

Hi! My name is Bri, and you're listening to More than Meat. More than Meat is a podcast series that explores the ins and outs of animal welfare legislation. In the next few episodes, we will be looking at different laws related to animal welfare and animal agriculture. This series seeks to interrogate the meat industry through a legislative framework. We will take a closer look at different components of the livestock industry and related laws to determine implications for human health, environmental sustainability, labor conditions, and animal welfare. Naturally, many of the laws and topics we will focus on are directly related to animal welfare; however, we plan on identifying and elaborating on how these laws are connected to health, the environment, and labor. We have conducted interviews with public policy experts, students, animal rights activists, and grassroots organizers to understand the full picture on how animal rights legislation is perceived. We also distributed a survey to gather information about what motivates people to vote on animal welfare legislation. Ultimately, More than Meat seeks to interrogate the current livestock industry and determine whether the current system is working in terms of human health, environmental sustainability, labor conditions, and animal welfare. We'll also examine the barriers to effective animal welfare legislation. Through More than Meat, we hope to educate our listeners about challenges in formulating effective animal welfare legislation that protects animals raised for consumption, human health, livestock industry workers, and the environment.

We will kick off this podcast series by exploring how animal agriculture legislation is framed, and which arguing points are emphasized and overlooked by animal advocacy groups. In the next 10 minutes, we will be looking at two major animal advocacy groups: American Society for the Protection of Animals (ASPCA) and The Humane Society. We will identify these groups'

prerogatives and hope to shine light on what issues are being highlighted and ignored when it comes to animal welfare and related laws.

First, let's take a closer look at the ASPCA. For those of you who may be vaguely familiar with the ASPCA, the organization does more than just release sad commercials about pound animals with Sarah McLaughlin playing the background. According to their website, ASPCA's mission is "to provide effective means for the prevention of cruelty to animals throughout the United States." They do this through public policy and legal advocacy, among other more "on the ground" type actions. Farm Animal Welfare is one of their main key issues they work to address. On their website, ASPCA claims that current industrial farm conditions are "bad for animals, bad for us." Under this heading, this organization addresses human health, environment, and family farmers as threatened by the existing system.

The ASPCA includes human health in the conversation of animal welfare by arguing that improperly maintained farms are a breeding ground for Salmonella, E. Coli, and other dangerous diseases. They assert that the cramped conditions of industrial farms leads to the misuse of antibiotics that presents dangers related to antibiotic resistance and superbugs. ASPCA also draws the connection between environment and animal welfare by stating waste for large-scale confinement operations pollute surrounding air, water, and soil, and facilities consume ample water resources while emitting greenhouse gases. Finally, ASPCA offers family farmers as another externality of the current industrial animal agriculture system. The organization warns about corporate consolidation in the meat industry, and argues that contract-growing systems in integrated poultry production strips farmers of their autonomy to make decisions about how their animals are raised (ASPCA, "Farm Animal Welfare").

While ASPCA addresses the environment and family farmers on their “Farm Animal Welfare” page, they make more mentions about animal welfare and food safety in other posts related to animal welfare legislation. The article, “Are Farm Animals Not Considered Animals?” by ASPCA president and CEO Matt Bershadker reflects on the anniversary of the Animal Welfare Act, a law that requires minimum standards for treatment of some animals. Notably, farm animals raised for consumption are not included in the act. In his reflection on the Animal Welfare Act, Bershadker brings up animal welfare and food safety as two driving points as to why farm animals deserve more protections. He discusses the role of “ag gag” laws, laws that make recording and taking pictures inside of slaughterhouses and animal production facilities illegal, and how they have implications for both human health and animal welfare. He offers an anecdote about an undercover video showing sick chickens being dumped into a pit of carcasses, where they die of hunger, thirst, or exposure (Bershadker 2014). Bershadker makes no mention of the environment or farm labor in his assessment of the Animal Welfare Act.

Another component of the ASPCA’s agenda is their opposition to “Right to Farm” Legislation, which limit the ability of states to regulate conditions on farms. Animal welfare is included in those conditions states are not allowed to regulate. In their statement of opposition to “Right to Farm” legislation, the ASPCA states “Right to Farm laws seek to preserve the status quo by greatly limiting the ability of states to regulate conditions on farms, including the cruel confinement of farm animals and other environmental and public health threats.” Interestingly, ASPCA frames the “Right to Farm” issue as a danger to animal welfare, the environment, and human health. Problematically, it doesn’t address consequences for industry workers. Nothing

on the ASPCA's website addresses how "Right to Farm" legislation affects livestock industry workers.

Now let's take a closer look at the Humane Society. According to their website, The Humane Society of the United States is the largest and most effective animal protection organization. In their mission statement, the Humane Society claims they attack the root causes of the animal welfare related problems by passing local, state, and federal laws to protect animals, make sure existing laws are being enforced, and shape public opinion on animal cruelty through awareness campaigns and investigations (HSUS, "About Us: Overview"). Since 1954, the HSUS has contributed to passing state laws banning extreme confinement and other factory farming practices. They defend citizens against "ag gag" efforts that criminalizes anyone who exposes animal cruelty on factory farm via video or photography. In 2008, California passed a Proposition 2, a measure supported by the Humane Society that requires the state's egg producers to end cruel confinement measures (HSUS, "HSUS Accomplishments for Pets, Wild Animals, Farm Animals and Animals in Research"). Most recently, The Humane Society supported a campaign for the ballot initiative Prevent Cruelty California, which requires cage free housing in California for breeding pigs, egg laying hens, and veal calves. We're going to explore how the Humane Society has framed these different legislative actions.

