Animal Cruelty: General Issues of Animal Rights

Introduction to the topic of Animal rights:

Over the years, the public has grown increasingly aware and influential in the enforcement of animal rights on a global level. After years of tormenting our fellow fauna, humans have become more accepting and concerned of their past flaws, and this is the perfect time to open the floor of debate of this topic to today's world.The exploration of this topic will prove a crucial tool in mankind's conquest to mend its errors, whilst using various mediums to expose various,pertinent animal-related issues to an increasingly digitized public. By definition, Animal rights include the moral or legal entitlements attributed to nonhuman animals, mainly because of their complex perceptive and social lives and the capacity to experience emotional and physical pain. Heated debates regarding the nonhuman animal rights have always been on a high rise due to a majority of the population growing up eating meat, wearing leather, and lending their support to circuses and zoos. However the nutritional elements derived from these animals and their share in progress in the medicine industry cannot be ignored. Furthermore captive breeding of animals in enclosures and shelters provided by the organizations in entertainment, sports and numerous other industries have proven to be beneficial to them and have helped conserving numerous species of animals that would have otherwise gone extinct in the wild. It is therefore important for debate on animals being used in the entertainment, sports and experimental industries to be conducted in order to delineate and accentuate the rights entailed to animals and their contribution in various industries. Despite the topics rising into prominence in today's world, the constant development and realization of different issues signals the need for constant debate in order to come to a common consensus over the best way to resolve the problem is crucial. The subtopics listed below were carefully selected to align with today's' rising problems pertaining to this topic

1) Debate for and against animal euthanasia

Brief outline:

Euthanasia is defined as the painless killing of a patient/animal suffering from an incurable and painful disease. It has found its commonplace in recent times, but has been heavily debated upon over the effectiveness and ethical nature, especially in cases pertaining to animal.

Arguments for:

- The most painless method that can used to put down animals in immense pain -May be posed as the only solution to treat intractably ill animals
- Prevents suffering and is a very fast process

Arguments against:

- There is no clear decision making process to decide on whether to euthanize a particular animal

- There are laws which permit the owner to make the decision for the animal,and this could be done as per the owner’s selfish wants, which may pose some harm to the animal.
- Euthanasia as a means of population control is a very controversial topic. There are no figures available for how many healthy animals are put down, animals are sometimes euthanised when shelters are full.

2) Animal Experimentation

Brief outline:

In today’s scientific world, animal experimentation has become a common practice which has resulted in major scientific breakthroughs which have contributed to the advancement of the human race, but at what cost? Although stricter rules and greater ethical concern has spread across a number of scientific disciplines, and overall treatment of animals has improved significantly; there are still some controversial rules and incidents that can open the floor to effective debate.

For:

- Animal testing has contributed to many life-saving cures and treatments
- There is no adequate alternative to testing on a living, whole-body system.
- Animals themselves benefit from the results of animal testing.
- Research is highly regulated, with laws in place to protect animals from mistreatment
- There maybe no other mediums of testing of products such as cosmetics before use
- If animal experimentation has been the norm for so many years, why change it now

Against:

- Animal testing is cruel and inhumane.
- Alternative testing methods now exist that can replace the need for animals such as bacteria phages,fungi etc. which rouse no ethical concerns
- Drugs that pass animal tests are not necessarily safe, as shown by past incidences

Example:

Animal tests on the arthritis drug Vioxx showed that it had a protective effect on the hearts of mice, yet the drug went on to cause more than 27,000 heart attacks and sudden cardiac deaths before being pulled from the market

- 95% of animals used in experiments are not protected by the Animal Welfare Act, which gives too much freedom/non regulation for scientists to work with
- The Animal Welfare Act has not succeeded in preventing horrific cases of animal abuse in research laboratories in the past

3) Animals in the entertainment industry

Brief outline:

Many animal entertainment industries have been shut down in the past, but there are many that haven't been thoroughly inspected, and as a result have caused potential harm to the animals. However these large industry players have always found ways to thwart cases and media attention directed towards them. It is about time, that these problems are addressed to ensure the safety of our furry companions.

Arguments for:

- Sometime the animals that are kept safe/healthy with regimented food and medication that they otherwise might not get in the wild.
- Some organizations such as zoos are known to rescue and aid conservation efforts for endangered animals
- Some types of enclosures such as sanctuaries allow for greater area for animals to roam around and accurately replicate the environment the animals are used to.

Arguments against:

- The animals might be taken from their habitats forcefully, and may develop a condition known as zoochosis, or severe depression as a result of being away from home.
- The animals in captivity may be forcefully bred against their will, and this may possibly result in harmful inbreeding, chronic health problems etc.
- Some big players in the industry might not be willing to budge, as this industry is a huge money making industry bringing in almost US $25 billion annually.

4) Animals in sports

Brief outline:

In today’s global scenario, there are various types of sport in which animals are used for including bullfighting, horse racing, camel wrestling and the most recognized and debated for, hunting. These sports along with others have been gaining a lot of popularity globally but only at the cost of millions of animals being killed each year. A proportion of such activities have been outlawed but legal fights, sports, and related activities continue to persist in many parts of the world.

Arguments for:

- Activities such as hunting and fishing are natural and are mostly undertaken for rational reasons.
- Many sports are often an integral part of a certain culture and tradition and this must be respected. Example: Bullfighting in Spanish culture.
- Animals who take part in a sport are thoroughly bred to do so and they may be enjoying the activity themselves.

