

Understanding Terminology

Animal Welfare

Definition

Animal welfare refers to how a non-human animal is coping with the conditions in which it lives.

A person or organisation adopting an 'animal welfare' approach to animal protection, is referred to as an 'animal welfarist'.

Animal welfarists are concerned with how well animals are coping with their environment, i.e. whether they are experiencing positive or negative wellbeing.

For welfarists, it is morally acceptable for humans to use animals for human purposes, so long as that use does not cause unjustifiable or unreasonable pain and suffering.

Example

A welfarist would not be opposed to horse racing on the grounds that it uses animals for human entertainment. However, they may be opposed to some practices used in horse racing, if those practices (such as, whipping) cause unjustifiable pain to the horses.

Animal Rights

Definition

Animal rights refers to the moral and legal entitlements/rights of non-human animals.

A person or organisation adopting an 'animal rights' approach to animal protection is referred to as an 'animal rights advocate'.

Many rights advocates believe that animals are entitled to enjoy fundamental rights such as the rights to life, health and liberty.

An animal rights advocate would challenge the property status of non-human animals, and disagree with the idea that it is morally acceptable for humans to use animals for human purposes.

Example

A rights advocate would be opposed to horse racing on the grounds that a horse should not have to race for human entertainment. They believe that animals have a right to live their life naturally without human interference, and they should not be forced to perform for humans. Therefore, a rights advocate would oppose horse racing even if the horses did not experience pain and suffering.

