

An Overview of Animal Use and the Animal Protection Movement (historical, international and local)

The use and abuse of animals by humans:

Humans have been using animals for many centuries. The use (and abuse) of animals by humans can be divided in different ways – for example, by species or by use. Again, subjects will be put into different categories depending on the observer's views on animal use. For example, are animals in zoos a form of entertainment or necessary for conservation? Or both?

We have categorised animal use as follows:

1. Animals used as companions
2. Animals used as food
3. Animals used in research
4. Animals used for entertainment
5. Working animals
6. Wild animals

1. Animals used as companions: The use of animals as companions, or 'pets', would, in many cases, appear to be something that is of benefit to both the animal and the human. However, as you will all know from your work, there are many welfare issues associated with keeping animals as pets. Although we tend to think of dogs and cats when we discuss companion animal issues, we need to be aware that there are many issues associated with keeping other species in the home. When wild or exotic animals are used as pets, apart from severe welfare issues, there are often serious implications for conservation. Some issues are mentioned below:

- a. Irresponsible pet ownership
- b. Overpopulation of dogs and cats – leading to stray animal issues
- c. Puppy mills
- d. Abuse by the owner
- e. Shelter issues
- f. Exotic pets

2. Animals used as food: Billions of animals are reared as food in conditions that severely compromise their welfare. Pigs, chickens (for meat and eggs), cows (for meat and milk) and other domesticated species are turned into production machines for humans to satisfy their taste for animals.

The suffering of animals in these intensive farming systems is severe – it begins from birth (for example, calves are separated from their mothers), continues throughout life (where they are usually crammed into tiny cages or packed sheds), and only ends with death. Animals endure mutilations, diseases, injuries and a total inability to express their social and behavioural needs. Even their slaughter is usually inhumane.

Intensive (or factory) farming is also harmful for the environment, livelihoods of small farmers and human health. Unfortunately this is not an issue that is confined to the west – intensive production is taking a hold in more and more countries in Asia, spurred by multinational companies who want lower costs and fewer laws.

Apart from these systems, other animals are also used as food, including wild animals. They are caught or raised, marketed, and killed in appalling conditions.

3. Animals used in research: Millions of animals are used in experiments – not just in medical research, but also in school dissections, product testing (such as cosmetics), basic research and weapons research. Governments and scientists reassure us that all this research is necessary for the well-being of humans, and that they would not do it if there were alternatives. However, they have not put any significant effort into finding such alternatives, and it is usually left to NGOs to campaign for laws on regulating such research, and even to fund research into non-animal alternatives. Research with animals in most countries is surrounded by such secrecy that often the only way to find out about abuses is to do undercover investigations. Unfortunately, these investigations have still not led, in most countries, to significant changes in the suffering of animals used in laboratories. In the US, for example, mice, rats and birds are exempted from the law on laboratory animal welfare.

Animals in research suffer from barren environments, inadequate housing, psychological deprivation, inhumane sourcing (breeding, or capture from the wild), and, above all this, may endure tremendous suffering during the procedures performed on them in the name of science or safety.

4. Animals in entertainment: Animals have been used to entertain humans for centuries. There are significant welfare problems associated with the sourcing, training and housing of these animals. There can also be serious conservation issues when wild animals are used.

Supporters of abuse in this area talk about how this is part of their culture – although it is hard to understand why any country would want to preserve pointless cruelty, such as bullfighting, for future generations.

Other supporters of using animals in entertainment, when wild animals are used, state that places of entertainment that display animals, such as zoos, circuses, etc. are actually needed to educate the public about these animals, and that they contribute to species conservation.

Some areas where animals are used for entertainment – zoos, circuses, racing, fighting (such as bullfighting and dog-fighting), hunting, films and advertising.

5. Working animals: Animals are still used in many countries for agricultural and transport purposes. They include bullocks, horses, donkeys, elephants and camels, among others. Animals are also used in bomb squads, to help disabled people, as guards, and in many other ways.

They suffer from problems including a lack of food and water, working without enough rest, cruelty and abandonment.

6. Wild animals: Wild animals are used by humans in all the categories above. The trade in wildlife has severe welfare implications, whether the animals are caught in the wild or bred in captivity. Most commercial exploitation of wildlife also has serious conservation implications, and many species are becoming extinct in the wild because of human activities.

These reasons include habitat loss, pollution, human intervention, and commercial use of wildlife, as pets, for their parts, for entertainment, etc.

Global use of animals

Animal use may vary slightly from country to country. However, increasingly, international factors are of concern:

- Export of live animals for food
- Trading of wild animals for zoos or circuses
- The trade in exotic animals as pets
- The expansion of intensive farming to cheaper countries
- The expansion of animal breeding and research to less regulated countries

How does this affect you at a local level?

Large scale animal use/abuse is sanctioned by most, if not all, governments. There are striking similarities among different countries with respect to certain issues, such as the killing of dogs as a response to rabies. The question we need to ask ourselves is - can local use/abuse of animals be stopped without focusing on larger issues?

Why do we use animals?

- Animals have always been seen as resources
- Until relatively recently, there was no thought about their sentience – they were considered similar to machines
- Most humans believe that they are superior to other species
- Using animals can be economically and psychologically rewarding

A recent study by Sarah Knight, from the University of Portsmouth, tried to find out why people have such different attitudes towards animals. She asked two questions:

- Why do different people have different views on the use of animals?
- Why do the same people have conflicting views on animal use?

