

CHAPTER FOUR
SUGGESTIONS FOR RESOLVING NATIONAL ANIMAL PROTECTION
PROBLEMS

4. Understanding some suggestions to improve animal protection in Mexico

As I have argued throughout this thesis, in Mexico there are many obstructions for achieving and enhancing an adequate animal protection culture. This, however, makes it more and not less important to try to find feasible solutions to the current and future problems concerning animal protection that face Mexico in general and government policy makers in particular. All the arguments in this thesis point to the conclusion that the current policy drive for animal protection in Mexico is too focused on the formal, legal side and insufficiently focused on practical implementation. It seems clear therefore that, to be efficient and workable, the policy orientation needs to be refocused toward practical implementation. In this final chapter I offer some broad suggestions as to how this project might begin with specific reference to animal-related problems.

It is clear that giving *definite* or *exclusive* answers to the wide range of ecological problems that faces Mexico is an enormous task. While I fully acknowledge that animal questions are fundamentally related to the wider and highly interconnected problems associated with broader environmental problems, I have narrowed the focus of this thesis to animals only. This method is likely to generate a certain amount of criticism from those like Smith or Eckersley, for example, who perceive the environment and its problems as too interconnected to split up in the way I have attempted to do. It might also generate criticism from those, like Alejandro Mendez, who believe that the problems

facing wildlife conservation and domestic animal treatment are quite separate and require quite different policy alternatives to rectify. I am in broad agreement with both of these claims. However, I have chosen to focus on animals for two main reasons that I hope address each criticism to a defensible extent. First, I have done so in the hope of exploring some of the problems in a deeper and more sustained way than they are usually presented in the literature. Second, I have done so in the hope of isolating a specific place to start the process of narrowing the perceived gap between humans and ‘our’ non-human environment in Mexico. As will become clear in this chapter, it is my claim that our treatment of those animals that are closest to us (domesticated animals) may perhaps provide the key toward promoting a deeper awareness of, and possibly even a respect for, those animals that are further away. The argument is a contentious one, but is not far removed from previous ecofeminist arguments that claim a similar perspective – though I do not class myself as an ecofeminist in other respects. It is for this reason that the suggestions I offer in this chapter focus perhaps slightly more on domestic animal issues than on wildlife issues.

The general conclusion of the thesis at this point is that to rectify the situation of animal treatment in Mexico will require moving animal issues from their current low place on the political and public agendas to a much higher position. This would increase public awareness of the problems associated with animal protection in Mexico and refocus government policy toward attempts to provide substantive progress in practical implementation and law enforcement – two of the central problems I have identified in this thesis. Making this move will not be easy for the reasons I have mentioned throughout the study. Neither will it happen overnight. However, I hope that the

suggestions I make in this chapter might cover some areas that would help the process get started. What the arguments in this thesis suggest is that short and long-term policy strategies need to be engaged together, both within the government and within society. I develop this chapter by explaining the suggestions for some of the problems presented throughout the three previous chapters.

4.1 Chapter One

The general conclusion to chapter one was that despite Mexico's strong legal framework on animal protection, many violations to the law and illegal practices still take place. This situation is a result of the lack of law enforcement at the federal, state and municipal levels. To try to ameliorate the lack of law enforcement issue, I provide two suggestions.

4.1.1 Begin measures to decrease bureaucracy; more power to municipal authorities

Part of the problems identified in chapter one concern the amount of bureaucratic red tape generated by the federal system and by the complexity of the laws on animal protection themselves. Excessive bureaucracy is a problem that needs to be confronted in order to permit authorities to do their job more efficiently and to encourage citizens to respect the law. It is often the case that the amount of time and effort required to pursue legal channels and the bureaucracy this entails actually encourages individuals and companies to pursue the illegal route for activities. 'Sustainable' legal lumber production, for example, requires an individual or company to obtain several legal documents from different institutions, all of which are required to inspect company procedures at various times and all of which are required to agree that the 'sustainable product' stamp can be

legally used on the lumber produced. This can often take several months or even years to coordinate and regularly needs updating by law. It is quicker, easier and more profitable to bypass these procedures by either bribing officials for the stamp or selling illegal lumber. There are few enforced penalties for doing so and the lumber yards they sell to are just as prepared to buy illegally forested lumber as they are legally stamped lumber, primarily because it is cheaper. This not only contributes to the reduction of animal habitats. It also, as I mention in chapter two, contributes to rapid desertification (through soil erosion) of the forested land and therefore impacts upon human interests as well as those of animals. The point is that while it might sound good on paper to make companies accountable for the sustainability of their products, in practice bureaucratic inertia actually makes illegal channels far more attractive, given that actually incurring penalties for not following the law is so unlikely. This is just one more instance of policy focusing too much on the ‘front end’ of the idea while not providing enough enforcement (or even thought) at the ‘back end’ to ensure that the policy works.

A similar problem mentioned to me by Alejandro Mendez,¹ in 2004, concerns the ‘real’ value of fines for violating animal protection laws. It has been a common strategy of politicians to systematically increase the financial penalties for violating protection laws such as those relating to slaughterhouse practices in the hope of providing a sufficient deterrent. However, using the ‘mathematical hope’ statistical method to calculate the ‘real’ value of the penalties also takes into account the probability of actually being caught, prosecuted and forced to pay the fine. This means that if, for example, the fine for not having a veterinarian present at a slaughterhouse is around

¹ Alejandro Méndez López, President of the Michoacán State Executive Commission of the Mexican Green Ecologist Party, interviewed by Norma Contreras, *Environmental Efforts in Michoacán* (August 4, 2004).

50,000 pesos (as stated in chapter one), but the probability of being caught and having to actually pay that fine is only, say, 5% (as is suggested by Silva's report mentioned in chapter one), the 'real' value of the fine is calculated by this method to be just 2,500 pesos. On this account, such a value clearly does not provide either the desired incentive to systematically follow the law (carrots) or the desired disincentives not to (sticks). From this it seems that the government either has to ensure that its 'sticks' are sufficiently robust to discourage illegal activities, or ensure that its 'carrots' are within sufficient reach and sufficiently attractive to be worth following (or ideally both).

