

THE TRUE GREEN ALLIANCE

Position Statement

Prepared November 2014

Subject: The Animal Rights Doctrine

The True Green Alliance (TGA) considers the application of honest science to be the only vehicle that can provide mankind with an understanding of the natural world; and that can provide the information necessary for mankind to develop rational and effective methods to manage our living resources (both domesticated and wild). TGA recognises the intrinsic value of all our living resources and their importance to humanity, and we believe these resources, and our people, should be looked upon as an integrated and ecological-cultural-economic complex.

We, therefore, believe that wild animals should be considered by society to be WILD “products of the land” just as we have come to accept that cattle, sheep and goats are TAME (or domesticated) “products of the land”; and TGA believes that both should be managed, and used, wisely and sustainably for the benefit of mankind.

We believe that organised agriculture is the best vehicle to control the management of domesticated animals and cultivated plants (The TAME “products of the land”); and TGA defers to the appropriate organs of agriculture in these respects. TGA believes, nevertheless, that it has a watchdog role to play (even in agriculture) with respect to the need for society as a whole to adhere to our overall natural resource management priorities - which are: **First** - for the good care and sustainable ‘wise use’ of the soil; **Second** - for the good care and sustainable ‘wise use’ of plants; and **Third** - for the good care and sustainable ‘wise use’ of all our animals - in that hierarchical order of priority.

TGA supports the scientifically determined control of wild animal population numbers (by way of organised population reduction, culling and/or harvesting practices); and it supports and promotes regulated hunting, trapping and fishing (both recreational and commercial) provided those practices are sustainable.

TGA believes that people have the right to pursue either consumptive or non-consumptive uses of their privately-owned wildlife (wild plants and animals) - as they see fit - provided such use is sustainable.

TGA is concerned that foundational elements of the animal rights philosophy contradict the principles of successful wildlife management practices, globally; and that they

promote false choices within society regarding desirable current and potential human-wildlife relationships. They also create false expectations for wildlife population management, and they erode society's confidence in decades of knowledge gained from extensive scientific exploration of wildlife management practices, and the management of wild habitats.

Although a range of individual philosophies exists within the realm of "animal rights", most adherents hold similar foundational beliefs: (1) that each individual animal should be afforded the same basic rights as humans; (2) that every animal should live free from human-induced pain and suffering; (3) that animals should not be exploited for any human purpose; and (4) that every individual animal has equal status regardless of commonality or rarity, or whether or not the species is native, exotic, invasive or feral. TGA notes that animal "rights" organisations, themselves, declare that it is their purpose to ABOLISH all animal 'uses' (both domesticated and wild) by man.

By comparison, animal "welfare" organisations do not object to man 'using' animals to obtain 'benefits' for mankind provided: (1) when the animal is alive (such as when a horse is used to pull a cart, or an ox to plough a field) no cruelty is involved in the process; and (2) when an animal is killed (such as when an ox is slaughtered to obtain meat for human consumption) such killing is conducted in a humane fashion. Animal "welfare" organisations, therefore, do not preclude the 'use' of animals for food, or for other cultural reasons, nor do they object to the "management" of wild animal populations, provided these 'uses' can be justified and achieved humanely.

In contrast, the animal "rightist" point of view is that it is wrong to take a sentient animal's life or cause it to suffer (for virtually any reason) - even when the taking of an animal's life is in the interests of the animal species concerned; is in the interests of the other species of animals which share its environment; is in the interests of the better management of the natural ecosystem as a whole; or to promote human welfare and safety.

The animal rights philosophy dictates that ALL animals be afforded the same moral considerations, and legal protection, as those that humans enjoy. However, its adherents have not reached consensus with regard to which species are sentient *enough* to qualify for these protections.

The animal rightists' focused emphasis on individual animals fails to recognise the inter-relatedness of wildlife communities within functioning ecosystems; and they hold that protecting individual animals is more important than maintaining the health and vigour, and sustainability, of wildlife populations, species or ecosystems. For example, whereas practicing wildlife managers will automatically afford greater protection to an individual animal from an "unsafe" (or so-called 'endangered') wild animal population, than they

would extend to one from a “safe”, “excessive” or “very common” species population, for animal rights advocates both these animal individuals are considered to be equally valuable and deserving of equal protection.

The animal rightists’ viewpoint is that mankind should subsist on a vegetable diet alone. They are silent, however, about the massive land use alterations that would be necessary to feed the world’s human population purely on plant foods - if man is denied the consumptive use of animals. They are equally silent about the dramatic and continued loss of wildlife that would ensue if the world’s wildlife habitats are converted to intensive agriculture.

The animal rightists’ viewpoint also does not tolerate the use of animals in scientific and medical research, whether designed to benefit humans or animals. And they are not at all perturbed by the fact that the curtailment of these ‘research uses’ will inhibit wildlife science and wildlife management programmes, and a vast range of other human endeavours and progress.

The conflict between many tenets of the animal rights philosophy, and the science of wildlife management, is profound. Established principles and practices of wild animal population management, both lethal practices (such as culling, regulated hunting and trapping) and non-lethal techniques (such as conditioning or capture-and-marking for research purposes) are rejected out of hand by the animal rightists.

In the USA, the “Public Trust Doctrine” (PTD) is the foundation for many laws protecting wildlife. In other countries, similar protocols apply. The PTD is based upon the premise that wild animals are a public resource that should be held in trust by government, for the benefit of all its citizens. In South Africa direct private ownership of wild animals is legal provided the animals are contained within adequately fenced enclosures. In other countries, different laws pertain.

Animal rightists philosophically oppose the concept of wildlife being the “property” of anyone - whether it be held as a public trust resource, or is privately owned. Instead, they advocate affording legal rights to all animals. Taken literally - if the animal rights demands were to prevail - there would be no legal framework for the maintenance of national parks and nature reserves, or for any kind of wildlife management practice - anywhere. If the PTD-type of legal framework, in any country, were to be thus voided, it would be difficult, if not impossible, for wildlife professionals to manage wildlife in any way at all; or to thereby protect human health and safety.

The animal rights philosophy does not recognise the fact that man is an integral part of the animal kingdom; that he is part and parcel of the food chains and food webs of the natural world; or that he has the *right* (and survival necessity) to subsist upon BOTH the

plants AND the animals with which he shares his living and physical environment. The animal rights ideal, therefore, is irrational and quite contrary to everything that is natural.

It is TGA's considered opinion therefore, that the philosophy of animal rights-ism is totally incompatible with science-based wildlife management. And we believe that this opinion - together with the common sense rationale we have offered in support of it - should be enthusiastically embraced and propagated by society-at-large. Why? Because, today, animal rights-ism represents the biggest obstacle to the application of essential wildlife management practices on the African continent - practices that can 'save' Africa's wildlife into posterity.

So... whereas, democratically, everybody in this world is entitled to his or her own opinion, nobody has the right to persuade others to their way of thinking by false and/or coercive means - for THAT constitutes terrorism. And animal rightists, everywhere, are not averse to using 'coercive means'.

To achieve their objectives, animal rightists will have to force radical changes on the life-styles of most people alive today. They also cannot achieve their goal - to abolish all animal 'uses' by man - without violating the legitimate rights of the vast majority of mankind. And to allow such a state of affairs to persist, and to operate, in human communities anywhere in this day-and-age, is unconscionable.

All things considered, therefore, there is no place in responsible and civilised society for the animal rights doctrine.

TGA wishes to acknowledge that the framework for this paper - greatly modified to fit our own needs and requirements - was drawn from a similar protocol published by The Wildlife Society (USA) in August 2011.