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Discussion of Inconsiderate Cruelty Towards Animals: Further Arguments for Animal Rights

Głos w dyskusji nad bezrefleksyjnym powodowaniem cierpienia zwierząt –
argumenty na rzecz praw zwierząt

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Abstract: This work focuses primarily on animal rights in the United States within the context of the specific legal system existing in that country. It argues that animal rights as recognized by state law are limited, in the sense that enforcement can occur only through public prosecution. If horses and cows are beaten and mistreated at a local farm, or if greyhounds are forced to live in small cages, protection will come only if the prosecutor decides to provide it. However, as prosecutors have limited budgets, and animal protection is rarely a priority the result is that violations of state law occur every day. We contend that there is no good reason to accept the level of suffering that is now being experienced by millions of living creatures. Doubts have been raised about the radical idea that animals deserve to have “autonomy”, understood as a right to be free from human control and use. In our view, the primary focus should instead be on animal welfare and suffering. While animals should not be treated merely as tools for human purposes, it is possible for humans to control them in ways that still allow animals to have decent lives. However, emphasis on minimizing suffering and ensuring decent lives for animals has significant implications. It is appropriate to consider human interests in this equation, because most times human interests take precedence over those of animals. Adopting the conversational method of inquiry, we claim that often the interests of animals are entirely disregarded, and if they were considered, many of our current practices would be indefensible.

Keywords: animal rights, animal welfare, animal ethics, meat consumption, Tom Regan

Streszczenie: Niniejsza praca koncentruje się na prawach zwierząt w Stanach Zjednoczonych biorąc pod uwagę system prawny obowiązujący w tym kraju. Autorzy uważają, że *prawa zwierząt* w świetle praw stanowych, są ograniczone, w tym sensie, że egzekwowanie zapisów prawnych może być wymuszone jedynie przez oskarżyciela publicznego. Jeśli konie czy krowy są bite lub źle traktowane na farmach lub jeśli psy gończe są *zmuszane do życia w małych klatkach*, o ich prawa może się upomnieć jedynie prokurator. Natomiast, trzeba zwrócić uwagę, że prokuratorzy mają ograniczone budżety, a kwestia ochrony zwierząt rzadko jest priorytetem, więc codziennością jest łamanie prawa stanowego. Autorzy są zdania, że nie ma *żadnego* powodu, aby akceptować taki poziom cierpienia, jakiego dzisiaj doświadczają miliony żywych stworzeń. Pojawiło się wiele wątpliwości w kwestii radykalnych pomysłów nadania zwierzętom “niezależności”, rozumianej jako prawo do wolności od ludzkiej kontroli i użytkowania. Naszym zdaniem, powinniśmy się skupić na dobrostanie zwierząt i ograniczeniu ich cierpienia. Zwierząt nie należy traktować jedynie jako zasobów, z których swobodnie korzysta człowiek, możliwe jest natomiast panowanie nad nimi w taki sposób, by zapewnić im godne życie. Należy jednak pamiętać, że

minimalizacja cierpienia zwierząt i zapewnienie im godnego życia niesie za sobą znaczące konsekwencje. W tym równaniu należy uwzględnić interesy ludzkie, ponieważ w większości przypadków interesy ludzkie mają pierwszeństwo przed interesami zwierząt. Przyjmując konwersacyjną metodę dociekań, twierdzimy, że często interesy zwierząt są całkowicie pomijane, a gdyby były wzięte pod uwagę, wiele z naszych obecnych zachowań i praktyk byłoby nie do zaakceptowania.

Słowa kluczowe: prawa zwierząt, dobrostan zwierząt, etyka zwierząt, spożycie mięsa, Tom Regan

Introduction

If we understand “rights” to be legal protection against harm, then many animals already do have rights, and the idea of animal rights is not at all controversial. And if we take “rights” to mean a moral claim to such protection, there seems to be a general agreement that animals have rights of certain kinds. Scholars such as Descartes have argued that animals are like machines and that they lack emotions. Therefore, people should be allowed to treat them according to their will. But to most people, including fierce critics of the idea of animal rights, this position seems unacceptable. Some people agree that animals should not be subjected to torture or cruelty. Indeed, state law contains a wide range of protections against cruelty and neglect (Gary 2000, 2).

We can build on existing laws to define a simple, minimal position in favour of animal rights: *The law should prevent acts of cruelty to animals*. In the United States, state anticruelty laws go well beyond prohibiting beating, injuring, and the like, and impose affirmative duties on people who have animals in their care. In New York, certain penalties are imposed on anyone who transports an animal in a cruel or inhumane manner, or in such a way as to subject it to torture or suffering, conditions that can come about through neglect. People who transport an animal on railroads or cars are required to allow the animal out for rest, feeding, and water every five hours (Gary 2000, 2). Non owners who have impounded or confined an animal are obliged to provide fresh air, water, shelter, and food. Those who

abandon an animal, including a pet, in public places can face criminal penalties.

The anticruelty prohibitions sharply contrast, in this respect, with most prohibitions protecting human beings, which can be enforced both publicly and privately. For example, the prohibitions on assault and theft can be enforced through criminal prosecutions, brought by public officials, and also by injured citizens, proceeding directly against those who have violated the law. Second, the anticruelty provisions of state law contain extraordinarily large exceptions. They do not ban hunting, and generally they do not regulate hunting in a way that is designed to protect animals against suffering. Usually, they do not apply to the use of animals for medical or scientific purposes. To a large degree, they do not apply to the production and use of animals as food. The latter exemption is the most important. About ten billion animals are killed for food annually in the United States. 24,000,000 chickens and some 323,000 pigs are slaughtered every day (David 2003, 11). The cruel and abusive practices generally involved in contemporary farming are largely unregulated at the state level. Because the overwhelming majority of animals are produced and used for food, the coverage of anticruelty law is exceedingly narrow (David 2003, 11).

This work is divided into five sections. Section one is devoted to introduction, and it outlines the nature of the existing rights of animals. Section two considers the idea of animal welfare and Regan’s case for animal rights. Ethical views and animal welfare form the main crux of section three. Section

four is devoted to a discussion of the importance of animal welfare. The work ends with evaluation and conclusion in section five.

1. Enforcing Existing Rights

If animal suffering matters, as most reasonable people believe, we should be concerned about the limitations in animal welfare. A straightforward solution is to close the “enforcement gap” by allowing private lawsuits in cases of cruelty and neglect. Reforms could ensure that existing laws are enforced in practice. This broader view of animal rights suggests that animal representatives should be able to file lawsuits to enforce anti-cruelty laws. For instance, if a farm is cruelly treating horses in violation of legal standards, a lawsuit could be filed on behalf of those animals to ensure compliance (Singer 2002, 7).

This proposal might seem radical, perhaps implying that animals could sue in their own names, though the suits would clearly aim to protect animals, not humans. While this idea may appear absurd, it is more straightforward and conventional than it seems. Naturally, animals would be represented by humans, similar to the way children are represented in legal matters. If children’s interests are protected through private litigation, why oppose similar efforts for animals by supplementing prosecutors’ powers with private lawsuits? The main concern might be that some lawsuits could be unjustified or frivolous, driven by ideological commitments rather than actual legal violations, potentially straining the legal system.

If these risks are real, perhaps other issues deserve higher priority than animal care. However, instead of banning these lawsuits, the best response would be to make those who file frivolous claims pay the defendants’ attorney’s fees. It is hard to argue that animal cruelty should be ignored altogether. Even those who mock the idea of animal rights usually support anti-cruelty laws and should back efforts to enforce them, including more regulation of hunting, experiments, and farming. Beyond addressing

the enforcement gap, the law should also provide more protection where it currently falls short. For example, further regulations on hunting, scientific experiments, entertainment, and especially farming could reduce unnecessary animal suffering. Some European nations have already made progress in this direction.

Federal law could require scientists to justify animal experiments before a committee, ensuring that they are necessary and that animals suffer as little as possible. Although steps have been taken, there is room for further action. If dogs or chimpanzees are used in medical research, they should be well cared for. Similar controls could apply to agriculture; animals raised for food should be treated humanely in terms of nutrition, space, and care. For instance, the European Union has banned standard wire cages for hens, requiring perches and nesting boxes. If we focus on reducing suffering, it is not necessarily wrong to kill animals for food, but it is wrong to ignore their welfare while they are alive. This principle should apply to all farm animals, especially when they are used for human benefit. Hunting purely for recreation could even be banned.

However, hunting might be justified for population control, food, or protection from animal attacks. A minimal reform could require companies to disclose their animal welfare practices, either voluntarily or by mandate. Companies that treat animals well might benefit in the market, while those that treat them poorly might be punished by consumers (Peter 2002, 13).