To begin to reduce bureaucratic red tape, it seems clear that more funds need to be allocated to the authorities in charge of enforcing animal protection, part of which could come from the international cooperation efforts I discuss later in this chapter. Part could also come from minimizing bureaucracy at the national and/or state level by reducing the paperwork that society has to go through in order to get permissions or to make some activities legal. My suggestion here is to consider giving municipal authorities more enforcement power. This would mean proposing that municipal authorities (sanity and ecology directors)² should be permitted to apply sanctions according to state laws on matters of wild fauna, not merely on domestic animals. The suggestion is that they should be able to sanction illegal possession and the maltreatment of wild animals and their habitats. At the moment, municipal authorities must report these cases, along with illegal trafficking, to the PROFEPA state authorities. This process is complicated, obstructed by corruption and bureaucracy and it is also slow due to the distance between state capitals and state municipalities.

² *Regidores de Salud y de Ecología.*

For instance, in the state of Puebla alone there are 217 municipalities.³ As declared by Heberth Sánchez,⁴ municipal authorities must report maltreatment or possession of wild animal species to the PROFEPA located in the state's capital, generally in person. To provide some dimension of the problem, it is important to highlight some cases. For example, San Martín Texmelucan is only 30 minutes away from the capital,⁵ but Tehuacán is one hour and a half away from the capital⁶ and Metlatoyuca is about four hours away from the capital.⁷ This makes it practically impossible for the PROFEPA to supervise the fauna situation of all the municipalities and increases the time it takes for bureaucratic channels to be pursued. It should also be taken into account that most municipalities, especially those that are not considered to be tourist-oriented, lack money to develop their projects so traveling to the capital to try to resolve most cases is neither in their interest nor within their budgets.

With the suggestion of allowing municipal authorities to have more enforcement power, bureaucracy would very likely be reduced since it would avoid the process of municipal authorities constantly contacting the state authorities before practical decisions can be made. This process would also benefit state authorities by saving them time and increasing resources for practical law enforcement within their wider state jurisdiction concerning, for example, organized illegal trafficking. It would also do much to circumvent corruption at the state level since state authorities would not be benefiting

³ México Sistema Nacional e-México. *Puebla* (2004), http://www.e-mexico.gob.mx/wb2/eMex/eMex_Puebla_inegi [cited October, 2004].

⁴ Heberth Sánchez, Health Director of San Martín Texmelucan Puebla, Interviewed by Norma Contreras, *The situation of pounds* (June 15, 2004).

⁵ 32 km from the state's capital.

⁶ Approximately 120 km away from the capital. México Desconocido, "Tehuacan Puebla y sus alrededores," *México Desconocido* (2004), http://www.mexicodesconocido.com.mx/espanol/pueblos_y_otros_rincones/centro/detalle.cfm?idpag=861&idsec=41&idsub=0 [cited October, 2004].

⁷ 334.1 km. Puebla Gobierno del Estado, "Metlatoyuca," *Fiestas y ferias en el estado* (2004), <http://www.sectur.pue.gob.mx/promocion/feriasyfiestasmun61al70.htm> [cited October, 2004].

from bribes or extortion from violators and could function as watchdogs of the municipalities. This would also allow municipal authorities to follow and monitor cases closely, which could reduce instances of reoffence by bringing the presence of enforcement authorities closer to the people. It could also provide municipal Sanitary and Ecology departments with more funds for their projects, since they would obtain more money from sanction fees.

But it is important to highlight that even when the law is enforced, authorities can face discontent among the society, due to the lack of a culture of respect of the law in general, explained in chapter two. Such is the case I discussed in chapter one of the closure of the municipal/state slaughterhouse in Morelia.⁸

4.1.2 Address the cause and not the symptoms; government-society collaboration

It is for cases like the Morelia slaughterhouse fiasco that my second suggestion is to focus Mexican animal protection policy more on addressing practically the causes as well as the symptoms. For example, government policy seems to be more concerned with rectifying the stray dog population by exterminating them than in dealing with the problem at its cause. It also seems more geared toward allowing illegal practices happen (such as the reopening of the slaughter house in Morelia) in order to avoid even worse scenarios rather than in generating a policy drive that focuses on providing sufficient incentives for following the law and/or sufficient disincentives for not doing so.

In general the policy orientation is more worried about tackling the consequences than in actively promoting measures that attempt to create the kind of culture of respect

⁸ Méndez, *Environmental Efforts in Michoacán*, Interview.

toward animals that could eventually form the remedy in combating the illegal and disrespectful practices that cause the problems in the first place. The government therefore spends a lot of money in alleviating the problem only temporally, as in Puebla State government's current drive to reduce the stray dog problem and combat associated problems of rabies. It is clear that the symptoms require addressing and below I propose two suggestions intended to deal with this issue. However, it is also clear that any solutions will only be short term if addressing the causes is not also incorporated into state and municipal policy and a little later I also provide a suggestion on how this might be approached in the near future.

Due to the extension of this thesis I cannot address all the problems and propose solutions to each of them. I thus want to focus on a suggestion which, in my opinion, might allow the government at least at state and municipal levels to take more advantage of available perspectives and proactive initiatives than it is currently doing. It seems crucial to recognize that the government should work jointly with society in order to benefit humans and animals alike. Such is the case of an education and 'donation' project implemented in San Andrés Cholula, Puebla to improve the problems when dealing with strays and pounds humanely, within the law. The situation of pounds analyzed in chapter one is a worrying matter, because the stray dog population is large and because animals are maltreated during their capture and subsequent death.

One suggestion that stems from the above is that the government could clearly be doing more by channeling some of the resources spent on managing the stray population into a campaign for publicizing and providing pet sterilization facilities at a price affordable by most Mexicans.

