

Broom 2010. Foreword to *Such a Nuisance to Die, the Autobiography of Princess Elisabeth de Croÿ*, E. de Croÿ and J. Leney, xxv-xxvii. Brighton: Book Guild Publishing.

## *Foreword*

Donald M. Broom, Professor of Animal Welfare, Centre for Animal Welfare and Anthrozoology, Department of Clinical Veterinary Medicine, University of Cambridge, UK

A small number of people devote much of their energy and resources to noble causes such as attempting to improve animal welfare. Occasionally, they continue to do so for over forty years. Princess Elisabeth de Croÿ not only did this, but gave up many aspects of a privileged and comfortable life to achieve her objectives.

She describes some of her exciting encounters with famous and influential people during her early life. They range from Henri Matisse and Salvador Dalí to King Farouk of Egypt, Orson Welles and John and Jackie Kennedy. Even at that time, the glamorous young Princess Elisabeth could sometimes have valuable influence on behalf of animals. She relates how, when she met the president of Chile, her expression of horror at hearing that a bullfight was to be staged there resulted in his declaration that it would be the last in his country. There are also descriptions of many major events in world history as Princess Elisabeth wrote reports on Hungary just after the 1956 uprising, the Franco-Algerian war with its various atrocities and the war in Biafra.

The founding in 1968 of the *Refuge de Thiernay* was a significant event in the history of animal protection in France. Elisabeth explains how the concept of animal welfare was almost completely unknown in the 1970s, not just in rural France but in most parts of the world. In setting up the Refuge, some advice was obtained from the RSPCA in Britain and volunteer veterinary nurses came from Britain to help. One innovation in her efforts to minimise the worst problems of

stray, often diseased, animals that were brought to the Refuge was to arrange for neutering by staff at the renowned veterinary school in the University of Lyon. At the time this practice was thought to be just a drop in the ocean of stray dogs and cats but it has proved to be of great importance in reducing the numbers of starving, diseased and wildlife-consuming dogs and cats. An interesting ethical question is raised here. Is depriving these animals the possibility to reproduce justified by the reduction in the poor welfare of their offspring and other animals? Readers can come to their own conclusions. Another innovation, later taken up nationally, was to tattoo, and later microchip each animal that passed through the Refuge. In considering such difficult issues, Elisabeth became involved with the World Society for the Protection of Animals and was invited to become one of its Advisory Directors. In her account, she pays tribute to the pioneering work of Graham Fuller who changed the concept of what an animal shelter could do in his work at Wood Green Animal Shelters during the 1980s and early 1990s.

My personal experiences of Elisabeth started when I gave lectures on the scientific assessment of animal welfare twenty years ago at meetings of WSPA or at universities in Belgium and France. She made clear her delight that there was at last a Professor of Animal Welfare and she strongly encouraged further development in this scientific discipline. I think that she was also pleased that I could lecture in my somewhat inadequate French. Elisabeth was by origin, and by penchant, very much an internationalist and after having some success in France she wanted to spread the civilising influence to other countries in Europe and elsewhere. She was encouraged by Mike Seymour Rouse to become involved with Eurogroup for Animal Welfare in its early years. This organisation, later a consortium of all major animal welfare organisations in Europe that was taken forward under the leadership of David Wilkins and Sonja van Tichelen, is now the major lobbying body on welfare matters that is listened to by the European Commission and the European Parliament.

I was well aware of Elisabeth before I met her because of the leg-hold trap issue. In 1989, Stanley Clinton Davis, a member of the European Parliament, contacted me in Cambridge to request that I should prepare a brief scientific report on whether or not such traps

would have the effect of causing poor welfare in the trapped animals. The key issue that I considered in my report was the degree of poor welfare that would be considered acceptable in the legislation on animal experimentation or on humane slaughter. My report was presented in the European Parliament. At the same time Princess Elisabeth de Croÿ was an influential figure arguing the case in the corridors of the European Parliament building in Strasbourg. The result was a ban on the import of furs from animals caught in inhumane traps. This, and a similar experience relating to the killing of baby seals on which I also wrote a report, changed the views of many in the animal protection movement about animal welfare science. It was realised that a good quality scientific report by independent animal welfare scientists was of great value in efforts to change laws. In Cambridge, we followed this by founding the Cambridge University Animal Welfare Information Centre that produces scientific reports on animal welfare topics for any organisation. At the same time, the European Commission set up the Scientific Veterinary Committee (Animal Welfare Section) that also produced scientific reports.

Elisabeth started from a position of influence but her greatest impact was a result of her ability to appreciate good, new ideas and to present them where they might be heard. Few aristocrats have such a wide-ranging impact on the world. Although welfare scientists can provide information to the scientific world and to governments, the real changes come about because of the changing of public opinion and the impact of carefully-considered, factually-based campaigns. The future improvement in animal welfare in the world depends very much on people like Elisabeth.