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Ethical reasons to legislate for stronger protection of animals from pain, suffering and oppression

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Abstract

In spite of dedicated institutions and campaigns for their protection, animals suffer in vast numbers around the world. This study explores the potential for animals to be candidates for stronger legal protection and the barriers to actual protection becoming widespread. It engages with arguments for excluding animals from ethical consideration claimed for human beings since support for 'equal consideration' of animals is found in the history of philosophy. Drawing on rights discourse, virtue ethics, and the critique of some humanistic positions, including "speciesism", the study concludes that the case for ethical concern is strong enough to support far greater protection against the oppression of animals. It argues that human denial and tyranny is at the root of animal suffering; changing mindsets is therefore essential for a permanent improvement in the consideration of animals. However, such change must be backed by legislation *and* powerful regulatory organisations, as has been the case for subsets of humankind.