

ANIMAL RIGHTS AN ISSUE IN THE FUTURE

Farol Tomson, DVM
University Veterinarian
University of Florida
Gainesville, Florida

"Hotel Drops Veal From Restaurant Menus"
"Factory Farming: The Experiment That Failed"
"Free-Ranging Chickens and Veal Now Available"

These topics are not of the future, they are here now. Massachusetts defeats a restrictive farming bill by a 76% vote, and farmers claim a victory. Others claim a shallow victory, realizing that if another 25% of the public is duped by this philosophy, Massachusetts will eventually pass this legislation.

This well-funded grass roots movement is successfully exploiting animal abuse incidents with the sympathetic press and sympathetic public. Americans have a soft and bleeding heart for the underdog.

Although the Animal Rights Movement, (ARM), doesn't exploit the surplus dog control problem, they certainly make sure research and teaching entities don't utilize them. Nowhere is our abuse and neglect more evident than in the dog and cat overpopulation. 1988 figures from four Florida counties reveal:

| <u>COUNTY</u> | <u>DOGS/CATS ADMITTED</u> | <u>DOGS/CATS EUTHANIZED</u> |
|---------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Alachua | 12,944 | 8,601 |
| Escambia | 16,620 | 14,271 |
| Santa Rosa | 6,731 | 5,891 |
| Leon | 10,195 | 6,880 |
| <u>TOTALS</u> | <u>46,490</u> | <u>35,643</u> |

And not one of these was used to advance teaching or research programs in the state of Florida. In fact, the University of Florida faculty pay \$200 per dog (to out of state dealers) to use them in veterinary education and research programs. UF used only 486 dogs last year; down from over 1300 several years earlier. The continuing, relentless pressure on politicians from the ARM will totally prohibit this source of dogs and cats from being used.

The above figures are from just four counties in Florida. Imagine what the entire state euthanizes! Another tragic aspect of this issue is the hidden cost associated with producing this animal protein. Average carcasses weigh 15 pounds; therefore, these counties produced 267 tons of carnivore at a cost of over \$172,000. These figures of four counties are typical of the waste and neglect in this aspect of animal welfare.

