

Animal Action!

A Guide for Animal Activists

By David Sztybel, Ph.D.

“Action is the antidote to despair.”

Joan Baez

Introduction

Many people feel helpless in the face of widespread animal suffering brought about by human hands. This is a problem on top of the problem, as it were. Yet I want people to feel **powerful** in response to animal-related issues. And this is no idle fantasy. There are steps that any person can take that are indeed powerful. Anything added to that is icing on the cake, or “more power to the powerful.”

Now it is improbable up to this point in your life that you should ever be offered full-spectrum information about what you can do to help animals, since the primary conduits of information are the education system and the media. First, the education system is funded by governments that do not wish to diminish any aspects of the economy, including animal-based industries. Also, fully extending into high school, parents often do not wish to risk their children returning from school wanting to be vegetarians, and these parents often have a predominant influence over school administrators. As for the media, it is not “news” that there is factory farming, for example, and also, private corporations which sponsor media productions have powerful and far-reaching interests to see that a “discourse of ignorance”¹ is perpetuated, so that passive and uninformed consumers do not question what manners of suffering might be associated with various commercial products. The failure of the education system and the media to deliver full-spectrum information concerning animal protection also makes it less likely that anyone will learn about such things from relatives, friends, or others.

I offer a spectrum of ways to protect animals unapologetically.² This booklet will offer resources that are of interest to **all** kinds of individuals who wish to either reduce their personal association with cruelty, or who wish entirely to divest themselves of what they perceive to be speciesist discrimination and domination. Accordingly, this document

¹ A phrase used in M. Michael, “Lay discourses of science: Science-in-general, science-in-particular and self.” *Science, Technology and Human Values* 17 (1992): 313-333; cited in Lynda Birke, Arnold Arluke, and Mike Michael, *The Sacrifice: How Scientific Experiments Transform Animals and People* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2007), p. 116.

² For one of the greatest speeches I have ever heard, and I was excited to hear the original in Washington, D.C. at an animal rights activism conference, see Karen Davis, Ph.D., “The Rhetoric of Apology in Animal Rights: Some Points to Consider.” Speech July 10, 1994 at the Seventh Annual International Animal Rights Symposium, July 8 through July 10, 1994, Washington Dulles Marriott. To read this speech, visit: http://www.upc-online.org/summer94/rhetoric_of_apology.html.

does not tell people what position to take but offers practical resources for individuals who tend to fall into 3 broad camps:

- (i) **traditional animal welfarist** – agrees that animals may be used in traditional ways for food, clothing, hunting, entertainment, etc., but that such usage must avoid cruelty or inhumaneness.
- (ii) **partial abolitionist** – accepts some usages of animals, such as eating them or using them for medical vivisection, but deems many uses of animals to be examples of needless cruelty, such as sport hunting, testing cosmetics on animals, rodeos, animal circuses, marine mammal aquaria, the veal crate, foie gras, wearing fur, or perhaps other practices. In my section noting remarkable progress in animal protection, it will be evident that many legislatures around the world have adopted partial abolitionist measures of the sort listed above.
- (iii) **complete abolitionist** – rejects all uses of animals that involve harming them as fundamentally unjust.

I will have the most to say about animal liberation activism for a few reasons:

- (a) There is more to do with animal liberation, i.e., more challenges, and much more that **can** be done since it challenges animals used as commodities for example;
- (b) I have more experience and therefore knowledge to share about animal liberation activism.
- (c) I believe that animal liberation is morally right, as I defend elsewhere in moral theoretical terms.

General Notes about Activism

In this document I make a distinction, which I have not seen anywhere but find to be illuminating, between *private activism* and *public activism*. Private activism involves, first, activism towards the self (which is also a category that I have not seen discussed but I think urgently needs to be) and second, activism towards others in one's private life such as friends, relatives, acquaintances, and colleagues. Public activism seeks to reach the general public at large. Let us deal with ways of being effective in all modes of activism.

Private Activism: Activism Towards the Self

People tend to think of "activism" only as reaching out to other people. However, it is also about reaching into yourself in various ways, as odd as that may sound. You relate to yourself intellectually, emotionally, physically, and perhaps in some sense spiritually. There are ways of relating to yourself that are more likely to promote a realistic understanding of the world, a positive outlook, and an active engagement with realities. Here are some ideas to assist in private activism:

- (1) Educate yourself so that you can make informed choices and also educate others.
- (2) Sociology more than any other discipline reveals that social movements are made of individuals. Therefore, every decision of individuals that might bring one into accord with a social movement, or as part of a collective "we," is critical for the greater or lesser success of social movements. No social movement entirely fails so long as it remains alive with hope and relevant activities.