These were her findings:

- Individuals have different views depending on external and internal factors
 - Personal: such as gender, and contact with animals
 - Knowledge: If they think that the benefits to humans outweigh costs to animals, they are more supportive of use; if they believe there are alternatives, there is less support
 - Beliefs: Such as a belief in sentience; or a belief that it is natural for humans to use animals
- Specific details can change their view - for example, they may think it is acceptable to eat animals, but not to eat dogs

From this it is obvious that we, as animal protectionists, need to take these factors into account when engaging with others to improve the lives of animals.



History and development of the international animal movement:

- Early beliefs that humans can be reincarnated as animals (as far back as the Indus Valley Civilisation)
 - Early religious views sympathetic to animal welfare – Buddhism, Jainism, Hinduism
 - The animal movement developed in parallel with other humanitarian reforms
 - 18th century - 'age of sensibility' in literature and popular culture – increased sensitivity to the suffering of others, including animals
 - Changes within Christianity, in particular, evangelicalism, focused on:
 - Relief of suffering
 - Improvement of morals
- This influenced the animal movement in the early 19th century.
- Industrialisation and urbanisation - closer relationships with companion animals, but distancing from others
 - Darwin's theories of evolution greatly changed the way humans viewed animals around them
 - 1822: first animal protection law – for cattle and horses
 - 1824: first national animal protection society – SPCA (UK) – inspectors checked markets and slaughterhouses
 - 1866: first US animal protection society - ASPCA
 - 1870s: Bands of Mercy – to teach kindness to children
 - 1875: first anti-vivisection society - NAVS (UK)
 - Late 19th/early 20th century:
 - Radical changes in reform – socialism, feminism, etc.
 - Move from 'kindness', 'compassion' to 'rights' and 'equality'
 - Move from moral causes to economic and social causes
 - Issues – animal experiments, fur, hunting, meat-eating
 - Direct action – learnt from other movements

The suffering of sentience began to be viewed from a scientific angle:

- Intensive farming started after the second World War
- 1964 - Ruth Harrison published 'Animal Machines'
- 1965 – in response, the UK government commissioned an investigation into farm animal welfare
- This resulted in the Five Freedoms:
 - Freedom from thirst, hunger and malnutrition
 - Freedom from discomfort
 - Freedom from pain, injury and disease
 - Freedom to express normal behaviour
 - Freedom from fear and distress
- 1960s and 1970s – questioning of authority
- Civil rights, women's rights, peace, environmental protection
- Radical division of animal movement
- Connection between racism, sexism and speciesism

Different beliefs behind animal protection:

- Animal rights – animals have rights and should not be exploited by humans
- Animal welfare – animals can be used, but should be treated humanely
- Conservation – species matter, but the individual animal does not

However, it is important to note that there are many variations and combinations of these views. Organisations will act according to their own beliefs, and also may look at short term objectives from other beliefs that will move them towards their ultimate goals. For example, an animal rights group may campaign for improved welfare standards for farm animals, even though their ultimate goal is to stop animals from being used as food.

Development of animal rights and welfare

Animal issues have become part of the agenda in many different fields. For example:

- Science: Huge advances in animal welfare research – pain, behaviour, needs
- Law: Cases for the rights of animals; Great Ape Project – granting rights to non-human apes
- Psychology/Social sciences: Human-animal interaction
- Philosophy/Ethics: Arguments for animal rights
- Intergovernmental considerations – e.g. EU policies
- International animal protection campaigns and assistance



Animal protection work in China

	West	East (China)
Social Concept	Individualism	Collectivism
Protection	Animal welfare Prevention of cruelty Ethics Sustainable living	Kindness, love (Anthropocentrism) Wildlife conservation Part of environmental ethics Focus on development
Agent	Charities and pressure groups	Few individuals and/or volunteers
Campaign	Media Lobby Legislation	No /low understanding No specialists Does not exist or no enforcement

China: Too large, too many, too much

- Incredibly large area
- Unbelievable population: 1.3 Billion
- Impossible (?) to feed but 8% GNP annual increase
- Unimaginable animal suffering

Everything multiplied by 1.3 billion becomes inconceivably large

Everything divided by 1.3 billion becomes unbelievably small.

-Premier Wen, 2003

Development of NGOs in China:

- NGOs are bridges between the public and the Government
- GNGOs are bridges between the NGOs and the Government

Current situation:

- More NGOs have been established.
- The role of NGOs is also developing and NGOs have become more important in public issues.
- Public awareness activities are increasing, and public concern is developing.
- More and more people take interest in public affairs.

Encouraging developments within the Chinese Animal Protection Movement:

- More companion animal groups have been established
- New groups are concerned with issues such as zoos, circuses and farm animals
- Growing positive feedback from the public and media interest in response to animal cruelty
- Existing animal issues but new approaches or arguments are being raised by local Chinese groups

Further resources:

- www.careforthewild.com – Care for the Wild International
- www.rspca.org.uk – Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
- www.hsus.org – Humane Society of the US
- www.peta.org – People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals
- www.buav.org – British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection

