

# The Animal Rights Coalition

*Over Four Decades of Advocating for Animals*

## ANIMAL RIGHTS, WELFARE, AND LIBERATION

The Animal Rights Coalition often receives inquiries concerning the relationship between animal rights, traditional animal welfare advocacy, and activities sometimes designated under the term animal liberation. Although these terms may overlap in meaning, they are not interchangeable.

### Animal Rights

The philosophy of the animal rights movement maintains that animals are morally entitled to pursue their lives free of human violence according to the needs of their species. The movement calls for an end to the systematic subordination of animals' interests to human interests, and places upon humans the burden of justifying, in terms of a morally relevant difference, disparate treatment of animals. That criterion obliges us to grant animals those rights they are capable of exercising, including freedom from coerced physical and psychological suffering. Animal rights is not the special province of *animal lovers*, nor does it focus exclusively on those species who live with humans as companions. It concerns rather the moral status of animals; their right to be treated as ends unto themselves, not as mere means for human ends.

### Animal Welfare

Traditional animal welfare advocacy emphasizes the humane care and treatment of animals. Animal welfare groups typically provide shelter for homeless animals, promote spay/neuter programs, and in general work to minimize animal suffering. To be distinguished from such activities are attempts by the animal use industry to co-opt the phrase *animal welfare* in the interest of perpetuating the status quo. The Animal Rights Coalition, as an organization whose mission is to eliminate the suffering, abuse, and exploitation of non-human animals, supports the efforts of legitimate animal welfare organizations. ARC itself, however, is not primarily an "animal welfarist" or reformist organization, but seeks to abolish the use and exploitation of animals for human interests, rather than simply reforming or improving the conditions under which animals are used and exploited.

### Animal Liberation

While the term *animal liberation* is used in a generic sense to refer to all efforts aimed at ending the exploitation of animals, it has come to refer more specifically, especially in the popular media, to clandestine, and sometimes illegal, activities directed towards releasing animals from captivity and/or situations of abuse. The Animal Rights Coalition does not engage in or encourage such activities.



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