

A Case Against Cruelty

Humans began domesticating animals about 11,000 years ago, starting with goats, pigs, and sheep to provide food for their hunter-gatherer communities. Today, we continue to slaughter countless animals to produce products such as food, clothing and use them as test subjects for pharmaceutical and cosmetics research. As we begin questioning the morality and functionality of suffering inflicted upon these nonconsenting, sentient creatures, simply for our own trivial needs, to what extent is this acceptable? I will argue that the killing of animals, no matter the reason or circumstance, is morally wrong. We, as humans, have the moral obligation to be concerned for the well-being and the lives of the animals we use for our benefit, as we are complicit in their suffering.

Our desire to eat meat should not be satisfied at the expense of animals' lives because it is immoral for us to use animals for something as trivial as our wants. However, the meat industry continually exploits hundreds of animals per year, simply for our desire for animal products. These animals often endure lives of torment and suffering before being mutilated and slaughtered. They live in cramped conditions, are often abused by their handlers, and abuse their bodies, or are force-fed. In animal agriculture, there is no such thing as humane meat. The animals' quality of life is low and in addition to this, we do not have the right to take away their lives at the expense of a simple meal. These practices are cruel, unsustainable, and unethical, yet most of the human population enjoys an omnivorous diet. In the face of an ethical debate between animal interests and their own, we continue to exploit and abuse these helpless animals for our benefit.

It is still morally wrong when, for instance, a chicken is killed instantaneously during its sleep, as it is still harmed by death, even if it does not employ suffering. The chicken wishes to continue its life, therefore ending it prematurely, for the sake of someone else's enjoyment, infringes the animal's right to live. When we acknowledge that animals have rights, raising and killing them solely for food is unethical. An animal being raised for food is being taken advantage of by humans rather than being able to live for itself, which is a violation of the animal's basic rights. In principle, it is wrong to butcher animals for something as trivial as human consumption, no matter how 'mercifully' an animal is treated during the process. For example, Wagyu beef is a type of Japanese beef where the cows live stress-free lives, and their every need is catered to. In the end, these animals are still slaughtered and sold as cuts of luxury meats. Even the most humane forms of killing animals violate an animal's right to continue living, and modern agriculture prevents animals from partaking in other key parts of life, such as eating naturally, living in natural conditions, and being free of fear and pain. Although many humans don't believe that animals have rights, they are emotionally and intellectually complex beings with interests that should not be ignored.

Meanwhile, the most basic right is to be treated as an individual, not as a means to someone else's needs. Raising and killing animals for food uses them as a means to human gratification, and does not treat them respectfully. Human wants do not need to be considered in this situation, as we do not need meat to survive, however animals want to stay alive, which is a completely different struggle. Therefore, people that respect animal rights should be vegans. Although one person refusing to eat animals will not affect whether animals are raised for food, this does not matter! The pointlessness of a single person refusing to eat meat is irrelevant because if something is morally wrong, a moral person would generally not do it.

On the other hand, a drug's safety and effectiveness have long been based on laboratory testing involving rodents, rabbits, and many other species of animals. While these practices are unethical, they can also prove to be inaccurate when trying to predict human reactions. Animal experimentation has been proved to waste lives and resources time and time again. Although there is an abundance of newer, more effective research methods that don't require animal subjects, animal testing continues to approve lots of cosmetics for corporate companies who seem to have no trouble putting money above morals.

The issue with animal testing is that it is often futile when it comes to predicting the reactions of new drugs in humans. Results can vary hugely from species to species, therefore the responses from potential treatments are often dissimilar to that of a human patient. Despite the unreliability of animal testing, it continues because corporate companies and scientists refuse to change. These experiments are no longer needed for new medical advancements, and the data is often jeopardized due to the animals' state of being and the lack of human relevance. So if we want higher quality research, safe and effective drugs for human diseases, we must pull the plug on animal experimentation and move forward with alternative methods for scientific research to develop better products for humans.

In addition to this, animals are often subject to immense physical and psychological pain for extended periods to observe their bodies' reactions. Due to a lack of laws protecting these animals in labs, they are allowed to be burned, shocked, restrained, brain-damaged, and endure other forms of painful torture. These experiments pose major ethical issues because clearly, it is morally wrong to subject living beings to such pain. It is unacceptable to hurt these animals, even in the name of science.

In fact, some people hold the cruel belief that animals are here for human use. Ethics dictates that the value of a life cannot be superseded by its potential value to someone else. Some may claim the right to slaughter animals based on a set of arbitrary characteristics, such as an animal's supposed lack of cognitive ability. However, if this held true, the killing of humans with intellectual disabilities or less developed mental capacities such as infants would also be acceptable. This argument also fails to recognize the reasoning ability of many animals. Interestingly, pigs and rats are among the most intelligent animal species, yet they are the most tested on. The real argument hidden behind these words is that humans are supposedly superior to animals, therefore it is acceptable to harm them since they are weaker and their pain is insignificant compared to human pain. Not only is this incredibly inhumane, but the reasons behind such killings are also vain and easily avoidable, and despite many alternatives being provided, this heartless slaughtering continues.

It is clear that the exploitation and mistreatment of animals are unacceptable. It is unethical to control, keep captive, and kill these innocent animals, all for human wants and needs. The abuse of animals in an array of situations, including killing for food, hunting for sport, genetic manipulation, domesticated pets, and aquariums should not continue. There are many new alternatives to using animal subjects such as synthetic testing materials and other food sources, yet the slaughter of millions of animals, sometimes humanely, but often not, continues today. There's no question as to whether holding animals captive and causing them suffering is truly necessary because it is not. And as consumers become more conscious of the consequences of their actions, there is hope that cruelty against animals can be stopped once and for all.