

Animal rights activism in the Netherlands

Between peaceful and burning protest

General Intelligence and Security Service, July 2004

'As long as persons who kill animals are protected by laws that are no good, animals will have to be protected by persons who are no good in the eyes of the law'.

(Letter claiming responsibility for the arson attack at Ermelo, 11 July 1999)

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1 Introduction

On 6 May 2002, the Netherlands was confronted with the assassination of Pim Fortuyn. As the perpetrator had a long history as an animal rights activist, animal rights activism as a whole suddenly found itself in the limelight of negative publicity, both in the media and in the political arena. From that moment on, especially the more radical animal rights activists have been confronted with more suspicion and criticism than before. Although this category of animal rights activists hastened to condemn the assassination in strong terms, so far they have still been unclear about how far they themselves would be prepared to go.

Animal rights activists use many campaign types that are widely considered acceptable within the Dutch society. Practically nobody will take offence at demonstrations with banners, the distribution of pamphlets or an open debate with the public. Even the more direct action types, usually referred to as extraparliamentary or civil disobedience, meet with some sympathy. These include picketing, but also short, peaceful sit-ins.

Over the past decade, however, a radicalisation developed among a small part of the animal rights activists, which has led to an increasing tendency to resort to violent methods. These radical activists do not confine themselves to verbal assault, but they also increasingly threaten persons and inflict serious material damage. In several cases the damage caused by, for example, liberation of minks, vandalism, but also arson attacks amounted to millions. On the other hand, however, even in circles of animal rights activists only a small group of sympathisers approves of this type of action.

In recent years, the conclusion that within animal rights activism in the Netherlands certain individuals do not shrink from using means that border on or even overstep the limits of the Dutch law has led to a social but also political debate about the question whether excesses of animal rights activism should not be combated more vigorously. The question whether in some cases such violent manifestations should be qualified as terrorism has also been a prominent subject for discussion, even in Parliament.

This paper describes the history and development of political activism in the Netherlands where it concerns animal welfare and animal rights. It focuses on the composition of the action groups, the background of the activists, their methods and targets, as well as the international component of activism. This leads to the question of what risks are involved in the violent manifestations of this activism.

Finally, when focusing on the combat of excesses, the role of the General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD) in this area will be described. In addition to preventing attacks, the AIVD also tries to provide insight into the excesses of animal rights activism by separating the sheep from the goats.

The annex gives an overview of the evolution in thinking about animals. Many of the animal rights activists are interested in this historic development and see it as a source of inspiration for continuing their resistance against causers of perceived cruelty to animals. The ALF doctrine quoted in the annex serves as a handbook for radical animal rights activists.

2 Animal rights activism in the Netherlands

2.1 Political and non-political activists

Animal rights activism in the Netherlands can be qualified as both diverse and diffuse. It is inspired by various motives and perceptions. Sometimes its campaigns overlap with other ideological movements, like anti-imperialism or environmentalism, but it also happens that unexpected ad-hoc coalitions are formed. This was the case, for example, when McDonalds was hit by separate but simultaneous actions. Extreme left-wing animal rights activists campaigned against McDonalds because of the company's alleged exploitation of the third world, while ultra-right activists were motivated by anti-Americanism: 'McDonalds undermines our culture and turns the Dutch youth into an Americanised TV generation'.¹

The majority of the animal rights activists are not inspired by any political ideology, however, but by a great emotional involvement in the well-being of animals. Dirk Boon, who held the chair in 'Animal and Law' of the Utrecht university until 1 January 2004, sees it as single-issue activism: in his opinion, the animal rights movement is an emancipation movement comparable to activism for issues like abortion, euthanasia and, for example, anti-nuclear energy. The activists are mostly apolitical persons with a wide range of backgrounds. It is not their aim to demonstrate for political changes or to cause political damage in terms of traditional left-wing activism. The purpose of their campaigns, which are mainly targeted at property (liberation of animals, vandalism, theft of a company's books), is to influence political decision-making on animal rights.

There is also a considerably smaller category of animal rights activists who are inspired by extreme right-wing political motives. They protest against matters like ritual slaughtering by migrants in the Netherlands. In some cases they operate under the banner of *Dierenbevrijdingsfront* (DBF) (the name is the Dutch translation of animal liberation front) or Animal Liberation Front (ALF), names which represent rather a conglomerate of ideas than an organisation in the Netherlands. In other cases they use a self-chosen 'nom de guerre'. There is, for example, an action group of the 'national-anarchic' *Nationale Beweging* (NB) that protests against the sale of ritually slaughtered meat under the name of *Met de Dieren Tegen de Beesten* (MDTB) (With the Animals Against the Beasts).² Another national-anarchic animal rights group is *Dusnudelft*, a mainly regionally operating group which has not attracted any attention lately. For these extreme right-wing groups the fight against animal suffering is often instrumental in a broader xenophobic strategy, however.

As opposed to the aforementioned category, another group of activists is inspired by traditional leftist political motives. They put oppression and exploitation of people in the third world on a par with cruelty to animals. This group also operates under the name of ALF or DBF sometimes, but usually it is mainly motivated by 'anti-imperialist' views. A good example are the acts of vandalism targeted at fast food chain McDonalds. The activists do not only accuse this firm of destroying the environment in the rain forests for the sake of growing feed crops for cattle, but indirectly also of oppressing the native population.

And then there is a substantial category of fanatical activists who believe in the so-called straight-edge philosophy. Straight edge is a lifestyle among mainly young people who concern themselves with animal rights, but also with matters like anti-abortion. They have their own

(hard-core) music, they object to the use of stimulants and to deviant sexual behaviour, and veganism is the basic principle of their actions.³ It sometimes happens that persons within the straight-edge movement are mistaken for ultra left-wing activists, also by the authorities, just because of the fact that they live in squats. As a consequence, they are often wrongly labelled as political activists. Straight edge, however, is a movement that cannot easily be ranged under a particular political category. There are also right-wing extremists within this movement.

In addition to influencing by third parties and the intentional or unintentional manipulation of political opinion, we have also seen overlapping campaign areas since the end of the 1980s. More and more groups began to focus on matters like breeding of furred animals and vivisection. Some, however, like *Stichting Lekker Dier*, also focused on biological 'manipulation' in the broadest sense. Consequently, it is not surprising that even today we are sometimes still confronted with so-called gentech actions, like digging up test fields, under the banner of animal rights activism.

2.2 Animal rights activism since the 1980s

By the middle of the 1980s a movement emerged in the Netherlands that not only expressed verbal protests against perceived injustice towards animals, but also put its objections into action. In that period of time it was mainly the *Dierenbevrijdingsfront* (DBF) that initiated such activities in the Netherlands. The non-aggressive campaigns of this movement were intended to influence political decision-making about animal rights, but the activists also tried to change the social climate in favour of animal welfare.

