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Letter to Editor

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### **The untold suffering of the voiceless**

**4<sup>th</sup> October is World Animal Day** and it is a time to pay heed to the suffering of animals. Many animals endured pain and suffering when abused, neglect or cruelly treated by humans. It can be the causing of harm or suffering for specific achievement, such as killing animals for food, for their fur or even their tusks and body parts and cruelty associated with a given method of slaughter.

Cruelty to animals sometimes encompasses inflicting harm or suffering as an end in itself as in the case of animals killed for food daily. Factory farming causes billions of animals to suffer every year. The industrial nature of these facilities means that many routine procedures or animal husbandry practices impinge on the welfare of the animals and could arguably be considered as cruelty. Campaign groups have suggested that chickens, cows, pigs, and other farm animals are among the most numerous animals subjected to cruelty.

Worldwide meat over consumption is another factor that contributes to the miserable situation of farm animals. But they are not the only ones paying a heavy price. Animal agriculture accounts for a large percentage of the greenhouse gasses associated with climate disruption. Waste from factory farms also makes its way into the air and water supply, poisoning rural communities.

The term 'Free range' that suggests animals living a natural lifestyle with minimal restraints on their freedom and behaviour can be misleading. Although given more room than factory farmed animals, free-range chickens can still be kept in big windowless sheds. Whether in a windowless shed or outdoors, they are subjected to painful mutilations, such as de-beaking, de-horning and tail docking.

The label 'organic' also implies higher welfare standards but being organic is no guarantee that the animals lived free-range. While organically-farmed and free range animals have a better quality of life than factory farmed animals, they will be subjected to the same trauma of transport to the slaughterhouse and the same terrifying, bloody death.

Farmed animals are regarded as mere units of production. Their bodies are pushed to the limits in order to produce the largest amount of meat in the shortest possible time. They are now being genetically selected and manipulated to produce more milk, more meat, more eggs and more offspring. Dairy cows produce around ten times more milk than their calves could consume. And still research into increased productivity continues.

Animals are abused and exploited in a variety of forms of entertainment. Animals are not actors, spectacles to imprison and gawk at, or circus clowns. Yet thousands of these animals are forced to perform silly, confusing tricks under the threat of physical punishment. Elephants tasked with giving rides to public are often brutally beaten. Crushing a young elephant's spirit can involve beatings, sleep deprivation and starvation. An extreme form of animal cruelty!

Horses used for racing are subjected to cocktails of legal and illegal drugs intended to mask injuries and

artificially enhance performance. Behind horse racing is a world of injuries, drug abuse, gruesome breakdowns, and slaughter. Ownership turnover is rampant, and most Thoroughbreds are bought or “claimed” multiple times during their careers. They are bought and sold as commodities not to mention where the horses will end up at the end of their stint.

Animals in zoos, sanctuaries, menagerie and roadside displays are forced to spend their lives behind bars just to entertain the public. Living conditions are often dismal, with animals confined to tiny, filthy, barren enclosures void of any environmental enrichment. Boredom, loneliness, and even abuse from their carers causes many captive animals to suffer from this condition called zoochosis - rocking, swaying, or pacing endlessly, and some even resort to hurting themselves by chewing on their own fingers or limbs or pulling out their fur or feathers.

Animals in the exotic pet trade suffer as many are yanked from the wild and do not survive the journey from their homes. Those who do survive often suffer in captivity and die prematurely from malnutrition, an unnatural and uncomfortable environment, loneliness, and the overwhelming stress of confinement.

The suffering of domesticated pets is immense and widespread. Cases of animal abuse are on the rise with frequent reports of dog and cat abuse, poisoning, slaughtering, abandonment and many others.

The lives of animals are profoundly affected by the actions of individuals, businesses, and nations. It's therefore essential that, as sentient beings, their rightful status as recipients of social justice is established and translated into effective animal protection. Through increased awareness and education, we can help develop compassionate culture which feeds into legal reform and social progress to make this world a fairer place for all living creatures. A world where animals are recognised as sentient beings and full regard is always paid to their welfare.

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