

# Zoophilia in Men: A Study of Sexual Interest in Animals

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This article presents a study of 114 self-defined zoophile men who were researched primarily through the use of an on-line questionnaire. We describe how the participants acquired the identity label of zoophile, what it meant to them, and their relationships among themselves. Also examined are how they eroticized animals and how human and feral characteristics combined to form this object choice. Finally, participants' sexual profiles with animals and humans, and how the balance of animal and human desires creates different forms of zoophilia, are described.

**KEY WORDS:** zoophilia; bestiality.

## INTRODUCTION

Sex between humans and animals is a relatively uncommon source of sexual outlet, usually thought to be confined to a particular age, locale, and gender. For example, Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin (1948) found the highest incidence among adolescent males raised on farms. Moreover, given the expansion of sexual opportunities over the last 30 years, collectively referred to as the "sexual revolution," sex with animals—often considered a substitute sexual activity—is thought to have become even less prevalent in the U.S. population (Hunt, 1974).

Despite this, public awareness has increased with regard to the topic. For example, Matthews (1994), a man who had "married" his pony, wrote a book, *The Horseman*, in which he defended the rights of so-called "zoophiles," a recent identity label for persons who claim sexual-love relationships with animals. Publicity has been further generated by animal rights groups who are attacking zoophiles with the claim that any sexual contact between humans and animals per se constitutes cruelty to animals and should be punished (Beirne, 2000). For example, the Humane Society of the United States (2001) has initiated a "First Strike Campaign" that encourages the passing (or reintroduction)

of laws against "bestiality." To add to the debate, the noted animal rights activist Singer (2001) has attacked the taboo against sex with animals on the website of *Nerve Magazine*. And, a Broadway play by Edward Albee called "The Goat," in which a married man falls in love with a goat and, inter alia, attends an animal lovers' therapy group, won the prestigious Tony Award for best play of 2002.

The emergence of sex between humans and animals as a public issue is not confined to the United States. For example, a very accepting book, *Dearest Pet* by Dekkers (2000), was originally published in Dutch, and received national attention. In Britain, a documentary film on TV, "Hidden Love: Animal Passions," which focused on Missouri's zoophile community, was aired on national TV.<sup>4</sup> A British newspaper ("Beastly passions," 2000) did a long article that claimed that "Bestiality—or zoophilia, as its apologists prefer to call it—has never been more acceptable." This claim notes such themes in magazines, photographs, TV commercials, a book that was nominated for a serious literary prize, and a Home Office (2000) report, titled "Setting the Boundaries," which recommends reducing the penalties for sexual contacts between humans and animals.

The interest shown by the public in human–animal sex is not paralleled among sex researchers. Other than the Kinsey et al. (1948) and Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin, and Gebhard (1953) volumes, there is little information

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<sup>4</sup>According to Roth (1999), it featured Matthews, the author of *The Horseman*, and showed him having sex with his pony.

on the topic in the sex research literature (see Cornog & Perper, 1994; Walton, 2001). At the time we began the present research, a study by Miletski was underway as a doctoral dissertation for the Institute for Advanced Study of Human Sexuality in San Francisco (since published in 2002, and which will be compared with our findings in the Discussion section).

Furthermore, in most sexuality texts usually only a paragraph or two is devoted to zoophilia, and it is generally consigned to the chapter on "Sexual Variations" (Masters, Johnson, & Kolodny, 1995), "Atypical Sexual Activity" (Allgeier & Allgeier, 2000), or "Atypical and Paraphilic Sexual Behaviors" (Strong, DeVault, Sayad, & Yarber, 2002), along with other minority forms of sexual expression. The treatment of the topic, moreover, simply notes that the behavior is rare and confined to certain groups (the Kinsey et al. data), although the practice is said to occur throughout history. The texts attribute sex with an animal as mainly due to the lack of a human partner. In the last two texts above, zoophilia is also seen as an "invasive" or "coercive" paraphilia. The classification as a paraphilia places zoophilia in the realm of mental disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). A similar judgment characterizes some forensic texts (Holmes & Holmes, 2002), where "bestiality" is said to typify the early lives of serial killers in the form of cruelty to animals (called "zoosadism"). And there are a number of clinical studies involving those with a sexual interest in animals (see, for example, Abel, Becker, Cunningham-Rathner, Mittleman, & Rouleau, 1988; Alvarez & Freinhar, 1991; Earls & Lalumière, 2000).

The approach in this paper takes no stance on the clinical status of zoophiles. Rather, we are interested in the study participants' sex-related identities, their relationships with one another, how they behave sexually, and how their understanding of this behavior relates to the cultural and social contexts in which it occurs. With regard to the last parameter, zoophiles operate within a cultural tradition that strongly condemns their behavior with animals as a transgression of a well-marked species boundary (Ingold, 1994; Page, 1999; Thomas, 1983). At the same time, another aspect of Anglo-American societies is a veneration for certain types of animals defined as "pets" (Jasper & Nelkin, 1992; Savishinsky, 1983) to whom displays of affection can be directed that can mimic human intimacy (Beck & Katcher, 1996; Bryant & Snizek, 1993; Dekkers, 2000). What, then, is the meaning zoophiles give to their sexual conduct in such an environment? Another aspect of the study participants' zoophilia is that they are involved in an Internet zoophile community. How does involvement in such a community shape their sexual identity and the interpretations they make of their sexual interest

in animals? We also examine whether and to what degree sex with humans is also of interest to them. By examining the balance of their human and animal sexual desires and behaviors, we can investigate a variety of sexual profiles among zoophiles.

