

Economically Productive Animals and the Community's right to Know

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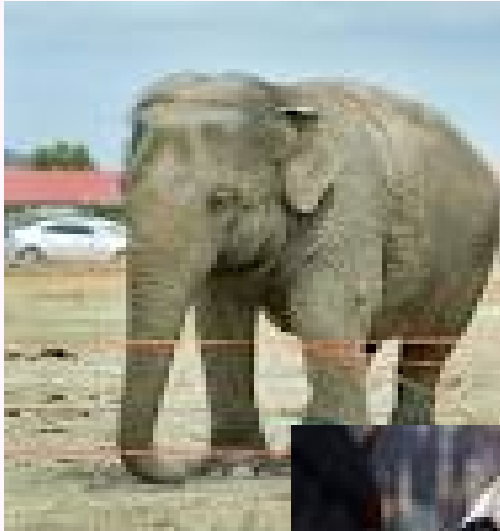
The traditional economic explanation for animal welfare inconsistencies

- Animal welfare laws in Australia and throughout the developed world are not consistent.
- How we wish to make use of an animal has a big impact on how the law views that animal and how well that animal is protected by the state against various types of harm.
- Traditional accounts provided by animal protection theorists, usually legal academic, to account for inconsistencies in animal welfare protections, tend to place heavy emphasis on the economic dimension of the human/nonhuman relationship.

A visibility explanation for animal welfare inconsistencies

I argue that it is not economics alone influencing the structure of animal welfare laws. Politics matters. In a liberal democracy, where the community is at least somewhat engaged in the process of setting the direction of public policy, the politics of animal welfare regulation is influenced by what the community can see; what the community is aware of; and how the community responds to perceived animal welfare deficiency.

Animal protection regulation tends to favour the most visible



Visibility

1. Direct Popular Visibility: that is the animals we can see and interact with directly.
2. Indirect Popular Visibility: which is animal visibility generated by the mass media, including the work of animal activists.
3. Indirect Visibility via the State: which is animal protection inspections carried out by the state on behalf of its citizens.

So what?

BUT: **WARNING!** If the community finds out they may not be happy



The case of Mulesing

- 1930s Mulesing first practiced.
- 1975 animal protection organisations first begin to organise in Australia.
- 1985 Christine Townend published 'Pulling the Wool' including a chapter on the practice of Mulesing.
- 1987 Townend publishes a paper in *Parasitology Today*.
- 2002 Mark Pearson receives a tip-off about a Mulesing working in rural NSW. He films the practice and send the DVD to PETA.
- 2004 the PETA campaign against Mulesing explodes.
- 2005 AWI commences legal proceedings against PETA and other animal organisations. AWI finishes what PETA started and the word 'mulesing' moves into the mainstream.

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