

## LEE HALL: ANIMALS AS PETS TRANSCRIPT FROM A TALK AT THE LONDON VEGAN FESTIVAL 2008

Lee Hall is legal director for the North American group Friends of Animals. The 11<sup>th</sup> annual London Vegan Festival was held on Sunday, 7 September 2008 at Kensington Town Hall. Footnotes have been added to this transcript for readers' further information. Participants were informed of the recording for *Abolitionist Online* both at the beginning and conclusion of the talk; this piece is really the work of the whole group. Participants who would like their comment(s) attributed should advise leehall[AT]friendsofanimals.org.

### Part One: Rescue and Domination, Welfare and Rights

The question here is: Must animal advocates choose between being rescuers and working for animal rights?

Why would there be a distinction between working to rescue animals and working for animal rights? Well, I don't think there is. I live with cats. They were all street cats, and I love them. And I don't mind saying that; I'm proud of saying that because I'm an animal-rights activist who's also for animal welfare. What I *don't* say, what I don't do, is credit industries with doing anything for animal welfare. The welfare they're looking out for is the welfare of their shareholders. So if an industry that commodifies animals, sells animals as meat, if somebody who works in animal experimentation says they're working for animal welfare -- they don't. The vocabulary is really important. When you're looking at an institution of use, you're looking at animal *husbandry*. Not animal welfare.

What I do by looking after the cats I live with is truly animal welfare. So this is a taking back of the word *welfare*.

You've heard people say, "Oh they're a welfarist organization; don't listen to them." Well, I'm a welfarist. I look after domesticated animals who need a home. But I don't credit the institutions that use domesticated animals with being interested in their welfare. So if somebody says something about an animal-welfare law or an animal-welfare rule, and the animal is still within the institution of use, I would call that a husbandry rule, not a welfare rule -- you see the distinction, that we shouldn't credit the industries with animal welfare.

This is a really, really big distinction. Because even in the abolitionist movement, you know there is this question of advocates who are working for animal welfare and advocates who are working for animal rights. How many people have heard about this, welfare and rights? [Several hands are raised.] That there's this difference, right? So I'm saying that the word *welfare* being used in the sense of "Let's work for modifications within the industry" -- I don't think that is welfare, so maybe there's not this hard-line distinction between animal welfare and animal rights *if one uses the words properly*.

So I'm for animal rights; I am an abolitionist. I would like to see the end of animal use. But for animals who are captive and are dependent on us for the rest of their lives, I agree with animal welfare in their circumstances. For pets, I agree with animal welfare. That's the best we can extend to them. They are not going to have animal rights.

What I see as animal rights is the right to live on your own terms, not on the terms of the people who have subjugated you.

It seems a very important distinction here, and I don't think it's being talked about very much. And I thought that the reason for writing a second book -- I've written one, and also co-authored a vegan cookbook, and my next book will be called *On Their Own Terms* -- is the view is that animal rights is an ideal, for which we should all strive, that respects animals' rights to live on their terms and not on the terms of people who have subjugated them.

In the meantime, the animals we have brought into existence -- as pets, as animals used as food -- we have a responsibility to look after. I don't agree that they should be killed. I think we should look after them for the rest of their lives and that's why I live with animals bred as pets.

Should you call animals "pets"? I don't know; should you call people who are enslaved "slaves"? The truth. Should we call them companion animals? Well, "companion" is a word that means some sort of mutual decision we've reached that we're going to live together and break bread together, that's com-pan-ion. The root is to share bread.

Did they decide that they were going to live with me? Is it fair that I call them a companion -- an animal companion or a companion animal? Did they make the decision to share bread with me? They didn't. They were on the streets and they got injured and they showed up at my door. And I was a vegan for ten years when I took the first one in. I'd wanted to avoid taking in cats. And once I took one in because I couldn't find someone else, then I was already in the situation of looking after a domesticated cat, and felt that this is a person, an individual. And I thought, well, I've put this person in this situation of dependency, because I am in the class; we define ourselves as humans. What does the word mean?

Darwin said human is a species, right? But species is a category of convenience. There's no actual line between species; it's a continuum.[1] It's constructed; and how do we construct ourselves? We decided that we're the species that's in charge of everybody else, and therefore we can own others. *We first* decided we are the species in charge of everybody else; in other words, we're dominating the others. And we decided this why? Because we wanted to protect ourselves against the wolves and the wildcats. And so now we've domesticated them, and made them into dogs and cats. Smaller beings.

How many people have heard of Temple Grandin? About five? Temple Grandin is the person who designs slaughterhouses, right?

**Participant:** Isn't Temple Grandin in the animal-welfare movement?

**Lee:** Is Temple Grandin for the welfare of animals?

**Participant:** I wouldn't define slaughter in any circumstance as welfare. It's not in the welfare of any particular individual to be killed.

**Lee:** Let's say that Temple Grandin works in the animal-husbandry field. Yes, George--

**George Rodger:** "Isn't that the lady who claims to be -- to telepath with animals?"

**Lee:** Yes. Autistic?

**George:** "Yes, well, that as well."

**Lee:** Yes. Temple Grandin wrote a book called *Genetics and Behavior of Domestic Animals*, and said that the genetic studies point to the wolves as the ancestors of domestic dogs. And through a process called neoteny, there've been changes in a few genes.

This has happened throughout the centuries of selective breeding -- specifically since the Victorian era. Dogs were domesticated 15,000 years ago, cats less; the modern breeds of cats and dogs we see, however, have come into existence in about the past 200 years.