2. Exploitation of Animals

In the course of discussing the exploitation of animals in “Animal Welfare and Animal Rights: An Examination of Some Ethical Problems” Nibedita opines that in their reckless pursuit of “development”, human beings neglect the welfare of other animals, disrupting their habitats and endangering their lives. Despite their intelligence, humans exploit animals due to their narrow perspective. This continuous exploitation raises concerns

for animal welfare and rights. The two concepts, i.e., animal welfare and animal rights differ significantly. The former is indifferent about the uses to which animals are put, but champions their comfort and freedom of movement, while the latter holds that animals have rights, which implies that humans have responsibilities towards them (for more differences see March 1984; Silberman 1988; Morrison 2009; Bekoff 2010). The concept of welfare can be made more effective, even though some of the animal welfare legislation already enacted by various states precludes rights, hence, fails to do complete justice to the issue. Since the two concepts have emerged out of concern about the many ways in which animals are exploited and cruelly treated, it is important to discuss them briefly and to analyze the ethical problems that they give rise to.

2.1. Killing for Consumption

Our dietary choices significantly impact the lives of animals. Before being used as food, animals are often kept in appalling conditions. For instance, breeding sows are confined in gestation stalls, and chickens are cramped in small cages or battery crates, with their beaks cut off to prevent them from attacking each other. In some factories, chickens are even hung by their feet on a conveyer belt that leads them through an automatic throat-slitting machine. Similarly, pigs, goats, and veal calves are kept in cages so small they cannot move or develop muscles. These animals are bred and raised solely to provide food for humans.

We justify this process by citing the nutritional value of meat, such as its vitamins and proteins. While consuming meat may be necessary in some regions, in others, these nutrients can be obtained from fruits, vegetables, nuts, and other plant-based foods. This justification, however, may simply mask a deep-seated human desire to eat meat. Another flawed argument is that since animals eat each other, there is nothing wrong with humans doing the same (Franklin 1950).

This reasoning overlooks the fact that animals, unlike humans, are physiologically designed to kill and consume other animals, with no alternative. Lions, for example, eat deer because they are natural carnivores. In contrast, humans possess the unique ability to think ethically about their actions toward both other humans and animals, and the consequences that follow. Thus, the true issue is whether eating animals is morally justifiable—is it a necessity or merely a luxury?

2.2. Killing for Scientific Purposes

Animal experimentation is highly controversial. At some universities, dogs, monkeys, and rats are confined in small rooms with electrified floors, where they are exposed to unavoidable shocks to study their reactions to pain. Unfortunately, even prominent biologists have supported the use of animals in education. For instance, biologist Don Igelsrud (1987) advocated for the use of animals in biology classes, arguing that efforts to limit this practice have been successful largely because people do not view it as important.

Though gestation sow stalls and battery crates are banned in some developed countries such as the United Kingdom, they persist in countries such as China or India, despite higher welfare standards. While animal use in biomedical research is widely encouraged and practiced, Ringach (2011) argues that the contributions of animal research to medical science and human health are undeniable. He cites Darwin's view that animals do not have equal moral status to humans and suggests that halting research would condemn both animals and humans to suffer from disease, which Darwin deemed a "crime against humanity".

However, ethical dilemmas compel us to question whether animal experimentation is justified. Should countless innocent animals be sacrificed for human benefit, or should experimentation be stopped, despite potential human suffering? One might argue that animal experimentation is a necessary

evil, and that using animals in education or for meat is acceptable because of its contributions to human health. But this reasoning risks justifying all forms of animal exploitation.

Ultimately, to prevent animal suffering, we must consider ending all forms of animal use that lead to exploitation. Humans should seek alternative methods for testing new medicines and advancing scientific knowledge in more humane ways.

2.3. Killing for Luxury

Leather bags and shoes have become modern fashion symbols, yet fur and leather farms show little concern for the animals that die to sustain these industries. It is troubling to learn about the treatment of these animals. Typically, fur-bearing animals are confined in filthy, overcrowded wire cages, often elevated above the ground. Restricted in movement, exhausted, and terrified, these animals frequently exhibit aggressive and psychotic behaviours. Their suffering does not end in the cages; they are killed painfully, often by having their necks severed or being electrocuted to preserve their fur. Numerous documented cases reveal even more horrific practices. The fur industry serves no essential human need, as there are alternative materials for warmth. As Donald VanDeVeer suggests, while human needs may sometimes outweigh animal needs, the basic needs of animals should take precedence over non-essential human desires (VanDeVeer and Pierce 2003). We can live fulfilling lives without luxury items derived from animal cruelty. This discussion highlights how animal welfare policies can alleviate suffering and prompt the evolution of animal rights. Although these policies might improve the lives of animals before they are killed, their true significance remains unclear. A closer look at animal welfare is necessary before further examination.

