



Animal Business

Corporate responsibility
towards animals

Monique Janssens

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Animal Business

Corporate responsibility towards animals

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Dit werck dat ick meyne te onderstaene en es negheen cleen dinck, maer hets een werck van groter pinen ende aerbeyde, dat mi menighe ruste ende nachtslaep benemen zal eer ict volbrenghe.

De Bijbelvertaler van 1360 (In: *Wereld in Woorden*, Frits van Oostrom, 2013, p. 214)*

Zoals

*Zoals je soms een kamer in gaat, niet weet waarvoor,
en dan terug moet langs het spoor van je bedoeling,
zoals je zonder tasten vlug iets uit de kast pakt
en pas als je het hebt, weet wat het was,
zoals je soms een pakje ergens heen brengt
en bij het weggaan, denkt, vreest
te licht te zullen zijn, zoals je je, wachtend,
minutenlang verliefd in elk nieuw mens
maar toch het meeste wachtend bent,
zoals je weet: ik ken het hier, maar niet waar het om ging
en je een geur te binnen schiet bij wijze van
herinnering, zoals je weet bij wie op alert
en bij wie niet, bij wie je kan liggen,
zo, denk ik, denken dieren, kennen ze de weg.*

Judith Herzberg (In: *Zoals*, 1992)*

This work that I am trying to undertake is not a small thing, but a work of great effort and labour, that will cost me much rest and sleep before I will fulfil it.

The Bible Translator of 1360 (In: *Wereld in Woorden*, Frits van Oostrom, 2013, p. 214)*

The way

*The way you enter a room sometimes, not knowing why,
and must return along the trace of your intention,
the way you grab things from the shelf without fumbling,
and only when you hold it, know what it was,
the way you take a parcel somewhere sometimes
and while you're leaving, think, worry
you might be too light, the way you, waiting,
start loving every new human for minutes
but still are mostly waiting,
the way you sense: I know this place, not what it was about
and then a sudden scent jumps to your mind as
a memory, the way you know with whom on alert
and with whom not, with whom you can lie,
that is, I think, how animals think, know the way.*

Judith Herzberg (In: *Zoals*, 1992)*

** translation: Monique Janssens*

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Abstract

The twofold question of this PhD thesis is: *What is the ethical responsibility of companies for animals and how do they deal with this responsibility?* My final conclusions will be that companies have definite responsibilities towards animals, and that this seems to be a blind spot in both business practice and academic business ethics. As a rule, companies who engage in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and scientists who engage in business ethics consider the impact of business activities on people and the natural environment, but are less likely to consider their impact on animals, although they do indeed have a responsibility in this arena. My conclusion is based on three types of research: quantitative, qualitative, and normative-philosophical research.

Together with Muel Kaptein I developed a method for quantifying companies' commitment to animals as expressed on their websites, which we applied to 200 multinationals (quantitative research). More than half of these multinationals do not show any signs of commitment to animals. Companies who do express themselves as acknowledging responsibilities towards animals do so mostly in less-important locations on their websites, and not often in the central places where the subject would belong, such as texts on CSR policy and business codes.

Together with Floryt van Wesel, I researched factors that promote an ethical corporate position towards animals. We zoomed in on the food industry. Through analysis of interviews and written texts (qualitative research), we found three groups of stimulating factors: showing leadership, forming partnerships, and publicly celebrating successes. We also identified two ways for the manager who is responsible for animal welfare to use communication to encourage such an attitude: by communicating with internal and external parties, and by facilitating communication between these parties.

Based on existing ideas from philosophy and other disciplines about animal ethics and business ethics, I argue that businesses have significant responsibilities towards animals, which I translate to various industries (normative-philosophical research).

This thesis connects animal ethics and business ethics on both an academic level and an applied level. As for the latter, I recommend that companies: do a self-assessment with our CAN scoring method; include the interests of animals in materiality assessments; make a particular manager explicitly responsible for animal welfare; explore how progress can be made through leadership,

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partnership, 'championship', communication with a variety of parties, and encouraging these parties to communicate amongst each other; include animal welfare in current CSR communication; add new communication channels where appropriate; and communicate proactively and honestly about plans, goals, obstacles, and achievements.



Samenvatting in het Nederlands (in Dutch)

In dit proefschrift stel ik de tweeledige vraag: *wat is de ethische verantwoordelijkheid van bedrijven voor dieren, en hoe gaan bedrijven met die verantwoordelijkheid om?* Mijn conclusies zijn dat bedrijven een sterke ethische verantwoordelijkheid hebben voor dieren en dat dit een blinde vlek is van zowel de bedrijfspraktijk als de academische bedrijfsethiek. Bedrijven die Maatschappelijk Verantwoord Ondernemen (MVO) en wetenschappers in de bedrijfsethiek houden zich veelal bezig met de invloed van bedrijfsactiviteiten op mens, natuur en milieu, en minder met de invloed op dieren, terwijl ze daarin wel een verantwoordelijkheid hebben. Ik baseer deze conclusies op kwantitatief, kwalitatief en normatief-filosofisch onderzoek.

Samen met Muel Kaptein ontwikkelde ik een methode voor het kwantificeren van het commitment aan dieren zoals geuit door bedrijven op hun website. We pasten die methode toe op 200 multinationals (kwantitatief onderzoek). Ruim de helft van de multinationals geeft geen blijk van verantwoordelijkheidsgevoel voor dieren. Bedrijven die zich er wel over uiten, doen dit veelal op minder belangrijke locaties op hun websites, en minder op de centrale plaatsen waar het onderwerp thuis zou horen, zoals teksten over MVO-beleid en bedrijfscodes.

Met Floryt van Wesel onderzocht ik factoren die een ethische houding van bedrijven ten opzichte van dieren stimuleren. We zoomden in op de voedingsindustrie. Door analyse van interviews en geschreven teksten (kwalitatief onderzoek), vonden we drie groepen stimulerende factoren: het tonen van leiderschap, het vormen van partnerschappen en het openlijk tonen van besluiten en successen. Ook stelden we vast dat de manager die verantwoordelijk is voor dierenwelzijn op twee manieren communicatie kan inzetten om een extra stimulerende rol te spelen: door te communiceren met interne en externe partijen én door onderlinge communicatie tussen die partijen te stimuleren.

Uitgaande van bestaande ideeën over dierethiek en bedrijfsethiek uit de morele filosofie en andere disciplines, maak ik vervolgens aannemelijk dat bedrijven sterke verantwoordelijkheden hebben ten opzichte van dieren (normatief-filosofisch onderzoek). De uitkomsten vertaal ik naar concrete adviezen voor verschillende bedrijfstakken.

Dit proefschrift verbindt de dierethiek en de bedrijfsethiek op zowel academisch als toegepast niveau. Wat betreft het tweede doe ik de volgende aanbevelingen voor bedrijven: doe een zelfonderzoek met onze CAN-methode; neem dieren op in

Samenvatting in het Nederlands (in Dutch)

de materialiteitsanalyse; maak een manager verantwoordelijk voor dierenwelzijn; zoek verbetermogelijkheden door leiderschap, partnerschap, naar buiten treden en communicatie met en door diverse partijen; neem dierenwelzijn op in MVO-communicatie; voeg nieuwe communicatiekanalen toe; en communiceer proactief en eerlijk over plannen, doelen, obstakels en prestaties.



Acknowledgements

This thesis, which is based on articles that were meant as separate publications, is far more than my own work. Though I was first author of each of the papers it is based on, there were substantial contributions from other authors. Apart from that, there were many people who supported and inspired me, and still do so.

I would like to thank Muel Kaptein for seeing the urgency of my topic, for his ongoing help and support, and for co-writing the article Chapter 2 is based on. He taught me how to go from a question to a study design and helped me conquer many other specifics of academic research and writing. I would also like to thank Franck Meijboom for his flexibility in jumping into an ongoing process, his critical and supportive comments on my work, and his wholehearted involvement in issues of animal ethics. He contributed substantially to the article on which Chapter 1 is based. My thanks also go to Floryt van Wesel, for co-writing the two articles the Chapters 3 and 4 are based on. As a methodologist, she particularly helped me with the study design, the processing of the qualitative data, and the ways of drawing conclusions. And I would like to thank Patrick Bossuyt for helping me, as a methodologist, with the processing of the quantitative data of the study which Chapter 2 was based on, and especially, as my partner in life, for loving me and believing in me.

This thesis could never have seen the light of day without the support of many other people around me. My thanks go to Anne Hodgkinson for making my English sound like English, Joleen Schipper for typing out several interviews, Maartje Gortworst for designing the wonderful infographics, and Conchita Mulder for making a touching animation on CAN: Commitment to ANimals (the concept presented in Chapter 2), which the reader can easily find on YouTube and Vimeo. I am also grateful to Betteke van Ruler, for advising me in the corridors on current communication research, and to Peter Singer for talking me into this academic adventure in just two sentences, probably without being aware of it (see also my personal Epilogue). I send my thanks to the late Rob Jasperse for teaching me how animal advocacy works and for being my funniest colleague ever (and I have shared work space with stand-up comedians). My thanks go out as well to my colleagues at the Animal Welfare Body Utrecht for sharing their ethically challenging cases with me, especially the late Harry Blom, my ever-optimistic ex-officemate. I also want to thank my colleagues of the TNO Animal Ethics Committee and the informal 'Ethicists in Animal Ethics Committees' think tank for freely exploring ethical issues with me, especially Frans Stafleu for his non-stop teaser questions. I also thank my many animal advocacy friends in real life and on social media, who have

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I thank you all, as well as anyone whom I may have forgotten to mention here, from the bottom of my heart.

1

Introduction

This chapter provides an introduction to the topic of this thesis, and a first exploration of both animal ethics and the societal responsibilities of companies. The research question is presented and explained.

This chapter is partly based on the chapter Animal Ethics, which I wrote with co-author Franck L.B. Meijboom and was published in the Encyclopedia of Business and Professional Ethics (Springer, 2017).

Ethical dilemmas about animals play a part in our lives, and our choices affect their lives, as we eat, drink, buy things, go on a holiday, or take care of our companion animals. Some people think animals are meant to be owned and used by humans, while others think they are not, or have not given the question a thought. There are people who take the interests of animals into account in every conscious choice they make, others who do so now and then or in making specific types of choices, and there are others who acknowledge the interests of animals but do not always have the energy, the money, the information, or the drive to do so. In addition, some of these choices are based on competing interests: my tasty dinner or the pig's life, my soft leather shoes or the calf's life, my child's nutritious milk or the cow's ability to feed and raise her calf, my enjoyment of a marine animal show or the dolphin's freedom, my preference for a short-nosed pedigree dog or the dog's health. These ethical choices may remain unrecognized by the people who make them, and the outcomes may be incorporated in culture. In society, the treatment of production animals is 'outsourced' to companies, for example – staying with the former examples – to industrial farming, the entertainment industry, and professional dog breeders. This takes us to the role of companies. Are they responsible for their impact on animal welfare?¹

In Western society, philosophical and societal support for the idea that animals should receive more protection has grown since the 19th century, with an acceleration during the last five decades (Singer 1975/2009, Regan 1983, Rollin 2011, Verbeke & Viaene 2000, Verdonk 2009). This is reflected in, for example, the aim of the European Union to improve animal welfare (European Convention for the Protection of Animals kept for Farming 1976). NGOs for animal protection play an important role in this development (Verdonk 2009). Some consumers whose awareness has been raised vote with their money and stop buying products or services that have a negative impact on animals (Hancox, 2018). They may switch to products with animal welfare labels or stop eating animals at all. They may even stop visiting zoos and marine animal parks, and boycott animal-based products

1 Throughout this thesis, I will use the term 'animal welfare' when referring to animal welfare in a broad sense, meaning roughly: the good for animals, or the interests of animals. For ethics specialists, the term 'welfare' is strongly connected to a utilitarian approach, which considers welfare the central value that should be maximized. Other ethical approaches may use other terms with different ethical notions, such as: rights, respect, care, autonomy, or intrinsic worth. At the same time, in everyday language, 'animal welfare' is often used in the broader sense used here. To connect to this practice in society, I will use it in the same broad way. In chapter 5, I will explore the meaning of the term 'animal welfare' in the context of this thesis somewhat further, including the question of whether it includes continuing a good life. Insights from this chapter are not necessary for understanding the previous chapters.

besides meat (dairy, wool, leather, et cetera). Nevertheless, it is not always clear who bears responsibility for animals affected by corporate activity. Part of the responsibility may lie with different parties, such as companies, the government, and consumers.

Those who look into both animal ethics and business ethics may get the impression that the two hardly intermingle (Van Liedekerke & Dubbink 2008). In animal ethics, it has been argued extensively that humans have strong moral obligations towards animals, but not much is said about obligations or responsibilities of companies as institutions towards animals. In business ethics, the achievements in animal ethics have hardly been considered. Exceptions are papers about responsibility towards specific animal groups, such as farmed animals and laboratory animals. Few researchers treat animal ethics as a topic of CSR. (See Chapter 2 for a more elaborate description of literature in which animal ethics and business ethics overlap.)

The broader question whether companies bear responsibilities towards animals at all, and what these responsibilities – if any – consist of, remains unanswered. To answer this question, it is helpful to know whether companies express themselves about responsibilities towards animals. Therefore, in this thesis I will explore the question: *What is the ethical responsibility of companies towards animals and how do they deal with this responsibility?* In doing so, I will explore and try to answer the following sub-questions, which are related to the chapters² of this thesis as follows.

Are companies prima facie responsible for their impact on animals? This question is relevant as a first exploration of the topic of responsibilities of companies towards animals, which I will undertake in the following sections of this chapter (Chapter 1). Here I will give an overview of the field of animal ethics and where it could relate to business ethics, and in that way roughly define the field as part of normative philosophy.³

After having sketched the field from a normative-philosophical point of view, I will offer an empirical view on the same matter, by answering the second sub-question: *Do companies express themselves about ethical responsibilities towards animals?* In

2 As the chapters are based on separately published papers, the content may overlap.

3 Partly based on the chapter *Animal Ethics*, which I wrote with co-author Franck L.B. Meijboom and which was published in the *Encyclopedia of Business and Professional Ethics* (Springer, 2017).

Chapter 2, *Talking about animals*, I will present a study by Muel Kaptein and myself,⁴ in which we show on a quantitative basis that slightly fewer than half of the world's 200 largest companies make statements of ethical responsibility towards animals on their websites. The findings show great divergence among these companies in the commitment towards animal welfare they express. We will conclude that companies who do express responsibility express quite a high level of concern, but do so in documents and places on their websites of relatively low importance. Our approach results in the CAN (Commitment to ANimals) scoring method for measuring the commitment to animals expressed by companies on their website. This method can be used by companies for self-assessment as well as by NGOs or others interested in animal welfare.

Having concluded the above, I will try to explain the divergence in the expressed commitment and try to gain more knowledge about factors that play a role in the attitude companies take towards animals. Because this is relatively unexplored ground as well, together with Floryt van Wesel I undertook explorative qualitative research into the third sub-question: *What drivers help to make companies adopt an ethical stance towards animals?* In Chapter 3, *We are the Champions*, I will present an explorative study conducted by Floryt van Wesel and myself,⁵ in which we present a model that shows how, in companies, three sets of drivers we called 'leadership', 'partnership', and 'championship' are helpful for creating a positive attitude towards animals. We show that by strengthening these phenomena, stakeholders can accelerate a change towards a more widely felt corporate responsibility towards animals within the company and its business environment. Our model helps to explain the differing positions on animal ethics of companies as found in the study in Chapter 2. We gathered the data on which our qualitative study is based by zooming in on the food industry, probably the most animal-consuming and animal-welfare-threatening industry. We held in-depth interviews with managers in large Western-Europe-based food companies (producers, processors, wholesalers, and retailers) who were made responsible for animal welfare, and we used written sources from these companies.

4 Based on Janssens, M.R.E., Kaptein, M. (2016). The Ethical Responsibility of Companies Towards Animals: A Study of the Expressed Commitment of the Fortune Global 200. *The Journal of Corporate Citizenship* 63(3): 42-72.

5 Based on Janssens, M.R.E., Van Wesel, F. (2018). Leadership, Partnership and Championship as Drivers for Animal Ethics the Western Food Industry. In: A. Linzey & C. Linzey (eds.), *Ethical Vegetarianism and Veganism*. Routledge, London, pp. 276-290.

In Chapter 4, *Connecting Parties for Change*, I will present a second study by Floryt van Wesel and myself,⁶ based mainly on the same data set, this time focusing specifically on factors of communications that influence an ethical stance of companies towards animals. Its purpose was to answer the fourth sub-question: *What factors of communication help companies to take responsibility for animals, and how do these factors interact?* Again, we focused on the food industry, for the same reasons as above. Our conclusion, presented in a second model, is that a manager who is responsible for animal welfare in a company can strengthen the company's ethical position in two ways that involve communication. The first one is to connect with stakeholders within and outside the company. The second way is to facilitate, as a moderator, connections between these stakeholders in which the manager is not involved per se. In both cases, if these connections take the form of personal meetings, this is extra helpful for enhancing a responsible attitude towards animals, because that is how insight, trust, and collaboration are gained and sustained. Our model outlines all the supportive communicative connections we found. An additional table displays the different communication channels that are used for each different stakeholder. We also offer practical advice for managers.

Having done this, in Chapter 5, *Animal Business*, I will return to a normative-philosophical approach, where I will leave the *prima facie* stance from Chapter 1 and go deeper into thorough step-by-step philosophical argumentation, to answer the fourth sub-question: *What are the ethical responsibilities of companies towards animals from a normative-philosophical point of view?* There, I will argue that, if there is a human obligation to respect the interests of animals, and if corporations have responsibilities towards society, companies bear an institutional responsibility towards animals. I will offer arguments for why animals count from an ethical perspective and how moral obligations of individuals lead to responsibilities of companies for different types of impact on animals. Finally, I will offer implications for different industries.

I will conclude with Chapter 6,⁷ in which I answer the last sub-question: *What do the ethical responsibilities of companies towards animals entail in practice?* To do this, I will resume my conclusion that companies can and should take steps to take the interests of animals into account in their policies and actions, summarize

6 Based on Janssens, M.R.E., Van Wesel, F. (2019). Connecting parties for change, A qualitative study into communicative drivers for animal welfare in the food industry. *Food Ethics*, 3: 5-21.

7 This chapter is based on Janssens, M.R.E. (2019). *Animal Business: An exploration of corporate responsibility towards animals*, under review.

the different conclusions and implications, and offer action points for managers and other decision makers in companies, ranging from doing an informative assessment on their own corporate website to incorporating animal ethics into their business codes and CSR policies. Special suggestions are made for the CSR manager (or any other manager potentially responsible for the corporate impact on animals) and for the role of communications in the change process. An extra recommendation that I will make, based on this thesis, is for the fields of business ethics and animal ethics to work together more closely to accelerate the notion of responsibility for animals as one of the corporate social responsibilities that cannot be ignored.

Having said this, in the following sections of this chapter I will roughly sketch the field of animal ethics in relation to business ethics, and delineate how the two fields have hardly related so far.

1.1 Animal ethics

Animal ethics deals with the moral relationship between humans and animals.⁸ This implies a discussion about whether and why animals are morally important for their own sake and if so, what consequences follow for human action. Traditionally, animal ethics is concerned with individual animals and their moral value, their interests, and their preferences (Bovenkerk & Meijboom 2012, Cochrane 2016, Engster 2006, Fraser 2012, Keulartz 2016, Meijer 2017, Milligan 2016, Nussbaum 2007, Regan 1983, Rollin 2016b, Singer 1975/2009).

As in business ethics and many other fields of ethics, the most common modern approaches of animal ethics are consequentialist or deontological by nature, or a type of virtue ethics. What these approaches generally have in common is that they include sentient animals in the sphere of the morally relevant. This means we should take animals into account for their own sake when deciding about the good and the right.

8 In animal ethics literature, 'humans' are often called 'human animals', and what we call 'animals' in daily life are often called 'non-human animals'. The purpose of this choice is to stress that humans are also an animal species. Although this is my personal preference, I have decided to connect with conventional language in this thesis and will use the terms 'humans' and 'animals'.

Consequentialism and utilitarianism

The father of utilitarianism, Bentham (1780/2007:311), wrote a short but famous fragment that turned out pivotal for animal ethics: 'The question is not, Can they reason? nor, Can they talk? but, Can they suffer?' With these words, he opens up the possibility of including sentient animals (animals who can experience pleasure and pain) in the sphere of the morally relevant. If a utilitarian – a consequentialist who sees welfare or happiness as the central value that should be maximized – is calculating the added or diminished value for all affected, then the added or diminished value for affected animals counts as well. To put it simply: as soon as we know that other creatures can be harmed by negative experiences such as pain, we should take their interests into account, because being sentient is why we as humans count morally ourselves. In our times, this approach has been developed further by Singer (1975/2009; 1981/2011; 1993), theoretically as well as practically. He examines how we should weigh up the different value changes for animals and humans in different situations and argues that by the above definition at least all vertebrates (without disorders that prevent them from feeling pleasure and pain) are morally relevant and that their interests should receive equal consideration.

Deontology and rights ethics

According to Kant (1785/1996), humans have direct duties towards other rational beings, who by virtue of their rationality have moral agency. They can decide about principles that qualify to be universal laws about moral obligations. Towards animals, who are in his view non-rational beings without moral agency, humans have only indirect duties; people who behave badly towards animals could hurt the feelings of humans with these actions, or start behaving badly towards humans too. Although this may be true, there have been recent proposals that show that a deontological account is compatible with the notion of direct human duties towards animals. Korsgaard (2018) argues that animals as non-rational beings can be 'passive citizens' who can have moral claims on 'active citizens' (rational beings). We, rational humans, should acknowledge these claims because animals are ends in themselves who care about themselves. Regan (1983/2004) developed a deontology-based rights approach to animal ethics, by which he claims that humans have direct moral duties towards animals. His approach is based on the inherent value of subjects-of-a-life: sentient individuals who in addition to sentience have other violable abilities, such as memory and belief. They are aware of the world and of what happens to them, and they act intentionally. These subjects-of-a-life are moral patients: they cannot reflect on right and wrong, but they can undergo it. They have inherent value and a right to be treated respectfully

and not to be harmed. There are circumstances where overriding this right is permitted: if not harming them would harm many more. The criterion of being subject-of-a-life leads to many empirical and philosophical questions about who and what should be included in the moral realm. Regan is aware of this, but postulates that mammals from around the age of 1 year should be included, as it encompasses both animals and humans such as young children and people with mental disabilities. At the same time, he remarks that it is difficult to draw the line, and that the group of subjects-of-a-life may be larger, including for example birds.

Virtue-ethics inspired capabilities approach

Nussbaum (2007) developed a virtue-ethics inspired capabilities approach for animal ethics. Briefly, her approach holds that based on an attitude of wonder and respect towards other creatures, we should allow animals the capabilities to flourish in their own specific ways. She translates the list of capabilities this approach assigns to humans to a list of capabilities animals should be allowed. These are: life, bodily health, bodily integrity, access to sources of pleasure, emotions through attachment to others, practical reason (to the extent to which the capacity is present in the animal), non-humiliation, relationships with other species, play, and control over their environment. Nussbaum does not go very deeply into differences between animal species but acknowledges that priority should be given to changing the situation of animals who suffer from the way they are being treated.

Which animals to include: some consensus

Departing from differing ethical strands, the philosophers mentioned above seem to agree that vertebrates are the first to be taken into consideration: mammals in any case, and probably fish, birds, reptiles, and amphibians. Research shows that more species than these may be sentient in the sense that they can have experiences they evaluate as positive or negative, and recognize stimuli which they try to encounter or avoid. To begin with, crustaceans and cephalopods have been acknowledged as probably sentient (Broom 2007). Today, there are scientific indications of relevant cognitive capacities that might imply sentience of, for example, shrimps (Broom 2007; Elwood et al. 2009) and honeybees (Bateson et al. 2011). Knowledge about the biological systems of animals is increasing rapidly, and may lead to species or subspecies being added to the group of sentient animals which should be treated respectfully by avoiding the risk of making them suffer. (See Chapter 5, Table 11, for an overview of current knowledge about sentience of animal species.)

1.2 Responsibilities of companies

Various scholars have argued that companies have responsibilities towards society. Joyner and Payne (2002:298) state that 'business cannot exist without society and that society cannot go forward without business. Thus, business must acknowledge society's existence and society's growing demand for more ethically responsible business practice.' Jeurissen (1995:69) states: 'it is only due to the integration with the moral community that business can exist.' Kavaliauskas (2011) gives a brief summary of the general obligations of companies to society, quoting Solomon, Buchholz, De George, and Duska about the respective obligations (in a broad sense) which they put forward in their writings: the good life as a goal of business, corporate responsibility to help society, business as a means to create a good society, and the betterment of society as a purpose of business. But how do we define 'the good life', 'help society', 'the good society', or 'the betterment of society'? A broad variety of answers to these questions is possible, but our focus is now on animals: are they part of society, and should companies help animals to pursue and achieve 'a good life'? Without the need to answer these questions at this point we have reasons, based on the foregoing argument about the relative consensus of the three main modern ethical approaches on moral obligations of humans to animals, to take a closer look at the responsibilities of companies towards animals.

In businesses, animals are often treated as an instrument for human goals: for example, they are raised or fished to serve as food; special strains are bred to obtain laboratory and companion animals; animals in circuses and marine animal parks are taught tricks for human entertainment; others are trained to do agricultural, rescue, or guide work for humans. Apart from these forms of direct impact on animals, companies can have an indirect impact on animals, for example through habitat destruction, road kill, food provision in company restaurants, and pollution, including noise and light pollution. From an animal ethics perspective, this could lead to moral concerns about business activities in relation to animals.

Integrating the interests of animals into ethical reflection of companies can be complicated, not only because of the huge variety among animals and animal species, each with their specific needs and preferences, but also because humans and their institutions relate to animals in very different ways in the context of different practices, and (in general) view and treat them accordingly. They can be classified into six categories of relatedness to people and people's institutions:

farmed animals, research animals, wildlife, animals in entertainment, working animals, and companion animals (WAP 2013). This is not a static categorization. Animals can change categories. A wild animal can be captured and put in a zoo to continue its life as an object of entertainment. A farmed animal can be purchased by a private individual and be kept as a companion animal.

It is possible that what a company owes to animals in moral terms depends not only on its direct or indirect impact on the animals, but also on its relationship with the animal. Companies that own animals may bear a more primary responsibility, resulting in a moral duty of care. However, ethical responsibility towards animals is not limited to their owners; it can pass through the production chain and affect the responsibility of business partners, so that any company that buys animal-based products bears a shared responsibility for the animals the products were derived from. Even outside the production chain, procurement, for example of restaurant food, can be an activity in which ethical responsibility is involved. Therefore, it is important that each company explores its own responsibility towards animals and identifies the extent of it and the relative proportion of it amongst other responsibility issues. I will return to how this can be done in the final chapters 5 and 6. From this starting point, I will now outline the different studies I conducted to approach the research question mentioned earlier: *What is the ethical responsibility of companies towards animals and how do they deal with this responsibility?* and its sub-questions.

With this PhD thesis, I aim to contribute to the academic fields of both animal ethics and business ethics by connecting the two and filling in the blind spot of the latter. I hope to enrich the field of animal ethics by offering insights into the role and position of companies, and the field of business ethics by introducing insights from animal ethics and offering recommendations for companies on how to take responsibility for animals.²

2

Talking about
Animals

This chapter describes a study that shows that 47% of the 200 largest companies in the world make statements of ethical responsibility towards animals. There is a great divergence in the expressed commitment toward animal welfare among these companies. Companies that express responsibility show quite a high level of concern in their words, but they do so in documents of relatively low importance. Statements regarding ethical responsibility for animal welfare are generally made in consequentialist terms. The results of the study presented in this chapter show that it is high time for the fields of business ethics and animal ethics to start working more closely together.

This chapter is based on Janssens, M.R.E., Kaptein, M. (2016). The Ethical Responsibility of Companies Towards Animals: A Study of the Expressed Commitment of the Fortune Global 200. The Journal of Corporate Citizenship 63(3): 42-72.

Companies have a significant impact on a great number of animals, be it in the natural environment (Braithwaite 2010, Chepesiuk 2009, Sai Leung & Sze Leung 2003), within the walls of (other) companies (Foer 2009, Schwartzkopf-Genswein et al. 2012, Vetter et al. 2014), or even in private homes (Bermudez et al. 2014). However, animals are not always treated well by companies (Engster 2006, Fraser 2008) and are even abused on a large scale (Braithwaite 2010, Foer 2009, Leder 2012, Singer 1975/2009). Companies are therefore under growing pressure from animal welfare organizations and consumers to change this behaviour (Brinkmann 2004, Ventura et al. 2015).

Research in business ethics does not address corporate responsibilities towards animals in its full scope. Van Liedekerke and Dubbink (2008) observe that animal ethics and business ethics are drifting apart. At first glance, business practice seems to confirm this. In a study of business codes, Kaptein (2004) found that preventing harm to animals or optimizing animal welfare is mentioned by only 2% of the largest companies in the world. However, companies can also express an ethical responsibility towards animals in other documents, such as strategy plans, annual reports, detailed policies, press releases, and corporate magazines. This raises the question of how companies actually do express themselves on their responsibilities towards animals, or on any other ways of looking at animals through an ethical lens. Therefore the research question of this chapter is: *Do companies express themselves about ethical responsibilities towards animals?* This question and its answer will contribute to answering the second half of the larger question of this thesis: *What is the ethical responsibility of companies for animals and how do they deal with this responsibility?*

An annual benchmark on farm animal welfare has been published since 2012: The Business Benchmark on Farm Animal Welfare. Though not peer reviewed, it is well known in the field and has grown in importance. A recent edition (Amos & Sullivan 2018) assessed the approach to animal welfare of 110 global food companies by their published information. Findings are that performance and reporting on farm animal welfare is still underdeveloped, but that there are signs that companies are increasing the attention they pay to farm animal welfare.

The company website is often used to disseminate these documents and thus to communicate the ethical responsibilities of the company (Mann et al. 2014). In this study, we use the web-based approach of Mann et al. (2014) and Fukukawa and Moon (2004) to analyse company websites to establish whether and how they

articulate ethical responsibilities towards animals. Websites are more often used as a source in business ethics research (cf. Kim & Nam 2012, Snider et al. 2003).

There are good reasons to be cautious. Website content is subject to continuous change. It may not tell the whole story, or it may tell more than the whole story by painting a rosier picture than the truth. Still, we think that web-based data can be very revealing, since our intention is not to draw conclusions about the actual behaviour of these companies in relation to animals, but merely about the way they express themselves on this topic.

Our main reason for adding this study to existing studies like the annual benchmark on farm animal welfare is our observation that *all* companies have an impact on animals (as was argued in section 1.2), which may result in non-food companies expressing some responsibility as well. We wanted to find out whether companies in general see reasons to express themselves regarding their attitude towards animals. We did not know of such a study.

We studied the websites of the 200 largest companies in the world as these companies have the resources to build and maintain extensive websites, and to publish information they perceive as relevant on these websites. Furthermore, the Fortune list is a common data source in business ethics research (cf. Kim & Nam 2012, Muller & Whiteman 2009, Kaptein 2004, KPMG 2008, KPMG 2014).

