

anchorage anarchy

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The Inhumane Society

On June 8, 2007, the local newspaper carried a telling story. It was about the experience of a baby moose that was apparently starving to death because it could no longer nurse after its mother had been killed by a bear. The moose was picked up by a local group dedicated to increasing the alaskan moose population, treated for a couple of days by a vet, then turned over to the zoo which killed it when it appeared not be thriving.

The reason this all was considered newsworthy was because the state's head wildlife cop wanted charges filed against the folks who "rescued" the moose because they had no permit to do so. Although he claimed that rescuing animals can endanger them, he was really most upset that the those who picked up the moose did so without his authorization. He contended that he and his department knew best how to deal with wildlife and since the rescuers had no government permit to do so, they should not have picked up the moose.

His alleged concern for the safety of the animal is absurd on its face, since picking it up at least had the potential of keeping it alive, while leaving it to roam the streets of Anchorage would soon have led to its death by starvation or its being killed by a bear, a wolf, or a car. And this very fact makes his argument that only government experts are qualified to judge when and where people should interact with wild animals laughable.

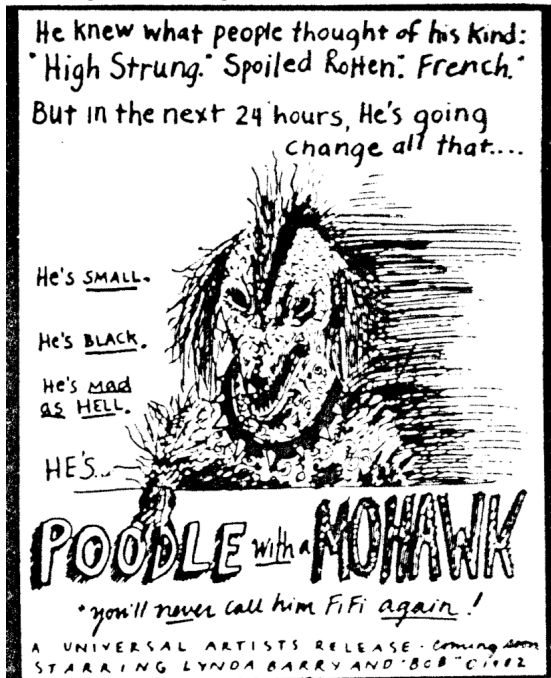
The thing that really mattered most to this petty tyrant was not what was best for this unfortunate animal, but that someone had the audacity to take an action in his bailiwick without first asking for his permission.

What makes this whole scenario yet more bizarre is that the group of which the animal's rescuer was a part believes in increasing the moose population so that people can kill more of them. So, while the authorities clearly care more about their rules and regulations than they do about the wildlife they are supposed to be conserving, the rescuers here wanted to save this baby moose so that some human hunter could kill it when it grew up.



So neither side was genuinely concerned about the wellbeing of this animal as an individual. For both it was merely a means to an end. Dead or alive, it doesn't matter to the state, as long as no one is allowed to act without their approval. And for the moose

federation, they only wanted to keep this moose alive long enough for it to get to a size and age where someone could get a rush from stalking and killing it.



This all got me thinking, once again, about how people in general view and treat animals. They routinely eat animal parts and products and wear animal skins. Companies test drugs and cosmetics on live animal "subjects." Pet owners castrate and imprison their "companions," but then spend thousands of dollars on food and medical care for them. Hunters shoot animals for sport and display their stuffed remains as trophies. Animals are run to death in dogsled and horse races and their drivers are considered heroic sportspeople.

Few people question such activities and those who do are often dismissed as cranks. But I believe it is important for people to consider the way they and others treat animals.

Love Hurts

While I have long been interested in the ways people interact with other animals, it has become even more a matter of concern for me since moving to Alaska, where it is nearly impossible to avoid observing animal-human interactions on a daily basis. Here in Anchorage, moose roam the city streets, bears live on the edges of neighborhoods, and it seems as if everyone owns an animal or two. The local newspaper frequently runs front page stories about animals, whether it is the running of the Iditarod sled race, the ethics of having an elephant at the local zoo, the falling population of beluga whales in Cook Inlet, or a grizzly attack on a mountain climber in another state. Co-workers and gym buddies are always willing to tell you of their luck (or lack thereof) in their latest hunting or fishing expedition. In fact, the slogan of the city's marketing campaign is Big Wild Life.

