

Animal Welfare Issues Are Here to Stay: Are You Prepared to Deal with Them?

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Meta-narrative

- “a global or totalizing cultural narrative schema which orders and explains knowledge and experience” (Stephens, 1998)
- A comprehensive worldview that places phenomena in a larger context
 - Sub-conscious
 - Taken for granted
 - Ritualized
 - Explanatory
 - Comforting

Animals in America: Understanding Meta-narratives and the Support for Animal Welfare
Wes Jamison, 2009

Meta-narrative Example: what is “America”

- Forefathers fled persecution in search of freedom
- They braved incredible hardship because of the courage of their convictions
- “America” was an ideal as much as a place
- American exceptionalism

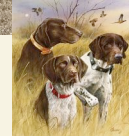


Meta-narrative Application

The old narrative



Anthropocentric instrumentalism



Meta-narrative Application

The ‘old’ welfare

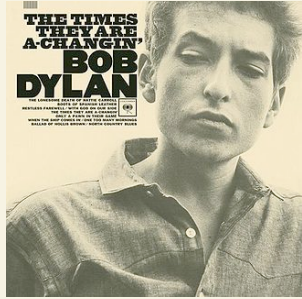


We can use animals as long as unnecessary pain and suffering are minimized

First Animal Welfare Law in America

- “Liberty 92” Massachusetts Bay Colony: 1641

“No man shall exercise Tirrany or Crueltie towards any brute Creature which are usually kept for man’s use.”



What Happened?

- For a significant majority of Americans, the role of animals in their lives has changed
 - Only 2% of U.S. population involved in agriculture; 3 - 5 generations removed from the farm
 - 63% of U.S. households have a least one pet; 70%+ consider the pet to be a member of the family
- From instrument used as tool and commodities to instrument used for human aesthetic purposes
 - Companionship, entertainment, symbolic, etc.

What Happened?

Key: anthropocentric instrumentalism no longer resonated with Americans' experiences with animals

What is Occurring?

- A new meta-narrative that resonates with American's animal experiences is being constructed
- Philosophers & interest groups are attempting to provide the new meta-narrative



Summary

- Consumers increasingly view animals through a meta-narrative framework of pet ownership
- Animal agriculture's core meta-narrative reflects its core reality: it modifies/counters natural systems & cycles to maximize animal productivity for human benefit

Implications

- These opposing views are incompatible
- Animal agriculture as currently practiced is not sustainable in the long run without a socially accepted meta-narrative about the role of animals

No dominant, cohesive meta-narrative has emerged

Consumer Opinion



Item	Relative Importance
Human Poverty	23.95
U.S. Health Care System	23.03
Food Safety	21.75
The environment	13.91
Financial well-being of farmer	8.16
Food Prices	5.06
Well-being of farm animals	4.15

Lusk, Norwood and Prickett, 2007

Consumer

(Species of Greatest Concern)

Please rank the following species in order of concern you have regarding current animal welfare/handling practices (1 being most concerned)

May 2010

Beef cattle	2.51
Dairy cattle	3.03
Swine/hogs	3.26
Broilers	3.00
Laying hens	3.21

Tonsor and Wolf, 2010

Consumer

(Meat demand)

- As animal welfare exposure increased more money left the meat complex; even though it may not impact beef directly those dollars are no longer there to compete for

Tonsor, Olynk and Wolf, 2009

Consumer

(Confinement)

- MI consumer pork preference (simulated purchasing analysis)
- 20% could only be appeased by a mandatory gestation crate ban
- 80% could be appeased by voluntary crate ban or elimination of the practice

Tonsor and Wolf, 2007

Where to Go From Here?



Livestock Industry

- We have matured
- We are beyond worrying about our situation and starting to be proactive

Livestock Industry

- North American Food Animal Well-being Commission: Beef
- NAWAWC will help direct research efforts, field studies and assessment tools for the North American beef industry in relation to beef cattle well-being in order to provide science-based recommendations for cattle management practices.

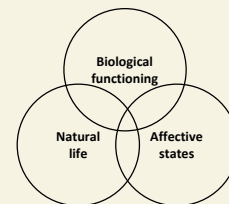
Commissioners

- Animal welfare specialists
- Livestock handling experts
- Veterinarians
- Animal scientists
- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

NAFAWC Concerns

- Environmental conditions for animals
- Painful procedures
- Weaning/Preconditioning/BRD
- Transportation
- Cattle Handling
- Disposal of Chronically ill animals
- Euthanasia techniques and timing
- Dystocia in feeder heifers

How the animal performs-
healthy, productive



Animal's ability to perform
natural behaviors –
social groups, grazing

Emotional state of the animal
How animal feels –
pain, fear, stress

Fraser et al, 1997

Concluding Thoughts

- Change is imminent
- Keep an open mind
- Communicate
- Continually seek ways to improve animal well-being
- Be proud of what you do

Thank you!

