

Humans and the environment

In this lesson you will consider the ethics of human relationships with the environment. Specifically, you will consider how practices such as the genetic modification of plants and animals involve a range of ethical positions toward non-human life.

You will need:

- Access to background information on “Ethics and the environment” from Biotechnology Online
- Extra information provided by your teacher or access to the internet.

What to do:

1. Form a group of three or four.
2. Read through the handouts or look at the following websites.
 - The Office of the Gene Technology Regulator: www.ogtr.gov.au
 - Enretech: www.enretech.com.au/
 - EcoBiotics: www.ecobiotics.com.au/
 - The Australian Gene Ethics Network: www.geneethics.org
 - Greenpeace: www.greenpeace.org.au/
3. With your group, answer at least four of the questions below.
4. Prepare some notes with your group so that you share the information with the rest of your class.

Questions:

- a) For each group's approach to their environment, do they:
 - i) put humans first (an anthropocentric view)
 - ii) put the environment first (an eco-centric view)
 - iii) think humans should manage the environment (stewardship)
 - iv) think that new technology should be sustainable
 - v) have a combination of the above views?
- b) Whose **interests** is this group concerned with? Why are they involved in this discussion about genetically-modified organisms (GMOs)?
- c) How does this group **describe** the environment?

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- d) How does this group **describe** genetic modification?
- e) What sort of **responsibilities** does this group describe for humans in their relationships with the environment, particularly in relation GMOs?
- f) How much power do you think this group has to influence the direction of genetic modification in Australia? Explain your answer.