

ETHICAL CHOICES



WORLD ANIMAL FOUNDATION®

Ethics addresses questions of morality, such as what makes our actions right or wrong. **Animal ethics** focuses upon the constantly evolving way in which society thinks of nonhuman animals. Through our use of animals as goods for food, clothing, entertainment and companionship, animal ethics is something that we all interact with on a daily basis. **Environmental ethics** is the philosophy that considers extending the traditional boundaries of ethics from solely including humans to including the non-human world. There are many ethical decisions made by humans with respect to the environment.



nonhuman members of our family, such as the cats and dogs who share our homes, we distance ourselves from the lives of billions of wild animals, farmed animals, animals used in experimentation, animals used for clothing and animals used in the entertainment industry.

Our consumer choices shape our daily lives and it is through them that we have come to regard some animals not as indi-

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ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Environmental ethics address questions of right and wrong regarding the natural world and our relationship with plants and animals. We must find meaningful ways to deal with pollution, resource degradation and plant and animal extinction - not only because it is vital to saving our human race - but because it is simply the right thing to do.

All plants and animals are an important part of the planet and are a functional part of human life. Maintaining environmental ethics ensures we are doing our part to keep the environment safe and protected. It is essential that we respect and honor the environment and use morals and ethics in our daily decisions.

Environmental ethics builds on scientific understanding by bringing human values, morals and improved decision making into the conversation with science. While moral reasoning is not a substitute for science, science does not teach us to care. Scientific



knowledge alone does not provide reasons for planet protection. It only provides data, knowledge and information. Environmental ethics uses this information to ask how can we live in harmony with the environment and why should we care.

Environmental ethics considers three key propositions:

- The planet and its plants and animals are worthy of our ethical concern.
- Plants, animals and the environment have intrinsic value; moral value because they exist, not only because they meet human needs.
- We should consider whole ecosystems, including other forms of life, in our daily decisions.

Industrialization has created pollution and ecological imbalance. It is not only the duty of that industry to make changes to protect the environment, but all of us must make daily decisions that help to restore the environment and make it sustainable.



ETHICAL CONSUMERISM

Ethical consumerism is buying things, only when needed, that are made ethically. Generally, this means they are made without harm to or exploitation of humans, animals and the environment. Ethical consumerism involves positive buying and moral boycotting.

Positive buying means favoring ethical products, be they fair trade, cruelty free, organic, locally produced, recycled or re-used.

Moral boycott means refusing to buy products that exploit humans, animals and the environment.

Shopping is a form of voting; a way to express our moral choices. If we care about the planet and animals,

but continue to buy from companies that harm animals and the environment, than we are participating in that unethical behavior.

Ethical consumers research products before purchasing to ensure they are environmentally friendly, animal friendly, sustainable and do not exploit humans.

We must also not limit our places in society to that of consumers only. We are, after all, people not consumers, with the free will to take more direct action. Our responsibility does not end after we stop ourselves from buying unethical products. We must also work to stop unethical corporations from abusing the planet and animals.

ANIMAL ETHICS

Different approaches to **animal ethics**, such as welfarism and abolitionism, vary greatly both in their philosophical viewpoints and their practices. Their shared focus is achieving the inclusion of nonhuman animals within our moral community.

Welfarism

The call for 'higher-welfare' products, through consumer demand for 'humane treatment' and products such as free-range meat, eggs and dairy, is termed **welfarism**. Welfarism modifies systems of abuse through changes to legislation and working practices, while allowing exploitation of nonhuman animals to continue.

Abolitionism

By rejecting their commodification as 'products' and property, **abolitionism** affords nonhuman animals a right to life and freedom from exploitation. Abolitionism challenges the legitimacy of abusive industries and what we demand from them, working to end suffering by ending exploitation as a whole.