- (3) Dealing with possible feelings of **guilt** in a rational manner is crucial. People rightly fear “the blame game,” and I have heard one psychologist suggest that negative criticism is what people fear the most. This fact highlights the importance of feeling badly about actions pertaining to animals. Yet there is an honorable way of getting past “the blame game” as I will clarify. Guilty or even shameful feelings play an important role particularly when people consider the claims of animal liberationists that most people are involved in violent and life-threatening abuses of nonhuman animals. Now it is understandable that people may try to repress guilt feelings or engage in denial, or else to try to purge guilt feelings through blind conformism since after all the majority of people feel no remorse at all about their role in the lives of countless animals. It is worth considering that if an average person had a role in wrongfully killing or causing extreme suffering to a human being, that might be experienced as traumatic. If untreated, there could result serious mental disturbance to the end of the person’s days. A different outcome is needed, including in the case of animal abuse. We can redeem ourselves for the future by deciding to be benign in relation to animals. However, what about the past? Perhaps the best model for us here is that embraced by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa. It is a true wonder of the world that *apartheid*, the racist regime there, was overthrown in a bloodless revolution. Part of this phenomenon is due to the traditional native philosophy of South Africa, called *ubuntu*, which, in the Bantu languages means “humanity towards others.” According to *ubuntu* in the TRC, past actions, even violent ones, were forgiven if the perpetrator lucidly confessed actions to those concerned with them. Amnesty was granted only so long as actions were politically motivated, proportionate, and full disclosure was offered. Such a model seemed appropriate since many racist acts under *apartheid* were systematic and society-wide, much as speciesism arguably is today. Such actions were perhaps less a sign of vicious individuals than they were indications of a lamentable and outrageous social system. *Ubuntu* is a way to move forward with forgiveness, rehabilitation, understanding, and a lack of vindictiveness or revenge. Perhaps such an outcome is best for all concerned. Harm to animals is politically motivated if it is just part of hegemonic, speciesist power relations. Disproportionate harm such as animal torture however would need to be addressed by the state since that is not “systematic” but rather socially despised. As for full disclosure, it is important that people be honest with themselves and try to move on from the past in the most constructive possible way. However, guilty feelings can swing both ways. Many humanists try to make animal liberationists or even welfarists feel guilty of making nonhuman animals a priority when there is so much human misery in the world. However, we should make it a joint priority to end abuse and injustice everywhere. Anyone can work for human rights without consuming animals in a way that is contrary to animal rights. Humans can create a thriving alternative economy that does not depend on animal exploitation.
- (3) You may experience **apathy** in response to being informed about animal issues. Some people think this means it does not “feel right” to be an animal liberationist, for example, and so they move on—unmoved. Or they condemn themselves, for all their apathy, as “bad people” and feel guilty as “hypocrites.” However, each of these reactions to experiencing apathy deserves to be examined. It should be understood that habits are extremely powerful psychological forces which tend towards two kinds of inertia: continuing with activities that are habitual, and also continuing with lack of taking action that is habitual—hence the common experience of apathy. Repeated choices actually rewire the brain, which helps to

explain the formidable, although not inevitable, power of habits. Apathy is a natural reaction since not being an animal liberationist is habitual for most people. Apathy is strongest, therefore, in practices that are most habitual. For example, eating meat is often more habitual than buying a particular product that is tested on animals, and people may enjoy meat-eating more than buying any particular brand of products. You can **choose** to act differently, however, and then you may find yourself not only changed but **charged**, and feeling very differently than when you began. Some passively wait to be transformed if they are to change at all, not realizing that making one's own choices after taking responsibility for one's actions is probably the most potent source of personal change that there is. With repeated choices, the force of habit gradually gets to be on your "new" side. Once you get used to the idea of taking a principled stand against cruelty, it is not only easy to do, but almost psychologically impossible to do otherwise!

- (4) Do not automatically dismiss animal liberation because you think it is "too radical." Anti-racism and anti-sexism were once greeted with the same dismissive thought. Think things fearlessly through to the logical end rather than simply following so-called authorities.
- (5) Many people insist, "I have my reasons for treating animals as I do." There are always reasons for everything. However, it is important to distinguish reasons that **explain** your behaviour from reasons that might **justify** your actions. In seeking to do the right thing, it is the latter class of reasons that is relevant.
- (6) Do not despair that your choices do not create large-scale effects in society. The animal liberation movement is in its infancy, and the part you play in this largely latent movement will involve subtle forms of education and action. Advertisers know that it takes about 7 times of being exposed to an idea before it "sinks in" generally speaking, and this applies to social movements as well. Most people have not had their 7 doses of animal liberation ideas! Besides, the movement is far from impotent: see my later section on inspiring animal protectionist achievements.
- (7) Please do not surrender to hopelessness. Exploiters or abusers would wish for nothing else more dearly. It is one of the greatest wellsprings of hope and courage to refuse to play a part in whatever might feed your despair.

Empowering Your Thinking

One dimension of self-activism is checking the way one thinks, to steer away from toxic thoughts (that are unrealistic and negative, and so disempowering) and towards constructive thoughts (that are realistic and positive, or empowering). This comes from a workshop I delivered on cognitive approaches to activism, and mainly pertains to animal liberation, although most of the rows in the following table also apply to animal welfare reformers:

| Disempowered Thinking | Empowered Thinking |
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| Individuals cannot make a difference. | Perhaps individuals cannot have much impact on speciesism as a whole. However individuals can have a dramatic effect on parts of that whole. And with every movement in the ocean there is a ripple effect. |
| So long as there is money to be made from animal suffering people will always exploit them. | Slavery and paying workers without a minimum wage were profitable for exploiters too, but these went the way of |

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| | the dodo. Profit does not always prevail, as achievements of the animal movement below demonstrate. |
| The media covers issues less and less, so how can animal rightists possibly get their messages across? | People can make the news in different ways. Austria made history in that all of the animal protection groups in that nation had a joint news conference against battery cages for egg-laying hens. This campaign ended up saturating a sympathetic media, even though battery cages are not “news” in a sense but have been around for many decades. Subsequently, such cages were banned in Austria (and later, all of the European Union). |
| Animal liberationists are doomed to die as failures since the animals will not be emancipated in our lifetimes. | This fails to distinguish between the short- and long-terms. We can have a substantial series of successful actions in the short-term. Also, we need to distinguish between individual and societal actions. It is inappropriate for any individual to grandiosely take on responsibility for the whole movement succeeding. We can measure our own success by our individual actions, and we can die as great "succeeders" given both realistic and positive goals in life. |
| The harder I try to convince people, the more their defences go up and the more hopeless the whole thing becomes. | Being overaggressive merely triggers others’ defences. Being a gentle role model who uses reasoning rather than brow-beating is more effective, and lets others be more receptive rather than defensive. Aggression reflects back on the aggressor and creates frustration, failure, alienation, coldness, and hostility. In any case, we should not take responsibility for others’ responses. Others’ responses are mainly their business. We should confine our goals to our own processes that we can control, and leave the rest to others or to nature. Also, we cannot simply try to control others but must respect their own agency, and in doing so they will be more receptive to considerations that one has to offer than if one tries to influence others as though they are “objects” or “mechanisms.” |
| Anyone sensitive to all suffering in the world must go mad with despair. | Thankfully, we can focus in ways that allow us to remain positive. We are more likely to help animals and to have a positive effect if we ourselves are positive |

