

ANIMAL RIGHTS VS. ANIMAL WELFARE – UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUE

LEVEL: 7-8

SUBJECTS:

Consumer Education,
Social Studies, Language
Arts, Economics

VOCABULARY:

Animal welfare, animal
rights, vegetarianism,
anthropomorphism,
extremist, humane animal
husbandry

LEARNING GOAL:

Students shall develop their abilities to connect and integrate knowledge from all disciplines into their own knowledge bases.

MATERIALS

List of animal rights/welfare organizations, “Animal Agriculture: Myths & Facts” handout.

BACKGROUND

In a predominantly urban society, the public’s contact with animals , especially farm animals, is limited. As a result of this separation, both adults and children may be confused about the needs and roles of domestic animals in our society. Groups advocating a range of positions on use and care of animals are prevalent both nationally and internationally.

Farmers, more than any other group except for keepers of zoos and animal parks, are in daily contact with animals. Farmers are the most logical advocates of animal welfare, as their livelihood is dependent upon keeping animals safe and healthy. Farmers furnish animals with appropriate housing, food, water and veterinary care in order to produce the wholesome, high-quality foods demanded by consumers. This practice is referred to as **humane animal husbandry**.

PROCEDURE

1. Conduct an opening discussion with students on the distinction between **rights** and **welfare**. Have students list some rights which they have as a U.S. citizen (examples: free speech, assembly, worship). Next, have the students identify some measures which ensure their welfare (examples: education, health care,

OBJECTIVE

The student will:

-differentiate between the concepts of animal rights and animal welfare.

-explore some of the myths surrounding production of animals for human use.

-understand the economic necessity for farmers to provide humane care for farm animals.

-research the positions of several animal rights/animal welfare groups on use of animals by humans.

CONCEPTUAL AREA

Agriculture base – people use plants and animals in a wide variety of ways to obtain food, fiber, shelter and other products.

Images and attitudes – peoples’ images, attitudes and behaviors create the issue and trends affecting agriculture and the environment.

parental care). Now, give students the two terms “animal rights” and “animal welfare” and see if they can distinguish between the two positions. Use the background material for this lesson to help students consider the aspects of our modern society which would lead to confusion about these two positions on animal use and care.

Anthropomorphism is the belief that people and all other animals have the same rights and is the most extreme view supported by animal rights extremists and some vegetarians. Supporters of animal welfare believe that people have a moral obligation to avoid cruelty in dealing with animals. Further, keeping animals healthy and productive by providing proper housing, veterinary care, food and water is an economic necessity for farmers, as well as their moral responsibility.

2. Many questions may arise from this discussion as to the actual practices used by farmers to raise food animals. Students may gain more understanding of production methods by participating in a farm tour. They would have opportunities to observe first hand how particular animals are cared for in production agriculture. An alternative experience would be to invite livestock farmers to come into the class to describe their farm practices and answer questions regarding common myths about animal care. Have students use the “Animal Agriculture: Myths & Facts” handout to ask questions of the classroom presenter.

3. The final activity in this exploration of animal rights/animal welfare issues is a research project where students are asked to gather information regarding the beliefs and policies of different organizations. Have students write to a sampling of animal welfare/rights organizations requesting literature on their positions regarding animal use and care. Ask students to compare and contrast the different organizations’ positions and evaluate the validity of their beliefs. This activity could include both a written report and presentation of findings to the class.

RESOURCES

“Animal Agriculture: Myths & Facts”, Animal Industry Foundation, 1988.

EVALUATION

The students’ levels of comprehension of the different positions on animals rights/welfare can be assessed by their written reports and presentations on the issues. Students will demonstrate the ability to hear and discuss differing viewpoints on an issue and communicate their opinions in an organized manner in both written and oral forms.

"Animal Agriculture Myths & Facts"

1. **Myth:** Farmers are more concerned about the money that animals bring than the welfare and health of the animals.