And Temple Grandin says that during domestication -- this process that actually started 15,000 years ago with the dogs -- what are selected are infantile behaviours. In other words, when you see dogs they yap, they bark all their lives, whereas with wolves, they only bark and yap as small babies, cubs. So they've retained this babyhood. And the dogs we see today are in this sense permanently babies. So we're taking them from their world of the wolves -- and they can't go back. You can see dogs go out and live with other dogs, street dogs, but they don't turn back into wolves. And domesticated cats never become wildcats, and that's where they came from.

In domestic dogs, the social behaviour patterns are fragmented and incomplete, Temple Grandin says. There have been studies done -- which I don't approve, as I'm a vegan who subscribes to the views of The Vegan Society, that is, opposing animal testing of any kind -- but I'll let you know what Temple Grandin said about malamutes: When raised with wolf pups, they failed to read the social cues of

wolves; they couldn't comprehend what wolves were saying. And their physical development was slower. So malamutes, who are close to wolves in looks and apparently in genetics, still couldn't keep up with what the wolves were saying.

Yorkshire terriers retain their baby teeth.

**Patricia Tricker [who's from Yorkshire]:** Just make me cringe.

**Lee:** Not to pick on you.

**Patricia:** They look like little -- hairy rats --

**Participant:** Aww --

**Patricia:** It's not the fault of the dog --

**Lee:** No, right, it's a deformation.

**Patricia:** Yeah. I mean, it's not my idea of what a dog should look like.

**Lee:** From wolves -- I understand the point you're making, Patricia -- the farther they got from wolves the more deformed, this is true, biologically; the handout we've got shows certain kinds of dogs who are so far removed from wolves that for example the bulldogs have trouble giving birth and need caesarean sections. The BBC recently did an exposé of [the British dog show] Crufts. And it got to the point where the Queen was thinking of separating from the Kennel Club. Because the BBC was saying, well, there are certain dogs, for example, the cavalier King Charles spaniels are built so that their little heads are so small that their brains are squeezed against the back of their spines, and there's this fluid that goes into the spinal cord, and, as they said on the BBC, about half of these spaniels have this condition. It causes excruciating pain, to the point where it's like hitting someone on the head with a sharp object repeatedly, and the cavalier King Charles spaniels are given human painkillers for their entire lives because there is no dog's painkiller for this condition; however, this condition has happened in humans so they know what kind of drugs to give. Imagine: They live with this their entire lives.

So when Patricia said "there are certain dogs that just make me cringe" the Yorkshire terrier being one of them, there's a reason Patricia is saying that. And it's not directed at the individual. There's a difference between who you are and what you are: As an individual, the dog is a person who deserves love and care; certainly these spaniels deserve everything we can do-- except now, they're in a most non-vegan position. I understand Donald Watson lived for 95 years and never took any pharmaceutical drugs, concerned that they were tested on animals. So here you have the pharmaceutical companies selling drugs with which we alleviate the pain that these spaniels feel all their lives.

One of the breed sites for Yorkshire terriers says: "These dogs must be allowed to live indoors. They cannot tolerate heat or cold. Besides, they are much happier with their family."

Now think about that. Their family. They were *separated* from their family. Taken from their mother. Taken from their siblings. And put in certain homes. And now we say that's our family.

We treat them with love, as we would treat a member of our family; I do. But I know what their family members went through-- what *they* went through, and they were the ones spared from what others went through; that's why they live with me -- because they survived it.

So, are they ever in the position to make the choice? They are put in front of us, for people to select, buy, and take home. Some of them don't make it that far. They're vivisected; they watch car parks, behind barbed wire fences, on oily concrete, every night. They stay alive as long as they live with somebody who cares. And for every one of them, many relatives don't make it.

I rescued them. But that means, in a sense, I dominate them; because in the act of rescue, one party becomes dominant, and the other party becomes dependent on that rescue. And I have one pair of siblings, and one of the pair loves being inside. Plays all the time, always asking me to play. They are siblings, born together, and they both came in at approximately the same time. I heard one calling for the other -- didn't know what the ruckus was, and then the other one showed up at the door and they looked very much alike (that's why it first seemed there was only one) and when I brought the second one in, the ruckus stopped. All the howling, the screaming had gone on non-stop for a month. That's how much the one cared about having the other one. And when they were together it stopped.

Well, they have two different personalities. The one who was screaming isn't particularly happy to be inside. This one, it seems, doesn't like to be dominated. But the other one is inside and appears to have a different perspective: I like the food; I like to play; I like the other cats here and I'm enjoying myself. So there are two, with different interests, but I know what they seem to like best of all and that's to be together. So they'll have a place for life. Including the one who didn't seem to want to be in, and probably would have been the survivor. But I can't split them up; they love each other.

Well, in human circumstances, the ideal rescue would be you help somebody and then immediately allow them to regain their independence. As quickly as possible, you assist them to go back to independence. In this case, we have feral cats who live on average two years where I live in North America; whereas if they're inside it could be up to 20 years. So I'm making a decision and imposing

it on them, one who seems thrilled with it, the other one, I think it's going to take time. So I'm imposing it. The two of them could never live in a natural biocommunity and have a full life. Where I live, that one who wants to be out would be picked up, and gone. So, the dilemma.

Free-living animals, on the other hand, if you rescue them, for example, a sea lion on the coast wrapped up in lines-- there's no nice word for "fishing"-- this is another reason to become a vegan: The killing of the fish means sea lions, pelicans, and everybody else is getting hooks in their throats. At Friends of Animals, our group, the Marine Animal Rescue team, picks up pelicans and sea lions. They can't help the fish because the problem for the fish is the demand. So when they help the pelicans, sea lions, and whales, what they also say is: Stop eating the fishes. For their own sake, we shouldn't be in the ocean, bringing animals out and eating them. And for the sake of these other animals.