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| | in our cause, exuding positive energy that inspires rather than misery and despair that mires. |
| I would be selfish to have any regard for my own pleasures while so many in the world suffer. | A positive consideration of one's own happiness and that of others is consistent with wishing a good life, and not merely a "not-bad life," to everyone, including oneself. Individuals are not mere means towards the ends of social movements. Rather, affirming the dignity of each individual is basic to social justice. |
| Speciesists are "idiots," "curmudgeons," etc. | Totally negative labels are inherently unfair, since no one is all-bad. Also, such labels inspire hatred which is unpleasant for everyone as well as counterproductive. People who behave irrationally are best helped through reasoning, not abuse. Abuse is part of the world's problems, not the solution. |
| Animal rights is a thinking person's philosophy. However most people do not think much for themselves. Therefore, the cause is bound to fail. | Thoughtful leaders can be educated, and then the fact that most people follow others can be used to advantage as society's leadership is progressively more educated and others follow suit. Also, we should not give up on educating everyone, since everyone is capable of learning. |
| I hate people who oppress others. | Everyone has good and bad points. Often people do not know any better. Most people who are animal liberationist used to be otherwise. Compassion for all animals includes human animals too. However you might feel about others—and outrageously negative feelings often correspond to exaggeratedly negative images of others—you need to think about what you want to communicate to others. Get away from thinking about your anger as a purely private matter that is internal. In gross or subtle ways you will communicate this inner state to others. Now rage communicates rejection, and occasions fear, anger, and rebellion in response. That is not a constructive or cooperative state. Is that the message you wish to send? Is that the response you wish to get? Wanting to change your personal (including body language and "aura") message will go a long way towards toning things down and getting calmer. Moreover, you can change by focusing |

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| | more on the positive and taking a strictly constructive approach to the negative. |
| The world is predominantly speciesist and speciesism is evil. Therefore the world is predominantly evil. | In my opinion, evil—as opposed to badness—is not primarily about outcomes but is more about intentions and character. In my experience, the world is full of people trying to do good every day, which does not make the news. If people can reform their consciences, they may continue to do try to do good, only they may include animals more regularly in the “good promotion” equation. |

Avoiding “Burnout”

In addition to keeping good “thought hygiene” by thinking healthy thoughts, and using critical thinking skills such as avoiding fallacies and inaccurate information, one can take care of oneself in other ways to cope with the stressful realities of what happens to animals, both human and other:

- humour
- doing things you enjoy
- keeping company with friends
- enjoying nature
- exercise
- yoga
- meditation
- deep breathing
- artistically enhancing your living environment
- becoming an activist rather than a helpless observer

These and other strategies can help one to avoid activist “burnout.”

Private Activism: Activism Towards Others

Quiet Role Models Who Make a “Loud” Statement

Whatever actions you choose to take, you serve as a **role model** in your community. Some have said that setting an example is the most powerful form of practical education that exists. Some people wait for others to ask questions once they are ready rather than foisting their activism on others. However, there is no social rule against oneself speaking out about the topic of animal treatment, and there is a real urgency to speak on behalf of “voiceless” animals.

Diplomacy

Being diplomatic is essential to relating to others effectively. Diplomacy involves a variety of considerations:

- (1) Tact about when to discuss matters; giving gory details while eating does not

- make sense from this perspective, for example.
- (2) People tend to shy away from those who are angry and blaming since it feels terrible to be around such people. Anger at injustice is understandable but like all anger it needs to be channeled effectively and indeed politely.
 - (3) Avoid being insulting or fostering generalizations or stereotypes. Openly discuss **actions** rather than making generalizations about **people**. For individuals can change simply by choosing to act differently.
 - (4) Avoid characterizing people as “sadistic” or “psychopathic” in relation to animals. Often people simply desire animal **products** and are largely ignorant of the actual implications for animals. They often have not even thought of how to weigh significance to animals when deliberating.
 - (5) We need to remember that compassion for animals includes human animals who are on the receiving end of our attempts to educate.
 - (6) Being genuinely open to others’ questions and reasoning, and do not assume that you have all of the answers—nobody does.
 - (7) Avoid making assumptions about people. Try to **learn** about them and avoid judging them.
 - (8) Find out “where people are at” when it comes to animals and then work from there.
 - (9) Being a good representative for the animals, who do not have a voice of their own, is a great responsibility in a world in which animals are generally helpless and “mute.”
 - (10) Try diplomatically to cultivate diplomacy in other activists as well.
 - (11) Being diplomatic does not mean being wishy-washy. One can be gentle but firm, steering a course between being merely passive and being outright aggressive. **Assertiveness** is an effective middle-ground to aim for. Passive people do not stand up for their values or beliefs in the way they express themselves or perhaps advocate. Aggressive people risk imposing their views on others in ways that are harsh, insulting, disrespecting of boundaries, inferiorizing, or hurtful. Assertive people present their beliefs and try to actively represent what they see as most fitting, but in a respectful manner.
 - (12) People do not conclude matters on the basis of reasoned arguments alone. They also come to conclusions, at times, that reflect their **desires**. So do not take it personally if someone with whom you are conversing seems unmoved by your arguments. It does not necessarily mean that your arguments are faulty. It might just be that the others’ desires occasion a rejection of a conclusion that reason and compassion may yet recommend to them at some future time.

Dealing with Unsupportive People

Some people wrestle with friends or family being unsupportive towards one’s animal activism. Here are some relevant considerations:

- (1) A friendly way to respond to your beliefs about animals would be to be supportive, curious, polite, and perhaps inquiring, not ridiculing, insulting, dismissive, negative, rude, or disdainfully uninterested, or typecasting you with crude stereotypes such as the idea that animal liberationists are “terrorists” or “irrational.”
- (2) It is important to distinguish between ways these others are good towards oneself, and ways in which they create difficulty. Nobody is all-bad or all-good. Nobody is perfect.
- (3) Do not hesitate to be assertive, stating how you feel due to their lack of support.

No one can argue with how you feel. You can ask someone who is hurtful, as many times as you need, “Do you mean to hurt my feelings?” Chances are they will cease, desist, and back off.

