

Springboard

into
Comprehension

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Discussion

Animal Issues



Written by Jean O'Dea



Animal Issues



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Introduction

As long as humans have walked Earth, they have used animals for their own needs. They have hunted them for their meat and fur. They have used them to work the land and carry loads. In more recent times, animals have also been used for scientific research. Many people, like the author of this book, are against humans using animals in this way and feel very strongly about it. Although the author is biased, she has also shown that there is more than one side to the story. Read on and decide what you think about these animal issues.

A French protest against the Canadian seal hunt in 2009



A demonstration in favour of animal testing at a United States university



What's the Issue?

Every year, millions of animals suffer and die at the hands of humans. They live short, miserable lives in scientific laboratories and on huge farms. Others are slaughtered for their fur in the name of fashion. How these animals live, die, and are used is a hotly debated topic.

Some people who eat or wear animal products have little idea of where the products come from, or how the animals that provide them lived. They may not be aware of how their medicines or household products were tested to make them safe to use. They may not care.

However, some people have very strong opinions about these issues. Some of them believe that animals have the right to be treated like humans and not used in any way. These people work to promote animal rights.

Some people believe that it is acceptable to farm animals and to use them for testing medications, but they insist that these animals should be well cared for and their needs met. They are committed to promoting animal welfare.

Some people believe that humans have the right to use animals. They argue that other animals kill for food and since humans are animals, it is natural for humans to kill animals, too.

The issues of animal rights and animal welfare raise a long list of questions.

- Is it OK to farm some animals, but not others?
- Is it OK to eat some animals, but not others?
- Are all animals equal?
- Is swatting a pesky mosquito the same as clubbing a baby seal?
- Is it OK to use animals in experiments as long as the animals do not suffer?

Some animals are farmed for their fur to make clothing.



In the Laboratory

Most household products, such as cosmetics and cleaning products, contain chemicals, so when new products are being developed, the makers have to run tests to make sure they are safe for people to use. Frequently, such products are tested on animals. For example, scientists might feed an animal one of the chemical ingredients or put the chemical on an animal's skin or in its eyes. They might test how much an animal can take before it reacts to the chemical or dies, so many of these animals suffer.

Some countries are starting to ban animal testing for the manufacture of cosmetics.



Experiments on Animals

Today, doctors are able to carry out complex life-saving surgery and treat many once life-threatening diseases successfully. Many scientists argue that these procedures or treatments could not have been developed without first experimenting on animals.

Every year, thousands of scientists depend on live-animal experiments for their research. This is called **vivisection**. These experiments are used to study diseases, and to develop new treatments and surgical procedures. Because most animals do not suffer from the same diseases as humans, scientists need to recreate the effects of the disease in the animals. For example, scientists have inflicted brain damage on monkeys to study a disease that affects the human brain, called Parkinson's disease.

Some people believe that vivisection is necessary and that the sacrifice of a few animals is worth saving thousands of human lives. Others believe that it is OK to test some things on animals, but not other things. Still others argue that all vivisection and tests on animals are cruel and should be banned.

Operations, such as transplant surgery, were tried out on animals before being done on humans. Here, the lucky recipient of a kidney (left) meets his donor.



What do you think?
Would you want to take a medicine that had not been tested on animals first?

Animal Activists

There are many animal rights groups around the world. Some of them have enough financial support from their followers to do publicity and print leaflets. Here is an example of a flyer from this kind of group.

Animal Testing Lab – EXPOSED!



"The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated."

– Mahatma Gandhi (Indian leader), 1869–1948

I wonder how Gandhi would rate our nation, considering what a member of our animal rights group revealed. She spent a year working undercover at an animal research laboratory, feeding the animals and cleaning the cages. What she witnessed was absolutely horrifying, but she carried on so she could reveal to the world the acts of shocking cruelty, or atrocities, that she witnessed.

Our courageous agent was in charge of monkeys that were being used in painful experiments for medical research. First, the monkeys endured a 30-hour flight inside tiny crates that didn't give them enough room to stand up. By the time they arrived in the lab, they were so frightened that they were cowering in their crates and had wounds from the sharp edges inside.

The monkeys were kept alone in small cages and were only taken out when awful experiments were performed on them. They suffered terribly, enduring stress, fear, and pain. Animal doctors, or veterinarians, were not available to treat wounds, so many animals died.

Monkeys are highly intelligent animals, similar to humans in many ways. They live in family groups, need affection, and feel pain, just like humans. It would be wrong to keep humans in cages and perform painful experiments on them, so we should not do it to animals. No animal deserves to suffer through such horrendous atrocities. End their misery now. Stop experiments on animals!

What do you think?

Are you more comfortable with experiments on mice than on monkeys?