So they'll find a few animals paralysed, do x-rays and find a hook in the spine. They'll take the hook out, and the animal will go back into the sea. As quickly as possible, you're sending the animal back to the completely free circumstances. Now you're talking about an animal who can experience animal rights.

In a world where we had animal rights, sea lions could experience it. If we all agreed on animal rights, sea lions could flourish. And they would.

And we'd have a much more robust environmental movement, because if we respected free-living animals, and their right to be living on their own terms, that would necessarily mean that we protect and respect their habitat. That, for the first time in history, would give polluters their true challenge. If animal rights were injected into environmentalist thinking, for the first time, we'd have a powerful environmental movement. And animal rights needs to bring environmentalism into its thinking, because animal rights is going to be found with the sea lions, it's going to be found with the wolves. The dogs can never go back.

The dogs are individuals. We look after them as unique individuals. But they'll never have animal rights.

There are only a few wildcats in Britain. About 400. They live in Scotland. They were exterminated in Wales and England; people thought evil spirits lived in the wildcats, or that they might diminish the number of animals used for food, get on the land of the farmer and cause trouble, or maybe they'd eat human beings; that was thought too. And that's not far from the truth, because we're not at the top of the food chain. We're primates, and in the world there are humans who are killed by big cats. We don't like to think that we're subject to risk, but if we seriously respected free-living animals, we'd understand and accept that we are, and we'd live with that risk.

In Britain there are no wolves left except behind fences. There are 400 wildcats. And you know what the greatest threat to their survival is? You'd be surprised.

**Patricia:** Encroachment, lack of habitat.

**Lee:** That's closely connected, and always behind everything, yes: lack of habitat. Specifically, the international groups protecting big cats have said that, globally, the one biggest threat is the mix of genes with domesticated cats. So now in Scotland there may be a mandatory rule to spay and neuter cats simply to keep them away from the wildcats. Because there are only 400, and only in Scotland-- the only place the gamekeepers didn't completely wipe them out.

So there you have another reason for stopping or for challenging this domestication.

How many people have read or heard of Jeffrey Masson...who says there is one example of domesticated animals who might be very close to the situation of having animal rights in their lives, and that would be the domesticated cats allowed to roam freely. But here's the rub. We've changed them genetically just enough so that they can never return to being wildcats. Yet they can still procreate with wildcats; here we go again with the invasive research, now going on in Scotland, to find out how many of these wildcats really are wildcats, and not the progeny of some domesticated parent. So you see: Some of them do live close to independently of us, but it turns out that we have created an imbalance in the biocommunity that threatens to wipe out every wildcat in the world. Everywhere wildcats are, humans have let domesticated cats outside, and abandoned them, and this challenge has occurred to the free-living community.

When environmentalists say you can't really take animal-rights people seriously because we don't understand anything about free-living animals, it's a good idea to have the understanding of how domesticated animals interact with free-living animals, and how we change the biocommunity.

**Patricia:** I thought the Scottish wildcat was actually different from the wildcats in other countries. Is that right, that they are different? So if they were completely wiped out and there wasn't a single one left, you couldn't reintroduce them from anywhere else.

**Lee:** Now you're bringing up another issue, and important one. Once a community is gone in a certain region, there's a dilemma. Should you reintroduce what's called a species, a community of individuals; should you take certain ones and treat them as specimens and put them in a certain place, expecting them to breed, possibly at the expense of lives of many of them when they're shipped from here to there? If the Scottish wildcats go... In England, certain very wealthy people have offered their lands to bring in some of the large mammals.

**Participant:** Wolves.

**Lee:** Yeah. I'm going to go for six more minutes, then someone sound a buzzer. [Laughter.] There's a question to cover, that's come up in animal rights theory. How far would you take animal rights? To avoid species bias, how far do you take it? And the theorists, animal-rights authors, bring up this hypothetical question, a lot. There's a lifeboat, with human people and a dog. The boat isn't strong enough to hold the dog and the humans. Should you throw out the dog or a human? And you have to make a decision; someone's got to go. Generally you'll find--

**Participant:** In New Orleans they did leave the dogs behind, didn't they? They didn't even get into the boat.

**Lee:** Interesting that you bring this up because animal-rights theorists will say "That's just a hypothetical; don't worry too much-- [Laughter] because it's not going to happen. We can decide to pick the human, but don't worry; it doesn't invalidate the theory at all because this is only in any emergency; it never happens." [Laughter] It does happen. And it's going to happen more and more, with global warming. They just had another, and had to evacuate, and we don't know where those dogs and cats are right now. Every hurricane season, as the Gulf of Mexico warms, the hurricanes will be more extreme.

**Sarah Austin:** In New Orleans, some wouldn't leave--

**Lee:** Standing on top of the refrigerator with the cat. I'd like to think I'd do the same.

Well, generally they say you can throw the animal. Tom Regan, in *The Case for Animal Rights* in 1983, said you could and you should, ethically, throw the dog overboard. And the reason is this: There's equality, because dogs have a sense of what Regan calls sympathy, self-sacrifice, loyalty, and courage. So to that extent the lives of other animals are equal to human lives. Still, relevant differences remain. Because the human's life typically offers many more possible sources of satisfaction than a dog's. So there's a difference-- between the humans and dogs being equal, and the *interest in their lives* being equal. And Regan says equal respect means counting their *interests* as equal, so if the humans have more possible sources of satisfaction, we have to look at that and account for that against how many possible sources of satisfaction a dog could get, and therefore you would have to save the human.

Well, dogs can sniff through concrete. I mean, imagine how many interests they have. [Laughter] But the dog then becomes a foil, a proof of our special status -- as Regan sees it, our greater variety of sources of satisfaction. We can listen to Bach. A dog doesn't care about Bach.

