?
- As well as feeling pain, we can also *suffer*. It is said that suffering comes when we know, or think, that pain, or unhappiness will not stop soon; it will go on and on. Some people say that most animals cannot suffer, do you agree? If so, why? (This is all about whether an animal has a *memory*, so can recall what has happened in a similar situation before. There is plenty of evidence of animals having a memory; encourage children to swap stories of how pets know when it is feeding time, walk time and so on).
- Would the ducks have experienced pain? Suffering? (since they had no idea what would happen, and were killed pretty much instantly, and humanely, they are unlikely to have suffered).
- Most people would not cause any pain or suffering to an animal just for the sake of it, so, do you accept that it is necessary at all to use animals to help cure diseases? To provide us with food? To make sure that soap or shower gel or shampoo we use does not cause a rash or worse?
- Everybody could become vegetarians, but then many farm animals would not exist at all – no-one would have cause to breed them; is it better to live a life, and then be eaten, which happens to many animals in nature, or not to exist at all? See *Additional Resource 75.C* for a way to help people explore these questions.

When you think the conversation is complete ask each child to make a poster to illustrate their view and opinion. When they are complete they can be shown and talked about in the group if children want to. *Resources: You will need A4 or A3 white card or paper, drawing pencils, coloured pencils and felt tip pens, black felt pens.*

It is possible that a child might just want to be quiet, read, and write in a journal if they have one or do some private artwork. Have a place set up to make this possible – include some cushions as well as additional arts materials from the list above.

**Talking to meeting.** Ask children how they might encourage meeting to think about this big question. Plan what to do – decide who will ask meeting about doing it.

Play some silly games for a few minutes. There are lots of ideas on this website: [www.activityvillage.co.uk/party\\_games\\_and\\_activities.htm](http://www.activityvillage.co.uk/party_games_and_activities.htm) and group games at: [www.activityvillage.co.uk/group\\_games\\_and\\_activities.htm](http://www.activityvillage.co.uk/group_games_and_activities.htm)



## Reflect

What we have been examining is not easy; all of us would rather such difficult decisions were not necessary, but they are. People do become ill and we wish to do all we can to make them better; when they are close to us their suffering is our suffering.

The story told in this issue has been about a person being asked to support a friend in carrying out something which they feel is necessary, but which is very difficult. Could you have supported Martin in this situation?

End this session with a period of stillness around a lit candle to let thoughts and ideas settle down and to get ready to go into meeting or for sharing food and drink.



## Review

Reviewing can happen at the time or later, and may be particularly helpful where a series of activities is planned around the same themes.

Some useful questions to consider are:

- What went well, and why?
- What didn't go so well, and why?
- What might you do differently another time?
- What might parents need to be told about the session?

**This issue was written by Terry Wood and edited by Chris Nickolay and Howard Nurden. Chris Nickolay wrote the Topical activity.**

**Issue 76** is the first in the new series looking at six different feelings. The first in this series offers way to think about and explore sadness. Available from 3 June 2013.

**Issue 77** will give ways to wonder about and explore anger. Available from 1 July 2013.

**Issue 78** will offer ways to think and talk about love. Available from 1 August 2013.

## Materials available online are:

Current issue *Additional Resource Sheets*

An easy to use plan for a Children's Meeting

A simple plan for an all age Meeting for Worship

A topical activity about ways to talk about and act on climate change.

Also a 'How to use *Journeys in the Spirit*' guide; a link to special issues; an archive of previous issues; a discussion forum and a link to the *Journeys in the Spirit* Youth edition. Go to:

[www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren](http://www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren) and choose from the range of links in the sidebar.