The DBF of the 1980s can hardly be compared to the present DBF. The 'old' DBF had a certain organisational structure, although the persons committing the actions (vandalism, sit-ins and liberation of animals) often did not know each other. There seemed to be a certain leadership and co-ordination behind the scenes, however, as opposed to the present situation. A major part of the hard core of the *Dierenbevrijdingsfront*, like the British ALF, maintained direct relations with (partly extreme) right-wing parties and individuals.

Like the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), the present *Dierenbevrijdingsfront* as it has manifested itself since the late 1990s is rather a conglomerate of ideas and principles from which everyone who fights against animal suffering can pick what suits him best. Everyone who agrees with the doctrine of the DBF or ALF can use its name. Today we also see more and more DBF and ALF cells that are inspired by a broader left-wing range of ideas.

By the mid-1990s the Netherlands was confronted with a series of arson attacks throughout the country, committed not only by the *Rode Haan group*, which operated mainly in the Veluwe district, but also by the Right Animal Treatment/Animal Justice Front (RAT/AJF). The latter group turned out to consist of no more than two activists, and so far this has been the only radical cell that was rounded up. The two activists were given considerable prison sentences.⁴ The successful rounding up of the RAT/AJF was partly accidental, however. One of the activists called his mate about a planned attack from a public telephone booth that was monitored by the police for another case. This enabled the police to catch the two activists red-handed. They eventually confessed 28 arson attacks.⁵

In the course of the 1990s the more 'civil disobedient' part of animal rights activism in the Netherlands evolved towards a certain degree of commercialisation. *Dierenbevrijdingsfront* campaigns were replaced by activities of the - originally American - People for the Ethical

Treatment of Animals (PETA). But the Dutch PETA cadre (consisting of former DBF activists) did not seem to meet the American standards: they generated too little income, and PETA Netherlands soon ceased to exist. After DBF and PETA, the principal cadre member continued his activities within *Een Dier Een Vriend* (EDEV) (an animal, a friend). The main target of this group was the Biomedical Primate Research Centre (BPRC) at Rijswijk, where tests on primates were conducted. Round the turn of the millennium it was this testing which gave part of the animal rights activists reason to adopt a far more radical attitude, thus following the example of the – partly very violent and aggressive - animal rights activists in the United Kingdom.

2.3 Foreign influence as a catalyst

As part of their unremitting fight against perceived animal suffering, British animal rights activists set up the non-political Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty (SHAC) group early in 2000. This organisation aimed its - partly violent - campaigns particularly at companies involved in animal experiments. Every week the activists selected a company of which they published names and addresses (including private addresses of employees) on the Internet and against which they instigated various campaigns. These led to serious infringement on the privacy of the employees. Some of the directors even felt forced to put up at a hotel. The activists saw the British commercial biopharmaceutical company Huntingdon Life Sciences (HLS) as the embodiment of all evil, and they started to gradually ruin the company, not only by means of incessant campaigns and negative publicity against it, but also by threatening and in some cases even attacking its directors and employees. This constituted a violation of physical integrity. British activists have shown that they are prepared to endanger human lives: they do not shrink from using baseball bats, but neither from methods like sending bomb letters and letters containing razor blades.

An organisation like the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection (BUAV), on the other hand, infiltrates laboratories for animal experiments. They examine perceived abuse of animals and make clandestine photographs and films. To that end they sometimes use research journalists who try to gain access to the laboratories under a false identity and then subsequently publish their experiences, for example on the BUAV web site. In the Netherlands, too, some institutes have been confronted with such or other obstructive practices, in some cases initiated from inside the company.

As is the case in Scandinavia and some other countries, also the Dutch ALF and DBF cells imitate British ideas and campaign types. In the absence of leaders, this type of animal rights activism is mainly inspired by an ideological set of principles: rather than 'follow the leader', the idea is to 'follow the doctrine' (laid down in, for example, the ALF doctrine and the DBF guidelines).

Years ago, Dutch activists already crossed the Channel in order to gain experience. The contacts with British activists, particularly concerning anti-vivisection campaigns, have been intensified over the past four to five years. SHAC soon expanded its activities to the European continent, including the Netherlands. The group organises pre-announced campaign weeks against testing on animals. In the Netherlands this has involved vandalising of industrial property and 'home visits' to directors and staff members of mainly Japanese companies, involving threats and damage to these people's houses and cars.

The Biomedical Primate Research Centre (BPRC) at Rijswijk has been the target of various obstructive campaigns carried out by Dutch (and foreign) animal rights activists. These campaigns against the BPRC have increasingly become the Dutch equivalent of the campaigns against the aforementioned HLS. In October 2000, BPRC employees were publicly exposed on posters (with photos and addresses) distributed in The Hague and on the Internet. As a consequence, several of these persons were confronted with threats in their private lives. On New Year's Eve 2000-2001, Dutch animal rights activists calling themselves Animal Rights Militia (ARM) made an attempt to liberate primates from the BPRC. This attempt failed, however, due to a confrontation with security guards. The activist journal *Ravage* and newspaper *de Volkskrant* received a letter in which BPRC employees were warned that: 'After years of cruelty, now the time has come to stop you. The cruel practices of the BPRC will no longer be tolerated. The time of peaceful action is over. Let this be a warning.' The name of the group added an extra dimension to the threat: in the Anglo-Saxon countries Animal Rights Militia is the extremely violent wing of the Animal Liberation Front. That group does not shrink from using physical violence, like in case of the so-called razor blade letters; razor blades hidden in the envelope may cause serious injuries.

In the years 2001-2003 the focus of national and international animal rights activists partly shifted from the principal targets, Huntingdon Life Sciences and BPRC, to companies affiliated with these organisations in the broadest sense: banks, insurance companies, security agencies. In the Netherlands particularly ABN-Amro, the BPRC's bank, has been confronted with a wave of vandalism, mainly aimed at cash dispensers.

Under pressure of the above-mentioned SHAC group, a number of companies, including some Dutch branches, have broken off their business contacts with Huntingdon. This pressure involved a wide range of activities (e.g. obstructing communication, hacking web sites, threats, 'home visits', blockades and vandalism), carried out jointly with sympathisers in the Netherlands. In 2002, but mainly in 2003, campaigns were mainly targeted at Japanese medicine producers affiliated to Huntingdon, also in the Netherlands. The Japanese embassy repeatedly complained about the campaigns against these companies and even told officers of the Ministry of Economic Affairs that it was considering to move the Japanese branches from the Netherlands to another country.

In recent years it has been no exception that companies and persons working in the sectors confronted with violent animal rights activism felt forced to discontinue their business or to move it abroad. Particularly in the fur sector a number of companies ceased their activities as a consequence of the above-described modus operandi, often referred to as the 'British method'. But also a number of people involved in animal experimenting for medical research felt forced to stop their activities.

