

Avoid Being Abstract When Making Policies on the Welfare of Animals

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In this chapter, I am going to discuss two main issues from the viewpoint of a person who has worked for thirty-five years finding practical ways to improve the treatment of cattle and pigs. I have worked to design better equipment and to teach people behavioral principles for moving and handling livestock.¹ The first issue is the importance of staying in touch with what is actually happening on the ground, in farms and in slaughter plants. This is important for implementing effective reforms. The second half of the chapter will discuss the use of animals for food. Before I delve into the issues, I would like to provide some background about myself.

During the 1970s, the main focus of my career was designing better equipment for handling cattle.² Cattle handling practices in the 1970s were rough and absolutely awful, and I worked hard to improve animal treatment. During the 1980s, I learned that I had to shift my focus, because better equipment alone could not completely solve all animal handling problems. Good equipment is essential for calm, careful animal handling, but it is useless unless it has good management to go with it. During the 1980s and early 1990s I spent many weeks giving lectures and training feedlot and slaughter plant employees on behavioral principles of cattle handling. I soon learned that training the managers was more important than training the employees. To make change take place, I had to convince the managers that calmer, gentler methods would be an economic benefit by providing better animal weight gain, bruise reduction, and fewer accidents. Ethical reasons alone were not sufficient to convince the manager to change the practices.

In 1999, I was hired by McDonald's to implement animal welfare audits in slaughter plants. I trained their food safety auditors to use a simple objective scoring system for evaluating stunning and handling.³ This resulted in some great improvements. When huge customers such as McDonald's, Wendy's, and Burger King started using their vast purchasing power to enforce standards, great improvements took place.⁴ During 1999 and 2000, I witnessed more improvements than I had seen previously during a twenty-five year career. My work on improving animal welfare has been recognized by animal advocacy groups such as PETA and the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS). I received the Joseph Wood Krutch Medal from the HSUS in 2001 and the Proggy Award from PETA in 2004.⁵ My work has also been recognized by awards from the American Veterinary Medical Association and the Dodge Foundation.

WELFARE ISSUES STOP BEING ABSTRACT AND START BECOMING REAL

When I first started working with McDonald's, Wendy's, Burger King, and other companies, I took vice president level executives on their first trips to farms, feedlots, and slaughter plants. When conditions were good they were pleased, but when conditions were bad they were shocked and horrified. I remember the day when one of the vice presidents saw a half-dead, emaciated old dairy cow walking up the ramp in a slaughter plant that made their hamburgers. This motivated that vice president to implement animal welfare auditing. In the mind of this executive, animal welfare had now changed from an abstract issue that was delegated to the public relations department or to the company lawyers to something real that was causing suffering.

Executives in other industries have also had eye-opening experiences. I read an op-ed column in the *New York Times* about an executive who worked for a large health insurance company as the director of communications.⁶ His job was to fight against reforms in health care that could hurt the profitability of his company. At the age of fifty-six, he quit his job after he visited a three-day charity health program that was held at the local fairgrounds. The sight of hundreds of desperate poor people receiving free health care from doctors working in the animal stalls changed his views on the need for health care reforms. His conscience started bothering him, and he could no longer help his insurance company employer fight reforms that would help these poor people. Both of these cases clearly illustrate the importance of actually observing the people or the animals that a policy has an effect on. I've had the opportunity to watch many executives make the transition from considering changes in the abstract to actually mobilizing their companies to make real reforms.

I AM A VISUAL THINKER

I am a visual thinker, and I do not think purely in words.⁷ My work has been hands-on out in the field. Half the cattle in North America are handled with equipment I have designed.⁸ My ability to think in pictures has really helped me to understand animal behavior and design better facilities for handling them.⁹ To understand anything, I have to have a picture in my imagination. If I have no picture, I have no thought.

