

SEP 8 1983

Civil Rights for Animals?

"TOUCH the lives of animals and make it their world, too," says an advertisement of The Humane Society of the United States, one of two dozen groups campaigning for "civil rights" for animals.

The movement goes far beyond the prevention of cruelty to animals, which has widespread public support. The animal rights movement seems to attribute human qualities and reactions to all sorts of birds and beasts, apparently regarding them as equals of human beings contrary to the biblical subjugation of animals.

For example, a ceremony to "bless" a frog, grasshoppers, a cat, a horse and a cockatoo was held by animal rightists at the Oklahoma City Zoo last May for the third successive year.

The animal rights movement is linked to similar campaigns in Europe. It has extensive moral, social and philosophical implications, plus humanitarian and economic factors.

For one thing, animal rightists want to terminate the use of animals in medical and other types of research. It is an indisputable fact that numerous discoveries of great benefit to the human race have resulted from experiments upon animals. These include tests of medicines, food, livestock improvement and surgery.

Last year, an organization called Volunteers for Animal Welfare, Inc., staged a protest against the use of stray animals for medical research at the Oklahoma Health Sciences Center.

On the economic side, animal

rights advocates oppose the raising of chickens, pigs and calves in confinement on grounds they were meant to run free. However, they don't seem to find anything wrong with confining pets or keeping wild animals in zoos.

"There's a great difference between humane treatment of animals and humanizing animals," said Orville Sweet, executive vice president of the National Pork Producers Council, at an animal health meeting. "The livestock producer has a great deal of difficulty in identifying with the element that seeks to humanize animals."

The animal rights movement has not stimulated public interest as the environmental uprising did a decade or so ago. However, it might succeed, as the environmentalists did, in obtaining legislation to create a federal agency to draft and enforce regulations.

A bill (House Resolution 3170) by Rep. James Howard, D-N.J., with 10 co-sponsors, is now before Congress. It proposes to establish a federal commission to investigate "all aspects of intensive farm animal husbandry." Most animal husbandry might be called "intensive" since it requires the close attention of operators.

This is surely one public agency we can do without. If it becomes established that a pig is entitled to equal rights with a human being, it must follow that a man is no better than a pig or any other beast so elevated by civil rights for animals.

Man Has Duty to Protect Animals

SEP 18 1983

TO THE EDITOR:

This is in rebuttal to your shockingly ignorant editorial "Civil Rights for Animals" in The Daily Oklahoman Sept. 8.

As to the biblical subjugation of animals, it is true that in Genesis 1:26 God gave man dominion over the animals. Nowhere does it say that He gave man permission to wantonly destroy said animals through killing and loss of habitat, to their possible ultimate extinction, in order to satisfy his personal greed.

To belittle our excellent Oklahoma City Zoo is appalling. The ceremony of the Blessing of the Animals goes back to the 13th century and St. Francis of Assisi. It is a standard part of many of the world's religions. What better location for this ceremony than our beautiful zoo, and what better time than during Be Kind to Animals Week?

Volunteers for Animal Welfare's protest last year against the use of stray animals for medical research at the OU Health Sciences Center was not a protest against the use of animals in laboratories, although the needless cruelty and needless waste of animal life in this area could and should be eliminated, not the work itself. It was a protest against taking animals from the Oklahoma City Animal Shelter, a fact that you conveniently omitted in your editorial.

VAW's stand, and a valid one, is that a shelter is a refuge. It should not in any way be a source for laboratory animals. Only seven states, Oklahoma among them, still have the antiquated pound seizure law on their books.

As to factory farming of animals for food production, it is the feeling of many people that even though an

animal may have only a few months of existence before it becomes veal, pork chops or a broiler, during that time it is entitled to a controlled life normal to its species, not kept practically immobile under painful, artificial conditions.

Certainly a sensible compromise can eventually be reached on the animal rights issue between the extremes of the man who scrawls the sign of the dollar over every animate and inanimate thing he touches, and the "little old lady in tennis shoes" who takes in more stray cats than she can possibly care for. But your biased and factually inaccurate editorial will not help either side.

Mary M. Nice, City