

Seeing through the hype

From [There's an Elephant in the Room blog](#)

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Calves in transport Photographer/Filmmaker: [Jo-Anne McArthur](#)

Today I've been thinking of the way those who seek to justify continued exploitation of other individuals – including industry supporters who promote themselves as 'representing victim interests' – habitually grasp at any available straws, and the way in which, as advocates we have to be aware that diversionary tactics are ultimately not tackling the root of a problem. So here's a spoiler. When it comes to the exploitation of nonhumans, that root is always 'speciesism' and the solution is to end all exploitation of other individuals. If an article doesn't point that out, it's not 'representing victim interests'.

So – that all sounds a bit obscure, doesn't it? Well I'll explain. Recent posts about the plight of calves exploited by the [dairy](#) industry have provided several examples of what I'm talking about. Now don't get me wrong, what's done to calves is utterly shocking, brutal, sickening, barbaric and many other adjectives besides. BUT. They are not the only victim group who undergo unspeakable abuse – unspeakable abuse is the subtext for every single type of nonhuman exploitation. Animal agriculture IS unspeakable abuse.

Points that have provoked outrage include:

- The fact that calves and their mothers are separated within 24 hours
- The fact that calves face lengthy journeys by road and sea, starving and thirsty;
- The fact that calves are roughly handled;
- The fact that so many calves are male and this deemed surplus to 'dairy' requirements.

So we see ‘solutions’ proposed by some who claim to represent the interests of these hapless infants; solutions grasped at eagerly by the milk drinkers and cheese eaters who absolutely do not want to change their own behaviour and in fact see nothing wrong in it. Somehow it’s claimed that changed procedures, more laws and better enforcement will fix all the issues. It’s as if the heading ‘*Treatment of calves*’ can be extracted from the overall ‘Dairy’ industry and solved as an academic exercise without inconveniently touching on any other aspect of a much MUCH bigger and financially lucrative picture.

Using imagination

Apart from the fact that the trauma for the mothers and calves is WORSENERD the longer they remain together after birth, a mother/child bonding common to all mammals including humans, I find myself wondering what else this proposed scenario looks like. It could apparently include slaughter close to the place of birth to avoid the misery of transport and sexed semen amongst other things. Other proposals call for tightening up of existing regulations that limit journey times, set down feed requirements in transport, methods of handling etc.

It’s all too easy to see articles getting carried away with proposals for feeding schedules and journey times but we need to keep in mind the individuals who are impacted by this barbaric trade. So for the avoidance of doubt, we’re talking about infants; so new that many are still wet from birth with their umbilicals trailing from their little quivering bellies. Male or female, they want and need their mothers in the same way newborn humans want and need their mothers.

Imagine the distress of a human infant taken from their mother at birth and set aside with a whole load of other newborns to be segregated into ‘males’ and ‘females’ and disposed of, with a nice *legal* feeding schedule, a *regulated* journey time limit, and *laws* against beating, kicking or throwing them. Would we find that reassuring? Would we hell. Most of us would find that idea far too distressing to even contemplate. And THAT – right there – is our speciesism talking. This is the bit where some will be firing up their keyboards to announce that humans are not the same as cows. Granted, we look different but as sentient mammals we share many of the same characteristics as science has proven time and again.

The infant victims are terrified and they are panicked and desperate, and the one thing they need, is the one thing that is – and will ALWAYS be – denied to them, the love and nurturing of the grieving and anguished mother who gave birth to them. She will never be theirs because her body is a profit-generating commodity in an industry that keeps milk drinkers and cheese eaters supplied.

So where does that leave us?

Well it’s the dairy industry and it’s ALL about profit so even if all the current talking points are addressed in some manner:

- Mothers will STILL be restrained and physically violated with this sexed semen to ensure a good chance that their infants will be female and thus able to be abused for breastmilk at the earliest opportunity;
- Newborns will STILL be taken from their mothers which causes unbearable distress to both mothers and infants whenever it happens;
- Female calves will STILL be raised on milk replacement because their mothers’ milk is required to generate profit.

- Male infants (and there will no doubt still be some), distraught and crying for their mothers, may face local [slaughter](#) and their corpses will travel in freezers. Or else their journey time limits will be enforced.

And the industry will go on with business as usual, mothers violated for annual pregnancies that leave their bodies and spirits exhausted and broken while they are still only young themselves. They will then be slaughtered for cheap meat. The fathers (who are never mentioned) will still face an existence of repeated [forced or electro-ejaculation](#) to provide semen for sexing and the resultant artificial insemination. Exit route – the slaughterhouse.

But the REALLY disturbing aspect of all this furore is that the milk drinkers and the cheese eaters of the population will recall that there has been an uproar about the ‘Treatment of Calves’ and will be reassured that ‘something has been done’ to resolve the situation. Reassured, they will continue to fund the whole disgusting industry with their consumer cash while congratulating themselves that they signed one or two petitions in the wake of an exposé that swept the REAL issue under the carpet.

When the dust settles will anything have been solved?

The REAL issue is the atrocity that is ALL animal agriculture including ‘dairy’. It all needs to stop for every reason there is, causing millions of deaths each year, damaging the planet and harming human health. It can’t be done piecemeal. Neither our victims nor the survival of planet Earth have time for that.

The REAL issue is where we need to keep our focus and until such time as that is tackled head on, points of contention will result in regular exposes, and the unscrupulous advertising of the industry will continue with the ease of long practice, to distract consumers with side issues. These have the twin aims of maintaining consumer ignorance of the reality that their cash is paying for, and reassuring them that it’s all perfectly ‘humane’ so they can feel good about themselves as the horrors continue.

In reality the exploitation of other living beings is neither ‘humane’ nor [necessary](#). To end with the words of Tom Regan;

‘The fundamental wrong is the system that allows us to view animals as our resources, here for us – to be eaten, or surgically manipulated, or exploited for sport or money. Once we accept this view of animals – as our resources – the rest is as predictable as it is regrettable.’