We would like to indicate that we do not assume beforehand that companies *should* express themselves about animals, which would mean that communicating about animals is a moral obligation. What we did was to evaluate their communication about animals in order to analyse how they view their responsibilities towards animals.

This chapter is structured as follows. In the next section we define animal ethics and explore why companies would have an ethical responsibility towards animals. In the two sections that follow, we describe the research method and discuss the findings. The final section presents our conclusions and the implications for future research and business practice.

2.1 Theoretical background

In this section we explore the relevant theoretical background from animal ethics and business ethics.

Animal ethics

Animal ethics is an established academic field, with a dedicated *Journal of Animal Ethics* and several publications in bioethics and agricultural ethics journals. A core element of animal ethics is the moral status of animals, not as a species but as individuals with interests (DeGrazia 1996, Des Jardins 1993). Animal ethics is therefore concerned not with the instrumental value animals have for humans or institutions, but with the value animals have in and for themselves, or as Lynch (1988:268) puts it, the animal as ‘a subject for-itself as well as in-itself’.

To capture the scope of this chapter and this complete thesis, it is necessary to distinguish animal ethics from adjacent fields of research. Animal ethics does not correspond to environmental ethics. Though animals in the wild and the their continued existence as a species can be part of the environment, there is a difference in focus. Environmental ethics focuses on the moral status of the natural environment with the animals in it (who need it as a habitat, a provider of food and shelter) and possibly on preservation of animal species. Notwithstanding the importance of this strand in bioethics, the focus of animal ethics in its current academic interpretation and as understood in this thesis is on the interests of individual animals. It is also necessary to distinguish between animal ethics and nature ethics, which may research the ethical value of ecosystems, species or biodiversity. Wildlife management by hunting, for example, can have a positive impact on nature, and at the same time a negative impact on the animals involved. Keeping animals in zoos where breeding programmes dictate their lives can be positive for their species but negative for the individuals involved. An even more important difference is that animal ethics is also concerned with animals in the non-natural environment, such as laboratory animals, companion animals, and animals in the food industry. Some philosophers, such as Benson (2000), do regard animal ethics as one of the many elements of environmental ethics, but even in that context animal ethics has its own approach.

The three main traditional approaches in animal ethics, which I presented in Chapter 1, coincide with the main approaches in business ethics, which are consequential, deontological, and virtue ethics (Kaptein & Wempe 2002). Singer

(1993) represents the utilitarian and, therefore, consequentialist approach to animal ethics, Regan (1983, 2006) proposes a deontology-inspired rights approach to animal ethics, whereas Nussbaum (2007) has developed a capabilities approach for animal ethics which is mainly inspired by virtue ethics.

Utilitarianism is concerned with the maximization of happiness or welfare. The right action is the action of which the consequences maximize 'pleasure' and minimize 'pain', for the greatest number, each individual counting as one (Singer 1993). Through his famous words, 'The question is not, Can they *reason*? nor, Can they *talk*? but, Can they *suffer*?', the father of utilitarianism, Bentham (1780/2007:311), explicitly includes animals in the sphere of the morally relevant. Singer (1975, 1993) expands this approach by including moral considerations for using and killing animals for human ends. Given that aggregate pleasure and pain are central to utilitarianism, it includes all sentient beings, and therefore all vertebrate animals (mammals, fishes, birds, reptiles, and amphibians), as well as crustaceans and octopuses (Elwood et al. 2009). Within this tradition Norwood and Lusk (2011) present a utilitarian model for ethical cost-benefit analysis that includes human and animal preferences and costs.

Regan (1983, 2006) develops a rights-based animal ethic which is grounded in the inherent value of what he refers to as 'moral patients'. Moral patients are individuals who are aware of the world and of what happens to them but who lack the capacity to do right or wrong. One could say, 'the innocent': they cannot act morally or immorally but can be treated morally or immorally (DesJardins 1993). Due to their status as moral patients, animals have inherent value and therefore a right to be treated respectfully and not to be harmed. This right is, according to Regan, *prima facie*: there are circumstances where it is permitted to override this right, that is, if it can be justified by solid arguments. The only acceptable justification for harming the innocent is that not harming them would harm an even greater number of innocent beings.

Nussbaum (2007) develops an animal ethic that connects virtue ethics with animal capabilities. She argues that humans should permit animals a dignified life that allows their capabilities to flourish. This can be achieved by adopting an attitude of wonder towards complex forms of life in nature and of kindness and compassion towards animals. Based on the list of capabilities that humans should be allowed, Nussbaum identifies a similar list of capabilities that animals should be allowed: life, bodily health, bodily integrity, access to sources of pleasure,

emotions through attachment to others, practical reason (to the extent to which the capacity is present in the animal), non-humiliation, relationships with other species, play, and control over their environment. Although Nussbaum would argue that a mosquito's ability to continue living is a capability that has value in itself, she would also agree with Singer that priority should be given to sentient animals. Although the group of animals Regan is referring to is narrower, we will focus on sentient animals, henceforth referred to as animals. In Chapter 5 we will elaborate on the moral status of different animal species.

Animal ethics and business ethics

To date, business ethics has not broadly incorporated animal ethics. Van Liedekerke and Dubbink (2008:278) observe that there is a strong need for business ethics to integrate animal ethics but that 'it often looks as if the fields of applied ethics are drifting apart without too much overlap or synergy'. An influential article like *The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility* (Carroll 1991) does not even mention animals. Freeman's stakeholder theory (Freeman et al. 2010) only touches on the subject. Few researchers treat animal welfare as part of corporate responsibility, and then usually with limited scope, or from a specific perspective, and more often in descriptive than in normative studies. We will now list a few examples.

With regard to the limited scope, Maloni and Brown (2006) address responsibilities of companies in the farmed-animal food-production chain. Allievi, Vinnari and Luukkanen (2015) discuss animal ethics as one of the aspects of sustainability in meat production and consumption. Simpson and Rollin (1984) work out the consequences of welfare enhancement of cattle and broiler chickens. Some cite laboratory research on animals as an ethical issue for companies (Holder-Webb & Cohen 2012, O'Riordan & Fairbrass 2014; Rappaport & Himschoot 1994). Eastman and Santoro (2003) mention animal welfare as an example of a value-laden issue for a drug company. In their studies of the ethical policy of the British Cooperative Bank, Harvey (1995) and Kitson (1996) note the issues of animal research, blood sports, and fur production. Scholtens (2007) mentions animal research as an issue for socially responsible investments, and Taylor (2005) discusses animal research thoroughly. Boyd (1997), examining business ethics in Canada, addresses the issue of animal ethics in the context of the country's much-discussed seal pelt industry. Rojas et al. (2009) identify animal rights as one of many issues of shareholder activism. Finally, Low and Davenport (2009), in their examination of the challenges of ethical trade, mention the animal-friendly restaurant policy of a UK zoo.

Some scholars note consumer concern for animals. Auger and Devinney (2007) and Auger et al. (2007) cite animal testing as an issue that matters to ethical consumers. Brinkmann (2004) finds ethical shopping tips beneficial to animal welfare on consumer websites. In their research into ethical product labels in the UK, Hartlieb and Jones (2009) find quite a few labels concerned with animal welfare. Crane (2001) mentions a few animal welfare topics in exploring the notion of an ethical product.

Regarding the specific perspectives, DesJardins (1998) briefly considers a consequentialist biocentric business ethics but rejects it on practical grounds. Zuzworsky (2001) examines unnecessary suffering in factory farming from a spiritual perspective. Vogel (2001) notes that in the Jewish tradition, humans, and thus also companies, have an ethical responsibility towards animals, so long it does not come at the cost of human welfare. Graafland (2015) as a business ethics scholar explores animal stewardship from a biblical perspective.

A broader approach can be found in Zadek (1998) who identifies eight quality principles for assessing social and ethical initiatives. Inclusivity is among these principles, which means taking all stakeholders into account, also animals. And then there is Hoffman (1991), who pleads for ethical consideration of and legal rights for 'non-human natural things'.

Notably, Elkington's (1997) Triple Bottom Line concept of the Triple Bottom Line (People, Planet, Profit) does not explicitly include the interests of animals. In some of its interpretations such as ISO 26000 (2010), animals are treated as part of the natural environment (planet). This however does not guarantee that the interests of individual animals – the concern of animal ethics – are also taken seriously. Gray et al. (1996), for example, recommend disclosing social, environmental, and employee information in annual reports, but make no mention of animals. It is possible that companies may believe that addressing environmental issues embraces addressing animal interests, but since 'the environment' is an extremely broad concept, the interests of animals are bound to be overshadowed by the more obvious environmental issues, such as pollution and impact on plant and animal species. This can be seen in the publications of Bansal and Kistruck (2006), Driscoll and Starik (2004), Hoch and Giacalone (1994), and Phillips and Reichart (2000). Two exceptions are Sillanpää (1998) and York (2009). Sillanpää describes the ethical policy of the Body Shop as having three branches – Human and Civil Rights, Environmental Sustainability, and Animal Protection – whereas York

presents animal ethics as an important aspect of environmental ethics, which allows for a connection to business ethics. Nevertheless, it appears that animal ethics is discussed only marginally in the business ethics literature.

Ethical responsibilities of companies towards animals

Animals can be found to occupy six different relationships to humans and companies: as wildlife, farmed animals, companion animals, animals in entertainment, working animals, and research animals (WAP 2013). Farmed animals, animals in entertainment, working animals, and research animals are often owned by companies. Companion animals and wildlife live mainly outside companies (with a few exceptions, e.g. animals in zoos, pet shops, and breeding facilities), but can be affected by companies as a result of their activities. A few examples include the construction of buildings or development of land destroying animal nesting places and habitats, manufacturing processes polluting the environment and causing damage to animal health, the use of company trucks occasionally hitting animals on the road, and oil spills or contributions to plastic waste killing birds, fish, and sea mammals. Almost any large company therefore has some impact on animals. At the very least, it is most likely that it makes use of a catering company for its company restaurants which sources, prepares, and sells animal food products, such as meat, poultry, eggs and dairy products. Google and Microsoft, for example, were among the first companies to receive the Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) Good Egg Award after this award was established in 2007 (CIWF website). The award is granted to companies that use, or have committed to use, only cage-free eggs or egg products in their supply chain. CIWF found it rewarding enough to invite these companies to meet the requirements, and in this way illustrates that any large company has a strong impact on animals.

What implications does the moral status of animals have for companies? How and to what extent are we to assign companies responsibility for animals? Apart from the three main theoretical approaches in both animal and business ethics, which will be discussed further in Chapter 5, there are three additional approaches that can be of help when looking into whether companies express their responsibilities towards animals. These three approaches specifically address the relationship between animals and institutions.

The first approach is that of Fraser (2012) who distinguishes four ways in which human activity can affect animals, and four matching 'principles' for acting ethically. By these 'principles', people who are responsible for these animals

are attributed moral obligations. He does not address companies explicitly but emphasises that the four principles apply to individual decisions as well as to issues related to social policy and collective action. According to Fraser, anyone who keeps animals (farmers, zoo owners, owners of labs where animal experiments are conducted, et cetera), is firstly obliged to give these animals a good life (shelter, food, protection, companionship, health care, and a painless death). When intentional harm is caused to animals (through hunting, slaughtering, conducting experiments on them, etc.), they should be treated with compassion (analgesics, a quick death). When direct but unintended harm is caused to animals (through oil spills, by-catch, vehicle collisions, underwater noise, pollution of their drinking water or food, et cetera), one should be mindful of potential harm (challenge and change existing practices, change decisions that influence how others treat animals). When animals are indirectly harmed as a result of interference with life-sustaining processes and balances in nature (through change of water levels, light pollution that may result in species extinction in the long term, et cetera), these processes and balances should be protected. This latter way in which human activity can affect animals is often treated as a dimension of environmental ethics rather than animal ethics. Yet, Fraser argues, given that individual animals and not only their species are affected, such impacts should 'be seen as fundamental to a practical ethic for animals' (p. 737).

Donaldson and Kymlicka (2011), look at animal ethics from a political perspective. They represent a second approach to the relationship between animals and companies, and propose seeing animals as co-citizens in the political community, whose interests count when people determine the collective good. Although animals cannot be citizens in the sense of being able to vote or engage in the public debate, they can be citizens in the sense of having certain rights. These rights function independently of their capacity for political agency, just like those of children and mentally disabled people. Animals are part of society. Adopting this perspective has significant implications for the relationship between companies and animals. Animal products like milk, eggs, and wool can be used as long as the animals are not harmed. Meat can no longer be produced. Another implication the authors cite is that animals living in the wild have their own communities that should not be invaded, colonized, or robbed by humans. This would prohibit humans consuming game and fish.

A third approach to the relationship between animals and companies is to see animals as stakeholders. A widely accepted definition of a stakeholder is that

of Freeman (2010:207): ‘any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation’s objectives’. This does not resolve the question of the nature of these groups or individuals. Must they be human to be a stakeholder? Starik (1995), who is acknowledged by Freeman et al. (2010), argues that the natural environment is a stakeholder. As animals are part of the natural environment, they can be regarded as stakeholders. Hart and Sharma (2004:7) argue that it is in the interest of companies to include in their policies the views of stakeholders on the ‘fringes’: ‘the poor, weak, isolated, non-legitimate, and even non-human’. Webster (2006) also regards (farm) animals as stakeholders, along with farmers and customers.

What these different approaches to the relationship between companies and animals have in common is that they conclude that companies should consider the interests of the animals on which they have (or may have) an impact. An interesting question is to what extent companies do consider the interests of animals. For this reason, we will examine how and to what extent companies make statements on their websites that are related to these responsibilities, focusing especially on their expressed commitment to safeguarding the interests of animals.

2.2 Method

We will now present the sample and scope of this study, the study protocol we followed, the way we categorised companies, the way we classified features, and the way we developed our measurement tool: Commitment to Animals (CAN).

Sample and scope

The scope of this study comprises the statements of responsibility towards animals that can be found on the websites of the 200 largest corporations in the world. The companies were selected from the top of the 2012 Fortune Global 500 list, which is ranked by revenue. Given the time-consuming nature of analysing each website, we limited the scope to the 200 largest companies, as this is also a regular scope of research (cf. Kaptein 2004). The information accessible on a website is often extensive, and therefore it is a good source to consult to determine whether and how companies acknowledge and articulate ethical responsibilities concerning animals (Fukukawa & Moon 2004). According to Frostenson et al. (2011), almost all large companies use their websites to communicate their ethical commitments to the outside world. These companies share a great deal of information including

social reports, policies, and codes of conduct. According to Brønn and Brønn (2003), companies find it important to share their responsibilities on their websites. Given the budgets these large companies have for maintaining their websites, it is reasonable to expect websites to be quite complete and up to date. Data collection took place from April 3 to October 21, 2013.

Protocol

Using the website search tools available on most sites, we searched all of these companies' websites for the word *animal* as well as its synonym *fauna*. Sometimes an additional Google search was required. When an English-language website was unavailable, we used terms in the language encountered. When there were indications of specific animal groups, we also searched for terms like *cattle*, *fish*, and *pet* but soon found that in these cases the word *animal* was always close by. When a website included a web shop with a large number of products with 'animal print', for example, we searched for 'animal welfare' and 'responsibility' (terms often found in the texts of other companies) in order to locate the relevant texts. We followed a relatively flexible research protocol, but did so doggedly, which assured us that relevant hits would hardly be missed. Two companies were excluded from the research: one whose website remained offline during the research period and another whose website was not accessible without knowledge of Japanese. In the case of the latter, web translation did not work well, and we could not find a Japanese-speaking colleague to assist us.

Each hit was analysed for statements of responsibility towards animals. Mere references to animal health were excluded. Although animal health is related to animal welfare, such references tended to be inspired by economic concerns (keeping them alive and healthy for reasons of productivity, research quality, et cetera). The same holds for mere references to the protection of animal species, animal habitats, or biodiversity. Not only do these categories fall outside the definition of animal ethics adopted – and thus beyond the realm of our study – they were largely the subject of nature ethics or environmental ethics. We are, however, aware that aspects of animal ethics could be included in issues concerning nature or environmental ethics. References of this kind were therefore included if they reflected concern for the interests of animals as individuals. We thus excluded references to saving individual animals merely to save the species, but we included such references if a concern for the individual animal's interests was also expressed.

We accepted hits only if the text represented (directly or indirectly) the view of the company or a staff member of the company. We excluded hits such as news items about the company quoted from the media, reports from independent committees or juries, or letters from consumers. We made an exception for blogs or columns, given that allocating space to a blogger or columnist makes a statement as well. In the event that we found different versions of the same text, for example, updates of the same text with only small differences, the most recent version was used in the analysis and the older ones were ignored.

Company features

Corporations included in this study were classified geographically (as presented in the Fortune Global 500 list), by sector (especially: dealing in animal products or not), and in terms of their impact on animals. To identify companies in terms of impact, we used the approach of Fraser (2012) discussed above. However, a few aspects of his approach appeared problematic when applied to companies.

We will start with Fraser's his last category: causing direct but unintended harm to animals. In many cases this can be regarded as environmental damage. If we were to include harm of this nature it would be problematic to distinguish between companies that consider individual animals to have moral status and those that support the protection of a species as part of biodiversity or ecological balance. This problem is nevertheless easily overcome since large companies will always also cause direct, unintended harm to animals, through construction work, land development, transport, and catering (as discussed above). Therefore, it can be concluded that all companies in the research cause direct, unintended harm to animals.

A second potentially problematic aspect of applying Fraser's model is that it does not address the supply chain or the purchasing of animal products outside the supply chain. A wholesale company selling meat products does not keep animals, and does not directly harm animals either intentionally or unintentionally. However, given that it buys farm animal products for which animals are deprived of their freedom and finally killed, its impact is in fact not that far removed from 'causing intentional harm to animals'. As noted above, there is good reason to presume that all large companies are at least buyers of animal-based products, as they contract the services of caterers for their company restaurants.

Therefore, the only criteria that remain to classify a company as displaying the feature of impact on animals are 'keeping animals' and 'causing intentional harm to animals', the second of which can be direct, or indirect through purchasing. In view of the above, we are distinguishing only between companies that keep animals and those that do not keep animals.

Measuring corporate Commitment to ANimals (CAN)

To assess each company's expressed commitment towards animals, we developed the following scoring procedure. We analysed the level of commitment to animals expressed in each quote with reference to three elements: the degree of concern a company shows in its statement about animals, the level of importance of the document in which the statement appears, and the length of the text section that contains it. We ranked each measure in an ordinal classification of five levels. Each individual text could score 1 (lowest level) to 5 points (highest level) for each item, and therefore 3 to 15 points in total. Next, the commitment scores were added up for each company, the total being the Commitment to ANimals score (CAN score). We will now explain how we built up the ranking for each measure.

First factor of commitment: concern for animals

Companies differ in the level of responsibility they adopt towards animals. Some take responsibility for animals, whether voluntarily, under stakeholder pressure, or obliged to do so by legislation. Others accept no responsibility whatsoever. The depth of concern for animals thus varies considerably. How important are the interests of animals to companies? Do they mention taking animals into account in a more or less neutral way, or do they make statements about real action for the benefit of animals, or even the results of these actions? Pompe and Korthals (2010) highlight a discrepancy between the aspiration to and implementation of corporate responsibility, which in their view has more to do with implementation incompetence than window dressing. Since the aim of this study is not to draw final conclusions about successful implementation but to establish how strong the expressed level of commitment is, we distinguish five 'levels of concern'. We use Pompe and Korthals' 'aspiration' and an additional four features as signifying the level of concern.

Information. The lowest level of concern is represented by neutral information about the ethical relevance of animals, but without the company taking a stand. For example, a company can state that some consumers prefer products that are not tested on animals. The fact that it is mentioned shows that the company

acknowledges the issue of (not) harming animals; however, whether or not the company actually cares about not harming animals is not made explicit.

Attitude. The second level of concern is represented by the expression of a positive attitude or disposition towards the interests of animals. For example, the term ‘animal welfare’ could be included in a list of corporate responsibilities. It may be concluded that the company has a positive attitude towards animals, but it remains unclear what the concrete implications of that attitude are. A positive attitude signifies a higher level of concern than merely providing information since it entails a positive moral stance towards animal interests.

Aspiration. This third level of concern can be discerned when companies make statements that express aspirations or ideals (Pompe & Korthals 2010). For example, a company announces its ambition to reduce the number of animals that are annually used for research purposes. Aspiration can be assigned a higher level of concern than a positive attitude, since it does not only signal a positive stance but also the desire to improve performance.

Action. This level of concern is indicated by the company acting or having acted in a positive manner towards animals. For example, it has given an amount of money to an animal welfare charity or has started an animal welfare program. Actions signal a higher level of concern than aspirations because the company also declares that it is in fact doing something for animals.

Result. This highest level of concern applies when statements are made about intentional action with positive results for animals. For example, a company could state that it has created better living conditions for farmed animals. Result represents the highest level of concern because it indicates that the company has taken action which has had a positive effect on animals.

Second factor of commitment: document type

The level of concern statements express is only one factor relevant to a company’s commitment to animals as defined in this study. Making statements about animals in a corporate policy document, for example, signals a stronger commitment than mentioning animals in connection with a single product. Capriotti and Moreno (1996) name three relevant factors in the presentation of corporate responsibility information on websites. The first is the amount of text dedicated to a topic, discussed below. The second is the hierarchy of information in the web structure.

This factor has become obsolete due to technological progress: it is less relevant where specific content is put, as long as it can easily be found by search tools. The third factor concerns the location of the information. In this study, the location of the information is translated as 'document type', given that it is indicative of the importance a company attaches to an issue. Again, we distinguish five levels in relation to this factor.

Returning to the first of these three factors, the lowest level is *specific information with marginal scope*, for example the opinions of staff or guest bloggers about personal consumer choices or volunteer work. The second level is *specific information with a narrow scope*, where animal ethics is linked to a specific product, project, volunteer program, donation or study. The third level is *information of short-term relevance*, such as news items, press releases, magazine articles, or campaign information. It does mean something to the company, but the focus is temporary. The fourth level is *information of mid-term relevance*, such as a corporate responsibility report dealing with one year, or a mid-term policy document. Information of this nature is not an expression of the core of the company's long-term identity. The fifth and highest level is *corporate information of long-term relevance*, such as corporate brochures, long-term policy statements, and a business code.

Third factor of commitment: length of the statement

A third factor indicative of a company's commitment to animals is the length of the statement. It can range from a few words on the moral status of animals to lengthy documents elaborating on the topic in detail. Five levels were distinguished for this measure as well, using not a ratio scale but an ordinal scale since on a ratio scale the differences between the smaller numbers of words would blur. We chose to create our own ordinal scale based on what we believe the number of words indicates about the importance of the issue to the company.

Statements of a few words or a short sentence (*20 words or less*) represent the lowest level of commitment. Statements that briefly discuss animal welfare and which are made in a few more sentences (*21-100 words*) represent the second level. Where a company elaborates broadly on animal welfare in a substantial paragraph or a few short paragraphs (*101-300 words*), the third level is reached. The fourth level is achieved in instances where a company elaborates extensively on the subject (*301-1,000 words*). The highest level is represented by large texts that are, or could be, autonomous documents (*more than 1,000 words*).

Ethical approach

Texts were classified as employing a consequentialist or utilitarian view on the moral status of animals through their use of terms such as welfare, well-being, pleasure, pain, suffering, happiness, or balancing interests. Texts employing a deontological (rights) ethic were identified through the use of terms such as rights, integrity, respect for life, inherent value or sanctity of life. A virtue ethical or capabilities approach was identified through the use of terms such as dignity, flourishing, capabilities, kindness, wonder, and compassion. When we found references to the Five Freedoms from the Brambell report (1965), which are not part of any special ethical approach, we identified, if possible, the underlying approach by analysing the context.

Data analysis

The statements found were given scores for level of concern, document type and length. The scores were subsequently analysed in a manner that yielded the most relevant information: for each of the factors it was assessed how many companies (and what proportion) reached *at least* a certain level through the statements made. This approach was adopted because the highest level is the most informative: when a company shows a high level of concern for animals, statements that reflect a lower level of concern were treated as ‘extras’, covered by this higher concern. The same holds for companies making statements concerning animals in more or less important documents, or larger or smaller text fragments: the lower-level document types and fragment lengths add no extra level to the highest level found on the website of any given company.⁹

2.3 Findings

In this study, we found that 94 of the 198 companies (47%) make statements concerning ethical responsibilities towards animals on their websites. The number of texts for each of these 94 companies ranged from 1 to 57.

Commitment

Table 1 depicts the companies that make statements of responsibility regarding animals on their websites, ranked by their CAN scores. The 5 companies that scored highest are Bayer, Unilever, Nestlé, Royal Bank of Scotland Group, and Tesco.

9 The study protocol followed is presented at the end of section 6.3 in the form of an instruction: Commitment to ANimals (CAN) assessment in brief.

These high scores were obtained in different ways, as many different types of industries are represented. Bayer states its concern for research animals in many instances on its website, referring to actions and also to some outcomes. Unilever expresses a high level of concern for farm and research animals, and expresses this concern in many documents at a corporate level. Nestlé includes farm animals as well as companion animals (for which they make products), and scores high on document type as well as level of concern, and the company cites several actions and outcomes. The website of Royal Bank of Scotland Group contains several pages of consumer information on how to treat pets: the large number of individual texts is the main contributor to the resulting score. Tesco not only presents its Animal Welfare Policy online, which pertains specially to farm and research animals, the company also addresses the issue of animals in different ways in news releases and corporate responsibility reports.

The five highest-ranking companies are all based in Europe. The sixth-highest-ranking company is North American. The first 25 are all European and North American, with the exception of Woolworths, which is Australian. Asia is represented from number 26, with the Japanese IT company Fujitsu scoring 55 points thanks to a few annual reports and news items. The geographical spread of the companies in this study is shown in Table 2. North America (30%), Europe (34%), and Asia (32%) are each home to about a third of the companies included in this study. Of all companies that make statements of responsibility towards animals, the majority (40%) are North American companies, followed by European (33%) and Asian companies (21%).

Table 1: Companies Ranked by CAN Score

Position	CAN	Name
1	507	Bayer
2	452	Unilever
3	358	Nestlé
4	338	Royal Bank of Scotland Gr.
5	314	Tesco
6	293	Procter & Gamble
7	206	Roche Group
8	182	Novartis
9	160	General Motors
10	150	U.S. Postal Service (USPS)
11	139	Aviva
11	139	Woolworths
13	138	Dow Chemical
14	135	Walmart
15	125	BASF
16	124	Target
17	95	IBM
18	81	Johnson & Johnson
19	78	Exxon Mobile
20	77	Boeing
21	76	PepsiCo
22	74	Wells Fargo
23	71	State Farm Insurance Cos.
24	69	Volkswagen
25	67	Siemens
26	59	Fujitsu
27	55	Kroger
28	50	Chevron
29	43	General Electric
30	40	Hitachi
30	40	Groupe Auchan
32	39	ING Group
33	38	BHP Billiton
34	34	Barclays
35	32	Wesfarmers
36	30	Samsung Electronics
36	30	Metro
36	30	Intel
39	29	RWE
40	28	Petrobras
41	26	Bank of America Corp.
41	26	SSE
43	25	Enel
43	25	LyondellBasell Industries
45	24	Royal Dutch Shell
45	24	Pfizer
47	23	Carrefour
47	23	United Parcel Service (UPS)

Chapter 2

Table 1: Continued.

<i>Position</i>	<i>CAN</i>	<i>Name</i>
49	22	Japan Post Holdings
49	22	Vinci
51	21	Crédit Agricole
51	21	Home Depot
53	20	INTL FCStone
53	20	Kraft Foods
55	19	Daimler
55	19	Assicurazioni Generali
57	18	China National Petroleum
57	18	Deutsche Post
59	16	J.P. Morgan Chase & Co
59	16	Honda Motor
59	16	Lowe's
62	15	E.ON
62	15	Freddie Mac
64	14	Vale
65	13	Boasteel Group
65	13	Walgreens
65	13	UniCredit Group
68	12	PTT
68	12	Lloyds Banking Group
70	11	ENI
70	11	CVS Caremark
72	10	Sinopec Group
72	10	Total
72	10	China National Offshore Oil
72	10	Marathon Petroleum
72	10	AEON
72	10	Rio Tinto Group
78	9	Hewlett-Packard
78	9	Cardinal Health
78	9	Prudential Financial
81	8	Sony
81	8	Toshiba
81	8	Caterpillar
81	8	Saint-Gobain
85	7	Valero Energy
85	7	Lukoil
85	7	Verizon Communications
85	7	Mitsui
85	7	Sumitomo Mitsu Fin. Gr.
90	6	Citigroup
90	6	Telefonica
92	5	MetLife
92	5	Itochu
94	4	Microsoft

Table 2: Geographical Spread of Companies (N=198)

	Continents					
	North America	South America	Europe	Asia	Oceania	Total
	N=60	N=5	N=67	N=63	N=3	N=198
<i>Companies that do make statements of responsibility towards animals</i>	38 (63%)	2 (40%)	31 (46%)	20 (32%)	3 (100%)	94 (47%)
<i>Companies that do not make statements of responsibility towards animals</i>	22 (37%)	3 (60%)	36 (54%)	43 (68%)	0 (0%)	104 (53%)

Table 3 shows that four animal groups are mentioned by more than a quarter of the companies that make statements of responsibility: companion animals, research animals, wild animals, and farmed animals. These are the primary animal groups companies have an impact on through production, manufacturing, or retail sales of food, drugs, raw materials, insurances, etc. Animals falling into the two remaining groups – animals in entertainment and work animals – are mentioned less frequently.

Table 3: Companies Mentioning Animal Groups (N=94)

<i>Animal group</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage*</i>
Companion animals	39	41%
Research animals	33	35%
Wild animals	33	35%
Farmed animals	25	27%
Entertainment animals	6	6%
Work animals	5	5%

**Percentages do not add up to 100, as some companies do not refer to specific groups whereas others refer to more than one.*

Of the 21 companies involved in animal-based food products, 16 (76%) make statements of responsibility towards animals. This is a far higher proportion than the 44% (78 out of 177) of the companies that do not sell food products derived from animals. These 21 companies' average CAN score is more than four times the average of the other companies (98 versus 21). Of the companies that keep animals (mostly research animals), all 14 (100%) make statements of responsibility. Of the

remaining 184 companies 43% make statements of responsibility. The average CAN scores for these two categories are 180 and 18 respectively. This indicates that company commitment to the welfare of animals is more prevalent among companies keeping animals than those selling animal-based food products.

Concern for animals

As Table 4 shows, 13% of the 94 companies that make statements of responsibility towards animals do so only in a neutral manner (level 1). A positive attitude can be detected in the statements of 5% of the 94 companies that do not reach a higher level. None of the companies express aspirations (level 3) without also referring to actions or results. 59% reach level 4, referring to actions, and 23% reach level 5, referring to positive results for animals.