Reyna Tomé, together with other Pueblan sanity directors, expressed her concern that *razzias* cause animals much distress and together with electroshock methods of killing them are not humane methods.⁹ This is something that the people of Cholula seemed to agree on, the result of which culminated in several allegedly violent incidents between citizens and public officials in the municipality. For this reason in San Andrés, where Tomé is the Sanity Coordinator, a pilot project was launched in 2002 to make the population more accepting of the Health Department's job and to encourage the public and the officials to collaborate more closely. A *donation* method was therefore implemented (although this term is a bit of a misnomer). This pilot project started with a poll made by the municipal authorities in 2002. The results showed that the population did not respect the Health Department officers largely because they were perceived to be cruel to stray animals through their use of *razzias* and the electroshock method of sacrificing them.¹⁰ Given that it is common to allow pets to free-roam in the streets for large parts of the day (which contributes much to the stray population explosion) pet animals were also at risk of being caught and/or sacrificed, compounding the tensions between the public and officials. The alternative method of euthanasia (lethal injection of *gilacina*) is highly costly. Each bottle, which can be used to humanely euthanize approximately seven dogs, costs around \$850 pesos (75 USD)¹¹ and is clearly beyond the existing municipal budget to use. The pilot 'donation' project was implemented was therefore initiated to address the issue practically. It consists of a campaign called

⁹ Reyna Tomé, Coordinator of the Health Department in San Andrés Cholula Puebla, México, Interviewed by Norma Contreras, *The situation of pounds* (June 21, 2004). Ruth Ramos, Sanity Director of Puebla, Puebla, Interviewed by Norma Contreras, *Animal Care in the State of Puebla* (June 24, 2004), and Heberth Sánchez, Sanity Director of San Martín Texmelucan Puebla, Interviewed by Norma Contreras, *Animal protection in San Martín* (June 15, 2004).

¹⁰ Tomé, *The situation of pounds*, Interview.

¹¹ Tomé, *The situation of pounds*, Interview.

‘Donate your dog to live better (yourself)’¹² where owners who cannot afford the proper care for their dogs within the law can *donate* them along with a nominal fee to the Health Department. Authorities guarantee humane euthanasia through lethal injection for these animals. Tomé stipulates that the owners can be present during the process if they wish to ensure that it is being done humanely. 50% of the donation fee is given to the veterinarian in charge of administering the injection and the other 50% is for the municipal authorities and the *gilacina*. San Andrés authorities claim that this project has decreased the local stray dog population by 70%.¹³

No reliable figures have yet been released to corroborate this allegedly high success rate. However, the example seems to be useful to illustrate that active collaboration and attempts to promote understanding between officials and the public regarding the humane treatment of animals and its financial costs appears to be possible. My suggestion here would be to pilot the project in other municipalities. First, this might give a more concrete indication of how successful it is in dealing with the stray population. Second, at the very least it would serve to publicize the importance of humane treatment of animals and the responsibility of the public toward the animals they ‘own’. A little later I will suggest a twin measure that can be used alongside this suggestion to address the problem also at the level of the cause.

¹² *Dona a tu perro para vivir mejor.*

¹³ Tomé, *The situation of pounds*, Interview.

4.2 Chapter Two

In chapter two I argued that the root of the difficulties in implementing animal protection policy in Mexico seems to be a lack of respect toward animals in general cultural terms and a lack of awareness of what the legal framework contains and apathy in following it.

4.2.1 Creating a single animal law following international developed countries

Concerning the problem of lack of awareness of what the law contains, my first suggestion would be to seriously consider making it easier for authorities and society to understand the legal framework as it pertains to animals. The creation of a separate law, like an animal welfare law that includes pets, domestic species, abandonment of animals and the like might be useful in dealing with this problem. Separating the law in this way has been efficient in Canada, Great Britain and Germany to cite a few. As I highlighted in chapter one, these countries have a history of respect in viewing animals as beings with the possession of inherent rights and have a history of respect toward other forms of life. Animals thus have a role on the ‘high’ politics agenda and receive humane treatment and systematic protection as a result. Also awareness and respect of the animal protection laws in these countries is evident.

My suggestion is for Mexico not to copy exactly but to consider following the general example of these countries. This would mean tabling for discussion the possibility for creating one general law that combines the protection and welfare of animals and the responsibilities that humans are entitled to as animal ‘owners’. The current LGEEPA is highly complex to understand and enforce, as I have shown. It is constituted by six titles, 27 chapters and over 200 articles. Its areas of protection vary

from the protection of biodiversity including all types of ecosystems to the protection of ground and marine species. Although it is highly detailed, its full comprehension is obstructed due to its length. A law as wide as this one is not easy for authorities to know thoroughly or to know with immediate clarity which section of the law applies to which ecological department. Its enforcement is therefore ambiguous and difficult to coordinate institutionally.

In Great Britain the ‘Protection of Animals Act’ was established in 1911 and covers domestic animals including farm animals.¹⁴ The Act includes many of the concepts found in current Mexican NOMs, but emphasizes the issue of animal welfare. Creating a similar law that fits with Mexico’s particular context would mean gathering the principles of humane treatment and welfare into one law. Specifications for procedures of how to handle animals (in laboratories, markets and more) could be left in the NOMs as it is at the moment to avoid adding paperwork and bureaucracy. This, however, could only work if contradictory elements within and between laws and norms are detected and removed. As I mention in chapter one, article 6a of NOM33 lists electroshock sacrifice as a permitted practice, while articles 39 and 40 of the LPP ban cruel practices, which electroshock is generally thought to be. It is of imperative importance to resolve this and other contradictions between laws and norms, between different laws and between environmental institutions in the very near future. Méndez, for example, identifies significant contradictions regarding environmental practices between the Semarnat’s stated objectives that “70% of Mexican territory is not suitable for farming purposes, and if used for such purposes, environmental damage would very

¹⁴ Defra, “Protecting Domestic or Captive Animals from Cruelty,” *Animal health and welfare* (2004), <http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/welfare/domestic/index.htm#1951> [cited February, 2004].

likely happen.”¹⁵ This conflicts with the objectives of the SAGARPA ¹⁶ (Agricultural Federal Agency) which attempts to “expand the agricultural frontier” with no reference whatever to the environmental consequences. This, according to Mendez, can and does lead to “wild species loss of habitat, loss of biodiversity, soil erosion, diminished under surface water recharge.”¹⁷ Mendez’s argument is that Mexico lacks a coherent policy design behind its environmental policy and between that policy and other policies that affect it and are affected by it. This is because laws are usually made separately by lawyers with no reference to, and sometimes no understanding of, how coherently they integrate with other laws and where they might conflict with or even contradict them.

