

Farm animals, by Jane Goodal

The **blurring**¹ of the line between animals and humans raises for many people a range of ethical issues related to the ways in which we use and abuse animals for so many purposes all around the world. One such relates to the raising of animals for food in factory or intensive farms. I was introduced to many farm animals when I was a child. In fact it would be true to say that I started my scientific career in a hen house ! When I was four and a half years old I spent a holiday on a farm in the country. My family lived in London where the only animals around, other than our dog, were pigeons and sparrows. So seeing cows and pigs and horses out in the fields, and meeting them close up, was very exciting.

When I first got to **Gombe**² to study the **chimps**³, somebody gave me two chickens that were meant to be eaten: a hen and a **rooster**⁴. I cut the string that tied their legs together and they became good companions, eating many insects around the camp, including scorpions. I named them Hengist and Hildegard, and Hengist was a wonderful alarm clock. It was quite impossible to sleep through his pre-dawn crowing. They were enchanting birds, each with a very distinctive personality.

It was a real shock when, in the 1970s, I read *Animal Liberation* by Peter Singer and learned about **factory 'farms'**⁵. Places where hens and other **poultry**⁶, cows and **calves**⁷, and pigs, were kept in crowded, **stinking**⁸ conditions, fed hormones to make them grow faster, and fed antibiotics as a prophylactic to keep them alive. I was horrified. And when I next looked at a piece of meat on my plate I realized that it symbolized fear, pain and death. I never ate meat again.

Intensive, factory farming is not only unethical with regard to animal suffering, but also because of its adverse impact on the environment and human health. The use of farmland for **grazing**⁹ **cattle**¹⁰ or for growing grain to feed cattle is very wasteful, and is causing the destruction of ever increasing areas of natural habitat and is placing **unsustainable**¹¹ demands on water. The practice of giving animals antibiotics in their feed, to keep them alive in the highly stressed environment of the intensive farm, is causing many bacteria to become increasingly resistant to more and more antibiotics.

It's encouraging to find that at least some farmers are beginning to return to the *old fashioned* methods of animal husbandry. There are imaginative projects that attempt to improve conditions for some farm animals.

(...) The programmes of the Jane Goodall Institute [are] helping to raise understanding of the true nature of animals and ways in which we humans exploit them and cause them to suffer. The most important message is that every individual makes a difference every day. We **endeavour**¹² to teach children about the problems in the world around them and encourage and empower them to take action to make change. And everywhere, today, there are people who have heeded that appeal, people who are speaking out **on behalf**¹³ of animals just as, a hundred years ago, people spoke out on behalf of human slaves. And because our cause is right, we shall, eventually, succeed on behalf of the animals. In the meantime we must work even harder and never give up.

Author : Dr Jane Goodal is a world-famous primatologist, and has studied the lives and behaviour of chimpanzees for over 40 years. In 2002, she was appointed a United Nations messenger of peace.

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Link : <http://shop.earthscan.co.uk/ProductDetails/mcs/productID/678/groupID/6/categoryID/8/v/>



VOCABULARY

1. **Blurring** : when the outline of an object is not neat.
2. **Gombe** : a region in the North East of Nigeria, Africa.
3. **Chimp** : short for chimpanzee.
4. **Rooster** : a male chicken.
5. **Factory farm** : system of farming which involves keeping animals indoors, often with very little space, and giving them special foods so that they grow more quickly or produce more eggs and milk, in order to reduce costs.
6. **Poultry** : birds raised for meat.
7. **Calf** : young cow.
8. **To stink** : to have a very strong smell.
9. **To graze** : to eat grass in a field
10. **Cattle** : cows, calves and bulls
11. **Unsustainable** : not viable in the long term
12. **To endeavour** : to try
13. **On behalf of...** : in the name of ...

QUOTATIONS FOR FURTHER DEBATE

« The question [about animals] is not, « Can they reason ? » nor, « Can they talk ? » but rather, « Can they suffer ? »

Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), was an English gentleman, jurist, philosopher, and legal and social reformer. He is best known as an early advocate of individual and economic freedom, including the separation of church and state, freedom of expression, equal rights for women, animal rights, the end of slavery, the abolition of physical punishment (including that of children), the right to divorce, free trade, and no restrictions on interest.

« It doesn't bother me. We're no different from any other business. These animal rights people like to accuse us of mistreating our stock, but we believe we can be most efficient by not being emotional. We are a business, not a humane society, and our job is to sell merchandise at a profit. It's no different from selling paper-clips or refrigerators. »

Henry Pace, owner of a livestock auction yard

« The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated. »

Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), major political and spiritual leader of India, and the Indian independence movement and known to Indians as the Father of the Nation. He was the pioneer of Satyagraha — the resistance of tyranny through mass civil disobedience strongly founded upon ahimsa (total non-violence), which led India to independence, and has inspired movements for civil rights and freedom across the world.

« The thinking [person] must oppose all cruel customs no matter how deeply rooted in tradition and surrounded by a halo. When we have a choice, we must avoid bringing torment and injury into the life of another... »

Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965), German theologian, musician, philosopher, and physician. He received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1953.