## METHOD

### Procedure

Our initial contact with zoophiles was accomplished through search engines on the web. Through them, we located a website that catered to a network of people who had a sexual interest in animals. We contacted the site and asked whether a research study would be feasible. The director of the site then forwarded our letter to members of the network who e-mailed us and offered to participate in the study.

We decided that the study could best be done primarily through use of the Internet to make questionnaires available that could be completed and returned on-line. The people who had already volunteered were asked to contact other people they knew who had a sexual interest in animals. Persons willing to volunteer would then have to contact us. Given that human/animal sex is so stigmatized (and is illegal in some states), we did not want to create anxiety by our contacting them. (Posner & Silbaugh, 1996, provide a state by state summary of these laws.) A specialist at the university computer center and a member of the sociology department's computing staff helped to design a system of procedures that would provide the maximum safeguards for maintaining the anonymity of the participants. The research plan and the questionnaire we developed for the study received approval from the university's Human Subjects Committee.

A fieldwork dimension to the study was added when we attended a gathering of some members of the computer network. Up to this point, our knowledge of these men had come from reading the minimal academic literature, some cursory scanning of Internet sites, a phone interview with one zoophile man, and a face-to-face interview with another. Thus, we had few solid ideas of what we could expect during our visit.

The gathering was held at a horse farm in a southwestern state, a rural location that was reached by a long drive along narrow winding roads. This was quite unlike the site of other nonmainstream sexualities we had researched before in such urban locales as San Francisco. It also reinforced the idea of the rural context of this particular practice when the sexual activity was with a horse (which was a common animal of choice within this group).

The farmhouse was surrounded by horse barns and green fields in which horses grazed. There were also dog pens; some occupied by malamute or husky type dogs most who were the sex partners of the owner of the farm. We learned that some zoos were attracted to only specific breeds of a particular animal (and to exclusively male animals or female animals, or both).

The 28 attendees were mainly young men but did include a woman, the zoophile wife of a male zoophile. This was our first (but not last) introduction to a married couple who shared a zoophilic interest. Everyone at the gathering seemed to know each other. Those attending spent a lot of time chatting, watching DVD movies, and playing computer games. Some of them talked about the zoophile community, how it had been portrayed in the media (everyone watched the "Hidden Love" video), and who their enemies were. They reminded us of some of the early gay groups that we studied in the 1960s and 1970s, especially when they engaged in banter about sex (in this case, it was not just sex with men).

We met some of the dogs who were brought to the gathering and to the horse of one of the men who lived at the farm. Some of the animals had sexual reputations that were laughingly related to us. The attendees showed affection toward their animals and at no time did we see any ill treatment of an animal. We were given demonstrations of the way in which sex could be consummated with various animals. These men did not seem to fit the cultural conception that zoophiles were sick or dangerous people or ill educated cultural rubes beset by a lack of social skills. Actually, the gathering was strikingly reminiscent of a fraternity get-together (the difference being that the zoophiles were less rowdy). Anyone who was unaware of the questionnaire study also signed up (using pseudonyms) to participate. We also asked these persons to contact other possible study participants for us.

The last evening we all went out for dinner in a motorcade from the farm to a large city that was a short distance away. The waitress at the restaurant asked us if we were all members of some kind of a club! To great laughter, she was told that it was not quite that which had brought everyone together. The real basis of the group, of course, could not be mentioned—which gave us some more insight into the twilight world these men inhabited.

Upon our return from the gathering, we e-mailed the people who had volunteered to participate in the study with instructions on how to access our webpage and then the questionnaire through the use of a username, password, and code number. Questions were directed at the development and history of their sexual desires for, sexual fantasies about, sexual behaviors and love relations with both animals and humans, their networking with other per-

sons with a similar sexual interest, and the way in which they acquired an identity label with respect to their animal contact.

We ran the data collection phase of the study for a period of approximately 7 months beginning in the Fall of 1999 and ending in the Spring of 2000. During this time period, through the snowball procedure, we obtained 159 volunteers. Of these, 120 people (114 men, 5 women, and 1 transgender) completed and returned the questionnaire (117 by computer and 3 by regular mail). Because of the small number of women and only one transgender, we only analyzed the data from the men in this paper. There was a maximum of 100 questions (including 14 demographics) that they could possibly answer. A quarter of these questions were open-ended, including those that asked for more detail after a closed-ended category was chosen. The database was amplified through the voluntary continuation of correspondence from the people who had participated, who filled us in on new developments in their own and other people's lives, as well as on the difficult personal and political situations that were emerging for them.

Some key participants were used as consultants to review any questionnaire where we felt there may have been some question of credibility. We only needed to use the consultants on a single occasion. (Also, the same general patterns appeared in the data from the men we personally knew as compared to the other men in the study.) Names used in this paper are pseudonyms of our own making.

