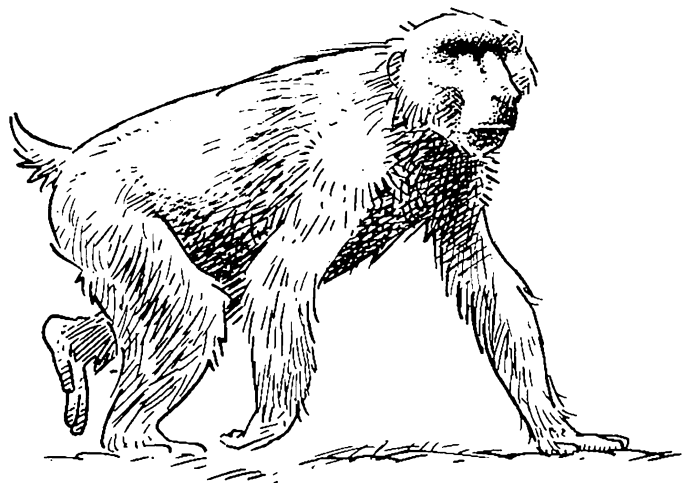
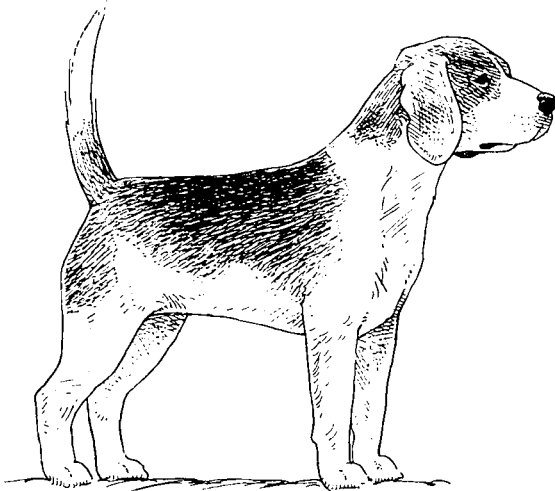
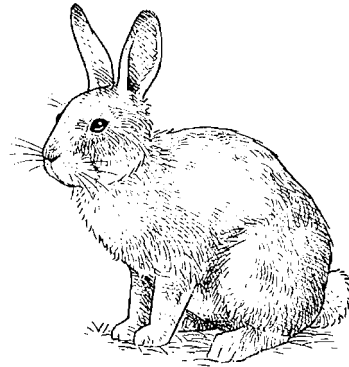
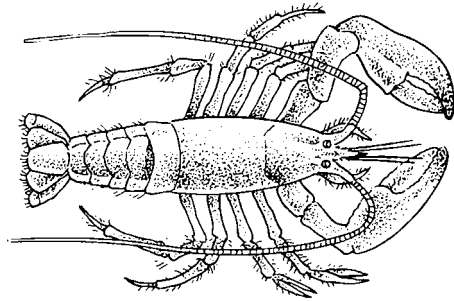
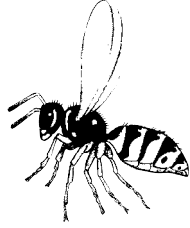


Where do you draw the line?

worksheet



ILLUSTRATIONS: STUART TROTTER



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Interacting with animals – different views (1)

Humans interact with animals in many ways and there are many situations involving **ethical dilemmas** and differences of opinion. People may hold different views on what is an acceptable way to treat animals, depending on the species and the type of interaction they have with them.

Local culture, religion and the passage of time can also influence our views. Here are some examples:

Different views, different uses

Animals are reared for meat and other products, but some religions have dietary restrictions that forbid eating certain animals.

The cow is sacred to Hindus and they do not eat beef. However, other products from cows such as milk, butter and yoghurt are considered pure and are consumed.

Religious dietary laws for both Muslims and Jews prohibit eating pork.

Fancy rats are kept as pets, but wild rats are often killed in large numbers because they are considered to be a nuisance (e.g. due to concern about the spread of disease from rats living in people's homes). Many rats are specially bred in laboratories to be used in scientific experiments, as are some wild rats (e.g. to investigate more humane methods of pest control). However, in India there is a temple where Hindus worship them because they believe they are reincarnations of holy beings.

Dogs and horses are eaten in some countries but this would be unthinkable for most people in the UK where these animals are often much-valued companions. They are also used (to a lesser extent than rats) in experiments but additional justification is usually required.

Tigers and rhinoceros are **endangered species** and many people want to conserve them so they can continue to live in the wild. However, some people kill these animals as they are a source of bones or horns for alternative medicines. Others view them as a big game shooting challenge or as public entertainment in zoos.

Interacting with animals – different views (2)

Which animal is most important?

Animals naturally interact in various ways, e.g. where one species **competes** with another for territory and food, or one species **predates** (hunts) another. However, these interactions may change as a result, for example, of human activity destroying habitat or introducing a new species into a place where it would not normally exist.

One example is the red squirrel, which used to be common throughout the UK. Grey squirrels were introduced to Britain from America in the second half of the 19th century and early part of the 20th century. They quickly spread and not only competed with the red squirrel for food, but introduced a new disease that reds were prone to catch. As a result, red squirrel populations declined dramatically. They now only exist in Britain in relatively small numbers, in a few places. The grey squirrel is still a threat to their survival.

Hedgehogs might be nice to see in our gardens, but on some islands (where they have been introduced by humans) these little carnivores eat the eggs of ground nesting birds, devastating whole populations.

In both of these situations, one might think that the easy solution would be to kill or somehow remove the invading animal. But how do we decide which animal or species should be preserved, and which should be removed?

Changing times, changing views

It used to be acceptable (and fashionable) to dock the tails of horses, and many breeds of dogs still have docked tails. However, this practice is now considered cruel as it cuts through the animal's spine and prevents some of its natural behaviour. For example, horses with docked tails cannot whisk off flies and both horses and dogs lose one of the ways that they communicate with each other.

It has been illegal to dock horses' tails for many years. However, as a result of the Animal Welfare Act 2006, it is also now illegal to dock dogs' tails, except for welfare reasons.