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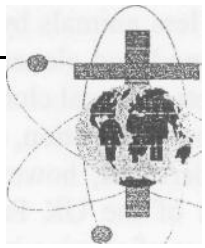
Is it right to clone animals?

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SOCIETY, RELIGION AND TECHNOLOGY PROJECT

Church of ScoTland



IS IT RIGHT TO CLONE ANIMALS?

It was ironic that Dolly the cloned sheep caused a media sensation about human cloning,
which may or may not ever happen, and largely neglected the important ethical questions of
cloning animals which we can already do. This information sheet tries to redress the balance.

What's the Church doing Here?

Since 1993, the Church of Scotland's Society, Religion and Technology Project (SRT) has looked in depth at the ethics of genetic engineering and cloning in animals and plants with an expert working group. Leading scientists, including Dr Ian Wilmut, leader of the Roslin team that produced Dolly, discussed issues with specialists in ethics, theology, sociology and risk, which culminated in a major book "Engineering Genesis", published by Earthscan in November 1998. So when. Dolly hit the headlines, the church was already in a position to offer a balanced and informed view on this local Edinburgh issue with global implications. In May 1997 the Church of Scotland General Assembly gave the first view of a UK church, and has been much quoted, for example in a recent UNESCO declaration on cloning. The SRT director is much engaged in UK, European and international ethical discussions about cloning and related issues, and has spoken, written and broadcast widely on them. To help shed light on these confused and often misrepresented issues, we have produced two information sheets - this one on animal cloning and another on human and embryo cloning.

Is Cloning Animals Simply Wrong?

Cloning occurs naturally in many plants and micro-organisms, and in some lower animals. However, it does not normally happen in humans and mammals, except for identical twins. Should we respect this biological distinction or celebrate our capacity to override it? For creatures that rely on sexual reproduction it is important for a healthy population to maintain good genetic diversity. Cloning such creatures could be said to be a step in the wrong direction, against the grain of God-given variety in nature, whose very diversity is a cause of praise to its creator, and of pleasure and use to ourselves. Where God evolves a system of boundless possibilities by diversification, should humans select out certain functions we think are the best, and simply replicate them? Does cloning animals exceed a limit? In our second cloning sheet we argue why human cloning is ethically unacceptable, and one reason is the instrumental way it would use and control other humans. This argument could not be used as an absolute objection to cloning animals, however, if we already accept a certain amount of valid human use of animals. Should we then add cloning to the set of technological manipulations we already do on farm and other animals, or is there a difference[7] We now look at several cases.

Genetically Modifying Farm Animals to make Pharmaceuticals in Milk

For some years the Roslin Institute and PPL Therapeutics have been genetically engineering sheep and other mammals to produce proteins of medical value in their milk. The first product for emphysema and cystic fibrosis is approaching the

end of its clinical trials, and others are scheduled to follow. This raised no serious ethical problems for the SRT working group or the church. There are clear human benefits with few animal welfare or other concerns once past the experimental stage. But in the experimental phase, the modification is normally hit and miss and uses many animals.