

# Terrorism or freedom guarantee

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Do we treat animals badly? Animal welfare groups tell us we are. There was an increase in the number of incidents of animals rescued from abuse recorded in the UK, up 1347 to 13907 according to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA). The RSPCA Financial Report also highlights that people who abuse animals often abuse people.

As depressing reading as it is, it can be put into context with the statistic that over 1 million people cared enough about animals to report mistreatment. There are also over 20 million households in the UK that have pets according to the Pet Food Manufacturers Association (PMA) website. So the majority of people treat animals well.

There is a flip side to the good treatment of domestic animals. All animals seem to be subject to this treatment, which can be bad for wild animals and bad for people. The treatment of animals is considered more important than the good treatment of people.

Roy Horn of the top, Las Vegas, magic act, "Siegfried and Roy," had worked with exotic animals for many years and the double act have their own animal conservation programme. Their website shows them with their famous big cats on private planes and in swimming pools, living the life many of us could only dream of. This did not diminish the risk Roy faced when he took some of the big cats on stage with him. In October 2003 a white Bengal Tiger bit him and dragged him off the stage by his neck leaving him in a very critical condition.

The interesting point is that there appears to have been no mistreatment of the animals. The US Department of Agriculture that was investigating the accident found no reason for the Tiger to attack its owner. The animals were fed regularly, there was no provocation. They were being treated as well as and indeed better than a domestic pet. Perhaps what we as human see as being good treatment of animals is masking their natural instinct.

Zoo Parks around the world generally do not feed their wild animals live food. In the EU this is to do with preventing the suffering to the prey which would be legally a protected animal. The Chinese Zoo's have been perhaps a little more honest about the reasons why they banned the feeding of live animal to wild animals in public in 2005. It was because it was upsetting the general public and therefore impacting on their finances.

Are we becoming too sensitive to the fact that animals instinctively need to hunt?

In Africa the wild animals are treated very differently. The safari parks do not have fences surrounding them to keep the animals in. The parks can only attract the big cats if they can maintain the environment and attract the prey that they need. The parks make their money from tourist willing to see the big cats and to see a kill is considered a privilege. Small lodges attract hunters. This may sound barbaric but the hunts are done on quotas and seasons. The good local hunters act as guides to ensure that the populations do not diminish. It is not just in the big parks, there are snake parks that take in stray snakes keep them for a while to make sure they are not injured and return them to the wild. One of the more important practices is that they feed them live bait. Small chicks, or rats are put into the cages of all manor of reptiles. Spitting snakes paralyse the small animals and save them from when they

are hungry, it is quite an amazing event. These are good, practical, conservation techniques.

Not so practical is the fox hunting ban in the UK. Where it has become illegal to hunt and kill foxes, or any other mammal with a pack of dogs. This is so not to distress the foxes. The does not stop the lawful use of using dogs to flush out foxes once flushed out the hunters must shoot the foxes. However due to the lack of expert marksmen and the the difficulty of hitting a target as small and fast moving as a fox there have been an increase in the number of foxes wounded but not killed. The pressure that brought this law change came mainly from extremist groups and people not involved in the activity.

There has for about 30 years been groups that are willing to break the law in order to “liberate” animals from animal test facilities and operations that breed animals for clothing. They claim that they are trying to look after animals but they are starting to cause more serious problems. Some of the animals they “liberate” are incapable of existing in the wild like white lab mice. Other animals like mink if they are set into the wild, often in large numbers from mink farms, they can decimate the local wildlife, eating birds eggs and snakes, rabbits, squirrels and various other small animals often killing more than they need.

The Animal rights extremists, especially the Animal Liberation Front (ALF). Are starting to employ different strategies to “liberate” animals they are targeting people that are not directly connected to the abuse of animals and their tactics are pretty underhanded. They attack share holders in companies that test on animals, they attack contractors that build the animal testing facilities and they have even dug up and held for ransom, the remains of a woman whose family ran an animal fur farm.

These groups have become so bad that there is an organisation that was set up from British security services looking at the domestic terrorist threat which is mainly concerned with extremist Animal rights groups. To put this in context they are a more prevalent threat to the British than the Irish Republican Army (IRA) militant guerilla organisation which had been at war with the British.

Are those that are supposed to be making things better for animals in fact only inhibiting the animals and making things worse? Preventing cruelty to animals is of course honourable, but increasingly this prevention is becoming an attack on the legitimate treatment of animals in activities that may just involve the brutality of life in nature.