Table 4: Companies Reaching Concern Levels (N=94)

<i>Level of concern for animals</i>		<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1	Information	12	13%
2	Attitude	5	5%
3	Aspiration	0	0%
4	Action	55	59%
5	Result	22	23%

Document type

As Table 5 shows, none of the 94 companies that make statements of responsibility towards animals do so only in documents of the lowest level of importance, that is, specific information with a marginal scope. This means that at least one text at a higher level could be found among the statements of responsibility of each of these companies. This does not mean that level 1 texts could not be found but that they were always accompanied by texts at another level. 31% of the companies provide no more than specific information with a narrow scope (level 2). 14% of the companies provide short-term corporate information at most (level 3), whereas 21% of the companies include mid-term information at most (level 4). 34% of the companies also include long-term corporate information (level 5).

Table 5: Companies Reaching Document Levels (N=94)

Document Level	Number	Percentage
1 Specific information with marginal scope	0	0%
2 Specific information with narrow scope	29	31%
3 Short-term corporate information	13	14%
4 Mid-term corporate information	20	21%
5 Long-term corporate information	32	34%

As Table 6 shows, 20% of the companies that make statements of responsibility towards animals that reach the 'concern level' of actions or results (CL levels 4 and 5) limit their statements about these actions or results to the lowest-level documents (DL levels 1 and 2).

Table 6: Companies Reaching Document Levels (DL) and Concern Levels (CL) (N=94)

	CL1	CL2	CL3	CL4	CL5	Total
DL1	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
DL2	8 (9%)	2 (2%)	0 (0%)	18 (19%)	1 (1%)	29 (31%)
DL3	2 (2%)	2 (2%)	0 (0%)	5 (5%)	4 (4%)	13 (14%)
DL4	2 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	16 (17%)	2 (2%)	20 (21%)
DL5	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	16 (17%)	15 (16%)	32 (34%)
Total	12 (13%)	5 (5%)	0 (0%)	55 (59%)	22 (23%)	94 (100%)

Length of the statement

Of the companies that mention responsibility towards animals, 3% use only a few (1-20) words. A large majority reach the three mid-size levels: 44% go up to level 2, 33% go up to level 3, and 17% reach level 4 (see Table 7). Only 3% have at least one large document consisting of more than 1,000 words: Unilever (in a lengthy sustainability webpage that elaborates on the topic), General Electric (in an extended statement on animal research), and Roche Group (in a large text on its use and care of animals under Frequently Asked Questions).

Table 7: Companies Reaching Length Levels (N=94)

Length Level	Number	Percentage
1 1-20 words	3	3%
2 21-100 words	41	44%
3 101-300 words	31	33%
4 301-1,000 words	16	17%
5 >1,000 words	3	3%

Ethical approach

In most of the quotes, the underlying ethical theory could not be detected reliably (Table 8). Taking this into consideration, the 33% that use terms implying a consequentialist approach is relatively high. BASF, for example, writes: 'We commit to minimize pain and distress for the animals we use'. Johnson & Johnson writes: 'Make Sure your Pet is Happy and Healthy this Year'. 12% of the companies that make statements of responsibility use terms that can be associated with a deontological approach. Roche, for example, writes: 'Medical research respects all living creatures – also those used in experiments', and Hitachi mentions 'animal rights'. A virtue ethical approach could be detected in the statements of 5% of companies: for example, 'Norwich vets [...] also provide for a dedicated out of hours emergency service' (Royal Bank of Scotland Group), or 'Carers must have time, commitment, dedication and training' (job vacancy of Rio Tinto Group).

Table 8: Companies in which Specific Ethical Approaches can be Detected (N=94)

Ethical approach	Number	Percentage
Consequentialism	31	33%
Deontology	11	12%
Virtue ethics	5	5%

Finally, we present in Table 9 the companies with 0 references of responsibilities towards animals. Correspondingly, their CAN score was 0.

Table 9: Companies with a CAN score of 0, ranked by revenue (highest revenue first)

BP	China Construction Bank	Dongfeng Motor Group
State Grid	Costco Wholesale	Mitsubishi UFJ Financial
ConocoPhillips	China Mobile Communications Group	Dai-ichi Life Insurance
Toyota Motor	Indian Oil	POSCO
Glencore International	Agricultural Bank of China	Dell
Gazprom	Peugeot	Wellpoint
Berkshire Hathaway	Banco de Brasil	Seven & i Holdings
AXA	Deutsche Telekom	China Southern Power
Fannie Mae	Repsol YPF	Grid
Ford Motor	Noble Group	A.P. Müller-Mörsk Group
Allianz	Archer Daniels Midland	Renault
Nippon Telegraph & Telephone	Bank of China	Bunge
BNP Paribas	AmerisourceBergen	Prudential
AT&T	Meiji Yasuda Life Insurance	United Technologies
GDF Suez	Reliance Industries	China FAW Group
Pemex	China State Construction	Comcast
PDVSA	Groupe BPCE	Marubeni
McKesson	Deutsche Bank	China Minmetals
Statoil	Vodafone Group	Nokia
JX Holdings	American International Group	Armérica Mevil
Nissan Motor	Robert Bosch	Zurich Insurance Group
Hon Hai Precision Industry	China Railway Construction	Deutsche Bahn
Banco Santander	China Railway Group	Nippon Steel
EXOR Group	Sinochem Group	Manulife Financial
HSBC Holdings	Mitsubishi	CNP Assurances
ICBC	Hyundai Motor	Best Buy
Apple	Medco Health Solutions	Banco Bilbao Vizcaya
UnitedHealth Group	ThyssenKrupp	Argentaria
SK Holdings	EADS	Sabic
Panasonic	Tokyo Electric Power	Intesa Sanpaolo
Société Générale	Landesbank Baden	Citic Group
Petronas	Wörttemberg	LG Electronics
BMW	China Life Insurance	Idemitsu Kosan
ArcelorMittal	SAIC Motor	Foncière Euris
Electricité de France	Banco Bradesco	
Nippon Life Insurance	Rosneft Oil	
Munich Re Group	France Télécom	

2.4 Discussion, conclusions, and recommendations

The data reveal that almost half (47%) of the Fortune Global 200 companies make statements of responsibility towards animals. This marked deviation from Kaptein's (2004) finding that animal welfare is mentioned in the business codes

of only 2% of the Fortune Global 200 can mostly be attributed to the range of documents included in this study, that is, aside from changes that might have occurred over time. However, what the companies communicate reflects quite a high level of concern: of the companies that do make statements, 82% mention actions or results. Just over half of this group (52%) address the issue in documents of mid- or long-term corporate relevance.

It is remarkable that several companies do not express themselves in documents that match the actions taken or the results achieved. They put their actions or results in 'hidden' documents of a low status and temporary nature. Of the companies that make statements of responsibility, 20% do not mention their actions or results in online corporate-level documents. They limit communication about such actions or outcomes to documents of marginal importance. Based on results of Frostenson et al. (2011) we can add that this will apply even more to subsidiaries and retailers, through a phenomenon referred to as the filtration effect: part of the communication is left behind in the transition from parent company to subsidiary or retailer.

European and North American companies express the highest level of commitment towards animals. Europe dominates the top in this respect, whereas North America has the highest percentage of companies that show any commitment at all. Although it is striking that all 3 Oceania companies in the list make statements of responsibility towards animals (positions 11 (second), 33, and 35 in the ranking in Table 1), the small group of Oceanian and South American companies included in this study precludes drawing any reliable conclusions about these regions. The study did not include any African companies. Given the geographical spread of the companies included in this study, further conclusions about geographical differences cannot be drawn.

No animal group stands out strongly. Only companion animals stand out a little, which is not surprising since humans have a stronger relationship to them. The texts referring to companion animals often provide information about employee volunteer work and company donations to charities. The fact that research animals share second place with wild animals is not surprising either. For decades, companies have had to contend with legislation and pressure from stakeholders regarding animal research. Examining the texts, one also sees that companies mentioning their impact on the environment often add a few words about the protection or care of animals in that environment as individuals with interests.

It is likely that the relatively high profile of environmental issues in the public domain has led companies to also reflect on their impact on the well-being of individual animals in the natural environment. For example, Sinopec states, 'While conducting 3D seismic prospecting activities, Sinopec [...] takes every measure to avoid disturbing living creatures, including rabbits, foxes and snakes. Moreover, injured animals are taken good care of until they recover and are released into the nature.' Animals in entertainment and work animals are mentioned less often, but neither do they feature very often in a business context, nor in society as a whole.

The most remarkable result regarding animal groups is that research animals (35%) and wild animals (35%) surpass farmed animals (27%). This is striking given that all large companies have an impact on farmed animals at least through the caterers they hire for their numerous restaurants. The truth is that not one company mentions animals in the context of its restaurant catering. It could be that the impact on animals through the supply chains beyond the primary production process is regarded as too far removed from the core business to be worth mentioning.

Finally, keeping animals appears to be a much stronger indicator of company commitment than selling animal-based food products. There are three possible explanations for this. The first is the high level of responsibility companies experience towards the animals they own, and which are encountered by their employees daily. Another possible explanation is the fact that companies that own animals are obliged by law to look after their welfare. And thirdly, companies that own animals might be more aware that they could potentially become the target of animal welfare groups.

Company commitment

Based on the CAN scoring depicted in Table 1, we can roughly divide the companies into five groups. The first group can be called the 'top 6', consisting of companies with very high scores. These are the companies that make several different types of statements of responsibility, of different lengths, and on several different parts of their websites. Unilever and Procter & Gamble are among them. Of the 200 companies included in the study, they are the only ones that deal in animal-based products and at the same time keep animals (for research). They thus have at least two good reasons to feel extra responsible. Nevertheless, they are surpassed on the CAN score by Bayer, a company that has good reason to demonstrate accountability given that it relies strongly on animal research, its primary products

being pharmaceuticals. How then do Nestlé, Royal Bank of Scotland Group, and Tesco surpass Procter & Gamble? Nestlé includes several lengthy, strong, action-oriented texts about different animal groups in its Frequently Asked Questions and corporate responsibility documents. It shows concern for the pets the company produces food for and for the farmed animals it uses for its food products. Here the type of product a company manufactures is a strong indicator of displaying a commitment towards animals. Royal Bank of Scotland links to its pet-insurance products extensive texts on how to take good care of companion animals. Tesco articulates its responsibility towards farmed animals in high-level documents: corporate information, corporate responsibility reports, and a few news releases. All of these companies have identified responsibilities towards animals and found their own ways of expressing them.

The second group consists of numbers 7-16. These companies all have scores well above 100. Most of them have very good reason to make statements of responsibility towards animals: they either keep animals or they are food retailers that sell animal-based products. There are only three exceptions in this group: General Motors, USPS, and Aviva. By informing consumers and supporting animal-friendly initiatives, they display a strong responsibility towards animals somewhat beyond the company's core business (potential road kill, animals in shelters).

The third is a large group, numbers 17-69, which scored 12-95 on the CAN scale. What they have in common is that more than one text fragment was found on their websites. A minority have more reason to demonstrate commitment, keeping animals or being in (animal-based) food retail, but the majority must have other reasons to do so. A great variety of texts was found: from the Thai oil- and gas-producing company PTT mentioning vegetarian and vegan lifestyles in their magazine, to PepsiCo sharing its animal research supplier policy and information on its donations to animal charities.

The fourth group consists of those companies where exactly one statement could be found, numbers 70-94. Their CAN scores vary from 4 to 11. In this group there are two (Japanese) food retailers: Mitsui and AEON. The former mentions the term 'animal well-being' in a newsletter to shareholders, while the latter mentions animal welfare charities benefitting from a system of pre-paid shopping cards. Again, the conclusion must be that companies refer to animals in many different ways and may have just as many reasons for doing so. The level of commitment these companies display is, however, low considering the fact that they are food retailers.

The last group consists of those companies that scored 0 (104 of the total 198, listed in Table 9). This group does not include any companies that keep animals. This is in line with the strong relationship we found earlier between this variable and the CAN score. Only two companies are selling animal-based food products: Costco Wholesale in the USA and Seven & i Holdings in Japan. Seven & i Holdings has an extensive CSR report in which eco-friendly – not animal-friendly – products are mentioned.

It may be clear that the CAN score as a tool is not a measure of company behaviour, but merely of the commitment expressed by the company. It is very well possible that there is a gap between the two. In addition, the score does not claim to draw conclusions about the company impact on the welfare of animals, as it does not say anything about the type of activity the company is talking about. A preventive activity, for example, could be far more effective than a restorative one.

Ethical approach

The results show that companies refer more often to a consequentialist approach than to other ethical approaches. This could be a sign that this approach might fit companies better, as is confirmed by Gustafson (2013). One could say that a consequentialist approach bears similarities with the economic system within which companies function (Kaptein & Wempe 2002). Trade-offs are possible in both perspectives. This is reflected in, for example, the position articulated by some companies in this study regarding animals in experiments. Shell formulates its dilemma clearly: 'We recognise the dilemma of balancing potential animal suffering against, in some cases, the lack of a reliable alternative to ensure that new products are safe for people and the environment. We are working to reduce the number of animals used to test our products, to make test methods as humane as possible, and to replace animal tests wherever possible'. Or, as General Electric puts it: 'GE is committed to using the smallest number of animals that will provide scientifically sound data to ensure the safety and efficacy of products and therapies'. Negotiability can also be found in this Quote from Tesco: 'Buying and selling our products responsibly means [...] that care is taken to minimise the impact our products have on the environment. That includes how we: [...] establish and monitor animal welfare.'

Opportunities

The companies included in this study diverge greatly in their expressed commitment to animal welfare: some do not mention animals at all on their websites, others expand on public concerns, initiatives they are involved in,

measures taken, or results achieved. We found several texts that express responsibility towards animals, and we found that no company made negative statements about animals. Still, over half of the companies in this study do not mention responsibilities towards animals.

Although texts alone do not reveal how much companies actually do for animals, more companies could acknowledge animal ethics as a topic of corporate responsibility by making statements about it. Several companies in Europe and North America do so already, but many are neglecting the opportunity to make their apparent position known in documents on a corporate level. In its eight texts on the subject, Exxon Mobil, for example, emerges as a company that seems to take responsibility for the impact of its operations on individual animals, sometimes structurally, researching the impact of underwater sounds on individual marine mammals, sometimes incidentally, cleaning, treating, and releasing oil-soaked animals. It seems to take animal interests into account, but in its CAN score it is not a frontrunner company (CAN = 78, No. 19). Statements on actions and results are published in a corporate online brochure called Arctic Leadership, but do not appear in other corporate documents on the website. Other statements appear on their website in separate documents like company magazines and local newsletters.

Recommendations for future research

For future empirical research we recommend in-depth qualitative research within companies, for example, to assess how they reached their current CAN score, what their considerations are, and how they view their relationship to animals. This can help us understand the differences we found in the present study in whether and how companies articulate ethical responsibilities towards animals on their websites. Understanding this would help us to better evaluate the ethical stance of companies towards animals. It would also help to improve the way companies articulate and meet their ethical responsibilities towards animals. By studying best and worst practices, for example, their determinants can be traced, common patterns can be identified, and interventions can be developed and tailored to improve and maintain their commitment. (Two studies were conducted and are presented in the Chapters 3 and 4.)

Secondly, we recommend a more thorough exploration of the CAN method for assessing the expressed corporate commitment to animals. The method would benefit from more testing and from ideas for improvement. What exactly is the

impact of the individual factors (level of concern, document type, and length of the statement) and how are they related? Can the method be used for smaller companies than the Global Fortune 200? These are a few of the questions that might be further explored.

Further empirical research could also assess the relationship between what companies say and what they do. Research into other business-ethical issues has shown that there can be a decoupling between companies' 'talk' and 'walk' (MacLean et al. 2015). Ultimately, what companies *do* to safeguard animal welfare is most important, but what they *say* is also important. A company communicating what it stands for and how it performs makes it easier for stakeholders to hold it to account, and this encourages the company to fulfil its responsibilities (Kaptein 2004). For this reason, we believe that the manner in which companies formulate their statements of responsibility concerning animals is already in part a demonstration of their ethical commitment towards animals. This is also one of the reasons we have conducted this study. In fact, according to Speech Act Theory and the CCO perspective (Communication Constitutes Organizations), some forms of 'talk' can be seen as action (Schoeneborn & Trittin 2013). These concepts could be applied to the field of corporate and animal ethics to see what the impact on animals is.

In addition, there is still the question of the *relationship* between what companies say they do, and what they actually do to have positive impact on animals. Is this relationship positively linear (the more they say, the more they do); negatively linear (the more they say, the less they do); or, for example, curvilinear (companies that do the most communicate less in words than the average company since they communicate through deeds, and companies that do the least also communicate less since they have nothing to say, or they fear that saying anything will backfire)?

This study also has conceptual implications. As mentioned earlier, the ethical responsibility of companies towards animals is hardly addressed at all in business-ethics literature. This study has shown that almost half of the largest companies in the world do make statements regarding ethical responsibilities towards animals. Several of these companies tell what they do to safeguard animal welfare, and they provide information on the impact of their efforts. For example, Volkswagen states that it takes measures to prevent a negative impact on animals; General Electric and BASF state that they replace, reduce, and refine animal research; Unilever, Kroger, and Nestlé state that they buy products where animals are treated best; Shell and Exxon Mobil state that they help wounded wild animals; Royal Bank of

Scotland Group states that it designs pet-friendly products and services; Hitachi, Siemens, Cardinal Health, Nestlé, and Target state that they support animal charities that prevent animals from being abandoned or neglected; StateFarm states that it applies welfare criteria to company excursions, for example, to zoos and circuses; USPS states that it refrains from doing business with companies that abuse animals for entertainment; and JP Morgan Chase & Co states that it supports organizations that work towards better treatment of work animals and good animal retirement facilities. Thus, the question is whether all companies have an ethical responsibility towards animals (which would imply that half of the companies in this study are failing), no company has an ethical responsibility towards animals (which would imply that the half that do make statements of responsibility are doing more than necessary), or whether there are certain factors that determine whether a company does or does not have an ethical responsibility towards animals. We will explore this question further in Chapter 5.

In this chapter we advanced some arguments as to why all companies have an ethical responsibility towards animals. However, much more work still needs to be done to further develop and ground persuasive arguments. Assuming all companies have an ethical responsibility towards animals, it also needs to be established whether they have the same level of responsibility, or whether there are legitimate reasons why the level of responsibility differs among companies. To answer these questions, we advise closer collaboration between the fields of business ethics and animal ethics.

Recommendations for companies

In this chapter, we presented a CAN scoring method by means of which companies can gauge the level of their commitment towards animals. We advise companies to make their own assessment to determine whether their ethical responsibilities towards animals are adequately articulated. Companies whose results have been presented in this study could decide whether they are satisfied with their score, considering their own ambitions, expectations from stakeholders, the arguments that ground an ethical responsibility towards animals, and what their peers are doing. Stakeholders can also use the CAN score to evaluate whether a given company articulates its responsibilities adequately, and if they find it does not, request improvement.

This study offers several avenues for improvement. The CAN score is set up in a manner that points towards four directions for improvement: (1) the number

of statements concerning ethical responsibility towards animals, (2) the level of concern expressed, (3) document type, and (4) length of statement. By presenting information in more places on their websites, in higher-level documents, expressing higher ambitions, and in greater detail, companies can better articulate their responsibilities towards animals.

Examples can be taken from this study. In order to increase the number of statements, companies can, for example, interview staff members about their private ideas about animals or voluntary work involving animals. In this way the company can express on a very basic level that animals matter, as some companies in this study do. Boeing, for example, does so in its magazine: 'Most rewarding part of volunteer work: Knowing that my contributions make a difference [...] to the health and well-being of the animals'. Companies can also make corporate staff activities regarding animals known, as Shell does in a news item: 'Shell workers rescue baby great horned owl'. Companies can check their products and mention positive aspects for animals. In this respect Target mentions simply: 'NP Set Bath & body is not tested on animals'. They can provide extra consumer information, like Royal Bank of Scotland: 'If you hit a farm animal or a dog [...] find the owner or a vet, look after it and make sure it's not hurt or suffering'. And finally, companies can mention the charitable donations they make to animal welfare organizations. Exxon Mobil lists its donations in this way: 'Azle Animal Shelter & Humane Society, Texas: 5,000 dollar'.

A company that wishes to make small positive steps in its CAN score could lift animal topics to a higher document level. If product information contains anything of relevance to the interests of animals, a news item could be made about it. If there has been news about the company taking responsibility for animals, it could be included in a responsibility report. If the item is mentioned in a responsibility report, it could be incorporated into the Frequently Asked Questions or a policy document, like an ethical code.

Before starting to communicate (or communicate better), we would advise companies to first reflect on and identify their ethical responsibilities towards animals. The position adopted in this study is that companies have an ethical responsibility towards animals. But what is the view of company management? Do they acknowledge the moral status of animals? Do they view animals as stakeholders and, if so, which animals does the company regard as its current and future stakeholders? Chapter 5 can provide inspiration. Articulating the company's ethical responsibilities towards animals would therefore be a fruitful start in integrating animal ethics into the ethics of business.

3

We are the
Champions!

This chapter explores differing company positions on animal ethics, using a qualitative study of drivers and challenges of animal ethics in large Western-Europe-based food companies. This is done through in-depth interviews with managers who are responsible for animal welfare policy in combination with analysis of written documents. We present a model that shows how in these companies 'leadership', 'partnership', and 'championship' are crucial drivers for a positive change for animals. By strengthening these phenomena, all stakeholders can accelerate the change toward a more widely felt corporate responsibility towards animals.

This chapter is based on Janssens, M.R.E, Van Wesel, F. (2018). Leadership, Partnership and Championship as Drivers for Animal Ethics the Western Food Industry. In: A. Linzey & C. Linzey (eds.), Ethical Vegetarianism and Veganism. Routledge, London, pp. 276-290. We are grateful for comments received when the article was presented in Porto at the EURSAFE 2016 Food Futures conference, and at the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics Summer School 2016 on The ethics of eating animals.

Today, concepts like Corporate Social Responsibility and Triple P or ‘People, Planet, Profit’, as put forward by Elkington (1997), are well known in all industries and offer companies opportunities to define their own responsibilities towards people, nature, animals, and sustainability of the planet and its ecological and social systems. Business ethics offers extra food for thought, not only for philosophers, but also for decision makers in companies. However, the field of business ethics seems to have ignored the ongoing debate about the moral standing of animals (Janssens & Kaptein 2016, Van Liedekerke & Dubbink 2008). Furthermore, Janssens and Kaptein (2016) found that some multinationals extensively express responsibilities towards animals, whereas others do not mention animals. Although keeping animals and being part of the animal-derived food industry are both factors that correlate positively with expressed commitment to animals, this does not account for all differences.

The Business Benchmark on Farm Animal Welfare 2017 (Amos & Sullivan 2018) identifies four drivers for companies to set animal welfare as a corporate issue: the recognition of farm animal welfare as a business risk, the recognition of farm animal welfare as a strategic opportunity, customer and client demand, and being involved in the yearly benchmark. It identifies barriers as well: a perceived lack of customer willingness to pay for higher farm animal welfare, costs and investments needed, and a lack of awareness of the wider business and marketing benefits of higher welfare. Though their study offers many interesting insights, more knowledge is needed about the drivers and challenges companies and their corporate responsibility managers (RMs) encounter with regard to animal welfare.

Based on the above and on the aim of this thesis to explore what drivers help companies to adopt a responsible stance towards animals, the research question of this study is: *What are the drivers and challenges for large Western-Europe-based food companies to take responsibility for animals?* Answering this question will not only explain differences between companies; at the same time, it will offer companies and their stakeholders tools for change. We chose the term ‘drivers’ for stimulatory factors because it is a common term in managerial literature (Amos & Sullivan 2018, Mauser 2001), and the term ‘challenges’ for obstructive factors, for reasons of positive framing: a challenge is surmountable. To explore the drivers and challenges RMs encounter, we conducted a qualitative study among nine Western-Europe-based companies producing, processing or selling meat, poultry, fish, or dairy products. By conducting and analysing interviews, we have identified several drivers and challenges and the way they interact.

This chapter provides a connection between theory and practice. We identify drivers and challenges for incorporating animal ethics into corporate responsibility in food companies. Our findings can be of interest for other sectors too, since all large companies hire caterers for their company restaurants, or have impact on animals through transport, pollution, development and construction.

This chapter is organised according to the qualitative study reporting guidelines by Corbin and Strauss (2015). In this section we outlined the significance of the issue of animal ethics as a theme in corporate responsibility and presented our research question. In the next section we explore the theoretical background. Next, we explain how this study contributes to animal and business ethics theory and practice, we present our research method, and offer our findings. In the final section of this chapter, we discuss our findings and come to conclusions.

3.1 Theoretical background

In this section concepts that are related to the topic of this study, drivers and challenges for the food industry to taking responsibility for animals, are explained and previous research is presented, as a starting point of the research and as an analytical lens.

Status quo of the economic system

People have bred and slaughtered animals for ages. In the second half of the 20th century an industrial system emerged that systematically breeds as many animals as possible at the lowest possible cost and sells them at the best possible price. McMullen (2015) argues that the place of animals in our economy is determined by: low-cost technology, competition-driven efficiency and accountability, and specialization. It is very hard for individuals to change the system. This is why RMs may encounter challenges related to the economic system. Rollin (2011) thinks it probable that in the heads of those responsible, a positive correlation between individual animal welfare and individual animal productivity from traditional agriculture, was extrapolated to an alleged correlation between overall animal welfare and system productivity in industrial agriculture.

External pressure

Schultz and Wehmeier (2010) see competition, regulative norms, professional norms, and public pressure as triggers for institutionalization of CSR. One of

the regulative norms could be legislation about reporting (Delbard 2008), as could non-coercive regulations, such as political pressure or the international CSR guideline ISO 26000 (2010). Castka and Balzarova predicted in 2007 that multinationals would adopt this standard to legitimize their policies. It is conceivable that these kinds of external pressure will also influence the way a company takes responsibility for animals.

Managerial decision making

It can also be expected that individual (managerial) decision making plays a role. While arguing how factors from both within and outside the company influence managerial decision making about corporate responsibility measures, Hoffman and Bazerman (2006) also identified external regulatory pressure and internal reward systems, amongst others, as influential. In addition, they argue that institutional resistance can result from resource constraints, fear of the unknown, threats to political interests, and habitual distrust.

Organizational culture

Constantinescu and Kaptein (2015) found that under particular conditions, responsibility awareness of companies and of individuals within these companies can be mutually enhancing. The most important condition for that effect to emerge is for corporate structure and culture to be disconnected: then there is room for doing something better or worse than corporate regulations dictate. However, if people in the company act according to culture more than to structure, this strengthens the corporate ethical culture.

Ingenbleek et al. (2007) studied four European 'criteria formulating organisations' and found elements within organizational culture that influence the development of ethical standards for animal welfare. They found that standards are uplifted by strong positive shared ethical values and are lowered by negative shared values. In addition, norm diversity leads to lower standards in the short term, but to more upgrading standards in the longer term. Strong shared values lead to more symbolic artefacts which stimulate compliance and innovative behaviour, which leads to higher standards. These influences could also be present in food companies.

Collective responsibility and leadership

Isaacs (2011) explores moral responsibilities in the collective context of a company. She sees companies as having collective responsibilities because they have

agency. Professional actions can be seen as contributions to a larger collective act. Decision-makers bear extra responsibility, because outside their role their actions and decisions would not have the same impact. Isaacs concludes that individual agency is not absorbed by collective agency, but on the contrary, adds power. At the same time, an individual agent in the company has to deal with policies, structures, interests, attitudes, practices, and cultures. In addition, Isaacs identifies potential collective agents: groups that act upon certain moral issues. In fact, she sees a responsibility to form them. This responsibility can be diminished by vagueness about what can be done or by a status quo of wrongful social practice. These are all factors that can be expected to be perceived as challenges. In addition, we learn from Isaacs that when decision-makers are aware of their power, they can take individual responsibility and stand up as leaders.

Mostovicz et al. (2009) find that leadership as a personal quality plays an important role in corporate ethical behaviour. Angus-Leppan et al. (2010) follow Matten and Moon (2008) in making a distinction between implicit and explicit CSR (the former being collective and embedded in the relations of the political system, and the latter being more a voluntary and often strategic choice of the company) and explore different forms of leadership. A combination of leadership types can lead to conflicts or to healthy friction.

More institutional determinants

Basu and Palazzo (2008) made a study of internal institutional determinants of CSR. They distinguish between different kinds of dimensions of sensemaking in CSR: cognitive dimensions (identity orientation and legitimacy), linguistic dimensions (justification and transparency), and conative dimensions (posture, consistency, and commitment).

Van Tulder et al. (2014) identified more than 70 different managerial tipping points for transition to sustainability in organizations, moving from an inactive position, through a reactive, and an active, to a proactive one. Drivers that take companies from tipping point to tipping point include perception, involvement and satisfaction of employees, purchasing policy, chain management, organizational communication, internal coherence between departments, openness to stakeholders, the need to set priorities and appointing a manager with excellent communication skills.

Mauser (2001) identified intra-organizational drivers for the environmental performance of businesses from a case study of the Dutch dairy sector. She finds four drivers for environmental performance: policy & strategy, communication, organization structure, and management commitment. To achieve optimal environmental performance, the right balance between these four has to be found.

Visser (2014) holds five principles of Transformative CSR (or: CSR 2.0) responsible for its potential success: creativity, scalability, responsiveness (being proactive, in dialogue with stakeholders), glocality (tailor-made adaptations to global solutions) and circularity (renewability and no waste).

Resuming

In this section we have shown that factors that have an influence on CSR have been identified by many studies, which we resume in Table 10. Apart from the first row (Status quo of the economic system), none have been identified especially for animal ethics in the food industry. Nevertheless, the literature we found makes us alert to finding similar elements. At the same time, we need to be open to finding new factors.

We use the definition of animal ethics from a previous study in the field of animal ethics and business ethics. Janssens and Kaptein (2016) define it as being about the moral status of animals, not as a species but as individuals with interests. CSR in this chapter is approached as all ethical responsibility of a company beyond what is legally required (Carroll 1991).

Table 10: Factors influencing CSR and/or an ethical stance towards animals as found in literature

<i>Influencing factors</i>	<i>Examples</i>	<i>Authors</i>
Status quo of the economic system	Industrialization, wrongful extrapolation from individual animal productivity to general animal productivity	McMullen (2015), Rollin (2011)
External pressure	competition, regulation, professional norms, public pressure, political pressure,	Schultz and Wehmeier (2010), (Delbard 2008), Castka and Balzarova
Managerial decisions	Internal rewarding systems, fear of the unknown, threats to political interests, habitual distrust	Hoffman and Bazerman (2006)
Organizational culture	Shared values, shared norms, disconnection of corporate structure and culture	Constantinescu and Kaptein, (2015), Ingenbleek et al. (2007)
Taking collective responsibility, taking leadership	Limitations by vagueness of what can be done, wrongful social practice, having leadership as a personal quality	Angus-Leppan et al. (2010), Matten and Moon (2008), Isaacs (2011), Mostovicz et al. (2009)
Other institutional determinants	The role of employees, coherence between departments, openness to stakeholders, communication, organization structure	Basu and Palazzo (2008), Mauser (2001), Van Tulder et al. (2014), Visser (2014)

3.2 Method

The current study is exploratory in nature. Our focus is on the animal-derived food industry, as that is where large numbers of animals are bred, kept, cared for, transported and slaughtered. Our methodology is based on grounded theory (Boeije 2010, Corbin & Strauss 2015), a research method that has proved to be applicable to organizational research (Gehman et al. 2013; Martin & Turner 1986; McLean & Behnam 2010; Sonenshein 2009; Treviño et al. 2014).