## Participants

The participants surveyed in this Internet study were 114 men, 91% of whom were living in the United States (with the remainder living in Australia, New Zealand, the UK, or other countries in Europe). All the men were White. Their median age was 27, with a range from 18 to 70 years. Sixty-four percent indicated that they were single and never married and 83% were either college graduates or had completed some college. Forty-five percent were working in the computer field or some other form of technical work. The rest were in an assortment of occupations. Forty-one percent earned less than \$20,000 a year and 27% earned \$40,000 or more (with 6% of the total group earning \$100,000 or more). Twenty-three percent reported a Catholic religious background, 37% a Protestant background, 3% a Jewish background, and 37% another religious background. Sixty-nine percent of the study participants categorized themselves as currently not at all traditionally religious. Thirty-four percent were living in a rural area, 12% in a small town, 7% in a small city, 11%

in a medium sized city or its suburbs, and 36% in a large city or its suburbs.

### Measures

A list of the exact questions used in this paper is contained in the Appendix. The questions are organized as follows:

1. Shared identity – How do the participants label themselves with respect to their sexual interest in animals and how did they come to see themselves in the way they do? How do they relate to other members of the community of men who have a sexual interest in animals?
2. Nature of the sexual interest in animals – What is it about animals that the participants find sexually arousing, and what do they think led to this sexual interest?
3. Sexual contact with animals – When did their sexual contact with animals first occur and how? What animals are they interested in, and what sexual acts do they engage in with them?
4. Human sexual desires and contacts – What are their feelings about sex with humans and what are their sexual histories with humans?
5. Balance of animal and human sexual desires – How do their desires for sex with animals and humans compare, and what is the resulting variation in the participants' sexual profiles?

## RESULTS

### Shared Identity

Most (93%) of the men defined themselves as “zoophiles,” literally “lovers of animals.” This was not a term widely recognized when Kinsey et al. (1948, 1953) provided the first modern data on persons who have sex with animals. Self-defining as a “zoophile” was said by the participants in our study to involve a concern for the animal's welfare and pleasure and an emphasis on consent in the pursuit of sexual gratification. Lacking these elements signified identification as a “bestialist,” meaning a person whose sexual interest in animals involves only the human's physical gratification. Their statements concerning the above follow:

Jason, 19 years old, who was working at a horse farm, makes the typical distinction between zoophilia and bestiality:

A bestialist only has sex with an animal no matter what the cost for the animal is and the sole purpose of getting

their jollies. . . . I do practice the act of bestiality for it is impossible to have sex with an animal and not practice bestiality. However, my relationship with animals is a loving one in which sex is an extension of that love as it is with humans, and I do not have sex with a horse unless it consents. . . .

Ray, a 29 year old part-time student, emphasizes the animal's pleasure:

Although I do get an erection when interacting sexually with a stallion, my first priority is always the animal's pleasure, erection, and personal affection toward me.

Charles (who would not provide any identifying data because of fear of discovery) speaks of a transition common to a number of zoophiles:

Bestiality has the stigma of my adolescent use of animals. . . . I was not respectful or caring about establishing meaningful relationships or full and joyful participation by my partner.

What was especially important in the present study was the role the computer played in the construction and dissemination of an identity label for people having a sexual interest in animals. For example, half of the participants said they came to use the label “zoophile” through websites and chat rooms on the Internet. (Sixteen percent reported the source as books and articles and another 14% as personal contact with other “zoos.”) The role of the on-line community in shaping and propagating identity labels was shown in the following remarks:

Andy, 19 years old, who was employed as a computer technician, reported

I found it [the term zoophile] on a web site looking for others like myself.

And Rob, 39, a computer engineer, noted that

Zoophile more closely fits my current sexual practices [definition found on WWW].

Keith, 24, who was working at a garage, had this to say

I never knew the word “zoophile” existed until I looked up animal sex on the net. I only thought there were people called “bestialist.” I didn't know there was a difference between the two until I started to talk to friends on the net.

Computer networks were said to have helped alleviate the social isolation of the study participants. All but one said that in the last year they had been in touch by computer with others who shared their sexual interest. This was far greater than contacts by regular mail or phone. The salience of computer contacts was illustrated by about half saying that in their lifetime they had been in computer contact with 100 or more other zoophiles.

The importance of computer contacts did not rule out personal contact; rather, it coexisted with it. Ninety percent said that they had met with someone who shared their sexual interest and about half said they had done this 20 times or more. Additional information concerning those contacts suggests more about this group of participants. Sixty percent said they had had sex with another person who also had a sexual interest in animals. (Sixty percent of the reported partners were men, 13% women, and 27% at least one man and one woman.)

Sex was not the only function such contacts served. They were also reported to be important in linking them to similar others (33% said “a lot,” with only 8% saying “never”), in helping them to feel less lonely (58% “a lot,” 8% “never”) and in bolstering their self-acceptance (46% “a lot,” 21% “never”). The men also reported generally becoming less secretive over time. Over 60% said that they had been “very” secretive in the past; this was approximately twice as many as those who reported being so currently. Approximately 40% said that it was fellow animal lovers who made them less secretive, mainly by showing them that they were not alone in their interests.

We next examine what underlies the zoophile identity. We first consider how the men explained their sexual involvement with animals. Then, we look at the various forms this sexual involvement took. Finally, we look at their human sexual involvement and the balance reported between sexual desire for animals and for humans. Such an analysis is aimed at detailing zoophilia as a sexual object choice and the various forms it can take.