My research corroborates Mendez’s point here and I am in general agreement with his call to recreate environmental policy with a coherent underlying design. However, promoting an entire new policy design is beyond the scope of this thesis. But this kind of argument does impact on my idea of having one specific animal law in that it would have to be drawn up making sure that it did not contradict other laws. Indeed, the importance of such a law may well lie in the possibility that seriously thinking about how it should be composed could lead to finding other inconsistencies in and between environmental laws and beyond them.

Separating animals out legally from ecosystem, biodiversity and sustainability legal issues into their own specific animal welfare law, would help in more than the good treatment of domestic animals, however. As recognized in the British ‘Protection of Animals Act’:

¹⁵ Alejandro Méndez López, ‘Is Bread and Butter the Sole Option for Animal Protection Policy in Mexico? A Reply to Norman and Contreras,’ ‘This is a preprint of an Article forthcoming in Review of Policy Research © [21, 1, January 2005] Policy Studies Organization’.

¹⁶ *Secretaría de Agricultura, Ganadería, Desarrollo Rural, Pesca y Alimentación.*

¹⁷ Méndez, ‘Is Bread and Butter the Sole Option?’

It is an offence to: cruelly beat; kick; ill treat; over drive; over load; torture; infuriate; or terrify any animal; cause unnecessary suffering through transportation; take part in the fighting or baiting of an animal; administer poisonous or injurious substances without good reason; permit operations to be carried out without due care and humanity; cause unnecessary suffering to an animal that is being destroyed to provide food for mankind.¹⁸

The idea to be stressed here is that some of these points can pertain also to the treatment of wild animals even though it is clear that the focus is on those of domestic origin. Following this example, the creation of a specific law would make it easier for the reader to understand the generalities for how the animals closest to us should be treated instead of having to revise all NOMs to know them.

Great Britain also has a ‘Performing Animals Act’ of 1925 which in general watches for the welfare of animals “training and exhibition of performing animals,”¹⁹ a ‘Pet Animals Act’ of 1951 which deals with animals sold as pets, the ‘Abandonment of Animals Act’ of 1960.²⁰ There are many other Acts that watch for the welfare of animals under various conditions. Unlike Mexico, Great Britain has a ‘Cock fighting Act’ of 1952 which bans fighting. The advantage of these specific Acts is that they can also sanction violators. These acts have proven to be effective since their creation. In Mexico it would probably not be necessary or advantageous to create as many laws to fulfill the correct treatment of animals as there are in Great Britain, because Mexico has enough NOMs to deal with similar issues. The advantage of having an animal protection law would be that, if it is violated, citizens can be sanctioned.

¹⁸ Defra, “Protecting Domestic or Captive Animals from Cruelty.”

¹⁹ Defra, “Protecting Domestic or Captive Animals from Cruelty.”

²⁰ Defra, “Protecting Domestic or Captive Animals from Cruelty.”

Canada has programs to aid in the protection, and welfare of animals like the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) program.²¹ Germany has characterized itself for animal caring and in 2002 made an important change for animals' welfare. It included the animals into their Constitution; this might mean a significant step for other countries including Mexico. Germany made animal sympathizers, protectors, and scientists all over the world turn their eyes to the country by including animals in the German Constitution.

The lower house of parliament in Germany, the Bundestag, has adopted a bill that would for the first time enshrine animal rights in the constitution. The bill, passed by a huge majority after more than a decade of debate, includes animals in a clause obliging the state to respect and protect the dignity of humans.²²

Germany also has an important Animal Welfare Act published on May 25, 1998 in the Federal Law Gazette I.²³ The key concept of the Animal Welfare Act (last amended in 2000) is that: "No one may inflict pain, suffering or harm on animals without good reason. This concept represents a further development of the comprehensive animal welfare legislation which has evolved over many years in Germany and set worldwide standards."²⁴

The European Union has a European Convention for the protection of Pet Animals which was adopted on November 13, 1987.²⁵ The Act governs the treatment of companion animals throughout the EU. This legislation is helpful because it takes preventative measures instead of just relying on redress when an animal has been abused.

²¹ CCAC, "Canadian Council on Animal Care," *CCAC Guidelines* (2002), http://www.ccac.ca/english/gui_pol/GUFRAME.HTM [cited January, 2004].

²² BBC, "Germany to grant animal rights," *BBC News* (May 17, 2002) <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/1993941.stm> [cited December, 2003].

²³ Federal Ministry of Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture, "Animal Welfare in Germany," *Animal Welfare* (2004), <http://www3.verbraucherministerium.de/index-000B446B640A1FFDA0CD6521C0A8D816.html> [cited January, 2004].

²⁴ Federal Ministry of Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture, "Animal Welfare in Germany."

²⁵ European Union, "European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals," *European Council*, (1992), <http://conventions.coe.int/treaty/en/treaties/html/125.htm> [cited September, 2004].

The creation of any more Mexican laws at this time is not my suggestion, since they would probably add to the enforcement problem I have explored in detail and that are mentioned briefly by Federico Ruanova, Karen Smith and Albert Koehl among others. But the creation of one specific animal welfare law might work. Even though it would mean the creation of more legal framework rather than a reduction of it, its advantages would be highly useful. It should be framed with the objective of making it easier for authorities and society to understand the needs and treatment animals are entitled to. If engaged in this way, its enforcement might be more effective - as it has been for the countries I have used as illustrations. At the very least, as I have indicated, even deliberating over what should go into such a law could be useful for highlighting where existing laws conflict and for beginning to think in terms of the new, more coherent environmental policy design program that Mendez suggests, is needed.

4.2.2 Education, collaboration among schools and animal protection NGOs

Another suggestion is related to education. Although I have argued that the education measure is a long term-solution, it is nevertheless a crucial element for achieving a culture of respect toward animals. I therefore coincide with Edgar González in saying that ‘education helps’ in the long-term formation of a respectful society. I demonstrated in chapter two that the problem with education is that it lacks sufficient information about environmental problems and that animal issues are no exception.

More information has to be included about the problems national fauna is struggling with and the inclusion of domestic animals is imperative. I am not by any means saying that text books are wrong. They would just benefit from reorientation to include first, more information about specific topics and problems, second, that the

responsibilities for animal protection rest with the government as well as society and third, that collaboration between government and society should be given greater emphasis.