We studied nine large, internationally operating food companies based in Western Europe. Western Europe was chosen because it is where we ourselves are based (the Netherlands) and because there are signs that Europe is one of the areas where animal ethics in businesses is the most developed (Janssens & Kaptein 2016). The companies were found by searching on the internet for the most important players in the animal-derived food industry and by asking interviewees for more names

(snowball method). We invited thirteen companies to participate. Four companies rejected our invitation. Seven companies are based in the Netherlands, one in the United Kingdom and one in Switzerland. They all operate internationally and have over 1,000 employees (up to 172,000). Some companies are very old (the first shop opening in 1887) and some relatively new (2007). They are producers, processors, wholesalers and retailers.

For reasons of data triangulation, we studied the companies' responsibility reports, their websites and interviews we conducted with the managers responsible for animal welfare policy (CSR managers, quality managers, et cetera, in short: RMs). We used the 'semi-structured interview' method, which provides the richest source of data for theory building (Boeije 2010, Corbin & Strauss 2015). Each interview was started with announcing the main topic (drivers and challenges for their company to take responsibility for animals) and inviting the interviewee to elaborate on it. At the end we checked our topic list to remind them about topics we missed. Guiding topics on this list were derived from the theory presented earlier.¹⁰ Trust was created by offering the research plan beforehand by e-mail, declaring we would use the data anonymously and for research purposes only, and conducting the interview in person. One interview was done by telephone because of the geographical distance and the lack of video call options on the part of the interviewee. Interviews were conducted by the first author, who has an academic background in both communications and ethics, and 25 years of experience in journalism and communications. Audio recordings of all the interviews were transcribed by one of the researchers or an assistant, and in the latter case checked by one of the researchers. The interviews that were done in person took 40 to 90 minutes each, with an average of 62. The interview by telephone was

10 Guiding questions and topics for the interviewer during the interview were:

- I) How did the company come to integrate, maintain and expand animal welfare in CSR? What are stimulating and what are inhibiting factors?
- II) What moves the people in the organization to do that, and how do they get others to do it?
- III) How is animal welfare communicated internally and externally?
 - a) View on animals (things, means of production, raw materials, beings, biological systems, stakeholders, friends)
 - b) View on CSR (valid for animals or not, how far should a company go)
 - c) Ethics (personal norms and values, those of others, business ethics, cultural differences)
 - d) Leadership, power and influence (own role, role of others, cooperation/opposition of persons)
 - e) Economic considerations (costs, business case, competition)
 - f) Identity and internal communication (mission, vision, culture, formative aspect of communication)
 - g) Image and external communication (advertising, website, image in media, public pressure through campaigns)

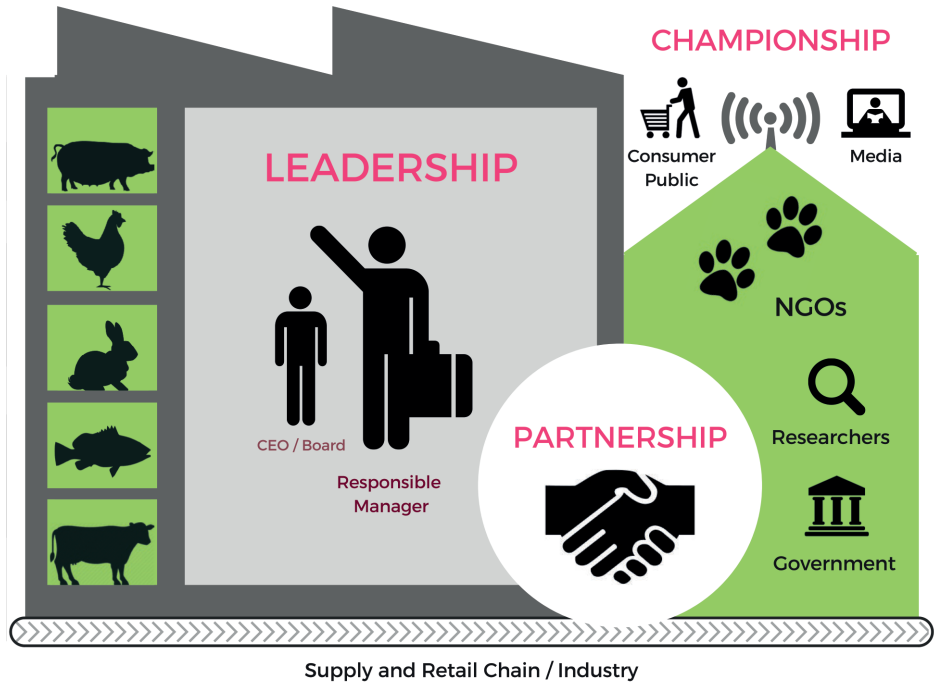
relatively short (24 minutes) because enticing the interviewee to elaborate was more difficult through the phone, and secondly because after the interviewer had taken the interviewee through the topic list, the interviewee started to refer to written sources on their website.

Data were handled in a cyclical process of interviewing, coding, identification, comparison, and analysis. Three of the interviews were open-coded by both authors. Inter-coder reliability was high (around 90%) and differences in coding were agreed upon. Hereafter, the first author open-coded the rest of the transcripts according to the adapted coding system. All additional text documents (websites and CSR reports) were also coded by the first author. The software used was NVivo (QSR International, Australia). After analysis of the data from the eighth participant, saturation occurred, the point 'where all major categories are fully developed, show variation, and are integrated' (Corbin & Strauss 2015). We decided to look for one more participant to be sure, which is recommended in this type of research, and after coding the information from the ninth company, saturation was confirmed. Further analysis consisted of axial coding where the authors defined the codes, restructured them, and investigated relationships between the codes, and selective coding, where a model of the findings was created.

3.3 Findings

As a result of the axial coding we created a matrix, based on the ten types of factors we found (emotional, attitudinal, ethical, cultural, communicative, historical, geographical, practical, economical, and strategic ones) and the five different levels at which these factors appeared to occur (the RM, the company, external organizations, the consumer, and the broader public). We placed all encoded topics in this extended matrix and looked step by step for meaningful relationships between the topics, then clustered the topics based on these relationships. Taking a step back and looking at our data, then going once more through them in detail, we identified similar characteristics in topic clusters, which enabled us to cluster them once more under three main terms: immobility, dilemma, and slander. We then discovered that the solutions that seemed to make these challenges manageable could also be clustered into three groups. These respective clusters of drivers we called leadership, partnership, and 'championship'. How they are connected to the company and its surroundings is shown in the model we present in Figure 1. Leadership of the company, a CEO, the board or at least the RM, is crucial.

Figure 1: Model of interaction between drivers for animal ethics in the food industry



UPPERCASE TEXT = drivers for enhancing the ethical stance of the company towards animals
 Lowercase text = parties relevant to the process of enhancing the ethical stance of the company towards animals

Partnerships with partners inside and outside the production chain are very helpful, and so are ‘championships’: ways of externally celebrating moments of importance, for example when a goal is set or an achievement is reached. We will now go through the model and explain the different clusters of drivers, connect them to the challenges we encountered, and offer a few illustrative quotes from our data: mainly from the interviews (marked RMx), but also some from the annual reports (marked ARx), and the websites (marked WSx) we analysed.

Leadership overcomes immobility

A large collection of challenges can be grouped under the term ‘immobility’, meaning for example: having fixed ideas, being satisfied with the status quo, or not being prepared to move. We found fixed ideas about: the responsibility level of the company towards animals, what animals prefer, the special taste of meat, the purpose of farm animals, et cetera. We also found fixed ideas like ‘good care

is enough', 'animal welfare equals animal health', 'animal welfare equals animal productivity', 'animals are lower creatures', and 'the farmer represents the animals'. We will now offer a few examples.

RM1: 'The farmer is a stakeholder, and that includes the cows and the land and biodiversity and the birds and the flora and fauna. And the farmer represents them, he's our most important stakeholder, because he's our stockholder and our biggest milk supplier, and he knows the best way to do that.'

RM3: 'If these animals have had a [good] life like that and at a certain point get slaughtered, that doesn't bother me at all, because I like to eat meat, and that is the purpose of those animals. That's what meat production is.'

RM5: 'A huge aspect of meat is that it represents some of the cosiness of eating together. It has a huge social side. At parties we almost always eat meat. Barbecuing is a meaty thing. Now there's Christmas: eating together and doing things together says something about those you visit, and is socially very important. It's a way of living together, as is the case in many cultures. Traditionally, meat plays a very important role.'

Immobility can take the form of seeing animal welfare as the exclusive concern of the RM, of feelings of powerlessness of the RM, of a reward system with a short-term sales focus, and of clinging to a traditional money-driven culture in which there is no room for compassion. External factors of immobility we encountered in our data are the capitalist system, the public's prejudices, strictness of animal welfare label requirements, rigidity of NGOs, or entrenched stakeholder values originating from historical, geographical, national or cultural differences. Here are two examples, first of the money-driven culture and second of the rigidity of NGOs:

RM2: 'Ultimately, I think the commercial side is still winning. (...) But after all, we're in a capitalist system, and money's important. (...) Every morning, our Category Managers look at yesterday's margins.'

RM6: '[Some NGOs] actually want people to stop eating meat. (...) If you want to improve things, then you have to make sure what you want to do is realistic, and not be too extreme with new standards.'

These different types of immobility can be overcome by leadership. RMs can, for example, play the devil's (animals') advocate within the company about potential commercial success, or offer an ethical decision-making framework that can be used in the event of arguments.

RM8: 'The main obstacles were, indeed, the targets of our commercial colleagues. They have to be overcome. That surely took us a few meetings to do. Deciding these things together doesn't happen overnight.'

RM5: 'I (...) also wrestled for a long time over which decision-making framework to use. Ultimately, I made it very simple: if I can't explain it on the Alexanderplatz in Berlin, in Soho in London or on the Dam Square in Amsterdam, we won't do it.'

3

It appears to be helpful if the RMs are sensitive to trends and future issues, eager to learn, and open to new ideas, such as the idea that animals are individuals with their own needs, or that they can be stakeholders. This was one of the answers to the question whether animals could be stakeholders:

RM2: 'I think so, because we see suppliers as stakeholders as well. But then you would actually have to see products as stakeholders as well. (...) But then I think it will be difficult to interview the animals, so to speak. But look, you could do that by ways of research.'

Although RMs are aware that within the company their own commitment to animal welfare is above average, they can have influence by setting clear standards. Their leadership stance seems stronger if they encounter animals now and then, and if they are respectful and empathic towards animals, but also to people. In the following example the RM is connecting to farmers by translating animal suffering to a case involving children.

RM7: '[I ask them:] Let's say thirty school kids take a bus trip, and three of them get out with a broken arm. Is that normal?'

As is shown in Figure 1, a CEO, the board, or the company as a whole, can take leadership as well. The company can commit itself to an ethical approach to animals, eventually as part of CSR policy. It can communicate this stance, quantify animal welfare or create demand for products with higher animal welfare. In

general, a proactive attitude appears to be helpful, as well as real engagement, true involvement, and corporate pride in animal welfare.

RM8: 'If we're talking about people, animals and the environment, the principles of our CSR policy, but also how we see our formula, then [animal welfare] is a part of that.'

RM4: 'We're not having people here who are animal welfare advocates on personal or emotional grounds, no, it's a fully accepted, and, of course, an integrated element of our sustainable-agriculture approach.'

RM3: 'Targets are also there to show your buyers that you're more than someone doing simply what they ask from you. I think that's also becoming more and more important... some authenticity, some honesty, openness about what you do.'

Organizational communication helps spread information and pride through the company (see also Chapter 4). Extra optimisers are innovative ideas, short lines of communication, discussions with employees, and budget. Here is an example of innovation:

RM4: 'I've developed a kind of engagement platform with gamification (...) All employees are asked to participate. (...) This year one of the challenges was about food. (...) You could build a business case or a consumer behaviour change case with our sustainable agriculture sourcing activities (...); [animal welfare] could be an element there. [Employees could also] sign up to visit one of our pig farmers. (...) Because our experience is: if you take people with you, then it comes alive.'

The leadership stance can be translated into goals, projects and programs, which are helpful as well. Another form of leadership we identified is proactively preventing disruptive mistakes, for example in labelling. And when it is difficult to find the right suppliers (which can be quite a problem with livestock), leadership companies explore new markets and look for new solutions to practical problems. They invent new rewarding systems, spread sales risks over different food categories (for example: sell vegetarian alternatives as well), conduct research on animal housing, or focus on value creation. They make animal welfare a business case, for example by building animal welfare into the cost model, choosing quality

markets, or calculating the extra productivity of animals that live longer. The general line in these drivers is an open attitude and a willingness to anticipate and change, which is expressed by the following example:

RM2: 'Recently, [our CEO] made a wonderful statement. He said: 'Sometimes we just have to take certain steps to create market share. That means we may lose money in the first two or three years, but that we will create a shelf advantage for suppliers, so that they can start to produce cheaper, and we can go to a lower price level.'

Partnership overcomes dilemmas

A second cluster of factors is formed around the concept of dilemmas and finding balance, for example between strategies or competing values. Should we go for a low-price or a high-quality reputation? Are we going to invest in animal friendly production systems or in a reputation campaign? Shall we take risks or play it safe? Are we going to choose for free range systems or should we concentrate on minimizing emissions? Do we engage in a money-making culture or a responsibility culture? Will we be taking small steps or do we want to provoke radical change? Shall we use idealistic or commercial arguments? Do we accept being paternalistic or should we respect the autonomy of others more?

WS7: '[Company] is standing in the middle of society that demands a well-balanced equilibrium between people, animals, the environment and profitability.'

RM7: 'You can die in beauty and, in a manner of speaking, keep the broilers in the Royal Suite at the Hilton Hotel, fine, but then you end up with a product that differs from consumer expectations, that is not responsible environmentally speaking, and that is absolutely not competitive. So, you always should look for that balance. It's not an isolated thing. You cannot say: I am now going to produce with animal welfare, or, my product was produced without any concern for animal welfare. There is always a gradation of animal welfare in it.'

AR8: '[Brand] will establish the balance between people-animal-environment per group of fresh products. We will do this on the basis of criteria and corresponding assurance.'

RM8: 'Finally it's about someone else's KPIs, (...) our commercial colleagues, who are responsible for the shelf, who have to reach targets. And finally, you're gnawing at their goals. (...) I try not to be into it in an idealistic way, so, [more] with a commercial lens. Otherwise you're not going to make it in the discussion.'

RM6: 'You always have to keep looking for the economic balance, because you cannot always say: these are my ideals, and I want to work towards those.'

Operating internationally, companies encounter the dilemma of imposing national or European standards on suppliers, or accepting foreign standards. The materiality analysis, an assessment of the company's most important responsibility issues, plays an important role, but also creates dilemmas when many issues are identified as important. A dilemma can occur if stakeholders discriminate between animal species. It can also lie in the disputability of specific ethical claims about animals.

RM3: 'For example, how can you tell if an animal's in pain? That's always tricky for me. And everyone has an opinion about it.'

RM3: 'In Ireland you have these calves, which are with the mother, and which are taken away after six months. That is a critical process in the sense of, well, they first put the calves on one side of the stable, and the mothers on the other side. Then the calves can still walk back and forth. And at some point, the gate closes and during a period of two weeks... well, there's a whole process so that they don't have too much stress as a result. That sounds super responsible. The reaction of someone at [our retailer's]: Gosh, how awful that they do that so late. You have to do that immediately after birth, then it is much less bad! So we all have our own ideas about that.'

RM2: 'Now you have the Meadow Milk, which says: animals have to go outside, because we have decided that, and as humans we think that animals are best off that way... But when you start talking to farmers, those farmers say: those animals, those cows, do not want to go outside at all, they prefer to sit inside, because inside it is warm, they have good food, they have space – I really have to chase my cows out to be able to meet [the requirements of] that Meadow Milk. So what often happens is that the stable door is opened, and they do not want to go outside at all. That is not entirely the case at the beginning of the year, but at some point they say: we will cosily sit inside. I find that very

special. So, then the question is, what does an animal want? But I'm sure that if I would ask a broiler chicken, philosophically speaking: gosh, do you want to live in a stable with 40,000 others or do you prefer a Rondeel farm where you can walk around and make your own way?, I know what he will choose.'

Partnerships with other parties, as shown in Figure 1, are crucial for tackling these complex dilemmas and the numerous practical problems that come with it, like dealing with a specific traditional husbandry system, or aligning supply and demand while taking the life cycle of animals into account. Partnerships make it possible to exchange knowledge and do a well-informed materiality analysis in which choices between different options can be made, or choice can be made unnecessary because of smart innovations. Companies who show self-confidence about their animal welfare achievements are those who take part in extended partnerships, with mutual trust and understanding.

RM2: 'For example, we work with the Consumer Goods Forum. (...) That's an organization, 400 retailers and manufacturers are associated, and they also do a lot of research. (...) Actually, it's how we try to signal all the trends, and work them into our policy.'

RM7: 'There are poultry farms who have invested four, five, six hundred thousand euros to be able to deliver in this segment. A daylight system has to be applied in the stables. Straw bales have to be added. Other enrichment changes have to be made. Adding it up, it's about, eh, maybe a dozen, fifteen, perhaps twenty million euros of investments needed to start even a very small chain. This is only possible if you work together very well in a partnership. If [the retailer] says: 'It's a nice idea' for now, but, uh, not any more in two years, then we all have huge disinvestments, which we, the slaughterhouse or the poultry farmer, cannot bear. So, you have to issue very good agreements about these things. (...) It's all about trust. (...) You'd be surprised how little we write down. Because there's a fairly long-lasting relationship and [the retailer] has always presented themselves as a trustworthy partner. And we've tried to do the same.'

Partnerships with suppliers offer companies some security and empower them to change. Farmers tend to appreciate values like naturalness, craftsmanship, respect for animals, and reciprocity between farmer and animal. Acknowledging these values in the partnership is helpful.

RM1: 'We're not going to tell farmers how to take care of their cows or dictate the size [of the stall] or what kind of bedding they have. Farmers can [determine] that much better than we can. (...) It's almost patronizing to ask them to. (...) It's so much part of their skills and their passion for farming, that it's almost a question of [laughs]: how dare you, why would you think I wouldn't care about that?'

Broad partnerships can also include governmental organizations.

RM1: 'Then the Ministry of Economic Affairs says: We actually want to look at what's possible; could we do a project about it? Then we and the Agriculture and Horticulture Association become the mouthpiece, for the dairy farmers too.'

Partnerships with researchers can be drivers too. RMs appreciate evidence for their decisions. Research can end discussions, show the way out of dilemmas and reveal animal preferences.

RM4: 'So then I started setting it up from the role of sustainable agriculture for [Brand] and, uh, quickly contacting [University], of course, the experts. A fairly academic approach. In the opinion of the [Brand] headquarters [it was] totally over the top, because they wanted it to be all nice and fun. I said: Well, if you want to be distinctive here [in this country], it needs some back-up.'

The collaboration with NGOs ranges from participation in the materiality analysis to large-scale programs, involving labels, audits, research, certifications and awards. RM's mention as positive factors an open dialogue, and personal leadership of NGO directors.

RM2: 'So in terms of people: yes, [name] is the director there, and he is, of course... He comes to our stakeholder events and talks to a lot of people, so he's the face of the NGO. There is, of course, a whole organization standing behind him. And you see that these two different approaches... For us as a company it is much more pleasant to work with [this NGO]. And we are much more inclined to say: 'No, we are going to cooperate, and we do see the win-win situation in it', than with [another NGO].'

Finally, companies can combine leadership and partnership by starting to work with new partners.

RM9: 'We then identified a third-party partner to work with us, to help us understand better the external landscape and to target our assets. (...) We have been working with [NGO]. They've been helping us in terms of implementation, and also helping us formulate a vision. (...) It was at that time the first partnership between an international food company and a global animal welfare NGO.'

Championship overcomes slander

The third crucial element in Figure 1 is 'championship', which overcomes the third type of challenges we found, clustered around the concept of slander. Slander from animal welfare organizations or influential individuals can be obstructive. As we will see later, a critical stance is accepted and is even experienced as an important driver, but, on the other hand, prejudices, extreme demands, and strong unfounded opinions from critics have a negative effect on the willingness of the company to make a change.

RM6: 'Then you do a tour through the store and there are people from [an NGO], and then it appears, for example, that they have never been to our stores before. Then I think to myself: how can you cry wolf, while you yourself know nothing? They were surprised at what we all did as a supermarket organization. They had no idea at all. I think that's a bad thing (...) It can also be immensely annoying if NGOs make statements on TV without any substantive knowledge.'

RM8: 'Some NGOs take a harder stand than others (...) There's something going on now (...) that can have a pretty disruptive effect. While you're sticking your neck out as a retailer in so many ways, and you're really serious and committed, it can work against you at the point it gets unpleasant. And that absolutely has a huge impact on the people involved (...) Then it's not a positive energy (...), but more a negative energy.'

This negative influence of slander can be overcome by positive news in the traditional or social media, by which the general public can be reached as well as the consumer. Here NGOs play an important role too, because they can share an

animal welfare item on a trustworthy basis. Media and NGOs can help companies celebrate their achievements through awards, reports, events, and news items.

RM4: 'The moment we have again reached a big milestone, of course we communicate that, internally and externally.'

WS7: [Company] has received the so-called [Award] (...). This prize was awarded for [our] unique free-range chicken chain by [NGO]. In [year], [Company] developed a new farming concept for broilers with a number of broiler farmers and [other NGO]. This animal-friendly initiative has also laid the foundation for [animal welfare label].

Critical questions asked directly to the company via the media are supportive too.

RM2: '[This NGO] raises a very loud voice, with harsh commercials. And on the one hand they have enticed us to (...) ultimately improve the chicken shelf, because internally we started seeing: Right, we can't go on like this, there is a need for sustainability, for improvement. That happened on the basis of a very aggressive campaign. I'm not sure whether they caused us to finally take steps, but they did contribute to that process.'

The public are strongly influenced by the media, and at the same time express themselves in it. Publicly expressed ethical demands (transparency, integrity, accountability, traceability of products, naturalness of food, welfare) are extra drivers for companies to take action.

RM2: 'People know more and more about it, and so they're asking more questions, and you have to have answers ready.'

Related to the concepts of slander and championship is the risk of reputation damage as a driver. Publicity on genuine positive achievements can be a buffer to future reputation damage. In the following example, the company shows pride in the way they tackle slander from a television documentary together with an NGO, and turn it into something positive.

WS5: 'The [NGO] and [Company] had intensive discussions about the allegations regarding the [animal welfare label] in [the documentary]. The joint conclusion of these talks was that the interests and the reputation of the

[label] are of key importance to all those concerned with this 'animal-friendly' meat. For that reason, the [NGO] is instigating an independent external investigation. As a holder of the [label], [Company] wholeheartedly supports this initiative and, like [NGO], stands to benefit from absolute transparency regarding the reliability of its internal production processes and the [label].'

3.4 Discussion, conclusions, and recommendations

We sketched a model of the central drivers for taking animals into account ethically. The most important drivers that help overcome challenges we found, based on the clusters of information we derived, we called leadership, partnership and championship. These three elements are essential to progress. In the first place, leadership from the company or the decision makers in it, including the RM, is important. What helps as well is the second element: partnerships with other companies, governmental organizations, research institutions, individual researchers, NGOs (sometimes in combination with leadership). Thirdly, 'championship' is helpful: showing and celebrating positive steps or achievements of the company, for example as leaders and partners. These interactions with the public or the consumer, through media, eventually organised together with partners, have a positive impact too, and can relate back to marketing decisions in the company through consumer behaviour, which in its turn can stimulate its leadership. In Figure 1 the three elements and the way they can interact are outlined.

In this study, several theoretical concepts from adjacent CSR fields were confirmed by our findings for animal ethics in food companies and illustrated by examples from our data. We saw how a money-driven culture (McMullen 2015) and a short-term sales focus (Hoffman & Bazerman 2006) can be challenges. These and many other challenges for companies we encountered in our data, can be overcome by taking leadership (Isaacs 2011, Mostowicz et al. 2009, Visser 2014), initiating collectives (Isaacs 2011, Rotter et al. 2013, Visser 2014), and paying attention to the purchasing and supply chain as well as to organizational communication (Van Tulder et al. 2014) and intra-organizational communication (Mauser 2001).

Finding balance in dilemmas seems to be difficult, as is confirmed by Mauser (2001). Strategic market opportunities and stakeholder expectations appear in our findings to be helpful drivers, which is confirmed by Amos and Sullivan

(2018), just like competition, regulative norms, professional norms, and public pressure, found as well by Schultz and Wehmeier (2010). Identity, accountability and transparency issues play a role (Basu & Palazzo 2008). We also can confirm traces of the mutually enhancing effect of responsibility awareness of corporations and of individuals within these corporations (Constantinescu & Kaptein 2015), which is in our case expressed by the influence of the RM on corporate animal welfare policy.

In our data political, legislative (cf. Delbard 2008), and employee (cf. Tulder et al. 2014) influences were hardly mentioned, although they could have emerged easily based on the topic list. We have tried to explain this. It is conceivable that they remained implicit because they were not mentioned explicitly in our topic list. On the other hand, neither was public pressure, which was mentioned by several data sources. Another explanation is that it is possible that other CSR issues are (or were) higher on the public and political agenda than impact on animals.

Especially for animal ethics, we encountered as one of many fixed ideas that animal welfare would equal animal productivity (Rollin 2011). Additionally, we found other fixed ideas standing in the way of progress, like 'good care is enough', 'animal welfare equals animal health', 'animals are lower creatures', and 'the farmer represents the animals'. We identified these fixed ideas as cases of immobility that can be overcome by taking leadership.

Though most of the individual challenges and drivers we found seem applicable to other CSR topics as well, the total of the model as we found it, is strongly related to the position of animals in the food industry as vulnerable living creatures, locked away from the public, not acknowledged as stakeholders themselves (whilst very much is at stake for them), unable to tell us in words what they experience. This combination of characteristics is not applicable to other stakeholders of CSR, like people, who have a voice, or the environment, which can be seen and experienced every day. Eventually a comparison with children in child labour could be tenable. Those RMs who feel responsible for animal welfare, in surroundings where a different culture prevails, have a tough job in letting the voice of animals be heard. Our model might help them and other parties to strengthen their case.

The small number of rather diverse companies in our study is one of its limitations. We tried to minimize this influence by asking interviewees for names of other RMs in the same industry, and by proceeding till saturation was reached. Secondly, we

realize that our discussion of championship as a driver to overcome slander is relatively short. We found fewer references to the influence of slander and forms of championship overcoming it (fully or partly), than references to the other topics, but we treated this evidence in the same way: we offered a variety of ways in which this issue was expressed, including a few illustrative examples. Because qualitative research can never lead to quantitative claims, we presented this pair as an equally useful result. We recommend further research be done into this topic by conducting quantitative studies into specific aspects of our study to quantify the weight of the drivers we found. Secondly, it would be helpful to explore the complex role of animal welfare NGOs, who on the one hand put off companies by naming and shaming, and on the other hand achieve changes. In this light, a more thorough analysis of the role of communications would be useful. We will take a first step in the next chapter.

Our recommendation to RMs and companies in the food industry would be that, on the basis of our model, they explore how they can make progress through leadership, partnership, and championship. This can be done by, amongst others, exploring how the numerous examples we gave in this chapter apply to their own company.⁴

4

Connecting Parties for Change

This exploratory qualitative study reveals which communicative factors stimulate an attitude of responsibility towards animals in companies in the animal-based food industry. It shows that a manager who is made responsible for animal welfare can strengthen the company's ethical position in two ways using communication. The first one is to connect with stakeholders within and outside the company. The second way is to facilitate, as a moderator, communicative connections between these stakeholders in which the manager is not involved per se. In both cases, if these connections take the form of personal meetings, this is extra helpful for a responsible attitude, because in that way insight, trust, and collaboration are gained and sustained. We present a model outlining all supportive communicative connections, a summary of communication channels that are used to effectuate them, and practical advice for managers.

This chapter is based on Janssens, M.R.E., Van Wesel, F. (2019). Connecting parties for change, A qualitative study into communicative drivers for animal welfare in the food industry. Food Ethics, 3: 5-21. We are grateful for comments received when the article was presented in Vienna at the EURSAFE 2018 conference on Professionals in Food Chains, ethics, roles and responsibilities.

Communication by companies plays an important role in CSR (Golob et al. 2013). Without communication, customers or corporate buyers would have no extra stimulus to buy responsibly produced products or services. On the other hand, CSR communication can lead to accusations of ‘greenwashing’ and ‘window dressing’, even if the communication is honest and accurate (Schlegelmilch & Pollach 2005). Fear of this type of accusation may be one of the reasons for doing the opposite and keeping silent about a decent CSR performance (Mausser 2001; Nielsen & Thomsen 2009), a phenomenon we propose to name ‘window blinding’.

Communication with internal and external stakeholders is of importance for CSR in several ways and on several levels. CSR communication studies so far have focused merely on communication with consumers and other external stakeholders (Golob et al. 2013). Communication is not only supportive of CSR, it can also trigger responsibility (expression is followed by action) or be an act of responsibility itself by virtue of its performative role (Schoeneborn & Blaschke 2014; Schoeneborn & Trittin 2013). Writing on a website that animal welfare should be taken seriously, for example, is a way of taking animal welfare seriously (Janssens & Kaptein 2016). In addition, communication can lead the right employees to the right company. Jobseekers and employees increasingly value the CSR achievements of companies (Grayson 2010; Rodrigo & Arenas 2008), and therefore want to be informed in order to make the right career choices. Finally, and in addition to these topics of public communication, it has been argued that organizational values can be integrated in organizations through (internal) organizational communication, for example by writing about them in vision documents that are shared with employees (Begley & Boyd 2000).

Animal welfare is a rather special CSR issue. In business ethics literature, it is a relatively new and unexplored topic, and in business practice it appears to be a blind spot for many (Janssens & Kaptein 2016). In a previous exploratory study (Janssens & Van Wesel 2018) we presented a model for explaining differences between companies in the food industry regarding the corporate responsibility they take for animals. In the present study, we build on data from that earlier study to deepen the topic of *communicative* drivers and will therefore explore the role of communication in gaining and strengthening an ethical corporate stance towards animals. In this way, we are contributing to the fields of business ethics and CSR communication by exploring how the topic of animal welfare acquires, or could acquire, an appropriate place in these fields. Furthermore, we offer practical advice to those who are involved in this aim.

We are zooming in on communicative drivers because communication is an instrument that is relatively easy to handle and that is already there in practically any company. It does not require extreme innovations. A few points of attention and practical adaptations can make the beginning of a change or strengthen an existing change process. Specifically, we will focus on communication in relation to corporate responsibility for animals in the food industry.