Compared to other authors in this book, my approach to animal welfare issues will be much less abstract. To understand a concept I have to convert it to a series of concrete examples so that I can see them like scenes in a movie. For example, when I think about the statement "cruelty to animals is wrong," I immediately see "video clips" from my memory of really awful things being done to animals, and I recall scenes from either undercover videos or cruel acts I have witnessed. Some examples would be people bearing pigs with metal rods, bashing an old dairy cow with a forklift, or poking an animal's eyes out. When I read the statement "Good stockmanship and management greatly improves animal welfare" I recall pictures from my memory of farms I have visited where animals were treated really well. I see the beautiful Singing Valley Ranch in Arizona¹⁰ and an immaculate dairy run by a manager who really cared about his cows. I don't think about either of these statements in an abstract way; using just words.

Words are the terms I type into my own internal "search engine" to bring up pictures from my memory. My mind works a lot like a search for photos on the Internet. During my long career, I have seen both the very best and the worst places. When I train animal welfare auditors and inspectors, I always tell them that travel is a great educator. Traveling to many different places enables a person to gain a more realistic perspective; especially when they view the very best, the mediocre, and the worst places. They need to see a wide range of places. I have talked to many U.S. policy makers who have made policies on both humane slaughter and food safety. Some of these people had never been in a slaughter plant. It is impossible for them to make realistic, practical policy if they have never visited the places they are making policy for. This is a big problem in Washington D.C. Abstractification clouds the perception of reality on all kinds of issues. "Abstractification" is *my* term for ideology and policy made by people who have no "on the ground" experience with the issue(s) they are making policy about.

VISUAL THINKING CHANGES MY APPROACH TO IMPROVING ANIMAL WELFARE

My approach to ethical thinking is bottom-up instead of being theory driven and top-down. Most people form a theory first and then fill in the details. I form my theories and general principles by looking at many specific details and then fit them together like a puzzle. To form a concept, I take many specific examples that I can visualize in pictures and put them into different categories; such as "cruelty to

animals” or “good stockmanship.” My ethical principles on animal treatment are based on visits to hundreds of farms and slaughter plants and my reading of many scientific studies. I use this combination of practical experience and academic science to form my opinions and ethical principles on how animals should be treated. I’ve concluded that I should work to get rid of the practices used in the bad places and promote the practices used in the good places. Later in this chapter, I will discuss in more detail my ethical principles for using animals for food.

When I learn of a new law or policy, I think, “How will this affect the treatment of animals on the farm or in a slaughter plant?” Many policies are so vague that inspectors and auditors in the field do not know how to enforce them. Another problem occurs when well-intentioned policies have unintended bad consequences.

POLICIES WITH BAD RESULTS IN THE FIELD

There are three kinds of really bad policies: ones that are too vague, ones that have unintended bad consequences and may make animal welfare worse, and ones where policy makers get information from sources on only one side of the issue.

Vague Policies

Many government agencies issue regulations that are so vague that nobody knows how to enforce them. This results in one inspector being extremely strict and another inspector who does no enforcement. An example would be a USDA food safety and inspection directive for the Humane Slaughter Act that requires facilities “to avoid agitation and excitement in animals.” One inspector may interpret this directive differently than another. The first inspector may think that hitting pigs and causing them to jump on top of each other and continually squeal was acceptable, another inspector might shut the plant down if one pig made a tiny squeal. The sensible level of enforcement would be somewhere in between these two extremes.

Some other examples of poor, vaguely written guidelines and policies would be these statements: “provide adequate space in a pen” and “handle the cattle properly”. One person’s idea of adequate space or proper handling may be totally different than somebody else’s. More specific wording would result in more consistent enforcement and make it easier for inspectors to do their jobs. For example: “all the cattle must have sufficient space in the stockyard pen to all lie down at the same time without being on top of each other”, and “cattle and pigs should not be forced to move faster than their normal walking speed.” I would like to ban the words “properly”, “adequate,” and “sufficient” from welfare guidelines unless these terms are defined.