- (4) If a friend is totally unsupportive of one’s choices by being ridiculing or insulting, how good a friend is that person?
- (5) If someone you know is being defensive, that might say more about them than about you. They might feel guilty at some level and are trying desperately to salvage their self-esteem. Their battling away animal protectionist arguments might be more of this nature, and out of an interest in retaining old habits, than any hostility towards oneself as a “bad person” etc. It is easy to take others being frustrated or offended personally when that is not what is going on at all. Some people see disputes as open combat which they must “win” and you must “lose” rather than as an opportunity for everyone to learn something.
- (6) If you experience a lack of friendly attitudes towards your stance against cruelty to animals, self-activism once again enters the situation. **Be a friend to yourself** by using positive self-talk (you need not voice this aloud!), such as:
“I am holding to my convictions and I can take a measure of dignity in that position.”
“I am choosing to act on my belief that human beings should be just, compassionate, and positive towards others.”
“I’m doing a good job of actively seeking to choose in ways that do not promote cruelty.”
- (7) Sometimes friends or relatives get insulted if you refuse animal flesh offerings or other animal products. They may feel insulted, but you are not insulting them. You are just affirming your own beliefs and not necessarily commenting on their beliefs or actions by refusing animal products for yourself. You are not putting them down at all if you are willing to abide with them politely while they consume animal products. Rather, in this situation, they are negating your choices and you are not negating theirs. Thus, they are the ones being unfriendly or disrespectful. They might try to make you feel guilty that you are ungrateful or unappreciative to refuse the “hospitality” that they offer. However, in refusing products associated with cruelty and hoping for meals or offerings that respect your choices, you are not negating true hospitality. Rather, by not accommodating you, your hosts are being inhospitable, and you do not need to be grateful for that aspect of their treatment, nor feel guilty that you do not conform to the demands of their inhospitality. Just as they should respect others’ physical allergies, so should they respect others’ “moral allergies.”
- (8) You can **always** find friendly people—or even potentially dear friends—in animal activist groups, either in person or over the internet.

Private activism can be even more potent than public activism. For example, if private activism plays a role in causing someone to surrender corpse-eating, then that may mean a lot more in the world than someone reading a fleeting placard at a public protest. However, this is not a contest: legal change is also one of the most potentially potent forms of social change. Indeed, all forms of social change ideally work in concert rather than pitted against one another.

Public Activism

The goal of public activism is to help transform consciousness and behaviours in a way that is more compatible with what one perceives as best for animals. I have discussed

mainly private activism since these are the forms that are most underdiscussed. Here are some examples of public activism:

- (1) Consumer boycotts. People understandably bemoan capitalism and how the profit-motive undercuts caring for others in terms of social justice and the environment. However, the logic of capitalism can be socially useful. Since it relies on supply and demand, boycotts can be effective in getting companies to stop making certain products or to modify their products so that they are more in keeping with anti-cruelty and social justice concerns.
- (2) Look up a local activist group and decide on collective actions together.
- (3) Write letters to the editors of periodicals. You may well get published.
- (4) Write opinion/editorial pieces, e.g., for newspapers.
- (5) Demonstrations. These may gather media attention, help to educate passersby, and give a clear message to the one(s) being protested that their behaviour is being challenged.
- (6) Staged dialogues, e.g., on a crowded subway can educate many people around you. This is an effective form of street theatre, although many will not realize it is just that!
- (7) Strategically placed literature, e.g., in doctors' offices or on subways. It is useful to pass on literature you have finished to other people rather than tossing it in the waste basket.
- (8) Hold film nights to educate others.
- (9) Promote alternative, activist-friendly arts, literature, and music both to enjoy your world view and to reinforce your aspirations.
- (10) Be a "financial activist" by donating to groups in need of funds to carry out their public campaigns.
- (11) Do information tabling at malls or concerts.
- (12) Do presentations and announcements in your classes.
- (13) Attend animal conferences to learn more and develop your activism.

Now that we have discussed effective activism in general, both in the private and public spheres, let's consider the three forms of specific animal protectionist activism.

Traditional Animal Welfare Activism

Here are some effective things you can do to promote traditional animal welfare:

- (1) Find out who your federal member of Parliament (MP) is and inquire about any animal welfare issue that you please. He/she is legally obliged to reply and can get into trouble if that duty is shirked. You do not even need postage to mail your MP a letter and look forward to a reply! To find out who your MP is, go to:

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/common/index.asp?Language=E>

For correct forms of address for various members of your Canadian government:

http://www.pch.gc.ca/progs/cpsc-ccsp/pe/address2_e.cfm

Get involved with anti-cruelty legislation in Canada. The website of the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies contains information on why the old 1892 aspects

of the Canadian Criminal Code are so inadequate. The currently proposed Bill S-203 (a Senate bill) basically only increases fines, unlike Bill C-373 (“C” as in House of Commons). Bill S-203 might be passed as it already has been read in the House of Commons, unless the public can convince the legislature otherwise. It is not too late. What C-373 would do to improve matters: (a) does not require proving willful intent, as it is often impossible to prove a mental state and causes many cases to be thrown out of court; (b) prohibits killing animals without a lawful excuse; (c) protects all vertebrates equally, whether dog, cattle or other; (d) defines “animal” as sentient beings; (e) recognize animals as sentient rather than just as property; (f) makes it an offense to train animals for fighting. Tell MPs under pressure from animal industry lobbyists that traditional animal usage will no more be affected than under previous legislation. An earlier version of C-373 was approved by 85% of Canadians polled and unanimously in the House of Commons, only to be defeated by the unelected Senate. Tell your MP they need to get on board with democracy in this matter.

- (2) Take a stand against factory farming. See <http://www.humanefood.ca>. I do not agree that eliminating factory farming would make eating animals “humane,” but I agree with the goal of eliminating factory farming, and I think that concrete outcome means a lot more to the animals than disputing over the words. Also, I recognize the intent to make things relatively **more** humane, even if not **absolutely** humane. Humanists—those whose ethics favors humans above all—still have important reasons for at least reducing their animal consumption due to environmental and health factors (see below).
- (3) Adopt an animal from a local shelter or pound. An argument can be made against buying from breeders since they are bringing more and more animals into the world when there are already literally millions of animals being killed due to overpopulation of animals.
- (4) Join your local Humane Society or Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and get involved in humane advocacy. You can help walk dogs at shelters, educate children, help adopt out animals to responsible homes, and much more.
- (5) Provide a good role model for children. Challenge them any time they show tendencies towards cruelty to animals. This can go a long way in their social development.

Partial Abolitionism

Why people go further than traditional animal welfare and wish to wipe out certain animal usages: There are many possible reasons or combinations of them in a pluralistic society. However, in general, many people concerned with cruelty to animals see many practices as involving great suffering and possibly death for animals, with only trivial or at least minor benefits to human beings. For example, trapping animals for fur, or raising them on fur-farms, involves enormous amounts of suffering and death, but benefits—e.g., profiteering, winter clothing, and “fashionableness”—that can be easily had through more benign means.

Examples of partial abolitionism include banning animal fighting and animal sacrifice. You can find out about different activities of these sorts via internet searches. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals has many sources of information on practices that many people favor banning, such as, again, sport hunting, testing cosmetics on animals, rodeos, animal circuses, marine mammal aquaria, the veal crate, foie gras, wearing fur,

among other practices. The above discussions of how to be an activist in general apply to this category as well as the next...

Total Abolitionism

Equip Yourself to Respond

You can quickly educate yourself on common objections and replies in relation to animal liberation. This is currently a minority position in society, and people often have questions. However, you might be surprised at how simple and easy it is to come up with plausible replies to these inquiries. There are 3 sources listed here to help you in this regard:

- (1) David Sztybel, "Dances with Reason: Responses to Common Objections to Animal Rights."
<http://sztybel.tripod.com/dances.html>
- (2) Tom Regan, "10 Reasons FOR Animal Rights and their Explanation; 10 Reasons AGAINST Animal Rights and Their Replies."
<http://www.cultureandanimals.org/animalrights.htm>
- (3) The Animal Rights FAQ
<http://animal-rights.com/>

The "V" Word

Taking animal issues seriously means putting vegetarianism in all of its forms on the table for thoughtful discussion. Considering vegetarianism does not mean you have to dress up as "Krisp E. Carrot" and prance around at a demonstration. It can be a quiet form of private activism. Actually there is more than one "V" word: there is veganism to consider as well, or the avoidance of all animal products.

It is estimated that the average flesh-eater is responsible for the slaughter of 22 warm-blooded animals per year and 1,500 in a lifetime. According to the Toronto Vegetarian Association, the average flesh-eater results in a death toll of 984 chickens, 37 turkeys, 12 cows, 29 hogs, 2 sheep, and 910 pounds of fishes.³ Each individual vegetarian does make a difference. If all the vegetarians in the world suddenly decided to become meat-eaters the market could not support the demand.

You can order PETA's totally free Vegetarian Starter Kit on the following site:
<http://goveg.com/order.asp>

Then there is the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM) free Vegetarian Starter Kit (which emphasizes human health):

<http://www.pcrm.org/health/veginfo/vsk/>

³ The term "fishes" is used by some animal liberationists rather than "fish" since the latter term does not dignify these aquatic animals as individuals. Unfortunately, neither does measuring fish consumption by the pound, but that is the figure given by the TVA.

PETA has vegetarian recipes at:

<http://vegcooking.com/>

PETA's 30 reasons to go vegetarian:

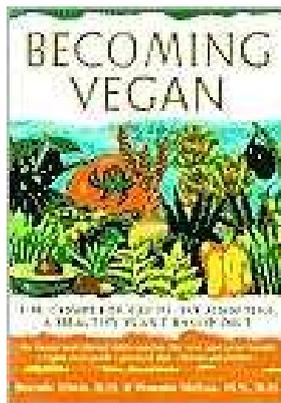
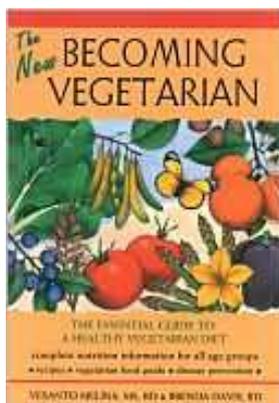
<http://goveg.com/feat/chewonthis/index.asp>

Use an accredited list of animal ingredients in order to avoid them in your foods and other consumer products:

<http://www.vegfamily.com/lists/animal-ingredients.htm>

Here are some considerations for vegetarian activism:

- (1) Request vegetarian items at your grocery store; you may just find these products suddenly appearing on the shelves.
- (2) Support vegetarian restaurants inasmuch as your budget, time, and preferences permit; they at times go under due to lack of clientele.
- (3) Realize that you have a practically endless supply of great recipes; the following link is to my favorite vegan recipes:
<http://szytybel.tripod.com/recipes.html>
- (4) Ensure that you are eating a healthy vegetarian diet. Eat foods from the PCRM's new, vegan 4 food groups of fruit, legumes, whole grains, and vegetables. See:
http://www.pcrm.org/health/veginfo/vsk/food_groups.html
- (5) Realize that vegans especially need to make sure that they get enough vitamin B-12, because current ways of processing foods tend to eliminate the bacteria that generate B-12. That said, it is easy to get enough B-12 without special measures, and the human system requires only minute quantities of it that in fact are recycled over and over again. Soy beverages such as Silk include doses of B-12.
- (6) For those who like to read books on the subject, two excellent books for covering your nutritional needs by professional dietitians are Vesanto Melina and Brenda Davis, *Becoming Vegetarian: The Complete Guide to Adopting a Healthy Vegetarian Diet* (2003) and Davis and Melina, *Becoming Vegan: The Complete Guide to Adopting a Healthy Plant-Based Diet* (2004):



- (7) Realize that corpse-eating has a tremendously negative effect on the environment, since animal agriculture: (a) is the #1 contributor to global warming (18% of total, outweighing **all** combined forms of transport according to a 2006 UN report); (b) water pollution (more than 10x the water pollution otherwise attributable to humans); (c) uses more than half our fresh water; (d) uses 1/3 of all

raw resources; (e) uses the majority of arable land (e.g., 95% of oats are grown for animal feed); (f) causes habitat loss and species-extinctions from clearing grazing lands; (g) leading source of topsoil depletion; (more than 75% of original U.S. topsoil was gone by 1987; it takes 500 years to make an inch of topsoil naturally); (h) much increased pesticides since so many crops are grown for animal feed; and (i) doubles fossil fuel consumption society-wide. It is not an exaggeration to say that meat-eating might be **the** paramount environmentally destructive factor. Therefore, it might not even be possible to be a serious environmentalist as a corpse-eater.

