1. The Vegetarian Meal Plan

A professor at a major state university has received federal funding for a program on ethics which life sciences professors from around the country will attend. The professor is a vegetarian on moral grounds. In making arrangements for the five-day program, he specifies that all of the (optional) lunches will be lacto-ovo vegetarian. Several of the participants are outraged. In fact, one sends a long, angry email message to professors across the country and to highly placed personnel in federal funding organizations, including the National Science Foundation, which funded the program.

Questions:
1. Why do you think some of the participants were outraged?
2. Was the professor wrong to design the lunches this way? Should funding for future programs be rescinded because of the meal plan?
3. Suppose the professor in question had believed, on moral grounds, that every meal should include some broccoli and he had insisted that the lunches all do so. Would this have angered participants? What if the professor believed, on moral grounds, that people should consume some animal flesh at each meal and had designed the menus accordingly?

2. Farm Animals: Some Specific Management Cases

Note: The following cases, which each involve relatively specific management issues in farm animal welfare in the United States, are all based on information in Bernard Rollin’s Farm Animal Welfare: Social, Bioethical, and Research Issues (Iowa State University Press, 1995).

Case #1: On p. 11 Rollin quotes the following moral dilemma from the Canadian Veterinary Journal: "You (as a veterinarian) are called to a 500-sow farrow-to-finish swine operation to examine a problem with vaginal discharges in sows. There are three full-time employees and one manager overseeing approximately 5000 animals. As you examine several sows in the crated gestation unit, you notice one with a hind leg at an unusual angle and inquire about her status. You are told 'She broke her leg yesterday and she's due to farrow next week. We'll let her farrow in here and then we'll shoot her and foster off the pigs'."

Then Rollin writes: "Before commenting on this case, I spoke to the veterinarian who had experienced this incident, a swine practitioner. He explained that such operations run on tiny profit margins and minimal labor. Thus, even when he offered to splint the leg at cost, he was told that the operation could not afford the manpower entailed by separating this sow and caring for her..."

Question: Should immediate euthanization of such animals be required by law? Why or why not?

Case #2: Polling, or de-horning, is an issue on both range and feedlot beef operations and on dairy farms. Cattle with horns are more difficult to handle safely, they require more room in transportation and confinement systems, and the presence of horns can exacerbate problems associated with dominance hierarchies.

Dehorning is done several ways: by treatment, at a very early age, with a caustic chemical, which causes some irritation; by burning the horn bud with a hot iron, also when the calf is quite young, which causes pain because the interior of the horn is
innervated; and using a "dehoming spoon," which levers the horn out of the skull, a procedure which becomes increasingly painful and bloody as the calf ages. Cattle with the poll (hornfree) gene are born homless, so it would be possible to breed cattle to have no horns. However, a dairy and reproduction specialist estimates that introducing the poll gene while preserving other superior traits in Holsteins (a common dairy breed) would raise the price of milk 4% or 5%.

Questions: Is solving the animal welfare problems associated with de-homing worth a 4%-5% rise in the cost of milk? What if a number of other animal welfare problems could each be solved at similar cost, with the aggregate rise in cost associated with virtually eliminating problems involved in management, housing, transportation, and slaughter all being solved for a 50% rise in the cost of meat and animal byproducts? Would an ideally humane animal agriculture be worth that? If so, should the changes be mandated and how should the transition be phased in?

Case #3: Kosher slaughter rules prohibit stunning the animals before slitting their throats. Studies show that in animals "stunned" with the captive bolt pistols used in almost all contemporary slaughter plants, loss of visual and somatosensory evoked response is immediate and irreversible, and loss of spontaneous cortical activity occurs within 10 seconds.

In kosher slaughtered animals, by contrast, loss of evoked responses takes between 20 and 126 seconds with a mean of 77 for somatosensory responses and a mean of 55 for visual responses. Loss of spontaneous cortical activity in kosher slaughtered animals takes between 19 and 113 seconds with a mean of 75 seconds after cutting.

Questions: Some countries (e.g. New Zealand) have banned slaughter without stunning. Should the United States? Would such a ban interfere with the free exercise of religion? If so, is this a sufficient reason not to ban it?

Case #4: Tight confinement of sows is recognized as the major welfare issue in swine management. Feral swine develop complex social relations and spend as much as half their time rooting. However, state of the art swine operations today confine sows continuously, in gestation crates small enough that the animals cannot turn around, and then, after parturition, in farrowing crates of approximately the same size. The latter are claimed to be justified in terms of reducing piglet mortality, since sows commonly crush small piglets, and the former allow large numbers of animals to be housed in climate-controlled conditions.

Questions:
1. Should continuous confinement of sows be prohibited by law?
2. Should farrowing crates be outlawed?
3. Should access to straw or other rooting material be required?

3. Farm Animals: Some General Practices
Note: Information for the following cases, which each involve general animal husbandry practices in the United States, was drawn from Bernard Rollin's Farm Animal Welfare: Social, Bioethical, and Research Issues (Iowa State University Press, 1995) and from Gary E. Varner, "What's Wrong With Animal By-products?" Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics 7 (1994), pp. 7-17.

Case #1: Approximately 30 million cattle are slaughtered yearly in the United States. When it comes to the slaughter procedure itself, the large-scale, state-of-the-art facilities capable of slaughtering as many as 400 or 600 animals per hour are, perhaps contrary to popular belief, the most humane. The races approaching the stunning chute can be
designed to look just like those through which cattle have traveled previously for routine veterinary care, experienced handlers can move animals along without prodding, cattle do not "smell blood in the chutes," and "stunning" is a misnomer for what happens in the kill chute, since a properly placed shot with a "stun gun" obliterates the animal's brain, making it impossible to regain consciousness.

**Case #2:** On average, milking cows spend between three and four years in production, after which they are slaughtered for relatively low-grade beef. Dairy farmers maintain high productivity by breeding cows to calve about yearly. The calves are removed from their mothers immediately or within days, with most of the female calves becoming replacement milk cows and almost all of the male calves being raised for veal. Statistics indicate that about one seventh of the cattle slaughtered yearly are from dairy herds.

**Case #3:** Today, over 90% of laying hens in the United States live caged in intensive egg production facilities, which have increased the average yield per hen from 70 in 1933 to 275 today. In these facilities, birds cannot forage, flap their wings, dust-bathe, nest, establish dominance hierarchies, or even preen themselves in natural ways; culling of injured birds is economically inefficient, and the entire population of a battery operation is slaughtered and replaced periodically (every 12-15 months on state of the art operations). Poultry are still exempt from federal humane slaughter legislation and by comparison to state of the art cattle slaughter facilities, poultry slaughter is still a relatively indelicate affair; fully conscious birds are from their legs on conveyor belts before being stunned and beheaded.

**Questions:**
1. What conclusions would you personally reach about the morality of each of the practices described? Why?
2. Explain how Regan's and Singer's theories would apply to each of these practices, what conclusions they would imply, and why. What, if any, modifications of the practices in question would change these theories' implications about them?

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**4. Hunting**

Note: Cases #1 and #3 are entirely fictional, but realistic. Case #2 below is based on an actual situation in Yellowstone in the early 1960's, although the contemporary management practice is not as described.

**Case #1:** Peter Kirk is a midwestern farmer who hunts deer every fall just like his father and grandfather before him. Each year, Kirk spends several weekends afield, tracking deer and eventually killing one. He cures and freezes the venison, which is treated as a delicacy in his family.

**Case #2:** Rick Pearson is a National Park Service ranger in Yellowstone. One of his jobs is to serve as a marksman during yearly culling of the northern elk herd, which has repeatedly exceeded the carrying capacity of its range. After extensive attempts at trapping and relocation, the Park Service killed about 4000 animals (upwards of one third of the population at the time) during the winter of 1961-62. The hunt was staged in the winter, when the animals are concentrated at lower elevations, it used Park Service marksmen, and the carcasses were processed on the scene, the meat being given to area Indian tribes.

The initial herd reduction caused a public outcry because the methods seemed so unsporting or cruel, but an influential government report endorsed the technique and now each winter, several hundred elk are shot under similar circumstances, and this has stabilized the population within the carrying capacity of its range.
Case #3: Howard Stancer is a successful Hollywood actor who has traveled the world for years trophy hunting. He has heads of 19 big game animals on his wall and needs only the head of a rare cat to have completed the prestigious "big 20" of trophy hunting. So this summer he is going to a game ranch in central Texas and paying $3500 to be guaranteed a cat of the species in question. These cats, along with a dozen other exotic species, are bred on the ranch in one acre pens for the purpose of such "canned" hunts.

Questions:

1. What conclusion would you personally reach about the moral permissibility of hunting in each of these cases? Why?
2. What do you think a typical animal rights activist would say about each of these cases?
3. Explain how Regan's and Singer's theories would apply to these cases and what conclusions they would imply (i.e., in each case, is the hunting morally permissible, morally required, etc.) and why.