Animal Ethics In Practice

We can prevent nonhuman animals from being degraded into the class of things by promoting a compassionate attitude towards them. An attitude that demonstrates a lack of respect for other animals and unfair behavior towards them is known as **speciesism**. Like both racism and sexism, speciesism is a prejudice which builds a general disregard for the lives of others based upon an unreasonable differentiation. Only by allowing all animals equal consideration can we be unprejudiced in our actions.

When we start to value nonhuman animals as individuals, we recognize that they are not mechanical units of production and profit. Gradual changes to how animals are treated, confined and slaughtered may alter aspects of how we use other animals but they do not challenge the wrongs of their enslavement. On the surface,

welfare changes may appear compassionate, however, by looking at the wider picture we can see that they leave animals within abusive environments and allow their exploitation to continue. By regulating cruelty, welfarism actively accepts the trade in nonhuman animal lives.

Killing and unacceptable harm remain an inherent part of farming animals for food and clothing, using animals in experiments, and using animals for entertainment, regardless of the practices used. The use of buzzwords such as 'humanely raised', and commercial branding of free range products, wrongly reassures us as consumers. The cheery media persona designed for these 'products' enables us to put a falsely positive image to a process which commodifies animals and causes them to suffer.

By creating a change within our own consumer demand, we can create a wider reaching change for the better. When we choose not to support exploitative industries and avoid products taken from animals, we reject the commodity status placed upon them and recognize their value as individuals. Veganism (refraining from consuming all animal products) is the simple action of removing our personal demand for animal exploitation. It is the practical application of the idea that animals are not property, nor ours to use and manipulate.





ANIMAL ETHICS & YOU

If you believe that we should be kind to animals and treat them with respect, only one further step is needed to reach the conclusion that all animals deserve our kindness and respect. If we extend to other animals the same compassion and morality we would hope for ourselves, we can begin to alleviate the harm that we cause them. Compassionate choices made by us as individuals offer protection to those who need it most. Changing the way in which harm takes place is not enough: we need to make choices that respect life and freedom. By leading a vegan lifestyle, we end our demand for animal suffering and exploitation. All that this requires from us is the decision to make a change.

IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT ANIMAL WELFARE

The suffering and cruelty inflicted upon animals is a major cause for concern and a strong motivation for many vegans. Many people are becoming increasingly aware of the animal welfare concerns surrounding food production, particularly in intensive farming systems. However, the welfare of farmed animals during their lifetimes is not the only reason why vegans choose not to consume or use animal products. There is strong evidence that animals are sentient beings with individual needs and preferences. The mass production and killing of these animals does not recognize this. Anyone who has spent time with a companion animal knows that they have complex emotions, and yet wild animals and farmed animals are no different in this respect from dogs and cats.

Killing is an inherent and unavoidable part of farming animals for food. Of course animals are killed for



meat, but many people are unaware that this is equally true of egg and milk production. Millions of male chicks and calves are killed each year as 'by-products' of the egg and milk industries, considered worthless since they cannot produce milk or eggs. The dairy cows and egg-laying hens themselves are killed at a fraction of their natural lifespan, when they become too worn out to produce enough milk or eggs to be profitable.

Simply buying 'higher-welfare' animal products cannot change these facts. If consumers want to ensure that the food they buy is 'cruelty-free', by far the best way to achieve this is to buy vegan food. It is entirely possible and increasingly easy to have nutritious and tasty food and practical and stylish clothing without exploiting other animals. Therefore the question is not, "Why shouldn't we use and kill animals?", but, "Why would we?"



IT'S NOT ALL OR NOTHING

Living a vegan lifestyle is not an all or nothing philosophy. Vegans attempt to minimize the suffering of animals as much as possible in their daily lives. If a vegan accidentally, or intentionally, purchases or consumes an animal product, it does not suddenly exclude them from being vegan. They simply try harder in the future.

If you are not ready, or willing, to be a full fledged vegan, you can still help countless animals by making as many compassionate choices as you can. For example, if you aren't ready to completely eliminate animal products from your diet, you can still reduce consumption of those products while also eliminating non-food animal products from your daily purchases and boycotting animal entertainment.