

# The Relationship Between Workers and Animals in the Pork Industry: A Shared Suffering

Jocelyne Porcher

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**Abstract** Animal production, especially pork production, is facing growing international criticism. The greatest concerns relate to the environment, the animals' living conditions, and the occupational diseases. But human and animal conditions are rarely considered together. Yet the living conditions at work and the emotional bond that inevitably forms bring the farm workers and the animals to live very close, which leads to shared suffering. Suffering does spread from animals to human beings and can cause workers physical, mental, and also moral suffering, which is all the more harmful due to the fact that it is concealed. The conceptual tools used to conceal suffering ("animal welfare," stress, pain) suggest that the industrial system can be improved, whereas for farmers it is by definition incompatible with animal husbandry.

**Keywords** Pork production · Suffering · Human-animal relationships · Animal husbandry · Animal welfare · Work conditions

## Introduction

The relationship between human beings and domestic animals has existed through the ages and remains a crucial part of modern societies. It is described as being embedded in social cohesion, whether explained by the emergence of "mixed communities" (Midgley 1983), a contract (Larrère and Larrère 2000, Mepham 2008), or a gift relationship (Porcher 2002b). The fact that the relationship between human beings and animals is inevitable and the consequences of this on animals and people have been revealed within the context of animal testing (Arluke 1991; Davis and Balfour 1992; Arluke 1999). In industrial pork production systems, which are of

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J. Porcher (✉)  
INRA SADAPT, 16 rue Claude Bernard, 75231 Paris Cedex 05, France  
e-mail: jocelyne.porcher@agroparistech.fr

particular interest as pork production is an archetype of animal production, the durability of the relationship is a cause of suffering for both workers and their animals. The human and animal conditions in these systems are linked, and raise issues of occupational and public health, as well as grave moral issues. Scientific considerations on “animal welfare” fail to take into account the possible transmission of suffering between human beings and animals in these systems. Workers are considered in managerial terms only, whereas it is the very meaning of work with animals that needs to be questioned. Shared suffering is also overlooked in the critique of industrial systems, which focuses primarily on their environmental impact and consequences on public health and, more recently, on the implications for occupational health (Ilea 2009).

The results that are discussed here are based on the following empirical studies:

1. Psychodynamics of work study<sup>1</sup> with a group of 12 workers in the industrial pig production in Brittany in 2004 (Molinier 2006).
2. Sociological study: 13 interviews of female workers in the industrial pig production in Brittany in 2005 (Porcher 2008a).
3. Psychodynamics of work study with two groups (11 and 13 workers) in industrial pig production in Québec in 2005 (Porcher, [in print](#)).
4. Sociological study with 12 youngsters in pig production training in Brittany in 2006 (Porcher, [in print](#)).
5. Sociological study with teachers in 5 training centers for industrial pig production in Brittany in 2006 (Porcher, [in print](#)).

### **The Relationship between Farmers and their Animals, an Inevitable Bond**

Historically, the relationship between human beings and animals has had a specific form in animal farming, since it takes place at work. For a long time, this particular context caused the relational aspect of work with animals to be downplayed, and obscured the role of affects in that work by writing it off as sentimentality. Yet affective involvement is an inevitable and necessary component of work with animals. Most animal farmers consider the work relationship with animals to be based on intersubjectivity and communication (Porcher 2002a, 2004). Well-being is described as a shared state, “I’m comfortable with my animals and I’m sure that they’re comfortable with me,”<sup>2</sup> which is confirmed by the behavior of the animals when the farmers are present. But the actual place of affectivity in this work

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<sup>1</sup> “The psychodynamics of work” is defined as the analysis of psychic processes mobilized by the gathering of a subject and the work organization constraints. These kinds of behavior, called defence strategies, are articulated with the effects of the suffering generated by the real work but also by the deprivation of work. Because of this suffering related to work, and to protect themselves, some subjects build defences to fight at the same time against the fear and the risk of psychopathological disorders in Rebeyrat (2007).

<sup>2</sup> Quotations are extracted from interviews I made with cow or pig farmers in industrial or non-industrial production systems.

depends on the production system, on how intensive it is, and on the farmers' degree of autonomy.

