

Animal Rights

What is Animal Rights?

Animal Rights is the philosophy of allowing non-human animals to have the most basic rights that all sentient beings desire: the freedom to live a natural life free from human exploitation, unnecessary pain and suffering, and premature death. This is what the animal rights movement is about; it is not about working for equality between human and non-human animals.

How is Animal Rights different from Animal Welfare?

Proponents of animal welfare seek to alleviate the suffering of animals while they are being exploited --- without attempting to question the fundamental basis of whether it is acceptable to exploit animals in the first place. Animal rights beliefs reject the idea that animals need to have a value to the human species in order to be deserving of rights. A person can work for both animal welfare and animal rights.

How is Animal Rights Related to Human Rights?

Since the beginning of recorded history, humans have tried to maintain their dominance over others. As humanity began to grow intellectually and socially, it became apparent that many feeling beings were being discriminated against --- that is, having rights taken away from them --- because of the class to which they belonged.

...we must learn to protect both other humans and non-human animals. How does humanity intend to solve differences among its own species when it cannot learn to make peace with other animals on earth? Humans need to start thinking and living in terms of co-existence, as opposed to dominance.

Bringing About Change.

Though it seems impossible for humans always to act perfectly, animal rights activists strive not to hurt other beings. Therefore, logically, animal rights activists should use only nonviolent means to bring about changes. As in any movement, there are many different approaches, which can vary from

letter writing to civil disobedience in the style of Martin Luther King or Mahatma Gandhi (a vegetarian and human rights organizer).

Animal Rights Concerns.

People involved in animal rights have many different opinions. A few of the issues that concern them: fur, wool, wildlife, aquariums and zoos, pets or companion animals, cosmetic testing on animals, use of animals in entertainment, medical experiments on animals. ...The majority of animals killed unnecessarily are often forgotten --- these are the animals raised for food.

Vegetarianism.

In order to save the most animals, increasing numbers of animal rights activists are becoming vegetarian. The bonus in this dietary change is that vegetarians have lower rates of heart disease, osteoporosis, and certain forms of cancer than flesh eaters. In addition, vegetarians are also helping the environment and the world hunger problem since less water, land, and energy are need to feed a person on a vegetarian diet than on an animal-based diet.

Vegetarians do not eat meat, poultry, and fish. Vegans are vegetarians who abstain from eating or using all animal products. ...The key to a healthy vegetarian diet, as with any other diet, is to eat a wide variety of foods, including fruits, vegetables, plenty of leafy greens, whole grain products, nuts, seeds, and legumes. Limit your intake of sweets and fatty foods.

(The above information was excerpted from "What Is Animal Rights?" and reprinted with permission from the Vegetarian Resource Group, PO Box 1463, Baltimore, MD 21203.)