This infatuation with animals is not unique to Alaska of course. There are cable TV networks dedicated to animals, pet ownership is widespread all over the country, and the pro and cons of listing species as endangered are debated in the national press. It's just that such a large part of the recreation, jobs, and self-image up here is tied to the plentiful supply of animals in this part of the world. Between commercial fishing, whale and bear watching, and recreational and subsistence hunting and fishing, millions of dollars are spent and earned and hours and hours of people's time are consumed.

People's relationships to animals, if judged by this mixed bag of approaches may appear to be an amalgam of contradictory impulses: spending thousands of dollars for surgery or chemotherapy to extend the life of one's pet dog, while daily eating parts of other

animals; cheering on the dog teams forced to run in the Iditarod, while failing to recognize the collateral damage of failed runners dumped in shelters and killed. But that would be a misreading of the situation. While killing wild animals and running dogs to death in races may be more obvious forms of abuse, the day-to-day cruelties and indignities to which owners subject their pets and working animals are also forms of mistreatment which betray the “love” which is suppose to drive these relationships.

Whether it is killing them for sport, raising them for food, mutilating and humiliating them to turn them into pets and/or working animals, or keeping them behind bars or in tanks in zoos and aquaria for human edification, people’s treatment of animals is largely cruel and violent. And absolutely

unnecessary as well. Although I would be the last person to argue that there is anything unnatural about this, I do believe that because people have the ability to reason in ways that other animals cannot, they can be held to a higher standard than that applied to these other beings. Just because something is natural does not make it ethically acceptable and people need to look a bit more critically at how they live and the kind of world that results from their choices.

Nasty, Brutish, and Short

Humans have likely been eating and wearing parts of other animals since they emerged as a species. In fact, our more “natural” earth-centered ancestors were likely the cause of the extinction of many species of megafauna. Humans have historically also been eaten in turn by other carnivores, although that happens with considerably less frequency now than it once did. Killing and being killed are part of our nature as animals. However, we differ from other animals in a couple of important ways: we have the skills and tools to derive our food from other sources and we have the ability to make moral or ethical choices. We are able to empathize with the pain of others, including other kinds of animals, and we have the option of living our lives in such a way that inflicting pain on others is not the only or best means of sustaining ourselves. So, just as we now avoid being eaten by bears and lions, even though this is natural, we could also avoid eating cows, eggs, pigs, cheese, and fish, despite the fact that this is also natural.

There is no question that killing other animals for food, or using them to produce food products like milk or eggs causes pain and suffering to these animals. If they are wild animals that are hunted and killed, at least their



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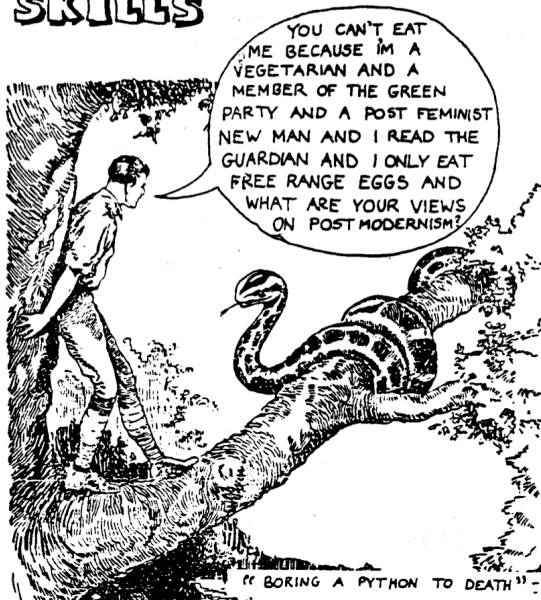
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lives may be spent having some modicum of pleasure mixed in with the unpleasantness that is part of any creature's life, before they are slaughtered. Domesticated food animals, on the other hand, are doomed to lives of uninterrupted pain. These animals are kept in confined quarters, have restraints attached to their bodies, are force fed and/or mutilated, and then killed. Either way, a sentient being that can feel pain is made to suffer for the pleasure or convenience of humans. Causing pain to animals, when there are other sources of nutrition and clothing, is cruel and unjustifiable.