From the nineteenth century the industrialization of animal farming and the international development of "animal production," i.e., industrial and intensified systems, reduced the multiple rationales of work with animals to a single one: the technical-economic rationale. The other work rationales, particularly the relational rationale, have been repressed. Affectivity repression consists in dismissing feelings as well as aesthetic and moral concerns, in fact everything that makes sense in the work relationship with animals.

The industrial organization of work, the denial of the intersubjective bond between farmers and animals, and the repression of work rationales that are not economically based have triggered a deterioration, if not a perversion, of the relationship between workers and animals (Porcher 2006). Research on workers in industrial pork production (Porcher, in print) shows that they are forced to repress their spontaneous affection towards the animals, especially in the case of women. People often choose this job because of their love for animals, but in a way this plays against them. Working with animals involves several rationalities. The first of them is not economics as it is often supposed but relationship. Most of farmers work with animals to be able to live with them. (Porcher 2002a). The industrialization process put the economical and technical rationalities as a priority for the organization of work but they do not get the same place in the mind and heart of workers (Porcher 2003). But, whereas they would like to rear animals, i.e., to bond with them, care for them, be attentive to them, and communicate with them, farmers and wage-earners must produce, as many of them state, "at all cost and at any cost." The repression of feelings is a cause of suffering for workers, for contrary to management's paradoxical injunctions, affects cannot be suppressed by the cold organization of work. Suffering at work can provoke numerous physical and mental pathologies, or even lead to suicide (Dejours 2009).

Historically the relationship with farming animals can be seen as a form of "juggling with distance" (Salmona 1994; Lizet and Ravis-Giordanni 1995). The bond is inevitable; it is an essential part of the work but must be undone when the animal is slaughtered. In other words, one should love but not too much. Farmers refer to this difficult position in terms of respect (Porcher 2002a, 2004). The relationship with farming animals has never been an easy one and, like human beings, animals suffer from the violence of social and human relations. The fact that some farmers mistreat their animals has been observed for decades. However, the industrialization of work has profoundly changed the nature of violence towards animals, which is no longer individual or limited to small numbers but has become institutionalized, linked to the industrial organization of work. Violence is no more the fact of workers themselves but the fact of the ruthless character of work. Such *soft* violence, for example killing animal with machines to gas or electrocute pigs instead of striking them, that hides its real nature is all the more deadly. Hence, in industrial and intensified systems, suffering has become a shared pathology for animals as well as for workers.

In response to their suffering and that which they impose on the animals, animal production professionals (farmers, workers, technicians, vets, researchers, etc.) set

up individual and collective defence psychological mechanisms. But these have the drastic consequence of blocking out the thought process, thus preventing any change in representations and practices. They can make perfectly immoral practices tolerable, as they prevent rational judgement of one's own actions. Suffering arises when the defence mechanisms are inadequate or faulty due to the dismantling of work collectives and the isolation of workers, and if the break-down in defences does not result in a potential transformation of the way of relating to work.

## Suffering in the Workplace

The issue of suffering in industrial systems not only concerns animals, it also affects workers. They suffer physically, mentally, as well as morally.

### Physical Suffering

Pork production work is described as “exhausting” and “stressful.” It is exhausting because it is “very physical” and requires the body to be constantly involved (Molinier 2006). Due to labor shortages in this sector, it is difficult for workers to get help or to be replaced. They must cope with an intense pace of work both daily and over time. For instance, sick leave is very rare as it means adding to the workload of colleagues who already have too much work. The work is also described as exhausting because it damages the body and “wears it out” prematurely. Women especially highlight this: “I won't be doing this until I'm 60, I won't have any hands, arms or back left” (Porcher 2008a). Many employees have back problems, rheumatisms, and complain about hearing problems, breathing problems, and fatigue.

Furthermore, the work is described as “stressful” because farmers and workers have to manage lean production. For example, in order to maximize equipment utilization, workers inseminate more sows than there are places available in the “maternity ward” in anticipation of insemination failures. However, if there end up being more impregnated sows than there are places, they are forced to wean the piglets very early and to send the sows to the abattoir. Since they are constantly working on a tight schedule, workers often have to bypass basic safety rules such as doing work alone that normally requires two people. They often bypass hygiene rules such as pressure washing a maternity ward that sows have already entered to deliver, instead of cleaning it first before letting in the animals (Molinier 2006).