**Nature of the Sexual Interest in Animals**

A closed-ended question asked whether or not participants believed their sexual interest in animals was related to any of 12 factors (Table I). These factors included their family having a household pet, their family having a farm

animal, having pleasurable sex with animals, not being popular, not being physically attractive, lacking opportunities for human sex, unpleasant human sexual experiences, other people influencing them, a fear of AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases, a lack of sex interest by human partners, whether they were drunk or high, and a desire for affection. Two factors stood out in their importance. One was the desire for affection (26% “a lot,” 23% “more than a little”); the other was the role of pleasurable sex (44% “a lot,” 29% “more than a little”). In short, the rewards of affection and sensuality were cited by a large number of the men to explain their sexual involvements with animals.

*Love and Affection*

When asked “Is being in love with an animal different than with a human?” approximately three-quarters answered positively. The features the men mentioned were anthropomorphic in that they described ideal human love relationships. Ironically, humans were often seen as less able than animals to provide these ideal human characteristics. The feature they most frequently mentioned was that an animal’s love was unconditional.

Roy, 36 years old, unemployed because of a disability, said

Humans use sex to manipulate and control. Humans have trouble accepting who you are . . . [:] they want to change you. Animals do not judge you [:] they just love and enjoy the pleasures of sex without all the politics.

The same theme was also found in the answers to the open-ended question, “Why do you think you became sexually interested in animals?” Many of the men referred to the emotional rewards that animals can provide and prime among these was again their claim that an animal can and had given unconditional love.

**Table I.** Factors in Why Sexual Interest in Animals Began or Continued (N = 114)

	A lot (%)	More than a little (%)	A little (%)	Not at all (%)
Your family having a household pet	12	11	23	54
Your family having a farm animal	7	3	5	85
Pleasurable sex with animals	44	29	12	16
Not being popular	7	12	31	51
Not being physically attractive	3	4	14	80
Lacking opportunities for human sex	3	9	30	58
Unpleasant human sexual experiences	4	10	19	67
Other people influencing you	1	0	10	89
A fear of AIDS or other sex disease	2	5	18	76
Lack of sex interest by human partner	6	3	11	81
Because you were drunk or high	0	0	1	99
A desire for affection	26	23	27	24

As James, 28 years old, who was working as a computer consultant, noted

They [animals] are just friendly and non-judgmental.

It seems clear to us that the men anthropomorphized their animals by attributing ideal human characteristics to them, especially their capacity for love; and this form of love can result in—or follow from—sex. (One response to the definition of “zoophile” was “Someone who loves animals to the point where they express their love sexually.”) But what else is operating in viewing animals as erotic objects? We directly asked, “What makes one animal (within a species) sexier than another?” Again, many mentioned human-like characteristics. This time most of the replies seemed to represent the ideal friend—the animal providing empathy, attention, and the sheer joy of companionship. Unlike a human, animals seemed always attentive, understanding, and ready to play.

Bob, aged 32, a production engineer, noted

An animal’s personality plays a large part as well. A playful filly would be very sexy while an animal disinterested in life is not.

Thus, most of the men claimed they were able to create a relationship with their animals that was emotionally deep as well as exciting. Unlike most pet-owners, however, they fit these characteristics into an “erotic” frame. Participants considered love to be an important ingredient in both the development and current constitution of their sexual interest in animals. Other, less frequent descriptions that were variations on the theme of being “loveable,” were also evident. For example, also mentioned by some in their accounts of influences were cultural depictions of “loveable” or “admirable” animals—for example, Bambi, Black Beauty, Pooh. Some claimed even more extreme affinities to animals, sometimes to the extent of believing they had animal characteristics or that they felt like they were an animal. Finally, love and admiration were highlighted when some spoke of animals serving as human surrogates when love and affection had been denied by peers or parents, or they themselves said they had problems with human intimacy.

### *Sex and Sensuality*

The second and more frequently mentioned reason chosen by the men as to why they had a sexual interest in animals was “pleasurable sex.” And the sensual rewards of sex came through as one of the most frequent answers to the open-ended question “Why do you think you became sexually interested in animals?”

We have already suggested that an emotional relationship with an animal can help to blur the boundary between humans and animals. For some people, this boundary can become easy to cross when the rewards of sex are there. Quite a few of the men suggested that the desire for sex was so intense and occurred at such an early age that cultural prohibitions seemed minor or easy to ignore. The following illustrate the sensual rewards remembered for the first sexual experience the participants had with an animal.

Drew, a 45 year old engineer, said

After puberty . . . [my interest in horses] became more sexual. . . . One night [when 19 years old] there was a horse standing in a narrow ditch. . . . She was a mare, and it suddenly struck me I might be able to straddle the ditch and have sex with her. I had had many sexual encounters with human females so I knew what went where. . . . I pressed the head of my penis against her vulva, started thrusting, and suddenly slid in. The sensation is hard to describe, incredibly warm, almost a shock to the senses, culminating in a very strong orgasm.

Other sensual rewards were not as intense as orgasm. For example, from the question “What makes one animal (in a species) sexier than another,” a frequent response referred to the feral nature of the animal, especially as this was perceived through its physical features. Here the sensual rewards centered on more aesthetic characteristics—strength, grace, posture, sleekness, and the like.