PERSONAL SURVIVAL SKILLS



An Outfit to Die For

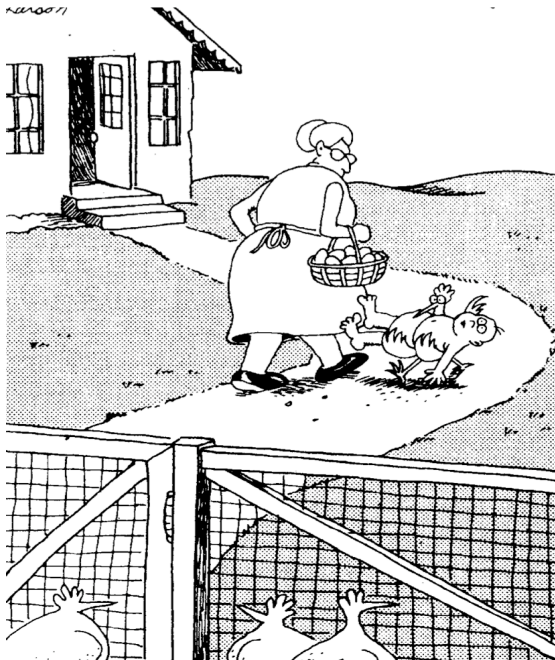
Despite that, most people continue to eat and/or wear animals parts. While more and more people rely on others to do the killing for

them, there are still those who continue to hunt and fish to provide their own food and clothing. These folks are often considered, even by those who do not themselves wear or eat dead animals, as somehow more justified than other, more urbanized, people in the killing of animals because they are more “authentically” in touch with nature. While there may be some emotional appeal to the argument that those who themselves do the dirty work of killing and realize more fully the consequences of their actions are somehow better than those who buy a burger at McDonald’s or wear a fur, it doesn’t really wash. If the activity engaged in is ethically unacceptable because of its cruelty, it shouldn’t matter how “naturally” or “compassionately” it is done.

To address concerns about the nastiness involved in hunting, attempts have been made to make the process cleaner and more efficient. But killing other animals is necessarily painful. Devising “humane” weaponry does not make it OK. Just as lethal injection does not make legal murder acceptable to death penalty abolitionists, creating traps more likely to be lethal to their victims and using exploding harpoons to kill whales does not make a cruel activity into one that is humane. And while fishers are now using nets that allow some fish or marine mammals to escape because they are not the target species, allowing the “targets” to slowly suffocate in the hold of a fishing boat puts the lie to the good intentions of the fishers. Furthermore the fish that escape from this round of terror, go on to be killed by other fishers for whom they *are* the intended prey. It seems like an awful lot of time and effort spent to make some people feel good about themselves, while accomplishing little in the way of actually saving sentient creatures from

pain and suffering.

As cruel as hunting and fishing are, however, food animal husbandry is even more so. Though the end result of both is always the same, death at the hands of people, animals raised for their flesh, their skins, or their other products spend their whole lives in captivity and are frequently mutilated along the way. Egg-laying chickens are crammed into small cages and their beaks are partially amputated. Calves destined to be turned into veal are imprisoned in small spaces where they can hardly move for their entire short lives. Industrial dairy cows are restrained virtually all the time and kept perpetually pregnant. Steers destined to end up as steaks are castrated and branded, and then, when they are large enough, are transported to their deaths in cramped train cars where they piss and shit on each other before they are slaughtered. And all to provide a nice meal for some "civilized" human.



Cultural Relativism

Some argue that certain groups of people have no options other than killing animals in order to live, and that their practices should be looked at differently from those who choose hunting from among other options. This may be true in some isolated areas of the world, where people are prevented by poverty or other social and political conditions from utilizing other methods of obtaining food or moving somewhere else where they could more easily do so. As I said above, killing for food and covering has been part of human life for millennia and people will do what they must to survive. If it is us or them (other animals), the choice is clear. But this is less and less the case for people in the modern world.

