

Animal welfare

Animal welfare is the viewpoint that animals, especially those under human care, should not suffer unnecessarily, including where the animals are used for food, work, companionship, or research. This position usually focuses on the morality of human action (or inaction), as opposed to making deeper political or philosophical claims about the status of animals, as is the case for an animal rights viewpoint. For this reason animal welfare organizations may use the word *humane* in their title or position statements.

Contents

- 1 History of animal welfare
 - 1.1 Welfare in practice
 - 1.2 Animal welfare for taste reasons
 - 1.3 Welfare principles
 - 1.4 The five freedoms
- 2 Animal welfare compared with animal rights
- 3 Criticisms of animal welfare
- 4 See also
- 5 References
- 6 External links

6.1 Animal Welfare Organizations

Welfare in practice

From the outset in 1822, when British MP Richard Martin shepherded a bill through Parliament offering protection from cruelty to cattle, horses and sheep (earning himself the nickname *Humanity Dick*), the welfare approach has had human morality, and humane behaviour, at its central concern. Martin was among the founders of the world's first animal welfare organization, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, or SPCA, in 1824. In 1840, Queen Victoria gave the society her blessing, and it became the RSPCA. The society used members' donations to employ a growing network of inspectors, whose job was to identify abusers, gather evidence, and report them to the authorities.

Similar groups sprang up elsewhere in Europe and then in North America. The first such group in the United States, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, was chartered in the state of New York in 1866.

Animal welfare for taste reasons

There is a growing contemporary movement among leading chefs that meat should have come from free-range sources where the animal has been well-treated. This has less to do with concern for the animal (although this is a factor), and the claim that well-cared-for meat tastes better.

Key proponents of high-quality slow-reared meat within cookery include Fergus Henderson [1] proponent of 'nose to tail cooking', Raymond Blanc and Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, well known for his personal stock of animals, which he raises himself and slaughters.

Modern Western consumers can now choose between mass-produced meat (particularly pork, where high-quality meat will be raised outside while cheaper pork comes from pigs kept in

small individual pens) and poultry costing a few dollars a kilo, and free-range animals, which typically costs three or more times as much.

Critics say that those arguing for higher quality meat do so from the position of wealth, and those less privileged cannot afford such high-quality food. Conversely it is argued that the current profusion of cheap protein is unnatural, and that the modern diet consists of too much meat. Certainly in comparison to previous generations, food expenditure represents a lower part of the average household's expenditure. Furthermore, it is argued that the greater use of lower grade cuts from well-treated meat, which tend to be flavoursome while tough, can offset the increased cost.

Welfare principles

The UK government commissioned an investigation into the welfare of intensively farmed animals from Professor Roger Brambell in 1965, partly in response to concerns raised in Ruth Harrison's 1964 book, *Animal Machines*. On the basis of Professor Brambell's report, the UK government set up the Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Committee in 1967, which became the Farm Animal Welfare Council in 1979. The committee's first guidelines recommended that animals require the freedoms to 'turn around, to groom themselves, to get up, to lie down and to stretch their limbs'. These have since been elaborated to become known as the Five Freedoms of animal welfare:

The five freedoms

1. Freedom from thirst, hunger and malnutrition.
2. Freedom from discomfort due to environment
3. Freedom from pain, injury and disease
4. Freedom to express normal behavior for the species
5. Freedom from fear and distress

Animal welfare compared with animal rights

Most animal welfarists argue that the animal rights view goes too far, and do not advocate the elimination of all animal use or companionship. They may believe that humans have a moral responsibility not to cause cruelty (unnecessary suffering) to animals. Animal rights advocates, such as Gary L. Francione and Tom Regan, argue that the animal welfare position (advocating for the betterment of the condition of animals, but without abolishing animal use: see veganism) is logically inconsistent and ethically unacceptable. However, there are some animal rights groups, such as PETA, which support animal welfare measures in the short term to alleviate animal suffering until all animal use is ended.

Canadian ethicist David Sztybel distinguishes six different types of animal welfare views:

- **animal exploiters' animal welfare:** the reassurance from those who use animals that they already treat animals well
- **commonsense animal welfare:** the average person's concern to avoid cruelty and be kind to animals
- **humane animal welfare:** a more principled opposition to cruelty to animals, which does not reject most animal-using practices (except perhaps the use of animals for fur and sport)

- **animal liberationist animal welfare:** a viewpoint which strives to minimize suffering but accepts some animal use for the perceived greater good, such as the use of animals in some medical research
- **new welfarism:** a term coined by Gary Francione to refer to the belief that measures to improve the lot of animals used by humans will lead to the abolition of animal use
- **animal welfare/animal rights views** which do not distinguish the two

Other views of animal welfare exist which are not included in David Sztybel's list.

Animal welfare principles are codified by positive law in many nations.

Criticisms of animal welfare

At one time, many people denied that animals could feel anything, and thus had no interests. Many Cartesians were of this opinion, though Cottingham (1978) has argued that Descartes himself did not hold such a view. This kind of view may also have been held by some behaviourists, but there is a logical problem involved in going from: 'there is no scientific evidence that the rats in my lab are suffering' to 'the rats in my lab are not suffering', particularly as the behaviourist idea of what constitutes scientific evidence makes settling issues concerning suffering impossible.

Some others argue that animal welfare is given excessive importance especially when even the basic human rights and human welfare is still lacking.^[citation needed] They cite Africa and many other parts of the world where poverty and other problems are rampant. These critics sometimes rebuke animal rights activists to improve the conditions for fellow humans many of whom live in conditions that are comparable to, if not worse than animals, before taking on the rights of animals. The problem with this is an assumption that human interests and nonhuman interests are mutually exclusive, which is not always the case. Similarly, this critique rides upon the assumption that human suffering takes priority over nonhuman suffering, a belief that at least some animal welfare supporters do not hold.

More recent critiques have used arguments inspired by Wittgenstein to argue that some kinds of suffering and joy are only available to language users. They claim that only humans, and perhaps chimpanzees, have sufficient linguistic capability.

An additional critique regards animal welfarism in practice, arguing that welfarists demonstrate disproportional concern for some species of animals over others without providing rational/scientific justification for such preferences. E.g., some critics say the movement favors companion animals over commercial animals, wild over domestic animals, or mammals over birds/reptiles/fishes. For example, the welfare movement commonly opposes anesthetized declawing of pet cats by veterinarians, but rarely contests the unanesthetized toe cutting of commercial birds by poultry workers. The critique is that much animal welfarism, in practice, is as prejudicial as an anthropocentric anti-welfarist view.