### Mental Suffering and Moral Suffering

Mental suffering in pig farms is related to the industrialization of animal farming systems and to the drastic intensification of work. The industrialization of farming systems and the control of science and technology over the work content have profoundly altered the nature of work.

The content and organization of work are a source of constant anxiety for workers: anxiety about the techniques employed, such as the use of hormones or

“vaccines.” Workers are concerned about the power of technology to transform “nature.” Being part of this transformation makes them feel like sorcerers’ apprentices in an enterprise that goes beyond their understanding. The problem of smells is also an example of a profound cause of suffering that can only be partly relieved. Work in pig industry units leaves one with an unpleasant smell that can only disappear with thorough showers and shampoos. Many workers are permanently worried about “smelling.” This affects their social relations, as well as their family relations and friendships. This problem of smells is not mentioned by farmers in outdoor pig farms or straw systems.

The instruction given by management is to produce as much tonnage as possible—farmers are asked to think in terms of kilograms of meat produced by sows, not in terms of animals—and as fast as possible. At the same time farmers are also asked to care for the animals’ “well-being” and to consider them as “sensitive” beings. These contradictory demands cannot be reconciled, which gives workers—especially women—the painful feeling of never doing enough for the animals (Porcher 2008a). The suffering resulting from the relationship with the animals is either indirect (suffering from seeing the animals locked up) or direct when workers must inflict the suffering themselves. For example: repeated interventions on sows due to their hyperprolificity, euthanasia of animals “that are not supposed to be killed” but have become unproductive (knocking out piglets against a wall, knocking out pigs with a sledgehammer), repeated injections, castration, sectioning of the tail and teeth, etc. This is ethical suffering, i.e., suffering from making another being suffer (Dejours 1998).

This causes farmers and workers great suffering as they must carry out these various tasks daily and hence causing the animals to suffer. Furthermore, the rising number of animals per farm, as well as changes in the distribution of work within the sector, have resulted in more work eliminating animals “with no value.” To begin with, slaughterhouses are now refusing animals “in a bad state” and are leaving farmers to slaughter them on the farm. Moreover, due to pressure from management to perform, farmers carry out a selection process and eliminate unproductive or even under-productive animals (Mouret and Porcher 2007). The animals are then slaughtered using the most convenient method at hand (piglets knocked out against a wall, pigs hanged on a tractor fork, knocked out with a sledgehammer, etc.) or, outside of any legal framework, using techniques based on the Canadian or US model to make this killing bearable (Chevillon 2004). The pork industry offers tools to transport corpses without having to see them, machines to electrocute pigs in a clean and efficient way, tools to gas piglets that are more acceptable than the “wall-therapy” (banging the piglets against a wall), etc. Yet most workers would rather treat the sows and pigs than electrocute, gas, or knock them out, but they cannot do so; they must kill. And because they are stuck with these instructions, they accept the “least horrendous” methods.

This elimination policy is also applied in many countries throughout the world by public authorities in case of an economic health crisis (“mad cow disease,” foot and mouth disease, bird flu, swine flu, etc.). The decisions are economic much more than on health considerations. The slaughter of animals has psychological repercussions on farmers as well as on those supervising them, namely vets who must carry out the

elimination whilst trying to give it meaning (Winter and Ward 2002; Gaignard and Charon 2005; Hartnack et al. 2009).

### Multiple Recognition Deficit

In order to positively contribute to the construction of an individual's identity, their work needs to be recognized (Dejours 1993, 2001). In animal production, however, there is a multiple recognition deficit. In pork production it begins with the animal, which is by definition unrecognized as such by the industrial work organization. This type of work organization sees animals as resources (animal matter, ore) to be transformed, and treats them as such. Pork production workers point out that they cannot “show consideration” for the animals (Porcher 2003). Then, the workers themselves are not recognized, neither by their animals, nor by their peers, nor by consumers. As one employee put it: “I don't show any sympathy, no one shows me any” (Porcher 2002c). The only way of getting recognition is from management, through the race for productivity and performance. The worker evaluation system in the pork industry is exclusively quantitative. It strives to maintain a competitive environment—the height of which are the “Golden Pigs” (Porcher 2009)—in which performance alone is supposed to make work meaningful. The gap between evaluation and what defies quantification in the actual work, particularly affection and the moral sense, is not something workers discuss amongst themselves: it is unspeakable.

