



## Dear reader,

in current times we are alternately confronted with euphoric hopes in but also the concrete possibilities of biomedicine. Despite all prognoses, it is often not possible to foretell what many of the current developments may achieve in the future. But one impact they certainly have is that they show us that old patterns of thought and ethical considerations are falling short and need to be reassessed. One such example from the area of animal experiments is the subject of the main article of biologist and philosopher Kirsten Schmidt entitled “Dignity or integrity – Does the genetic modification of animals require new concepts in animal ethics?” The debate on gene technology represents a gauge of animal ethics in general. Do we really only care about avoiding suffering, and is it enough to care only about suffering? If yes, genetic modifications of animals could even contribute to reducing their suffering; at least that is what some of the leading figures in gene technology suggest, who think they have elegantly solved the questions of animal protection by generating mice that are allegedly insensitive to pain. Or is that simply the culmination of the insufferable functionalisation of animals in gene technology? It seems we must fear it is the latter.

The idea that humans and animals share the same biological origins has recently regained popularity. In his main article “The metaphysical dimension of animal ethics” the philosopher Norbert Walz deduces that animals and humans also share a spiritual quality, a similarity that the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer also employs to argue against animal experiments. The topicality of Schopenhauer’s animal ethics is enunciated by philosopher Cecilia Muratori in her main article “Against *pariahmoral*. Schopenhauer on the ethics of vivisection.”

New and established theories and arguments regarding the treatment of animals can be found in the book reviews of our literature report. The relationship between humans and animals is continuously conquering new discussion platforms. This is good news, as it is a prerequisite for change. Our literature report also contains the book review of a harrowing experience report. The former state veterinary of Lower Saxony, Hermann Focke, documents the daily cruelties that characterise the treatment of animals. We look forward to a time when such books no longer need to be written.

The abyss between the legal stipulations of the law and the reality of animal experiments is still grotesquely wide. The revision of the Swiss animal protection law of the 1st of September 2008 aims to address this transnational problem. At last, the enforcement of the law shall also be improved. Read more about this development in the news section.

The establishment of a new chair for alternative methods in Geneva by the university’s medical faculty, the Egon-Naef Foundation and the Doerenkamp-Zbinden foundation represents another cornerstone for the animal protection of the fu-

ture. Further details are in the news section. The EU has presented a new draft of a directive to protect 12 million experimental animals. The retrospective evaluation of proposals to perform animal experiments shall make the scientific results more transparent. More information can be found in the news section.

Animal experimentation for our food safety is the subject of Thomas Hartung’s “Food for thought ...” column in this issue. Together with Herman Köeter he throws the spotlight on this area of animal experiments, which is hardly known to the public and is thus seldom the subject of public debate. Therefore, it offers surprising information, for example, the fact that almost ten percent of all toxicological animal experiments are performed for the safety assessment of herbicides and fungicides. The number of animal experiments performed for the safety of our food is thus almost as high as it used to be for testing industrial chemicals.

Gotthard M. Teutsch, a pioneer animal ethicist and animal protectionist, celebrated his ninetieth birthday on the 13th of December. Already in the times when animal protection had little formal footing, Teutsch was an advocate of a better treatment of animals. We convey our heartfelt congratulations with four essays.

*ALTEX* must continue to evolve; that is what the board and general assembly of the society *ALTEX* Edition decided. To enable a better recruitment of subscribers outside the German-speaking countries, four issues of *ALTEX* per year will be published in English, starting in 2009. A fifth issue, which will be published at the end of every year, entitled “*ALTEX*<sup>ethik</sup>”, which will appear in German, will contain main articles dealing with all central aspects of the public discussion on the treatment of animals. A main feature will be the literature report: The book reports, which reflect the zeitgeist of the human-animal relationship, will be complemented by German summaries of all the scientific articles published during the year in the *ALTEX* issues 1-4. With *ALTEX*<sup>ethik</sup> you can keep an eye on both the social and scientific developments in the field. As a philosopher, to whom the subject of animal ethics has been a central theme for many years, I am pleased to be assuming the office of editor of *ALTEX*<sup>ethik</sup>. I wish you a good New Year and look forward to continuing to inform you of further developments and a more considerate treatment of animals in the future.

Yours sincerely,

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Editorial office of *ALTEX*