

## The Bitter Taste of Animal Activism

### A Short Course in Animal Rights Strategy

**Question:** What do dog breeders, cattle ranchers, deer hunters and draft horse enthusiasts all have in common? (Cue game-show waiting music while we contemplate.)

**Answer:** They are all under attack by animal rights groups – as is anyone who owns, works with, exhibits, researches, eats, or otherwise uses animals in any way.

The campaign waged by the animal rights movement is global, prolonged, continuous and all-inclusive. During the last 50 years the movement has made significant inroads into American life and culture, bringing “Meatless Mondays” and “Humane Education” into our school systems, ensuring that 80-90% of our pets are now sterilized before they reach sexual maturity, influencing the steady decline of participation in hunting, bringing significant pressure to bear on scientists conducting life-saving medical research and successfully hampering animal agriculture by targeting sound, broadly-accepted, expert-endorsed animal husbandry practices via the legislative process. Animal rights specialties and concentrations are now routinely offered in schools of veterinary medicine and law, and attempts have been made to confer upon animals legal status fully equal to that of humans.

Whether we personally see these developments as good or bad, there is no denying the impact on our lives. Each of the examples given illustrates a dramatically altered reality, for all of us – whether we are looking for our next purebred dog, buying meat, eggs or dairy to feed our families, praying for a cure for a loved one’s devastating medical condition or discovering that our favorite hunting spots are now fenced and posted.

Tactically, in every animal use context (medical research, recreational hunting and fishing, circuses and zoos, food production, etc.), the animal rights movement seeks to identify an effective wedge issue or group – a “foot in the door” if you will. Such activities and issues are relatively easily marginalized. They look for an easily demonized activity or setting. Those who earn a living in partnership with their animals are often singled out, as profit is easily shamed – especially profit made “on the backs of poor, helpless animals” until they are “worn out, used up and discarded.”

Any subset of the larger group that has relatively few participants involved, in an activity or discipline about which there is little public knowledge, may serve as a wedge. Activists and followers are able to propagandize against the target group with little to no push-back.

Members of the larger peer groups, somewhat understandably, prefer to believe that those “other” people and pursuits really are a bit suspect, rather than consider that they themselves could suffer the same arbitrary and baseless attacks, simply in different clothing. Animal rights activism’s leaders look for these weaknesses to exploit, much as any predator goes after the vulnerable, knowing that the rest of the herd will opt for self-preservation and flee.

~~~~~

*Adapted with permission of author and publisher. This material is excerpted from an article on the horse carriage controversy by Candace Ware, originally published in the Spring Issue of The Draft Horse Journal, and edited as above by Elaine Hanson. Permission is granted to use this material for educational purposes provided this statement of credit to the author and publisher is included.*