The research question of this study is: *What factors of communication help food companies to take responsibility for animals, and how do these factors interact?* Answering this question will also help answer one of the sub-questions of this thesis: *What factors of communication help companies to adopt a responsible stance towards animals?* We take as a starting point the Laswell Formula for ethical communications: *Who says what to whom in which channel and with what effect?* (Schlegelmilch & Pollach 2005). In this case we start from the *effect*: we will look specifically for those factors which strengthen an ethical stance of the corporation towards animals. In addition, we focus on *who* and *in which channel*, so that we can explore the routing of the communication. Analysing the content (*what*) is beyond the scope of our research question, aside from our starting point that the content relates to animal welfare.

We looked into Western food companies because they are relative frontrunners in taking animal welfare into account (Janssens & Kaptein 2016). In these companies, factors influencing the process towards a responsible position will stand out extra clearly. In addition, there is the fact that qualitative data were available. We will elaborate on this reuse of data in the next section. In the third section we will present our findings, followed by discussion, conclusions and recommendations in the final section.

4.1 Method

In this exploratory study, we use part of the data from a former exploratory, qualitative study, collected in 2015 and 2016 during nine interviews with managers who were made responsible for animal welfare, whom we called RMs (Responsibility Managers), of 9 large (1000+ employees), internationally operating, Western-Europe based companies in the animal-based food production chain (Janssens & Van Wesel 2018). The companies were producers, processors, wholesalers and retailers. The methodology used was based on grounded theory

(Boeije 2010, Corbin & Strauss 2015). We searched online and in real life for companies fitting the above requirements and approached them by email. We were directed to new companies by asking the interviewees for potential participants (snowball sampling). In total, we invited thirteen companies to participate. Four companies rejected our invitation. Within the sample of nine, seven companies were based in the Netherlands, one was based in the United Kingdom and one in Switzerland. The RM could be the CSR manager, the quality manager, or any other manager, but in all cases there was a manager who was responsible for animal welfare. By offering the research plan beforehand by email, promising confidential use of data, trust was created.

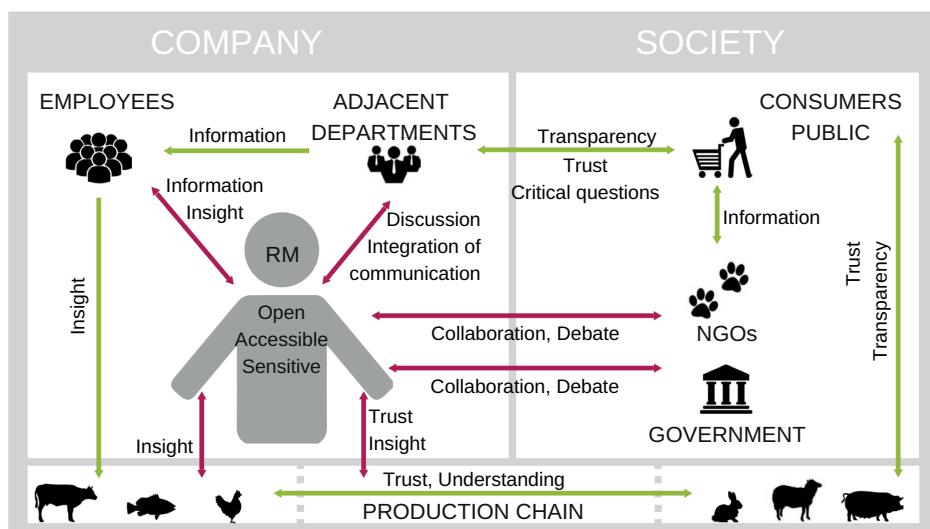
The interviews were semi-structured using an interview guide, which provides the richest source of data for theory building (Boeije 2010; Corbin & Strauss 2015). In each of the interviews, information on communicative factors was given spontaneously as well as by answering open questions. The length of the interviews was 40 to 90 minutes. The interviews were done in person by one of the researchers, who had more than 25 years of experience in journalism and communications. One interview was done by telephone. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. For reasons of data triangulation, we combined the interview data with data from the companies' CSR reports and their websites. Data were entered in NVivo and analysed in a cyclical process of interviewing, coding, identification, comparison, and analysis. When saturation occurred, one last participant (the ninth) was added, and the saturation was confirmed. For more details about our method, see Chapter 3.

For the study reported here, which focuses on communication, we re-analysed the complete data set with a strong focus on communicative factors that were mentioned as positive drivers for a responsible stance of the company towards animals. Because of our focus on communication, we added extra data from social media as an extra (fourth) data source. We checked the companies on the most current social media used by companies: Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram. We read the companies' posts, going back several months (the exact number of months depending on the frequency of the posts, varying from two to twelve), looking for information on animal welfare. By comparing and analysing the extended data set, we identified the model we will present in the following section. In validating our findings, the constructed model was presented and explained to the RMs by email, asking them whether they recognised it from their practices. Their comments were incorporated in our discussion and conclusions.

4.2 Findings

We found several communicative factors that appeared, based on the data, to enhance the level of responsibility for animals taken by the company, which we called drivers. By grouping these drivers, and drawing communicative connections between the stakeholders involved, we could design a model illustrating how these elements interact. This model is shown in Figure 2. Furthermore, we made an inventory of the communication channels involved in each of the communicative connections in the model. This inventory is shown in Table 11.

Figure 2: Communicative connections functioning as drivers for corporate responsibility for animals in the food industry



RM = Responsibility Manager (CSR manager or any other manager responsible for animal welfare)

UPPERCASE TEXT + icon = stakeholder involved in communication

Red or dark arrow = driver in the form of a direct communicative connection with the RM

Green or light arrow = driver in the form of a communicative connection in which the RM plays moderating role

Arrow point = direction of the communication

Lowercase text = what is exchanged or gained through the connection

Dotted lines = borders between companies within the production chain (one stakeholder group, but different companies: producers, processors, wholesalers and retailers of different types of animals and animal-based products)

Table 11: Communication channels used by RMs in food companies

Communicative connections	Communication channels used
<i>Connections of the responsibility manager (RM) with stakeholders</i>	
RM ↔ employees	Intranet, meeting, event, game
RM ↔ adjacent departments	Meeting
RM ↔ NGOs	Event, award, campaign, stakeholder debate
RM ↔ government	Meeting
RM ↔ production chain	Visit, meeting, extranet, newsletter, stakeholder debate
<i>Connections between stakeholders, in which the RM plays a moderating role</i>	
Employees ↔ production chain	Visit, event
Adjacent departments → employees	Newsletter, intranet, company website, press release, social media
Adjacent departments ↔ consumers/public	CSR report, packaging, website, press release, social media, traceability system
NGOs ↔ consumers/public	NGO website, company website, social media, joint press release, label
Production chain ↔ consumers/public	Visit, website
Production chain ↔ production chain	Visit, meeting

We stress that our model and table do not reflect the average situation. We combined all positive factors that appeared to enhance corporate responsibility for animals from the way they were presented in the data. Therefore, we view our model and table as an overview of what works well in frontrunner companies, and how these elements could interact if they were all put into practice in a variety of combinations. Consequently, the model reflects a combination of positive communicative drivers, all of which can be found in practice. All companies in the study use a selection of the connections and channels. Some use many, in interconnected combinations, while others use only a few. From here on, when we talk about RMs it can mean either one of them or all of them, or any number in between. As our study has a qualitative and exploratory design, we do not make statements about the *quantity* of the influence of drivers, nor do we draw conclusions about how many companies make use of them.

We will now explain Figure 2 and describe each connection (shown as an arrow), including the communication channels that are used, as listed in Table 11. In Figure 2, arrows pointing both ways express a dialogue, while the arrow pointing one way expresses communication in one direction. Now and then we will illustrate

our delineation with statements from our data: RMs (marked RMx), annual reports (marked ARx), websites (marked WSx), and social media (marked SMx).

The RM connecting to stakeholders

As can be seen in Figure 2, the RM connects with several parties, and additionally builds connections between those parties. An open, accessible, and sensitive attitude of the RM as a manager and as a person appears to be beneficial as well, as we will see in the following examples. The RM can make direct communicative connections about animal welfare in five directions: inside the company with (i) employees and (ii) adjacent departments (management, communications, marketing, etc.), outside the company with (iii) NGO's, with (iv) the government, and with (v) parties in the production chain. We will now describe some characteristics of these connections as they emerge from our data, going clockwise through Figure 2.

For connecting with employees, RMs use channels for dialogue by which they can connect directly. Channels we found in our data (see Table 11) are intranet, meetings, and live events such as celebrations of milestones. The next citation offers an example of how this is done, and includes a statement on the integration of animal welfare as a topic of sustainability. We will touch upon that later.

RM4: 'We have this external newsletter for stakeholders, that goes to employees as well. So in that newsletter we've just had a complete issue about sustainable farming, including interviews with farmers. And in the former issue one of the pig farmers was interviewed extensively, who was as well on the stage during our last stakeholder update event of [our sustainability program including animal welfare], together with the brand manager [of a specific Brand], to tell the story and show how proud we are of what we're doing. Yeah, we communicate it constantly. But not animal welfare as a separate issue. To us, animal welfare is just one of many topics we are actively dealing with. In this way it is included, but it's not lifted out of a certain setting or placed on a pedestal. It is simply integrated.'

It is helpful for the dialogue if an RM is accessible to the people in the workplace. Between these communication partners, both channels that facilitate dialogue and one-way channels are used.

RM5: 'In every production unit with live animals, an Animal Welfare Officer is positioned. (...) And those people are empowered to stop production. – It can happen, as in any company, that a conflict emerges there. – And all those people are functionally connected to me. The site manager is their hierarchical superior, but functionally it's me. If we disagree, the power of decision immediately goes to the next level. And they will discuss it with one of my employees who's in charge of this kind of issues, or with myself. And in no time, there is a discussion about whether we think it's acceptable or not.'

One RM raises awareness about responsibility and sustainability dilemmas for companies by initiating a game for employees that explores this issue. This way the company helps employees understand its dilemmas, including those regarding animal welfare. Another finding was, that despite dialogue, the influence of the average employee on corporate decisions is limited, as is illustrated in the following quote, in which the communication with the majority of employees is described as being one-way.

RM7: 'Let's distinguish between people in the workplace with the knife in their hands, who, like, cut into the animals or pluck their feathers, or [handle them] in other ways. They know about these [animal welfare] things. There one sees differences, one sees developments. But, of course, they are not really involved in the direction of the company. (...) [We have] several meetings, informal worker meetings. There are ways to communicate these things with each other. But, with all due respect for what all the employees do, they are not very determinative for these transitions. It's much more a somewhat smaller group of people (...). And as soon as we have chosen that direction, one can start to communicate with those people what the changes will be.'

The complexity of animal welfare as a CSR issue, concerning for example what is best for animals, makes it important for the RM to communicate with colleagues from adjacent departments in a sensitive way (the next connection in Figure 2), especially those responsible for reputation, strategy, marketing, issue management, and product quality, which were all mentioned in the data, including the management department. A strong connection between the RM and these departments is a driver for a responsible attitude of the company. If the RM has a connection with these departments and involves them in the change process, more can be achieved. One of the RMs describes illustratively how an agreement on working with an animal welfare label for chickens came about.

RM8: 'That initially was discussed between the CSR/Quality Department, that's us, and the Category Manager, the people who are responsible for what's on the shelf. (...) And that's how the first agreements were actually made. First [one should] talk about what [animal welfare] means; what are we talking about here? And is everyone aware what it means to work with a slow growth [chicken] breed, and what the impact will be?'

Outside the company, RMs connect with NGOs (see the next connection in Figure 2). Programs for working together on, for example, meeting the requirements for an animal welfare label are helpful for getting companies to take a responsible stance towards animals. RMs invite NGOs to stakeholder debates about animal welfare. Some regularly organize a stakeholder debate or a materiality assessment with stakeholders, in which the topic of animal welfare is introduced and discussed. In the next statements, the RMs are explaining how the animal welfare strategy of the company comes about and is revised now and then.

RM9: 'When we hold these stakeholder meetings, we do invite the animal protection welfarist organizations.'

RM1: 'You do a materiality analysis. So, you ask your stakeholders what they see as the important issues we should pay attention to. And then 'animal health / animal welfare' just scores high.'

Governmental organizations were not often mentioned in the data. RMs expressed the opinion that government regulation at national or European level makes sense, but that the sector itself should also have substantial autonomy. Opinions on how proactive on the one side or reserved on the other side governments should be, differ among the interviewees. Communication plays a role, albeit a modest one, in the complex relationship between government and company (see the next connection in Figure 2). A dialogue, which is effectuated through meetings (Table 11), is necessary to start innovative programs in cooperation with the government. An RM who is willing to join the debate, and is supported to do so by corporate management, can be influential. The next quote is an example of how this is described:

RM5: 'The House of Representatives wanted to discuss the stunning of slaughter animals. The Association [of the industry] wanted to delegate people there to explain things on behalf of the industry. Being a frontrunner

for animal welfare we [as a company] said: we slaughter more than 50% of Dutch pigs, so I'm going to explain it myself.'

There are connections between RMs and companies in the production chain (Figure 2) which are helpful. In addition to a rather impersonal channel such as a newsletter, and a quasi-personal channel such as an extranet (a website with controlled access for partners), live meetings and farm visits are stimulating, because they can establish mutual trust and understanding (Table 11). For example, RMs visit farmers to see how things work from their perspective.

RM4: 'I myself, through my work and walking around on farms, with boots on, talking to farmers, have started to appreciate farming and animal-based production systems, and the people behind them. I think they are extremely undervalued in society. (...) So, through my work and through the years I have started to value all this, and as well the importance of animal welfare. Honestly, I think, I wasn't aware of all that before, because I wasn't raised on a farm. We didn't really have companion animals. So, it was a rather remote issue to me.'

In addition to the five directions described above (shown in Figure 2) in which the RM directly communicates – in most cases bilaterally – with stakeholders, we will now describe communicative connections between stakeholders in which the RM plays a moderating role.

The RM moderating connections between stakeholders

Apart from communicating with the stakeholders as described above, the RM connects stakeholders. We found six connections inside and outside the company, in which the RM is involved as a kind of moderator, stimulating stakeholders to communicate about animal welfare issues. Again, we will describe them clockwise, starting at the left of Figure 2.

RMs sometimes connect employees to parties in the production chain by organizing farm visits, based on the view that visiting farms increases employees' understanding of animal welfare issues.

RM4: 'You could [as an employee] sign up to visit one of our pig farmers. (...) Because our experience is: if you take people with you, then it comes alive.'

We have already seen that RMs connect with adjacent departments to work closely with them. Through this channel, the RM also initiates and facilitates connections between those departments and other stakeholders. One of these connections is that between those departments and other employees. To begin with, employee newsletters, for which the RM can offer information on animal welfare issues, are put together at the Communications department. The same holds true for part of the content on the intranet and on the company's website. The latter is created for the public but is used by employees too. We found no clear examples of employees responding on animal welfare issues, which is represented by the unidirectional arrow between adjacent departments and employees in the model. This quote illustrates how these connections were briefly mentioned:

RM9: 'It is widely communicated. We offer public updates on our websites. As part of our creating shared value, we report. Lots of employees look on the websites and it can also be accessed via the intranet, so, yes, it's there for people to take advantage of.'

There are many external communicative connections of adjacent departments that enhance corporate responsibility for animals. The RM plays a facilitating role by working together with these departments or providing information. We will now proceed with the arrow on top, right from the middle, between adjacent departments and the consumer and the public. As already mentioned, websites are open to the public. They can present animal welfare issues and steps taken by the company. One of the corporate websites mentions 'farm-to-fork transparency'. Another one explains the differences between Good Nest Chicken, free-range chicken, and organic chicken. Besides their explanatory role, websites contain press releases about the company's intentions and achievements. This type of news can also be published on social media, as is done in this example:

SM2: 'All [brand, nationality] dairy products satisfy the requirements of outdoor grazing.'

Other relevant channels between adjacent departments and the public by which the RM can stimulate animal welfare topics mentioned in the data are packaging (where product information is disclosed), product traceability systems, and integration of animal welfare as a topic in overall CSR or sustainability communication. The last point was observed in general in the CSR reports we studied, for example. An illustrative quote about the use of packaging is the following:

WS6: 'To help consumers make choices, [NGO] have developed a simple star system. The more stars, the more animal-friendly the meat. (...) You can find these stars on [our] meat packaging.'

In addition, we found that the connection between these adjacent departments and the public (including consumers) through these channels helps to establish transparency and trust by providing information. The channels are used to make the complex issue of animal welfare come alive and to receive and answer critical consumer questions, making this connection a two-way street. One of the annual reports explains how this connection to the public works, and one of the RMs illustrates how the reaction of the public plays a role.

AR8: '[Company] thinks it's important that communication about our products is honest, open and clear. [Company] wants to help its clients to be sure that they can make well-informed choices. [Company] says what it does, and does what it says. Integrity and trust are important values of our cooperation with suppliers. This applies as well to consumer communication. If claims or specific product features are printed on [company] products, this will be checked beforehand, to guarantee that products really match these claims. If possible, [company] works with licensed inspection bodies and labels. In some cases, this is not sufficient. In that case [the company] sets up an appropriate inspection body in cooperation with parties involved. In the horsemeat chain, for example, [company] has started to do its own inspections. In addition, [company] is working on a certification system to improve animal welfare.'

RM5: 'A lot has to do with transparency, openness. The consumer pays a lot more attention, right? And we have other media, social media. What you see is that many changes start after something goes wrong, and the [public] reaction to it. That kind of things have a lot of effect.'

Especially if products are being sold with a trusted animal welfare label, it helps if the label is communicated extensively and at the same time honestly.

RM8: 'What we haven't meddled with – I think that's been our strongest weapon – is that we have been communicating based on facts (...). So, we have just been very honest about how much space the chicken has. (...) We are not going to depict chickens sitting in a wicker basket somewhere in the meadow, or something like that. (...) No, welfare really requires factual communication.'

(...) If you don't do it well, you're going to be lynched. And that's a good thing, I think.'

Marketing and communication departments use communication channels for storytelling, for example to confirm an authentic or indigenous product image in texts or videos on the website. A video on the corporate website (WS6), showing a farmer who says how much he loves his animals and enjoys the change to a more animal-friendly system, helps to increase trust and partly replaces live farm visits. In the next example, the wish to tell a positive story and be authentic at the same time stimulates change.

RM3: 'If you would like to state that in Ireland the cows are always in the meadow... In winter they're not in the meadow, right? So, you cannot write that down. Marketing would love to tell that story. Well, in that case we'll have to make it happen.'

Even food-processing companies, on whom reputation issues may seem to have less impact because there is no direct consumer contact, are aware of indirect effects on their reputation. RMs acknowledge that if animal welfare is important to the companies next to them in the production chain, it is automatically important to themselves.

RM3: 'The retailers we are dealing with are all, let's say, number one companies in their home countries, who put CSR in a high position already. So automatically we put it in a high position too. (...) Actually, we don't really like to be in the news. It's all about our retailer.'

NGOs in the field of animal welfare have an interest in companies taking a responsible stance towards animals, for example as part of the company's CSR. For these NGOs, communicating with the public is an obvious activity (see the next arrow, between NGOs and the consumer and the public). They use several channels to express themselves on animal welfare in relation to the food industry in general, or to specific products, companies, or brands. RMs use these existing channels for positive change by being in close contact with these NGOs and working with them. They facilitate communication between NGOs and the public, for example about products, labels and NGO awards. According to our data, the channels used are NGO websites, company websites, social media, joint press releases, and packaging

(NGOs allow companies who meet their requirements to use their label). This is a quote from one of these press releases, which the company also put on its website:

WS7: 'Animal welfare prize Good Chicken Award for free-range chicken chain – [Company] received the so-called [award] in [place] on [date]. This prize has been awarded to [Company] for their unique free-range chicken chain by [NGO].'

If a company obtains an animal welfare award for their achievements, the RM can help the NGO communicate about it with the public. An RM describes how even a 'shaming' NGO campaign can be used for progress by tuning in on it.

RM4: 'When you see that animal welfare is what resonates [with the public], you start working with [label]. That's what you communicate with the consumer. (...) We're also always in contact with [an NGO] internationally, and received a few awards from them. (...) And locally, we also work with (...) various NGOs. (...) What happened with [an NGO] and chickens, this 'pop chicken' campaign: You find out that the interaction may be of interest, or offer opportunities. We have long been concerned with animal welfare as an integral element, but in some materials we are such small players, that we can hardly be the *trigger*. But (...) since it's already on the internal agenda, you can seize the opportunity of the 'pop chicken' campaign to announce your own switch, and start free riding on the attention, instead of digging your heels in and being defensive.'

If RMs make their companies join an animal welfare label program, it becomes possible for an NGO to share this information through its website and a press release. In addition, an animal welfare label can be introduced on product packaging. The RM in the following example sees the animal welfare label as a communicative tool.

RM6: 'Five years ago, the [label] came into existence (...), a great tool to make things known to the consumer.'

In case of collaboration with an NGO, shared press releases about joint actions or achievements are issued and exposed on websites.

WS9: '[Company] has announced a major pledge to improve the welfare of the farm animals in its supply chain, following the signature of a partnership agreement with [NGO].'

As animal welfare is strongly demand driven, we observed that companies try to make their activities and achievements publicly known through these press releases, which increase consumer trust by including a partner NGO as a co-sender.

Although it is not a direct influence of the of RM, we want to mention the influence of both naming and shaming of the company by NGOs. Indirectly, RMs can turn a shaming campaign into an opportunity. One retailer's website uses the negative term 'pop chicken' to make its own products stand out positively in comparison.

WS8: 'From October 2014, the [label] has been on the shelves. The living conditions of this chicken are considerably better than those of the current basic chicken, or pop chicken. [Label] is a slower-growing breed. The chickens live longer, gain less weight, and have more space. In addition, they get more daylight, which offers them a natural day-night rhythm. Those are all conditions a pop chicken doesn't have, and which are good for the chicken. It is [the company's] ambition to replace all pop chicken on the chicken shelf with [label] by 2015.'

Yet, if the shaming coin flips to the other side, it can have a negative effect on the collaboration between the company and the NGO. People in the company can feel offended or betrayed. RMs and their colleagues get demoralised if things get nasty, for example when excesses of animal abuse are presented as common for the industry, or when unfounded criticism is given. But even then, shaming can indirectly provoke change, as we see in the next example.

RM2: '[This NGO] raises a very loud voice, with harsh commercials. And on the one hand they have enticed us to (...) ultimately improve the chicken shelf, because internally we started seeing: Right, we can't go on like this, there is a need for sustainability, for improvement. That happened on the basis of a very aggressive campaign. I'm not sure whether they caused us to finally take steps, but they did contribute to that process.'

Food scandals outside the reach of the company pose challenges and at the same time accelerate the overall process of taking responsibility, as they reveal practices

through the media of which the public and the consumer were not, or hardly, aware. And again, RMs turn this challenge into an opportunity.

AR8: 'During the past few years, several abuse issues in the South American horsemeat chain have been revealed. A team from CSR and Quality did some research in the chain of the horsemeat sold by [company]. Luckily they found none of the practices shown in the documentary. Nevertheless, arrangements for improvement with our suppliers have been made, to further improve the well-being of the horses, also during transport.'

We have dwelled for some time on the connection between NGOs and the public and the consumers, and will now move on to the next arrow: connecting the production chain with the public and the consumer. What holds for employees, holds for the latter groups as well: the topic comes alive as soon as one meets farmers and their animals in real life. Therefore, RMs initiate participation of chain partners in activities such as open-door days. This extends transparency, establishes trust, and takes away negative prejudices. On one of the websites it is formulated thus:

WS7: 'The image that chickens have a bad life, living in small cages, is persistent. (...) Therefore, more poultry farmers should open their farms to the public (...) for example on Open Farm Days. It's important that people see with their own eyes that chickens have a good life, because only in that case will they really remember it.'

The bottom arrow in Figure 2 expresses connections between parties within the production chain, facilitated by RMs. Views on animal welfare and corporate responsibility can vary considerably between chain partners. According to the data, trust and mutual engagement are crucial for achieving progress. Both are established by live meetings between parties within the chain. Therefore, the use of live communication channels, such as visits and other meetings (e.g., focus groups, program meetings and strategic sessions), is a positive factor. Sometimes communication is embedded in partnerships, to make sure that the chain partners meet, connect and collaborate. Once again, the RMs are moderators.

RM7: 'We take retailers to the farms. We take farmers to the retailers. (...) We invited our farmers into a session to exchange ideas on issues like health, welfare, or any issues they are dealing with. And we invite external speakers to shed a new light on these kinds of issues. Well, it works. And why do we

do that? Not so much because we want to change the farmers ourselves, but because the awareness at poultry farms of [the situation of] market parties is very important for getting support for transitions, for improvement, for change. Conversely, market parties also need to understand very well what the problems of daily farm practice are. Only in this way one can jointly search for improvement.’

4.3 Discussion, conclusions, and recommendations

We will now interpret our findings in the light of our research question: *What factors of communication help food companies to take responsibility for animals, and how do they interact?* The positive communicative drivers we were looking for take the form of communicative connections and communication channels. They are summarised in our model (Figure 2), in combination with our overview of the communication channels we found (Table 11). We found them by analysing data from nine semi-structured interviews, the company’s websites, their annual (CSR or general) reports and their social media posts, looking for references to any positive influence of these connections on a responsible corporate stance towards animals. The interviews were the most informative, as they offered not only communicative expressions, but also elaborations and explanations. Nevertheless, documents and posts also provided useful additional information.

The role of the RM

Our model (Figure 2) and the accompanying table (Table 11) show a network of interactions of which elements are used by several RMs and stakeholders. As a central figure, the RM has many options for connecting to parties and additionally connecting parties around the RM’s own position. Concepts that play a role are trust, collaboration, and meeting each other in person, for example in company visits and meetings.¹¹ Additionally, more remote channels (and one-way channels) are used out of habit or for practical reasons, since involving all stakeholders extensively in visits and meetings is simply not feasible.

11 One of the interviewees remarked after seeing our results that in their case (a cooperative company), the communication with the supplying part of the production chain is of a slightly different nature, as their suppliers are co-owners of the company and therefore have a voice in corporate decision making. Nevertheless, communicative factors in this specific relationship appeared equally important and were integrated in the overall results and conclusions.

The RM acts as both a connector and a moderator of connections between others. Both types of connections involve the same set of stakeholders and therefore can in some cases intertwine. For example: if the RM organizes an employee visit to a farm, it is quite natural for him or her to join the group of employees on their visit and affirm the personal relationship with the farmer. Nevertheless, the RM can also keep in personal contact with the farmer. The RM who encourages the marketing department to provide information to consumers about animal welfare on the corporate website is likely to get involved in creating content. Note that all the communicative connections presented in Figure 2 could be identified in the data as drivers.

We did not find examples of RMs getting in contact personally with consumers or the public. This may have to do with the large numbers, but a written text or a video message could be an option. We have no data that show why RMs do not communicate with the public or consumers directly.

Channels

Table 11 shows that many different channels are used for communicating with the public (and meanwhile the consumer), such as websites, newsletters, press releases and social media, although differences exist between companies. Some of these differences can be explained from the position companies have in the production chain. For example, it is more important for a retailer to inform the public thoroughly than for a processor. Although quantity is not an issue in our study, we want to remark that not many references to animal welfare were found on the social media channels of the companies. For CSR issues in general, Etter (2013) concludes that, fearing the potential negative publicity, companies are hesitant to proactively communicate CSR topics on Twitter, although several of the companies have solved the paradox of engagement and risk management by starting a specific CSR Twitter account, taking time and effort to manage issues put forward by the public.

Looking more closely at Table 11, we see that each stakeholder has its own appropriate communication channels. Personal contact works out well with partners in the production chain and with NGOs. It would probably work with consumers and the public too but is not feasible, except during events like Open Farm Days. For large stakeholder groups, however, multimedia approaches such as websites, social media and press exposure via press releases are more viable. Sometimes authentic storytelling, as well as tuning in to trends and NGO

campaigns with genuine commitment, can work as a substitute for personal contact in approaching large audiences.

Animal welfare as a topic of CSR communication

As we noted already, not much is known about specific communication on animal welfare as a CSR topic. Du et al. (2010) found a mix of general CSR communication channels (reports, Public Relations, websites) and outcomes (trust, awareness, advocacy), both of which overlap with the findings in our study. A study by Kim (2019) reflects several aspects of CSR communication we found as well, like the importance of trustworthiness and transparency, and the link with reputation. Schlegelmilch and Pollach (2005) confirm trust as an important purpose of corporate communication about ethical issues, and also confirm most of the channels that we found. One difference is the relatively personal and reciprocal character of the communication that we found in our research. This difference can be explained by their stronger focus on corporate communication instead of manager communication. Another explanation may be the complexity of the animal welfare issue (Vanhonacker & Verbeke 2014) and the dilemmas it raises, for example between animal welfare and environmental issues, or between differing positions about what is best for animals (Janssens & Van Wesel 2018). At the same time, we cannot be sure that these characteristics (personal, reciprocal) are unique to animal welfare issues. For communication with employees about CSR in general, for example, it is in line with Chen and Hung-Baesecke (2014), who conclude that managers enhance employee participation in CSR activities by participating themselves in them and actively advocating them. Further specifying the differences between communication about animal welfare and about other CSR topics requires additional research.

The success of working with adjacent departments points towards embedding animal welfare communication in broader, existing channels of (CSR or other) communication within a company. This is in line with what Vanhonacker and Verbeke (2014) conclude: that incorporating animal welfare in CSR communication can be fruitful for the company and its animal-friendly stance. In addition, Cornelissen (2004) states that CSR communication needs to be an integrated and inherent part of business activity. Ross et al. (2015) suggest that many companies in the agri-food industry still do not use sustainability (including animal welfare) strategically, but instead defensively. In this way they overlook opportunities to use sustainability as a mechanism to build competitive advantage.

We have indicated that communication with the public and consumer communication are supportive of a responsible attitude of the company towards animals. The latter is confirmed especially for agribusiness by Luhmann and Theuvsen (2016). Taking the limited consumer knowledge of food production into account, they state that it is important for a company to share its view on the process, in order to increase transparency, knowledge, trust and reputation. The importance of communication and gaining trust is also confirmed by Schlegelmilch and Pollach (2005), and especially for the food sector by Gössling (2011) and Vanhonacker and Verbeke (2014). In addition, Luhman and Theuvsen (2016) find that stakeholder pressure is a strong motivator for CSR in agribusiness, as do Vidales et al. (2012). Our study confirms this relationship for animal welfare as a CSR topic.