Even people in bush Alaska have real choices about their source of clothing and nourishment. Much of the ongoing discussion of rules and regulations concerning hunting and fishing in this state is driven by arguments about what constitutes subsistence harvesting [killing] of whales, bears, fish and other animals. But though some people claim that killing these creatures is essential to their lifestyle and/or their traditions, I have not heard or read of anyone seriously claiming they have no other options. While it is costly to get commercially available foods in rural Alaska, it can be and is being done. And while people may feel an attachment to where they live, relocating to a city would make cheaper non-animal foods and clothes readily available.

While the case for necessity fails, the cultural tradition argument, which generally gets a sympathetic reception, is just as flawed. Alaskan whalers, for instance sometimes fall back on the arguments that killing animals is an essential "cultural" tradition here and therefore must be preserved. Alaskan whaling,

however, was part of a social and economic milieu that no longer exists. Traditional means of transportation, clothing, learning, and communication have been replaced by airplanes, denim jeans, government schools, and telephones. It is unclear to me why it is so “culturally” important to continue eating, wearing, and otherwise using slaughtered animals, but OK to reject other historical practices. And if historical ways are so important, why have these traditionalists adopted modern methods of stalking and killing their prey? Today’s eskimo and indian people’s hunting methods are anything but traditional. With snowmachines, grenade harpoons, and even helicopter rescues of hunters when needed, this is hardly the “man vs beast” contest of old.



Eating and wearing animals was the practice of the ancestors of all humans, so “tradition” and even “nature” can be used by anyone as a justification to continue doing so. In fact, the governments of norway and japan utilize the same strategy to try to justify their continued killing of whales, and residents of nantucket could make a similar case. But the (largely governmental) self-appointed guardians of animals pick and choose which traditions work for them. So, japanese and

norwegian whalers are evil and eskimo and indian ones virtuous. Similarly, although hunting by inuit and eskimo people is likely more of a threat to polar bears than warming in their habitats, this practice comes in for little criticism, while (non-“indigenous”) people who utilize carbon-generating technology are castigated for contributing to the deaths of these animals.

Testing Anxiety

Like animals that are raised or hunted to provide food and clothing for people, animals tortured in medical and industrial research are sacrificed to meet supposedly essential human “needs.” Animals have toxic substances shot into or applied onto them, are intentionally infected with microbes, are injected with cancer cells to produce tumors, and have artificial organs and devices surgically implanted in them. This is all done based on the assumption that these animals are similar enough to humans that their response to toxins, diseases, and treatments will predict those of people. However, the experimenters fail to recognize that if they are like us enough to have the same illnesses and respond to the same remedies, perhaps they are also like us enough to suffer as we would if these horrible experiments were carried out on us.

This begs the question of whether this ghoulish testing of drugs, cosmetics, and chemicals really “needs” to be done at all. Whether it is computer modeling or the use of cell lines, there are alternative methods to using sentient beings who have not consented to being experimented on, but animal testing is what researchers are comfortable with and regulators often demand. This continues despite that the fact that animal experiments are less than reliable at predicting the effects of drugs or other chemicals on humans. The

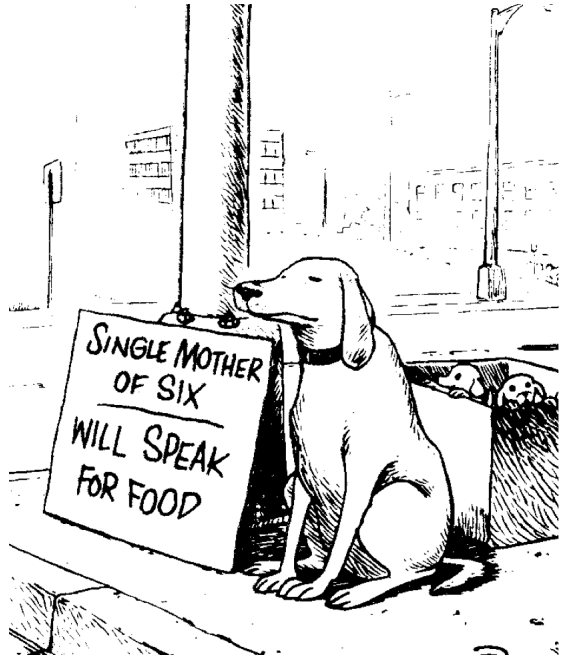
classic case is that of thalidomide, a drug used widely in the late 1950s and early 1960s as a nausea and insomnia remedy for pregnant women. It was marketed to these people precisely because it showed no ill effects on animal fetuses, but its use resulted in 10,000 human children being born with serious malformations. So countless animals are tortured and killed in the name of protecting humans, despite the fact that that this is bad science, and worse ethics.