2.4 Dutch activism in an international perspective

The media sometimes make it appear as if it is only the Netherlands that is confronted with radical activism, but this is not correct. Not only the United Kingdom and Scandinavia (particularly Finland), but also our neighbouring countries Belgium and Germany have been confronted with a considerable amount of - partly very violent - animal rights activism in recent years. Last year even Italian activists attracted international attention.

Animal rights activists increasingly communicate and interact on an international level. They regularly meet at so-called international animal rights gatherings. Since the turn of the

millennium we have seen increasing international co-operation in the Netherlands. In June 1999 an arson attack was committed on a slaughterhouse at Bodegraven. The claim letter, published soon after the arson attack, was full of Anglicisms, so it seemed to be written by an English language speaker.

In the same period of time Belgium was confronted with a series of incendiary attacks against big hamburger chains. The writer of some of the claim letters was obviously Dutch, not Flemish. On another occasion, activists from Germany and Luxembourg were caught reconnoitring a mink farm in the Peel district in the Netherlands. Other campaigns, for example the one targeted at a mink farm at Orsbach near Aachen, were committed jointly by Dutch and German activists. It is evident that the interaction is not restricted to an ideological level, but that it also involves joint campaigns against alleged abuses. The close ties between British and Dutch animal rights activists have been described above.

2.5 Activism pyramid

Current animal rights activism in the Netherlands can be characterised as a phenomenon with various manifestations. In all cases the aim of the activists is to influence political policy-making in the area of animal welfare, either in a general sense or with respect to a specific issue. But they do this in many different ways, focusing either on 'welfare' or on 'rights'.

Director Newkirk of the aforementioned PETA group explained the difference as follows: 'If you start from the premise of animal welfare, you accept that animals have interests but you think that these interests can be sacrificed or subordinated to the interests of people if there is some benefit for people. If you start from the premise of animal rights, you believe that animals - like people - have interests that should not be sacrificed or subordinated to the benefit of people. Animal rights imply that people are not allowed to use animals for food, clothes, entertainment and experiments. Animal welfare allows this use as long as it meets 'humane' standards'.

Like other types of activism in the Netherlands, animal rights activism can be represented in the form of a pyramid. The broad base represents the moderate movements and groups, the middle part the groups ranged under 'civil disobedience' and the top represents radical cells and individuals.

The vast majority of persons campaigning for animal rights confine themselves to peaceful manifestations like demonstrations and the distribution of pamphlets, intended to point out to the public and to politicians perceived injustice to animals. Under this category of moderate-minded individuals and organisations who stand up for the welfare and rights of animals - if necessary even in court - we can range as many as a few million Dutchmen if we include members, supporters and sympathisers. The following organisations fall within this moderate category: *Dieren-/Faunabescherming*, *Anti Bont Comité*, *Wakker Dier*, *SOS Dier*, *Bont Voor Dieren*, *Animal Defence League (ADL)*, *Stichting Lekker Dier*, *Compassion In World Farming (CIWF)*, *Anti-Vivisectie Stichting (AVS)*, *Proefdiervrij*, *Alle Dieren Vrij* and *Vereniging Milieu Offensief (VMO)*.

However, there are some hundreds of activists - often operating in ad-hoc coalitions - who choose to spread their message by means of more radical actions, such as blockades, sit-ins and vandalism. Their aim is not only to hit the companies and target sectors directly, but also to exert political pressure indirectly and thus to influence decision-making concerning, for example, bioindustry, fur breeding but also animal experiments. Under this 'civil disobedient' category we can range groups like *Een Dier Een Vriend*, *Animal Rights Activists*, *Actiegroep Koen and Dusnudelft* (until recently an active extreme right-wing group). The group *Animal Rights Militia* overlaps with the next category.

A small minority of activists - probably no more than some dozens - is prepared to go to extremes for the benefit of animals. They liberate animals, they harass persons whom they hold responsible for animal suffering (by means of threats and physical harassment), but they also commit arson, which evidently involves a risk of physical injury. This radical, violent category regularly operates under the names of *Dierenbevrijdingsfront* and Animal Liberation Front. The aforementioned *Rode Haan* can also be ranged under this category. So far, however, even this category of activists has kept to the principle that inflicting (serious) material damage is acceptable, but that physical harm to people 'whether innocent or not' should be prevented at all times. In practice, however, this has sometimes turned out differently, and certain actions involve considerable risks.

2.6 Reflection and self-criticism

Partly under the influence of the media, but also as a result of the attention for the phenomenon of animal rights activism in parliament, part of the activists decided to reconsider their efforts. The assassination of Mr Pim Fortuyn by an activist with an animal rights background reflected negatively on the movement. The vast majority of the activists saw the attack on a mink farm near Putten committed in broad daylight in September 2003 as a capital blunder and a thoughtless action, which only cast a slur on the reputation of the average activist. Since then they have tried to limit the damage to their reputation by publicly, but also internally, repudiating the excesses of activism, such as large-scale vandalism, liberation of animals and especially arson attacks.

For example, the justification of radical actions by the chairman of *Dwars*, the youth organisation of political party *GroenLinks*, in the newspaper *NRC Handelsblad*, was a direct reason for Herman Meier, the chairman of *GroenLink*, to distance himself from such comments: '*GroenLinks* is against all forms of illegal action'. The series of articles about animal rights activism in *NRC Handelsblad* triggered similar reactions from other organisations as well. The chairman of the Dutch Society for the Protection of Animals even felt obliged to comment on matters from decades ago.

The *Partij voor de Dieren* also hastened to draw a line between moderate campaigns and radical activism. The group's chairman expressed the fear that animal protectionists and animal rights activists would be lumped together: 'There is no differentiation at all. Animal protectionism or animal rights activism threaten to be indiscriminately ranged under terrorism, while the public at large and the AIVD fail to see that there is an evident difference between millions of peaceful animal protectionists, who pursue their ideals in a democratic and legal manner, and a small group of troublemakers breaking the law.'

From other comments made by Marianne Thieme on TV but also in the newspapers⁶ we can also conclude that within the animal rights movement there is a certain extent of 'self-cleaning capacity'.

2.7 Reaction from society and the target sector

Not only self-criticism within activist circles is important to curb and prevent excesses in animal rights activism, but also the attitude of both society and the target sector. In fact, the general feeling is that the way in which animal rights activists overstep limits is in several respects intolerable. Besides, the radicalisation of part of the activists threatens to reflect negatively on the vast majority of well-meaning individuals and groups who seek to improve

the situation of animals by peaceful means. Public support for moderate types of animal rights activism might erode and policy-makers and the agricultural sector might be less willing to listen to arguments.

Signs from society that radical animal rights activism cannot be tolerated may have a purifying effect on the movement as a whole. Most types of activism have some support among the population as long as they keep within the limits of the freedoms laid down by law. Radical animal rights activists who overstep these limits (e.g. incendiary attacks, threats) are now faced with increasingly less tolerance in society, but also from the side of moderate activists.