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# Journeys in the Spirit

Children's work

Additional resources 75.A

Gather

Animals in science









# Journeys in the Spirit

Children's work

Additional resources 75.B

Engage

Animals in science



Female eider duck



Male eider duck





**Eider duck nest**



**Eider duck aunties**



# Journeys in the Spirit

Children's work

Additional resources 75.C

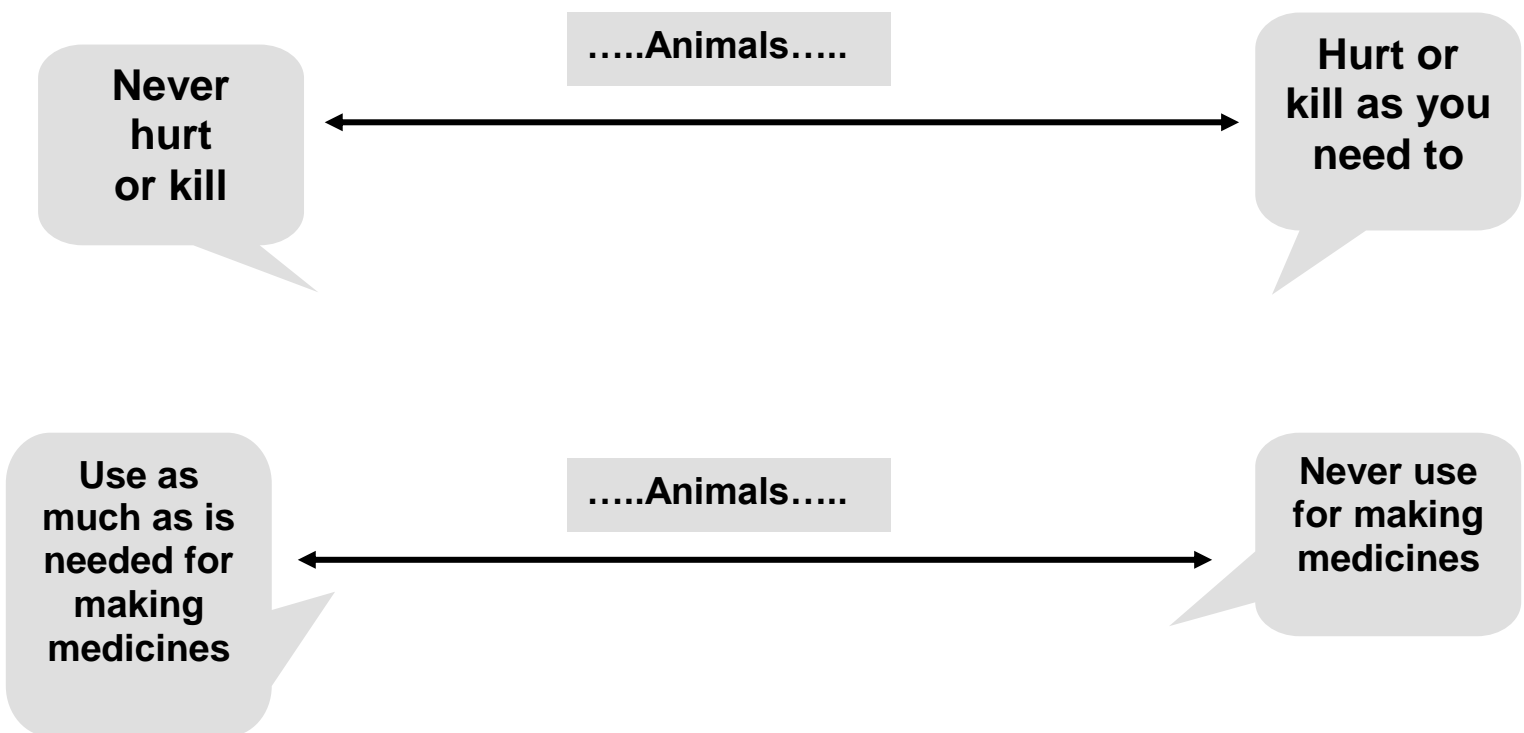
Respond

Animals in science



This is an activity called a 'continuum'. It enables people participating to give their view, opinion or feeling about an issue without, necessarily, having to state it out loud and alone in a group. You say that from the story there come some problems and you wonder what everybody thinks about them.

Ask everybody to imagine a line going from one side of the room to another. Say that the line is a way to help us think about the story just told. With each of the continuums below ask people to choose where to stand depending on how strongly they feel about the statements at either end of the line – they might stand right at one end if that is what they feel is right or they might stand near one statement or in the middle. You could write the statements on paper and stick them to the back of a chair or on the wall to help people understand the task.



Once people have chosen a position ask why they chose to stand where they have.