Limitations of this study and recommendations for further research

We realize that our study is of an exploratory nature, and that the small number of participants is a limitation. We stopped interviewing when saturation in the diversity of topics occurred, which means that some of the drivers we found were only experienced by one or two of the interviewees. Thus, we cannot make statements about the strength or frequency of the drivers found. Therefore, we recommend that future research further explores our findings, including the nature and impact of specific connections and, as was mentioned earlier, specific characteristics of animal welfare as a CSR issue. Another limitation of this study is that it does not offer all possible drivers for animal welfare. Despite the saturation effect, we cannot completely rule out the possibility that additional interviewees could have surprised us with new channels, or that there are several potential channels or connections that have been overlooked by the industry and have not yet entered its practice. Research into the potential influence of relatively new communication channels and communicative connections is therefore recommended. Furthermore, it is possible that the RM plays a less central role and only looks more central because of the relatively high weight of the interviews with the RMs in our analysis. A final limitation is that, although during our analysis of the data we were looking for communicative drivers for an ethical stance of companies towards animals, we cannot draw conclusions about the influence on the actual performance in terms of animal welfare. Nevertheless, we think we have revealed a model that draws a useful picture of communicative drivers around the RM, inside and outside the company.

In our exploratory study, we cannot make statements about strong causal relations between communicative drivers and a responsible corporate stance. What we have shown is in which ways RMs with a relatively responsible attitude take a central role in a web of communicative relations that are potential drivers of corporate responsibility for animals, at least from their own point of view.

The exploratory nature of the study and our aim to find factors that help a company take a responsible stance towards animals, has led us to focus on companies that do express themselves on animal welfare and therefore appeared to have linked responsibility for animal welfare to one of their managers. This is a limitation as well. Our data offer no options for comparison with companies who have not done so.

Given the existing literature on the influence of investors on CSR (Glac 2014, Kong 2012, Vidales et al. 2012) it was interesting to observe that they were hardly mentioned in any of our data sources. Sometimes they were implicitly included in terms like stakeholder debate and materiality assessment. We did not explicitly ask RMs to elaborate on investor communication, and RMs did not mention them spontaneously. Therefore, investors are not included in our model. An explanation of their relative absence in the data may be that they are beyond the scope of the RM and thus are more remote.

Applicability of the results

We have wondered to what extent our conclusions are specific for animal welfare in relation to other more common CSR topics. Although our study focused especially on animal welfare in the food industry, we think the odds are high that the drivers we found can be translated to other CSR topics and industries as well, as was argued above in the light of CSR communication literature. Nevertheless, the strength of each driver will depend on several aspects of each topic, such as how common it is and where the company stands on the topic. Therefore, on the one hand, we do not want to be speculative about the transferability of our findings, but on the other hand, we have no difficulty imagining that trust and dialogue play an important role in, for example, child-labour issues in the production chain, and that site visits could accelerate processes by creating understanding. We also think that openness, accessibility, and sensitivity are positive characteristics of any responsibility manager working on a CSR issue. At the same time, we think that the issue of animal welfare in the Western food industry is so urgent and so relatively new that it reveals communicative drivers more easily than other topics in other industries would have done.

For the issue of animal welfare, we conclude that there is much that companies and their RMs can do to strengthen a responsible stance of the company by communicating. For example, they can share information in their reports, organize farm visits, talk about their goals and achievements on social media, and work towards an animal-friendly reputation by showing the trusted face of the farmer in authentic stories. This confirms the findings of Janssens and Kaptein (2016), who state that any company can express its responsibility for animals, at least by showing it more clearly on its website.

Our list of communication channels offers plenty of tools for RMs to enhance a responsible corporate stance towards animals. We recommend that from this list, they extract ways to take the corporate stance further by using the communicative drivers (both connections and channels) described in this model. We also want to repeat that we are showing the cumulative connections and channels that are used by the RMs of the frontrunner companies in our study, and that none of them uses the complete set. This means that RMs of any company can derive new ideas from our model and overview. For the convenience of the reader, we have summarised our recommendations for RMs and their companies below.

First, if no manager is responsible for animal welfare yet, make it the explicit responsibility of the CSR manager, the quality manager, or any other manager with an appropriate job description. Secondly, we recommend exploring the five opportunities for connecting with stakeholders, and the six opportunities for facilitating connections between stakeholders, that can function as drivers for a company's taking a responsible attitude towards animals. One can strengthen existing connections and initiate new ones where this is possible and appropriate, and use existing (CSR or other) communication channels for communication about animal welfare. The next step is to add personal contacts to these channels for establishing trust and explore substitutes like storytelling. Finally, one could add creative new ideas and to the existing use of communication channels: take inspiration from the gaming example and explore where dialogue can enrich current one-way communication by making use of the input from communication partners (e.g. on social media), et cetera.

Although most of the communicative drivers and channels we found may not come as a total surprise, we think we have offered an overview of the total field of communications around the RM and a broad spectrum of communicative tools that a company, and especially the RM, can use to strengthen and communicate the responsibility it takes for animals.⁵

5

Animal Business

Using insights from business ethics and animal ethics, this chapter argues that companies have a responsibility towards animals. It argues that animals have a moral status, that moral actors have the moral obligation to take the interests of animals into account and thus, that as moral actors, companies should take the interests of animals into account, more specifically their current and future welfare. Based on this corporate responsibility, categories of corporate impact on animals in terms of welfare and longevity are offered, including normative implications for each of them. The chapter concludes with managerial implications for several business sectors. It contributes to the field of business ethics by taking normative aspects of animal welfare in corporate practice from a blind spot into the spotlight, and thus connecting the fields of business ethics and animal ethics.

This chapter is based on the article Animal Business: An exploration of corporate responsibility towards animals that is under review. I am grateful for comments received when the article was presented in Barcelona at the EACAS 2019 conference.

In our times, animals are viewed, at least legally, as things people can own and use as they please, with certain restrictions on the ways they are handled (Meijer 2016, Stallwood 2017). Many countries, at some point, enacted animal-protection laws, if initially for people's sake, because people who hurt animals could easily start hurting people as well, and people watching an animal being mistreated might be offended (Svoboda 2014, Timmermann 2005). Despite developments in legislation, there are huge differences in legal protection of different categories of animals based on their function for humans. Land animals in the United States that are raised and killed for food, for example, are hardly protected by law, in contrast to companion animals (DeMello 2012).

During the last few decades, societal and philosophical support for the idea that animals should receive more moral and legal protection has grown. Consumers, investors, and NGOs have become critical of the treatment of animals by corporations and nations (Amos & Sullivan 2018, Special Eurobarometer 2015). Nevertheless, normative explorations of the responsibility of companies towards animals are scarce (Van Liedekerke & Dubbink 2008). In *The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility* (Carroll 1991) animals are not mentioned, and Freeman's stakeholder theory (Freeman et al. 2010) only touches on the subject. When animals are discussed in animal ethics literature, the approach is often empirical (e.g. consumer attitudes), limited to one sector (e.g. the fur industry) or to one specific approach (e.g. a spiritual one) (Janssens & Kaptein 2016).

Therefore, in this chapter I will explore the ethical responsibility of companies towards animals in general from a normative point of view, using the most common modern ethical approaches. This aim takes a few steps. First, I will argue that sentient animals, able to experience pleasure and pain, have a moral status. A second step is to argue that from the acknowledgement of animals' moral status, direct moral obligations will follow. For the definition and content of such obligations we need ethical theory. Therefore, I will discuss the fact that according to different modern moral theories, this moral status entails that moral agents should take the interests of sentient animals into account in their actions. The next step is that I will argue that this holds not only for individual moral agents, but as well for collectives, including companies. Taking the argument further, I will state that the interests of animals should play a role in the discussion on the ethical responsibility of companies towards animals. To fill this responsibility in, I will then define animal interests more precisely as animal welfare, and will explore whether the killing of animals can be discussed in terms of welfare. Having done

this, I will offer a categorization of different types impact of companies on the welfare of animals. In the pre-final section of this chapter I will draw conclusions and offer managerial implications for companies. I will conclude with brief recommendations for different industries and for further research.

5.1 The moral status of animals

In this section I will explore the concept of moral status and identify how it applies to animals. I will look into the concept of moral status in relation to sentience, and then identify to which animals it is applicable. I will summarize relevant biological knowledge of animal sentience and conclude that some groups of animals can make a moral claim on moral agents, based on their sentience.

Moral status and sentience

‘To have a moral status is to be morally considerable, or to have moral standing. It is to be an entity towards which moral agents have, or can have, moral obligations’, as Warren (1997:3) points out. She explores which entities (humans, animals, plants, things) have a moral status. In that search, she considers the views of several philosophers, such as Taylor on the one hand, who attributes moral status to each goal-oriented organism with a tendency to maintain its existence and reproduce, including plants, and Kant on the other hand, who limits moral status to rational moral agents, which in general equates: humans. Warren argues that sentience, the capacity to feel pleasure and pain, should be the key concept for moral status, because there is a general agreement that it is wrong to inflict pain on those who can experience it. She distinguishes the Sentience Only view (sentience is a *necessary* and *sufficient* criterion for moral status) and the Sentience Plus view (sentience is a *sufficient*, but not necessary criterion for moral status, because there can be other sufficient criteria). (Note that in both cases sentience is sufficient.) She argues that there may be valid reasons for ascribing moral status to some non-sentient entities (e.g. biological species or ecosystems) and for ascribing a stronger moral status to some sentient beings than to others. Additionally, she distinguishes between *some* moral status and *full* moral status. Although this multi-level and multi-principle system of moral status is beyond the scope of this study, it is relevant that sentience of organisms serves as a sufficient basis for granting sentient animals at least some moral status (Warren 1997).

Several authors agree with Warren on the importance of sentience as an essential condition to speak about the moral status of animals. The most obvious candidate for endorsement of the sentience criterion as sufficient for moral status is Singer's (1975/2009) utilitarian view, which is explicitly based on a moral status of animals dictated by their sentience. Rollin (2016b) as well agrees with Warren that sentience is a sufficient condition for moral status. He stretches the notion of pleasure and pain to include any positive or negative mental state, such as the negative state of boredom, and prefers to speak of what *matters* to animals.

The deontological perspective on moral status is another matter. It seems harder to connect to the sentience criterion as a sufficient criterion for moral status. Regan (1983/2004) acknowledges moral status of all individuals who are subjects-of-a-life, because they have beliefs, desires, preferences, intentionality, memory and a sense of their future. He defines mammals (from around the age of 1 year) as those who have these features, and therefore as 'moral patients': they have a life that is theirs and can undergo moral acts from moral agents. His concept of those who count morally is therefore narrower than those who are sentient, which means that he does not agree that sentience is *sufficient* for having moral status. Is this problematic for my argument? As was mentioned in Chapter 2, Regan first drew the line at mammals from the age of 1 year, and later added that birds probably also belong to the circle of those who matter, and maybe fishes (Regan 1983/2004). This means that he is drawing closer to acceptance of all vertebrates as morally relevant, but does not include reptiles and amphibians. In addition, Korsgaard (2018:33) states: 'There is such a thing as the good because there are creatures in this world for whom things can be good or bad. Those creatures are animals, who pursue their functional good through action: locomotion guided by valenced representations, or in simpler terms: by sentience.' From that perspective she agrees to attribute moral status to sentient animals, stating that animals pursue the objects of their inclinations just like humans do, and that both are creatures for whom things can go well or badly. I conclude that there are deontological approaches that acknowledge moral status to sentient animals, noting that there is uncertainty about reptiles and amphibians.

Well-founded views of opponents could undermine the argument that sentient animals have a moral status. Scruton (1996/2006) stresses that distinctive features of humans versus animals matter morally and that, although researchers continue to discover capacities in animal species which were formerly attributed only to humans (language, planning, mourning, remembering, sacrificing oneself),

no other species combines them all. It has been confirmed that many different human capacities have been detected in animal species to a certain degree. Meijer (2017:13) offers an overview of how the idea that ‘non-human animals are categorically different from human animals’ has been challenged in different fields of study. She refers to authors who argue that animals can have cognition (Bekoff and Allen 1999), cultures (Smuts 2001) and language (Gentner et al. 2006, Slobodchikoff 2009).¹² She describes (2017:13) how ‘Poststructuralist and posthumanist thinkers challenge the underlying hierarchy, questioning a binary opposition between humans and other animals, as well as human exceptionalism (Calarco 2008, Derrida 2008, Wadiwel 2015, Wolfe 2003).’ To refute the idea that grammar is a unique human capacity she refers to nonhuman primates learning grammar, amongst whom ‘Chimpanzee Sarah, who was born in Africa, was taught to parse and produce streams of tokens that obeyed a simple grammar. Along with three other chimpanzees she learned to use a board with plastic symbols to analyse syntactic expressions, including if-then-else’ (2017:44). Syntactic communicative expressions of this type are seen as a form of grammar, but these conclusions do not remain undisputed. Conversely, humans lack capacities of other species, for example the capacity of bats to navigate in the dark with echolocation and the capacity of chameleons to adapt their skin colour to the environment. This means that humans may have literally *more* of certain different capacities, in *number* and in *complexity*, but this does not make them any more a unique species than other species are unique.

Another opponent is Hsiao (2017), who argues that welfare matters to an animal only in the way water matters to a plant and fuel matters to an engine. Although the analogy is interesting, it fails when explored further, because this is not how the verb ‘to matter’ is used in common language, nor in ethical idiom. Having access to water makes a difference for a plant (the difference between living or dying), but we normally do not say it *matters* to the plant. It is sentience that makes a being experience that something matters (Rollin 2016b). I therefore reject both Scruton’s and Hsiao’s arguments against attributing sentient animals a moral status.

Up until now I have argued that there are several philosophers who ascribe a moral status to sentient animals, and that those who challenge it do not seem to have convincing arguments. There might be differences in levels of moral status (Korsgaard 2018), but for the purpose of my argument, there is no need to explore

¹² This should probably be 2012.

the differences between the different views any further. From here I assume that *at least some* animals have a moral status: those that are sentient beings. One remaining problem is the difference between sentience as a sufficient condition for moral status, which most authors accept, and the narrower group of animals to which Regan attributes moral status. The reason why this is an issue here, is that it leads to differences in the demarcation of which animals to attribute moral status. Using his definition of subjects-of-a-life, he first confined moral status to mammals at least one year old, and later added that birds probably should be granted moral status as well, and maybe fishes (1983/2004). This takes the demarcation line closer to the sentience threshold, as we will see later. Despite the remaining fuzzy area, I consider sentience as a sufficient condition for moral status and explore now which groups of animals are considered sentient.

Demarcating sentient animals

Sentience is the ability to experience positive and negative affective states, such as pain, grief, hunger, thirst, happiness, fear, and pleasure (Duncan 2006). Apart from that, anticipation, memory and coping with challenges play a role (Spruijt et al. 2001). Knowing that a positive or a negative state is to come, as well as remembering it, can intensify the experience (Varner 2012). Varner sees a continuum from mere sentience (of beings who can experience positive and negative mental states) via near-personhood (of beings who have a sense of their mental states in the past and the future) to personhood (of beings who can place their mental states of the past and the future in their life story, which is in line with DeGrazia 2006). Akhtar (2011) and Rollin (2011) on the other hand argue that animals may experience pain more negatively than humans do, because animals have less understanding of the situation. Without drawing conclusions about differences based on memory, anticipation, and understanding (earlier I have concluded that Regan has doubts about sentience as being *sufficient* for moral status, and therefore excludes reptiles and amphibians), I will stick to the concept of sentience as a sufficient condition for moral status.

Biological research uses four types of evidence for sentience: a nervous system similar to the human nervous system, behaviour in reaction to injury that is similar to human behaviour in reaction to injury (crying, howling, shrieking, moaning, etc.), the presence of sense organs and/or behaviour indicative of perceptual ability (not sufficient for sentience, but apt to be accompanied by it), and the presence of neurochemicals that in humans are related to the experiencing of pleasure, pain, or emotion (Warren 1997). Based on these criteria, researchers

have drawn conclusions about several groups of animals, which I have listed in Table 12. All vertebrates – mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fishes – seem to be sentient. There are signs that many other groups of animals may be sentient (e.g. crustaceans) or deserve the benefit of the doubt (e.g. particular insects and molluscs). Therefore, one can say that *at least* vertebrates have a moral status. For practical reasons, I will from here on use the term ‘sentient animals’.

Table 12. Current knowledge of animal sentience per animal group

<i>Animal group*</i>	<i>What is known of their sentience</i>
Mammals	Experience pain and pleasure (Bateson 1991, Dawkins 1980)
Birds	Probably experience pain like mammals (Marino 2017, Nasr et al. 2012, Varner 2012)
Reptiles	Probably experience pain like mammals (Stoskopf 1994, Varner 2012)
Amphibians	Probably experience pain like mammals (Stoskopf 1994, Varner 2012)
Fishes	Probably experience pain like mammals (Braithwaite 2010, Bovenkerk & Meijboom 2012, Chandroo et al. 2004, Elder 2014, Varner 2012)
Cephalopods (squid)	Highly sophisticated and poorly understood nervous system, added to list of sentient animals in European animal experiment legislation (Broom 2007, Crook & Walters 2011, Fiorito et al. 2014)
Other molluscs (oysters, mussels, snails, sea slugs etc.)	Motivational states and cognitive capabilities in some species that may be consistent with capacity for states with functional parallels to pain (e.g. avoiding food previously combined with electric shock) (Crook & Walters 2011)
Crustaceans (crabs, lobsters, crayfishes, shrimp)	Different systems from those of vertebrates, similar functions, possibly similar experience of suffering (Broom 2007, Elwood et al. 2009)
Insects	Reaction to harm and potential harm, no change of activity when bodies are damaged, uncertainty about pain experience, species diversity too large to generalize (De Goede et al. 2013b); pessimistic interpretations and lowered levels of dopamine, octopamine, and serotonin of agitated honeybees (Bateson et al. 2011)

**Grouping of animals not based on taxonomic ranking but on available literature.*

5.2 Moral obligations

If entities have a moral status, they can make a moral claim on moral agents (Warren 1997, Gruen 2017). Their moral status represents general claims about the ways in which moral agents ought to conduct themselves towards them. It is not necessary for animals themselves to be able to express this moral claim. Infants cannot express any moral claims either, but their moral status is beyond doubt. Acknowledging their moral claims, we make sure they are represented by adults who can express their claims. Still, the claim is not their representatives', but theirs. The same holds true for sentient animals. Even if they are represented by people or NGOs, the moral claim remains theirs.

If vertebrates can be called sentient animals and have a moral status, which I concluded above (with uncertainty about reptiles and amphibians for those who follow Regan), it is an obligation of moral agents (in general: humans) to give them moral consideration. What do these obligations consist of? What should be done in the event of conflict of interest? To determine how we should act as humans, we need ethical theories. Different modern ethical approaches have explored human moral obligations to animals. I will now briefly present the most relevant ones for exploring what humans (and maybe collectives of humans, see 5.3) should do when animals are involved.

Utilitarianism

Singer's (1975/2009, 1981/2011) ground for embracing utilitarianism is the idea that for ethical reasoning one should see one's own interests as one set of interests among the sets of interests of other beings, who are equally important. Humans, as rational creatures, should acknowledge that it does not matter whether someone in pain is our kin or a stranger, our neighbour or someone far away, black or white, male or female, our own species or another species. The interests of sentient animals, including humans, count equally, and therefore we should treat all of them according to their species-specific and individual interests.

Although it is not the aim of this thesis to defend one specific moral theory, I dare say that utilitarianism has strong rational grounds. The utilitarian argument, simplified for the purpose of this thesis, goes as follows. There is not a lot we can know about other living beings, but what we do know is that sentient beings tend to prefer positive experiences over negative ones. If sentient beings prefer positive experiences, then we should strive for the most positive experiences and the least

negative (not in number but in total quality) experiences for all sentient beings. Nevertheless, a few objections have been raised that are especially relevant to the current argument. I will discuss them briefly.

One problem is the issue of abuse or malicious pleasure. If many people enjoy watching a bullfight, for example through a worldwide television broadcast, their pleasure will at some point (at some number of people) outweigh the harm done to the bull. This type of problem is avoided by rule utilitarianism: instead of weighing the good and bad for every single act, we should decide in a consequentialist way, including long-term side-effects of actions, about which rules to observe, and observe them from then on (De Lazari & Singer 2014, Varner 2012). This would imply that there are good reasons to morally reject bullfighting – as well as broadcasting, sponsoring, or otherwise encouraging it – because a world without the painful killing of sentient beings for fun is a better world in terms of pleasure and pain than one with these activities, which would include acceptance of cruelty and fear of becoming a victim.

Another objection to utilitarianism is that it fails to respect the separateness of individuals and treats them as mere ‘receptacles of value’. Both Varner (2012) and Chappell (2013) have offered plausible solutions to this objection. Varner argues that since interests are always connected to the being having them (*my* interests, *your* interests), they should be viewed from this being’s perspective. Therefore, we should consider the experiences of all those affected as if we would experience them all one by one. Chappell comes close to this approach by offering ‘token-pluralistic utilitarianism’, by which each person’s interests are separately accorded value. My happiness and yours have equal weight but are nonetheless distinct intrinsic goods. Trade-offs are indeed trade-offs: though a benefit to one may outweigh a smaller harm to another, this does not cancel it. The loss remains regrettable for the one who loses.

A related issue is that maximizing the total good would require us to keep adding sentient individuals to the world population ‘so long as their net utility is positive and is sufficient to counterbalance the loss in utility their presence in the world caused to others’ (Graafland 2007:166-167). The beginning of a solution could lie in the fact that too many humans and sentient animals would indeed put too much pressure on the earth’s space and the resources for there to be an increase in total utility.

A fourth objection is the ‘argument from cluelessness’ (Lenman 2000), which argues that utilitarianism depends on estimations of consequences in the future and their positive or negative value, which will always be uncertain, and which therefore may introduce subjectivity. I cannot go deeply into this objection here, but two of its solutions are: building on experience and approaching objectivity as closely as possible through risk analysis techniques and deliberation.

Finally, I would like to mention, without pretending to be exhaustive, the argument that utilitarianism is so demanding that one intuitively feels that it exceeds what can reasonably be expected from moral actors (Bruder & Attila 2014). It is very well possible that the best thing to do is to put an endless effort into maximizing welfare. Nevertheless, I will return to the topic of the extent of obligations and responsibilities later.

I am aware that I have offered only very short summaries of the way authors have dealt with the issues of utilitarianism, but this thesis is not the place to discuss these issues more extensively. Nevertheless, I think I can conclude that utilitarianism has rational grounds for supporting the idea that the interests of sentient animals should be taken into account in assessments of right and wrong.

Duty-based approaches

The most well-known duty-based approach to ethics is Kant’s deontological theory, which acknowledges no direct human duties with regard to animals (Kant 1785/1996). Kant claims that rationality and autonomy are central features for having inherent worth (i.e. being an end in itself), and therefore for obtaining moral consideration. These features of others give us reasons to respect their autonomy. As, in his view, animals lack rationality, the ultimate normative reason for taking animals’ interests seriously lies in duties towards other moral agents.

This stance had been challenged by several successive duty-based approaches. I mentioned earlier that Regan (1983/2004) offers a duty-based approach that recognizes animals as beings who can have moral status. He argues that subjects-of-a-life should be treated respectfully and not harmed, which implies direct moral duties of moral agents towards animals. Kaldewaij (2013) shows that starting from the Kantian idea that similarities between rational actors can lead to direct duties towards humans, direct duties of humans towards animals are defensible. Without exploring these proposals any further, we note that there are indeed several duty-based approaches which conclude that humans can have direct moral duties towards animals.

Korsgaard as well has contributed to the link between deontology and direct moral obligations towards animals. She summarizes Kant's view on animals in two theses: 'First, we owe the duty of treating animals well in various ways to ourselves rather than directly to the animals, because we cannot have obligations to animals. Second, the ground of the duty to treat animals well rests in the effects of the way we treat animals on our own characters, or on those of our emotions that are, in Kant's words "serviceable to morality in one's relation with other people".' (Korsgaard 2018:115) She then argues that his position is based on the concept of reciprocity: autonomous rational beings can only impose on themselves obligations towards other autonomous rational beings who can do the same reciprocally towards them, because only then they are able to 'will' these obligations as a universal law (2018:120). This is the case because moral principles should be acceptable from anyone's point of view (2018:122). Moral actors should be able to conceive of themselves as being under shared laws (2018:124). Finally she concludes: '...there is no reason to think that because it is only autonomous rational beings who must make the normative presupposition that we are ends in ourselves, the normative presupposition is only *about* autonomous rational beings. And in fact it seems arbitrary, because of course we also value ourselves as animate beings. This becomes especially clear when we reflect on the fact that many of the things that we take to be good-for us are not good for us in our capacity as autonomous rational beings. Food, sex, comfort, freedom from pain and fear, are all things that are good for us insofar as we are animals. (...) [We] are not the only beings for whom things can be good or bad; the other animals are no different from us in that respect. So we are committed to regard all animals as ends in themselves.' (2018:144-145). Note that her statement that normative presuppositions come from autonomous rational beings, but are not necessarily *about* autonomous rational beings, can be associated with Regan's distinction between moral agents and moral patients.

Telos-based approaches

A third group of modern ethical approaches is based on Aristotelian virtue ethics and its concept of *telos*, the purpose by which one flourishes. Nussbaum (2007) argues that, just like humans, animals have a *telos* and should be allowed to exercise certain capabilities so that they can flourish. They should therefore be granted the following: a life (and continuing it, although killing non-sentient animals for good reasons may be acceptable), bodily health, bodily integrity (no violence, abuse, and other forms of harmful treatment), access to sources of pleasure (free movement in an environment that pleases their senses), emotions through attachment to

others (feelings of friendship and care, no fear), practical reasoning (to the extent the capacity is present, which differs by species and by individual), affiliation (attachments and bonding with their species), relationships with other species (as preferred), play, and control over their environment (Nussbaum 2007). These capabilities constitute a minimum threshold. Note that staying alive is one of them. Her arguments for this approach, based mainly on Aristotelian philosophy and broadly accepted intuitions, may from a point of view of pure rational argument be less strong than the arguments that substantiate utilitarianism or Regan's animal rights view, but the translation of telos into concrete capabilities is extremely useful for case assessments.

Although Rollin (2006) claims to combine approaches in a pragmatic way – because in his view it is obvious that sentient animals' positive and negative experiences *matter* to them – the core of his approach is also the animal's *telos*: 'the unique set of traits and powers that make the animal what it is, the "pigness" of the pig, the "dogness" of the dog' (Rollin 2016:51), from which needs and desires flow. Not satisfying these needs and desires results in poor welfare, which should be avoided (Rollin 2016).

Combined approaches and other approaches

Several authors have taken other routes, sometimes combining elements of the main approaches. Cochrane (2013) uses utilitarian elements and those of a duty-based view for his argument that the interests of humans and animals can and should be weighed against one another. Garner (2013) offers a contractarian approach and finds a thorough obligation of humans towards animals. Donaldson and Kymlicka (2011) argue from a political approach that animals can be seen as fellow citizens who should be granted rights on grounds of their ability to communicate, work and relate to others. Their approach is viewed as one of the triggers of the political turn in animal ethics, a paradigm shift characterised by, among other things, less focus on ethical theory, more focus on liberal values and positive rights, and a pragmatic attitude towards political engagement and compromise (Milligan 2016). Schmitz (2016) as well pleads for political and institutional change and argues that it cannot be right to maintain institutionalised practices that make animals suffer for trivial human purposes.

Similarities

I have discussed several approaches of animal ethics with serious theoretical differences and issues. Three central approaches to ethics, and a few 'combined

and other approaches', offer perspectives on animal ethics that provide arguments that point in the direction of direct human obligations towards sentient animals. Although I do not advocate choosing and mixing ethical approaches as it suits one's case, I conclude that there are widely shared moral understandings between approaches in animal ethics with regard to using animals. According to utilitarianism, for example, interests of human and non-human sentient creatures should be taken equally into account, and therefore Singer concludes that harming sentient animals can only be acceptable if it is outweighed by a crucial human interest that maximizes overall interest, which in the light of current food production and availability, enjoying the taste of meat is not (Singer 1975/2009). From a rule utilitarian approach, this stance comes close to what can follow from a direct duty not to harm animals for unnecessary purposes (if one assumes that eating meat is not necessary). The telos-inspired capabilities approach also rejects the ways in which sentient animals are currently used for the purpose of meat production (Nussbaum 2007).

Based on the argumentation up to now, I conclude that sentient animals count morally and that this translates to a moral obligation to consider their interests. Though the exact demarcation line of sentient animals remains undetermined, as well as other issues of identifying the right thing to do (how should we weigh interests? how much effort should we invest?), the broad spectrum of ethical approaches gives us many reasons to avoid harming sentient animals and to take their interests into account. How and to what extent this should be done by companies will be discussed in the next sections of this chapter.

5.3 The responsibility of companies

I have argued that humans should attribute sentient animals a moral status and take their interests into account. Does this mean we can talk of moral responsibilities of companies towards animals? A personal moral obligation is not yet a corporate responsibility. Therefore, I will now investigate what responsibility is and how individual, collective and corporate responsibility are related.

Individual versus collective responsibility

According to Scanlon (1998/2000), there are two types of responsibility. Attributive responsibility means that an action can be attributed to an actor who is properly subject to praise or blame. Substantial responsibility means that an actor's specific

role or position requires them to act in a certain way. If this type of responsibility applied to companies, it would mean they owe something to someone, for example to society, to consumers, or to animals. However, companies are not persons, so in their case responsibility could work out differently. Therefore, I will first explore the relationship between responsibilities of persons and those of companies.

Pettit (2007) offers three necessary conditions for fitness to being held responsible: there is an autonomous agent facing a value-relevant choice involving the possibility of doing good or bad, or right or wrong; the agent can judge the value of the options (understands it and has access to supportive evidence); and the agent has the control that is necessary for being able to choose. Members of groups can be held responsible for their part in the design of the group, for the actions of the group (as members, unless they protested) and for acting in the group's plans. These conditions often apply to decision-makers in companies, who according to Isaacs (2011) bear more responsibility for the consequences of their actions than individuals outside companies, because of their powerful position. Isaacs explores the issue that collective moral responsibility requires collective intentions, whereas collectives cannot have intentions, which are mental states. Her argument is that individual intentions can set in motion collective actions, and therefore individuals are responsible for the consequences of their actions within a collective. At the same time, they can be bound by formal policies and structures, such as interests, attitudes, practices and cultures. I assume with Isaacs that individual agency is not absorbed by collective agency, but, on the contrary adds power.

In addition, Isaacs states that when a collective has obligations that are not met, this failure shapes and alters the obligations of individuals as members of the collective. This means that powerful people in companies can, and should, take individual responsibility and use their power to initiate responsible collective corporate actions. Groups of these powerful individuals (boards, for example) are collective agents. Apart from these existing collective agents, there are, according to Isaacs, potential collective agents: groups that could be formed to act upon certain moral issues. That these new collectives can have a positive influence on a responsible attitude of companies regarding animals is confirmed by Janssens and Van Wesel (2018). But, Isaacs warns, fuzziness of roles and tasks can pose a challenge to the outcomes. Therefore, against the background of collective responsibility, members are morally required to sort out their roles and tasks, so that collective actions can take place. The individual is not responsible for change,

but for doing her part. This also holds true for issues that were not caused by the collective, and of which the cause may be unclear. Vagueness about what can be done, or a wrongful social practice combined with widespread ignorance about the wrongness or harmfulness of actions, diminishes the individual's responsibility.