This atmosphere of growing social dissatisfaction about the nature of the campaigns and the ensuing damage evidently involves a risk of escalation. Part of the target sector (poultry farms, the meat production and processing industry, mink farms etc.) have started an offensive already. They have set up interest organisations, and in some cases they jointly take security measures in order to prevent violent actions. For that purpose they do not only hire professional security agencies, but it also happens that they protect their business themselves in a way that involves the risk that they will take justice into their own hands.

3 The AIVD and animal rights activism

3.1 Threat to the democratic legal order

When radical ideas lead to a pursuit of undemocratic goals or to activities that endanger the democratic legal order, it is necessary for the government to intervene. In that case the AIVD will start monitoring the individuals or organisations in question. In 1999 the increasing violence aimed at people and the growing number of arson attacks - strategies which used to be restricted to the United Kingdom - gave the AIVD reason to intensify its investigations into animal rights activism in the Netherlands and to tackle the problem more systematically. Complicated cell structures make it difficult, however, to identify and deal with a large number of activists, mainly those who inflict serious damage to property. These cell structures and the fact that the activists focus practically exclusively on animal rights and not on other subjects (e.g. the environment, asylum policy, racism/fascism or globalisation) often enable them to keep a low profile for a long time. This obviously makes it difficult for law enforcement and security services to take measures against them. Another complicating factor is the existence of various (unorganised) small groups and even individually operating activists. Among the latter category are many individuals who can be qualified as 'amateur activists'; they lead a normal life as an employee, family man, housewife or student, but after working hours or in weekends, they occasionally - seemingly out of the blue - take part in fierce campaigns, only to disappear into anonymity again afterwards. The fact that many activists refuse to identify themselves (and do not carry any identity papers) when they are arrested is another complicating factor.

3.2 Terrorism

The question whether certain forms of animal rights activism should be labelled as terrorism is subject of debate, not only within society, but also at a political level. The AIVD uses the definition based upon the European framework decision on terrorism: 'Terrorism is the use or threatened use of force or violence against people's lives or the infliction of serious damage to property causing social dislocation, with the aim to alter the social structure or to influence political decision-making'.

Politically motivated violent activism, including animal rights activism, can be distinguished from terrorism because the violence involved in this type of activism is not aimed at people's lives, while its character is not serious enough and its scale not large enough to cause social dislocation. In recent year, however, the AIVD nevertheless observed a tendency within a certain part of animal rights activism towards more radical action and an implicit preparedness to risk people's lives. We have been confronted with, for example, an increase in rash arson attacks. In order to reverse this development, the AIVD tries to gain insight into the radicalisation process by studying the phenomenon in a broad perspective. In some cases activists evolve from moderate-minded advocates into radical protesters who increasingly violate the physical integrity of people in the interest of animal welfare, thus sliding towards terrorist violence. In order to find out what indications suggest that an individual or group might be going through a radicalisation process, it is particularly important to study the early stages of this process. It is also important to identify catalysts that trigger the radicalisation process. This might enable us to identify and curb a development towards terrorist violence at an early stage.

The question whether to range certain forms of animal rights activism under terrorism is not just a semantic or purely theoretical matter, which has become evident in the debate about it within the target sector. If certain forms of animal rights activism are designated as terrorism by law, it would have specific financial consequences. Since the 11 September 2001 attacks in the United States, insurance companies have no longer been prepared to compensate damage caused by terrorism. Hence there is a risk that certain companies will no longer report terrorist actions against them, which makes it more difficult to deal with such actions and to get a good idea of the real scope of the problem.

3.3 AIVD approach

The AIVD tries to gain insight into the nature, seriousness and scope of animal rights activism by studying the phenomenon thoroughly and extensively, particularly focusing on radicalisation processes within animal rights activism, catalysts influencing these processes and on the radical animal rights activists themselves. Subsequently, the AIVD intends to contribute to the identification of radical elements within animal rights activism and, by providing relevant information, to an adequate approach of the problem.

3.4 Co-operation with law enforcement and intelligence services

Co-operation with relevant law enforcement and intelligence services is of great importance to an adequate approach of animal rights activism. In the past the AIVD mainly co-operated with law enforcement services on an ad-hoc basis. There was, however, a permanent exchange of information through the Regional Intelligence Services of the police forces and with the National Public Prosecutor. Since 2003 the Counter-Terrorism & Special Tasks Unit (UTBT) of the National Police Agency (KLPD) has also intensified its focus on animal rights activism. The AIVD and this unit, each within its own competence, are now jointly trying to gain insight into the radical wing of animal rights activism. To that end there is a regular exchange of information between the KLPD's recently set up reporting centre for animal rights activism and the AIVD. In order to cover transnational activities, the AIVD has developed good relations with European counterpart services dealing with animal rights activism.

3.5 Provision of information to political and administrative authorities

The AIVD seeks to provide national and local authorities with reliable information that is relevant to the performance of their duties. The AIVD tries to enable the authorities to tailor their approach to specific situations. If (part of) the activists are too easily labelled as terrorists, this involves the risk that part of their campaigns will get a more radical and conspiratorial character. Some people in the Netherlands are considering to follow the example of the latest British legal measure, the introduction of the so-called anti-stalking article, but this has already given British animal rights activists cause to adjust their campaigns. Until recently their demonstrations against, in this case, Japanese companies had an open character and were held by day, but since the introduction of the aforementioned article, the campaign has changed to night-time vandalism and to publicly exposing persons not only because of cruelty to animals, but also, for example, as paedophiles.

3.6 Provision of information to society and target group

The AIVD does not only provide information to political and administrative authorities, but where possible it also shares information with a wider range of people in order to provide insight into the phenomenon to society as a whole. By pointing out the risks of radicalisation the AIVD particularly seeks to sensitise and mobilise the moderate-minded forces within animal rights activism. By fuelling the debate within the animal rights movement about the limits of activism, the AIVD seeks to encourage the 'self-cleaning capacity' within the movement, thus enabling animal welfare advocates to check the progress of violent excesses in animal rights activism themselves. Radical activists should realise that crossing the line to terrorism will have far-reaching consequences. If they cross that line, they will be faced with a totally different range of government instruments, including the consequences on a European level. Sanctions and penalties will also be much heavier, while it will be much more difficult to 'return' to a normal position in society. Another aspect to be taken into account is the fact that preparatory activities will soon be made punishable as well. Activists will then be liable to punishment at an earlier stage.

