

Preface

All animals should receive good husbandry and welfare but, because of their close phylogenetic relationship to man, primates are often given special status. Primates are intelligent and responsive, and working with them can be extremely rewarding. The authors do not believe that primates have specific rights; but that we, as their keepers, have a duty to ensure that their lives are as comfortable as possible and that the five freedoms are adhered to. That is:

- freedom from thirst, hunger or malnutrition
- freedom from discomfort
- freedom from pain, injury and disease
- freedom to express normal behaviour
- freedom from fear and distress.

These five freedoms are taken from the UK Farm Animal Welfare Council recommendations, yet they are even more applicable to a creature that has greater capacity for psychological suffering by isolation, boredom and restriction of movement than a farm animal, and so should be even more rigorously applied to primates.

If the use of primates in research facilities, zoos, or private collections is to be supported there is an ethical obligation to house and maintain them in the best conditions that can be provided, so as 'best practice' evolves it is necessary to continually question if the facilities and their operation and management can be improved. While a good deal is known about the needs of primates in captivity, there are a number of aspects where more scientifically validated information would be welcome to supplement the experience on which the present recommendations are largely based.

The purpose of this book is to encourage discussion and active review of the husbandry of captive primates and to assist with the management of changes to benefit their welfare. The authors' experience covers both wild and captive primates and currently they both work with primates kept for laboratory use. Although this is reflected in many of the examples given to illustrate the points made, the principles of improving primate welfare can be applied to all captive primates whether in zoos, laboratories or private collections. Whatever the purpose for keeping a primate it will need to be housed and cared for, diseases will need to be prevented and health and safety issues of those caring for it will need to be addressed. Some of the discussion is deliberately contentious; there are not platitudes to keep the majority content, but it seeks to sow the seeds of discontent in some current methodologies in order to stimulate progression toward a better future for these species whose lives enrich ours – either by contributing to progress in the fight against disease, allowing us the opportunity to observe and learn from their behaviour, or by providing us with more diverse fauna.