Research has shown that the normal human mind tends to drop out details and autistic minds like mine tend to retain detail (Nancy Minshew, University of Pittsburgh, personal communication, 2006). This may help explain why some policies are so vague and ambiguous that make consistent enforcement is impossible. To help prevent policy makers from becoming too vague, they should keep in close contact with people who actually work in the field. I have observed that the most extreme and abstract ideologies on animal issues come from people who have lost touch with what is actually happening to the animals. In any field the most radical views, which often fail to translate into making actual reform occur, come from people with little or no practical experience. Ideology can become so generalized and vague that implementation in the field is impossible. Problems with being vague will worsen if the policy makers never visit farms or slaughter plants.

Policies with Unintended Bad Consequences

The closing of all the horse slaughter plants in the United States was attributable to advocacy by the HSUS. The ban on U.S. horse slaughter was well intentioned, but it has resulted in many severe horse

welfare problems. Some old horses suffered a fate worse than ending up at the worst horse slaughter plant. Thousands of horses are now being shipped to Mexico, and many of them go to barbaric slaughterhouses where they are killed by being stabbed in the back of the neck. When the U.S. plants closed, exports to Mexico went up 312 percent.¹¹ Old horses were also abandoned and left to starve, and most of the horse rescue places are at capacity. Closing the Mexican border to horse transport for slaughter will be impossible. Traders and dealers can obtain fake papers and bring the horses to Mexico disguised as breeding and riding horses, which is still legal. I have crossed the U.S. - Mexican border. Homeland security is a one-way valve. Getting into the United States is a two-hour hassle, but when you leave the United States, the Mexican border guard just waves you through. At a scientific meeting, I had a brief conversation with Andrew Rowen who works for the HSUS, about these unintended bad consequences of the horse slaughter ban. He replied, "It's a matter of values." His idea is that slaughtering horses for human consumption is wrong. Were I hired to implement that abstract concept - that slaughtering horses for human consumption was wrong - I would have approached the issue in a different way. Instead of suddenly shutting down plants that took surplus horses, I would have implemented a program similar to the programs that have effectively reduced the number of surplus pets that have to be euthanized.

The number of pets that have to be euthanized has been greatly reduced through more constructive approaches to the problem. A sudden shutdown of kill shelters would be a disaster. The need to euthanize surplus cats and dogs was reduced by addressing the *causes* of surplus pets. When the problem was addressed in this manner, kill shelters increasingly became obsolete. This approach should also have been used to make horse slaughter plants obsolete. Dog and cat surpluses have been reduced with effective spay-and-neuter programs, which reduce excessive breeding. To my knowledge, there has been little research on the numbers of backyard horses that are indiscriminately bred. As I ponder this issue, I am going through the picture files in my mind and looking at all the sources of surplus horses. Indian reservations are big sources of surplus horses. Sometimes horses are allowed to breed so Native American families have a source of income. Periodically, the wild horses were rounded up and sold for slaughter. I have observed horses from Indian reservations arriving at the horse slaughter plant in Nebraska shortly before it closed. Wild horses on the Indian reservations are not covered under the laws that govern the treatment of mustangs on BLM (Bureau of Land Management) lands.

Horses have another problem. A dog serves its function as a pet up until the day it dies; a horse has many years of life after it is no longer useable as a riding horse. To keep the horse for many more years when he can no longer be ridden is expensive. When I asked a supporter of the slaughter-ban policy about costs to low-income folks, he stated, "low-income people should not have horses." This answer is not going to improve the welfare of neglected surplus horses. The only way to implement reforms on this issue is for field workers to spend days and months researching and finding other solutions to reduce surplus horses. That takes long, hard, sustained work. The work I have done to improve slaughter plants for cattle and pigs required years of sustained work.

Policies That Fail to Look at Both Sides of the Issue

David Fraser, at the University of British Columbia, authored a very thoughtful paper on animal issues.¹² There is a tendency for some people to read literature from only one side of the debate.¹³ Both the animal advocates and the agricultural lobbyists have some very biased literature. Animal advocates put up videos that show the worst conditions in the worst slaughter plants, and animal agriculture advocates publish misleading literature that shows everything is wonderful. From my travels to over five hundred farms and slaughter plants in twenty-six different countries, I have learned that the reality and the truth are somewhere in the middle. Most slaughterhouses and pig farms do not house the atrocious conditions that can be viewed on YouTube or on animal activist Web sites. On the other hand, conditions

on farms are not as idyllic as the California “Happy Cow” milk commercials.

