

Animal Rights Movements Began WAY, WAY Before ALL of Us Were Born! REALLY!

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An Irish Water Spaniel aficionado,
always right there with me
fighting the good fight for the animals.

EARLY HISTORY

What appears to be a forceful, frightening NEW movement in the animal world today all began centuries ago worldwide when the welfare of animals attracted the interest of citizens distressed over perceptions of animal abuse.

In order to understand Animal Rights extremism today, it is most important to take a very condensed tour through a small segment of American history.

In the United States, animal welfare was alive and healthy as early as the late 1700s! The schism between animal welfare and animal rights occurred stealthily as viewpoints regarding animals evolved during the next centuries.

The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was created in 1866. Ten years later, the American Humane Association, focused on farm animals and child protection, was founded. During the period from the late 1800s through the late 1930s, other humane societies and SPCAs emerged throughout the country. Animal research has been conducted throughout history with little concern for the welfare of the animals used. In the U.S., an anti-vivisection movement started circa 1875, but received little recognition as research was making miraculous new breakthroughs in the medical field.

During the early 20th century, the relatively small activist organizations continued their quest for humane treatment of animals, and although there was no specific demand for RIGHTS for animals, the humane treatment of animals was encouraged. Most of the activists' attention up to and during this time in the United States was on the welfare of animals, humane research and care of animals in work situations. Starting in the late 1930's, domestic animals and pets began to draw attention as animals became more numerous and visible as companions, in hobbies and in recreational pastimes.

Due to increased use of animal research after WWII, two new organizations with diametrically opposed philosophies formed. One group, the National Humane Society, whose name was later changed to the Humane Society of the United States, (1954) was completely opposed to the use of animals in research. HSUS splintered off from the American Humane Association and began pressing for more extreme positions regarding animals.

In 1951, the other group, the Animal Welfare Institute (AWI), regretted, but accepted the symbiotic relationship between humans and animals. That philosophy continues in their organization today, although the group has become less accepting of animal research. AWI worked for the adoption of the 1966 Animal Welfare Act and sees its primary goal as working for the adoption of animal protection laws, and monitoring adequate enforcement of those laws. From 1951 to the present, they have supported reducing humans' impact on wildlife and on the oceans. They oppose large “industrialized” farms and support alternatives to live animal research. There are continued, but sometimes borderline, differences between groups who follow AWI's mission versus those who have strayed closer to the HSUS philosophy, in which any use of animals is considered to be exploitation. However, those differences have become clouded in many areas.

RECENT HISTORY

Moving to more recent history and to the circumstances in which we find ourselves in today's world, let us examine the emergence of the word “speciesism.” Speciesism, roughly, means a prejudice of humans towards other animals. It is at the very root of animal rights philosophy. It is a belief that humans and animals are equal; therefore it is wrong to regard any animal as an object or property. In the late 1970s, with that ‘virtuous’ cause, the animal rights groups forged on towards extremism, waving a banner of righteousness -- the protectors of those equal “non-humans” who needed liberation from those who would enslave them.

During the late 1970s, early 1980s, the animal rights movements developed many more adherents largely due to the 1975 publication of Peter Singer's “Animal Liberation: Towards an End to Man's Inhumanity to Animals.” Some Animal Rights organizations became quasi-terrorists, with the ultimate goal of effectively eliminating private ownership of ANY animal. With increasing success, other groups continually attempted to regulate breeding practices of hobby breeders, limit the number of animals an individual may own, and legislate renaming animal owners “guardians,” thereby raising the status of animals to equal that of humans, and effectively denying the right to own animals.

Novelists began incorporating the AR philosophy in their plots, actors like Doris Day were publicizing their commitment to the cause, and a new extreme group burst into the scene. Founded by Ingrid Newkirk, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) emerged in 1981. Once considered for a possible merger with HSUS, PETA chose to retain the outward appearance of a radical group who counterpoints the more reasonable appearing animal rights organizations. From their outset, they became the butt of comedians' gags and the darling of Hollywood stars and aspiring actors. However, their stunts appealed to the animal-loving public, and harvested donations by the millions while involved in such despicable actions as displaying naked people in ads, insulting men, women and children by their depictions in ads, even as they were “rescuing” animals from shelters, euthanizing them, and placing their bodies in public dumpsters.

Many of these organizations have become increasingly powerful and wealthy by gradually shifting into the fields of politics and legislation, law and the courts. During this period, using strong public relations and legislation, HSUS quickly advanced to become a powerful force for the Animal Rights movement. The movement escalated rapidly when Wayne Pacelle was hired away from the radical Fund for Animals to become the Legislative Director of HSUS in 1995. Pacelle, through cunning and clever manipulation, rose rapidly through the corporate structure, and in 2004 became HSUS President and CEO. This shift started a series of shell games as Pacelle orchestrated mergers of organizations' considerable treasuries, staff and sanctuaries, with barely a blink of an eye. Significantly, these mergers brought more 501c4s, legislative lobbying groups and their politically activist donors into HSUS. Another significant change occurred at this time. Pre-merger HSUS would repeatedly deny an animal rights belief, however, FFA/Fund for Animals, on the other, was adamant about the opposite stance. Shortly after the merger, the animal rights philosophy became central to HSUS' policy.