3.7 Co-operation with the target sector

The investment climate is a vital Dutch interest that is harmed by radical animal rights campaigns. In the past, a number of fur retailers, mink farmers, people working in the poultry industry, but also people working with laboratory animals gave up their jobs under pressure of activists. Such a self-chosen 'berufsverbot' is a very undesirable development within the Dutch democratic legal order. An additional negative effect is the fact that these, usually small, companies - disappointed about the lack of support from the Dutch authorities - sometimes feel compelled to take care of their own protection. This might ultimately lead to a situation in which they take justice into their own hands. Some foreign (mainly Japanese) companies with branches in the Netherlands are considering to move abroad because of the continuous series of vandalism incidents and threats to employees. This damages the reputation of the Netherlands as a business partner in the international economic community. There is a risk that companies will move to other (European) countries where they expect to find a less hostile environment. As Mr Griffith, a VVD politician, pointed out on a web site, excesses like a pressurised 'berufsverbot' are unacceptable: 'The continued existence of enterprises that are legally practising their profession should not be threatened in this way'.

The AIVD co-operates and exchanges information with organisations in the target sector on an ad-hoc basis, but we attach great value to these contacts, since they are very helpful in our investigations into animal rights activism. Where possible, the AIVD (mainly through the Regional Intelligence Services) tries to alert individual target companies or employees when a campaign is expected. In the past the AIVD and the police could thus successfully nip a number of campaigns in the bud.

By the end of 2002 the AIVD encouraged potential target companies to report unusual things happening at or round their company, such as possible reconnaissance activities by activists. This initiative also contributes to the combat of radical animal rights activism.

3.8 Security advice

Within the context of the new system for Protection and Security, in which the AIVD - as well as the police - will play an important role, the AIVD follows comments and decisions made by politicians and policy-makers in order to assess whether these may provoke a reaction from animal rights activists. As soon as the AIVD sees a possible risk, it gives security advice - through the proper channels - in order to ensure that ministers, politicians or services who might be the target of an aggressive action are adequately protected.

4 Summary

A small part of the animal rights activists seek to alter animal welfare-related policy and practice in a conspiratorial and violent manner. Analogous to, and influenced by, the situation in the United Kingdom, this small, radical core of animal rights activists who do not hesitate to use violence aimed at people is dangerously sliding towards what should be qualified as terrorism. We are not only confronted with a threatening escalation of violence from the side of animal rights activists, but there is also a risk that potential victims will increasingly take the law into their own hands, because they feel let down by the authorities. These developments also require intensified efforts from law enforcement services. This has been realised by now.

The link between (ultra) left-wing activism and animal rights activism is less obvious than is often assumed. 'Straight-edge' supporters often live in squats and are therefore labelled as squatters and leftist, but they are, in fact, apolitical and conservative. Some people believe that groups like ALF and DBF have their roots entirely in the far left, but this is not correct. And in view of the fact that long-time British ALF activists still have a certain authority and respect, the (extreme) right-wing element cannot entirely be neglected.

In the Netherlands animal rights activism covers a wide range of activists, including both (ultra) left and (extreme) right-wing activists, but also individuals who are not inspired by political motives. It is likely that the politically motivated activists will try to win the big non-political category over to either the right or the left wing.

Left-wing and right-wing animal rights activists may sooner or later catch the public eye because of their other - political - activities. The apolitical activists, however, who usually operate in clandestine cells, keep a low profile, because they consciously avoid contacts with the activist scene.

The growing attention and criticism in media and parliament have scared off part of the movements and groups who used to devote themselves to animal welfare. They have turned their back on the more violent animal rights activist, with whom they often used to sympathise in the past. This has led to a certain split within the movement.

In order to halt the radicalisation of animal rights activism, co-operation between law enforcement organisations and intelligence and security services is not only necessary at a national level, but also at an international level.

Crossing the line to terrorism will have far-reaching consequences for the position of radical animal rights activists. If certain activities are designated as terrorist actions by law, radical activists will be faced with much heavier punishment. And if preparatory activities are also penalised, they will find themselves overstepping the limits of the law at a much earlier stage. Campaigns of animal rights activists affect the investment climate. They also involve the risk of a so-called 'berufsverbot', meaning that people feel forced to seek another job. There is also a risk that target companies and individuals will take the law into their own hands.

In the annex has been described how the long evolution in thinking about animal welfare has gradually evolved from anthropocentrism in Christian ethics (the subordination of animals to humans) to the widely held point of view that animals and humans are equal (anthropomorphism). At a political level, this has given a wide range of organisations and action groups reason to make attempts to have the current policy altered.

Annex

Evolution in thinking about animals

Although organisations devoted to animal welfare emerged as early as in the nineteenth century, it is only in the past few decades that animal rights activism has become a phenomenon that can no longer be ignored in Dutch society. A wide range of groups and individuals protest against what they see as unnecessary animal suffering, offering various types of resistance against persons and sectors whom they hold responsible. A small part of the activists seem increasingly to be shifting the emphasis to actions that violate the physical integrity of people or cause serious damage to property.

Where does this activism have its roots? And how can we explain the radicalisation? These and other questions will be discussed in the analysis below, in which the changing ideas about animals are sketched. The described philosophical line of thinking has also led to corresponding action in the course of time. Especially the (left-wing) politically motivated animal rights activists have shown to be well aware of, and influenced by, the changing ideas about the relationship between man and animal.

The analysis below is partly based upon the findings of Ms Geertrui Cazaux from the University of Gent, Belgium.⁷ Also incorporated are the views of scientists such as Dirk Boon, who held the chair in 'Animal and Law' of the Utrecht university until 1 January 2004, and Titus Rivas, a psychologist and philosopher. Many animal rights activists have adopted the line of thinking described below.

From Bible to biological farmer

Originally the relationship between primitive humans and animals was that of hunter and prey. Man and animal were part of the same food chain. After the stone age, the situation changed, and a separation between man and nature evolved. By living in settlements man obviously placed himself outside nature and above animals. Humans domesticated animals and started to behave as caretakers. This human superiority was also described in the great mythological creation stories. The Old Testament, specifically the Book of Genesis, leaves no doubt about it: 'And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth'.

From several sides it has been pointed out that the term 'dominion' should rather be interpreted as 'supervision' than as 'having power over'.⁸ Animals are part of the creation, they were not created for the benefit of man. Only later has this initial equality evolved into man's exploitation of his fellow creatures. In circles of animal rights activists the aforementioned Genesis quotation is interpreted as follows: in Christianity animals are in principle seen as soulless creatures, created by God for the benefit of man. Animal serves as an instrument to satisfy the needs of man. This point of view that human interest should prevail over the interest of animals is also called anthropocentrism.

Even in Jewish and Greek philosophy we can find these principles, although the Greeks started from the premise of nature where the Jews (and Christians) based their ideas on God. The Greek philosopher Aristotle wrote the following text in the fourth century before Christ: 'Plants exist for the sake of animals, and brute beasts for the sake of man: domestic animals for his use and food, wild ones for food and other accessories of life, such as clothing and various tools. Since nature makes nothing purposeless or in vain, it is undeniably true that it has made all animals for the sake of man.'

