PETA's Tactics Hurt Animal Rights ... and People, Too

By Alex Berezow, PhD — December 5, 2018

Animals need to be protected. Unfortunately, don't expect the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) to be the ones to do it.

The internationally renowned animal rights organization, which brings in more than $40 million every year [2] in donations, could be putting that sizable sum to good use. There are many horrifying examples of animal abuse occurring all over the world.

Rhinos and elephants are being poached to extinction. Habitat destruction, which often occurs in poor countries, is an enormous threat to biodiversity. The oceans are being over-harvested, decimating populations of fish. And questionable practices, such as putting highly intelligent animals like dolphins and orcas into zoos, represent just a handful of the many animal rights issues about which PETA could play a constructive role.

But PETA isn't interested in that. Instead, they're interested in extremely bizarre and illogical publicity stunts, such as protesting a veterinarian conference [3] because they invited Seattle's famous fish-tossing fishmongers. They also have boycotted innocent video games [4] for children, have encouraged feminists to stop eating eggs [5], and are ideologically opposed to the "institution" of pet ownership [6].

And, of course, completely naked women are featured in many of these strange campaigns, which means that PETA believes it is morally justifiable to sexually objectify women on behalf of cockroaches or whatever they happen to be protesting that day.
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In what can only be described as a purposeful attempt to damage its own poor reputation even further, PETA's latest campaign is to change our "speciesist" language. (If that word confuses you, "speciesist" is like racist or sexist, except it refers to derogatory language about animals.) What sort of offensive phrases need to be updated? Things like, "Don't put all your eggs in one basket." Why? Who knows.

It's tempting to dismiss PETA's antics as a bunch of silliness that should be ignored. That's true to an extent. However, they're doing actual damage to the cause of animal rights. As mentioned above, there are real cases of animal abuse happening around the globe. But by focusing on trivial nonsense, PETA distracts from efforts to implement positive change in the world. Most people consider animal rights activists to be complete loons. Does that help the cause of animal rights?

Far worse, PETA's biggest mission is to eliminate research that uses animals. Doing so would effectively end biomedical research, which means scientists could no longer work to find a cure for cancer, Alzheimer's, or myriad other diseases. From that perspective, PETA is an enemy of science.

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