There is a need to read literature that is more from the middle of the road. In Washington D.C. and on the Internet, extremists on the absolute opposite sides of animal issues tend to be the most noticeable and vocal. I tend to ignore the extremists and try to read more thoughtful or more carefully researched information from both sides of the issue. I like to read literature that is more objective and less biased.

Over the years, I have observed that people who actually work hands on with animals will usually have less extreme views. These people can be on either general side of the debate. Constructive dialogue can take place with people who are more moderate. The people who are the most extreme often live in the abstract worlds of the courtroom, legislature, university classroom, or corporate upper management. They have lost contact with the animals and the people who work with them. On the other hand, people who work in the “trenches” can become desensitized to suffering.¹⁴ The most effective managers for maintaining high standards of animal welfare are involved enough to care but not so involved that they become desensitized to suffering. For example, in designing a slaughter plan the quality-assurance department will usually do a better job of enforcing animal welfare than will the slaughter floor manager.

I want to have dialogues with people who may disagree with me, but I want those dialogues to help make practical change in the real world, on the ground. It is impossible to have a dialogue with an extremist who thinks I am evil because I believe that using animals for food is ethical. I had one of these extremists attack me at a book signing. I told him that “we have to agree to disagree on the issue of eating meat,” but he just wanted to keep attacking and have no dialogue. When I talk to people who are more reasonable, we can agree to disagree on eating meat but discuss other related issues where we do agree. I discuss many issues with animal advocates in areas where we can agree. For example, housing pregnant sows in stalls where they are not able to turn around needs to be changed by placing those sows in group housing. We can both agree that this needs to be changed.

HEAT SOFTENS STEEL

Over my thirty-five year career I have observed that economic forces, exposés by activists, and government regulations in response to something bad happening are the major factors that drive changes. Undercover videos of really atrocious practices on a farm or slaughter plant have been drivers of change. A top official for the USDA called the Westland Hallmark video a “policy-changing event.” This motivated the USDA to increase Humane Slaughter Act enforcement. People became outraged and that can create a period of time where improvements can be easily implemented. I have observed that the forces that can bring about societal change are like heat from a welding torch that is used to soften steel so it can be bent into pretty grillwork. When undercover videos create a lot of “heat” it provides an opportunity for reformers like me to make improvements, while the “steel” is soft and workable. The “steel” must be quickly worked and bent before it cools and hardens after the “heat” is removed.

STOP BASHING THE LIVESTOCK INDUSTRY

My old friend Henry Spira was a very effective activist. He knew when to put the pressure on and when to take it off. When he pressured Revlon to stop animal testing of cosmetics, he stopped bashing them when they made improvements. He had figured out that greater reforms would take place if he stopped pressuring Revlon after they had made most, but not all, of the reforms he wanted. I have come to similar conclusions. I would rather achieve 80 percent of what I want and actually achieve it, rather than always try to get 100 percent of what I want and never get any of it.

There is a point where the continuous bashing of the livestock industry by animal activists will retard reform making. Since the late 1990s, the industry has made reforms, but the activists never give it

any credit. The audits that McDonald's, Wendy's, and Burger King started in 1999 have brought about large reforms in over fifty plants.¹⁵ The vast majority of meat plants have improved, but unfortunately the activists found one plant that had faked looking good during audits and another atrocious plant that was not on any restaurant company's approved supplier list. Undercover videos from these two plants, Westland Hallmark and Agri-Processors, were shown to the public.¹⁶ Many people think all plants are this bad. This is simply not true.

It is very frustrating for me as a reformer to make many improvements on the ground and then have some activists tell the public that nothing has improved. They keep showing videos of the few places that are atrocious.