Medieval thinkers (philosophers, theologians) shared this view. Thomas van Aquino adopted Aristotle's point of view and incorporated it into Christian terminology in the 13th century. In his perception animals were 'born slaves', created by God in order to be used by man. Animals are therefore inferior to humans, in a hierarchy determined by God. Certain forms of cruelty to animals were already forbidden, however. Not because it was harmful for animals, but because it might be harmful for the owners of the animals. As this might subsequently lead to cruelty between people, Thomas van Aquino concluded that cruelty to animals was morally reprehensible.

In the 17th century the French philosopher and mathematician René Descartes played a major role in thinking about animals. In line with the Christian perception that animals have no soul, he concluded that they had no consciousness either. And that they did not communicate with each other, because they had no language. Descartes also concluded that animals neither had the capacity to experience pleasure nor to suffer pain. He compared animals with machines and believed that the sounds produced by animals during vivisection experiments were actually no different from, for example, the sound of a kettle hit by a hammer.

The rise of humanism during the Renaissance reinforced the perception that man occupies a unique position in the universe. In the 18th century the German philosopher Immanuel Kant indirectly defended animals, however. Although he saw the animal as an object, a physical thing (*res corporalis*), he stated that you can judge a man's heart by looking at how he treats animals: 'He who is cruel to animals will also be tough in his contact with people'.

As opposed to Thomas van Aquino, Kant did not only condemn cruelty to animals because it harmed the owner of the animal, but also because it might lead to cruelty to people.⁹ Kant's views might have been influenced by the Greek mathematician and philosopher Pythagoras, who is regarded as one of the first vegetarians (in the past also called Pythagoreans). A well-known statement by Pythagoras is: 'As long as people massively slaughter animals, they will also kill each other'. By the end of the 18th century several people argued in favour of changing the perception of animals. Especially the British lawyer and philosopher Jeremy Bentham believed that animals had rights. He also believed that they could be in pain: 'The question is not: 'Can they reason?' nor 'Can they talk?' but 'Can they suffer?'.¹⁰

He thus attached a moral value to animals, like he did to all people: women, slaves and coloured people. Bentham believed in 'utilitarianism', i.e. the idea that one should behave in a way that is most likely to result in the greatest possible happiness. According to Bentham, this should also apply to animals. His views were later supported by new scientific findings, like Darwin's evolution theory. This theory provided a scientific basis for the view that the differences between man and animal were differences in degree. This bridged the perceived gap between man and animal. Due to these secular views the sharp distinction between man and animal was largely abandoned to be replaced with differences in degree, and hence also similarities in degree.

As early as in the 19th century animal protection societies were set up in various countries. Also, the first steps were made towards legislation pertaining to the treatment or mistreatment of animals, remarkably enough on the basis of Immanuel Kant's views ('Cruelty to animals may lead to cruelty to people'). In the same period of time, attempts were made to 'educate' the proletariat. Given the then prevailing paternalistic ethics, it is not surprising that the first activities that were tackled were mainly those carried out by the lower classes, like poaching, dogfighting and cockfighting. Upper-class practices like hunting and horse racing were left alone. The protection of animals was evidently part of the general educational ideal for the lower classes. Nevertheless, many of the animal protection organisations and other advocates of better animal treatment were really motivated by concern about animals as such.

Not until the second half of the 20th century did a debate arise on the moral status of animals, which, according to many, had to be defined and laid down by law. As a consequence of the two world wars, as well as the depression in the interbellum period, public interest in the subject temporarily faded, however. But in the 1960s the tide turned. The growing attention for the adverse effect of industrialisation on the environment also added to renewed attention for the moral, social and legal status of animals. Attention for the moral status was even reinforced by publicity about practices in intensive arable farming and stock breeding that degraded animals to meat producing objects. The idyllic farmyard had been replaced with the bio industry, in which living and feeling creatures were used as products. In fact, however, stockbreeding programmes had made cattle dependent on man long before: for example, cows have to be milked for their own good.

For a long time, however, there was no coherent vision on the basis of which animal welfare could be elevated from the status of a moral-ethical subject to that of an urgent political issue. By the middle of the 1970s this situation began to change.

The handbook for animal rights activists is 'Animal Liberation', published by the Australian bio ethicist Peter Singer in 1975. Singer labelled cruelty to animals and animal suffering as immoral on the basis of an utilitarian point of view. He believed in the 'principle of equality' and attached similar value to the interests and preferences of both people and animals. Singer did not mean that people and animals should always be treated equally, but that all creatures capable of suffering had an equal interest in avoiding pain. He made a clear distinction, however, between the various species: he attached little value to insects, but he believed that most mammals, reptiles, fish and birds could experience pain.

A key element of Singer's ideas is the fact that he is against the discrimination of organisms on the basis of their biological species, which is called 'speciesism'. Singer defined this speciesism as 'a prejudice or biased attitude in favour of one's own species against members of other species'. Like the animal ethicist Tom Regan (described in the next paragraph), Singer believed that human reason should not be used to make a distinction between man and animal. Belonging to the human species is not enough, nor relevant: 'Defending human species would be as unacceptable as defending racism'. Singer underlined the importance of feeling in a broad sense, including physical pain and physical satisfaction, but also suffering from a situation of, for example, permanent frustration, as is the case in the bio industry. This has made Singer an example to many animal rights activists, including radical ones like those who liberate animals and commit arson. Singer also believed, however, that caring for the interests of animals automatically led to vegetarianism: 'Consuming beasts is the same as cannibalism'.

In an interview¹¹, however, Singer explained the growing popularity of the fight for animal rights as a result of changing ethics: according to him, we are in a transition stage: 'we are breaking free from Christian ethics, within which men have very much importance, but animals practically none'. However, Singer's ideas have been heavily criticised by both opponents and supporters - particularly the 'left' wing within animal rights activism - insofar as these concerned seriously mentally handicapped people. Singer calls them 'non-beings', and ranks them on a much lower level than healthy animals.

What 'sexism' is to the feminist movement, or 'racism' to the anti-racist movement, is the idea of 'speciesism' to animal rights activists, particularly the leftist ones. The American animal rights ethicist Tom Regan linked speciesism to his 'subject-of-a-life' philosophy, assigning inherent value to every being, whether man or animal, when it is subject of a life. It deserves respect, which obliges us to take care that no harm is done to it. According to Regan (in his book 'The case for animal rights'), each being that is capable of physically and mentally experiencing the good or bad qualities of his or her life in space and time, is valuable as such, irrespective of the use it may have for others.

From this perspective, activities like hunting, setting traps to catch animals, eating meat and the use of animals in experimental research are fundamentally wrong. These activities violate animal rights. Regan believes that: 'Like people, animals, who are subjects of a life, are no reservoirs of material from which people can draw as much as they like in order to satisfy their needs.' But during an interview it appeared that Regan, too, sometimes went too far, when he said that if he had to save someone from a sinking ship, 'he would rather choose a bright dog than a retarded baby'.¹²

In the Netherlands the philosopher of law Paul Cliteur has caught the public eye in the past few years. Although he emphasised to be neither vegetarian nor vegan, he acted as ambassador for the *Stichting Varkens in Nood* (Pigs in distress). Cliteur propagates the introduction of a Universal Convention on Animal Rights. Dirk Boon (see chapter 2), however, considers this unnecessary. Boon was one of the initiators of the Health and Welfare of Animals Act. In principle, this framework Act provides for sufficient possibilities to guarantee the welfare of animals. But according to Boon, the problem is that in practice, insufficient check is kept on the observance of the Act, as a consequence of which undesirable and illegal situations are continuing.