Whatever we might think of Regan's view, it's at least true that Regan has carved out an exception to the rule of equality there. It's not part of the theory, the fabric, of animal rights. It's a hole in the fabric.

Gary Francione, in 2000, in *Introduction to Animal Rights: Your Child or the Dog*, didn't go so far as Regan and say that you *should*-- that it's your ethical responsibility to-- throw the dog overboard. Francione said no, it's not; you can decide. But if you decide the dog can be thrown overboard because the dog is a dog and not a human, that doesn't invalidate animal rights. Because it's an emergency, it happens infrequently. [Laughter]

Well, it's not infrequent. And it's one thing to say I'll throw a random individual out; it's another thing to say, as Francione said, that the dog can be thrown overboard every time-- because the dog is a dog and not a human-- and that doesn't invalidate animal rights.[2] It's certainly a hole in the fabric.

Because there's a 19<sup>th</sup>-century case in English criminal law called *Regina vs. Dudley and Stevens*. (Generally, the United States and part of Canada have accepted English law.) There were four people stranded in a lifeboat. All sailors. But the youngest one, Parker, who was still a teenager, wasn't seasoned, and drank seawater; a fatal mistake. And the other three figured: that one's a goner. And they'd already caught a turtle whose body they consumed.

One of the group said it would be wrong to kill Parker, for you don't kill a living person, even a barely living person. But the other two felt their chances of survival were better if they did, rather than let Parker become fully diseased, dead, and then eat the body and drink the blood. So they waited for the naysayer to go to sleep, and then agreed to take their next chance and kill Parker. They were desperate, and they killed. They consumed Parker's body. And they did live. And they said, we needed to do it or we'd have all been dead.

The judges back in England hadn't decided this particular question before. The people were sympathetic to the survivors and didn't want to see them sentenced. Most of the testimony indicated the young sailor was unconscious already when killed, though there was some debate, some question as to whether Parker had managed to protest. But what was clear is that Parker was dying. And the court said that's murder.

The implication was that the group ought to have drawn straws, as had been done in an earlier case, so that no one would have died involuntarily. The court's stated decision was that "necessity" is no defence to a charge of murder.

Now if we were out in the boat and we came back and the human was gone and we'd saved a dog, there'd be very little sympathy. Most people would say that was wrong; you shouldn't have sacrificed the human to save the dog. So we can see why theorists say what they say. The theorists are saying, well, I don't want

to say that we should in any circumstances kill a human being. Because that would make the general public think that vegans, animal-rights authors are crazy.

But they say, “No, it doesn’t invalidate the theory.”

Look at the idea. If we say it’s acceptable to kill the dog because the dog is a dog, then we’ve basically said you can do vivisection. Because you have laid the groundwork for the person doing the vivisection to say, “But an emergency *might* come up and I need to do what I’m doing, because when an emergency comes up, then I’ve done my job: to save people from a life-threatening disease.”

That’s what happens every day. Because we have decided that one can go over the side of the boat. This view is below the surface of how we treat other animals every single day. It’s not just an emergency. It’s what we think. Because we were raised to think that we are in a superior position. It’s a tautology. Because the dog’s a dog, when push comes to shove, that dog will go overboard.

That’s what humans think. What can we do about that? Well maybe the question should be-- Donald Watson, I think, would look at the root of this question. Tom Regan said the boat is not like the lab, because animals in the lab had already been made into tools. Their interests were already compromised. Not like the lifeboat where the dog is being helped, so don’t compare it to a lab.

Well, over 15,000 years, this wolf was changed into a Pekingese. And that’s not an abrogation of their rights, of their personhood? And although it was very slow-- over 15,000 years-- was that not a sort of violence that put the dog in the position of reliance, of needing rescue? And shouldn’t the question be: Why did we do *that*?

A lot of people of New Orleans can’t or won’t save the dogs. We know this is going to happen. A lot of them won’t make the decision to stand on the refrigerator.

Should human beings be in charge of what once were wolves? Should we put them in that position?

The alarm went off; that’s great. So we’re gonna have a discussion about this.

This is the question I think animal activists aren’t quite ready for: Should we continue to domesticate animals?

**LEE HALL: ANIMALS AS PETS  
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## **Part Two: Group Discussion**

Here's the BBC. They're exposing Crufts, because of the King Charles spaniels, bulldogs and so on. They're not into animal rights. But they're saying at least for some breeds: We think this is an abomination. Now animal activists haven't really gone there, so the BBC is leading the argument.

I know a lot of animal lawyers and speak with them on panels. What do they think of dogs and cats? Generally, that dogs and cats should be made beneficiaries of wills. They think these animals should not be called pets, that they should instead be called companion animals because it's more respectful; and they think these animals should have some sort of rights vis-à-vis their "guardians"; they don't say owners. So, what they're not doing is going to the root and asking: Should these animals be in these circumstances at all? Because they will always be needing a home, food. Shelter, roofs over their heads. They are not going to return to their biocommunity and live on their own terms. They're going to live on ours. The animal lawyers aren't looking at this question.

The BBC is looking at it only to an extent-- to certain breeds. What would be interesting? Breed-specific legislation, called, you know, BSL--

**Sarah Austin:** Yeah, what about not doing it in the first place, breeding.

**Lee Hall:** Yes, I agree with you. We shouldn't kill them, because they're individuals--

**Sarah:** Oh, no; it's just that we wouldn't breed any more.

**Lee:** But because they've come in one breed by one, selectively created. You know there are new breeds of cats just over the past several years. So if that's the way they came into existence, one by one, then this breed-specific legislation, which some people call speciesist or discriminatory, is it really?

