

Is the Public Ready to Roast¹ the Meat Industry?

For decades, the **well-being**² of farm animals has been a largely ignored issue. So it may come as a surprise that most Americans want animals to be protected from cruelty. This is the overall finding of a recent telephone survey of 1,012 adults by the Opinion Research Corporation of Princeton, New Jersey, for Animal Rights International. The survey found that 93% of US adults agreed that animal pain and suffering should be reduced as much as possible even though the animals are going to be **slaughtered**³ anyway.

Nine out of ten adult Americans also disapprove of current methods of **raising**⁴ food animals in spaces so **confining**⁵ that **sows**⁶ and **calves**⁷ can't even turn around and that **laying hens**⁸ are unable to stretch their **wings**⁹. With these concerns, it's hardly surprising that more than eight out of ten people think the meat and egg industries should be held legally responsible for protecting farm animals from cruelty. And that 91% think the US Department of Agriculture should be involved in protecting farm animals from cruelty.

What may well alarm corporate executives is that on top of this, 58% of the public also believes that fast food restaurants and supermarkets, who profit from factory **intensive farming**¹⁰, should be held legally responsible for protecting farm animals from cruelty.

Too often, in the past, animal protectionists have ignored the 95% of animals who do not necessarily rank high in popularity. But, this study shows that the American public cares about all vulnerable animals. And, as demonstrated by the recent successful campaign to abolish the face **branding**¹¹ of **cattle**¹², they are ready to confront and challenge abuses in animal agriculture.

As the public focuses on the horrors of **factory farming**¹³, smart-thinking, image-conscious corporations, who profit from animal agriculture, would do well to respond swiftly and pro-actively. The alternative will almost certainly be a consumer **backlash**¹⁴ as animal protectionists begin to launch public awareness campaigns. In this connection, we have begun to use the survey to talk with major companies such as Campbell Soup, Heinz and PepsiCo about setting **humane**¹⁵ animal standards for themselves and their suppliers. This was the successful formula which energized Revlon and the whole cosmetics industry in the 1980s.

Pressures on the meat-industrial complex will continue to intensify from all directions. In addition to farm animal well-being issues, intensive confinement systems will be increasingly challenged on the grounds of public health, protecting the environment, feeding the **starving**¹⁶ millions and leaving some quality of life for future generations.

Author : Henry Spira

Henry Spira, prominent animal rights activist and architect of the movement in the United States to stop the use of animals in cosmetic experiments. Though born in Antwerp, Belgium, he and his family, who were Jews, moved to America in the years prior to the Second World War to escape Nazism. In 1980, Spira and the ARI took out a full page advert in the New York Times with the header How many rabbits does Revlon blind for beauty's sake? As a result, Revlon began research into «cruelty free» alternatives.

He was an advocate of gradual change, for example, negotiating with Mc Donald's for better conditions in the slaughterhouses of its suppliers.

Date : Fall 1995

Source : book : AWI Quarterly, Volume 44, Number 4, Animal welfare Institute website (<http://www.awionline.org/Default.htm>), Animals in Agriculture category, Farm animal issues.

Link : <http://www.awionline.org/farm/issues.htm#roast>



Animal welfare

www.education.pmaf.org

VOCABULARY

1. **to roast** : to cook meat or other food by dry heat in an oven or over a fire.
2. **well-being** : someone's health and happiness.
3. **to slaughter** : to kill in a way that is cruel or unnecessary. To slaughter animals means to kill them for their meat.
4. **to raise** : to look after a child until it is grown up. To breed a particular type of animal.
5. **confinement**: being forced to stay in a prison or another place which you cannot leave.
6. **a sow** : an adult female pig.
7. **a calf/calves** : young cow.
8. **a (egg) laying hen** : a hen (female chicken) raised for its eggs not for its meat.
9. **a wing** : the wings of a bird are the two parts of its body used for flying.
10. **intensive farming** : to produce as many animals as possible from your land in a short time, usually with the aid of chemicals.
11. **to brand an animal** : to put a permanent mark on its skin in order to show who it belongs to, usually by burning a mark onto its skin.
12. **cattle** stands for cows and bulls.
13. **factory farming** : 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.
14. **a backlash** : sudden, strong reaction against a tendency or recent development in society or politics.
15. **to be humane** : to act in a kind, sympathetic way towards other people and animals, and try to do them as little harm as possible.
16. **to starve** : to suffer greatly from lack of food.

QUOTATIONS FOR FURTHER DEBATE

« **The question 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. He supported inheritance tax, restrictions on monopoly power, pensions, and health insurance.

Lisa : « **Do we have any food that wasn't brutally slaughtered ? »**

Homer : « **Well, I think the veal died of loneliness.** »

Matt Groening, *The Simpsons*, American cartoonist and the creator of the American animated television series *The Simpsons* and *Futurama*.

« **Whenever people say 'We mustn't be sentimental,' you can take it they are about to do something cruel. And if they add 'We must be realistic,' they mean they are going to make money out of it.** »

Brigid Brophy (1929-1995), was an English novelist, essayist, critic, biographer, and dramatist.

« **We live in a world which is full of misery and ignorance, and the plain duty of each and all of us is to try to make the little corner he can influence somewhat less miserable and somewhat less ignorant than it was before he entered it.** »

Thomas Huxley (1825-1895), was a British biologist, known as « Darwin's Bulldog » for his defence of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution.

« **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.