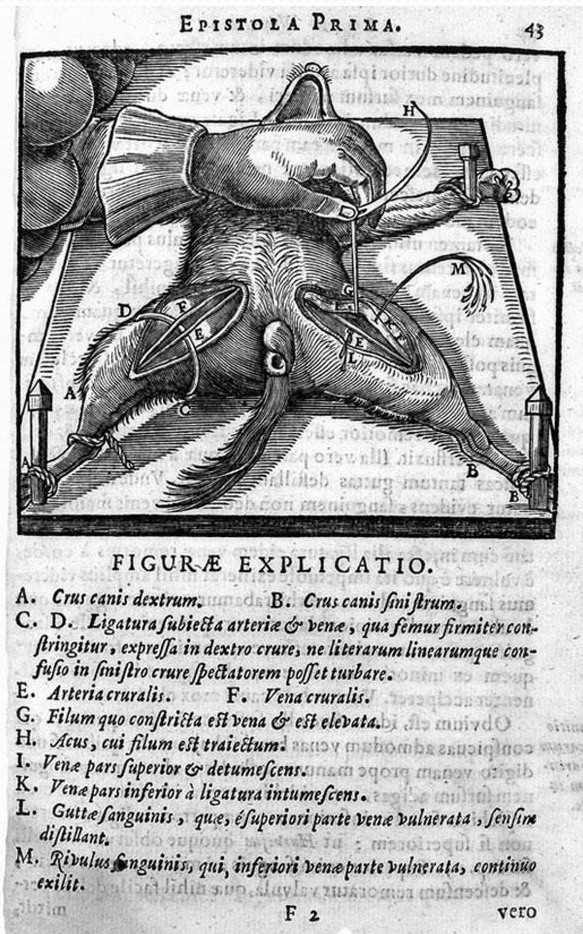


# Soulless machines to sentient beings

What does sentience mean for veterinarians' treatment of animals?

Virginia Williams BVSc, MANZCVS, Dip Prof Ethics  
15 November 2017

# Rene Descartes 1596-1650



- Saw animals as “soulless machines”
- They “could not feel pain” despite appearing to react as if they did
- Nailed his wife’s dog down and dissected it alive

# Times have changed...

- We know the nervous systems of most of the animals we treat are essentially similar to our own
- We know they feel pain
- We know they have “feelings, perceptions and experiences that matter to them” – they are sentient.



# What difference does the acknowledgement of sentience make?



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- NZVA strongly advocated for inclusion of sentience in the Act
- It means that in any interactions with any of the animals we treat, the opportunity is there to both minimise negative and maximise positive treatment experiences.



We know they don't always love  
us...



And we do things to them they may not like..



# Minimise the negative/maximise the positive

- Disease control
- Encourage exercise and training
- Appropriate socialisation
- Well-trained staff for appropriate handling



# Minimising pain...



# Breeding



- Inherited genetic disease
- Inherited conformational problems

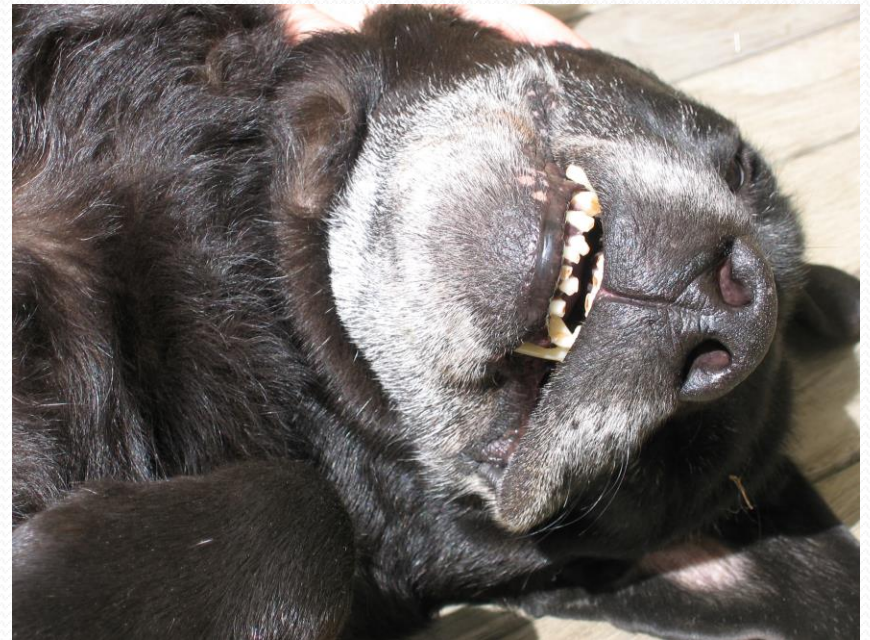
# “Our happy cat”

- Obesity
- Compromised health
- Shortened lifespan



# A good death - euthanasia

- Prioritising the interests of the patient
- When is a life – through age or illness - not worth living any more?
- Working with clients to find the right time



# Animal sentience in research, testing and teaching

- Part 6 of the AWAAct acknowledges that RTT activities may involve deliberate harm to animals IF the benefits of the RTT activities are seen by an AEC to outweigh the harm to the animal



# Use - or not - of analgesia



- Research into methods of analgesia

# Predator Free 2050

- The Department of Conservation's goal means more pest control



# Housing

- Impoverished environments are stressful (Garner 2005)
- Enriched environments reduce stress, resulting in a more “normal” test subject



# Carbon dioxide euthanasia

- Aversive
- Combines with the water in mucous to form carbonic acid, causing irritation and pain, initially in the nasal cavity
- Has been used as noxious stimulus in pain research
- Causes dyspnoea at higher concentrations
- Post mortem lung lesions at gradually increasing concentrations

# Thank you