This is a rough issue. But if we are going to stop the breeding of pets into existence, would that not mean starting with the animals who can't even give birth without caesarian sections, or go through massive headaches-- and headache seems too mild a term for what King Charles spaniels go through-- should we not say maybe what the BBC is implying is right? Why are they here?

**Sarah:** Haven't we got to get on the breeders, then? Their specific breeders? I mean, surely they're only doing it for money.

**Patricia:** Well, the problem comes from people who want to go out and get a dog, a puppy, a specific breed, rather than going out and rescuing.

**Sarah:** It might not be the individual's fault. People might not be aware of the situation because they're not a breeder themselves.

**Patricia:** But if people can read I should think they would be aware of what those people are doing.

**Sarah:** They might not be aware, but they're still creating a need.

**Patricia:** Isn't it obvious, though? I can't imagine anyone not realizing how obvious it is that if you pay five, six, seven hundred pounds for a pedigreed dog, somebody is actually making money from you. If you go out and buy something else that's 700 pounds, you know someone's actually making a profit... They do know it. "But we so desperately want a Yorkshire terrier" or--

**Catriona Gold:** It's just an excuse in this day and age. Everyone knows about abandoned dogs and cats needing homes.

**Participant:** I think it all comes back to animal-rights being about you have to educate people that, actually, it's all wrong, keeping pets. But that's such a hard thing to do; I mean, you know, we haven't turned that many people vegan yet so how are we ever going to stop them keeping pets? Because pets, they're the nice lives-- farm animals, yes, they get slaughtered, but pets are cosy.

**Lee:** Although breeding them into existence means millions are killed every year.

**Participant:** But even with the rescue centres, I mean, a friend of mine wanted a kitten for their child to grow up with. You can't get a kitten from the rescue centre to grow up with your child, it has to be a cat, and a cat who gets on with children, so they said, oh, we're going to go to the pet shop and buy one.

**Participant:** Surely not all the breeds are-- manufactured, if you like, to our specifications, are they? Big heads, small ears, little legs or whatever you want.

**Patricia:** These are the ones that have really very serious problems, serious health problems. But there are other breeds as well. There was something I heard recently about Rhodesian ridgebacks, that they can have a particular spine problem.

**Participant:** But Labradors--

**Patricia:** The thing about Labradors is that they're very short-lived dogs. You know, they're really old if they're ten.

[Crosstalk.]

**Participant:** A dog on a farm, they really have a hard life compared to a home life.

**Roy:** A cat would be meowing outside our house for days on end. Eventually we asked the neighbours if we should let the cat in, to provide a place to sleep, in order to possibly get away from their new dog, and they said just to ignore it, but the cat would meow all night. Eventually the cat's sister came in through the cat flap that was part of our house. In the end, the cats just stayed around forever. [Laughter] When we tried to take them next door, it was evident that they were frightened of the dog. I fed them because I felt really guilty eating in front of the cats. [Laughter] I really didn't want to have an animal, and I was in this predicament, as a vegan not wanting to buy meat. And I wondered what other people feel. Do you buy organic, or...

**Lee:** What you bring up is probably in my top five reasons for challenging the whole idea of animals as pets. Now, there's going to be a difference of opinion in this room as to whether we should be getting vegan cat food or not. But you're talking about animals who've been bred from carnivores. Even if you were to feed them vegan cat food, you'd be making them into little vegans who fit your lifestyle, like the lawyers who try to bring them into wills.

Is the root issue what you're feeding your cat? Or is the issue all these cats all over the world and all the people who are beholden to animal agribusiness -- not just for themselves but for their cats? And this is the case for vegans as well. I moved from a one-bedroom spot; I rent a house. Small, one-story, part is an office so it's functional; but the point is, I can live in one room. The cats weren't happy there. [Laughter] Nine cats and I was doing trap-neuter-return and as much fostering as possible.

So we're talking about taking up a bigger space on Earth. Yet what we're doing as vegans is reducing the space we take on Earth for a number of reasons. One, to leave habitat for free-living animals who could appreciate that space and survive.

**Sarah:** So do you feed them tinned food? I mean, that's a big issue.

**Lee:** I know it's an issue. And I'm not going to go into that debate. But it's not *the* issue. We'll talk about it privately. [Laughter] I know, every time this comes up people come to blows.

The issue is deeper than that. Even if you decide to give domesticated animals vegan food there are also people who aren't. And vegan food itself takes up space, to grow whatever it is we're giving to domesticated animals. There are 6.6 billion of us. We are outnumbered three-to-one, globally-- four-to-one in affluent

countries-- by farm animals alone. This doesn't include the animals bred as pets. Look at the footprint of 6.6 billion of us and multiply it, because we've got this entourage of domesticated animals.

So we take much more space than we need, much more food than we need, when there are people who are just trying to eat enough every day, and we're running into a global food shortage which will be exacerbated by global warming.

**Lisa (moderator):** A few things. We're the last speaker in the room today, so I think it's OK if we go over time. If everyone's aware, it's almost five, if they want to run up to something else. And also, another comment: We're talking about domestic animals, cats and dogs, taking up space in terms of, you have to grow food for them to eat. I'm interested to see what other people think about what are known as community dogs in developing nations. I was living in the Pacific for the past year, and in one house I lived in, we had a pack of five to ten dogs that would come around every few days to multiple houses in the area, and they'd eat the leftover food, they would go through the garbage. People never fed them, like they never went out and bought tinned food or cooked up anything particular for them. But they seemed to be quite happy, healthy, independent dogs who hung out with whoever they chose to associate with.