ACTIVIST PRESSURE MAY START RETARDING PROGRESS

In the late 1990s, activist pressure "softened the steel" and the industry responded by making reforms. Ten years later, some people in the livestock industry are becoming frustrated, because they are still getting bashed even after they made some improvements. I fear that this may result in reform slowing down, and time and money will be wasted on lawyers and security systems instead of on improving conditions for animals. Another trend I am observing in the late 2000s is that some activists who want to abolish the use of animals for food filing lawsuits to cause hardship and expense for the livestock industry instead of pressuring for specific reforms. This problem is going to get worse as more and more people get involved with animal law, unless the people studying animal law start a dialogue with "hands on" people in animal agriculture. Otherwise, abstractification will increase, and these new lawyers will have less and less connection with what is actually happening on the ground. (As I wrote earlier in this chapter, "abstractification" is my term for when thinking about policy becomes so abstract that there is no longer any connection with the people and places that the policy will affect.) Instead of pressuring the livestock industry to make real reforms, activist pressure may just cause legal gridlock where nothing constructive will happen. They do this because their goal is to abolish the livestock industry instead of reforming it. Unfortunately, all that this will do is waste everybody's time and money instead of working to reduce animal suffering.

USE OF ANIMALS FOR FOOD

My position is that using animals for food can be done in an ethical manner. My metabolism needs meat and eggs. If I do not eat animal protein, I get lightheaded and have difficulty thinking. My mother has the same metabolism. To prevent horrible yeast infections, I have to eat a lot of animal protein. I have tried eating a vegan diet, and I cannot function on it. I also cannot eat soy because I cannot tolerate all the female hormones that it naturally contains. I have Meniere's disease, which is now in remission. To keep it in remission, I must avoid substances both natural and synthetic that have high levels of female hormones. They could reactivate the autoimmune responses that were destroying my hearing. I tried some soy calcium supplements, but my postmenopausal breasts became very sore. The soreness went away when I stopped taking the supplements. Different people have different genetics and metabolisms. Some people will function well on a vegan diet. I am one of the people who do not.

My concepts are very simple, and they are discussed in detail in *Animals Make Us Human*.¹⁷ Most importantly, if we are going to use animals for food, the animals must be given a decent life. There are many things in animal agriculture that need to be corrected, but I have also visited places where animals are treated well and their behavior needs are met. Below is a passage from my afterword in *Animals Make Us Human*.¹⁸

Over the years I have done lots of thinking and have come to the conclusion that our relationship with the animals we use for food must be symbiotic. Symbiosis is a mutually beneficial relationship between two different living things. We provide the farm animals with food and housing and in return, most of the offspring from the breeding cows on the ranches are used for food. I vividly remember the day after I had installed the first center-track conveyor restrainer in a plant in Nebraska, when I stood on an overhead catwalk, overlooking vast herds of cattle in the stockyard below me. All these animals were going to their death in a system that I had designed. I started to cry and then a flash of insight came into my mind. None of the cattle that were at this slaughter plant would have been born if people had not bred and raised them. They would never have lived at all. People forget that nature can be very harsh, and death in the wild is often more painful and stressful than death in a modern plant. Out on a western ranch, I saw a calf that had its hide ripped completely off on one side by coyotes. It was still alive and the rancher had to shoot it to put it out of its misery. If I had a choice, going to a well-run modern slaughter plant would be preferable to being ripped apart alive.

My views on animal issues are similar to those of Michael Pollan. He writes in the *New York Times* that “what’s wrong with animal agriculture - with eating animals - is the practice not the principle.” He is referring to problems in industrialized agriculture. Pollan then adds: “What this suggests to me is that people who care should be working not for animal rights, but animal welfare.”¹⁹ My views are very similar and I want to reform animal agriculture not try to eliminate it. For further information, see Pollan’s *The Omnivore Dilemma* (the animal rights chapter)²⁰ and *Animals Make Us Human*.²¹

MAKING PRACTICAL, REAL REFORM

Here are some things that have made me effective on improving animal agriculture:

1. Farmers and meat plant managers know that I have no hidden agenda. I am not working to eliminate animal agriculture. This helps to make them more cooperative.
2. In my work, I use both scientific research knowledge and practical experience to implement practical improvements.
3. My persistence over a long period of time to bring about changes is more effective than short bursts of activity.
4. Over the years, I have learned how the right economic incentives will bring about reforms. The audits done by McDonald’s, Wendy’s, and other companies brought about large reforms because meat plant managers now had an economic incentive to improve their plants so they could remain on the approved supplier list.