Education is one of the factors that contribute to the process of social change. Recent Mexican environmental education has helped by including certain environmental topics to the national curriculum, but this has mostly been activities within the classrooms. This type of ‘classroom education’, according to González, is like inviting people to dinner and offering them only cooking recipes.²⁶ He therefore proposes that classroom activities can be complemented with field trips to museums, zoos, aquariums, and more.²⁷ He also mentions that educative projects should at first be related to local community problems and once people achieve a consciousness about the importance of their environment, then they “can think about respecting a broader area.”²⁸

Taking into account González’s recommendation, my suggestion to improve environmental education in Mexico rests on the cooperation of animal protection NGOs with schools. Local NGOs can and do help in local community problems. Integrating this with environmental education would not only make the issue more real to children and with more tangible results, it would not necessarily require much more work or resources on the part of educational authorities.

National NGOs are generally optimistic and willing to share their knowledge and trying to educate the society and this is where the advantages of my suggestion are most clearly marked. If NGOs were recognized by the government to be part of school

²⁶Edgar J. González Gaudiano, *Elementos Estratégicos para el desarrollo de la educación ambiental en México* (México, D.F.: Secretaría de Desarrollo Social e Instituto Nacional de Ecología, 1994), 62

²⁷ James Serpell and Elizaneth Paul, “Pets and the Development of Positive Attitudes to Animals,” in *Animals and Human Society*, eds. Aubrey Manning, James Serpell (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 64, 65.

²⁸ González, *Elementos Estratégicos para la educación*, 64.

activities to help in the formation of children's views about animals, both the NGOs and the government would benefit. Increased publicity and awareness of government environmental projects and the content of animal laws could be created through this kind of project. Similarly, publicity, possible increased membership and wider awareness of the NGOs and the issues they attempt to promote would also be served. If such a program was engaged in a nationwide project, it would certainly not harm the long-term project of creating a culture of respect toward animals and toward the animal legal framework and would probably do much to assist its creation. The beginnings of such a project could start as a government (or government endorsed) pilot program, say choosing a certain number of schools across the nation to work with specified NGOs on animal-related projects for a specified period. Research could then be initiated to determine the costs and benefits of the pilot scheme and to determine if it is worth extending further.

The work of one national NGO highlights part of what I have in mind. In Mexico City the Group of Education Pro Animal Defense (GEPDA)²⁹ can only aid animals and society by going to teach students³⁰ about the care and respect that animals deserve. They give conferences to kindergarten, elementary, junior high, high school students and college students. GEPDA uses different teaching materials according to the age of their audience: puppet theaters, videos on bull fights, animal experimentation, circuses, pounds and bibliographic material about other NGOs (national and international) and about Mexican animal protection laws and NOMs.³¹

A Mexican NGO-University collaboration that is proving to be effective in ameliorating the stray animal population is the case of the International Fund for Animal

²⁹ *Grupo Educación Pro Defensa Animal, A.C.* (GEPDA).

³⁰ It cannot be an animal refuge due to lack of economic resources.

³¹ Grupo Educación Pro Defensa Animal, *Leyes*, <http://www.gepda.com.mx> [cited March 2004].

Welfare (IFAW) and the School of Veterinary of the Autonomous University (UNAM) as explained shortly. IFAW, which opened an office in Mexico City in 2001,³² is leading several campaigns, such as Mobile Clinics to provide care and education to the population about animal welfare. IFAW Mexico states that

[p]roblems with pet overpopulation - usually related to ecological and public health concerns - are a major issue in many Latin American cities. In Mexico City, there are an estimated 3.5 million dogs, two-thirds of them strays. Lack of animal welfare education, lack of proper legislation and effective enforcement of existing laws, and a lack of veterinary care in disadvantaged and marginal areas all contribute to this severe pet overpopulation problem³³.

IFAW also supports the work done at the mobile clinic of the School of Veterinary of UNAM and reports that “the project has been very successful; both the authorities and the public have been enthusiastic and participative.”³⁴ Mobile Clinic staff work mostly in poor areas from Monday to Friday. So far “a total of 7,238 animal patients have been treated... 801 animals have been spayed or neutered, 2,666 dogs have received parasitic treatment, 3,545 animals have been vaccinated, and 226 dogs and cats have been treated for various clinical problems.”³⁵ Though the examples I have chosen focus on domestic animals, there seems to be no reason why NGOs working for the preservation of wild animals could not be equally successful. It is for these successes that I believe my suggestion might actually work if NGOs had the opportunity to participate actively and nationwide with schools. A government initiative in this area would demonstrate not only that it is prepared to act substantively in the long-term future of Mexican animal protection, but that it is willing to collaborate positively with national and international

³² IFAW Mexico, “Mexico,” (2001), <http://www.ifaw.org/ifaw/general/default.aspx?oid=8300> [cited March 2004].

³³ IFAW, “Mexico City Mobile Clinic,” *Mobile Clinics: Providing Care and Education Where It's Needed Most* (2004), <http://www.ifaw.org/ifaw/general/default.aspx?oid=11427> [cited April 2004].

³⁴ IFAW, “Mexico City Mobile Clinic.”

³⁵ IFAW, “Mexico City Mobile Clinic.”

NGOs in place of the usual more tension-filled government-NGO relation, illustrated by the Cozumel Pier incident I mentioned in chapter three. It could also do much to aid publicization of animal issues and could even be used to increase awareness about the content of animal protection regulations that can, in time, decrease enforcement problems.

4.2.3 Pets in schools

My next suggestion for chapter two is related to education in schools. It is very simple, but in my opinion is also vital if respect for animals is going to be achieved. This animal care formation would be best established if it starts at an early age. My suggestion is to promote a classroom or school pet initiative. This activity has already been effective in countries like the US and Great Britain. The importance of the possession of a pet is not a new idea; humans have for long pictured pets as more than companions but as members of their family.