The lack of recognition is a profound source of suffering for workers, especially for women who seem to have a more affectionate relationship with the animals (Herzog et al. 1991; Porcher et al. 2004; Kashdan et al. 2009). The reasons behind the specificity of this relationship are yet to be studied, but are more constructivist than essentialist. It is most likely not women's “maternal nature” that makes them more sensitive to animals' presence, but the fact that their virile defence mechanisms are weaker than those of men who have been raised to behave “like men,” in other words not to show affection or sensitivity. The results of our studies (Porcher 2008a) demonstrate this: female workers on pig farms say they do “the same as men,” but when they explain their work they reveal precisely the opposite. Most of the women surveyed do not hit the animals, are reluctant to kill and, generally speaking, take an interest in the sows and piglets whereas the men, according to them, are more interested in technical results. The suffering linked to work becomes more concrete when it expresses itself through professional pathologies. Workers and animals share the same living conditions, but also the same illnesses.

## Transmission of Pathologies between Workers and Animals

### Occupational Diseases

“An occupational disease is an illness caused by work (it would not have appeared if the work had not been done). It develops in regular work settings that expose workers to physical, chemical or biological hazards.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Source: Institut National de Médecine Agricole—France.

Both human and animal diseases generated by animal production have common causes that relate to living conditions at work in intensified industrial systems. Animals and workers share the same living conditions (confinement in the same buildings, air polluted by the dust and gases, stress, illnesses). Respiratory pathologies that affect animals also affect workers (farmers and their workers, as well as vets). This includes asthma and chronic bronchitis, especially in pork and poultry farming systems (Donham 2000; Borghetti et al. 2002; Dosman et al. 2004; McDonnell et al. 2008). While there are more studies on this topic than there are on suffering in the workplace (these are virtually inexistent), this body of research remains quite small (about a hundred) compared to that on “animal welfare.”

Pork production provides a particularly favorable breeding ground for pathogenic agents that affect workers and animals: brucella, streptococcus, influenza virus, and hepatitis E (Chandler et al. 1999; Caprioli et al. 2007; de Deus et al. 2008; Renou et al. 2008). Studies on French pig farms reveal the sero-prevalence of the hepatitis E virus (Pavio 2008).

Workers feel helpless in the face of constant viral pressure. The many viruses that develop in industrial systems can potentially jeopardize public health once they get out of the production units—although the way in which that happens is still unclear. The first victims of flu viruses linked to zoonoses (bird flu A/H7N7, AH5N1, swine flu AH1N1) are workers in the pork and poultry industry. They currently do not benefit from any particular protection (Gray et al. 2007) even though several scholars have highlighted the risk of a pandemic (Chevance and Moulin 2009; Galwankar and Clem 2009). Animal epidemic diseases also have emotional and mental consequences on workers (guilt, sense of doing morbid work, feeling of betraying the animals—by slaughtering the herd—of being socially despised, etc.) as well as economic and public health consequences.

### Massive Use of Antibiotics in Industrial Production and Antibiotic Resistance

Animals' living conditions in industrial settings mean antibiotics are essential. Their purpose is to hold off the microbial pressure and hence allow animals to survive without too much suffering. This not only affects the animals, whose health is already very poor, but also the human beings who spend their days in the same buildings as these animals.

In France over 93% of the antibiotics sold for veterinary use are administered to livestock animals i.e., those bred for human consumption. The French pork industry consumes 699 tons of antibiotics (active ingredients) a year,<sup>4</sup> which accounts for 55% of total animal production consumption (1,261 tons in 2007<sup>5</sup>) and 237 mg/kg of the live weight produced. Tetracyclines (mainly for respiratory and digestive illnesses) represent 62% of the antibiotics used in pork production (Chevance and Moulin 2009). This intensive use of antibiotics applicable in human medicine—bearing in mind that their use as growth stimulants was really banned in 2006 only—is highly problematical and is responsible for the development of numerous

<sup>4</sup> The industrial pork sector accounts for over 99.5% of all sows used for breeding purposes.