Working Animals (to Death)

Captive animals are not exploited just by being worn, eaten, or tortured in laboratories by their human masters. They are forced to labor for people as well, whether dragging plows, transporting goods or people, living out their lives as captives in zoos, or performing in shows or races. And while defenders of these practices compare the work of animals to that of humans, and pretend they are working for a living like we do, there is an essential difference: they are not free to go home at the end of the day, nor do they have the option of getting another job. Of course, there are still some people who work under similar conditions, locked into their workshops at night, forced to work in brothels to pay off their or a relative's debt, or indentured in some way to the factory owner who sponsored their migration to a new country. But these people would rightly be called slaves by most of us. Any animal treated thus is also a slave.

Animals forced to work or perform must be trained—or “broken”—to be made fit for bondage. Whether by the beatings administered to working elephants, the subjugation of “bucking broncos” by riders, or the “treats” given to dogs when they perform as their masters desire, these animals are degraded, abused and humiliated until they

give up and accept the domination of people. But supporters of such abuse, especially that of animal athletes, dismiss such concerns out of hand.



Fans of dog mushing in Alaska, where dogs may well be run to death, are typical of this mindset. They claim the dogs love to run and are not harmed by being forced to drag humans along after them. But if they so love their jobs, why must the owners chain them to the tiny boxes they are forced to live in? (Incidentally, a number of sled dogs were killed by wolves in Alaska last winter while they were chained outside by their loving masters. Who says there's no free lunch?) Why are they locked up in the backs of trucks while waiting for races to start? Perhaps because they might prefer the freedom to run when and where they like, unencumbered by some human and their sled. And then, when a dog dies during a long race such as the Iditarod, excuses are made, and the fantasy that

they died pursuing a life they chose, instead of one forced upon them by their owners, makes the rounds of the newspapers and news shows.

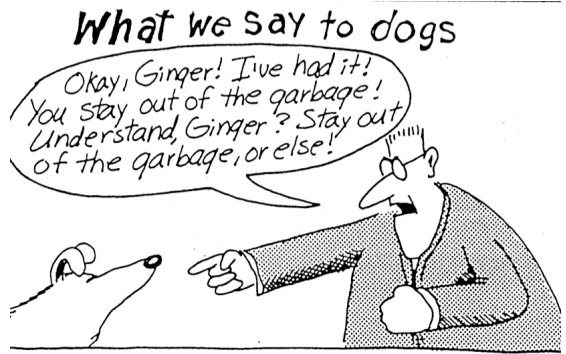
Not only are working animals forced to live a life of bondage and mandatory labor, when they no longer perform up to the expectations of their owner, or the owner decides they no longer wish to put the time into their "sport," the animals are commonly sent to death camps, or as they are more delicately called, shelters. Some are "adopted" out of these places by sympathetic people, but many are simply killed. This is not to mention all the potential animal athletes that never make the grade, or whose owners decide they are no longer interested, who also end up dead. Prematurely dead animals are part and parcel of animal "sports."

Killing for Sport

Speaking of sport, it is appalling that people still engage in "sport" hunting and fishing. While some of the flesh of the killed animals may be eaten, the real motivation for these hunters and fishers is the desire to kill another being or demonstrate one's superior skill or ingenuity or whatever. These people will even have their pictures taken with the animals they have killed, showing no remorse for having exterminated another living, feeling being for no reason other than the thrill of killing.