3. The Idea of Animal Welfare and Regan's Case for Animal Rights

There is no universal method for handling animals. As a result, defining animal welfare involves examining a variety of issues, and it is a rather complex endeavour. Researchers tend to define it based on their own convenience and the perspective of their respective disciplines. Thus, one must observe that the concept of animal welfare has many dimensions, including the scientific, ethical, political, and so on (Lund et al. 2006). The scientific dimension can be further divided on the basis of ethology, physiology, and psychology. Accordingly, scientists from the discipline of ethology study all about animals including the development of behavioural systems, which helps them to understand stress in animals (Millman et al. 2004). Human beings are rational, self-conscious autonomous beings. They are well aware of what is happening (good and bad) to them. They have intellectual capacity, ability to make ethical judgments, and aesthetic sense with features that distinguish them from other beings or things. However, even though they are endowed with these sophisticated qualities, yet they are not entitled to exploit animals.

In the first three chapters of *The Case for Animal Rights*, Tom Regan argues that considerations of welfare, of well- or ill-being do literally apply to animals. Animals do actually have a welfare or ill fare that we can either cater for or ignore. It is interesting that some philosophers in the past have actually denied this claim. Rene Descartes comes foremost to mind. It is perhaps in order for us to point out that we accept the thesis that animals do feel pain, have desires, perhaps emotions, and in some rudimentary sense, thoughts. Regan, however, goes further than most of us would be inclined to on this important point. He insists that animals have "concepts," and indeed that they have "perception, memory, desire, belief, self-consciousness, intention, a sense of the future – these are among the leading attributes of the mental life

of normal mammalian animals aged one or more" (Regan 1983, 81).

Most of us have had pets at one time or another and are familiar with the range of behaviour on the basis of which Regan makes these strong attributions. To most of us, it will seem not plausible to assert that animals have all of these capacities without severe qualification. In particular, we would be inclined to point to the evidence concerning linguistic behaviour as an indication that the mental life of animals is a pretty thin stuff compared to that of normal humans. As Regan is aware, recent work on the linguistic capabilities of chimpanzees, the most promising of land-based mammals for these purposes, points to the conclusion that chimpanzees "do not have the ability for language acquisition equal to that of young children" (Regan 1983, 14).

Regan was only concerned with the exploration of this aspect of animal attainments as a test for their possession of consciousness. We accept the view that one can have consciousness without knowing any language at all. But linguistic ability is surely evidence of mental complexity, while the inability to acquire language strongly suggests lack of intellectual ability. And it seems that even very retarded human beings, evidently, are very far in advance of even very bright animals in this regard. The problem with chimpanzees is not that they have not acquired such fluency despite their cognitive capacity for acquiring it. Rather it is that they lack that capacity, so far as all current evidence indicates.

Moreover, Regan's assessment of the facts here suggests that in his view, higher mental attainment is really irrelevant to the question of whether a being deserves moral consideration. And this seems very disputable indeed. Animals are conscious, but, perhaps, being conscious is not all that counts. There are, of course, other extremely impressive animal skills one can point to. The singular homing abilities of some species, for instance, the incredible mechanisms for self-defence or attack, the astonishing capacity

for self-sacrifice displayed by ants and bees, and so on.

All these are certainly enough to intrigue even the most minimally curious among us. But do they provide support for the view that these beings have moral rights? Interestingly enough, such attributes of animals have no obvious role to play in Regan's case at all. He is very concerned with showing that animals have welfare, that they suffer and they enjoy, that they do indeed have lives to live and lose. But why, we may ask, should we be impressed by that? What we want to know is why these things matter, specifically, why they matter enough to give us good reason to refrain from the many activities in which we make use of animals to their detriment, e.g., by eating them or experimenting with them or wearing their fur. In a crucial chapter four of his book titled "Ethical Thinking and Theory," Regan articulates his methodology in thinking about these issues. A number of criteria are laid down for making an ideal moral judgment and more for appraising proposed moral principles, most of them uncontroversial. But we want to have a closer look at two which loom very large in his arguments: 1. impartiality and 2. conformity to our intuitions.