The sensual characteristic most frequently referenced in this way was touch, especially the fur on the coat of the animal. This is one reason why some breeds of dogs were said to be sexier than others; for example, breeds like huskies or malamutes were admired for their coats. As sensuality is connected to particular animals, the smooth coat of the horse was included here also, and the coats of other animals (sheep, otters, etc.) whose fur provided a sensual stimuli. Horses were also appreciated for their size and power, something that appealed more to a sense of sight. Animal odors were mentioned by many—especially the smell of the genitals. Animal odors were noted as being especially stimulating among those who chose horses as sexual partners.

What stands out about these types of rewards is that they do not seem out of the ordinary for people in general. Second, it seems clear too that the rewards for sexual gratification can meld with the rewards of love, affection, and companionship to create a powerful impetus for a sexual interest in animals. Finally, it is striking how reinforcing the sexual reward of orgasm can be for some males. This is especially the case when allied with the relatively young age most of the participants began engaging in such

activity, with almost half having had their first experience between 11 and 14 years of age. Fourteen was the median age at which they reported first having sex with animals.

The men were similar in the way they identified with the zoophile label and the feelings that underlay it. In addition, almost all said they could not stop having such sexual feelings. They also showed a lot of similarity in the accounts they gave explaining their sexual interest in animals. Much more variety was evident, however, when we look at their sexual profiles. We first examine data that show their diversity in sexual contact with animals and then the variety in their sex desire and sexual conduct with humans.

### Sexual Contact With Animals

As mentioned previously, most of the men reported first having sex with an animal in their early or mid teens. Two-thirds of the men reported that this had occurred before 17 years of age. A variety of species were involved, mainly equines (29%)—for example, horses, burros, donkeys—or dogs (63%), but also reported were cats (2 cases), cattle (2 cases), a goat (1 case), a sheep (1 case), a chicken (1 case), and a dolphin (1 case).

Among those who reported currently having sex with an animal, 51% had a dog as a partner and 37% an equine (with the remaining animals including goats, pigs, cats, and sheep). On average, the number of animals the men reported having ever had sex with was 8 (the median), with a range from 1 to over 200. The most common sexual behaviors they reported ever having engaged in were performing oral-genital sex (81%), having vaginal intercourse with a female animal (75%), masturbating the animal (68%), and receiving anal intercourse from a male animal (52%). Among those currently having sex of any kind with an animal, 28% reported doing this less than once a month, 17% one to three times a month, and 55% more frequently.

For both the dog and the equine lovers, 80% had their first sexual experience with the type of animal they were currently involved with (the former more likely a male dog, the latter a female horse). This suggests that the preference for a particular species may be shaped by

the first experience. What may make this more salient was that this is often their first sexual experience of any kind.

Whether currently having sex with a dog or an equine, almost all said they had been in love with an animal partner and perceived an animal partner to have been in love with them. All those currently having sex with an equine said it was their most desired species. In contrast, among those currently having sex with a dog, 17% said they would prefer an equine as a partner. Because an equine is more difficult to afford and maintain, this is not surprising. Nor is the related data that, compared to the dog lovers, twice as many of the equine lovers were having sex with *both* an equine and a dog.

In addition, again because of the difficulty and cost in obtaining and maintaining one's own equine, negotiations sometimes have to be made with a person who owns one. This is complicated by the apparent unwillingness of many owners to do this. For example, two-thirds of the men said they would feel jealous if another person had sex with an animal they themselves sexually favored (no differences by species). Nonetheless, we did find participants who said they would lend their equine in this way and those who said they had been lent an equine (e.g., when asked if any of their contacts with fellow zoophiles led to their being provided an animal for sex, half said "yes"). For instance, one man had been fantasizing about having sex with a horse and made a post on the Internet asking for help. He was contacted through e-mail by a ranch owner and noted, "in a nutshell, I traveled over 2,000 miles by train to meet a person I really didn't know so that I could have sex with a quarter horse mare he owned, with his permission."

Concerning the sex of the animal partner, the men were evenly divided between those who said they were currently sexually active with a male animal and those with a female animal. Although there was no significant difference between the sex of the animal and its species, to some degree, species and sexual acts were intertwined (Table II). The dog lovers were more likely to have reported having been in a receptive sexual role than were the equine lovers, viz., receiving oral sex or anal intercourse from the animal. Anatomical differences (such as the nature of the mouth and size of the penis) make receptive activities more difficult with an equine (but were

**Table II.** Human Sex Role by Species of Animal

Human sex role	Dog (% , N = 58)	Horse (% , N = 42)	$\chi^2$	df	p
Receiving oral sex	44	14	6.77	1	.01
Receiving anal intercourse	63	32	6.65	1	.02
Performing vaginal intercourse	74	100	8.72	1	.003
Performing anal intercourse	24	50	5.30	1	.02

engaged in by some). On the other hand, more equine lovers reported being involved in the role of insertion, viz., performing vaginal or anal intercourse.

### Human Sexual Desires and Contacts

Overall, 25% of the men labeled themselves “heterosexual,” 17% “homosexual,” and 58% “bisexual.” About half of the men said they had a “strong” sexual interest in humans. (Seventeen percent said this strong interest was directed toward men, 17% toward women, 13% toward both, and the remainder that they did not have a strong sexual interest in either men or women.) Over their lifetime, 9% reported 10 or more women as sex partners (total group median = 4) and 9% reported 10 or more men as sex partners (total group median = 1). Seventeen percent, however, reported never having a human partner of either sex. Further, in the year prior to the interview, three-quarters reported having no heterosexual sex with a human and almost two-thirds no homosexual sex. Over the same period, 12% reported sex with a woman 20 times or more, and the same percent with a man 20 times or more. Over half of those who had sex with a human of either sex reported being “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the experience. But only about a quarter of them said they wished they were having more sex with a human of either sex.

We found a relationship between the classification of the participants’ sexual orientation and the sex of the animals they reported having a strong sexual feelings for, but the correspondence is far from a perfect one (Table III). Thus, those men who identified themselves as “homosexual” were more likely to say they had strong sexual feelings exclusively for males in the animal realm, but a majority said they had strong sexual feelings for both female and male animals. Those who identified as “heterosexual” were more likely to have reported strong sexual feelings for female animals, but three times as many reported strong sexual feelings for both male and female animals, and some for only male animals. Among men who identified themselves as “bisexual,” most reported strong sexual feelings for both male and female animals, but some reported strong sexual feelings for only male animals, and some for only female animals.

Further investigation suggested that human gender characteristics that are thought to characterize masculinity and femininity can be transposed to animals. Thus, one man who defined as heterosexual, and preferred female animals, replied to the question of what makes one animal sexier than another in this way “The eyes are the first thing to attract me: Some bitches have very sexy eyes. Body shape is also a draw as is gait. Some have a very enticing wiggle to their hips.” Another heterosexual-identified participant who preferred female animals said “Gracefulness in the way she stands . . . how she carries herself at a trot, with her tail raised.” A bisexual-identified man who prefers female animals similarly reported: “To me, it’s the elegance of certain animals that make them sexy, and the furriness and cuteness of others.”

These comments were different from those coming from men who preferred male animals. Their emphasis was directed more toward the genital characteristics of the animals. A man who defined as homosexual said: “I love [their] sexual interest and their endowment [penis and testicles].” Another man, who preferred male animals and said he was “gay” with his male dog only (i.e., having no strong sexual feelings for human males), noted that his attraction was “the size of the [dogs’] dicks, balls and assholes and the smell of the genital areas.” A bisexual-identified man who preferred male animals said what he finds sexually attractive about a horse is “a shiny coat, well-defined muscle structure, large penis and testes.”

Other things that men reported being sexy about male animals were wildness, power, and the size of the animals. A more direct reference to the relationship between human and animal sex preferences was stated by one man who identified as homosexual. Regarding his attraction to male dogs, he said: “[It’s] their male presence. Some dogs just exude it. One look at them and the one thing I can think of is how nice it would be to be under him.”

### Balance of Animal and Human Sexual Desires

Finally, we examine the balance between animal and human desires. To begin with, when asked to compare their sexual interest in animals and humans, over two-thirds reported that they would rather have sex with an animal

**Table III.** Sex of Animals Strongly Desired by Sexual Orientation Identity

Strong sexual feelings	Homosexual (% , <i>N</i> = 19)	Heterosexual (% , <i>N</i> = 27)	Bisexual (% , <i>N</i> = 62)
Toward male animals	42	7	10
Toward female animals	0	70	5
Toward both male and female animals	58	22	84

Note.  $\chi^2 = 22.35$ , *df* = 4, *p* = .001.



than with a human, that sex was “more satisfying” with animals, and that they thought more about animals than humans when masturbating. About a quarter said that they had an equal preference toward animals and humans, that sex with animals or humans was equally satisfying, and that they were likely to have thought about “animals and people equally” when masturbating. Only a few reported a stronger preference for humans than animals. Thus, just as we find different types of animal lovers according to the animal they prefer, we find different types according to the strength of their preference for animals. Those with the stronger preference for animals are illustrated below:

Adam, 32-year-old and unemployed, reported that he had never had sex with either a man or a woman, and had no strong sexual feeling for either. He would rather have sex with an animal:

I found horses to be more “honest” about sex than humans. They had no hang-ups about it—just carried on regardless. I found human sex felt “dirty”—while equine sex wasn’t.

And John, a 21-year-old who was working as a computer salesman, reported having had sex with women (infrequently)—which he did not find very satisfying. He had not been in love with a woman, but said he would rather have sex with an animal because

I find the company of animals more pleasing than that of humans—there’s less stress, fighting. . . . Love with an animal is how love should be—a lot less complicated with no strings attached.

Not surprisingly, those who said they had more interest in animals were more likely to report fantasizing about animals than humans. They were also less likely to report falling in love with a human, having had sexual experiences with a human, or desiring sexual activity with one.

## DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to examine zoophilia as a sexual object choice and to detail some of the forms it can take. Its limitations come from the group studied—mainly young men who were computer literate and who were recruited on-line. Internet samples may contain systematic biases (e.g., they overrepresent the computer literate). It is also impossible to check on a person’s identity (e.g., a man may pose as a woman). Ross, Tikkanen, and Mansson (2000) note, however, that these problems also characterize conventional questionnaire studies. Further, they quote Koch and Schockman (1998), who point out that Internet studies can be particularly useful in studying

sexually marginalized groups because of their anonymous character. As there are little data on zoophilia, we offer the findings, then, as suggestive and encourage further exploration.

All the study participants defined as “zoophile,” a relatively recent identity category, but one that is increasingly disseminated through computer networks. Computer networks are one of the most recent additions to the sexual underground and to developing sexual subcultures. The Internet brings into contact people who share the same sexual interest but who are socially isolated from each other. Not only does this provide social and psychological support but also the possibility of personal meetings, all of which hitherto were not available to zoophiles.

Ross et al. (2000) noted some novel features of the Internet’s effect on social organization that impinge also on zoophiles. First and foremost, it can socially integrate an incredibly large number of people with similar sexual interests. For example, in Kinsey’s day contacts between animal lovers were more localized and limited to male compatriots in a particular rural community. Further, while Kinsey’s farm boys might have been part of a rural culture in which sex with animals was a part, the sex itself did not define the community. Today’s zoophile groups incorporate a wider geographical area and often participate in the sexual politics of contemporary erotic minorities, notably constructing and propagating a particular identity for themselves.

Additionally, as noted by Ross et al. (2000), “When a minority and its culture is characterized primarily by . . . stigma . . . , the possibility of enhancing . . . contact and yet maintaining a degree of secrecy makes the Internet a particularly effective medium for enhancing such a subculture” (p. 751). With regard to zoophiles, we have seen how the Internet satisfies the need for anonymity concerning what in most places is highly stigmatized and in many states is criminal behavior.

In this research, we studied the desires and behaviors of men who have sex with animals. A desire for affection and pleasurable sex were presented as the major reasons for this sexual interest. In examining how these two factors were said to operate, it seems evident that anthropomorphic meanings were used in describing why animals were sexually appealing. Even though a “pet mentality” is a common feature of the dominant culture, the difference between the zoophiles and average people who have a companion animal is that the script of “love-ability” is extended by the former to include the eroticization of the animal. This seems to be done by seeing the animal itself as desiring sex and love. To this is added a sensual interpretation of the various characteristics of animals including their feral features.

It is evident that the rewards offered by sex with an animal can be immediate, easy, and intense, a situation that, occurring especially in the pubertal years, can be extremely reinforcing. In this, it parallels the development of other unconventional sexualities (Gebhard, 1965; Weinberg, Williams, & Calhan, 1995). Conditioning also seems to play a role in the species of the animal that is preferred—the species of animal first experienced sexually is the type of animal currently involved with. A preference is also shown for the sex of the animal. This is associated to an extent with one's human sexual orientation.

The complexity of zoophilia was evident when sexual desires and contacts with humans were considered. All study participants placed themselves in a traditional gendered sex orientation category. A majority chose the category "bisexual." We would suggest on the basis of previous research that persons who do not confine themselves to traditional sexual scripts are more likely to explore a diversity of sexualities (Lenius, 2001; Weinberg, Williams, & Pryor, 1994). As noted above, we found there was a relationship between the participant's human sex orientation and the sex of the animal they had strong feelings for. However, many of the men reported strong sexual feelings toward animals whose sex fell outside the literal boundaries of their human sexual preference identity. This raises an interesting question for future research. What lies behind the sexual attraction toward males and/or females in the human versus the animal realm? Finally, when we consider the balance between animal and human desires, a majority but not all of the men showed a leaning toward animals. This suggests further investigation on the factors involved in making sex with animals more or less preferential.

This study shows diversity among people who share the sexual identity of zoophile. Zoophilia, then, could be more specifically conceptualized according to the variety of forms it takes. For example, according to the above finding on the balance of animal and human desires, it is clear that some types exist that vary by the strength of their preference for animals. In addition, the study showed that types could be identified through the sex and species of the animal preferred. And, too, there were those who weighed differently the erotic and affectional components of their sexual attraction to animals.

Our research can be compared to Miletski's (2002) study that was also done with participants from an Internet source. Her participants, like ours, were preponderantly White, comparable to ours in income and religiosity, and highly concentrated in computer and technological fields. Her participants, however, were older on average and more likely to be married. Similarity of findings appear for most adopting a zoophile identity, their first sex

experience being with a dog or an equine, the species of animals currently involved with (dogs or equines), their sexual behavior with animals (especially according to the sex of the animal), their frequency of sex with animals, and the majority preferring animals to humans.

The limitations of our study are obvious. The group studied was mainly young men who were computer literate and recruited on-line. As such, the results cannot be generalized beyond this study group to all male zoophiles. Generally, however, there do appear to be parallels between the results of this research and studies of persons involved in other sexual expressions. Cultural scripts appear evident in the construction of their erotic desires; social support from similar others is crucial for their well-being; and the sexual dimensions along which they can be understood are not unique.

Compared to other subcultures that are Internet facilitated, the zoophile subculture is not particularly large. It remains limited to the extent that many people with the sexual interest are not computer literate or still worry that they could lose their anonymity by participating in this subculture. How large this group may be we cannot say, but we agree with Durkin and Bryant (2002) that "There is every reason to believe that the bestiality (sic) subculture will grow . . ." (p. 192). As it does, we suggest it aims and ideologies will not be that distinct from that group researched for this paper. Ross et al. (2000) suggest that for gay men, those in the virtual subculture may be less acculturated to the wider gay subculture. Given the absence of a wider zoophile subculture, there is little for those in the virtual subculture to become acculturated to. Rather, we believe it is the virtual group itself that will be at the forefront of subcultural development in the future.