**Patricia:** But were they wandering around the streets on their own? Yes, well, I've seen dogs wandering around the streets in this country. It's not as common as it used to be. Where I was brought up, on a very working-class, big housing estate, people used to let the dogs run around, and it was not a pretty sight. I've seen them in Spain, where they just run around all over the roads and cause accidents. Well, OK, it's not the dogs causing accidents, it's the drivers, we know that. And certainly as individuals they can be very aggressive. Now, again, this is the humans' fault, because of the way they're treated; it's not the dogs' fault. It does make it rather difficult to live in this sort of situation.

**George:** In other words, these dogs you refer to, community dogs, they're trying to live as wolves, which Lee was saying they're not capable of. Living in a pack, going around scavenging, and probably if there's the odd rabbit about they might well hunt it. They're probably not very efficient as wolves because of being bred.

**Participant:** Exactly; they're not--

**George:** They have all these defects--

**Lee:** And this is the thing with the cats, so they're around bins.

**George:** I was going to mention the cats. You spoke of animals being free to live on their own terms. Well, to my mind, a cat living on its own terms is living out in the wild, in the environment, hunting smaller animals, killing them and eating them, needing a lot of space and not being very friendly towards other cats

except during the mating season, and if it's female, raising a pack, a litter of young every so often. You made a passing reference to feral cats; you said they only live two years. That's probably not doing too badly for an animal living in the wild. A cat living 20 years in captivity would be exceptional. Most animals living in the wild don't even reach adulthood. So any animal that can live for two years is probably surviving quite a bit longer than a lot of others that die just as kittens or as pups or whatever. And the fact that the cat can interbreed with the Scottish wildcat I think shows that by definition they are the same species, although not the same sub-species. And does it really matter if the Scottish wildcat becomes a mongrel breed rather than the pure genetic breed that it was historically?

There's a campaign against the hunting of the ruddy duck in this country, and not s'long ago I was at a stall which had a petition against this. The ruddy duck is a North American species that's become naturalized in this country. It's also spread to Spain where it's interbreeding with the native species of white-tailed duck.

**Patricia:** It's the other end. It's the white-billed duck.

**George:** White-billed duck. Anyway, I think it's the RSPB being accused of trying to cull the ruddy ducks to prevent them from interbreeding with the pure-bred European duck. Whereas many animal-rights or vegan people would say, well, does it really matter if the European duck becomes a hybridized duck? In fact biologically it's probably better to be a mixed breed rather than an in-bred, like all these highly inbred dogs that you were talking about, or the BBC was talking about.

**Patricia:** It is a huge dilemma, because the humans have caused the problem in the first place by bringing the ruddy ducks from North America. They wouldn't have got here under their own steam, or paddle power. And it's the same with a lot of species that have been introduced.

**Lee:** And if they had enough habitat, animals will have their natural biological diversity. The planet allows it.

**George:** No matter how much habitat you've got, these species will try to fill the habitat. So if you magically doubled the habitat available for a particular species, they will rapidly increase their number to fill it.

**Lee:** There's also the question of if the predators aren't here, you're going to get a different dynamic--

**George:** Overpopulation, which is what you get with red deer in the highlands.

**Catriona:** Well, not necessarily, because natural competition from individual animals will drive the population down if there isn't enough food for them.

**Lee:** In England, some of the predators are completely gone.

**George:** Nearly all the big predators are gone.

**Lee:** It's a lot to think about, and we haven't even started these debates in animal rights, because a lot of animal activists are very busy talking about changing the rules within industry, to get better husbandry for animals who are bred as food, and rights for pets...Even abolitionists have assumed the question as your child or the dog. Is that the basic question of animal rights?

There's a lot of talk about apes' rights-- you know, they're talking about making a law in Spain that nonhuman apes can't be vivisected, can't be used for entertainment. And Francione, who's an abolitionist, who wants to abolish the use of other animals by humans completely, will say, basically, while apes know each other and are complex and so forth yet I can see when I look a dog that they are self-aware; and that they have an idea of the future; dogs know if I'm coming to the door and they anticipate pleasure. Which is true. Dogs, animals raised for farms-- all have moral significance. But when we're talking about an animal who will always depend on us for their well-being, that's an animal-welfare question. And it has been mixed into the abolitionist theory, without careful distinctions between [a] the reality of moral significance and [b] the potential of legal rights. So it's not surprising that people throughout the full spectrum of animal advocacy think that dogs could have rights.

You might hear that a director of a sanctuary is truly serious because the person really wants true rights for farm animals. But what is a right for farm animals? A purpose-bred animal is brought into the world for a human purpose. The hen who goes onto the free range suffers osteoporosis. These hens are selectively bred to produce so many eggs that the calcium goes out of the body and into the eggshells. So what you gain in extra space for the free-range hen you lose when their bones tend to break. Are you ever going to get rights for such an animal, or does the idea of purpose-breeding preclude that?

George brings up an interesting point, whether there is a grey area with certain animals. I saw some feral roosters, or cocks, in Key West. You'd hear them crow in the morning. They seemed to be living on their own terms. We need to explore more too about the question of some forms of domestication that might actually occur naturally. But when we are talking about dogs and cats who've been purpose-bred, and when petkeeping as we know it with these various breeds began in the Victorian era, that seems a clear issue. That this is not on their terms.

Jeffrey Masson says cats might be close to that grey area, and yet, the wildcats will be gone, and they are not the same animals.

**George:** Their descendants will still live on. Their descendants will be a kind of mongrel, but they'll still live on.

**Lee:** Now you have the situation with apes. We talk about apes' rights; will there be apes in a few decades? You've got a situation now where Jane Goodall and USAID and the Disney corporation have gone into Africa saying in order to save the great apes, they're going to "habituate" them: bring the eco-tourists in, have them pay to follow apes around for a few weeks, and get very close to them.