John Locke was... the first to suggest that pet animals had a special role to play in the acquisition of sympathetic tendencies. His prescription for developing tender feelings in children followed the example of a woman he knew who indulged her daughters' liking for pets by giving them: 'dogs, squirrels, birds or any such things as young girls use to be delighted with; but then, when they had them, they must be sure to keep them well and look diligently after them, that they wanted nothing or were not ill-used. For if they were negligent in their care for them, it was counted a great fault.'³⁶

It is from these early philosophical arguments that the idea of the 'humane' treatment of animals has filtered into popular northern European culture and has occupied a high position on national agendas and in current practical politics. In Great Britain laws and acts regarding animal protection and animal welfare are conceived under the argument

³⁶ Serpell and Paul, "Pets and the Development of Positive Attitudes to Animals," 137.

that animals “are sentient beings – not merely commodities.”³⁷ A ‘green philosophy’ of kindness and respect to animals has evolved. It has led to the creation of laws and, most importantly, rights for non-human sentient beings which, in turn, has contributed to the creation of animal protection NGOs. What can be gathered from this is that animals have had a great emotional impact in the life of humans. It is for this reason that I believe that having a classroom pet might make a positive impact on children in teaching them the inherent value of animals which would also contribute, in time, to the project of creating a culture of respect toward non-human types of life.

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals states that animals in schools makes students caring and responsible³⁸ – attributes, it should be noted, that are important socially and politically as well as to animal-related issues. “Teaching pet care and responsibility in school can have a major effect on the way our young people regard animals and, consequently, may make a vital contribution to the reduction of future animal suffering.”³⁹ A study among university students was conducted to show whether pet keeping stimulated more benevolent attitudes toward animals in general. The study’s findings were positive, as James Serpell and Elizabeth Paul note.

[I]n a recent survey of university students... It was found that childhood pet ownership was strongly positively correlated with concern for animals in general, and with the practice of some form of ethical food avoidance (i.e. veganism, or avoidance of certain animal products, such as veal). It was also correlated with membership of animal welfare organizations and charities... Most of these outcome measures were most strongly correlated with the number of important pets reported by students.⁴⁰

³⁷ Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs, “Animal Welfare,” *Animal Health and Welfare* (October 26, 2004), <http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/welfare/default.htm> [cited October 2004].

³⁸ Serpell and Paul, “Pets and the Development of Positive Attitudes to Animals,” 138.

³⁹ Serpell and Paul, “Pets and the Development of Positive Attitudes to Animals,” 138.

⁴⁰ Serpell and Paul, “Pets and the Development of Positive Attitudes to Animals,” 139.

It is for this reason that Serpell and Paul claim that pets can become “ambassadors” for all animals.⁴¹ The idea is related to the ecofeminist argument that we learn respect first through our interaction with those closest to us and seems to be a promising one. For if ecofeminists are correct on this matter, then it may well be the case that domestic animal treatment could be connected to the way in which we perceive and treat those areas of nature that are further away from us – a conclusion which seems to fit the facts of Mexico’s current public approach to animals and to nature as much as it fits the cases of Germany and Britain. What this conclusion might mean, is that if we can change the way in which we see those animals closest to us, then it may be possible that our understanding of those further away can change with it. It is this kind of argument that has led me to focus slightly more on domestic animal treatment in this chapter than on wild animal protection, which already has a wider range of academic support based on strong arguments. I also think that those who believe domestic animal welfare and wild animal protection should be legally separate issues should at least take this kind of argument into account. For it may show that at base, the two are more connected than is usually thought. I therefore consider that allowing students care for a classroom pet is a cheap and effective possibility for improving the way animals are viewed in the Mexican society. It would also help in the assimilation of animal needs and respect children now learn in books (if they learn it at all). People learn respect far more through everyday practices than they can in books.

⁴¹ Serpell and Paul, “Pets and the Development of Positive Attitudes to Animals,” 140.

4.2.4 The new *Green Catholicism*

In chapter two I explained why animal laws and animal welfare in Mexico are not as important politically and socially as they may seem on paper. This, I argued, is due to two main reasons, a lack of cultural respect and a lack of law enforcement. The lack of cultural respect relates to the inheritance of Christian thought and to poverty which is linked to illegal practices such as animal traffic and dog fighting.

The suggestion I provide for creating a culture of respect related to the Catholic practice is to promote in Mexico in the new *green*⁴² Catholicism that is taking shape elsewhere.⁴³ One possibility for promoting a deeper respect for animals may lie with the Church itself. In recent years, Christianity has begun to change and tried to promote kinder and more respectful attitudes toward both animals and nature. This has narrowed the gap between humans and animals a little. In 1990, Pope John Paul II made an address praising compassion toward all animals. The Pope explicitly stated in a public audience in January 19th, 1990 that animals possess a soul, therefore men must love and feel solidarity with those beings.

The Pope mentions the special relationship of mankind with God as being created in His image and likeness. 'However,' he goes on 'other texts state that animals have the breath of life and were given it by God. In this respect, man, created by the hand of God, is identical with all other living creatures.'⁴⁴ The then professor of theology and dogma at the University of Urbino, Carlo Molari, called it 'very important and significant. It is a "sign of the times" because it demonstrates the Church's desire and deep concern to

⁴² The term is mine.

⁴³ Emma R. Norman and Norma Contreras Hernández, "Like Butter Scraped Over Too Much Bread": Animal Protection Policy in Mexico," 'This is a preprint of an Article forthcoming in Review of Policy Research © [21, 1, January 2005] Policy Studies Organization'.

⁴⁴ And so in Psalm 104 there is no distinction between man and beasts when it reads, addressing God: "... Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth."

clarify present confused thinking and attitudes towards the animal kingdom... And are therefore not inferior beings or only of a purely material reality.⁴⁵

This change of approach in religion may provide a possible solution to the problems caused by lack of respect in Mexico. If promoted and publicized in Mexico, there is no doubt that it would appeal to a great part of the population, poor or otherwise, if endorsed by the Church. In fact, it could well be the case that this may be the best or only way of reaching some of the poorest and least educated sectors of the Mexican population.

4.2.5 NGO-Government Collaboration

My suggestion here is civil society-Government collaboration in order to improve the fauna situation. As mentioned above, the government has spent a lot of money trying to eradicate the symptoms but have, as yet, placed less emphasis on the causes. I will continue with the earlier example of the pound situation. The government spends a lot of money rounding up and killing stray animals which deals with the symptom and not the cause. Alongside this, it would seem more appropriate to spend more money on pet sterilization projects and education. It would also seem more appropriate for the government to take advantage of those organizations that are already working in this area. Local NGOs, as mentioned by González, are usually formed by few members, have no access to the media since they lack the resources for campaigns beyond local newspapers, and they receive few donations.⁴⁶ These are only able to help some stray dogs and cats from certain zones. They lack infrastructure, drugs and food for the animals they save.