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- (g) How many times have you gotten together (in person) with people who have a sexual interest in animals?
- (h) Have you ever had sex with another person who has a sexual interest in animals? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_  
If Yes, were they of the same sex or the other sex?  
Same \_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_ At least one of each \_\_\_\_
- (i) Currently, how secretive are you? Very \_\_\_\_; More than a little \_\_\_\_; A little \_\_\_\_; Not at all \_\_\_\_  
Previously, how secretive were you?  
Very \_\_\_\_; More than a little \_\_\_\_; A little \_\_\_\_; Not at all \_\_\_\_  
Did contact with people sharing this interest influence your degree of secrecy?  
Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_ If Yes, how:

## 2. Nature of the Interest in Animals

- (a) Why do you think you became sexually interested in animals?
- (b) Describe the first sex you had with an animal.
- (c) Is being in love with an animal different than with a human?  
Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_ If Yes, in what way:
- (d) What makes one animal (within a species) sexier than another?
- (e) Do you think this interest began or continued to develop as a result of any of the events listed below ("x" under category):  
(Note "MORE" = More than a little)  
NO A LITTLE MORE A LOT
- Your family having a household pet
  - Your family having a farm animal
  - Pleasurable sex with animals
  - Not being popular
  - Not being physically attractive
  - Lacking opportunities for human sex
  - Unpleasant human sexual experiences
  - Other people influencing you
  - A fear of AIDS or other sex disease
  - Lack of sex interest by human partner
  - Because you were drunk or high
  - A desire for affection

## 3. Sexual Contact with Animals

- (a) If you have had sex with an animal:
- At what ages did you first engage in such sexual contact

- What was the species & sex of the animal
- Did you (or your parents) own the animal
- If No, describe how you obtained access to this animal

- (b) With what animals have you ever had sexual contact? Starting with the animal you have had the most frequent contact with (no.1), continue to list the animals in order of the frequency of contact, noting the animals (a) species (e.g., dog), (b) sex (male or female), (c) number of animals of this species & sex, and, finally, (d) what happened.

- (c) With what sex & species (if any) are you currently having sex?

What sex acts do you currently engage in with animals (who does what to whom, e.g., insert your penis in their vagina)?

How often do you have sex with animals?

Less than once a month \_\_\_\_; 1-3 times a month \_\_\_\_; Once a week or more \_\_\_\_

- (d) If you are not having the most sexual contact with the sex & species that would be your preference, why is this the case?

- (e) Have you ever fallen in love with an animal?

Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

Species & sex?

Has an animal ever fallen in love with you?

Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

Species & sex?

- (f) Do you own the animals you currently have sex with?

All \_\_\_\_; Some \_\_\_\_; None \_\_\_\_;

Not now doing this \_\_\_\_; Never did this \_\_\_\_

- (g) If you do not own all these animals, how do you gain contact?

- (h) Would you feel jealous if another person had sex with the animal whom you sexually favor?

Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

## 4. Human Sexual Desires and Contacts

- (a) Do you have "strong" sexual feelings for human("x" one):

Men \_\_\_\_; Women \_\_\_\_; Men and women \_\_\_\_; Neither men nor women \_\_\_\_

- (b) How many women/men have you had sex with (put under category):

No. of Women      No. of Men

- in the last week
- in the last month

- in the last year
- in your lifetime

(c) How many TIMES have you engaged in sex with a woman:

Never    Once    2-5    6-10    11-19  
20-49    50+

- in the last week
- in the last month
- in the last year
- in your lifetime

How many TIMES have you engaged in sex with a man:

Never    Once    2-5    6-10    11-19  
20-49    50+

- in the last week
- in the last month
- in the last year
- in your lifetime

(d) If you have engaged in sex with women, has this sex generally been:

Very satisfying \_\_\_\_; Satisfying \_\_\_\_; **Not very** \_\_\_\_; Not at all \_\_\_\_

If you have engaged in sex with men, has this sex generally been:

Very satisfying \_\_\_\_; **Satisfying** \_\_\_\_; Not very \_\_\_\_; Not at all \_\_\_\_

(e) Do you wish you had more sex with women than you are having?

Yes \_\_\_\_ **No** \_\_\_\_

Do you wish you had more sex with men than you are having?

Yes \_\_\_\_ **No** \_\_\_\_

(f) Do you consider yourself:

Heterosexual \_\_\_\_; **Homosexual** \_\_\_\_; Bisexual \_\_\_\_

5. Balance of Animal and Human Sexual Desires

(a) If you have had sex with people and animals was it more satisfying:

With people \_\_\_\_; **With animals** \_\_\_\_; Equally with both \_\_\_\_

(b) When you self-masturbate, do you currently think more about:

People \_\_\_\_; **Animals** \_\_\_\_; Both equally \_\_\_\_; Neither \_\_\_\_; Don't masturbate \_\_\_\_

(c) If you had your way, would you rather have sex with:

**An animal** \_\_\_\_; A person \_\_\_\_; Both equally \_\_\_\_; No desire for either \_\_\_\_