**Animal law, cruelty and rights: A challenge to meaningful research in green criminology**

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Abstract

Animals have no rights under Australian legislation, with animals offered a level of protection under anti-cruelty legislation. Researchers studying crimes involving animals and human-animal behaviour are often constrained by the legal discourse framing animal cruelty. However our understandings of the boundaries of animal cruelty is being challenged by animal rights discourse, politically and socially driving the construction of what acts should be legally considered ‘cruel’. Green criminologists have been encouraged when examining issues relating to animal abuse and human-animal interactions, to “construct its agenda on the platform of rights for animals” (South, Brisman and Beirne 2013, 33). Similarly, in the field of sociology there has been calls for sociologists to challenge the field’s traditional human only focus (Bryan 1979; Nibert 2003; Peggs 2013) and create a space for an ‘animal-advocacy agenda’ in sociology (Peggs 2013). This emerging approach to researching human-animal interactions can create methodological challenges due to competing understandings of ‘animal rights’ and ‘animal cruelty’ both within the social movement and the literature. This paper will examine how animal cruelty and animal rights are framed in the legislation and literature, and how researchers negotiate this terrain in their research. It will highlight how researchers define and explore animal cruelty and animal rights in the inter-disciplinary fields of human-animal studies and green criminology subsequently contributing to the understanding of these terms. This paper will conclude by suggesting that the animal rights agenda needs to be further explored as to how it should be defined and utilised, to strengthen green criminology’s place in this broader inter-disciplinary discussion on human-animal relations and aid in breaking down the methodological challenges facing researchers.

Speaker Biography

Brodie Evans is a PhD candidate and Sessional Academic in the School of Justice at the Queensland University of Technology, Australia. Their research focuses on political discourse, activism and policy in relation to issues of sex, gender and women's rights, as well as environmentalism and animal rights.