

Animal rights views shared

BY RACHEL STERN

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The issue of animal rights has evolved over time, changing from a view of humans having moral worth to one with blurred boundaries to justify exploiting animals for human purposes.

Angus Taylor, a lecturer from the philosophy department at the University of Victoria, explored the issue at Vancouver Island University Tuesday. More than 80 people attended the lecture, which touched on issues Taylor covers in his book *Animals & Ethics*.

The creation of ethical standards around human use of animals boil down to

people not wanting to change their behaviour, said Taylor. Changes in the treatment of animals won't happen overnight, he added – people won't release every cow in captivity to have them roaming the streets fending for themselves.

Taylor said theories around the 17th century focused on humans as being more moral to justify exploitation. They centred on self-awareness and the ability to relate to others.

However, that thinking is flawed because some people aren't as self-aware as oth-

ers, said Taylor.

“There's an overlap between capacity between humans and animals. You can't draw a neat line,” he said.

More recent theories focus on humans as part of nature and examine the predator-prey relationship.

“In a world of predator and prey, we are the top predators,” said Taylor.

Lindsey Morin, a VIU criminology major, said it's

interesting how people have evolved from examining inequalities of racism and sexism to now focus on ani-



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mal rights. Issues of animal exploitation, especially in the food industry, need to be considered, he said.

“We have a hidden darkness of human nature hidden in the food industry and that aspect of our society needs to be addressed,” Morin said.

Maureen Okun, a VIU professor of liberal studies, said Taylor's presentation was informative and while new theories argue there is no distinction between humans and animals, people continue to exploit them for personal needs.

She said such a view is a paradox because people can't have it both ways.