

A Bill of Rights for Animals

Written by Seth Greenberg, Age 17

I believe that animals need and deserve a Bill of Rights. The way that animals are treated in the world is terrible. They are living creatures that share this planet with us and they deserve our respect. For some reason, humankind behaves as though animals are possessions. Man treats animals according to how useful they are in man's world. A lot of religions believe that humans have dominion over the animal kingdom, but I do not agree. Humans are mammals and mammals are part of the animal kingdom, so the idea that we are more important than other species is silly. Animals communicate, have relationships and have feelings just like human animals do. Just because non-human animals communicate using languages and behaviors that we do not understand, does not mean that they are less intelligent than us. The way that mankind picks and chooses which animals deserve rights is also ridiculous to me. Cats and dogs in America are treated like royalty, but for some reason we feel it is acceptable to inject a rabbit's eyes with chemicals in the cosmetic industry, or make shoes out of an alligator's skin. Rats and monkeys are given medications in research labs that kill them, while some people are taking their dogs to see psychics. It is very illogical to me. Why are some animals considered to be disposable while others are part of the family? I think that it is because humans are selfish. We like everything around us to serve our purposes. We enjoy our cats and dogs because they give us companionship and that serves our purpose. We don't care when other animals are being mistreated because we need those drugs, cosmetics and meat. It is all about the selfish needs of the human animal.

My family has a horse sanctuary in northern California. Many of the horses are there because they cannot serve man and his needs any more. Some come to the sanctuary from places called kill-pens. The kill-pens are places that injured, old or unwanted horses are left and abandoned by their owners and kill-buyers come there to buy them so they can drive them across the Canadian and Mexican borders to sell for slaughter. Some of the horses that we have rescued from the kill-pens have been prize winning racehorses, perfectly good horses with small injuries that can heal with love, and even royal horses! We can tell they are royalty or registered thoroughbreds by the tattoos in their ears. It makes no sense that these amazing creatures would be treated like garbage. Many of them have won races and prize money for their owners and have been treated like a broke down car sent to a junk yard when they couldn't run anymore. I do not understand the lack of morality and care that we show other living creatures. It makes me ashamed and sad. I feel like we behave like slave masters with the animals – we treat them like property and take absolute control over their lives. I have seen the difference that treating an animal with respect and rights can have. The horses at our sanctuary are treated with a bill of rights that gives them respect, kindness and the right to be

themselves. They are valued for who they are and not what they can do for Man ... and they are happy. They heal from their injuries and become horses again. They do not have to be what humans say they should be anymore, so they just become horses again and it is natural and it is balanced and it is true.

Some people think a bill of rights for animals would make food too expensive or slow medical research and cost lives. I do not think that is true. I think we eat too much meat from other animals and that is why we are sick in the first place. We take too much and become sick. Overconsumption is really just greed. Our bodies are sick and our planet is sick because of our greed. Would food be more expensive if there was a bill of rights for animals? Probably, but there are other things to eat. It's a choice. I eat meat and I love it, but I am also thankful to the animal for the food. My mother thanks the animals that gave their lives for us at dinner sometimes and it makes me feel good. It's a north American Indian tradition and so is the idea of a bill of rights for animals, I think. Would medical research suffer if there was a bill of rights for animals? Maybe, but trying out something that could be dangerous on another living creature instead of yourself is mean. It's just against kindness and compassion to expose someone, whether they are an animal or human animal, to something that could harm them. My mom told me that doctors take an oath to do no harm to their patients. I don'tt understand why it's acceptable to harm veterinary patients instead of human patients. It seems like another rule that has been bent to fit humans. The other thing I think about is whether or not it is supposed to be our business to stop death. Maybe the reason humans do not heal from so many diseases is because we are being punished for all the killing we do to try to find a cure for death. There is a natural way that life is supposed to happen and we mess with it too much. We tell animals they have to work for us – not natural, and we tell death and aging we are not ready – also not natural. It's really a waste of time. We could be experiencing a harmony with animals and life that we have not connected with before. I think that would be interesting and meaningful. I would like to experience that. I think it would feel natural.

All animals deserve to be treated the way that the sanctuary treats the horses. All animals deserve to be honored and treasured. Species are becoming endangered because man cannot stop himself from exploiting other living creatures for his own needs. Other animals have much more self-control than human-animals. There is a lot we need to learn from them to be better in the world. I think that a bill of rights for all animals, not just human animals, is imperative.