And then there are the kinder, gentler sportspeople. Some fishers, for instance believe they are showing compassion of a sort when they release their victims after they have hooked them. Many of these injured fish will nonetheless die later from their injuries, but, out of sight, out of mind for these fishers. This should come as no surprise, since these "humane" fishers see no harm in putting the fish through the pain of being hooked, and then

having the hooked removed, when they are caught in the first place. Strange way of having fun.



Heavy Petting

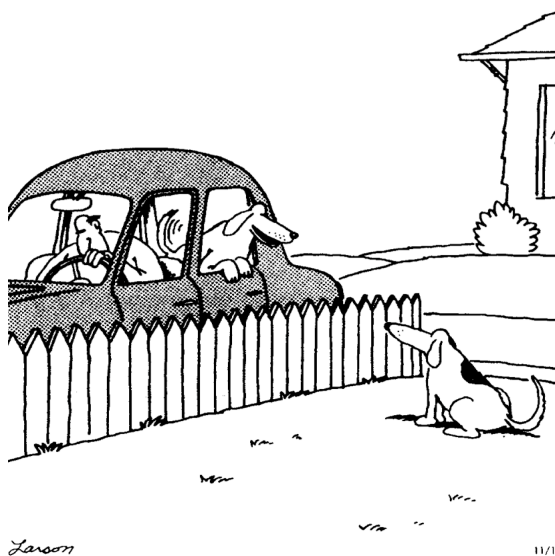
While more and more people have become aware—and often critical—of at least some aspects of hunting, fishing, wearing, experimenting on, and eating animals over the years, there remain few who are willing to admit that owning pets is abusive of animals as well. These poor beasts are forced to kowtow to their owners in return for treats; have their noses swiped in piss or shit while being housebroken; are confined in boxes, apartments, or their owners' cars for hours at a time; are led around on leashes or tied to posts when allowed out in the fresh air; and have

their tails, reproductive organs, or other body parts removed or mutilated (although nutty pet owners can now purchase testicular implants to preserve their castrated dogs' self-esteem). They are babied and cuddled and fawned over when they perform according to their owners' whims, but are "bad dogs" when they dare to show any independence or their ordinarily suppressed wild side. And if they make their owners uncomfortable by showing signs of unhappiness with their state of bondage, they can be prescribed anti-depressants to cheer them up and assuage their masters' guilt.

Pet owners talk about how satisfying it is for them that their pets show them "unconditional love," that their animals are always glad to see them, that they are their best friends. This "love" is so important to pet owners that they spend \$38,000,000,000 on feeding and caring for their "companions" each year. But what these animals show is dependence, not love. After being locked up all day, of course the animal is "glad" to see its master. It will now be taken out to shit and run, will be given its rations, and be petted and talked to. This is unconditional love? Pet owners mistake submission for affection.

As in the case of working animals, pet ownership results in huge numbers of dead animals. Whether it is animals abandoned by their owners who have tired of them or are moving away, unwanted animals produced by breeding, or animals that have tried to escape their bondage, animal control agencies and shelters end up killing animals day after day. The owner/pet relationship is one of absolute inequality, dominance and submission, bondage and discipline. Those who believe it is based on love and friendship are sadly mistaken. It is unfortunate that so many people's lives are so impoverished that they

cannot attain satisfaction of their emotional needs through equitable relationships with other people, but this is no justification for the humiliation and torment they inflict on their animal "friends."



"Ha ha ha, Biff. Guess what? After we go to the drugstore and the post office, I'm going to the vet's to get tutored."

The Animal Welfare State

Like the caring owners who brutalize their pets, the government officials and researchers charged with protecting animals, usually do anything but. Laws and cops regulate how and where people may hunt and kill wild animals, but allow the slaughter to continue. They decide when the routine abuse of "companion" animals crosses some arbitrary line and comes to be considered illegal cruelty, but do not question the ownership of pets. They believe they know best how animals should be treated and cared for and use the threat of fines and imprisonment to impose their views on us,

their subjects. But none of this is about helping the animals themselves.

Just as governments do not really look out for the interests of the human beings they rule, judges and politicians fail in their professed mission to protect animals. The state licenses shelters which execute animals, it certifies factories that render animals into their parts for consumption by people, it funds barbaric research using laboratory animals, and it decides which people, from which ethnic group, can legally kill marine mammals. They wish to control and regulate the horrid treatment of animals by humans, not eradicate it.



The Bremen Town Musicians: the true story!
In hierarchies you find the biggest donkeys at the top!

Beyond protecting the tormentors of animals, government agencies also do their share of abusing animals themselves. They kill “problem animals” that inconvenience humans. They “rescue” orphaned or injured animals and then sentence them to life

imprisonment in zoos.

In the name of science animals are shot up with drugs, imprisoned, tagged, banded, cultured, bled, and otherwise poked and prodded so that government paper pushers can look at trends in populations, migration patterns, disease transmission, and so on, with the supposed intent of better understanding these animals. But what is this “understanding” to be used for? To enable people to manipulate these animals in ways that serve human desires, not to meet the needs of the animals themselves.

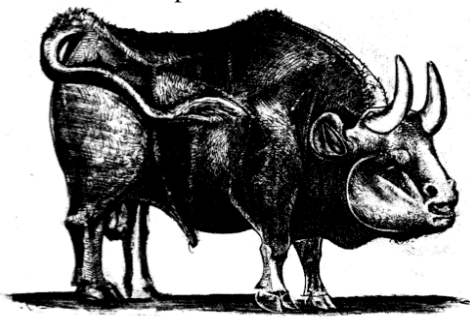
Once they have convinced themselves that they are the holders of all knowledge, the bureaucrats and researchers go on to try and manipulate and direct these animals in ways that they believe nature intended, since the animals are too dumb to figure out how they should behave on their own. For instance, when whales got into a river in California last year, the animal cops harassed them until they returned to their “natural” environment in the ocean. Of course, they criminalize the same behavior when regular people engage in it. But then again, they do know best don't they?

The Age of Unreason

One of the things I find so striking about people's treatment of animals is that it is so arbitrary and irrational. Dogs are pets in the United States, but are food for people in other parts of the world. Horses are to be used here for work and sport, but these animals are also eaten in other countries. And while Americans frequently express outrage at the fact that dogs and horses are eaten by others, they see nothing wrong with eating pigs and steers and lobsters, although none of these animals is inherently more appropriate as a food source than a dog or a horse. Similarly, while filmed footage of handlers beating elephants in Asia to

subdue them for their life of slavery is usually met with horror from american audiences, rodeos that feature flagrant abuse of horses and bulls are considered good entertainment.

Such double standards are reflected in the policies and actions of government agencies and officials. Only certain animals merit the protection of the state. The last horse meat factory in the united states was forced to close by the government last year, and Michael Vick was jailed for staging dog fights, but chickens, hogs, and steers can still be slaughtered with abandon. While polar bears are now listed as



endangered and thus deserving of special consideration (driven largely by the politics of climate change), government agents carry out campaigns to slaughter all rats and foxes on some alaskan islands, because they *know* that nature intended for these islands to be perpetually populated by birds and not these predatory mammals. In alaska, sea lions deserve to be studied endlessly to see if there is a (human-caused) reason for the recent decline in their numbers (although there is no reason to believe that any specific number of these animals is the “right” or “natural” one) and a protective fence was installed on an island to keep walruses from falling off a cliff there, but the state government actively promotes the killing of “excess” wolves in aerial hunts. It comes as no surprise that governments, which so badly manage human affairs, are equally

inept and cruel in managing those of other animals.

With Friends Like These...

Human interaction with animals has been a disaster for the animals. Whether it is hunting, fishing, dairy farming, meat production, horse-racing, or pet ownership, the animals always end up being brutalized and often are killed. And when humans purport to manage the environment in the interests of wild animals, they end up doing a piss-poor job of it, again resulting in the suffering and death of many of those they claim to be helping.

Whatever the stated rationale, people use animals to meet their own needs and wants, while pretending to care about the animals themselves, whether it is pet owners castrating their “companions,” mushers running dogs to death, or wildlife “experts” tagging, shooting, and otherwise tormenting their specimens. And while this has always been the case, the fact that abuse of animals has a long history is no justification for its continued existence.