ATTACKED BY ANIMAL RIGHTS ABOLITIONISTS

I am a reformer who wants to improve the livestock industry. I disagree with the advocates who want to abolish the use of animals for food. Since the publication of *Animals in Translation*,²² I have received some hateful attacks from individuals who believe that killing animals for food is the same as killing people in Nazi Germany. They have called me an evil Nazi, sent hate mail, and made Web postings that were so nasty and vulgar that they cannot be repeated here. One person said he wanted to apply an electric cattle prod to my anatomy describing it in the filthiest language imaginable. These extreme individuals who advocate for animals advocated in their e-mails and Web postings things they wanted to do to me that were very cruel - things that they would never do to any animal. I have thought long, hard, and carefully on how to respond to people who think I am a Nazi. In the next section, I provide my response, in which I have used information from my knowledge of animal behavior, neuroscience, biology, farm animal welfare research, sustainable agriculture, and travel to twenty-six countries on five continents.

MY CORE PRINCIPLES FOR USE OF ANIMALS FOR FOOD

There are four core principles of my belief that animals can be used for food in an ethical manner. They are:

1. Prevent suffering—this applies to all animals neurologically capable of suffering.
2. Improve sustainability of agriculture, conserve the environment and prevent loss of biodiversity
3. Animals with greater intelligence and social-emotional complexity such as apes, dolphins, elephants, and parrots should not be used for human food. They have higher moral value, but all animals that are capable of suffering have higher moral value than inanimate objects such as houses or cars.
4. Most animal species will avoid eating their own kind as their regular food. This is a natural principle of animal behavior.

Ethical issues concerning companion animals, animals used in sports, and research animals would require additional discussion that is beyond the scope of this paper. Below is further clarification of my four principles concerning my ethical principles for food animals.

1. Prevent suffering-

In his book *Animal Liberation*, Peter Singer states that preventing suffering is central for the ethical treatment of animals.²³ Scientific research clearly shows that mammals and birds not only feel pain but also suffer from it. This has been proven by self-medication experiments. In these experiments, rats and chickens will consume bitter-tasting analgesic (painkiller) medication when they have an injured joint.²⁴ When the joint heals, they will stop consuming the bitter drug. Research also clearly shows that the fear circuits in a person and in an animal's brain are similar.²⁵ I have also reviewed research on animal fear circuits.²⁶

In animals that are going to be used for food, steps should be taken to prevent fear and pain during both slaughter and surgical procedures. According to my belief system, this applies to all mammals and birds. Research is now showing that this may also need to be applied to fish.²⁷ To confirm this finding, the self-medication experiment will need to be done on fish to determine if the fish can actually suffer. Some fish farm managers have responded to these concerns by installing stunning equipment to render fish insensible before slaughter. I am not concerned about oyster suffering. They do not have a developed enough nervous system to suffer.

The work I have done during the last thirty-five years on improving livestock handling and slaughter methods has reduced both fear and pain. It is my opinion that animals must also be housed in a manner that provides them with a decent life that is worth living. Grazing animals that are given well-managed pasture have excellent living conditions. In an earlier part of this chapter, I discussed symbiosis. In a good animal husbandry system, it is possible to have a truly symbiotic relationship. Symbiosis is a common principle in biology.

Conditions for animals housed in intensive systems need improvements. Both intensive and extensive systems can be part of sustainable systems in the future. Animals should be housed in a manner that enables them to engage in positive experiences, such as seeking novel and interesting stimulation, socializing with their own kind, and having opportunities to express highly motivated species-typical behaviors. For a further discussion see Grandin and Johnson, Fraser, and Webster.²⁸ I am also an advocate of good stockmanship and animal husbandry. A good stockperson understands animal behavior and treats animals with kindness. Some excellent readings on stockmanship and the need for good husbandry are in Hemsworth and Coleman²⁹ and Rollin.³⁰

When animal issues are being discussed, people often forget that nature can be harsh. Predators kill other animals, and they may die a painful, lingering death. Storms and droughts can cause many wild animals to die. Much suffering occurs in the natural world.