Corporate responsibility

Companies have societal responsibilities, as has been argued thoroughly from the point of view of both business ethics (Kaptein & Wempe 2002, Kolstad 2017) and CSR (Van Marrewijk 2003, Visser 2014). These responsibilities have hardly been applied structurally to the interests of animals (Janssens & Kaptein 2016, Van Liedekerke & Dubbink 2008). Arguing from the idea that individuals in collectives, including companies, bear responsibility for the consequences of their actions, there are two options: the functional model (the company cannot be perceived as an autonomous moral agent) or the autonomy model (the company can be perceived as an independent social entity that can be held responsible for the effects of its actions) (Kaptein & Wempe 2002). I think the autonomy model does the most justice to the fact that companies make policy choices through institutional decision-making processes that can be distinguished from individual staff choices and that are embedded in corporate practices. Therefore, I will proceed from the autonomy model.

Carroll (1991) distinguishes four categories of responsibilities of companies, which together constitute CSR. The basis of the pyramid of corporate responsibilities consists of economic ones: making a profit for investors and creating jobs. Next come legal responsibilities, then ethical ones, and finally, on the top of the pyramid, philanthropic responsibilities. Though responsibilities towards animals could appear in each of these categories, I will focus on ethical responsibilities: those which are not prescribed by law but are more binding than philanthropy – the responsibility to do what is right, just and fair, and to avoid harm.

Returning with this definition to Scanlon (1998/2000), we discover that both attributive and substantial responsibility can occur in companies. A retailer who uncritically continues to sell meat from a producer who has been found guilty of animal abuse bears attributive responsibility: There is a direct relationship between not acting and the consequences, for which the non-actor can be blamed. At the same time, the retailer bears a substantial (role-based) responsibility to monitor the interests of sentient animals through the production chain. For the scope of this chapter it makes no difference in which cases corporate responsibility is attributive or substantial. They may supplement and intermingle.

Animals as stakeholders

Stakeholder theory may offer supporting arguments for corporate responsibilities towards animals, because it states that companies have an ethical responsibility to create value for stakeholders (Freeman et al. 2010, Freeman & Velamuri 2005). An accepted definition of a stakeholder is: any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives (Donaldson & Preston 1995, Freeman 2010). Animals differ from (other) stakeholders in two possibly relevant ways.

The first difference that may be relevant is that they are non-human, but the definition is unclear about whether being human is a necessary feature of stakeholders. The definition does say, however, that it is about groups or individuals who can affect or are affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives, which can be the case for animals. The three animal ethics approaches I discussed above agree that sentient animals have interests. Therefore, there is undeniably something at stake for them when business activities have an impact on their lives, which makes them potential stakeholders. This stance is supported by Hart and Sharma (2004), who argue in favour of including currently marginalised stakeholders like the poor, the weak, and the non-human, and by Mitchell et al. (1997), who classify animals as 'dependent stakeholders': those who lack power but who have urgent legitimate claims as 'dependent', 'because they depend upon others for the power necessary to carry out their will' (1997:977).

This classification leads us to the second difference – that they cannot speak for themselves – which can easily be overcome by letting animal-protection NGOs speak for animals (Carroll, 1991), using scientific knowledge about their preferences (Janssens & Van Wesel 2018), observing their behaviour (Wemelsfelder et al. 2000) and putting an effort in communicating with them (Meijer 2017). Webster (2006) describes farm animals as stakeholders of farming, besides farmers and customers.

An important critic of stakeholder theory is Heath (2014), who argues that a robust moral code can be derived from the fundamental obligation of a manager to maximize shareholder value within the framework of the law. His main argument is that this is the best way to make managers run the firm in a way that is in the long-term interest of those with a stake in the firm, especially in terms of continuation of business operations. As we have seen earlier, stakeholders are those who are affected by the company's actions, those for whom there is something at stake,

which can be the case in different ways. For some who are affected, a different type of doing business, or even stopping operations, may be in their interest, while for others the solution may lie in changing to innovative products or processes that are friendlier to them but are nevertheless profitable and sustainable. It is this type of sustainable continuation that may be overlooked by shareholders but could in the end be in the interest of all affected.

Following the above arguments in this section, the conclusion should be that powerful people in companies bear an individual responsibility for the impact of their actions on the interests of sentient animals. In addition, the company has an institutional responsibility. Both levels of responsibility may be attributive or substantial, based on CSR or stakeholder theory. It makes no decisive difference. From here on I will therefore speak of corporate responsibility, which can be fulfilled by actions of individuals within the company or of the company as an institution.

The extent of corporate responsibility

Animals can be treated badly by companies (Engster 2006, Fraser 2008), or even be abused on a large scale (Braithwaite 2010, Foer 2009, Leder 2012, Singer 1975/2009). The extent of professional and corporate responsibility may differ by context. A remote farmer in Sudan who is not aware of the increasing academic recognition of moral obligations towards animals cannot be expected to proactively transcend local norms for treating animals. Multinationals, by contrast, operating on a global playing field, can be expected be aware of changing public norms and increasing academic knowledge, and to act accordingly. They have both the resources to conduct thorough research before they make policy decisions (Isaacs 2011, Pettit 2007) and the opportunity to cooperate with researchers (Janssens & Van Wesel 2018). The responsibility of a company who produces and sells locally may be restricted to its own actions, whereas the responsibility of a company in the middle of an industrial network and an extended production chain may be much broader. Chain responsibility, for example, is confirmed by Eriksson & Svensson (2016).

A limitation to responsibility of individual actors in a company is that one can only be held responsible if one has the control necessary to make and implement choices (Pettit 2007). This restriction matches Isaacs' (2011) statement that sometimes an individual or an inter- or intra-corporate group may not have the power to make changes. In that case, Isaacs adds, the company should help these individuals or

groups to design their roles in such a way that power is added. If the company itself lacks power, it can search for ways of extending their power to make changes (Janssens & Van Wesel 2018).

Nevertheless, many factors of influence are involved, and several considerations and trade-offs have to be made. Taking the interests of animals into account may influence the interests of other stakeholders. Therefore, in the following sections of this chapter I will discuss the role of animal welfare and the implications and recommendations for companies on the basis of a fluid scale on which each company must find its own position.

5.4 Animal welfare

Having argued that companies have a responsibility to take the interests of sentient animals into account, I will now consider what these interests consist of. If humans have moral obligations towards sentient animals, this means that they have an obligation to consider the interests of these animals in their actions, or the animals' 'good'. Sumner (1996:35-37) chooses not to talk of interests when talking about the subjective 'good' of beings, but of welfare, because the term interests is too ambiguous: 'on the one hand my interests are the same as my concerns (what I am interested in), while on the other my interest (self-interest) is the same as my welfare.' For the purpose of this study, it is functional to embrace this choice and reflect on it in the given context, in the first place because animal welfare is a common term in both societal and academic practice, secondly because it is the central value that should be maximised in utilitarianism (Singer 1975/2009, 1981/2011), and thirdly because translated into practice it gets close to the notion of not being harmed of Regan (1983/2004) and part of Nussbaum's list of capabilities that animals should be allowed for being able to live according to their telos (e.g. bodily health, access to sources of pleasure, relationships with other species, play, control over their environment) (Nussbaum 2006). I will now say a bit more about the meaning of the term welfare in this context, without trying to offer a full operationalization of what animal welfare beholds in practice and how it can be measured.

The meaning of the term animal welfare in this context

Sumner (1996) defines welfare as authentic (not 'fake'), subjective (valuable to me) happiness. In his view it is more than a mental state: welfare is about the

relationship between the subject and the world and has to do with overseeing options and deciding in a way that is true to one's goals. This may be true for humans, but does it apply to animals as well? Can animals be 'tricked' into non-authentic or non-subjective 'preferences'? To check this, we imagine a hungry sow, lured away from her piglets with food and then separated from them permanently. Her fake preference will be to take the food, but her authentic preference would probably have been to go on taking care of her litter and feed herself later, had she been able to oversee the consequences of her options. Therefore, authentic preference seems to be applicable. Secondly, can animals have non-subjective preferences? A subjective preference of a dog could be to curl up with one of its owner's old sweaters, which will make her feel happy. The same sweater has no value to the neighbour's dog, who doesn't like the smell. Snuggling this specific sweater is not a preference of the neighbour's dog, although someone might conclude from the first dog's reaction that 'dogs like this sweater'. This means that the notion of subjective preferences can apply to animals as well. Therefore, the definition of animal welfare I will keep in mind is: the fulfilment of an animal's authentic, subjective preferences, those being the preferences this specific animal would have, overseeing and understanding the consequences of relevant options. At the same time it is very hard to determine what these authentic, subjective preferences are.

There is another aspect to animal welfare that is relevant to this argument. That is the awareness that it is impossible to identify when an individual has an acceptable level of welfare. Welfare takes a continuum from extremely negative to extremely positive welfare. Which level of welfare is acceptable in the case of animals and how it can be measured and weighed against other interest is hard to determine and influenced by context (Ohl & Van der Staay 2012). I will have to take this into account when moving to the implications of my argument for companies.

The harm of taking life

An ongoing discussion in animal ethics that is relevant for this study of the responsibilities of companies towards animals is the question of whether taking the life of healthy animals without causing them pain or distress constitutes harm. Regan (1983/2004) from his deontological approach is rather clear about this: moral patients have an inherent value, and therefore killing them is a violation of their moral rights. It is only allowed under specific threatening circumstances. The telos-based approaches are also clear on the issue: Nussbaum (2007) includes continuing life in the list of capabilities we should at least allow sentient animals,

and therefore taking their lives is harming them; Rollin (2006) takes the position that taking the life of an animal needs thorough justification, which he thinks is lacking in, for example, the case of eating them.

Utilitarianism poses extra questions. At first glance one would think that from a utilitarian perspective, taking life painlessly is not diminishing welfare as long as the animal is not aware of death approaching, and therefore is not experiencing negative emotions, such as fear, due to that awareness. No harm is done before death, and from the moment of death, there is no living animal anymore to have an interest in welfare, and therefore no welfare of an animal is taken away (Broom 2011, Webster 1994). This view is opposed by those who claim that cutting a sentient animal's life short is taking away its future welfare, and therefore is a wrong if this future welfare is expected to be an overall positive experience (Balcombe 2009, Bovenkerk & Braithwaite 2016, Bruijn et al. 2016, Deckers 2016, DeGrazia 2016, Kagan 2016, Kasperbauer & Sandøe 2016, Singer 2011, Višák 2015, Yeates 2010).

For preference-utilitarians, fulfilment of preferences is the central value that should be maximised (Singer 1993/1999). In this view, killing is taking away future fulfilment of preferences, which makes the loss and therefore the harm even greater for those with future-oriented preferences (Chappell 2013). Though this position has been questioned (Kasperbauer & Sandøe 2016, Yeates 2010), it could be an argument for differentiating ending human lives and ending animal lives, since humans have the ability to plan ahead and look forward to future experiences, and for distinguishing between animal species in light of the extent to which similar abilities are present in them. At the same time, there is evidence that animals of at least some vertebrate species can have a concept of the future that is relevant to the moral significance of continuing life (Bradley 2016, Clayton et al. 2003, DeGrazia 1996).

Let us try to grasp this idea of harm done by taking away future pleasure by doing a small thought experiment. Let us imagine a pig, for example. We can imagine very well that for a pig, expectations (after feeding time there will be sun in the back of the meadow) and plans (I will go and lie there then) can be thwarted if it is slaughtered, which results in a loss of the pig's future welfare. How large or small this loss is remains undecided. At first glance, the pig's loss appears small compared to the loss of a human planning to become a nurse, whose life is cut short. Still, to the pig, living in a shorter time frame, the modest afternoon plan could be half its world.

An interesting view to take into account here is DeGrazia's (2016:516-517), who is defending, building on the works of McMahan and Parfit, the *time-relative interest account* (TRIA): 'The basic idea of the TRIA, applied to the harm of death, is that in determining how harmful a particular death is to the individual who dies, we must take into account not only (1) the value of the life that the individual would have had, had he not died at that point – what I've here called the net good of the life – but also (2) the extent to which the subject is psychologically related to his possible future life at the time he dies.' (DeGrazia 2016:515) This psychological relatedness consists of memories, plans and a narrative of one's life. Based on this TRIA concept, DeGrazia concludes that in the case of positive expectations of future life experiences, killing is a harm for both persons and sentient non-persons, but that it is a greater harm for persons, who have a stronger psychological relatedness to their future.

The example of the pig is no more than a thought experiment of what being killed prematurely could mean for a specific animal in relation to their ability to plan and have expectations of the future. These abilities offer extra arguments, but are not conditional for being able to conclude that taking a life is a welfare issue. In many cases of the current practice of killing animals, there is no need to choose between human or animal life.

Based on the argument that killing animals is taking away positive experiences that the animal could have had in the future if it had stayed alive, I conclude that killing is a harm if done to a being that at the moment of death has an interest in being able to enjoy positive experiences in the future, an interest that can be ascribed to all sentient animals, as it does not depend on extra capacities, like having *a sense* of the future. Having a potential positive future is enough. What I cannot do is draw conclusions about the extent of that harm.

What about killing animals living unpleasant lives or facing an unpleasant future? Would it not be better for them to kill them painlessly? If they are already alive and their situation cannot be changed, this would indeed be the best option for them, but it would be even better to change their situation to a positive one and to stop bringing animals destined to lead lives of misery into the world.

Replaceability argument

Expecting that this argumentation may put moral limits on the use of animals in industries, I want to reflect shortly on the replaceability argument, which

could be brought forward against our case. In a nutshell, the argument, employed especially against the utilitarian approach of animal ethics, goes like this: Moral actors have a moral duty to maximize overall welfare, but it does not seem to make any difference to which individual this welfare is attached, except that all individuals count equally. This means that taking an animal's life is permissible if the animal is replaced by a newly bred animal with at least the same welfare level (Singer 1993/1999). Would it then be ethically neutral to kill animals and replace them with equally happy animals?

One of the answers to this question is from Chappell (2013). He argues that an agent with enough life-saving anti-venom for one person would find it horrible to choose which of two poisoned persons to save. Finding this choice horrible is what makes him or her a moral agent, and it shows that he or she accords separate value to the interest of each individual, and that those who count are not mere receptacles of welfare. Their interests count equally but as distinctive intrinsic goods. Trade-offs can be made, but a benefit to person A does not *absorb* a lesser loss by person B. I think Chappell's argument is well grounded, and applies to animals' welfare as well, because animals are individuals too (Braithwaite 2010, DeGrazia 2006, Rollin 2011). A similar analysis of the replaceability argument is offered by Višak (2011), who claims that the existence of an animal and the non-existence of a potential animal are incommensurable.

Without analysing the issue of the replaceability argument any further, I will stick to my assumption that killing a (sentient) animal is an infringement upon the animal's welfare and therefore a harm done to the animal, even if the animal is replaced by a new animal. If the animal's life is bad, the effort should go into improving it.

Categories of impact on animals

Different types of impact on animals may lead to different ways of dealing with corporate responsibility for the animals involved. In the first place, it matters whether or not the animals are killed. Other *prima facie* relevant differences are whether they are living in a positive or a negative state, and, thirdly, whether they are living freely or are kept by the company (or by another company in the chain). Those who keep animals for economic reasons might argue that animals are better off in their care than in the wild. They are indeed protected from many threats, such as unhealthy weather conditions, hunger, and predation (Rollin 2016). On the other hand, in industrial farming many aspects of animal flourishing are

ignored or actively suppressed, for example mobility, relationships, interaction with the natural world, and autonomy (McMullen 2015). Degrazia (2011) states that confinement as applied in factory farming and traditional zoos is a wrong done to animals. It is my view that if the animal's autonomous, informed preference is the safety of the barn, this safety should include a fitting welfare standard.

I will now offer a categorization of (sentient) animals, based on the above characteristics and existing practices, and formulate corresponding responsibilities they should consider based on my earlier argument that the welfare of animals should be taken into account and that taking their lives counts as taking part of their welfare. (Note that more practical management advice for different industries using animals will follow in the next paragraph). For the sake of clarity, some pronounced examples of each category are provided, assuming that the negative and positive welfare states are the true states of the animals involved, thereby avoiding the discussion about how happy or unhappy for example a free-range dairy cow is (Višák 2015, Webster 2013).

Animals kept in a negative welfare state, bred and killed for economic reasons (e.g. industrially kept pigs, broiler chickens, minks, some laboratory animals). Companies who bear direct or chain responsibility for them should:

- a) consider their living and dying conditions critically,
- b) look for ways to solve welfare issues,
- c) consider innovating towards alternate products that make killing animals unnecessary.

Animals kept in a positive welfare state, bred and killed for economic reasons (e.g. free-range pigs and broilers). Companies who bear direct or chain responsibility for them should:

- a) consider their dying conditions critically,
- b) look for ways to solve welfare issues.
- c) consider innovating towards alternate products that make killing animals unnecessary.

Animals kept in a negative welfare state, used for economic purposes over a longer period (e.g. industrial dairy cows and laying hens, circus animals of wild species). Companies who bear direct or chain responsibility for them should:

- a) consider their living and dying conditions critically
- b) consider innovating towards alternate products that make keeping them unnecessary.

Animals kept in a positive welfare state, used for economic purposes over a longer period (e.g. free-range dairy cows and laying hens, roaming sheep). Companies who bear direct or chain responsibility for them should:

- a) monitor their welfare to make sure there is no decline,
- b) consider their dying conditions critically,
- c) in case of persistent welfare and killing issues, consider innovating towards alternate products that make keeping them unnecessary.

Animals as by-products, killed at an extremely young age for economic reasons (e.g. male chicks and steers). Companies who bear direct or chain responsibility for them should:

- a) consider their living and dying conditions critically,
- b) take measures to solve welfare issues,
- c) consider innovating towards alternate products or production methods that prevent their coming to life as by-products.

Free-living animals, killed or harmed for economic reasons or as a result of economic activity (e.g. fishes, house mice in buildings, frogs on building sites). Companies who bear direct or chain responsibility for them should:

- a) consider their impact on these animals critically,
- b) look for measures, alternate processes or products that solve welfare and killing issues.

Critics may argue that the categories are neither complete nor absolute. Intermediate categories can occur (animals in a semi-wild enclosure), or animals may change categories (sheep living in a positive state shifting to a negative state when transported for slaughter). In this case, in-between categories or shifts can easily be derived. In the next section I will explore the practical implications of the former argument and categorization, and offer recommendations and conclusions.

5.5 Implications, recommendations and conclusions

In this chapter I have argued that companies bear responsibilities towards sentient animals, which oblige them to consider how to prevent inflicting harm on them, including killing, and to protect their welfare. A mind shift in companies is necessary to accept that sentient animals have interests that count ethically amongst other interests in and outside the company. Harming animals is ethically

negative, and asks for thorough ethical accountability. It cannot be denied that the impact on animals of many industries is far from neutral and should be reconsidered and set against the societal necessity or value of the products and services produced.

We have also seen that implications and considerations may differ by context and impact category. Responsibilities can be limited by vagueness about what can be done, secondly by wrongful social practice combined with widespread ignorance, and thirdly by lack of power (Isaacs 2011). For most companies, operating in contexts of abundant information and shrinking global distances, the first two limiting factors will play a minor role. The third limitation, lack of power, can at least partly be solved by efforts to cooperate within industries and production chains (Janssens & Van Wesel 2018). I have categorised different types of impact of companies on animals and listed appropriate responsibilities for each of them. I will now offer some managerial implications and some recommendations with accompanying informative (not argumentative) references.

Managerial implications

Managers of companies who acknowledge their responsibility for those animals that are affected by corporate activity should assess their impact on animal welfare and consider taking steps to minimize this impact, based on the above categorization. Although it is not the purpose of this PhD thesis to offer an operationalization of how exactly animal welfare can and should be supported, I will offer a few possible directions of managerial action. For livestock welfare issues, various companies are using the Five Freedoms concept (Janssens & Kaptein 2016). The original Five Freedoms are: freedom from hunger or thirst, freedom from discomfort, freedom from pain, injury or disease, freedom to express normal behaviour, and freedom from fear and distress (Brambell 1965). They were updated several times (Botreau et al. 2007, Brando 2016, Farm Animal Welfare Council 2009, Sandøe & Jensen 2011) and were recently expanded to 14 welfare criteria (Brando & Buchanan-Smith 2017), which offer an up-to-date guideline. Another concrete road to taking responsibility for animals in economic processes is to offer them 'labour rights' to representation by a union, rest, leisure, and retirement (Cochrane 2016). Although this may seem a large step for some companies, looking at animals through this lens may trigger a mind shift. Thirdly, treating animals as stakeholders, and discussing their alleged preferences with NGOs and animal behaviour scholars, can be a fruitful approach.

A disclaimer for companies can be that it is hard to know what is best for animals and what is minimally required, especially if one takes into account their authentic, subjective preferences, which are hard to determine. At the same time, several academics are doing research in this field and knowledge is growing. Therefore knowledge sharing between academia and business practice is desirable.

There are no rational arguments for rejecting responsibilities for reasons of burden. Ethical requirements can be tough, especially if they have remained unrecognised by common practice for a long time. At the same time, some weighing of interests is inevitable, for example between animal welfare and protection of the environment, or animal welfare and economic interests. This can be difficult, since it can involve many uncertainties (Janssens & Van Wesel 2018). For a correct weighing process, an ethical assessment can be useful. There are several tools for ethical assessment, like the Ethical Matrix (Mephram 2016), which refines common-sense ethics and facilitates discussion and assessment. Bovenkerk and Meijboom (2012) offer a model for defining the moral status of the animals involved (fishes, in their case) and weighing interests.

Implementation barriers can be overcome by taking leadership, working in partnerships with e.g. chain partners and NGOs, and by celebrating 'championships', like targets that have been achieved (Baur & Palazzo 2011, Janssens & Van Wesel 2018, Varner 2012). There is a special role for the CSR manager, who can have a positive influence by communicating and facilitating communication with other parties (Janssens & Van Wesel 2019). Gjerris et al. (2010) propose to introduce four virtues in the relationship between consumers and producers of animal-based products: attentiveness, responsibility, competence and responsiveness. Rollin (1995a) sees four problematic beliefs in agricultural communities that stand in the way of improvement: the idea that paying attention to animal welfare is opening doors to animal rights (which many people consider a bridge too far), the conviction that one can talk of animal welfare in a value-free context, the idea that science and ethics are separate worlds, and the notion that research into animal welfare cannot adequately address the animal's experience of pain. It is a challenge for companies to contribute to eradicating those barriers.

Recommendations for food production and retail

The most animal-consuming and animal-welfare-threatening industry is probably the animal-based food industry (Francione 2010a, Rollin 2006). It has many branches, each with its own issues. I have argued that killing sentient animals is

ethically dubious. At the same time, demanding an immediate termination of the killing of animals for food is too remote from practice. I do agree with most of the previously mentioned ethicists that in an ideal world, humans neither eat sentient animals nor use products for which sentient animals are killed as a by-product, and that phasing out is feasible. Nevertheless, I will now offer some information on welfare issues that can lead the way to first, more realistic steps in the right direction.

Aside from death, welfare problems in industrial farming are overwhelming, some of the main ones being lameness, stereotype behaviour, tail biting or tail docking of pigs, feather pecking or beak trimming of poultry, and exhaustion (De Goede et al. 2013a, Webster 2013). Measures for enhancing animal welfare will differ between groups of animals. Examples could be: cage enrichment, more space, better housing, free-range options, social contacts, safer transport, and humane slaughter methods. Webster (2013) introduces the Planet Husbandry concept, which means that animals can live in accordance with their natural needs and are cared for responsibly. Rollin (1995a) as well sees options for paying more attention to sources of animal suffering. One way is to engage in research into alternative practices, because industrial killing can almost never be done without pain and stress (Pachirat 2011, Rollin 2006). Breeding dual-purpose animals and introducing new methods for sex determination of eggs, for example, can prevent the early killing of male by-products of egg and dairy farming. Fish industries, for whom the discussion about welfare is extra complex and plural (Bovenkerk & Meijboom 2012), should consult biologists, physiologists, and ethologists to take steps (Bovenkerk & Meijboom 2013). The next ethical challenge is the up-and-coming insect industry (De Goede et al. 2013b), which is popular for reasons of efficiency, low emissions and biodiversity (less pressure on vulnerable fish species). Lacking any other norm, De Goede et al. apply the Five Freedoms, designed for more conventional animal husbandry, to insects, which is a delicate practice. They conclude that there is a need for transparency in the sector and research into the welfare of insects.

If companies would attribute the interests of animals a relatively heavy weight in their ethical assessments, the far-stretching ideal of some, a vegan society, seems feasible in the future. To reach that, companies could invest in the development of imitation meat and cultured meat, and promote vegetables, beans, nuts, and plant-based 'dairy' (Deckers 2016). Franzione (2010a) as well argues in favour of stopping animal use for food (or any purpose), which is possible if it is phased

out gradually (Simmons 2016). Still, the road to a vegan society is challenged by the debate about animal casualties from arable farming (e.g. machine kill and pest control, Davis 2008). Varner (2012) tries to solve that problem through innovations such as nest protection and new methods for expelling animals. Davis also mentions physical, economic, political, religious, historical, legal, psychological and cultural obstacles. Although these are many, they should not prevent companies from doing the right thing.

Recommendations for other industries

I will now offer some *prima facie* recommendations for other industries, not specifically originating from the argumentation in this chapter, but based on the argumentation that necessity of products and services and the value they add for society should be set against the interests of the animals involved, keeping in mind that I cannot make statements about the extent of their responsibilities and the weight of different interests.

Fur and leather have alternatives like imitation fur, plastics, cork, and leather made from pineapple waste. Sheep, goats, llamas, alpacas, and angora rabbits are used for wool production, which raises several welfare issues. Angora rabbit wool, for example, is sometimes harvested in a painful way. In the sheep industry mulesing, the cutting away of skin to prevent parasite flies from nestling, is problematic. Rough handling can be a problem for all the species mentioned. According to Garner (2016), animal-friendly wool production can be morally acceptable if the welfare of the animal involved is guaranteed.

The major problems in entertainment using animals are confinement, boredom, and cruel training methods. In zoos, deprivation of space, activities and free choice of company can be problematic. Solutions are: substitution of activities (natural ones for new ones) and habitat enrichment (Keulartz 2016). As a minimum, the animals' basic needs should be met (DeGrazia 2011). In some cases, animal-friendly training methods can be helpful (Haraway 2008, Hearne 2003). Additionally, one could argue that displaying animals in circuses, zoos and aquariums is not necessary, and that the sacrifice asked from animals for entertaining humans could be too high a price. Each company involved should make their own assessment, weighing the 'good' of entertainment, and sometimes species conservation, against the interests of the animals involved.

Many industries, including food and pharmaceuticals, use sentient animals in experiments. In most countries the weighing of their interests against those of society is imposed by law and is being done relatively carefully. Other industries could learn from the ethical assessment done by Animal Experiment Committees. Still, ethical issues of animal research deserve attention (Linzey & Linzey 2018).

Even in industries with no direct animal use, for example the raw materials industry, an assessment of impact on animals is useful. Issues that can be encountered here include pest control, pollution, building activities, transport and catering (Janssens & Kaptein 2016, Varner 2012).

Conclusions

I have argued that animals count morally, and that humans as well as their institutions, including companies, have moral obligations towards sentient animals, which had led us to the argument that companies bear responsibilities for the animals they have an impact on. Companies should take the welfare and life of animals into account in their ethical assessments and (at least) diminish animal suffering. I think my argument supports the position that companies should assess their current and future impact on the welfare of animals, explore cutting-edge knowledge about the needs and preferences of the animals involved, and draw conclusions on actions to take. The outcome of these assessments and the options for change may differ per context (corporate impact on animals, necessity of the products or services, status quo of the industry, national or international level on which the company operates, influence of the company, et cetera), but it may be clear that some reflection of each company is desirable.

A limitation of this ethical exploration is that many questions remain unanswered. Apart from uncertainty about the precise extent of corporate responsibility towards animals, there is uncertainty about how to weigh conflicting interest of stakeholders, how to deal with interaction with government, and how to assess consumer responsibility in relation to corporate responsibility. Therefore, I recommend these topics for further research. It would be useful as well if scholars further explored the implications for different industries and the moral status of several non-vertebrate animal species.

I think I have contributed to the field of business ethics by taking animal welfare from a relatively blind spot into the spotlight, and by connecting insights from business ethics and animal ethics. The claim I put on companies may be an

unwelcome message to some involved. Nevertheless, change is morally desirable and even obligatory, as it is the only way to end systematic abuse of animals in industries, of which I have argued that many aspects are wrongful. I therefore hope that decision makers in companies will initiate the recommended changes.

6

Conclusions of this
thesis

This chapter combines the results and conclusions of the previous chapters into some final conclusions. It provides recommendations for further research, and for companies and their managers. The latter recommendations are also summarized point by point in an overview. Additionally, there is a step-by-step plan for determining the Commitment to ANimals (CAN) score of corporate websites.

In this PhD thesis I have studied the question *What is the ethical responsibility of companies towards animals and how do they deal with this responsibility?* To do this, I explored the responsibilities of companies towards animals from different angles. I discussed the *is* and the *ought*: After the introduction (Chapter 1), in which I asked: *Are companies prima facie responsible for their impact on animals?* I provided empirical research, both quantitative (Chapter 2) and qualitative (Chapters 3 and 4), to answer the following questions: *Do companies express themselves about ethical responsibilities towards animals? What drivers help them to adopt a responsible stance towards animals?* and *What factors of communication help them to adopt this responsible stance?* As a result of these three empirical studies, I was able to describe some aspects of what the position of animal ethics in companies *is* as expressed on company websites, and what factors support a responsible stance of a company towards animals. In addition, I presented a normative study (Chapter 5), in which I argued how companies *ought* to act towards animals from an ethical point of view, answering the question *What are the ethical responsibilities of companies towards animals from a normative-philosophical point of view?* I will now offer my conclusions from each type of research and see what conclusions can be drawn from the combination of studies. I will do this going backward: if one accepts the conclusion from the normative Chapter 5, that companies bear responsibilities towards sentient animals which oblige them to prevent harm to animals and to enhance animal welfare, then how should we interpret the empirical findings of Chapters 2, 3, and 4? After that, I will discuss the limitations of this thesis and offer recommendations for further research and resulting recommendations for managers and other decision makers in companies.

6.1 Combining the results

In Chapter 5, I argued that companies bear responsibilities towards sentient animals, which oblige them to prevent their being harmed and to enhance their welfare. Although implications may differ by context and responsibilities can be limited by several factors (vagueness about what can be done, wrongful social practice combined with widespread ignorance, or lack of power, Isaacs 2011), there is a strong case for a moral obligation to at least assess the impact of the company on animal welfare and initiate steps in the right direction, like weighing conflicting interests and looking for shared interests between stakeholders, including animals.