⁴⁵ Deborah Jones, "Do Animals Have Souls?," *Catholic-Animals The Ark A Publication of The Catholic Study Circle for Animal Welfare* (Winter 2000), <http://www.all-creatures.org/ca/ark-186soul.html> [cited January 2004].

⁴⁶ González, *Elementos Estratégicos para la educación*, 60

Such is the case of Guyu Animalto, A.C. a one-vet association and refuge established in Puebla that receives stray dogs and cats or maltreated and neglected pets and tries to find them a new home. In order to continue with its goal of helping animals the organization asks for a donation of 100 pesos (around \$11 USD) for each animal it takes in. The fee barely covers the refuge expenses which include water, drugs, light, food, etc. Only around 25 animals can be kept at one time, but the rehoming service seems to be popular and animals do not often stay long. Guyu also provides a ‘no-frills’, affordable⁴⁷ sterilization and vaccination service and, on its very limited resources, produces leaflets informing the public about the stray population explosion in Puebla and the consequent responsibility of pet owners to have their animals sterilized.

It is for these reasons that the government can provide existing animal protection NGOs with funds and infrastructure without necessarily having to make it a purely government project. In return, these organizations would help to decrease the stray population by publicizing the nature of the problem and raising awareness that it is the responsibility of the public to contribute toward its solution. They also would contribute by giving shelter and rehoming services to more of the already existing strays than they can do on their present resources. The NGOs and the government would both benefit from mutual collaboration. The former would obtain funds. The latter would benefit in their drive to reduce the stray populations and in terms of public awareness of the problems. The government could also consider the idea that one condition of receiving the funds could be for the NGOs to publicize the more basic aspects of animal protection laws, or that they collaborate with schools in educational projects.

⁴⁷ Guyu charges 150 pesos to sterilize an animal, regardless of gender. Most other veterinary establishments in Puebla charge upwards of 700 pesos to sterilize a female cat.

NGO-Government collaboration has proven to be effective in other countries like Great Britain where probably the most impressive example of this type of collaboration can be found. The British government has shared the responsibility of promoting animal welfare with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) which is one of the most consolidated and recognized societies worldwide. The organization was created in London in 1824 under the name of Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA). “The SPCA became the first national animal protection society in the world.”⁴⁸ In 1840 it had gained a high respect and Queen Victoria allowed it to be called the “Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.”⁴⁹ Thanks to the funds received, it spread outside London, to date it has 187 branches in England and Wales.⁵⁰ The RSPCA seeks for the animals’ welfare and provides rehoming services.

The RSPCA's law-reforming origins are an important element of its work today. Much UK animal welfare legislation owes its existence to RSPCA campaigning, and the Society works for animal welfare at Westminster through its professional parliamentary lobbyists. Ministers and MPs frequently seek the advice and opinions of the RSPCA on legislative matters.⁵¹

The Society is respected by the government and all other animal welfare NGOs. New measures on animal welfare are always revised by the society. It has widely influenced the legal framework to seek animals welfare in the European Union.⁵² “There are currently 323 uniformed inspectors and 146 Animal Collection Officers (ACOs) in England and Wales. In 2003 inspectors investigated 105,932 animal cruelty complaints

⁴⁸ RSPCA, “About the RSPCA-History,” <http://www.rspca.org.uk/servlet/Satellite?pagename=RSPCA/AboutTheRSPCA/AboutTheRSPCAHistory&articleid=0> [cited January 2004].

⁴⁹ RSPCA, “About the RSPCA-History.”

⁵⁰ RSPCA, “About the RSPCA-History.”

⁵¹ RSPCA, “About RSPCA-Today’s RSPCA” <http://www.rspca.org.uk/servlet/Satellite?pagename=RSPCA/AboutTheRSPCA/AboutTheRSPCA&articleid=0> [cited January 2004].

⁵² RSPCA International, “Introduction,” <http://www.rspca.org.uk/servlet/Satellite?pagename=RSPCA/International/InternationalHomepage> [cited January, 2004].

which resulted in 1,829 convictions.”⁵³ This case of NGO-Governmental collaboration might not be easy to engage in Mexico at the moment, though it would be ideal in the long run. My suggestion is to start by giving NGOs economic funds and, as mentioned above, the chance to be involved with schools.

In Mexico City and Puebla the proposed similar bodies (to the RSPCA), the Brigades to watch for animal welfare mentioned in chapter three may well be able to take on a reduced, but similar, role, if given the chance.

4.3 Chapter Three

The basic problem presented in chapter three is that the international agreements Mexico has signed are a reflection of the national situation, they are well established on paper, but lacking enforcement. Hence very few successes have been achieved. Mexico is not participating as a particularly equal partner in the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC) right from the start. Its environmental difficulties are arguably far greater than those of Canada and the US and yet its capacity and resources (including public support) to deal with them are by far inferior. This suggests that environmental protection and sustainability is something that each North American government is *genuinely* concerned with addressing positively; therefore some kind of international economic aid to Mexico for the purpose of addressing its environmental problems seems not only warranted, but required.

This aid has been established by economists like Matthew E. Kahn and Alexander S.P. Pfaff. They take the NAFTA example as one in which if developed countries want underdeveloped countries to improve to benefit both states, they must aid them to do so.

⁵³ RSPCA, “About RSPCA-Today’s RSPCA.”

For instance, the US held out on ratification of NAFTA, and thus withheld economic benefits from Mexico until language was added to the treaty regarding environmental protection within Mexico. Since Mexico could do whatever it wanted to do within its own borders regarding the environment, it had to be “paid” with economic benefits in order to do what the US preferred.⁵⁴

If, however, the international environmental agreements are merely vehicles to promote more traditional national and economic interests of each country, then complaints and obstructions toward giving economic and other aid to Mexico for the purpose of enhancing its environmental law enforcement standards can be expected.