<sup>5</sup> 1,348.87 tons, including antibiotics for cats and dogs.

bacteria's resistances to antibio-therapy, both in animals and human beings (Goldman 2002). The conditions of animal production, the massive use of antibiotics, and the consequent alterations to the sanitary environment, provide a breeding ground for resistant bacteria and viruses to which animals and workers are exposed daily (Aubry-Damon et al. 2004). Antibiotic resistance is a threat to human health, first and foremost to workers' health (farmers, vets, etc.), and potentially to public health (Aarestrup et al. 2002; Hendriksen et al. 2008; Wulf et al. 2008; Wulf and Voss 2008).

The MRSA virus (Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus Aureus*), for instance, has become a predominant factor of nosocomial infection in Europe and worldwide. Numerous studies show that in many countries (France, Switzerland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Great Britain, Germany, Canada, the United States, etc.) pork production workers are more vulnerable to *staphylococcus aureus* than the general population, especially to the ST 398 strains that are often multiresistant to antibiotics. (Wulf et al. 2006; Lewis et al. 2008; van Belkum et al. 2008). A study in the Netherlands revealed that the chances of carrying MRSA were 760 times higher for pig farmers than for the general population, with an even higher prevalence rate on large farms (Voss et al. 2005). In that country, proximity with pigs is recognized as a risk factor for MRSA, especially since MRSA can spread from animals to human beings and then between human beings, for example within a family.

Although neatly dissociated from the context of animal production by the sectors concerned, recent health problems ("mad cow disease," bird flu, swine flu) bear witness to how close human beings and livestock animals are when it comes to illness and the suffering it creates. That is why it is important to consider "animal welfare" and occupational health together, in relation to living conditions at work.

The measures taken by animal production sectors and public authorities to remedy this dire situation are far from adequate.

## **Concealing Suffering**

The violent and "dis-affected" organization of work in animal production has consequences on animal health as well as human health. Yet in both cases suffering is concealed and euphemized with concepts such as "animal welfare," pain, or stress.

### **"Animal Welfare"**

Even though the issue of "animal welfare" is not new, it has never been so out of touch with the reality of work as it is today. As the name implies, the issue of "animal welfare" is concerned with the animal, essentially with the animal as a biological living organism. For the last twenty years the issue has been handled by biologists and behavioralists ("applied ethologists"), which has only served to strengthen that focus. Farming animals are not considered for their specificity, that is, their relationship with farmers. And when that relationship is supposedly taken into account, it is reduced to "interaction." The subjective life of animals and the



intersubjective character of the work relationship with animals are ignored as much as the work context itself (Porcher et al. 2004).

The relationship between human beings and animals is infinitely harder to study than are *interactions*. The concept of interaction that behavioralists use comes from physics and is concerned with the action-reaction process. This consists in doing something to an animal (for example giving it an electrical shock) and observing its reaction (avoidance). This kind of work is based on the idea that an animal (or a human being in behavioral psychology) is like a gas molecule. What you observe is supposed to result from your action; you are completely clueless as to the understanding the animals may have of your protocol. However, animals are not gas molecules, and in certain situations they will try to understand why they are there and what the aim is. They may then simply try to please you—or not. But *you* do not know that. As Vinciane Despret highlights, that is why the protocol is just as important to know as the results (Despret et al. 2007). A pig in an experimental situation is not a farming animal, it is a testing one, like a mouse. To study the *relationship* one needs a more phenomenological approach, which considers the real work relationship between real farmers and real farming animals. This would take into account the complexity, contradiction, variability, etc. This type of research is no less scientific than experimentation, in fact quite the opposite. Over the last twenty years, millions of dollars and euros have been poured into research on “animal welfare” and thousands of articles have been published on the subject, only to produce inconsistent results. In no way has this research improved our understanding of farming animals. Moreover, animals’ living conditions in industrial and intensified systems keep deteriorating because of work intensification. Not only have the results of this research produced nothing positive for the animals, they have allowed violence to be perpetuated and justified as a system.