When we return with this conclusion to the study presented in Chapter 2, it shows that there are many companies that seem to fail on this responsibility and should start taking action. In Chapter 2, our conclusion was that slightly less than half of the largest companies in the world make statements of ethical responsibility towards animals on their websites, which means that a narrow majority does not. In this study all types of industries that relate to animals differently were combined, but it was also argued that each company has some impact on animals, directly or indirectly. There were examples of companies with only an indirect impact on animals that do express their commitment to animals quite extensively. It was striking that, although all of the companies in the study have an impact on animals with the food options in their company restaurants, none of them mentions the topic. I am aware that the caterers are often separate companies; however, the companies that hire caterers could implement an animal-friendly procurement policy. At the end of the chapter the question was raised whether all companies have an ethical responsibility towards animals, which would imply that half of the companies in this study (those without any statement about animals) are failing. The argument in Chapter 5, that companies do have a responsibility, supports this actually being the case: in 2013, slightly more than half of the largest companies in the world did not show any commitment to animals on their websites and therefore failed to express themselves on an ethically relevant issue that is a potential CSR topic.

Another conclusion of Chapter 2 was that companies that do express responsibilities towards animals seem to display in their words quite a high level of concern, but most of them do so in documents of relatively low importance, and not for example in online CSR reports or business codes. How should we interpret this conclusion in the light of our main question (what the responsibility of companies towards animals is, and whether they express themselves about this responsibility)? It could mean, and I admit that this is somewhat speculative, that in parts of companies – in individual employees, teams, or departments – a commitment to animals is felt that does not come to the surface or is not seen as important. Therefore I think it would be useful if companies were to assess where their commitment to animals resides and what form it takes. I will return to this in the final section of this concluding chapter, where recommendations for companies are brought together.

From Chapter 3 it was concluded that in the food industry, leadership, partnership, and what we named ‘championship’ are drivers that help to overcome obstacles to taking a responsible stance towards animals. These obstacles were clustered as

immobility (having fixed ideas, being satisfied with the status quo, or not being prepared to move), the problems that different dilemmas bring about, and the risk of slander, respectively. In Figure 1 we sketched the different parties who, according to our findings, are involved in the creation of these drivers. Leadership can be taken by the managers themselves (a CSR manager, a quality manager, et cetera), as well as by CEOs or by the whole company as a leader within the industry. There are many potential partners: companies in the supply and retail chain, companies in the industry (including competitors), governmental organizations, researchers, and NGOs. All of them came forward from the study as being entities with whom helpful partnerships can be started and maintained to strengthen an ethical corporate stance towards animals. The ‘championships’ we found were ways of celebrating actions, targets, and achievements with the consumer and the public through public media, eventually in partnerships with NGOs. These appeared to be helpful ways to prevent or overcome slander. All in all, we can say that several theoretical concepts from adjacent CSR fields were confirmed.

Focusing on communicative drivers in Chapter 4, the conclusion was that the manager responsible for animal welfare has two ways of connecting to parties inside and outside the company (Figure 2). The first way is to communicate with these parties through various communication channels, and the second is to facilitate communication between parties in which the manager is not involved per se. The channels that are used for both types of communication partly overlap, but there are also differences between them. In many cases extra factors such as trust, collaboration, and meetings in person appeared helpful. Using Figure 2 in combination with Table 11 makes it possible for the reader to analyse each connection, including the channels that were mentioned in our data. Comparing these findings with existing literature on CSR communication, we concluded that it is useful to include communication about animal welfare in CSR communication that is already being carried out by the organization.

The above conclusions from the food industry may be relevant to other industries as well. We conducted these qualitative studies on the industry with the strongest impact on animals to make sure the findings would stand out. For industries with a lesser impact on animals, the findings may be applicable, but to a lesser extent. In the final section of this chapter I will therefore offer recommendations for companies in general. I kindly request the reader to keep in mind that the conclusions were partly drawn from research in the food industry only. Some alertness when applying the principles to other industries is therefore desirable.

In Chapter 5 we also referred to the work of Heath (2014) and argued that it is possible that changing the business in a way that has a positive impact on animals also can have a positive impact on other stakeholders, including shareholders. As a result of this thesis I can confirm that the interests of different stakeholders are not necessarily opposed to one another. Ways of finding common interests can be derived from the findings from Chapters 3 and 4, e.g. partnerships, championships, and many forms of communication.

The conclusions of this PhD thesis relate to existing literature not in the way that I have turned over existing theories or designed completely new ones – except for a few models of helpful drivers – but in the way that I have explored how animal ethics could be positioned within business ethics and business practice. The main conclusion that companies do bear responsibilities towards sentient animals is supportive of earlier indications in literature of responsibilities of companies for animals, which as already stated have a limited scope, take a specific perspective, or are purely descriptive (see the ‘Theoretical background’ section of Chapter 2). In addition, the separate conclusions of this thesis add arguments and action perspectives to positions taken by authors from the animal ethics field who argue in favor of institutional and societal responsibilities towards animals, such as Fraser (2012) and Donaldson and Kymlicka (2011), and to those who have opened the door to stakeholdership for animals, such as Hart and Sharma (2004) and Webster (2006).

In trying to incorporate animal ethics insights in business ethics, there is one more topic that draws attention: our argument from Chapter 5 that animal welfare in animal ethics includes future welfare, and therefore that taking a potentially good life of an animal prematurely is an infringement on animal welfare and a harm done to the animal. This leads to a strong moral obligation of companies to see how they can prevent sentient animals being killed for unnecessary purposes in the future. Taking this conclusion seriously would lead to a revolution in our industrial use of animals.

The main strength of this thesis may at the same time be its main limitation: it brings together two fields of ethics that rarely communicate: business ethics and animal ethics. They each have their own academic traditions and preferred methods, which makes it difficult to optimally meet the respective sets of requirements and expectations. For the purpose of looking through a multifocal lens, I also combined an empirical and a normative approach, which means that I

have only been able to work out either of them to a limited extent. Many questions remain open in terms of both the *is* and the *ought*. Nevertheless, I think I have contributed to first answers by exploring the topic in this multifocal way.

In addition, the limitations of the separate studies have an impact on the full thesis. The quantitative study of Chapter 2 was based on websites of the 200 largest companies from the Fortune Global 500 list of 2012. Though in business ethics, 200 is an accepted number of companies for drawing conclusions, numbers appeared too low to soundly answer specific sub-questions, for example about differences between continents, industries, animal groups or ethical approaches. Selection bias (created by the limited number of, or absence of companies from specific continents, industries, et cetera) cannot be fully excluded. And there is the fact that since 2012 changes over time may have occurred. Yet we have drawn some tentative conclusions based on the results that stood out the most.

Another limitation of Chapter 2 is the fact that the CAN score offers information about the commitment expressed by the company, but not about real company *behaviour*. Neither does it reveal the exact impact of the individual factors (the level of concern, the document type, and the length of the statement) and how they are related, nor what the scoring method does for companies smaller than the Global Fortune 200. We did, however, give an insight into the overall presence of the animal in statements of large companies.

Although we adhered to the methodological rules of qualitative research in the studies described in Chapters 3 and 4, there are limitations to these studies as well. There is always the factor of coincidence that can produce a flaw in the topic list or the saturation point. It cannot be fully excluded that an extra topic or company could have added new elements to the conclusions. We are aware that the relatively high contribution of interviews with managers may have positioned the manager in a more central role in our outcomes. The effects of this limitation were minimized by triangulating the study design.

Another limitation is that, although during our analysis of the data we were looking for drivers for an ethical stance of companies towards animals, again we cannot draw conclusions about their influence on the actual performance in terms of animal welfare.

As for the normative Chapter 5, a framework bias cannot be excluded. I have focused on those views from animal ethics that accept or dictate a moral status of sentient animals, leading to moral obligations towards them. Though I have presented some challenging views, I have not elaborated on what would happen if one would consistently follow these lines of thought, for example the more limited view of Regan on the circle of morally relevant creatures. Neither can a consequentialist bias be fully excluded. In every step of my argument I have offered views from multiple ethical approaches, accepted in both business and animal ethics, that lead to similar conclusions about ethical responsibilities of companies towards animals. Nevertheless, several readers have pointed out that my personal confidence in utilitarianism shines through the text. The same may hold for some preoccupation of companies with utilitarianism. Although both mechanisms may have led to some imbalance in my discussion of the respective ethical approaches, they do not weaken my main conclusion that companies do have ethical responsibilities towards sentient animals and that they should act upon these responsibilities.

Finally, it is a limitation of this thesis that it does not distinguish between the needs or preferences of the countless different vertebrate species, let alone between those of the individual creatures that populate these species. Research in biology and ethology should be able to fill this gap.

6.2 Recommendations for further research

In this PhD thesis I have argued, amongst other things, that in business literature animal issues are not often listed amongst corporate responsibilities, and that animal ethics, or more concretely, animal welfare, including longevity, deserves a place as a topic of CSR in the academic field of business ethics. Incorporating the topic, which I recommend, will make it easier to study the moral problems that occur when companies deal, directly or indirectly, with animals.

The data used in Chapter 2 were gathered in 2013, which is five and a half years before this thesis is going to press. Drawing conclusions from web-derived data is tricky, as websites can change quickly over time. Therefore, the results should already be seen as historical. It is possible that commitment to animals as expressed by companies on their websites has grown over time, but theoretically it may also have declined. Follow-up studies are recommended to find out which way the trend is heading.

In a direct response to this thesis it would be helpful if follow-up studies of quantitative research were conducted to further refine the conclusions we reported in Chapters 3 and 4, which are exploratory in nature and are based on data from a relatively small sample of companies in a specific industry and a limited part of the world. Further qualitative research could for example explore different industries and trends over time. Quantitative research is needed to explore the weight of the drivers for an ethical stance of companies towards animals. In addition, it could take our CAN scoring method for websites further by testing it more thoroughly on non-multinational companies and see how expressions about animals and actions towards animals relate, as recommended in the final section of Chapter 2.

In addition, a deeper analysis of the complex role of communications would be useful. As soon as more companies incorporate animal welfare in their organizational and external communications, a study of the effects of these communications would be helpful to create models for these extended ways of CSR communication. What remains underexposed in this thesis is a philosophical-communicative approach to the discourse about animals in companies. The question of how companies talk about animals and their interests would as well be a useful one to explore.

It would as well be helpful to explore the complex role of animal welfare NGOs. On the one hand they sometimes keep companies at a distance by naming and shaming, but on the other hand they achieve changes, sometimes in the same provocative and antagonistic way, sometimes by working with companies in partnerships. It seems that different NGOs play different roles that complement one another. An exploration of this field is needed to understand how change comes about.

Other interesting subtopics of research that emerge from this thesis are: animal-related interaction between governmental organizations and companies, and consumer responsibility in relation to corporate responsibility. It would as well be a good idea to work out more precisely the implications for different industries presented in Chapter 5, combining animal ethics and business ethics with research fields such as animal studies, food studies, innovation studies, and entertainment studies.

From a philosophical point of view, a further analysis of the ethical responsibilities of companies towards animals from different ethical approaches would be helpful. My argument is based on the main approaches used in animal and business ethics:

deontology, utilitarianism, and virtue ethics. Although all three of them have led us to roughly the same conclusions regarding the responsibilities of companies towards animals, I have now and then remarked that the utilitarian approach to animal ethics has a strong rational basis and best fits the real corporate world, where trade-offs in interest assessments are broadly accepted, and I therefore have sometimes discussed it more thoroughly. At the same time, virtue ethics could provide a source of inspiration to those people in companies who take up the gauntlet of leadership in animal ethics. In addition, the virtue-based capabilities approach supplies a concrete checklist. Nevertheless, exploring implications of other ethical approaches may be just as helpful.

At the end of Chapter 4, we observed that investors were not mentioned in the qualitative data. A possible explanation is their remoteness from the RM. Additional information can be offered by ESG (Environment, Social, Governance) rating systems, meant to inform investors on responsibilities taken by companies. Dorfleitner et al. (2015) mention animal testing (but only testing) in the context of ESG rating. At the same time, the most important ESG screening systems they mention, ASSES 4, KLD, MSCI, and EIRIS, hardly include animals. ASSET4 (Refinitiv 2019) and KLD (MSCI 2018) do not mention animals. The SAM system does not mention animals either, only biodiversity (SAM 2019), which is, as I have argued in Chapter 1, something different. EIRIS (Vigeo-Eiris), according to their website, seem not to check on animal welfare given their domains of analysis (Environment, Community involvement, Business behavior, Human Rights, Governance, and Human Resources), but claim to have contributed to the criteria of The Business Benchmark on Farm Animal Welfare (Amos & Sullivan 2018) and therefore can be expected to have the topic on their radar.

Another list where animals do not appear is the KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) for ESG from the European Federation of Financial Analyst Societies. Renneboog et al. (2008) summarize the regulatory SRI initiatives taken by national governments in a table, and identify the topic 'Animal testing', which interestingly is described more broadly than the topic title suggests as: 'Seek firms promoting the respectful treatment of animals + Avoid firms with animal testing and firms producing hunting/trapping equipment or using animals in end products' (Renneboog et al. 2008:1729). This short summary of the relationship between ESG and animal welfare reveals that there are movements that recognize animal issues as relevant, but also acknowledge the need for broadening the scope.

Chapter 5 mentions the political turn in animal ethics: a relatively new approach from political philosophy that moves from rather abstract reasoning about what is the right thing to do to concrete propositions about how to live with animals on Planet Earth. Though I did incorporate some of the new insights in that chapter, I have not given them abundant credit. Nevertheless, they are important developments that could turn the way we co-habit this planet upside down. I am fascinated by the work of Meijer (2017), who explores possible ways to communicate with animals and to acknowledge some of their actions as political deeds that show us what they want (like fleeing the slaughterhouse). Through her writings, I noticed the related work of Wadiwel (2015) who takes the position that systematic instrumental use, abuse, and killing of animals could be seen as an ongoing war against animals, based on the sovereignty of humans and the legitimization of violence towards other groups. To Wadiwel, focusing on reducing animal suffering and enhancing animal welfare within existing systems is no more than a way of enabling the ongoing oppression of non-human animals by humans: 'a violence that claims to care' (p. 112). Thirdly, I would also like to bring to mind again the work of Donaldson and Kymlicka (2011), who sketch a society where there is room for humans and animals to live peacefully together or alongside each other. Although I do not agree that the social position of animals as perceived by humans should be decisive for how they should be treated, I recommend their works to anyone interested in building on new views on the relationship between creatures living on Planet Earth. The political-philosophical approach might as well offer answers to a question still open in this thesis: how far exactly should a company push taking responsibility for animals?

There is one final topic that should receive more academic attention: our argument from Chapter 5 that animal welfare in animal ethics includes future welfare, in relation to the issue of taking the life of an animal prematurely. If this life could have been a good life in the future, then ending it is an infringement on animal welfare and a harm done to the animal. I realize that there are approaches of animal welfare, especially from ethology, that do not incorporate loss of lifetime into loss of welfare. A study of the differences between these views is recommended as well.

6.3 Recommendations for companies

Based on the empirical results and the normative argument that companies bear responsibility for their impact on sentient animals, I recommend the following actions for companies and their managers.

In the first place, it can be very informative for the company to do a self-assessment using our CAN scoring method. It can then see how it scores on expressed commitment to animals, in what places on the website animals are mentioned in what way, and what can be done to move the topic from the margins of the website to the centre of CSR policy and reporting. This self-examination will reveal where commitment to animals resides within the company and what form it takes. This insight will offer starting points for expanding commitment.

Companies who do a materiality assessment for their CSR could make sure that animals or their interests are represented in the corresponding debate. They can do so by working with animal advocacy groups or researchers with specific knowledge of animal ethics or animal welfare. Each company can find out for itself which party can represent the interests of the animals involved in the best way. For dealing in business practice with specific cases in which animal interests conflict with other interests, ethical assessment systems and ethical debating groups can be established within the policy-making systems.

If there is no manager responsible for animal welfare yet, I recommend making it the explicit responsibility of a CSR manager, a quality manager, or any other manager with the appropriate expertise and job description. This manager can function as a contact person for animal welfare issues and be presented as such within and outside the company. It is recommended as well that this manager be familiar with methods of ethical assessment and be encouraged to use them.

The models in Figures 1 and 2 and the examples in Chapters 3 and 4 can be used to explore how progress can be made through leadership, partnership, 'championship', communication with parties, and encouraging mutual communication between these parties. I advise those who want to improve the ethical stance of their company towards animals to go more thoroughly through these chapters, check whether all the relevant options for leadership, partnership, 'championship', and communications are being applied and which examples can inspire them to do so even more. In addition, the overview of communication channels in Table 11 can be used to include animal welfare in current CSR and other communications, and to add new channels to animal welfare and CSR communications where this fits the company. Organizational communication with employees can help to find out where in the company an ethical stance towards animals resides and how this stance can be shared with other employees and departments. I recommend as well that external communications about plans, goals, obstacles, and achievements be

proactive and honest. Finally, I recommend personal contact when communicating, to establish even more mutual trust. Where this is not feasible, one can explore storytelling as a substitute for personal contact.

I am aware that I am laying a heavy moral claim on companies. This may be an unwelcome message to some of those involved. But, as mentioned earlier, a heavy moral claim is what it is. The burden of a moral claim is not a sufficient reason for refusing to take action. Changing companies' ways of dealing with animals is morally desirable and even obligatory, and in fact is the only way to end companies' systematic negative impact on animals. At the same time I think I offer sufficient steps, large and small, that can be taken to work towards a partial or full fulfilment of that claim. Let me quote Green (2013:227) here, who offers individual actors a solution to the problem of the huge demands of moral claims (in particular utilitarian ones), leaning on the similarity to self-imposed demands of healthy food consumption:

'If you were a food-consuming computer, maintaining an optimal diet might be a realistic goal. But as a real person with limited time, money, and willpower, trying to maintain a physiologically optimal diet is not, in fact, optimal. Instead, the optimal strategy is to eat as well as you can, given your real-world constraints, including your own psychological limitations and including limitations imposed on you as a social being. This is challenging because there's no magic formula, no bright line between the extremes of perfectionism and unbridled gluttony. To be the healthiest that you can actually be – not in principle but in practice – you have to set reasonable goals, which will inevitably be somewhat arbitrary, and then work reasonably hard to attain them.'

If all involved start working reasonably hard to make their companies more animal friendly, then there is hope.

Let me give one example from my own country. On 29 June 2018, branch organizations in the food sector, NGOs, trade unions, and the Dutch government signed a covenant (SER 2018) offering Dutch food manufacturers and retailers an overview of issues of international CSR and sustainable chain management, with the explicit purpose to support companies in dealing with the risks involved, and to set up joint projects in cases where the influence of individual companies is inadequate. One of the themes dealt with is animal welfare, in addition to human

rights, labour rights, health and safety, land rights, and the environment. These themes were derived from the OECD-FAO Guidance for Responsible Agricultural Supply Chains that was launched a few months earlier (OECD-FAO 2018). It is an important step forward that may boost initiatives from companies themselves into an upward spiral. I hope that my contribution to this process is helpful as well, and that decision makers in companies will initiate the changes recommended. My parting message is: Make the most of it. It is thrilling to take part in a movement that will make the world a better place for humans and animals.

Recommendations for companies in brief

1. Do a self-assessment with our CAN scoring method
 2. Include the interests of animals in materiality assessments; establish assessment systems for cases with conflicting interests
 3. Make animal welfare the explicit responsibility of a manager
 4. Use our models in Figures 1 and 2 and the examples in Chapters 3 and 4 to explore how progress can be made
 5. Use the overview of communication channels in Table 11 to include animal welfare in current communications and add new channels where appropriate
 6. Communicate proactively and honestly about plans, goals, obstacles, and achievements
 7. Add personal contacts (or personal storytelling) to the channels used
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Commitment to ANimals (CAN) assessment in brief

1. Search on the corporate website for places where animals are mentioned. If the site search is unavailable or unreliable, use this search in a common web browser: animal site:<website>. Do the same with words like fauna, cattle, fishes, pets, and the names of animal groups or species you would expect on this website. If the website is in another language, use equivalent terms in that language.
 2. Follow and scan each hit. Read the title of the text where the term is found and relevant paragraphs around it. If more paragraphs directly around it mention the term animal(s) and describe the same subject within the same text type, this counts as one quote. If there is text in between them on another subject, the texts count as separate quotes.
 3. Identify whether it is the company speaking in this text (other possibilities include a news item about the company quoted from the media, a report from an independent committee or jury, a consumer letter). If it is the company speaking, or showing that it stands behind the text, then accept the quote. If this is not the case, ignore it.
 4. Identify in the quote any ethical views on animals, a reference to a moral status of animals, and especially references to: animal welfare, well-being, pleasure, pain, suffering, happiness, the balancing of interests, animal rights, inherent value, respect for animal integrity, sanctity of life, dignity, an attitude of kindness, wonder, and/or compassion towards animals, enabling animals to practice capabilities and to flourish, and actions or opinions that imply one of the preceding concepts. A quote about species or habitat protection should be excluded unless they refer at the same time to views such as the above. In case of an explicit or implicit reference to an ethical stance towards animals, copy the relevant part of the quote to a document, with the relevant section, article, or document titles. If varieties of the same text are merely updates (press releases, newsletters, reports), select the most recent one mentioning the animal issue. If varieties of the same text fragment occur in different text types (e.g. newsletter and press release) select both.
 5. Search on the same website via the terms CR, CSR, social, environment, and code for CSR documents and codes of conduct that might have been skipped by the website search. Check them for the term animal too and select quotations as described above.
 6. Assign points to each quote for Document Level (DL), Concern Level (CL), and Size Level (SL) according to the following definitions of the levels:
 CL, Concern Level: 5 = result; 4 = action; 3 = aspiration; 2 = attitude; 1 = information
 DL, Document Level: 5 = long-term corporate information (basic corporate information, business code, policy statement); 4 = mid-term corporate information (CR report, mid-term policy document); 3 = short-term corporate information (press releases, news items, periodicals, campaign information); 2 = specific information with a narrow scope (product information, research information, donation lists, volunteer work lists, case studies); 1 = specific information with a marginal scope (texts from individual staff members on private choices, staff or guest blogs)
 SL, Size Level: 5 = > 1,000 words; 4 = 301-1,000 words; 3 = 101-300 words; 2 = 21-100 words; 1 = 1-20 words
 7. Add all the points assigned to all the quotes. This total is the CAN score that quantifies the Commitment to ANimals as expressed by the company.
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Epilogue

I was born a utilitarian. It may have been my inborn Dutch-Flemish matter-of-factness, a capacity for rationality and empathy in the same person, or something else, but I knew it as soon as I started reading the works of Peter Singer. It felt as if Singer had written down what I had known all the time – which says everything about his skills and nothing about mine. From that day on, I have felt connected to his writings in one big stream of touching recognition.

A few years before, at the age of twelve, I had told my mother that I wanted to become a vegetarian because I was appalled by the way animals were treated in industrial husbandry. Images of their treatment from animal advocacy organizations had shocked me. My love for the many animals in our household may also have played a role, just like visits to my rabbit-breeding grandfather, who gave us a dead, skinned rabbit as a present each Christmas. Since I was also still an all-vegetable refusing child, my mother was concerned about my health and asked me to wait and first find out what I could eat instead. She used to make us typically Dutch triangled meat-potato-veg meals and wanted to protect me from committing to a potato-only diet. Two years later I met like-minded peers and gained the necessary knowledge and skills to become a healthy vegetarian. In those pre-internet times we exchanged paper recipes, magazines, and books. That was probably when I read Singer's *Animal Liberation* in Dutch translation, rather hot off the press. And I knew immediately: Peter Singer is right. All sentient beings count, no matter how small.

I was an extremely shy and insecure youngest child of five in a close-knit family. My brother and sisters learned things in school I was sure I would never be able to learn, like drawing curls on paper that could be read as words, and later – when these curls had turned out to be doable – drawing tail divisions that helped them do sums as if by magic. So, after finishing elementary school, it was my deepest wish to learn bake cookies and care for children in the lower vocational school in our small town. The nuns in my elementary school advised my parents to enrol me in a Catholic lower general secondary school 15 kilometres by bicycle from home. They didn't tell us that there was a public school the same distance from us, with a smooth level-to-level flow system, up to pre-university education. My parents had no idea. Looking back now, it is of no importance. I went through the small Catholic school easily, which boosted my self-confidence, switched to public school, was infected with a hunger-for-knowledge virus, moved to Utrecht to study Dutch Language and Literature (to make the world a better place through communication), and many years later gained an extra Master's degree in Applied

Ethics (to make the world a better place full stop). In the meantime, I worked for a range of NGOs for the protection of animals, humans, and the environment.

I loved to work but started to miss academic thinking. My Master's in Applied Ethics had triggered that longing, as well as working with researchers as a communications consultant for Utrecht University. I collected some of the papers I had written while doing my master's and reassembled them into a book in Dutch (Janssens 2010). I also had a pet topic of my own that I had not been able to research yet: Corporate Social Responsibility was of growing importance, but it seemed to overlook the interests of animals, which I thought was disastrous. If companies finally were starting to take responsibility, but not for animals, the system of animal abuse I had been fighting for years would never stop. I decided to look for a PhD position to once and for all make clear to academy and society that companies should reflect critically on animal use, after which, of course, they would stop abusing them.

Utrecht University would not support my topic. According to the professor I spoke to, it would first take years of thorough research to show that companies have any societal responsibilities at all. I did not agree but understood that animal ethics and business ethics specialists did not communicate with each other. By that time, I had attended the 2012 Minding Animals Conference in Utrecht where Peter Singer spoke. I addressed him personally with a short question: Do you think I can argue convincingly that companies have responsibilities towards animals? He answered that we already know that companies have responsibilities towards society, and that from there I could argue that they should include animals (paraphrase MJ). On another conference I asked John Elkington, the founder of Triple P (People, Planet, Profit) whether he might have forgotten to include animals in the concept. He admitted that animals should have been included, first live in the conference and later on Twitter. I cherish his tweet.

Re-motivated, I tracked down almost every ethics professor in the Netherlands who had anything to do with animal ethics. They all turned my proposal down, for different reasons. My last hope was with Prof. Muel Kaptein of Rotterdam School of Management. He had nothing to do with animal ethics but was very much into business ethics. I had already started to give up on the idea of doing a PhD but to my great surprise he immediately recognized the urgency of the issue and said yes.

We may conclude that, all the way through my career, my own driver has been the way we, as a society, deal with animals. I have no illusions that this thesis will have an enormous impact, although I am trying to intensify the impact it will have

by means of my professional communication skills: using press releases, videos, social media, et cetera. At the same time, I am very happy to see a strong consumer movement growing rapidly. Young people are becoming vegetarian or vegan on a large scale. It is now hip rather than weird, as it was in my student days. Traditional restaurants are following only hesitantly, but young people are starting their own vegan bars and eateries. In the small city of Utrecht alone there are four exclusively vegan restaurants. The internet seems to be a very helpful tool in the transition. And the young are inspiring their parents. I recently spoke to a friend whom I had not seen for almost twenty years, from a dining circle, in which it should be obvious I had always been the veggie weirdo. This friend told me she had recently become a vegan. Why now? Because of the discussions with her children and the horrible videos of animal abuse they had showed her. It gives me confidence that someday consumers and companies will finally take animal welfare into account in the same way they do human welfare. And those who have read the foregoing chapters know that this includes not taking their lives for reasons as bite and taste of food.

As a very rational utilitarian I have always found it hard to understand why people can admit rationally that there is something wrong with the system but refuse to change their behaviour accordingly. At the same time, I have begun to realize that psychological mechanisms can stand in the way. I experience them myself sometimes, when I cannot resist a dairy-based dessert in a restaurant or try to convince myself that my difficult feet really need leather shoes. Each decision about products like these is a tiny struggle. What I have learned over the years is to use the non-rational as a source of inspiration and a motivator, the way heart-breaking videos on the internet finally persuaded my friend. Rationality is crucial to argument, but the emotional, the literary if you like, is necessary to make people do what they should do, to gain courage, to connect. See the enormous impact of Foer's book *Eating Animals* (Foer 2009).

I grew up with dogs, cats, rabbits, pigeons, a turtle, and a canary. All had either been abandoned or were no longer wanted. As a grown-up I had a few cats, but have stopped keeping animals, as I am unable to offer them a good home. The animals I meet the most are Sacha and Olive (Olijfje), former stray dogs, now living at my sister's. When I look them in the eyes, I know why I must continue advocating better lives for animals. In their eyes I see the individuals they are, with their own preferences and frustrations, for whom life can go well or badly, and, especially, for whom life has now started getting better.

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About the author

Monique Janssens studied Dutch Language and Literature, and Applied Ethics, both at Utrecht University, and did an Honours course in CSR at the University of Amsterdam. She worked as a regional manager for the Dutch Society for the Protection of Animals (Dierenbescherming) and as a Public Information Officer at the Dutch office of the World Society for the Protection of Animals (now: World Animal Protection).

She started her own business in communications consultancy called JT&P Communicatie and the additional brand Ethisch Bedrijf (Ethical Business) for ethics consultancy. Nowadays, she combines ethics consultancy with a job at the Animal Welfare Body of Utrecht University and the University Medical Center Utrecht.

Monique Janssens completed this PhD thesis as an external doctoral candidate at the Rotterdam School of Management of Erasmus University Rotterdam. She has published several articles and two books (in Dutch): one on suicide attempts and suicide prevention, together with Professor of Psychiatry Jan Swinkels: *Een tweede leven: Ware verhalen over zelfmoordpogingen* (A second life: True stories about suicide attempts, Scriptum Psychologie, 2008), and one containing essays on animal ethics: *Dieren en wij: Hun welzijn, onze ethiek* (Animals and us: Their welfare, our ethics, A3 boeken, 2010). She is a member of the New Animal Ethics Committee (Nieuwe Dierexperimentencommissie) and the Netherlands National Committee for the protection of animals used for scientific purposes (Nationaal Comité advies dierproevenbeleid).

Courses:

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- Paper presentation *We are the champions!*, European Society for Agricultural and Food Ethics (EurSafe) 2016, *Food Futures: Ethics, Science & Culture*, Porto
- Paper presentation *We are the champions!*, Animal Ethics Summer School 2016, *The Ethics of eating animals*, Oxford

About the author

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- Paper presentation *Animal business*, European Association for Critical Animals Studies (EACAS) 2019, Barcelona

What is the ethical responsibility of companies towards animals?

How do companies deal with this responsibility? Based on both empirical and normative-philosophical research, Monique Janssens argues that animal ethics is a blind spot in both business practice and academic business ethics, whereas companies do have significant responsibilities towards animals. Companies who engage in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) often consider the impact of business activities on people and the natural environment, but are less likely to consider their impact on animals.

This book offers insight in how the commitment to animals of companies differs, how it can be assessed by website analysis, and what managerial and communicative factors promote an ethical corporate position towards animals. It connects animal ethics and business ethics on both an academic level and an applied level. In addition, it offers recommendations for both academic research and corporate practice to make animal ethics, and therefore animal welfare, part of CSR.



Monique Janssens is an ethics researcher and consultant, who has worked for, and is working for several NGOs, institutions and companies, mostly in the fields of animal welfare, human welfare and environmental protection. She has published on animal ethics, business ethics and suicide prevention. It is her aim to bring the topic of animal ethics into the field of business ethics.