

DO ANIMALS HAVE ANY RIGHTS AT ALL?



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Introduction

Do animals have any rights?

What rights do they have?

Should animals have fewer rights than people?

Reading

Throughout history, many people have treated animals inhumanely and with absolute cruelty. There have also been many people that have campaigned against this cruelty and made it their life's work to put an end to this behaviour.

In the eighties and nineties, the United Kingdom had many groups to try to put an end to fox hunting and badger baiting. They would sabotage the hunts which were often run by royal decree. They risked being run over by irate land-rover drivers or trampled on by the horses. In other cases beaten with sticks by the hunters intent on attending the fox hunt.

But due to their constant campaign of sabotage, the organisers — known then as hunt saboteurs — were able to halt all fox hunting in the country. People may look back now and see the hunts as a very cruel and unnecessary blood sport. The fox was not merely culled as the fox hunters liked to think, but hunted for most of the day. The fox's death would often be a slow, lingering agony as the dogs ripped its body to shreds.

The hunt saboteurs stopped fox hunting because of their love of animals and hatred of animal cruelty. Many regard them as

heroes of the day.

Bloodsports, in which animals are hunted for sport, are now banned in many countries — or very tightly regulated to season. But many animal rights activists think there should be a complete ban to all blood sports.

In Spain, parts of the country still host bullfighting events. Much to the anger of animal rights campaigners.

The organisers of the sport regard it as having a strong cultural value. After all, when we think of bullfighting we tend to think of Spain. The events are still very popular to this day, attracting thousands of spectators every year. And the matadors have the same social status as movie stars.

They say that the bull dies a noble and painless death. But the people who campaign against it say this is nonsense. They believe that the bull suffers greatly and dies in a very painful and undignified manner.

It's not only blood sports where animal rights activists set their targets.

They are also against circuses that use animals for entertainment. And zoos which keep animals in unbearable conditions not suitable for their size.

Then there are the ways in which some animals are eaten. Dogs and cats are eaten in some countries in Asia and regarded as a delicacy. They suffer a terrible death, often skinned alive before being thrown into the oil and cooked for someone's dinner.

And cosmetics and hair-product companies often test their chemicals on animals. This is banned or very tightly regulated in western countries so these companies do this testing in Asia to bypass any legal matters.

There is still a long way to go in terms of the protection of animals rights. Some people think that it is worth fighting for and give up their lives to campaign against animal cruelty.

Reading Comprehension Questions

In the first paragraph, explain the meaning in your own words.

What blood sports did British groups campaign against in the eighties and nineties?

What actions did these groups take?

What risks did they take?

Were they ultimately successful? How?

Explain what usually happened to the fox in a hunt.

Which country hosts bullfighting?

How do the organisers of bullfighting argue for the support of the sport?

What are the sportsmen of bullfighting compared to in the article?

How do they say the bull dies?

How do the campaigners against bullfighting say it dies?

Name two places that use animals for entertainment.

Which animals are regarded as something delicious in the article?

How are these animals killed?

What do make-up companies do to animals?

Essential Vocabulary

inhumanely	absolute cruelty
campaigned	made it (someone's) life work
fox hunting	badger baiting
sabotage	by royal decree
run over	trampled on
intent	bloodsports
culled	lingering
to shreds	tightly regulated
season	activists
complete ban	cultural value
spectators	matadors
social status	noble
painless	nonsense
suffers greatly	undignified
targets	circuses
entertainment	unbearable conditions
suitable	delicacy
skinned alive	cosmetics
bypass	legal matters

Exercise

Write down all the words and phrases in your vocabulary notebook. Look in your dictionary and find the meaning of each word. Write the definition next to each word.

Then make up your own sentences using each word or phrase.

For example:

Notebook—*a small book with pages of blank paper that students use to make notes when studying.*

“I left my notebook at home so I was unable to make any notes in my English class.”

It Shouldn't Be Allowed!

Look at all the following situations. Work in groups and decide if each of these situations is an act of animal cruelty or not. If so, what would you do about it?

Make your decisions as a group and then give a talk to the class about all of your findings.

One.

A man in your neighbourhood keeps very big dogs in his house. He has four of them. They bark all day because they are stuck inside. In the evening the man lets them out into his garden and they run around and play for a couple of hours. Then he makes them all come back into his house and they stay inside all night.

Two.

A pet shop in the town centre sells mice. One of the customers regularly comes into the shop to buy two or three mice. He has told the pet shop owner that he feeds the mice live to his pet snakes that he keeps in his home. The snakes must have live mice to feed on or they don't eat them.

The pet shop owner is aware of this but still sells the mice to the snake owner.

Three.

A circus is coming to town.

The circus is very modern and obeys all the laws about the welfare of animals. But there is a petting area for children. In this area of the circus, children can take turns riding donkeys and pet a small elephant. They can also see other animals and feed them

and take pictures.

Four.

In the local zoo, they have little shows for the public. There is a compound for the seals and the zookeepers make them do a show for all the crowd. They feed the seals fish and make them dive into the water from a high rock. Every time the seals do something funny or dive into the water all the people cheer and make a noise.

The zookeepers say the seals enjoy it.

Five.

A local farmer has many cows as he runs a dairy farm. On certain days he opens his farm and allows schools of young children to visit. The farmer and all the farm workers show the children where they keep the cows and how they are milked using special machinery. The whole experience is regarded as educational for the children.

The farmworkers show the children how to milk the cows and let them have a try on their own.

Discussion Questions

Tell the class about any acts of animal cruelty in your country. What is being done about it?

Are people naturally cruel to animals? Has this been happening for thousands of years?

Are animals happy to live in zoos? What are the arguments for zoos?

Do people have the right to hunt and kill animals?

Should people be allowed to eat animals? Shouldn't we all be vegans?

How do you feel about animal testing for cosmetic companies? How about pharmaceutical companies?

Why are so many animals becoming extinct? Is it mankind's responsibility to take care of all animals and protect them?

Do some animals have more rights than others? Compare cats and cockroaches.

Do animals have feelings? How do you know?

Is it acceptable for people to keep exotic pets such as snakes or monkeys in their home? Why/why not?

What pets is it acceptable for people to keep in their homes?

Why?

If you saw someone beating a dog in public what would you do?

Writing

You want to write a letter of complaint to your local zoo.

You have found out that they are using the seals in the zoo as part of a show and you are strongly against this. In your letter, you need to make a strong opinion about why this is wrong and why it needs to stop.

Make all of your points logically and in order. But at the same time ensure that you are being respectful and polite.

Credits

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