For example, the UC “Welfare quality program” received 16 millions €. But most research on “animal welfare” aims to reconcile “animal welfare” with productivity without questioning, fundamentally, the industrial treatment of animals, implicitly seen by researchers and technicians as necessary and unavoidable. “Animal welfare” conceals animal suffering by suggesting that animals can be “well” in industrial and intensified systems. In other words, that cows who never graze in a pasture can be “well” in battery conditions while their level of individual production keeps increasing (average 8,200 kg/lactation<sup>6</sup>) and their life expectancy is reduced dramatically (5 years); or that sows can be “well” locked up in buildings, forced to produce ever more (27.5 productive piglets/sows per year in 2008), also with their life expectancy constantly declining (2.5 years). In more general terms, it suggests that animals cut off from their own world (i.e., the majority of livestock animals deprived of pastures, disconnected from their farmers, and prevented from living and communicating) can be “well” and hyperproductive. Concil regulations (EC) impose a minimum age of weaning of 21 days. Workers we met all said that the age of weaning is very often earlier because of productivity firms’ injunctions. From five days, piglets can be raised in “nursery” in sorts of hutches. Real work in pig industry is far from the nice wishes of researchers and UC regulations. In a more

<sup>6</sup> In France. Sources: IFIP, Institut de l'élevage.

general way in agro-industry, the real work is far from the legal rights of workers (Nebraska Appleseed 2009).

## Pain

One of the ways in which animals' suffering is concealed, is through the consensual use of the concept of "pain" to take into account the impact of practices to which the industrial organization of work subjects animals—mainly because of pressure from animal rights organizations. Researchers justify the use of the concept of "pain" in the name of scientific objectivity. Pain is an event that biology can describe and that it can claim to be able to act upon. Objectivized "pain" is actually used to conceal experienced suffering. Since suffering is a far more complex approach, it cannot be dealt with by biologists and behavioralists. In order to understand the suffering of animals, one needs to consider the reality of work, as well as its organization. One must go to the farms to see how the animals live and to understand what they are subjected to, along with the workers. Yet for the most part, biologists and behavioralists do not go on the farms; they work on models in laboratories. Animal pain (de facto experimental, even if it involves a cow or a pig) thus becomes an abstract object, intellectually stimulating but reduced solely to the experimenter's objectives. The "lab bench" is not part of farming animals' reality. These laboratory games and their disconnection from the reality of work nevertheless have serious consequences on animals and workers. An issue in point is the castration of piglets.

For reasons relating to the organoleptic quality of the meat (no smells), the castration of piglets is standard practice on pig farms. Most workers describe this task as being extremely unpleasant, both physically and psychologically (Porcher 2006). In industrial settings, it must be carried out very early on. The pain inflicted upon the animals is directly linked to the industrial nature of the procedure, since work productivity excludes the use of anaesthetics. Biologists have therefore found a fast and painless solution to castrate piglets, "immunocastration," which consists of a chemical intervention in the process of testicular production. Castration is thereby replaced by a "vaccine" and hence injections.

Yet for workers, this is hardly a solution. "Improvac" (Pfizer), which ensures the "immunocastration" of pigs, is prohibited for pregnant women and an accident while handling it could have serious consequences: "Accidental self-injection of Improvac may produce similar effects in people to those seen in pigs. These may include a temporary reduction in sex hormone levels and reduced ability to reproduce in men and in women, including problems with pregnancy."<sup>7</sup>

Considering castration only in terms of the pain it causes the animals conceals the psychological difficulty of this task for workers. Workers do not like to castrate as it is both physically painful and psychologically difficult, due to the suffering inflicted upon the animals (upon the piglets themselves because of the pain caused by the

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<sup>7</sup> User guide for Improvac (Pfizer).

procedure and upon the mother sows that hear their little ones squealing without being able to interfere). For men, the very purpose of castration also brings up subconscious imaginary fears. “Immunocastration” does not reduce these fears; rather, it increases them, including for women, since this procedure presents a genuine risk. As a result of such intense use of syringes, injection accidents do actually occur frequently (Porcher 2006).

As this innovation reduces animals’ *visible* pain, it keeps animal rights organizations satisfied,<sup>8</sup> even though nothing is known about the indirect effects of this “vaccine” on animals. It meets the pork industry’s demands as well by allowing for further intensification of labor on pig farms. But this also implies more injections, which workers already perform often enough (“we spend our time giving shots”), and which causes them further anxiety. For the animals this actually makes very little difference, since the benefits of avoiding castration are nothing compared to the permanent suffering they endure in industrial systems (Porcher 2008b). Castration with analgesic is preferred in non-industrial farming systems.