Arguments against:-

- The use of animals as objects for sports should be banned as they are either killed in

the process of preparation or in course the sport itself (blood sports). This violates animal rights and paves the way for extinction.
- Using animals for sports deprives them of their natural habitat and social structure and is placed in a human construct of an exploitative nature.
- Many animals are bred and killed for racing. (Legally in over 15 countries)
- In the case of unavoidable killing, hunting and slaughtering can be substituted with more humane methods of killing.

5) Animals kept in zoos

Brief outline:

Most of us have seen animals in zoos at least once in our lives. Most zoos are of a high standard nowadays and try to provide environments identical to natural habitats but it is still argued that animals should not be kept in captivity but encouraged back into their native environment.

Arguments for:-

- Zoos help in providing educational experiences to those who visit who would otherwise not be able to interact with the respective animals.
- There is the threat of wild animals harming other animals including human beings and hence, zoos are a method of protection.
- Good zoos prolong the lifetime of animals as they have veterinarians, lack of predators, regular food supply, etc.

Arguments against:-

- Animals should not be kept in captivity as they deserve to live in their respective natural environments.
- Breeding animals in captivity alters the species, makes the animals genetically engineered and deprived of their survival skills and wild instincts.
- Animals in captivity can develop severe health problems despite the treatment plans provided by the zoo.

6) Animals used as workers

Brief outline:

It is not uncommon for animals to be exploited as workers. They are often forced to provide physical labor and transport (draught or draft animals). Others are used as police/guide dogs. There may be certain cases in which some animals enjoy performing the respective activities for which they are used, but these are exceptions as such uses of animals still occur within a framework of exploitation that harms them in other ways.

Arguments for:-

- Domesticated animals are used to provide transportation and perform traction.

- Transportation on animals such as horses and camels is a tourist attraction in many places.
- Dogs are widely used by the police, security guards and military for multiple reasons.
- Animals are also used to guide blind people or those with severe sight disabilities.

Arguments against:-

- Activities that animals are involved in maybe stressful, dangerous and in certain cases, lethal.
- They are often victims of different forms of aggression to make them work.
- They have to work in harsh environmental conditions and are also overworked with limited veterinary care.

Example:

Police dogs are abruptly separated from their families, given vigorous training leading to both physical and/or psychological pain. Moreover, since their health is not given the utmost priority, there is a high proportion of these dogs undergoing serious injuries, health issues, and accidental death.

7) Animal cruelty becoming a federal felony in the United States

Brief outline:

Animal cruelty has always been looked down upon, but regardless of that, people who are convicted have always been given either a fine or a very short sentence, even it they were responsible for ruining the lives of hundreds, if not thousands of animals. Well, that all changed on 25th December 2019, when a bipartisan bill was passed and signed by the Trump administration, to make animal cruelty a federal felony.

The Preventing Animal Cruelty and Torture Act, or PACT Act, ‘bans abusive behaviour including crushing, burning, drowning, suffocating, impaling and another bodily injury toward any non-human mammals, birds, reptiles or amphibians’. Violators of the PACT Act now face criminal penalties of a fine, a prison term of up to seven years, or both.

Arguments for (affirmative):

- Animals should be granted rights and should be treated the same ways as humans
- Animals are capable of feeling the same range of emotions as humans do too
- It can be considered more humane to convict and sentence people who commit such acts

Arguments against (negative):

- Why should humans be convicted and sentenced for committing crimes against an entirely different species?
- Animals don't deserve the same rights as humans, and therefore can't be treated the same way either since we're so biologically diverse

- Sentences shouldn’t be as big as they are for animal cruelty, as it doesn’t seem fair for humans

8) Destruction of animal habitats

Brief outline:

Due to the large scale industrialisation and urbanisation taking place in rural parts of the world, countless number of animals are losing their homes, to make room for either animals, humans or factories. This causes a mass scale endangerment of animals, and if this is not bought into control soon enough, many species may go extinct as well. A recent example of this are the Australia bushfires.

Arguments for (affirmative):

- Loss of animal species means there is a loss of biodiversity as well
- Animals losing a place to live can disrupt the food chain they’re part of, and can drastically either increase or decrease in numbers
- Many species of animals rely and depend on other species of animals as well, and if they became endangered, there’s a chance that other species of animals will also be directly affected

Arguments for (negative):

- Humans need to build new homes in order to support a growing population, and for that parts of lands will have to be cleared out
- More livestock also need to be bred in order to sustain and support a growing population, and they also will require more space
- Building more factories will help the economy, and grow it at an even faster rate

9) Animal farming methods(Intensive animal farming)

Brief outline:

The growing population of the world(8.1billion+) has put farmers under constant pressure to feed a growing population. With this increasing demand comes a greater and very unsustainable demand for meat and animal products, and it is this strain that has led to recent intensive animal farming methods that have often violated a number of animal rights in addition to adulteration and depletion of the overall quality of our food resources

Arguments for Current animal farming methods

- The food we eat(in this case meat) remains affordable only through this modern farming methods
- These farming methods ensure/secure the jobs of millions of people,and the abolishment of these farming methods would lead to greater unemployability
- Foods make it to the marketplace faster,and in time because of factory farming.
- Allows workers to be more efficient with their labor as factory farming provides some

ease farmers in some back breaking labor

Arguments against current animal farming methods:

- Intensive farming doesn't exactly take animal welfare/rights into account, and tend to emphasize more on profits
- Are responsible for significant greenhouse gas emissions
- Some animals are underfed/overfed and can become unnaturally large and maybe poisoned
- There is a possibility of inbreeding or genetic manipulation in these type of farms
- The animals are prevented from exerting their natural behaviours and are in a way subdued and confined.

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