- (8) Realize that scientific studies have shown corpse-eating to be detrimental to human health in a variety of areas, including but not limited to: arthritis, asthma, cancers, constipation, diabetes (adult-onset type), gall stones, gout, heart disease, hemorrhoids, hypertension, hypoglycemia, kidney stones, multiple sclerosis, obesity, osteoporosis, salmonellosis, strokes, and ulcers⁴
- (9) “Veganize” your cafeteria for your college, university or residence with a simple step-by-step procedure:
<http://www.peta2.com/college/cyc-veganize.asp>
- (10) One of the most effective forms of activism which groups such as the Toronto Animal Rights Society have successfully pioneered is showing videos of animal exploitation, such as PETA’s 12-minute short film, *Meet Your Meat* on the streets using portable televisions and leaflets, and then inviting people to regular vegan potlucks, each one featuring an educational video or guest speaker. This is rather expensive and requires considerable organization, but it might nevertheless become standard in major urban centres as time goes on.

Many animal liberationists see the logic of the partial abolitionists—get rid of needless practices that are extremely harmful to animals—as applying equally to meat-eating. The main difference is that people are more emotionally attached to the way they eat.

Anti-Vivisection

This is another die-hard cause that partial abolitionists often cling to since not least of all they associate vivisection with supposed medical breakthroughs for humans. You can educate yourself on how vivisection is alleged to be scientifically invalid since it is very difficult to extrapolate from animal models of disease to humanity. PETA has good information on these issues and so does the American Anti-Vivisection Society, and it is easy to find their websites by name.

Many people wish to avoid products tested on animals since the “test subjects” are often force-fed until their intestines rupture, rubbed until their skin is raw and bleeding, and otherwise degraded to observe the effects of everyday products. This form of harming animals does not teach much about toxicity to human beings. Such commercial testing is mainly done for companies to use in defence against possible lawsuits based on product toxicity. Here is a list of companies that **do not** test on animals:

<http://www.caringconsumer.com/pdfs/companiesDontTest.doc>

⁴ For information about vegetarianism/veganism and health and the environment, see generally John Robbins, *Diet for a New America* (Walpole: Stillpoint, 1987). Even the American Dietetic Association (ADA), a very conservative organization, recognizes the many advantages of vegetarianism in avoiding a variety of degenerative diseases. See the ADA report at: <http://www.vrg.org/nutrition/adapaper.htm>.

And here is a list of companies that **do** test on animals:

<http://www.caringconsumer.com/pdfs/companiesDoTest.doc>

Finally, many people donate to charities that are sometimes connected with medical research, not suspecting that what they are funding are animals tests that are not only scientifically questionable, but would be a violation of rights in the human case (including if we are talking about mentally disabled humans who sometimes have less cognitive capacities than test animals).

So here is a list of charities that do and do not test on animals, which you can search by country, and also type of charity: (If you are put on the spot, tell the charity agent that you will look up their organization up on the list before you decide whether to donate.)

<http://www.humaneseal.org/search.php>

There is no end to the things you can do! People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals has a tremendous assortment of resources for activists, often providing free literature for campus activists, for example.

You can order a free copy of PETA's guide to animal rights activism called "Easy as Pie" at:

http://www.peta.org/ActionCenter/easyaspie_order.asp

As well, PETA offers a few guides on how to be an activist in 5 minutes or less, and 15 minutes or less:

<http://www.peta.org/actioncenter/getactive-5min.asp>

[see under the heading, "Time to Get Active"]

Why Total Abolitionists Go as Far as They Do

Total abolitionists typically agree with a range of commitments which help to account for the practical position that they have adopted:

- (1) A commitment to fairness in allocating benefits and protections from harm; **suffering** for example is a concern that applies to normal humans and the sorts of animals reared for food. Animal liberationists often also point out that although the #1 reason for counting animals for less is their allegedly inferior cognitive capacities, we would not treat mentally challenged humans (the comatose, insane, senile, congenitally mentally challenged, stroke victims, etc.) in the way that we treat animals by experimenting on them, eating them, hunting them down, etc. Justice requires that we treat like cases alike unless there is a morally relevant difference between cases. And hard-thinking animal liberationists the world over have not been able to identify any morally relevant difference, any more than there is between members of so-called "races."
- (2) A commitment to non-violence
- (3) A commitment to anti-slavery
- (4) A commitment to choosing what is life-affirming rather than death-affirming

- (5) A commitment to abolishing all forms of oppression including sexism, racism, and speciesism
- (6) A commitment to not only refraining from active cruelty (which is a common commitment since society outlaws animal fighting), but also passive cruelty. Active cruelty seeks to inflict suffering, usually because it affords sadistic pleasure. Passive cruelty, as I define it, often means **indifference** to the suffering of others. Such indifference is sufficient to allow suffering to continue that otherwise might not if people care enough to take appropriate action.
- (7) Identifying common animal uses as cases of “animal illfare” rather than animal welfare” even when efforts towards “humaneness” are made⁵ and being committed to never contributing to animal illfare if that is possible

This list is merely suggestive. The philosophical waters we have just gotten wet with run very deep indeed. In fact, deeper thinking about the ideas may lead us to be critical of how we commonly use language. Joan Dunayer, in her excellent book, *Animal Equality: Language and Liberation* (2001), provides many examples of animal liberationist uses of language. For my own adaptation of her guide, please see: <http://sztybel.tripod.com/language.pdf>.

Animal Welfare and Animal Rights: Inspiring Achievements

I will include both a general list and a chronological list:

General List

- 10% of Britons used to be vegetarian, which is impressive enough, but now about 25% of them are vegetarian—the timing of this social change suggests that it has something to do with the “mad cow disease” scare there
- the Eurobarometer Program sponsored a study administered by International Research Associates in the fall of 1992, out of a total European sample size of 13,024, with approximately 1,000 in-person interviews conducted in each nation. In France, 68% of the population either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement that animals should be used in scientific research; over 50% of the population was similarly opposed in West Germany, East Germany, Belgium, Italy, Great Britain, Ireland, Denmark, and Spain. In North America less than half the population disagrees with animals in research, but the example of Europe shows that could very well change⁶
- Sweden banned the use of great apes and gibbons in scientific research
- Great Britain outlawed using great apes in experiments
- The Balearic Parliament for the Spanish Balearic Islands supports the Great Ape Project, or humanlike rights to life, liberty and freedom from torture for chimpanzees, gorillas and orangutans

⁵ The “animal illfare” label was introduced in David Sztybel, “The Rights of Animal Persons,” *Journal for Critical Animal Studies* 4 (1) (2006): 1-37; 3-6. This article summarizes my reasons for concluding that the traditional “animal welfare versus animal liberation” debate is perhaps best recast as an “animal illfare versus animal liberation” debate. For a summation of the animal illfare label and the Levels of Harmful Discrimination upon which it is based, see <http://sztybel.tripod.com/levels.pdf>.

⁶ L Pifer, K. Shimizu and R. Pifer, “Public attitudes towards animal research: some international comparisons,” *Society and Animals: Journal of Human-Animal Studies* 2 (2) (1994). See <http://www.psyeta.org>, the website of Psychologists for the Ethical Treatment of Animals.

- Vancouver's City Council in British Columbia, Canada is the first in North America to ban rodeos
- Richmond, British Columbia, Canada is the first city in North America to ban all use of eggs from battery hens in all city facilities; the city encourages residents to buy only organic, free-range eggs
- the Cloverdale Rodeo Association in British Columbia, Canada bans roping at rodeos due to animal advocacy
- Catalonia, Spain raised fines for cruelty to animals up to \$24,000 and bans the killing of abandoned dogs and cats in shelters
- a USA-wide survey of 100,000 college/university students finds that nearly 25% of students said that finding vegan meals on campus is important to them
- Sweden banned the leg-hold trap and signaled its intent to prohibit "fur farms"
- Tom Regan (his information is published in his 2003 book, *Animal Rights and Human Wrongs*) notes that in the mid-1980s, 17 million animals were trapped for fur in the United States, by the early 1990s it was 10 million, and at the time of his writing it was noted to be 4.5 million; caged mink declined from 1,000 farms to over 400 farms in the same period
- Regan in the same work reports that in 1988 there were 330,000 trappers, and by 1994 there were fewer than half that number; in his 2003 writing he noted there were then about a third of the first number
- Regan notes also that 7 US States and 89 nations worldwide have banned the leghold trap
- Regan notes that Austria, England, Scotland, and Wales have banned raising animals primarily for their fur
- Regan notes that 14 million veal calves were slaughtered in the US in 1945, compared to 800,000 at the time of his writing in 2003
- Regan notes that per capita meat consumption in the US is declining

Chronological List

- **1981** People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) does an undercover investigation of a Maryland laboratory, resulting in the first-ever conviction of an animal experimenter on charges of animal abuse and the first-ever suspension of federal funds on the grounds of cruelty
- **1983** Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada is the first city in the world to declare an official Animal Rights Day
- **1983** PETA achieves a ban on using dogs and cats in military "wound labs"
- **1984** a PETA expose at the University of Pennsylvania puts a stop to funding 14 years of experiments using baboons to study head injuries
- **1985** PETA uncovers gross mistreatment of dogs and other animals in the City of Hope laboratory in California, and the government fines the lab \$11,000 and suspends more than \$1,000,000 in federal funding to the lab
- **1986** PETA stops total-isolation confinement of chimps at SEMA laboratories
- **1987** PETA's *Don't Kill the Animals* album tops the dance charts in the US and Europe
- **1988** Sweden passes an agricultural law providing that farmed animals have the right to live their lives with plenty of room, bedding, less stress, and toys, with a ban on confinement of sows, foie gras, and battery cages for hens

- **1988** PETA's distribution of a video of an operation on an improperly anesthetized dog at East Carolina State University prompted the university to issue a moratorium on the use of live animals
- **1989** PETA's Compassion Campaign persuades Avon, Benneton, Mary Kay, Amway, Kenner, Mattel, and Hasbro to stop testing on animals
- **1990** the city of Saanich, British Columbia is the first jurisdiction in Canada to pass a bylaw banning exotic animals from being used in circuses; now there are more than 30 such bylaws throughout the province
- **1990** Estee Lauder is persuaded by PETA to stop animal testing
- **1992** the police conduct the first-ever raid on a factory farm to investigate cruelty related to foie gras
- **1993** Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada is the first city in Canada to close down its zoo
- **1993** Farm Sanctuary achieves first ever conviction of a U.S. stockyard (where animals are kept before slaughter) for mistreating a downed animal, after the prosecution of Lancaster Stockyards in Pennsylvania
- **1993** after a PETA campaign, GM, then the largest corporation in the world, agrees to stop "crash-testing" animals; today, no car companies do such tests anymore
- **1993** PETA uncovers cruel experiments at Wright State University; the university is charged with violating the Animal Welfare Act, and the experiments are ended
- **1994** due to pressure from PETA, the US Department of Agriculture bans face-branding of cattle, and spaying cattle without anesthetics
- **1994** for the first time in the US, a chinchilla farmer is charged with cruelty to animals after an undercover PETA investigation revealed photographs of electrocuting animals by the genitals
- **1994** PETA opens branches in the UK, Netherlands, and Germany
- **1995** Farm Sanctuary helps pass a law in California which prevents dragging, pushing, holding, or selling downed animals at stockyards and slaughterhouses. Other states follow California, passing similar laws
- **1995** Mobil, Shell, Texaco, and other oil companies agree to cap their stacks after PETA found that many birds needlessly die in these smokestacks
- **1995** the US government files 41 charges against a breeding company for pharmaceutical testing, Hazelton Research Products in Michigan, after an undercover PETA investigation revealed that the researchers beat the animals, sometimes to death
- **1996** due to PETA's campaign against using pregnant mares' urine for women in menopause, Wyerth-Ayerst lost more than \$73 million in sales
- **1996** PETA blows the whistle on Bion, a US/Russia/France program sending monkeys into space with implanted electrodes, in strait jackets; the US government closes down the program
- **1996** PETA finds that \$3 million in US tax money was granted to experimenters at Omaha's Boy's Town National Research Hospital to cut into kittens' heads and starve cats for deafness and vocal tract experiments; the government investigates and as a result the firm closes down the experiments
- **1997** PETA investigates a lab about to break dogs' legs in an experiment; actress Kim Basinger speaks out about it; instead the dogs are released to be adopted
- **1997** an Illinois fur farmer pleads guilty to cruelty to animals for the anal electrocution of foxes

