

Letters to the editor in response to “A Change of Heart about Animals”

- 1 Re "A Change of Heart About Animals," Commentary, Sept. 1: Jeremy Rifkin argues that science has shown that the differences between animals and humans are less than we think and that we should extend more “empathy” to animals. I disagree. In nature, animals naturally kill and eat each other. If the hawk does not care about the feelings of the rabbit that it eats, why should humans be any different? Is Rifkin saying that nature is wrong?
- 2 Rifkin goes so far as to say that pigs need social contact and should be provided with toys. There are many real human children in the world who do not have these things. Are animals more important than human children? Should our society spend scarce resources on toys for pigs?
- 3 Anyone who has owned a pet knows that animals can feel pain, happiness, anger, and other simple emotions. Most people have heard a parrot or a mynah bird talk, but this is just imitation and mimicry. We don’t need science to tell us that animals can do these things. However, does a parrot understand what it is saying? Can an animal write a poem, or even a grocery list?
- 4 Rifkin is simply an animal rights activist hiding behind a handful of scientific studies. He wants to ignore human suffering and focus on animal discomfort. He wants animals to have more rights than humans. Let’s not be fooled.

Bob Stevens

- 1 Much thanks to Jeremy Rifkin for showing us that science supports what we pet owners and animal rights activists have known in our hearts all along: animals have feelings and abilities not very different from humans. I found the stories about Koko the gorilla who is fluent in sign language, and Betty and Abel, the tool-making crows, intriguing and heart-warming. When will more people begin to realize that we share this world with many creatures deserving of our care and respect?
- 2 However, Rifkin should take his argument farther. Animals have a right to live without being confined, exploited, tormented or eaten. That means no animal experimentation, no fur or leather clothing, and a vegan or vegetarian lifestyle. Meat eating and animal abuse lead to spiritual disturbance and physical disease. Let’s free ourselves from the evils of the past and live in harmony with our fellow creatures!

Lois Frazier