Anthropomorphism

While man and nature in urbanised societies drifted farther apart, an increasing tendency emerged to attribute human characteristics to animals: e.g. thinking, feeling, consciousness. Opponents of animal rights like to use the often extreme forms of this anthropomorphism to demonstrate the preposterousness of this theory. The Belgian fur dealer (and veterinary surgeon) Christian Parmentier wrote a book, '*Het dier en zijn mensenrechten*' (Animal and its human rights), in which he scoffed at anthropomorphists. He pointed out that man, particularly in urban areas, is losing touch with nature. Urban residents have cats and dogs and go to the zoo. Their children think that milk is produced in a factory, and they are showered with cartoons like the ones from the Disney studios, which are entirely based upon the anthropomorphisation of animals.

Animal rights activists defend their views by pointing out that you can very well talk to a dog, but that it is obviously useless to claim that a plant would like to be talked to. It is a fact, however, that activists do not draw a very clear line between man and animal. They feel

encouraged by scientific research conducted in the last decade of the 20th century, which was increasingly focused on the intelligence of animals and their capacity of perception. Scientists analysed the mind as a product of the central nervous system and revealed biological and biochemical mechanisms. In fact, they reduced the mind to a material substance and found that man and animal went through a similar evolution. Mammals and other vertebrates have a consciousness. The researchers allegedly even proved that apes like chimpanzees, gorillas and orang-utans have something like a self-consciousness.

The idea of animals with a self-consciousness inspired Peter Singer to the following conclusion: 'Although it is obviously not the same thing, it is really possible to draw a parallel between saving animals from laboratories and liberating slaves from oppression'. According to him, people who disapprove of animal suffering usually have left-wing views about human oppression. This might account for the fact that a number of animal rights activists are also active in other campaign areas that are often perceived as ultra left, like anti-fascism, anti-imperialism and feminism.

The doctrine of the Animal Liberation Front (ALF)

The British Animal Liberation Front (ALF) has set an example to the current generation of violent animal rights activists in the western world. The organisation emerged in Britain in the 1960s, when a small group of people, the Hunt Saboteurs Association, started to sabotage hunting. In 1972 some members believed that the time had come for more radical action. They set up the Band of Mercy, which proceeded to destroy huntsmen's weapons and vehicles. They set fire to not only seal catchers' boats, but also medicine laboratories. Two members were convicted in 1975. This did not prevent, however, that the group's support grew rapidly and that the Animal Liberation Front was set up.

The ALF seeks to end the various forms of animal suffering by means of direct, illegal action. Usually this boils down to the following actions:

- liberating animals from laboratories or other perceived places of abuse;
- inflicting economic damage to those who cause animal suffering.

The ALF also seeks to expose the perceived objectionable practices, while taking care not to do any damage to 'an animal, human or non-human'. Their adage is: 'Each campaign involving violence is by definition not an ALF campaign'.

The ALF has given wide publicity to its principles - referred to as the ALF doctrine - and recommended modus operandi, for example via the Internet. Reading some of these recommendations gives a good insight into the difficulties with which law enforcement agencies and intelligence services are confronted. Radical activists are strongly recommended to reduce or discontinue their activities for moderate animal rights groups, in order to keep a low profile. They are also recommended to set up their own cell, consisting of two to five persons at most, rather than join an existing cell. The reason is that if the existence of a cell is known, the security awareness of its members is probably inadequate. Security awareness is further encouraged by pointing out that the activists should always expect to be under surveillance and their phones to be tapped, but also by pointing out that claiming responsibility for an action may leave traces. From an ALF perspective, bragging in public about a success, for example a liberation of animals or an arson attack, is absolutely unacceptable.

Calls for violence

Part of today's animal ethicists and philosophers emphasise the more or less equal relationship between people and animals. In their reasoning they conveniently ignore the reality of eating and being eaten between animals, however. Consequently, sooner or later people see through many of their arguments. After all, if you largely identify yourself with an animal, you should forbid all hunting and killing among living creatures.

The fact that the above-described evolution in thinking about animals is sometimes pushed to extremes appears from publications like 'A declaration of war – Killing people to save animals and the environment'. The authors of this thirteen-year-old book, an American couple¹³ writing under the pseudonym of Screaming Wolf, incited to kill people working in branches that contribute to animal suffering in any way: abattoirs, meat processing, transport of poultry and cattle, animal experiments, hunting. More recently, in autumn 2003, the group Only One Solution (O.O.S.) brought out a manifesto in which it made a similar appeal in answer to the question 'Why we must annihilate the human race'. So far there has been no evidence that the spreading of such theories about killing and annihilating the human race has actually inspired people to follow their advice up in practice.

Animal experiments

A traditional and recurring issue in animal rights activism is animal experimenting for scientific, medical or commercial purposes. This question was already subject of public debate in the Netherlands in the nineteenth century. The animal protection society *Sophia Vereeniging tot Bescherming van Dieren* has actively promoted animal welfare since July 1867. A couple of decades later, in 1890, the Dutch anti-vivisection organisation *Nederlandse Bond tot Bestrijding van Vivisectie* (NBBV), now called *Proefdiervrij*, was set up. Part of the opponents of animal experimenting put the emphasis on animal rights, while others mainly focused on a humane treatment of animals if experimenting was inevitable. Gradually the debate led to the Animal Experiments Act (1977), which prescribed that animal experimenting could only be carried out with a licence, that the experiments should not serve a commercial purpose and they were only permitted when no alternatives were available. The Act came into effect in 1986, and six years later it was amended to fit the guidelines of the European Community.

As we mentioned, Christian principles are based upon man's function as a caretaker over animals. From this perspective, certain animal experiments are considered acceptable. Others believe, however, that people who subject animals to experiments show too little respect for life. Concerning the various ethical questions about animal experiments, especially when seen within a scientific context, we can distinguish three levels:

- macro: are animals worth protecting? Do animals have a moral status? The legal criteria for animal experimenting can be criticised on the basis of ethical considerations;
- meso: has the use of laboratory animals been sanctioned for specific projects? Research proposals should be in accordance with legal, economic and scientific criteria and with moral aspects, involving the '3 Rs': Reduction (reduce the number of laboratory animals), Replacement (try to find alternative methods) and Refinement (develop methods that cause as little suffering to laboratory animals as possible);
- micro: on this level we see that individual emotion is mixed with ethical questions relating to the use of laboratory animals.