People have often had to change their habits and circumstances, either in response to conditions imposed on them by others, as happened during the industrial revolution, or as a way of seeking better a better life in a different place, as when the first alaskans migrated from asia. As technology changes there is less and less justification for the continued torment of animals to satisfy human wants. Creating a world free of human abuse of animals would require great changes in people’s habits, as well as new social and economic arrangements that would facilitate equitable distribution of non-animal food and other cruelty-free resources to people in need wherever they live. But it is the right thing to do.

License, Not Freedom

It is quite difficult to get people who are used to modern city or suburban life to move into the villages and small towns of bush alaska. While these places have acquired many of the technological features of the rest of the united states, such as television, phones, indoor heating, and so on, they remain difficult to get into or out of, especially in the winter, and lack many modern conveniences. It has been especially difficult to attract dentists.

In response to the lack of dentists, and the sorry state of dental health of many rural alaska residents, the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) several years ago established a program for the training of dental therapists to provide primary dental care to "native" people in bush communities. These therapists, initially trained in new zealand but now educated here in Anchorage, are able to do preventative dental care, as well as simple fillings and extractions.

Although training and utilization of such therapists is established practice in a number of other countries, including canada, south africa and the united kingdom, it is new here, and the Alaska Dental Society, the American Dental Association, and the Alaska State Board of Dentistry have been quick to try and prevent dental therapists from practicing in this state. Their legal efforts have so far been unsuccessful in stopping this program, but because of opposition from dentists, therapists are at present allowed to practice only in alaska, and only on "native" (ie, eskimo, indian, and/or aleut) people.

The claim from the dentists is, naturally, that no one else can provide good dental care but they. This is patent nonsense, and, presumably, will eventually go the way of similar arguments by medical doctors that nurses and physician assistants are not capable of giving good medical care. But it will be a long, difficult fight, since the legal monopoly of dentists is firmly established all over the united states.

Like physician, nurses, and other health providers, dentists have been able to gain an exclusive right to practice their profession by convincing governments to set up regulatory laws and boards that restrict entry into their field by granting licenses. Although the licensure rules change from time to time as educational practices evolve, they never fail to serve their core purpose: to restrict the numbers of practitioners and stifle competition in order to protect the jobs, income, and status of those who hold licenses. These laws prevent people from choosing alternative providers by

criminalizing the practice of dentistry (or medicine or nursing) without a license.

The professionals claim that government oversight is needed to protect "the public," but licensure has always been asked for and driven by providers, not consumers. It may incidentally offer recipients of health care some recourse when they have been badly treated, but that was never the main justification for regulation of the health professions.

Unfortunately, none of the advocates of the dental therapist program, however, are interested in getting rid of the system of regulation that encourages and justifies the attacks they have endured from dentists. In south africa and the united kingdom, for example, dental therapist are already registered and regulated by the state, and it is likely that such a system will eventually be established in alaska.

While this innovative program has angered dentists, who see it as a threat to their state-mandated privileges, it was clearly not created by a free market or libertarian mindset. It exists only because dentist-based programs were unable to provide adequate personnel, and would never have come into existence to challenge institutional dentistry if the dentists themselves had stepped up to the plate.

The program already shares features with licensed professions, in that people are required to attend a specific training program and numbers of trainees are limited. Furthermore, there is no discussion of broadening the program to include non-"native" people. This is no surprise when one considers the program is sponsored by ANTHC, which is a creature of government that runs a segregated health care system funded largely by federal dollars. One would not expect such a group to advocate free choice in providing and consuming health care. They monopolize the provision of health care to eskimo, aleut, and american indian people and jealously guard their own turf. Questioning state oversight of health care is not on their agenda.

Welcome as it is to rural alaskans, the dental therapist program came about as a last resort in a crisis. It would be a mistake to see it as an indication of a move towards deregulation of dental and medical care. But it has provoked the dental associations and their enforcers on the state dental board to show their true colors: monopolists whose primary interest is maintaining their government-protected market share, even if that means denying dental care to those who need it most.