- **1998** PETA President Ingrid Newkirk visits Taiwan and documents how filthy pounds kill animals by starvation, electrocution, drowning, and beating; as a result, Taiwan passes its first law against cruelty to animals
- **1999** New Zealand bans vivisection of great apes
- **1999** PETA sees that Belcross Farm in North Carolina is indicted with felony charges of cruelty to animals, namely pigs, due to undercover footage
- **2000** PETA gets McDonald's to ban de-beaking and force-molting (starving hens) and to institute unannounced slaughterhouse inspections
- **2000** PETA gets a Michigan puppy mill shut down and the owner is banned from owning or breeding animals
- **2001** Burger King agrees, due to pressure from PETA, to give hens 75 square inches in cages
- **2002** The Dutch ban biomedical research on chimpanzees
- **2002** In response to Matthew Scully's book, *Dominion*, the cruel confining of pregnant pigs is banned in Florida
- **2002** Germany votes animal rights into its Constitution; the state added "and animals" to a statement obliging Germany to respect and protect the dignity of human beings
- **2002** PETA helps activists ban animal circus acts in Costa Rica; Windsor, Canada; Greenburgh, New York; Bogota, Colombia; Sao Leopoldo, Brazil; Orange City, North Carolina; and Pasadena and Rohnert Park, California
- **2002** PETA persuades 40 companies, including Nike and Reebok, not to purchase leather from India, where animals are skinned alive among other atrocities, and this results in \$40 million loss of revenue for those animal abusers
- **2002** Thanks to PETA, Safeway is the first-ever supermarket to improve factory farming conditions, with unannounced slaughterhouse inspections and more space for laying hens; this is followed suit by Albertson's and Kroger
- **2003** The European Union bans cosmetics testing on animals
- **2003** a poll by Associated Press and the Los Angeles Times found that 72% of respondents said it is sometimes wrong to use animals in research, and 29% said it is always wrong; 2/3 of adult Americans agree that "an animal's right to live free from suffering should be just as important as a person's."
- **2003** PETA exposes stroke tests at Columbia University as cruel and pointless; the tests are canceled
- **2004** The Detroit Zoo is the first US zoo to give away the elephants there to a refuge solely on ethical grounds; these animals had been previously confined in the zoo for 22 years
- **2004** Farm Sanctuary is invited to speak about animal rights at the United States Department of Agriculture, the first event of its kind
- **2004** Austria passes laws banning battery cages for hens, exotic animal circus acts, ear-cropping and tail-docking of dogs, and showcasing puppies and kittens in often sweltering shop windows; Austria institutes fines of over \$18,000 plus seizure of animals in cases of extreme cruelty; an Animal Rights Ombudsperson is established to oversee the treatment of animals in farms, zoos, circuses, and petshops; bans cockfighting; makes animal torture punishable with 2 years in jail—these pioneering measures were unanimously approved by Austria's parliament
- **2004** city of Santa Ana, California bans animal circus acts
- **2004** Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger of California bans foie gras

- **2004** PETA persuades the Environmental Protection Agency and certain chemical companies not to do chemical tests, sparing the lives of tens of thousands of animals
- **2005** Israel bans foie gras although they were the fourth largest producer in the world
- **2005** Mercedes-Benz bows to PETA pressure to provide a leather-free option for cars; it takes 4 cows to make on leather interior for Mercedes
- **2005** PETA causes officials in Durham, North Carolina to halt plans to kill a family of beavers who dammed a road culvert; the city agrees to develop a humane solution
- **2005** a Virginia hoarder of animals is banned for life from owning animals thanks to PETA
- **2006** Arizona becomes the first place in North America to ban the veal crate, and the second place in North America to ban confining pregnant pigs
- **2007** the European Parliament commits itself to ending experiments on primates throughout the European Union
- **2008** a Dutch Party for the Animals becomes the fastest-growing political party in the Netherlands, having earned 2 seats in the House of Representatives, 1 seat in the Senate, and 9 seats in the Provincial States parliament
- **2008** Los Angeles passes mandatory spay-and-neuter legislation
- **2011** Israel bans manufacturing and importing of fur except for religious purposes

Conclusion

You do not have to be special or a “hero” to take action, but just an ordinary person taking account of information that should not be extraordinary to obtain, but often is due to repressive social forces. Animal rights is often associated in the public’s mind with atrocity images of animal maltreatment. However, those are images of what **rejecting** animal rights looks like. Animal liberation is taking action towards the upliftment of any and all beings who find their lives to be significant.

David Sztybel’s website: <http://sztybel.tripod.com/home.html>
Links to favorite sites: <http://sztybel.tripod.com/favlinks.html>

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