Impartiality is something moral philosophers regard as essential to basic moral principles. We cannot have a basic moral principle that says "such-and-such is right for John Jones but wrong for everyone else." Nor can we have one that says, "such-and-such is right for people, but wrong for everyone else?" Recent writers on this matter have coined the ugly word, "speciesism," to stand for precisely such views. They wish to hold that "speciesism" is as untenable as racism, or John Jonesism, i.e., a moral philosophy which says that everyone must do whatever John Jones says. We think they are right about this but noting just the way they think. We shall return to this later. Now, let us consider this argument of Regan's: "If to cause suffering is wrong, then it is wrong no matter who is made to suffer" (Regan 1983, 129).

Not many would disagree. Indeed, how could they? No doubt if suffering, just as such, is wrong, it follows logically that it is wrong (*prima facie*) in all cases. But is it thus wrong? Does suffering matter, just all by itself? Or does there have to be a reason why the sufferings of a given being matter? That is the question, and it is one which simple logic will not decide for us. This brings us to the other criterion, i.e., “conformity to our moral intuitions.” In the past, philosophers were inclined to argue that we have a special faculty of moral truth, a little black box in the soul that tells us when something is right and when not. Regan does not buy this view; of course, it is easily shown to be untenable. Another thing he does not mean is that we can test moral principles just by asking any Tom, Dick, or Henrietta whether they happen to agree with them. When he talks about intuition, he means of course, reflective intuition.

4. Rights and Reciprocity

Elizabeth Anderson (1993; 2005) discusses how sceptics of animal rights, who do not merely question animal minds, often argue that animals cannot possess rights because they lack the rational capacity to engage in reciprocal relations with other rational beings. This argument is grounded in a contractual intuition, where moral rights are seen as stemming from rational agreements or conventions based on a balanced exchange of interests or reasons. This perspective is independent of any historical contract. For Kant (1981), only rational beings can have rights because they are the only ones who are ends in themselves and deserve respect. Kant’s idea of respect involves treating beings according to principles they have reasons to accept, which only rational beings can do. Therefore, only rational beings can be subjects of respect, and only principles that all rational beings can accept are morally right. The concept of reciprocity is fundamental to Kantian theories, similar to contractual frameworks.

Two responses challenge this argument. The first is to deny the major premise that only those capable of reciprocal relations can hold moral rights. This is the Argument from Marginal Cases (AMC). Advocates for animal rights point out that we grant moral rights to humans who cannot reason or engage in reciprocal relations, such as infants, severely retarded individuals, the insane, and the demented, who still have rights, including the right to life. Since these rights are not based on rationality, they must stem from other capacities, such as sentience and emotional capacities. The AMC argues that some animals possess these capacities and thus should have the same rights as these “marginal” humans.

We have already exposed some weaknesses in this style of argument. Rights bearers enjoy some rights not in virtue of their intrinsic capacities, but in virtue of their membership in human society, the requirements of standing in a particular sort of relationship to humans, or the interests of other people in standing in a certain relationship to the rights bearer. It is not clear which rights are dependent on social relations in one of these ways. At least, the immediate derivation of rights from the bare possession of certain capacities or interests, without regard to the interests and capacities of the agents supposedly bound by those rights claims, or the relations of rights bearers to moral agents so bound, cannot withstand scrutiny.

The second response to sceptics is to deny the minor premise that animals cannot engage in reciprocal relations with humans. Vicki Hearne, a philosophically sophisticated animal trainer, adopts this strategy, offering insights into animals and the importance of reciprocity through her accounts of animal training. Hearne describes how riders and horses communicate through touch, where both strive to understand each other (Hearne 1986, 107-108). Properly trained dogs also demonstrate reciprocal relations with humans, earning rights through their understanding and obedience to commands.

The authority that owners hold over dogs is earned through responsible command, respecting the dog's "right to the consequences of its actions," such as the right to discipline, which is necessary for learning behaviours essential for rights to freedom. Similar to children, these rights and conditions apply to humans, particularly in civil rights.

Hearne observes that we do not grant civil rights to humans without first assuming authority over them as teachers, parents, and friends. Yet, we argue that rights can be granted to animals without first establishing the commitment demonstrated in training them. The "okay" command is an achievement not of love but of granting and earning rudimentary rights, such as the freedom of the house, which is contingent on specific behaviours. In most adult human relationships, less correction is needed to grant house privileges, but such privileges still depend on the potential for correction.

Discipline, according to Hearne, ennobles the dog by establishing the reciprocal, cooperative relations necessary for earning civil rights and civil respect. There are many lessons in Hearne's account, particularly the connection between having rights and the capacity for mutual accommodation of interests—adapting behaviour in response to the claims, corrections, and commands of others. This capacity for reciprocity, rather than autonomous reflection on the validity of claims, is crucial to understanding why reciprocity is important for rights. While reason is sufficient for reciprocity, Hearne's examples show it is not necessary. The capacity for reciprocity commands esteem, obliging recognition of rights. However, binding oneself to respect the rights of creatures incapable of reciprocity could lead to intolerable conditions for moral agents, such as slavery or self-immolation, which is unreasonable to demand from any autonomous agent.

