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Non-human animals: consciousness, rationality and animal rights

Questions to stimulate reflection

Why should anyone think that animals are capable of experiencing pleasure and pain? Are there any considerations that tell against this?

Should we agree that anything capable of experiencing pleasure and pain is intrinsically valuable? If so should we accord it absolute rights?

Is there reason for or against thinking the interests of animals should count for less in the utilitarian calculus than the interests of human beings?

Is speciesism really as morally unacceptable as racism or sexism?

Are our duties to animals indirect duties to human beings or direct duties to the animals themselves? Does this matter?

What would a virtue ethicist have to say about the use of animals for scientific research?

Can you describe three different deontological views on the proper use of animals?

What are the conditions under which a utilitarian would refuse to use an animal for a given procedure?