2. *Improve the sustainability of agriculture, conserve the environment, and prevent the loss of biodiversity* –

There is great concern about losing local plant and animal breeds in the developing world. Replacement of local plant and animal species with high-producing ones could cause the loss of valuable, diverse animal genetics. At the 2009 American Society of Animal Science meetings, two seminars presented evidence that local varieties of plants and animals must be conserved. If these genetic resources are lost, humans could run out of food if diseases destroyed high-producing genetic lines of plants and animals. Local genetic lines may have genes for disease resistance, and it is essential to prevent their loss. I also believe that conservation of the environment is essential to keep beautiful places. Natural places have great beauty, and that has moral value. There is a place for livestock in a future world where both plant and animal agriculture will be forced to be more sustainable. There are vast regions of land where crops cannot be raised because there is not enough ground water for irrigation. I have visited these lands. Some of them are in Wyoming, others in the outback of Australia. The Australian outback is over half of the size of the United States. I used to think Texas was vast until I flew over the eastern part of the outback and visited an excellent cattle station. The only way that food can be raised on these lands is with grazing animals. Rollin³¹ is concerned that the outback is so vast that the animals might be neglected. There have been some problems with this, but they can be corrected with good management. The managers must believe in the ethic that they should prevent suffering. Grazing animals can be used in a totally sustainable manner. Animal manure for fertilizing the ground is an integral part of

organic agriculture. When grazing is done correctly, it can improve arid land and prevent it from reverting to desert.³²

Work with large corporations – I have been asked, “Why do you work with big corporations when you believe that some of their practices may be either unsustainable or unethical?” I work with them to prevent pain and suffering. Another thing I have learned is that economic factors can become so powerful that they motivate people to engage in practices that will not be sustainable in the future. Two examples are; using up deep aquifer water, and feeding grain in huge quantities to millions of cattle. Grain is fed to cattle for only one reason, it is cheap. When it gets too expensive, grain feeding will be phased out.

I work to change things where it is possible to make improvements. I do not bang my head against solid cold, hard steel - places where attempting to implement improvements is impossible. There are two kinds of people who make changes - advocates who pioneer radical new ideas and implementers, like me, who make the actual changes on the ground. All my professional life, I have been an implementer. Early in my career I designed cattle handling equipment, and later in my career I implemented animal welfare auditing systems. Advocates facilitate the implementers by “softening the steel” so that the implementers can bend it and work it. There is a need for both the advocates and the implementers.

3. ***Animals with greater intelligence and social-emotional complexity have higher moral value-***

I believe that the apes, dolphins, whales, parrots, crows, elephants, and other animals with high intelligence and more complex emotional and social behavior have higher moral value. Crows can figure out how to get food out of a tube by using three different lengths of sticks to drag the food out.³³ Compared to other birds such as chickens, the region of the brain that integrates information is larger. I am against killing these cognitively complex animals for human food. However, all species that are capable of suffering should be housed and slaughtered in a manner that prevents suffering. My core principle of preventing suffering applies to all species that are capable of suffering, but my core principle of higher moral value applies only to the more intelligent animals. Therefore, the more intelligent animals should not be bred or raised for the purpose of feeding people. However, all animals that have sufficient neurological complexity to suffer have higher moral values than objects such as houses or cars.