The average animal rights activist hardly cares for the theoretical debate about macro questions and/or micro issues. They obviously want something to be done about the '3 Rs', but mainly concerning the R for Replacement. On a micro level ethical questions are considered to be of minor importance. The vast majority of activists just focuses on the emotional side of the matter. Dirk Boon pointed out that animal experimenting will remain one of the principal causes for mounting emotions, involving the risk that frustration will lead to radical actions.

Transparency about everything relating to animal experiments might reduce the willingness to engage in action and the vehemence of radical animal rights activists. A recent survey conducted by Intromart at the request of the Dutch Society for the Protection of Animals showed that in society there is a widely felt need for transparency about testing on animals. The majority of the Dutch interviewees were not only against testing on animals, but also wanted to have more information about animal experiments.

The government and changing ideas about animal welfare

Today the notion that everything possible should be done in order to prevent that unnecessary harm is done to animals is widely shared. In 1980 a proposal was drawn up for a 'health of animals act' pertaining to the control of animal disease. During the parliamentary debate about this proposal, it was pointed out that the regulations should not only be focused on the health of animals, but also on animal welfare. This was eventually laid down in the Health and Welfare of Animals Act, which was published in the Bulletin of Acts and Decrees in November 1992.¹⁴ In debates about this subject it is often emphasised that the interests of animals should not be considered in general terms. It is a fact that, for economic reasons, in intensive cattle breeding less animal-friendly measures cannot always be avoided. It is the consumer who determines the attitude of this sector: several surveys have shown that people want the products to be as cheap as possible.

However, when persons devoted to the welfare of both consumer animals and pets talk about animal rights, they rather mean moral welfare rights than legal rights. Part of the people whom can be seen as the brains behind the animal rights movement, but also the activists themselves argue as follows:

- each animal has a right to protection of its physical integrity;
- it has a right to freedom of movement and initiative;
- it has a right to protection against suffering;
- it has a right to a specific species-related habitat;
- in short, it has a right to life.

The *Partij voor de Dieren* (Party for the Animals) usually refers to the aforementioned Health and Welfare of Animals Act, Article 36, paragraph 1: 'It is prohibited to cause pain or injury to an animal or to harm an animal's health or welfare without any reasonable purpose or when reaching such a purpose involves unacceptable actions'. In fact this aspect was already laid down in a report drawn up by the British Brambell Committee in 1965.¹⁵ Brambell formulated five freedoms for animals kept by man. The animals should be free

- from thirst, hunger, and malnutrition;
- from physical and physiological inconvenience;
- from pain, injury and illness;
- from fear and enduring stress;
- to display natural and species-relevant behaviour.

In the opinion of the vast majority of animal rights activists, however, the intentions may be good, but the above-mentioned freedoms have hardly been realised in practice. A promise made by the present Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Nutrition Quality that 'we will seek to improve animal welfare but that the competitive position of trade and industry should remain unaffected'¹⁶ was dismissed by the activists as a contradiction in terms. The fact that rules imposed by the government are not always implemented in practice is a thorn in the flesh of many activists. And sudden policy turnarounds, such as the current minister's reversal of his predecessor's intention to abolish mink farming in 2010, have added to their distrust. But most of the animal rights activists are sceptical about solutions presented by the authorities anyhow. The fact that many committees are studying the use of laboratory animals and that it is possible to file a legal objection may be a step in the right direction, but many animal rights activists consider it an illusion. They do not believe in (slow) official procedures. A major reason for many activists, including environmentalists, to start procedures for lodging an objection is the fact that this puts both the government and the organisations in question to great expenses.

In conclusion, with a view to the future we should mention the views of Michel Vandebosch, the chairman of the Belgian animal rights organisation Global Action in the Interest of Animals (GAIA). He expects that a solution to the animal rights question will not be reached until far in the 22nd century. He bases his pessimism on the unrestrained growth of the world population, which will inevitably lead to an even more intensive meat production industry. Issues like how to interpret the 'caretaker function' will therefore remain on the agenda, also on the agenda of animal rights activists.

Notes

- 1 *Fabel van de Illegaal, Gebladerte* no. 17, *Nieuw rechts en de beweging tegen globalisering* (New right and the anti-globalisation movement).
- 2 In the 1970s there was a Dutch group called *Ekologische Beweging* (ecological movement), an originally extreme right-wing group, which also protested against ritual slaughtering. Active members of this group were Alfred Vierling, assistant to the late Hans Janmaat (politician), and the DBF spokesman in the 1980s.
- 3 The Dutch Veganism Association (NVV) defines veganism as 'a way of life which is entirely free from exploitation of animals'. The NVV propagates a healthy, completely vegetable and mineral diet for the benefit of man, animal, plants and the environment.
- 4 In September 1996 the principal offender was sentenced to 855 days imprisonment less 198 days spent in pre-trial detention.
- 5 The AIVD qualifies an attack as an arson attack or incendiary attack in case of premeditated and more or less orchestrated arson or attempted arson committed by means of a - usually home-made - rather sophisticated and powerful mechanism with the aim to cause substantial damage. This distinguishes an incendiary attack from arson that is usually committed with simpler means and without any specific strategy behind it.
- 6 *Trouw*, 2 August 2003: 'I have never understood why people like mink farmers or researchers working with laboratory animals should be threatened. And liberating animals does not help at all. Politicians will only think "We should not give in to those terrorists", and a breeding ban will be farther away than ever. The subject would become a taboo.'
- 7 *Mensen en andere dieren*. Geertrui Cazaux (editor), 2001.
- 8 The American primatologist James V. Parker studied Bible texts about vegetarianism. His comment about the word 'dominion': 'One of the most misused biblical words is the word dominion. We have dominion over the Earth and its creatures in the sense that we are caretakers and guardians of the Earth'. So he, too, sees man as a caretaker.
- 9 Kant also supported the British jury system, which excluded butchers from sitting on a jury. Because of their cruelty to animals, butchers were considered not to be entirely human.
- 10 Actions groups like *Proefdiervrij* like to quote this statement, pointing out that in view of the great similarity between animal and man, as well as the fact that both are conscious of pain, testing on animals should not be carried out but with great restraint.
- 11 *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 10 July 1996
- 12 Quoted by Gerry van der List in *Elsevier* (17 February 2001): '*Hebben dieren rechten*'.
- 13 Sidney and Tanya Singer of the Good Shepherd Foundation

- 14 It has been pointed out that the Act is in fact a mix of moral views. It seems to justify our current treatment of animals, except for demonstrable excesses. People who wish to devote themselves to the interest of animals in a legal manner may therefore find the Act frustrating.
- 15 See also Policy Document on Animal Welfare (Second Chamber, 2001-2002, 28 286, no. 2)
- 16 Letter from the Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Nutrition Quality, 20 October 2003 (Second Chamber, 2003-2004, 28286 no. 4).