Let's start with the opposition of 'ag gag' laws. This one hit all of the goodies. On their webpage about Ag-Gag laws, The Humane Society straight up addresses animal abuse, environmental offenses, unsafe working conditions, and food safety violations all in one. Ag-gag laws threaten whistleblowing and undercover investigations that bring about industry reform. They punish those who bring light to animal cruelty, safety violations, and worker rights (HSUS, "Ag-Gag

Laws”). Since ag-gag laws work directly against the reformation of the meat industry, the Humane Society understandably frames this legislation as a threat to the environment, animals, human health, and livestock industry workers.

Moving on, Proposition 2 was supported by the Humane Society and passed in 2008. The measure went into full effect on January 1, 2015, and prohibited the confinement of farm animals in a manner that does not allow them to turn around freely, lie down, stand up, or fully extend their limbs (Ballotpedia). In the few articles I could find from 2008, this initiative was framed mostly as an animal welfare issue, with some implications for the environment and public health.

Finally, let’s get to Prevent Cruelty California. In our series, we will be referencing this ballot initiative quite a bit, so if you’ve been zoning out, we recommend you start paying attention now. On the campaign website, the overview reads “Californians have shown time and time again that they want commonsense protections for animals, the environment, and food safety. Now they’re expressing support for Prevent Cruelty California, a modest measure to protect the most abused animals in the pork, veal, and egg industries” (Prevent Cruelty California). The Prevent Cruelty California website claims that this new ballot initiative would reduce suffering by improving the amount of space for pigs, veal, and hens. The ballot initiative is also illustrated as an opportunity to help the environment, arguing that animals confined in tight cages produce concentrated waste contaminated with antibiotic residue and other chemicals that pollutes the soil, air, and water. Finally, the initiative is offered as an improvement for food safety, since confined farm animals are more vulnerable to the spread of disease and bacteria like Salmonella.

In the survey we conducted, participants felt relatively strongly about animal welfare legislation. 60% stated that human health would influence their reason for voting on animal agriculture legislation, 62.4% said that farmer or labor rights would influence them, 75.3% said animal welfare, and 83.5% said environmental welfare. Here are some of their responses related to why they would or would not vote on animal welfare legislation.

“Having greater control over the production and consumption of the meat industry would positively contribute to human health, environmental health, and social causes.”

“I would vote to protect animals' rights. Voting to make conditions better/safer/more humane for animals also has the potential to make working conditions better for humans (example:slaughterhouse workers), as well as protect the environment.”

“It makes the most sense for the environment and public health”

Animal advocacy groups are doing an effective job of illustrating the public health and environmental concerns related to animal welfare and related legislation. However, a key challenge with the framing of animal welfare laws is the tendency to overlook the rights and wages of slaughterhouse workers. Meat industry working conditions are often excluded from the conversation about animal welfare and related legislation. In the survey we conducted, 62.4% of respondents indicated that labor rights would influence their general reasons behind voting, leaving 37.6% uninfluenced or unaware about the relationship between animal agriculture and meat industry labor conditions. In the interviews I conducted with Berkeley students, none of my

informants could identify how animal welfare and labor conditions for meat industry workers were related. This is incredibly problematic, as meat industry workers play an integral role in the meat production system and their welfare deserves to be acknowledged along with animal welfare. By failing to acknowledge meat industry labor conditions when addressing animal welfare, advocacy groups lobbying for stronger animal welfare regulations are overlooking a key part of the picture.

Immigrant workers make up a majority of the labor force in the United States meat industry. These workers are subjected to human rights and labor violations despite playing an important role in the proper functioning of the United States meat industry. Immigration status makes workers particularly vulnerable to abuses including denial of compensation to injured workers and failure to prevent workplace injury and illness. Workers fear reporting abuses out of fear of having their legal status discovered and then being deported. The meat and poultry industry benefits from immigrant labor at the expense of their health and safety. Animal advocacy groups fail to directly attack issues related to farm worker safety, instead focusing their efforts on animal welfare, environmental health, food safety, and even family farmers. The current system is failing to address problems in the livestock industry related to those most vulnerability. In order to effectively address all dimensions of problems related to animal welfare, animal advocacy groups need to consider the labor rights of livestock workers.

In our survey, we gave our respondents the opportunity to elaborate on why they would or would not vote on animal rights legislation. Many responses were related to human rights. Here are a few examples.

“[Referring to animal welfare legislation] Honestly pretty low on values personally. Would rather put more energy into human rights first”

“Animal rights are not a priority for me. As I view other problems in the food system to be much more pressing. If it was animal rights in conjunction with something else, I’d be more inclined to vote.”

“I am frustrated that we are currently prioritizing animal rights over human rights, human labor conditions, etc.”

“I believe we need to take better care of our animals for the health of people (slaughterhouse workers, consumers, etc.) and the environment.”

In failing to address labor rights as an important component of the livestock industry, animal advocacy groups are alienating voters who feel that human rights should be addressed before the rights of animals. Animal advocacy groups need to be especially conscious of this and make an effort to incorporate the perspectives of livestock industry workers when framing animal welfare legislation. By highlighting the perspectives and challenges of those working in the livestock industry, animal advocacy groups would be able to appeal to more voters and make more meaningful change in the existing system.

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