

Zombie Chickens and Silent Lambs: Managing Suffering Is NOT Animal Liberation

From [Lee Hall, Vegan Place](#)

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When someone portrays animal farming on any scale as a harmonious balance of natural forces, they are either delusional or lying.... Isn't it finally time we stopped tinkering with dominion and reclaimed the term animal liberation for the vegan platform?



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Will activists ever let go of the popular “reduce the suffering” model of animal activism, and their corresponding campaigns to score “humane farming” victories?

Some states and nations are banning crates for veal calves and for laying hens. Does this make veal or eggs better?

No! There is no good animal agribusiness.

When “crate-free veal” calves are wrenched from the dairy cows who gave birth to them and kept in groups of calves, the bewildered young animals frequently mount or suck each other, or fight. Site managers use restraints on the “bully calves.” As for the egg factories, where hens have more space, there’s pecking and manure-borne disease. And for calcium-depleted laying hens, normal movements can break bones.

Commercial animals just can’t win. And then we slaughter them.

We Have the Power to Opt Out of the System.

In 1944, Donald Watson and a small group of like-minded people founded The Vegan Society. In a 2002 interview with the chair of the Society, Watson, then aged 92, said: “One of my earliest recollections in life was being taken for holidays to the little farm where my father had been born.” With the joy of being “surrounded by interesting animals” at this family farm, Watson’s “first impression of those holidays was one of heaven.”

One morning, a pig was killed. “And I still have vivid recollections of the whole process from start to finish,” Donald told the interviewer, “including all the screams of course, which were only feet away from where this pig’s companion still lived...And it followed that this idyllic scene was nothing more than Death Row. A Death Row where every creature’s days were numbered by the point at which it was no longer of service to human beings.”

That morning, Donald Watson saw the inevitable horror in keeping other animals for our own ends—even if their situation, up until their last moments, is largely pain-free.

The Vegan Society therefore defined “veganism” as:

...not so much welfare as liberation, for the creatures and for the mind and heart of man; not so much an effort to make the present relationship bearable, as an uncompromising recognition that because it is in the main one of master and slave, it has to be abolished before something better and finer can be built.

Why Do Advocates Sideline the Vegan Call? Humans Love Our Luxuries.

For decades, Peter Singer, a professor at Princeton University and the author of *Animal Liberation*, has convinced activists to pursue husbandry adjustments for commercial hens and other commercially owned animals. The model keeps activists both busy and frustrated with the politically impossible work of making the treatment, transportation and slaughter of “livestock” bearable, while agribusiness expands and becomes more intensive as demand expands.

In 2006, Singer told an interviewer at The Vegan Society that “we need to cut down drastically on the animal products we consume.” Singer continued:

But does that mean a vegan world? That’s one solution, but not necessarily the only one. If it is the infliction of suffering that we are concerned about, rather than killing, then I can imagine a world in which people mostly eat plant foods, but occasionally treat themselves to the luxury of free-range eggs, or possibly even meat from animals who live good lives under conditions natural for their species, and then are humanely killed on the farm.

By calling the situation of purpose-bred animals “natural” and associating “luxury” with animal products, Singer further undermined veganism and weakened advocates.

Engineering Chickens Out of Their Feelings? Peter Singer Has Approved.

Paul Waters and Steven Pete were born with a life-threatening inability to feel pain. They described their experiences publicly. As children, they would chew their tongues, hit their heads, crash through glass, burn and cut themselves, and unwittingly injure other children. Children with this condition need constant protection to survive; some die from their injuries or resultant infections. The experiences of painless people (and the generosity of Waters and Pete in sharing their stories) helped us understand our *need* for pain sensitivity.

But Peter Singer is focuses on suppressing it, even if that means no feelings are left at all. In a 2006 interview for *Salon.com*, when Oliver Broudy asked for an opinion on bio-engineering chickens without brains, Singer answered:

It would be an ethical improvement on the present system, because it would eliminate the suffering that these birds are feeling. That’s the huge plus to me.

To believe zombie chickens are “an ethical improvement” is to promote a deep disrespect for the living beings who evolved here on Earth.

Meanwhile, as for commercial hens who have passed their laying prime, Singer told *Salon*:

Those hens have been producing eggs for you for a year or 18 months. You have a responsibility to make sure they are killed humanely.

Killed humanely?

Not that Singer's use of that term should surprise us. Singer's concern has always been about managing suffering and not the profound unfairness of systematic oppression.

Vegans Need to Reclaim *Animal Liberation*.

We need to use our precious time defending animals' interests in living untamed, on their terms. A leading reason for the planet's lack of untamed space is the sheer vastness of our animal farming operations. And yet Singer also accepts animal breeding, including for farming. Singer, with Jim Mason in *The Way We Eat: Why Our Food Choices Matter* (Rodale, 2006) wrote:

Raising lambs in the Welsh hills, for example, is a traditional form of husbandry that has existed for many centuries and makes use of land that could not otherwise provide food for humans. If the lives of the sheep are, on the whole, good ones, and they would not exist at all if the lambs were not killed and eaten, it can be argued that doing so has benefits, on the whole, for both human and animals.

Former animal farmer Harold Brown has said:

When someone portrays animal farming on any scale as a harmonious balance of natural forces, they are either delusional or lying.

I agree, Harold. Animals aren't benefited when we purpose-breed them. In doing so, we take away from their communities all that made them free. Moreover, the whole issue for the Welsh Hills isn't whether they can feed *humans*. There were other biological communities there before our sheep farms cleared them off.

Isn't it finally time we stopped tinkering with dominion and reclaimed the term *animal liberation* for the vegan platform?