

WHAT RIGHTS DO ANIMALS HAVE?

The goal of the human rights movement is to uniformly apply the same ethical code of treatment to all human beings. The animal rights movement has a similar goal, to establish a basic code of ethics which guides the treatment of all beings. Both the human rights movement and the animal rights movement seek the same end - a code of behavior that optimally benefits all members of the society. Like all rights movements, the animal rights movement asks that society broaden its definition of itself to include members previously excluded due to their perceived "inferior" status.

The animal rights movement asks for more than kindness towards animals; it asks for equal consideration of all animals. That is, animal rights requests that the interests of the being be taken into account, whoever that being may be, and whatever those interests may be.

From the animal rights perspective, all animals have the same basic inalienable rights which embody as much as possible the simple maxim "Live and let live." Humans, as members of the animal kingdom, are also entitled to these rights. Animal rights include:

- The right to be treated with respect.
- The right to physical, psychological and emotional health.
- The right not to be exploited.
- The right to live in a suitable habitat.
- The right to be valued for who we are, not how we can be used.
- The right to cooperatively share the Earth with other species.
- The right to live as much as possible according to our natures and to express our individual characters.

All animals, human and nonhuman, are unique expressions of life that have inherent value, for no reason other than the fact that they exist. Animals are sentient beings, capable of feeling pain and suffering. As such, they have the right not to be intentionally subjected to unnecessary pain. They have the right to live their lives without exploitation or undue interference.

Might does not make right! Just because humans have the ability to exploit animals does not make it right to do so, any more than the ability to dominate a particular race or social class of people makes it right to do so. Like humans, animals are unique individuals. They experience their lives, and the quality of their lives matters to them.

Excerpted from Amy Blount Achor's Animal Rights: A Beginner's Guide, published by WriteWare, Inc. To order a copy of this book, contact: