

LIBERATING ANIMALS IS A DEADLY IDEA

By Walter E. Williams

First, let's get down to the number. In the United States alone, there are: 100 million cows, 10 million sheep, 53 million pigs, 5.5 billion chickens, and excluding those in Congress, 259 million turkeys. For the most part, while not treated as humans, these cute animals are well-fed and well-cared for, and their owners make great efforts to insure that they're fruitful and multiply.

Lets imagine fruition of the animal activities dream, in which Congress enacts an emancipation proclamation, granting Bill of Rights Guarantees to our feathery, leathery and furry friends. What do you think will happen to their care and population size? I can just see a cow, with an emaciated face and forlorn look in her eyes, asking her exmaster, "How come you don't feed and care for me anymore? You used to protect me and my children from kidnaping(rustling), but now you don't give a hoot." "Right on! Right on!" say the sheep, chickens, turkeys and pigs.

It doesn't take much imagination to guess the ex-master's reply. He says, "When you were my property, I was rewarded for making sure you were well fed and protected; now that you're free, there's nothing in it for me, so tough it out as best you can."

"There you go again, Williams," you say, "Promoting that selfish, 'what's in it for me?' attitude." I plead guilty to the charge, but I ask: When was the last time you went out of your way to feed or nurse a sick cow or pig?

Let's forget about cows and pigs: think about elephants. There is an increasingly vocal call for a worldwide ban on ivory sales in the name of saving the African elephant from extinction. Will this improve the elephant's chances of survival? Not according to two researchers for the Institute of Political Economy at Utah State University, Randy T. Simmons and Urs P Kreutner in their article, "Herd Mentality(Policy Review, Fall 1989). In Kenya, where ivory sales are banned, the elephant population has fallen

from 65,000 to 19,000 over the past decade. In Kenya, elephants are not viewed as valuable economic resources, except as to boost tourism. Poachers succeed in illegally killing them because few people have any economic incentive to protect them

On the other hand, in Zimbabwe, where ivory sales are legal, the elephant population has grown from 30,000 to 43,000 over the last decade. In Zimbabwe, elephants have an economic value - about \$5 million to 24 tribal villages. As a result, villagers protect elephants from poachers, cull the herds to prevent starvation, which comes from overpopulation, and jealously guard their investment in future ivory production.

Other examples of these patterns prevail throughout Africa. The bottom line is simple. When foreigner; buy ivory products, they increase the economic value of elephant herds, which, in turn, give African villagers greater incentive to care for and protect them.

There's nothing novel or puzzling about the relationship between ownership, economic value and care. imagine that the animal rights lunatics got a law passed banning the sale of beef in name of saving cows: you can bet the rent money that our cattle population would fall dramatically.

People who are serious about the long term survival of elephants, rhinos, minks and other cuties should call for private ownership, buy plenty of the products made from these animals and smuggle if necessary. The New York City fringe of the animal rights movement, who intimidate and throw red paint on women wearing minks, will increase their own survival chances if they avoid doing the same to my wife when she sports her mink coat.

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