To illustrate this, Anderson discusses the case of vermin like certain species of rats and mice, which have adapted to live within

human spaces. These creatures are human symbionts, unable to survive in the wild. By the logic of animal rights advocates like Regan, these animals have a right to life, implying that exterminating or expelling them violates their rights. However, this reasoning fails to consider the consequences of granting rights to creatures that inherently act against human interests. Vermin cannot adjust their behaviour to accommodate human interests, making communication or compromise impossible. With them, humans are in a permanent state of war, unable to negotiate for peace. This issue will be further explored in the next section of the paper, which examines different ethical views on animal welfare.

5. Ethical Views and Animal Welfare

Animal welfare is a contentious issue, partly because people's perceptions about animal welfare are driven by their ethical views. There are many different ethical views regarding the use of animals. Prominent ethical views regarding the use and treatment of animals include animal rights, utilitarianism, contractarianism etc.

Animal Rights

Animal rights focus on moral rather than legal rights. While legal rights are enforced by law, moral rights are based on ethics and personal beliefs. The animal rights perspective argues that animals have inherent value and certain actions against them are wrong, regardless of human benefit. Some other advocates believe animals should have rights equal to humans, opposing their use for food, research, or as pets. Other scholars think animals deserve respectful treatment while still interacting with humans (Singer 1975; Regan 1983).

Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism considers the interest of all involved, including animal and humans, and weighs the consequences of actions. It justifies activities that may harm some animals if the overall welfare of humans and

animal increases. For instance, some utilitarians argue its morally acceptable to raise and slaughter animals for meat if they lived well, were humanely killed, and the benefits to people outweigh the harm to the animals (Bentham 1789; Mill 1957).

Contractarianism

Contractarianism argues that people act morally out of self-interest, as it benefits them. People enter agreements for mutual benefits, relying on each other's cooperation. While animals cannot make agreements, their treatment matters if it affects people involved in the contract, such as when animals are considered property or hold value to someone. The focus is on people who care about the animals, not the animals themselves.

6. The Importance of Animal Welfare

Animals are used for a variety of things. Why should society be concerned about their welfare in the first place? One argument is that humans have a moral obligation to care for animals because many domesticated animals and animals in captivity depend on humans for their survival. Humans have relied on animals (non-human animals) for survival and have used animals for different purposes for thousands of years. Today, animals continue to be bred and used for various purposes, such as food, fibre, medicine, research, companions, service animals and pets, to name a few. Many people will argue that it is only right that humans care for animals.

People's concern over animal welfare continues to increase. The increased interest in animal welfare in recent years is reflected in the number of laws that have been passed pertaining to animal agriculture. Since 2019, 12 U.S. states have passed some type of legislation or policy pertaining to farm animal housing; some examples are California (Farm Animal Welfare Council 1979). Along with the increase in animal welfare-related legislation, there has been an increase in the number of animal welfare organizations

and certification and food labelling programs. The increase in legislation and certification programs has been driven, in part, by consumers' interest in, and concern for, animal welfare. Indeed, animal welfare is incorporated into the decisions that consumers make when they buy food products (Olynk 2012). Concern for animal welfare differs depending on the species of animal being considered. For example, a recent study found that concern for animal welfare among U.S. residents is higher for dairy cattle than for turkeys and chickens (Bir et al. 2019). Concern for animal welfare depends on several factors, such as gender and whether people own pets, among other factors (Bir et al. 2019).

Today, animal welfare remains an important topic in animal agriculture, and it is important to understand what it means, so that people can make informed decisions when voting on legislation and buying products at the grocery store. The choices people may affect animals, farmers producing animal products, and consumers of animal products.

Conclusion

Although not every person believes in animal rights, even the fiercest critics of animal rights tend to support the anti-cruelty laws. This paper argues that the simple moral judgment behind these laws is that animal welfare and suffering does matter. This judgment supports a significant amount of reform. Most modestly, private suits should be permitted to prevent illegal cruelty and neglect. There is no good reason to give public officials a monopoly on enforcement; that monopoly is a recipe for continued illegality. Less modestly, anticruelty laws should be extended to areas that are now exempt from them, including scientific experiments and farming.

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