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Fact Sheet Animal Welfare and Animal Rights

Animal Welfare

Animal welfare endorses the responsible use of animals to satisfy certain human needs – from companionship and sport, to uses that involve the taking of life, such as for food, clothing, and medical research. Animal welfare advocates seek to ensure that all animals used by humans have their basic needs fulfilled in terms of food, shelter, and health, and that they experience no unnecessary suffering in providing for human needs.

Animal welfare is a term that came into use after the federal Animal Welfare Act passed in 1966. The term is used by research compliance inspectors employed by the government, by those who work in shelters, and by veterinarians and scientists employed by companies, hospitals, and universities that perform animal research, all of whom are charged with ensuring that detailed regulations are followed when using animals in research. People who promote animal welfare believe in the controlled use of animals in research under the strict guidelines of the Animal Welfare Act and its numerous amendments. Proactive animal welfare advocates also adopt the same high standards for the use of rats, mice, and birds in research, which are not presently included in the Animal Welfare Act.

The American Veterinary Medical Association *Policy on Animal Welfare and Animal Rights* describes animal welfare as "... a human responsibility that encompasses all aspects of animal well-being, including proper housing, management, nutrition, disease prevention and treatment, responsible care, humane handling, and, when necessary, humane euthanasia."

Although many cultures have vastly differing views and traditions of animal use, most western societies have adopted basic rules governing human behavior toward animals. In the U.S., laws have been enacted at the federal level to assure the welfare of animals in medical research labs as well as the health of dogs and cats raised in professional kennels. These laws are administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

In addition, most communities have local laws and ordinances to protect animals from unnecessary cruelty. These rules address everything from pet neglect and abuse to the treatment of circus animals, and from hunting and fishing to meatpacking. Without addressing the issue of whether animals have inherent rights, our society has enacted laws to govern the behavior of human beings in their interaction with animals.

In the animal welfare view, social traditions and the body of existing law with respect to our use of animals are based on the premise that humankind's right to use animals for human benefit carries with it the responsibility to do so humanely. These traditions and laws exist because for centuries man has recognized the wisdom and natural correctness of using animals for food, clothing, research, education, and companionship.

The first animal welfare organization, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), was founded in 1824 in London to promote the protection of domestic animals.

The RSPCA's American counterpart, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), was founded in New York City in 1866 by Henry Bergh, who was concerned about cruelty to horses, stray cats, and dogs. The ASPCA notes that in 1952, it initiated "voluntary inspection of laboratories in New York that use animals for research," an important function that is performed today by the Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care (AAALAC).

Animal Rights

Animal rights, as a philosophical viewpoint, is fundamentally different from animal welfare, since it maintains that animals are not ours to use at all—for food, clothing, entertainment, or experimentation.

Some people use the term "animal rights" as a shorthand for "better conditions for animals", but animal rights actually means much more. At the center of the animal rights philosophy is the belief that animals must be included within the same system of morals that are applied to people.

Many adherents further argue for equality — that animal rights should parallel basic human rights, including the right to life and to freedom from ownership and confinement, and from use as a food source or subject of experimentation without consent.

The key point is "sentience," or the capacity to experience pain or pleasure. In the animal rights view, if a being is capable of suffering, there can be no moral justification for refusing to take that suffering into consideration. No matter the nature of the being, the principle of equality requires that its suffering be counted equally with the like suffering of any other being.

In the animal rights view, the question is not merely whether an animal suffers as a consequence of any particular animal use. The question is whether humans have the right to exploit other sentient beings for any purpose. Even if a particular type of animal use is considered "humane" by traditional definitions, the fact that the animal has the capacity to suffer is sufficient to make its use unacceptable.

Therefore, a believer in animal rights would directly compare the needs of animals against the needs of people instead of putting the needs of animals second. He or she might decide that it is wrong to perform a medical procedure that sacrificed an animal, even if it saved a human life, because that would violate the animal's right to life. As with animal welfare, individuals' beliefs about animal rights vary.

