

Editorial

The Sacred Cow in Orthopaedics

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The sharp growth in the scope and sophistication of management of orthopaedic problems in companion animals in the past few decades has been mirrored by a corresponding decline in the opportunity for veterinary orthopaedic attention for individual food animals, such as the cow. The latter trend in bovine orthopaedics is driven by economics, with the focus shifting away from the individual animal and towards the entire herd in many parts of the world. However, in various regions of the Indian subcontinent where Hinduism is practised, cows have a traditional status as an endeared and respected living being. Indeed the law in many states of India does not allow the slaughter of cattle. Consequently, veterinarians must manage numerous injuries and fractures in cattle, while being constrained by affordability of treatment. In this issue of the Journal you can read reports of long bone fracture management in calves and a cow using the Ilizarov external fixator and the interlocking nail. The manifested

challenges of managing bovine fractures are much greater than in the dog and cat, so not surprisingly, complications and setbacks are a problem. Nevertheless, this effort is admirable and must continue.

Quite striking is the spectrum of usage of animals that feature in other reports in this issue. One report is about injuries in dogs and handlers engaged in a new sport called canicross in which the dogs and human runners are connected by a shock absorbing leash. Then there are studies of lumbosacral disease in German Shepherd dogs used by police in New Zealand, and also the screening for hip dysplasia of guide dogs in France, as well as use of locking compression plates for treatment of cervical vertebral stenotic myelopathy in horses in Switzerland. These reports and others are a reminder of how veterinarians contribute to the care of animals that have importance to human well-being in a diversity of ways.

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