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In Oppoirion ro rhe Preforming Animal Ban

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dear sirs and madams

The Animal World

Not too long ago, most Americans lived and worked with animals and understood them. The people who made decisions about them knew what they were really like and really needed. Abuse was a concern, but it was not the prism through which we understood animals, it was just one element.

That is no longer true, and the animal world, once a place of partnership, connection, love, work and sustenance has changed. It is filled with conflict, anger, corrupted by money, politics and dominated by people who do not live with animals, do not seem to love them, and more and more, seem to know nothing about them.

Abuse is now the primary determinant of how animals shall live, or even if they shall live at all. Even though little known about how much abuse actually occurs, and how it should be defined, it is almost all we think of when it comes to animals. There are few laws or regulations to make animals safer and remain in our lives, almost none to protect their dwindling world.

There are countless laws to prevent their abuse and target their abusers.

The national hysteria over abuse now dominates our national and local policy about animals. It distorts their lives. It threatens the very existence of the carriage horses, the elephants, the ponies, the sled dogs and working animals.

There is an elderly women who lives in my county, she is eccentric – or perhaps quite sane – she cannot say no to feral cats. About a dozen lived in and around the small split-level house – some would not come inside – that she now lives in alone. Her husband died a decade ago. The cats are her life, her reason for being.

Two months ago, informers contacted an animal rescue group who appeared with the police and an animal control van. The old woman was cited for cruelty and neglect – she did not have enough fresh water or feed or the money for vaccines – and the cats

were seized. All but two were euthanized. She faces an appearance in court and fines and legal fees, and is devastated by the loss of her cats.

Her neighbors have supported her with money and a retired lawyer is handling her case for free. They say she is a sweet and loving person, they do not understand why she could not have been helped to keep her cats in the proper way, rather than be traumatized and arrested and see her cats killed. I do not know her and have not met her, I believe that her story – like Joshua Rockwood's story in Glenville, N.Y. – speaks to us about what has gone wrong in our understanding of animals in our lives.

And about how the good guys in the animal world are now the bad guys, this world has been turned upside down.

There is an old and mentally ill man living in a garbage dump near Vermont, his emaciated horses – he loves them but could not care for them – were seized, and the horse rescue group that impounded them is seeking to seize his Social Security and retirement funds – tens of thousands of dollars – in payment for boarding them. The horses needed to be taken away, but the old man needed to be cared for as well. No one is rushing to re-home him or feed and care for him. I am hoping to meet him soon and learn more about his story.

What happened to the good guys of the animal world? Most of us grew up in a world where organizations like the U.S. Humane Society and the A.S.P.C.A. were the trusted spokespeople for the welfare of animals, they were known for advocating humane treatment of animals and for helping people who sought to live with animals and keep them.

I think of the special fountain the A.S.P.C.A. built in Central Park for the carriage horses, such a warm and useful gesture that helps the horses every day. This would be unheard of today, the A.S.P.C.A. is helping to put the horses at great risk and to put the hundreds of people whose livelihood they are out of work.

The modern A.S.P.C.A., along with the H.S.U.S. has lost its own purpose and identity, it has become a lobbying arm of P.E.T.A., the strident and wealthy national animal rights group. It is campaigning to ban the carriage horses from New York.

The H.S.U.S. and A.S.P.C.A. and their associates in the animal rights movement are not protecting the rights of animals, they are driving them away from people and purpose and killing off many more animals than all of the animal abusers combined. They are a far greater danger to domesticated animals than old men and women in trailers and dumps.

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So how are we to tell the good guys from the bad guys if we love animals and wish them to remain in our world? Some tips on what to look for when you are seeking to find a good guy in the animal world:

1. The good guys are always – always – seeking to keep animals in our world, not to remove them to farms or slaughterhouses where they will never again work with people or be seen by them.
2. The good guys love to be around animals. To touch them, talk to them, learn about them, give them snacks and treats, take photos of them, ask questions about them, smile around them, see and touch them. If you are near New York City, go to Central Park and watch the drivers and the streams of people touch the horses, pat their noses and shoulders, give them carrots and bits of apple, ask their names and speak to them. They are animal lovers. Across the street, you may see people carrying signs demanding that the horses be banned from the city. You will never see one touch a horse, offer a carrot or an apple, talk to them or smile at the sight of them.
3. The good guys love people. It is not possible to hate people and love animals. Domesticated animals have always loved people and worked with them, and there have always been people in the world – carriage horse drivers, pony ride operators, farmers, elephant handlers and trainers – who choose to live and work with animals. A life with animals is a special and cherished way of life. The bad guys use animals to intimidate and frighten people, to harass them and inform on them. The good guys always use animals to connect themselves and others to people.
4. The good guys seek meaningful work for animals in our world. If one looks at the history of domesticated animals in our country, the story is really quite clear. Animals who work with people survive among us, they are, in general, considered valuable and important. They are better cared for than any animal in the wild, who faces a horrific list of dangers and threats, from climate change to poachers to development and disease.

