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ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM OF ZOOLOGY

TORONTO

LEAFLET NO. 8

THE HUMANE TREATMENT OF ANIMALS*

MAN uses animals in many ways. Much of our food is of animal origin, including the flesh of many kinds of mammals, birds and fish, as well as milk, butter, eggs, honey, etc. Leather is made from animal hides. The horse, the elephant, and other animals haul or carry loads, or do other work. Cats, canaries and a host of other kinds are kept as pets. Some animals, particularly horses, are bred for show or for racing. Then many kinds of game mammals, birds and fish, are hunted for sport. (A game animal is one that is sought not so much for the value of its flesh as for the sport of hunting it.)

Most people believe that man has the right to use animals for his own pleasure and satisfaction, provided he treats them humanely, but it is generally agreed that it is not right to use animals in ways that cause them to suffer unnecessarily.

The horse is one of man's most faithful animal helpers. Most men who use horses are considerate of them and take care to see that they are comfortable and well fed, and that they are not made to work too hard, especially when they are weak or sick. But some men seem to forget that animals have feelings and make their horses pull heavy loads when they have great sores on their shoulders. These sores must cause excruciating pain when they are pressed by heavy collars. Sometimes horses are cruelly whipped for not going fast enough or for not doing what the driver wants, when they may be too tired or weak to go faster, or may not know what is wanted. We should remember that horses do not have as much intelligence as man. When they seem to be acting in a contrary manner, it is usually because they do not understand the driver's wishes. The horse is seldom vicious when young; if he becomes so later, it is usually the result of the treatment he receives. A man who has not the patience or intelligence to handle a horse considerately, should not be permitted to use such a faithful and useful animal.

Some people will not eat meat or wear leather shoes made from hides, because they object to the killing of animals. If we are among the many for whom animals are killed, it is our duty to see that they are treated as humanely as possible. Many animals are trampled to death in cars and trucks while in transit to market, through the thoughtlessness of the shipper or the carelessness of the driver. If small animals such as

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lambs are shipped with cattle, the lambs are likely to be trampled, unless they are confined to a separate part of the car. If an animal falls down through careless driving, it is almost impossible for the others to avoid crushing it beneath their feet. There are many other ways in which unnecessary suffering is caused to animals about to be killed for food. We cannot individually investigate how such animals are handled and killed, but we should strongly support organizations which do this on our behalf.

Much suffering is caused to wild animals in trapping them for their fur. When an animal is caught in a steel trap by its foot, its struggles to get away must cause it intense suffering. Sometimes it will eat off its leg to escape. If this does not happen, it must suffer until the trapper comes to put it out of its misery, or, if it is cold weather, until it slowly freezes to death. A trapper who thinks it necessary to use such traps, should visit them often to end the agony of the unfortunate animals that have been caught. Most trappers who live in the woods close to nature are considerate of the feelings of the wild creatures, but there are some who are so lazy and cruel that they allow their traps to remain unvisited for long periods. There is a story of a dog that remained in a trap for fifty-five days before being rescued; in that time, hunger, thirst and torture had reduced its weight from sixty-five to fifteen pounds. The Anti-Steel-Trap League, Dupont Circle, Washington, D.C. will be glad to send to those interested in humane trapping information on traps that capture animals alive and unhurt. Many fur-bearing animals are now raised on fur farms and are killed without causing so much suffering as trapping them in the wilds necessarily does.

What are we to say about the hunting of animals for sport? Opinions differ here as in other phases of the problem of the humane treatment of animals. There are those who say that we have no right to seek pleasure in ways that bring death to wild animals. Those who hold different views answer that we have as much right to kill wild animals as we have to kill domestic animals.

Hunting for sport is a survival of hunting for food and clothing. Primitive man and pioneer settlers in our own country depended for their living, to a considerable extent, on the wild animals they killed; and the Eskimos, many Indians, and some backwoodsmen in Canada must still secure the bulk of their food by hunting.