Two problems face this scenario, depending on which argument is followed. If other nations *are* genuinely interested in diverting funds to increase environmental protection in general, then the Mexican government’s reputation for corruption and lax law enforcement is likely to dissuade them from providing the economic and other aid necessary to deal with the problem in Mexico. “International animal NGOs can find themselves as involved in investigating corruption charges against Mexican officials as they are in more direct forms of Mexican animal protection,”⁵⁵ as the IFAW found in 2003.⁵⁶ If, however, more traditional national self-interest is behind the signature of international environmental agreements then it is unlikely that Mexico will, first, receive sufficient economic aid from the international community and second, that the international community will apply sufficient sanctions or other political pressure when Mexico transgresses environmental laws.

⁵⁴ Matthew E. Kahn and Alexander S.P. Pfaff, “Informal Economies and the Environment: Policy Implications and Public Understanding,” <http://www.columbia.edu/~ap196/JIApenultimate.pdf> [cited November 2004].

⁵⁵ Norman and Contreras, ‘Like Butter Scraped Over Too Much Bread.

⁵⁶ Animal News Centre, “28 Mexican officials charged in illegal hunting scheme,” (2004), <http://www.buzzle.com/editorials/2-7-2004-50278.asp> [cited July, 2004].

Unfortunately, the evidence presented in chapter three suggests that the latter scenario is closer to the truth. To be sure, a genuine level of interest in raising international standards in environmental care is present. But it is most usually overridden by economic concerns. To use the case of the NAAEC as an example here, two factors point to this. In the first instance, Canada and the US have not presented clean enough environmental records of their own to suggest environmental concerns are genuinely considered to be of high political importance. The example this sets for Mexico is rather weak. If countries with significantly more resources do not follow the agreement, why should Mexico feel it is expected to measure up? In the second instance, the criticisms I presented of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) impotence in influencing and affecting real change are valid. If the three countries were really serious about addressing their combined environmental problems, it would seem that the CEC ought to have been set up with rather more powers. At the very least, since the powers it has appear not to be working as desired ten years later, it would seem that measures to rectify its weaknesses should be under discussion if trilateral environmental protection *is* the ultimate goal.

The conclusion that stems from all this has two aspects. In the absence of enough evidence to suggest that Mexico is currently enforcing its animal laws adequately, it is clear that Mexico needs all the help it can get in achieving this as soon as possible. In other words, if the US and Canada want Mexico to shoulder an equal environmental responsibility, then they also have a responsibility to permit Mexico to play as a more equal competitor. This, however, does not mean that Mexico has fewer responsibilities of its own. In the second instance, it is therefore a government responsibility to reduce any

possible criticisms concerning whether any international aid that *is* given would actually reach the animals it is intended to reach. Addressing corruption or partiality in any form is not going to be an easy task, but it is one that is necessary if Mexico is to receive the resources required to reverse its environmental problems.

4.3.1 Reduce bureaucracy by providing animal protection authorities monetary funds

To try to resolve the lack of enforcement and corruption issue I can only provide a rather broad suggestion in addition to the conclusions I have pointed out above. This is to reduce bureaucracy by providing animal protection authorities with more monetary funds. These funds can be obtained through international cooperation. But international cooperation would only be provided if nature and animals are being respected: that is if Mexico proves to be effective in following its international agreements. In order to achieve the fulfillment of the agreements, I consider international pressure from environmental and national animal protection NGOs helpful, if not required – since Mexico has proven to be more effective when there is international pressure. International NGOs together with national NGOs can and do serve as watchdogs for the compliance of the agreements. However, as I exemplified through the Cozumel Pier incident, the Mexican government has not in the past always heeded NGO pressure. If, however, the various levels of government in Mexico worked more in collaboration with NGOs in other environmental areas, such as environmental education and funding, they may be able to replace the past tension-filled relationship with a more open and collaborative one with NGOs in some areas. This, of course, might lead to the possibility

that NGOs with government funding would be pressurized not to object to government initiatives in certain areas – which I have to acknowledge, is a problem that I cannot resolve here. However, a closer and less negative relation between government and civil society organizations could lead to animal NGOs having greater bargaining power when it comes to negotiations.

As mentioned by Kahn and Pfaff international cooperation is effective if the richer countries are willing to aid poorer and underdeveloped countries.

[G]reater international integration may increase environmental protection if citizens of developed countries are willing to pay to protect environmental assets... citizens of developed countries may be concerned about the deforestation of the Amazon, the creation of new markets and trade in forest preservation (that is, pharmaceuticals, rubber plantations, sustainable wood products) may create new methods to finance protection of forests.⁵⁷

What this seems to point to is that Mexican NGOs should be encouraged to seek more international NGO aid since “[g]reater openness may also increase the likelihood that global environmental treaties are signed and enforced.”⁵⁸ What this leaves open, of course, is that more environmental treaty signing does not necessarily lead to more environmental protection, as the arguments in this thesis demonstrate. However, if certain national NGOs could enhance their position by being allied with more powerful international organizations, this again could increase their bargaining power when it comes to negotiations with the government.

⁵⁷ Kahn and Pfaff, “Informal Economies and the Environment.”

⁵⁸ Kahn and Pfaff, “Informal Economies and the Environment.”

4.4 Conclusions

The suggestions developed in this chapter are brief, broad and some of them are inconclusive. While I believe that these proposals attack some of the current problems I have identified in this thesis from a fairly wide and fairly feasible selection of angles, my intention is not to provide *exclusive* solutions for solving animal protection problems. My wider intention is to engage, and increase awareness of, the debate about animal protection and its importance in Mexico in the hope of encouraging further debate and further awareness of the problematic and its aspects in a country that does not always appear to take them seriously enough. Policy analysts and political practitioners will all have their own views on how the problems should be dealt with and undoubtedly far more detailed proposals would come from these areas than I can offer. Moral philosophers and ecocentrists will also have different opinions. What is important is to encourage academics and practitioners alike to raise the debate about animal protection issues from its low place on the political agenda to the higher one it undoubtedly deserves. What I have tried to do in this chapter is to suggest that different directions for the policy drive on animal issues should be placed on the discussion table both at the political and the academic level. My overall suggestion is that if lasting solutions are to be found, it seems likely they will be best arrived at through *collaboration* between all levels of government, civil society, the public at large and, in some cases, with the international community.