Animals who do not have work with people – the wild ponies of the plains, the elephants in Asia and Africa, the ponies who give rides to children, the big draft horses who pull carriages – perish, they become extinct. Work is not abuse for working animals, it is their connection to humanity, and their literal survival in a world that has displaced and forgotten them.

5. The good guys know that the best way to save animals and keep them from neglect is to educate and help the people who own them. I know a farmer whose barn collapsed in a snowstorm and his cows had poor shelter. An animal rescue group came to his farm with 15 volunteers and fixed his roof so he could keep his animals and they would be protected. He was terrified to call them, he was sure he would be arrested, but a friend intervened and convinced him they were the good guys.

This group works to reach out to farmers and people with animals so that they can help people keep animals in their lives and care for them well. The good guys know that so much of what we call neglect and abuse is really poverty, inexperience or unavoidable circumstance. Good guys prefer to help people and animals, rather than jail and prosecute them, even kill their animals.

6. The good guys seek to connect people in need of animals with animals in need of them, not to throw up insurmountable obstacles to adoption and companionship. There are many elderly people living in loneliness and anxiety who would love to have one of the 12 million dogs vegetating and languishing in no-kill animal shelters. They too often can no longer qualify to adopt an animal: they are not able to walk them for miles, cannot afford tall fences, cannot engage in aggressive training. There are hard-working people who are denied dogs because they have full-time jobs, or live in apartments. Poor people are often denied dogs because they may not be able to afford vet bills. Farmers are afraid to leave their cows out to forage in the snow for fear someone will call the police. Good guys do not create obstacles for adoption of homeless or otherwise needy dogs, they remove them.

7. The good guys do not employ secret informers to spy on animal lovers and farmers and anonymously report them. I have a good friend of mine who is an animal control officer, and she does not invade or pry into anyone's life unless there is a good reason to do so. "If they don't have a license," she says, "I don't seize the dog, I give them three weeks to get a license and ask if they can afford it. If not, I ask someone in town to help them out, someone always does. Dogs can be very happy in the homes of poor people and farmers and the elderly, they are a lot better than in crates in a pound or a shelter."

This animal control officer does not criminalize or demonize farmers or the real lives of human beings. She seeks a balance, caring for animals, caring for the people who live with them.

8. Good guys work to understand farmers and the natural world. They know it is not cruel for example, for working horses to work; they know it is cruel when they don't. They know cows can eat snow or stomp through frozen ice if they are thirsty and have to wait a few hours for water in the winter. They know farm animals are hardy, and do not need heated barns or shelters. They know the animals living with people are the lucky ones.

9. Good guys understand the real lives of animals. They know the carriage horses have no place to go if they are banned from their work, and they know there is no more unhealthy or meaningless life for a work horse than to spend the rest of their lives with nothing to do, no humans to connect with, nothing to look at, for the rest of their lives. They know there is no place for the Asian elephants being abandoned by the circuses to go once they lose their work, they know they are being condemned to die by the people who think they are saving them.

10. The good guys are not elitist. They love "stupid" animal tricks because they result from the most intimate connections and relationships with human beings, and because they have delighted, entertained and inspired human beings for many thousands of years. They know it is not cruel for animals to entertain people, it is one of their most sacred and cherished functions, from the elephants in the circuses to therapy dogs in children's hospitals. Is it really true that the only place for the domesticated animals of

the world to be are impoverished and understaffed rescue farms where they will never again be seen?

The people who claim to speak for the rights of animals are creating a joyless world where it was once loving, a barren existence where it was once full and meaningful, and angry and loveless world which was once joyous and full of meaning. The good guys still hear the magic.

If it is cruel to separate elephant mothers from their children, then keep them together. If it is, in fact, cruel to use bullhooks, then ban them. If people have abused elephants, then punish them, as the laws in every state provide for. There is no reason to condemn the elephants or the horses or the ponies away from people, to exile or death, to send them out of the world.

11. The good guys understand what abuse really is. That it is not an opinion on Facebook but a crime, it happens every day. It is evident in some of the giant industrial factory farms where millions of animals live lives of sunless confinement in confined spaces where they can barely turn around. The New York Carriage Horses are not abused, many horses are starved and neglected. The good guys would like to help them, rather to spend millions of dollars on political and lobbying campaigns.

12. And finally, this. The good guys are nice, they are fun to be around. If you pay attention, you will see that people who love animals are most generally loving people. They smile, socialize, have fun, believe in magic and mystery. I have never seen a contented animal with a hateful person, I do not believe it is possible. If you want to learn more about the good guys, check out [Blue Star Equiculture](#), the draft horse sanctuary and organic farming center in Palmer, Mass.

They practice the Third Way, the new way to fight for the rights and welfare of animals, to cherish animals and people and help them remain together. They are the good guys, you can see what they look like, what they believe in, what they do. They rescue animals and care for them they do not ever harm people.

The Native-Americans speak for the horses, and they warn us that the message of the horses is clear, they are making their last stand to tell us that we are at a crossroads, we will either learn to live in harmony or the world as we know it will end.

Ned Kronberg Circus Fans of America Animate Welfare Committee