Fact: Farmers choose their occupation because they enjoy working with animals. U.S. agriculture is quite competitive and the farmer's profit is based on his/her ability to treat animals humanely, thus guaranteeing a healthy animal to produce high-quality meat, milk, and eggs.

2. **Myth:** Farm animals are raised on "factory farms" where they are confined to crowded, unventilated cages and sheds.

Fact: Animals are kept in barns or similar housing, except beef cattle, to protect the animals from predators, disease, and bad weather. Housing is also designed to protect young animals and provide each animal with water, nutritious food, and veterinary care. Housing is designed for a specific animal--a dairy cow would not be kept in a hog barn.

3. **Myth:** Not only are all animals confined, most are held in crates and cages and not allowed to move at all.

Fact: Animal behavior is quite varied, making it necessary to restrain animals to avoid injuring themselves, other animals, or the farmer. Dairy cows are milked in stalls so the farmer can use modern milking equipment. Laying hens are kept in cages to ensure adequate feed and water reaches every bird and to facilitate egg collection. Veal calves are kept in modern stall systems where they can stand, lie down, see, touch, and react to other calves in well lit, sanitary barns. They are not kept in "boxes" in perpetual darkness.

4. **Myth:** Farm animals in confinement are prone to disease, forcing farmers to routinely use antibiotics, hormones, and drugs to keep them alive. This practice is not good for animal or human health.

Fact: Animal scientists, veterinarians, and on-farm experience show animals kept in proper housing are no more likely to get sick than animals kept in the open. In fact, they are generally healthier by being protected. To prevent illness and ensure animal health, farmers use products in a scientifically formulated feed appropriate for a particular animal type. These products include: drugs, vaccines, vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients.

5. **Myth:** Grain fed to livestock and poultry could be used to feed the hungry in other countries.

Fact: Grain fed to livestock and poultry is generally referred to as "feed grade" and is not generally intended for human consumption because of its quality and nutrient value. Animals are the most efficient converters of this lower quality grain and other grasses and forages into high-quality protein.

6. **Myth:** A vegetarian diet is healthier than a diet that includes meat, milk, and eggs.

Fact: A diet containing meat, milk, and eggs is appropriate in the views of the federal government and the American Heart Association. Health benefits can be achieved by both non-vegetarian and vegetarian diets by controlling fat, sodium, sugar, and striving for variety and moderation in dietary intake.

SOURCE: Animal Agriculture: Myths & Facts

ANIMAL RIGHTS/WELFARE ORGANIZATIONS

American Humane Association

P.O. Box 1266
Denver, CO 80201-1266
(303) 695-0811

American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)

441 East 92nd Street
New York, NY 10128
(212) 876-7700

Animal Legal Defense Fund

1363 Lincoln Avenue
San Rafael, CA 94901
(415) 459-0885

Animal Liberation Front (ALF)

Information on this extremist group is kept secret. The Animal Liberation Front Support Group, which supports the "legal" activities of ALF, was last located at P.O. Box 3623, San Bernardino, CA 92413.

Animal Rights Coalition, Inc. (ARC)

P.O. Box 20315
Bloomington, MN 55420
(612) 822-6161
(612) 822-6604 (Hotline)

Doris Day Animal League

900 Second Street, N.W., Suite 303
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 842-3325

Farm Sanctuary

P.O. Box 150
Watkins Glen, NY 14891
(607) 583-2225

Fund for Animals

200 West 57th Street
New York, NY 10019
(212) 246-2096

Humane Farming Association (HFA)

76 Belvedere Street, Suite D
San Rafael, CA 94901
(415) 485-1495

Humane Society of the United States

2100 L Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20037
(202) 452-1100

National Association for the Advancement of Humane and Environmental Education

(formerly National Association for the Advancement of Humane Education)
67 Salem Road
East Haddam, CT 06423
(203) 434-8666

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)

P.O. Box 42516
Washington, DC 20015
(301) 770-7444, (301) 770-7382
(301) 770-8980 (Action Line)