

A *Religious Proclamation* for *Animal Compassion*

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Purpose Statement

As people from diverse religious traditions, we are united in our belief that animals have intrinsic value as part of God's creation and are entitled to live lives free of cruelty and exploitation. We therefore invite and encourage people of all faiths to speak with one voice on behalf of those who cannot speak in an effort that will define our legacy as stewards of God's creation.

Preamble

In a world of increasing violence towards others, ourselves, and our environment, we believe it is essential to reclaim and recover a commitment of compassion for all of life. We believe that a commitment to compassion begins with the most vulnerable among us, which includes animals.

Therefore,

We Proclaim:

that creation is a gift of love;

that creation is a gift to be celebrated, honored, and enjoyed;

that we have been especially entrusted by God to care for this creation;

that as an integral part of creation, farm, wild, and domesticated animals depend upon us, both directly and indirectly, for their welfare;

that as heirs of their respective traditions, religious communities bear a special responsibility for the welfare of these animals;

and that as ambassadors of compassion, religious communities should extend compassion not only to the human family, but to animals and to all of creation.

Five Calls to Action

As concerned people of faith and in response to these proclamations, we make the following five calls to action in five arenas that directly impact the quality of animals' lives: Pet Overpopulation and the Plight of Homeless Pets; the Meat and Fur Industries; Animals in Sports and Entertainment; Medical Research and Experimentation on Animals; and Wildlife Preservation and Protection.

I. Whereas millions of animals are killed each year and many more are left homeless due to a) aggressive for-profit breeding programs that add to an already massive pet overpopulation crisis, b) the reluctance or unwillingness on the part of some pet owners to spay or neuter their pets, and c) "No Pets" restrictions in common interest housing areas such as apartments and condominiums;

We therefore call upon all people of faith to promote legislation and educational programs designed to prevent further animal cruelty, abuse, and overpopulation; spay or neuter all pets; adopt animals from shelters rather than purchase them from breeders or pet stores; and advocate for more inclusive policies in all common interest housing agreements.

II. Whereas the increasing commercialization and commoditization of animals for the purpose of human consumption and comfort causes untold suffering upon animals each year in factory farms, the commercial fishing industry, and the fur-trade;

We therefore we call upon all people of faith to make conscientious food and clothing choices by reducing meat consumption and refusing to wear fur; buy from local farms that implement humane practices; and actively support all local, regional, and national businesses, organizations, and causes that promote and encourage the humane treatment of animals.

III. Whereas tens of thousands of animals are exploited each year in various sporting and entertainment venues for the purpose of providing entertainment, amusement and, in some cases, profit, and who are then often disposed of or abandoned when they fail to adequately entertain, amuse, or provide sufficient financial gain;

We therefore call upon all people of faith to reject any form of entertainment that harms and/or exploits animals and, instead, to choose venues that benefit animals and provide opportunities for education and animal protection.

IV. Whereas thousands of animals continue to be bred for and used in medical and commercial research and experimentation, often for dubious and medically unnecessary reasons and which, in many cases, cause pain, anguish, and suffering, often in spite of alternative methods that have been scientifically proven to be as effective or more humane;

We therefore call upon all people of faith to contact their elected leaders to request their support and/or sponsorship of legislation that demands an end to medically unnecessary animal testing and commercial animal research that cause undue pain and suffering; to promote efforts that seek to find alternative methods to animal testing and research; and to educate themselves and others regarding current methods and practices in order to increase awareness of the deplorable conditions that continue to exist for countless animals.

V. Whereas urban expansion and over-aggressive land development continue to encroach upon wildlife populations and habitat and many species are being threatened or completely destroyed as a result;

We therefore call upon all people of faith to refrain from consuming or purchasing any threatened species and to boycott companies that profit from wildlife eradication and environmentally unsustainable deforestation.

Conclusion

As leaders of different religious and faith traditions, we recognize the unique opportunity we have been given to effect profound and lasting change for the sake of animals. As stewards of God's creation, we accept and embrace our duty, responsibility, and moral obligation to both protect the lives of animals and assure that those lives reflect the respect and dignity they are to be afforded as part of God's creation. We therefore invite all people of faith, under the guidance of their various faith traditions, to take up the mantle of compassion towards all of life and recognize that, as human beings, we are only part of God's creation and cannot presume to be all that matters in it. Indeed, because animals are an inextricable part of our social and natural environments, we therefore affirm that any lasting effort for change on any level will only be complete insofar as it pays attention to and advocates for animals and their well-being. Finally, we call upon religious leaders of all traditions to honor and encourage those in their faith communities who make compassionate food and clothing choices and who work for the benefit of animals.