As scientists learn more and more about animal behavior, the list of animal species that should be placed in the intelligent group may expand. Maybe pigs and cattle need to become part of that group. These two species have similar intelligence, but grazing animals often appear to be stupid given their strong flocking instincts. A pig and a dog probably have similar abilities. To avoid eating the more intelligent animals, I would have to eat eggs, chickens, and fish. That would still satisfy my dietary needs. However, that would take the grazing animals off my list of morally acceptable foods, given core principle 3. Even if cattle were now on my list of animals of high intelligence, they are still less intelligent than apes or dolphins. To use vast rangelands in a sustainable manner, grazing animals are required. Therefore, I would keep the grazing or browsing animals such as cattle, bison, sheep, antelopes, deer, and goats on my list of animals acceptable to eat. In the animal kingdom there are three types of animals; prey species such as the grazing animals; predators such as dogs, wolves, lions, and tigers; and omnivores such as pigs, bear, and people. The prey species are all vegetarian herbivores. Predators eat mainly meat, and omnivores eat both meat and plant materials. Eating meat is a normal part of an omnivore diet. Chimpanzees, who share 99 percent of their genes with humans, are also omnivores who will kill other animals for meat.³⁴ Animals eating other animals is part of the natural world. People are also omnivores, so eating meat is a natural thing to do. Most prehistoric people ate meat.³⁵

4. *Most animal species do not eat their own kind as their regular food –*

After much long and hard thought, I have come to the conclusion that advocates for animal rights will call me a speciesist because I value the human species more than other animals. Some animal rights advocates will say this is the same as racism. However, it is not the same, because racism occurs within our own species. Joel Salatin, a well-known innovator of small-scale sustainable animal agriculture, also makes a moral distinction between other animals and people.³⁶ He provides a religious reason, but I am going to give a biological reason. There is a principle in animal behavior that each species of animal does not eat its own kind as its regular food. If an animal species dined on its own kind for the majority of its calories, it would become extinct. There are exceptions, such as infanticide (cub killing) by male lions and cannibalism in confined pigs. However, lions do not dine on lions as their main dietary item. Grazing animals such as antelopes are a major component of a lion's diet. A raven will not eat a dead crow, because it looks like a raven. However, a raven will eat a dead chicken.³⁷ In the animal world, animals treat their own kind differently than they do other animals.

I had to come to the above conclusion to avoid a moral dilemma that is more serious than killing animals for food. If I only believed in my first three core principles, I would morally be able to justify killing humans with severe neurological disabilities to prevent suffering. Some of these individuals have so much brain damage that a dog or a mouse would probably have more intelligence. When I was a child, I had all the symptoms of severe autism. Fifty percent of children with severe autism never become verbal, and about 10 percent of them are so severely autistic that they suffer during their adult lives. Their nerves are so dysfunctional that they may bite themselves and cannot tolerate loud noises in a supermarket. If my principle number 1 was followed to prevent suffering, then euthanizing handicapped people may be justified. This is similar to Peter Singer's view.³⁸ My response is that human life must be preserved because human life is precious. It has higher moral value because it is our own species.

If I had been born in Nazi Germany shortly before World War II, Hitler would have had me euthanized as a mental defective. When I was three and had no speech, Hitler's doctors would have decided that I should not live. There would be the possibility that Hitler would have valued a dog's life more than my life when he was making decisions on mass killing. This hits a very sensitive nerve in me. This is a major reason why I cannot place the moral value of other animal species equal to my own species. The people who do this may run the risk of becoming Nazis themselves. I have been accused by animal rights abolitionists of being a Nazi because I am involved in killing animals for food. If a person believes that animals are equal to people, they might have fewer moral qualms about killing other people to comply with core principles 1 and 2. To prevent people from morally justifying mass euthanasia of the neurologically handicapped, they have to be speciesists and value humans more than other animals.

CONCLUSION

Any animal that has the capacity to suffer when raised for human food deserves to live in an environment that prevents suffering and provides it with a life where it has opportunities to experience positive emotions. When animals are bred and raised for human food, they should be housed and handled in a manner that prevents their suffering. Human beings have the mental capacity to know that they should prevent suffering in animals. Nature has no morals; the natural conditions just exist. Animals eat other animals and sometimes kill them in a painful manner, or drought causes starvation. That's what happens in nature. Nature cannot be moral or evil because it has no intent. People have the intellect to become good stewards of both the land and the animals, because they are aware that their actions can cause either suffering or destroy the environment.

NOTES

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