I'm picking on Jane Goodall, but maybe that's good. Because this is someone who practically everyone thinks is an expert and an advocate. We need to know what people are thinking, and who they'll look to for expertise when they're talking about apes' rights.

Are we saying, first, that these apes have to pay their way to survive? That we have to convince these countries the apes are worth their weight in eco-tourist value to keep them alive?

And if so, what are we doing to them? By habituating them, which takes two years, and a lot of them reportedly don't make it-- I'd hate to hear what they go through.

Jane Goodall has also promoted, in the United States, the CHIMP Act: The chimpanzees are taken from biomedical research and put in what they call a sanctuary. But it's a holding area. And it may look pretty, a lot prettier than some sanctuaries, but the U.S. government holds the titles to the chimpanzees. And Jane Goodall's point is that at least the government is giving something back. But why are we saying that this kind of model is OK? What statement is being made?

Is this a domestication of nonhuman apes? And they're the ones closest to having rights, the ones most advocates-- in fact some countries, when they're talking about animal rights, are thinking about the apes. What apes' rights looks like will be the model.

But if you look in the Spanish proposal, you'll see there's an exception for zoos.

So you think, well, what is Goodall doing with USAID and Disney in Africa? Habituating apes so they can be looked at, gawked at, stared at? It sounds very much like the zoo. So my concern, going back to George, is that will we insist, for them to survive, that they become somewhat domesticated?

I'm open to arguments, especially now, what with writing a book that will address this. But shouldn't I resist that de-wilding, as an animal-rights advocate? Where does it lead, when our population continues to grow, and the green connectors are built over, animals such as moose or caribou live in small pockets--

**George:** Same with bears.

**Lee:** And we say the only way they're going to survive is under human stewardship, that that will keep them alive? And there's an element of domestication there, as that's probably how wolves became dogs in the first place.

You're thinking.

**Roy:** Yes; two things. Some people said that, in this day and age, we're all aware of what's going on. But I've just become vegan about two years ago.

**Lee:** Excellent.

**Roy:** When I try and tell my friends about it, they just don't want to know. So everything you're saying here is really important, and maybe the way to deal with it is to try and educate people as to what's going on. Then when everyone *is* aware of what's going on, if they choose not to follow, there's your answer, really. Then we're left with having to infiltrate these areas and try and free animals.

**Lee:** But we need a general change of paradigm. It's one thing to try and free animals, but then they are depending on rescue. I know you're frustrated with the prospect here, but there's a book called *Wild Law*, by Cormac Cullinan, an Irish writer who talks about Thomas Kuhn's concept of the paradigm shift.

In history, the *paradigmatic* paradigm shift was the Copernican shift. We had thought, for, you know, ever, that we were central in the universe and everything moved around us, and then Copernicus came along-- by the Church, there was resistance-- yet in a relatively small amount of time we revolved around the sun. Suddenly, we were no longer in the middle of everything.

So-- rather than say, "Well, OK, start with free-range eggs"-- telling the direct truth to enough people (and we don't know the tipping point, it could be a small amount of people who are working on a problem) we'd change the paradigm. It's not a continuum. It's a radical shift. The idea that we're not in the middle of the universe is exactly what we're talking about today. It could actually happen in a small amount of time. And it would.

Looking at global warming, scientists are saying we have a few decades to figure out what to do and do it. Animal-rights advocates have to be central in this talk, these decisions. So we can't be mucking with this free-range egg thing. We must be direct about how animal rights is part of environmentalism. If people would see the idea of respect, that we are not in the middle of everything, that we must respect the rest of the biocommunity and accept risk, that if the bears are around, they're around our homes, they may do something and we may live with it, and we'll go on...

**Roy:** Some people don't see other animals that way. They see them as there to be eaten.

**Lee:** Yeah, they do.

**Roy:** Animals eat animals; granted that in this day and age we don't need to eat animals, but how can you say that you shouldn't be eating a pig? You can prove that the earth goes around the sun. You can say a square is not a triangle. But to prove to many people that other animals have a purpose--

**Participant:** And it's the vast majority.

**Lee:** Well, there's a book called *Man the Hunted*. They're not animal-rights activists who wrote it, but the idea, and it's well-researched, is that we, for a long period of time, until very recent times, were the prey animals of lions, leopards; so we're not at the top of a food chain. There's scientific truth here, that's factual. We might think we're superior and that everybody else is naturally subject to domination, but we can bring up scientific arguments, biological arguments, and the time is now. We are looking at climate change, so maybe the time is now, and maybe our message will be heard.

But the ethical message has to be there. Because if humanity had taken Donald Watson's message [that the vegan ideal of non-exploitation would humanity to the first civilization that merits the name], we would not be in the situation we're in now. Much is due to animal agribusiness and the idea that everything is a resource for us, that we're central in the universe.

**Roy:** If we release them now and let them live the way they want to live or how they should live, or how they want to live-- I mean, we're taking over the earth; if there is no need for them then grazing land will more than probably be used for something else like growing soya and rapeseed for fuel maybe or even concreted over for more housing and there would be nowhere for animals to go therefore they would just die out.

**Sarah Austin:** If they're dependent, we'd look after them.

**Roy:** You know, there's a sort of thought that vegans and vegetarians, we're the worst thing that could happen to animals. Because they'd all die off. People would have no need for animals; if we all turned vegan--

**Sarah:** We wouldn't breed them.

**Participant:** We need less intensive growing because we need more space--

[Crosstalk.]