"Animal Rights" as a movement has its origin in the 1970s, following the publication of Peter Singer's book, *Animal Liberation* in 1975 that drew comparisons between discrimination against humans (racism) and discrimination against animals (speciesism).

The basic "platform" of animal rights calls for the end to all human "exploitation" of animals - this includes, but is not limited to:

- Use of animals and animal products for human or animal dietary consumption (meat and dairy)
- Confinement livestock and poultry production
- Hunting, trapping, and fishing
- Fur-farming
- Use of animals in cosmetic and product-safety testing
- The practice of owning pets
- Use of animals and animal products in clothing and domestic products (wool, fur, leather, silk)
- Use of animals for any medical or veterinary research or procedure
- Zoos, circuses, rodeos, horseshows, and dog-shows
- All performing animals
- Guide-dogs for the blind
- Police dogs and search and rescue dogs

There are thousands of animal rights groups in the U.S. They vary greatly in the type of opposition to the varying uses of animals and in how they oppose these uses. Some groups only oppose using animals in research; some oppose the use of animal products in clothing (leather shoes, fur coats, wool sweaters, silk shirts, etc.) Some animal rights advocates believe that animal welfare reforms impede progress toward animal rights because they improve the conditions under which "animal exploitation" occurs, making it more difficult to stimulate public opposition. Methods of protest vary from educational outreach in elementary schools, to media campaigns, to vandalism, arson, harassment, and physical attacks.

In the spring of 2002, the FBI declared two activist groups, the Animal Liberation Front and the Earth Liberation Front, as the top two domestic terrorist groups in the U.S.

Quotations from Animal Rights' Spokespeople

"The life of an ant and the life of my child should be accorded equal respect." – *Michael Fox, Humane Society of the United States*

"I wish everyone would get up and go into the labs and get the animals out and burn them down." – *Ingrid Newkirk, President & Founder of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, PeTA National Animal Rights Convention July 1997*

"There is no rational basis for saying that a human being has special rights. A rat is a pig is a dog is a boy. They're all mammals." – *Ingrid Newkirk, PeTA*

"Everything we are doing lays the foundation for the one day when animals will have rights... We need to get in their faces and sue the animal users so often they don't know which courtroom they're supposed to appear in next." – *Valerie Stanley, ALDF Attorney, June, 1996*

"We're looking for good lawsuits that will establish the interests of animals as a legitimate area of concern in the law." – *Ingrid Newkirk, PeTA, July, 2000*

"Even if animal research produced a cure for AIDS, we'd be against it." – *Ingrid Newkirk, September 2001*

"If we really believe that animals have the same right to be free from pain and suffering at our hands, then, of course we're going to be blowing things up and smashing windows... I think it would be great if all of the fast-food outlets, slaughterhouses, these laboratories, and the banks that fund them exploded tomorrow." – *PeTA's Bruce Friedrich, Animal Rights 2001 Conference*

"Our nonviolent tactics are not as effective. We ask nicely for years and get nothing. Someone makes a threat, and it works." – *Ingrid Newkirk, PeTA, US News and World Report, April 8, 2002*

"Arson, property destruction, burglary and theft are 'acceptable crimes' when used for the animal cause." – *Alex Pacheco, Director, PeTA*

"Pet ownership is an abysmal situation brought about by human manipulation." – *Ingrid Newkirk, PeTA, Washingtonian, Aug. 1986*

"In the end I think it would be lovely if we stopped this whole notion of pets altogether." – *Ingrid Newkirk, Newsday, Feb. 21 1988*

"Let us allow the dog to disappear from our brick and concrete jungles- from our firesides, from the leather nooses and chains by which we enslave it." – *John Bryant, Fettered Kingdoms: An Examination of A Changing Ethic, Washington, D C, PeTA, 1982*

"The cat, like the dog, must disappear... We should cut the domestic cat free from our dominance by neutering, neutering, and more neutering, until our pathetic version of the cat ceases to exist." – *John Bryant, Fettered Kingdoms: An Examination of a Changing Ethic, Washington, D.C., PeTA, 1982.*