



If you read or listen to leaders of the animal rights movement, you would swear that they come from an alien culture, if not in fact from another planet.

Dr. Tom Regan, a professor of philosophy at North Carolina State University author of *The Case for Animal Rights*, and a spokesman for the animal rights movement, simply argues that animals have the same basic rights as human beings, and thus they should not be used for food, for science or for hunting. Here, in his own words, is a very brief introduction to the animal rights cause:

To treat human beings in ways that do not honor their independent value is to violate that most basic of human rights: the right of each person to be treated with respect.

The philosophy of animal rights demands only that logic be respected. For any argument that plausibly explains the independent value of human beings implies that other animals have this same value and have it equally.

... The philosophy of animal rights is uncompromising in its response to each and every injustice of other animals are made to suffer. It is not larger, cleaner cages that injustice demands in the case of animals used in science, but empty cages; not 'traditional animal agriculture, but a complete end to all commerce in the flesh of dead animals; not 'more humane' hunting and trapping, but the total eradication of these barbarous practices."

Men like Regan do not sanction violence. However, it is easy to see how their position can lead others to violent action. If one believes, as does Regan, that animals possess "perception, memory, desire, belief, self consciousness, intention, a sense of the future," along with "emotion and sentience," then some believers could easily be charged up emotionally to protect creatures that are the victims of "unjust exploitation," even by extreme measures.

Farmers and livestock producers need not try to reason with the animal rights people. There is no common ground for argument. Rather we must be aware of their position and support organizations like the National Cattlemen's Association and state cattlemen's groups. They are involved in providing the general public with information that will help them make rational, unemotional decisions concerning not only animal rights people and the legislation that its supporters propose, but about the animal welfare activists, as well.

There is a wide gulf between animal welfare and animal rights. Those interested in animal welfare, and this could include farmers and ranchers, believe in humane treatment and handling of animals, but are not anti-animal agriculture.

One would hope that reason eventually prevails in the animal rights arena. But as fewer and fewer people have contact with the land and with nature, and as pets become their only contact with animals, it becomes easier and easier for at least some animal rights issues to be accepted.

From everything that we hear and read, these issues are something that we cannot sweep under the table. As an industry we must understand them and be prepared to deal with them rationally and forcefully for the foreseeable future.