Men who consider it right to hunt for sport should see that they cause as little suffering as possible to the animals concerned. They should not shoot at an animal until they are close enough to make certain of killing it outright. Most hunters do this, but again there is a minority so anxious to kill an animal that they will shoot at it from almost any distance on the chance of bringing it down. Too often they only succeed in wounding it, but not badly enough for it to fall down where it can be found. It gets away and suffers for a long time before it dies, perhaps of starvation.

Lucky is such an animal that is released from its suffering by a wolf. The true sportsman will stalk his prey until he gets near enough to make certain of killing it at once. He is no sportsman who causes needless suffering to a wild creature because of his lack of skill, or because he is not willing to exert himself enough to ensure a good shot.

The keeping of a pet is one of the best ways of helping us to realize that animals are capable of feeling joy or suffering pain, depending on the way they are treated. We become so attached to our pets that we do not like to think of their being starved or beaten; we realize how they would suffer if ill treated. A little thought will convince us that other animals we do not know, domestic or wild, suffer in the same way as our pets under similar mistreatment.

All right-thinking people avoid gross cruelty to their pets but many are very unkind to them without realizing it. For instance, it is unkind to keep a big dog in the city, unless he is given a large place in which to run and play, or is taken regularly for long walks, in order that he may get proper exercise. We should think enough of the welfare of our pets to learn what food is best for them. Many pets are injured in health through the ignorance or thoughtlessness of those who feed them. It is unfair and unjust to do with our pets only what pleases us, without thinking of their needs. We should not keep them, unless we are prepared to see that they are given opportunities to lead a healthy and happy life with us.

There is much unnecessary cruelty inflicted on horses in the name of sport. Again it should be mentioned that most horsemen are not cruel by nature, but to make their horse win in the show ring or on the race course, they sometimes resort to practices which cause intense suffering to their splendid animals. Some of the practices to which objections have been made by those interested in the humane treatment of animals are: the use of severe bits which hurt the horses' mouths; the "lip strap", a piece of stout twine twisted about the tender gums and tongue; sharp spurs and cutting whips. The way horses' tails are too often deformed for the show ring by docking and "tail setting" should also be strongly condemned. It is perhaps not generally known that horses are sometimes given an injection of ginger, tobacco juice, or other stinging substances in order to make them prance from pain and show life in the show ring. Such cruel practices will only be stopped when the majority of people give support to those who are working to end them.

Objection is often made to the practice of training animals to perform tricks on the stage. It is said that they are cruelly treated when being taught to do their tricks, and that they are confined in cramped quarters while being transported from one town to another. Undoubtedly there is often truth in such charges, but many animals can be taught to do tricks without abusing them. Those who love animals should insist on the same

principle being applied in this connection as in the case of other uses of animals; that they will not consent to take pleasure or satisfaction from any use of animals that involves their suffering.

Confining animals in zoological gardens is also condemned by many. It is not right, of course, to keep wild animals in cages or enclosures that are too small or are otherwise uncomfortable. We should see that they are given some freedom and placed under conditions which resemble their natural homes as closely as possible. This is now done in all up-to-date zoological parks. Whether it is ever right to deprive a wild animal of its liberty is a question on which we shall probably never all agree. Animals living in zoological gardens have some compensations to offset their loss of liberty; they do not have to struggle in order to secure a living, and they are protected from their enemies.

These references to cruelties practised on animals should convince us that there is still a vast amount of unnecessary suffering inflicted on them by man. When we remember that even the most intelligent of these animals are no match for man's power of planning their capture and later doing with them what he pleases, it should awaken our feelings of pity on their behalf. We have no right to make animals suffer simply because we have the power to do so; rather their helplessness should make the greater appeal for our kindness.

In every civilized country, humane minded people have formed societies to look after the welfare of animals, and to "speak for those who cannot speak for themselves". Pamphlets on humane education and on the care of various pet and domestic animals may be secured from the Toronto Humane Society, 11-23 St. Albans St., Toronto.

J. R. D.