## Stress

Stress is likewise a very popular concept among biologists and behavioralists with regard to animals, and among managers on the human side. It is another way of concealing suffering. Stress relates to biology; it can be evaluated, conceptualized, explained, etc. Stress is an individual problem whereas suffering is a collective one. Stress relates to individuals’—both human and animal—ability to adapt, whereas suffering relates to the organization of work. Stress in livestock animals has been studied for the last twenty years or so and has been the subject of countless publications. Within the field of “animal welfare” itself, concerns were subsequently raised about the workers’ stress as a cause of animal stress.

After being ignored for a long time, the relationship between workers and farming animals has therefore been taken into account, although not as an intersubjective, pathic relationship, but as “interaction” (Verga and Carenzi 1998; Hanna et al. 2006). The workers’ stress has a negative influence on the animals. It interferes with manipulations, reduces work efficiency, and ultimately affects the level of production and the meat quality. This issue is therefore of direct concern to managers. The idea is to train workers in *ad hoc* behavior and to draw up the psychological profile of the ideal worker in animal production. Hemsworth and Coleman pioneered this approach (Coleman et al. 2000).

Hemsworth’s research led him to head the Animal Welfare Science Center in Australia, which enables him to link research and training in collaboration with the industry. The Center carries out research sponsored by agro-industrial companies and sells training (for example on how to handle pigs or cows). This approach takes into account neither the subjective way in which people relate to work, nor the intersubjective bond between workers and animals. It furthermore fails to consider the industrial work context and its consequences on workers’ subjectivity. Training

<sup>8</sup> Immuno-castration is required by GAIA, an animal protection association in Belgium.

serves as a remedy to violence whereas workers know very well what they *should* be doing to do the right thing. They simply do not have the possibility to do so (Porcher 2008a). The concept of stress should be abandoned for humans as for animals for the concept of suffering even if suffering cannot be studied so easily.

## Conclusion

The spread of suffering between animals and human beings in animal production is almost completely ignored by researchers and occupational medicine. In view of this, the abundance of redundant studies on “animal welfare” is all the more shocking. The human side is considered only in terms of professional pathologies and stress, which conceals suffering and the fact that it is shared with the animals. In industrial systems, where livestock animals live closely with human beings because they are both shut up, the transformation of their living conditions is a common and crucial issue for work. Contrary to the claims of “animal welfare” biologists and behavioralists, the solution is not to improve the industrial system, which is by definition antinomic to animal farming; there is no such thing as “industrial animal husbandry.” This expression is an oxymoron that suggests that even animal farming could survive and still make sense in an industrial system. However, studies show that the dual injunction of rearing and producing is impossible to reconcile and is a major cause of suffering for both workers and animals. Animal husbandry *bring up* animals; industrial systems *produce* animal matter from animals. And soon, it will produce animal’s matter without animals (Hopkins and Dacey 2008). The purpose of animal husbandry is to live and work with animals; the objective of industrial system is profit. The world of industrial animal production is a violent one where sensitivity, affection, and intelligence have no place. In Michel Henry’s sense of the word (Henry 1987), it is a “barbaric” world (Porcher 2009), one where animals are seen as “units,” where the unproductive or underproductive ones are gassed or electrocuted to death, where virility serves as a substitute for thought, where compassion is a matter of professional misconduct, and where moral values must be sacrificed in the name of productivity.

Industrial animal production has nothing to do with animal husbandry. Animal husbandry implies a positive and lively relationship to animals. It is based on the desire to live with animals, to share their existence in its beauty and tragedy. It is based on friendship and joy, for animals are joyful and share their joy with their farmer, each in their own way. That is why work with farming animals needs to be given back its fulfilling dimension, the one Marx describes and that turns work into a path to fulfilment and freedom by allowing each individual to express their potential (Marx 1996). Breeding animals involves both joy and sadness, hope and despondency, life and death: life first, life before death. That could seem lyrical or romantic but that is the way that most French farmers do perceive their work. (Porcher 2002a, Despret et al. 2007).

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