TODAY

It was thought that Pacelle brokered mergers before he became HSUS President, including the ARK Trust in 2002. DDAL/Doris Day Animal League in 2006, Fund For Animals in 2005 mergers quickly followed his ascent to power. Cleveland Amory's FFA's three sanctuaries, Black Beauty Ranch in Texas, Wildlife Rehabilitation Center in California, and Rabbit Sanctuary in South Carolina, all merged into HSUS each with their own substantial trust funds. Other mergers have followed since then, and HSUS now has effective control over thirty-three globally located non-profit affiliates, nine for-profit affiliates, as well as eight divisions over which they have total control. State level affiliates in about half the states carry out "no-fingerprints" lobbying on state measures. These state affiliates are the main avenues for anti-breeding laws.

By the end of 2008, HSUS had mushroomed into a corporation with about 550 employees and a payroll close to \$38,000,000. In the last 7 years, they have introduced over 470 bills federally and on a state-by-state basis, with the subjects of those laws ranging from dog fighting to chicken farming. Legislators have included them in study groups and policy-making in every state as well as in the Federal government. In 2000, HSUS identified only nine law schools with courses on animals. In the intervening years, HSUS and other animal rights groups have funded or arranged to have funded, animal law study programs in more than 120 law schools in the U.S.

While not actually operating ANY hands-on animal shelters themselves, HSUS and other animal rights organizations are devoted to making animal use, including pet ownership, increasingly more difficult and expensive. Their main activities can be divided into: promoting laws to restrict animal use/ownership; propaganda in support of such laws; and fundraising/self-promotional events. HSUS actively lobbies against ANY animal use and/or pet ownership.

In the last few years, opposition to Animal Rights organizations' attempts to eliminate animal ownership has been galvanizing. In early 2010, a campaign requesting that the Internal Revenue Service start an investigation into HSUS' runaway lobbying resulted in thousands of letters being sent to elected federal officials. For years, HSUS has blatantly abused their 501c3 not-for-profit status. The IRS investigation is ongoing. False animal abuse charges against innocent animal owners have repeatedly resulted in innocent verdicts, and resultant civil suits against those who brought those charges. Watchdog websites, such as Humane Watch, <http://www.humanewatch.org> have been created. There are animal-oriented federations or organizations established to promote education and legislative awareness in almost each state. There are hundreds of online e-lists, blogs and forums dedicated to upsetting the wave of anti-animal legislation that has overwhelmed the nations in the last few years.

A FEW QUOTES

When he became president of HSUS (2004) Wayne Pacelle described some of his goals for The Washington Post: "We will see the end of wild animals in circus acts ... [and we're] phasing out animals used in research. Hunting? I think you will see a steady decline in numbers."

"We are going to use the ballot box and the democratic process to stop all hunting in the United States ... We will take it species by species until all hunting is stopped in California. Then we will take it state by state." Wayne Pacelle, October 1, 1990.

An excellent source of the historical timeline of the Animal Rights movements, their divergence and growth and spin-offs can be found in numerous websites and internet search engines.

A Very Limited Bibliography

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<http://www.aspc.org/about-us/history.html>

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Legislative History of the Animal Welfare Act: Animal Welfare Information Center

<http://www.nal.usda.gov/awic/pubs/AWA2007/awa.shtml>

Speciesism in the Laboratory, by Richard Ryder

<http://www.animal-rights-library.com/texts-m/ryder03.htm>

Animal People Info Services

<http://www.animalpeoplenews.org/04/9/editorial9.04.html>

What YOU can do!

- Get involved with dog owners and groups. Learn what dog owning is all about.
- Join community groups and All Breed Clubs.
- Local clubs may be able to direct you to the efforts of national and local organizations working hard to fight Breed Specific Legislation (BSL) and anti-animal legislation.
- Watch and listen to your local news for reports of legislation restricting your RIGHTS to own, breed, work or play with your dogs.
- Contact your local politicians to oppose the elimination of your RIGHTS as a dog owner, hunter, lure courser, field trialer and earthdog trialer.
- Get to know your representatives at the local town/city, county, state, and national levels and monitor how they vote on bills affecting your right to enjoy your dog.
- Invite your local representatives to meetings to discuss legislative matters. Ask them to present trophies and have lunch at shows so they can see the impact shows have on the local economy, as well as the interest shown by the community.
- Get the word out! When you hear a hint of legislation unfriendly to dogs, spread the word widely and quickly.
- Learn the facts and use them wisely. Gently educate your pet-owning friends and neighbors about these facts.
- Be familiar with alternative methods to deal with dangerous dogs and indiscriminate breeding, and let others know about them.
- Talk to your vet. Find out his stand on various dog issues and work with him to spread information about good and bad laws.

REMEMBER!

Animal Rights - Seeks to end all animal ownership; to liberate all animals from their relationship with humans.
Animal WELFARE - Seeks to ensure that all animals are treated in a caring, responsible manner.