**Lee:** Wow. OK, wait. First, we've got to ask about population. Donald Watson asked that question at the beginning, in the first newsletter, 1944, November the first.

**George:** Yeah.

**Lee:** It said we're already at a crisis point; it's got to stop populating. So that's a vegan issue. We're well beyond the numbers Donald Watson had. The London Zoo a few years ago had an exhibit with some humans. And you've gotta give credit to the director of the London Zoo, who put a placard in front of the display of humans using the term plague species. And people all over the world were up in arms over that; but they saw it, and from a respected zoological person. Now I don't like the idea of zoos, and I don't think Watson would like the idea, being for complete non-exploitation. But here's a zoo director who caught on to our effect on the biosphere of which we are a part.

We've got to bring population in. And not in the sense of *who* should stop, because that's what stopped it. For a lot of people, it is about a prejudice. It's got to be about the global human population, nobody selected for involuntary sterilization. Otherwise, it becomes a human rights issue. So it's got to be resolved in the human community as a whole.

You also mentioned whether vegans would be causing problems for animals' existence, whereas people who eat them keep them around. But the opposite is true, when we're using a third of arable land for domesticated animals we eat. That land is finite space on Earth. That land is being taken away from the *free-living* animals. We're going through the sixth great extinction crisis, and this one is connected with human causes. So it's at a much higher rate than during geological times. Edward O. Wilson, the Harvard biologist, has said that by the year 2100, we'll lose half the number of species of plants and animals we now have. But with global warming also in effect, more than half will be gone.

And what is the greatest threat to free-living communities, and to the environment? Gidon Eshel and Pamela Martin, at the University of Chicago, showed that each person in North America releases the equivalent of four tons of carbon dioxide every year. But they said if you're vegan, it's 1.5 tons less.

To be easy on the climate, the most important thing we can do is to embrace a vegan diet.

**Roy:** I shouldn't have said vegans would be responsible, but if we convince everyone that we don't need to eat animals, so don't use them, won't we get into a situation where people say we don't have any need for animals?

**Sarah:** This is probably a completely different issue but I think it's a big one: We have the whole of history on our shoulders, with our social values and our big

consumption that's growing and growing, and meat-eating and things like that, the whole of our growth, values that permeate the whole of our society, everything on our shoulders from our history.

**Lee:** Yes, we've built our civilization on this idea of hierarchy. It's a huge issue.

Abolitionist animal-rights activists, and specifically Gary Francione, say animals should have one right and that's the right not to be a commodity. And this is not, in any way, meant to diminish the important work that's gone into abolitionism so far-- I agree animals should have the right not to be property; otherwise, no right's really going to matter-- but I'd like to go one further and you just touched it. Animals should have a positive right. It's not just the right to be non-property, to be not-something; we need to start talking about what animals should have the right to *be*. They could be non-property and be gone, and at the rate we're going-- and you could say that every extinct animal community is not property.

More than just the right of not being commodities, there has got to be something said about domination. Yes, we have a lot of history. We dominated them and then they became commodities. So what can we do about this hierarchical mind we have? How are we going to talk with other people?

I think Donald Watson got there, talking about non-exploitation, and saying that veganism was about conscientious objection, and seeing our treatment of other animals as a war on them. That there was no border between warring on our own human community and warring on theirs and keeping them as captives. And that war needs to stop, not just between humans-- although it does, and that's really important, and a lot of people don't advocate that-- and that it has to end, all of it. We are peace activists as vegans.

And Watson could see that. Watson was a mountain climber, an organic vegan grower. Watson appreciated the outdoors and spent a lot of time there, appreciating free-living animals.

Watson revived a blackbird who hit a newly built glass wall, providing food and shelter, and the eye that appeared to be hanging from the socket by an inch-long stem when Watson found the bird-- they [Donald and Dorothy] said we've never killed. And amazingly enough, because nature is amazing, it wasn't long-- George will remember how many days it was-- the eye went back into the head, the little bird took off, and would dip every time Dorothy was out with the laundry.

Donald said this to George in an interview, during the sound check, and wanted this to be observed as part of the history of animals' natural lives. Here was this animal who was healed, and appeared to signal gratitude. Watson wanted to say something about who other animals are.

What Donald and Dorothy did had nothing to do with domination; it was like pulling a child out of the way of traffic. It was control, but just enough to ensure the child lived and flourished. It was the power of love.[3]

[Applause.]

That's very nice of everybody for staying. This will be posted on *Abolitionist Online*, the website. Claudette Vaughan, the editor, has asked for the transcript. You've made it special, and a really nice time for me, and, I'm sure, for a lot of people who will read the website.

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**Footnotes:**

[1] For related reading see the chapter by Richard Dawkins called "Gaps in the Mind" in *The Great Ape Project*, (Cavalieri & Singer, eds.; St. Martin's Griffin, 1993).

[2] In *Introduction to Animal Rights: Your Child or the Dog* (Temple University Press, 2000), Francione states, "Most of us share the view that in situations of true conflict between human and animal interests, or in some emergency that requires us to make a choice between a human and an animal -- that is, when it is *necessary* to do so -- we ought to prefer the interests of a human over the interests of an animal." Regarding such situations, Francione says (on page 159):

If we prefer the human over the animal in all such situations, are we not guilty of being speciesist in that our choice represents a morally unjustifiable prejudice against animals? No, no more than the physician who would always choose to give the one available pint of blood to the healthy human over the terminally ill one is guilty of prejudice against the terminally ill.

[3] For a remarkable discussion related to this, which inspired me to understand Donald's and Dorothy's act in such a light, see Yi-Fu Tuan's *Dominance and Affection: The Making of Pets* (Yale University Press; 1985) -- as a whole, and particularly at page 176.