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Invertebrate Welfare

Edited by: William Winlow, Jennifer Mather and Anna Di Cosmo

In recent years, it has become clear that advanced invertebrates are self-aware, sentient beings with the ability to feel pain, however that may be defined. This view is supported by animal welfare legislation in several countries. Although many invertebrates exhibit the ability to learn and have memory functions, there are major structural and physiological differences between animal groups. Some investigators argue that these differences imply the inability of advanced invertebrates to feel pain, even though they exhibit self-protective behavior. Whether this is true or not, it is the responsibility of human beings, particularly scientists, to value the welfare of invertebrates and to treat them well, both in captivity and in the wild. Here, we consider invertebrate welfare in breeding or holding facilities, in laboratories, and under natural conditions, where possible. The effects of effluents on animal populations are also considered, as is the need for appropriate methods of anesthesia, where experimentation on advanced invertebrates is necessary.

