Book Review

A.F. Fraser: Feline Behaviour and Welfare, CABI Wallingford 2012, ISBN 978 1 845 939 274 (pbk), XI and 198 pages

After a brief outline of the author's professional path in animal behaviour, the Preface briefly describes the way of the cat out of the Libyan Desert through the ancient Egyptian history, middle ages that brought them on ships to all parts of the world up to the present time. Fourteen chapters follow.

In the Introduction, the reader finds two simple goals in feline life, self-maintenance and reproduction. The term well-being is analyzed, explained along with sentience, the property of all higher animals that can experience pain and suffering, relief and pleasure. Concepts of applied feline welfare that relate to the animal's ambience and well-being as health-related factors are shown. Feline (anatomic and behavioural) features common to domesticated and wild cats are briefly described. The roots of well-being are analyzed in the second chapter – such as emotive quality (anger, affection, dislike and fright). Brief actions such as scratching, biting etc. indicate brief feelings whereas longer lasting feelings are called moods. Their detailed descriptions are given, the role of limbic system herein. Suffering is given interesting thoughts. Sensory organs are described as “sensors for well-being” with their complexities. The chapter ends with brief characteristics of 24 pedigree cat breeds and their domestic behaviour. Feline neuroethology, the nervous substrate for behaviour (reticular formation, cerebral cortex with its areas, the limbic system, basal ganglia, hypothalamus, spinal cord and reflexes is presented in Chapter 3. Autonomic nervous system and its role in behaviour of cats is described. Pheromones, hormones, and neurotransmission principles along with the respective substances are mentioned. Interesting new terminology is used here such as “well-being reflexes”. Chapter 4 is devoted to play and its changes during life but it also contains the description of general neonatal to adult development presented in phases and categories with several overlaps. Basic activities (chapter 5) include physiological needs, ingestion, elimination, followed by detailed common physical and social activities (here play is described again). Special attention is given to feline acrobatic abilities based on their anatomic features. Body care, exploration and rest are treated here (however, I found no mention of exploration). Chapter 6 is devoted to

Association and Reproduction, covering all aspects of these functions and behaviours.

Chapter 7 describes the three giant cats, namely, lion, tiger and jaguar, presenting their history, habitat, predation, territoriality, associations, breeding, development of the young. The dismal perspectives of these species are shown as well. Chapter 8 presents other feline species, such as leopard, clouded leopard, ocelot, African golden cat, caracal, serval, cheetah, bobcat, lynx, puma and several more. Aspects of their survival and roles in their habitats are presented. Chapter 9 is dealing with 14 small feline species with their geography, habitats, way of life, reproduction and special features. In Chapter 10 the author described common and comparative features of cats, behavioural characteristics, their travelling, dispersal, social independence, territorial behaviour, even sunbathing, tail action or spurring, lookout postures. Chapter 11 is devoted to abnormal behaviours and here one would expect more of scientific literature by animal behaviourists explored; separation anxiety, aggression, indoor spraying and some others are mentioned but for example compulsive disorders are not mentioned except for wool sucking. Chapter 12 deals with health monitoring and care of the cat, their grooming, parasite control, also in the environment. It continues with feline viral and other diseases. Special attention is paid to diseases of pedigreed cats but also to problems of feral cats and their colonies as well as colonies of housed cats. The following two chapters analyze in detail the questions of welfare and well-being of cats, both in human care but also the large cats in their environments. There is a comprehensive Glossary, Bibliography and Index. The entire text is completed with tables, illustrative photographs and drawings.

Felines are creatures that give special biodiversity to the world, and have their natural roles in balance of nature in virtually all parts of the world. This book is another enrichment of the literature on behaviour of cats. It shows the urgent need for their protection worldwide; it improves our knowledge and understanding of their special life styles.

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