

<http://www.pahrumpvalleytimes.com/2009/Mar-18-Wed-2009/opinion/27572783.html>

Mar. 18, 2009
Letters to the Editor

Response to 'Questioning challenge'

(PVT Letters to the Editor, March 6 edition)

His (Alex Melonas) whole letter is based on wrong assumptions.

We went to Carson City to meet Nevada legislators face to face and introduce ourselves before the animal rights-driven HSUS (Humane Society of the United States) did. It was a preemptive strike on our part; we didn't go there to oppose any specific (poaching) bills at this time.

Chris and I are not gentlemen, we are very much females and none of us are making money off the animals, so Alex's assumption that our visit was financially driven is false.

My animals are my pets, my money pit. When I fight for people's freedom and right to choose what breed or species of the animals we can own and love, it is based on my true passion and belief in the U.S. Constitution that guarantees us the pursuit of happiness and property rights, which animals are.

Therefore, Alex's feeble attempt to discredit me as a credible source because I supposedly make money off the animals doesn't hold any water.

Even if I was making money with my animals, what is wrong with honest profit-making American business? This country wasn't built on donation-dependent taxpayers' money-sucking, salad-eating extreme animal rights people who make too many assumptions and don't research their subjects before making childish attacks using Latin words, attempting to appear sophisticated. Can't fool any Pahrump horse with it.

According to Alex: "It is correct to argue that if the property status of nonhuman animals was eliminated, various forms of exploitation would end: buying and selling 'pets' and 'food animals,' for example." And that is where our disagreement is, as I don't think animal welfare and profit are mutually exclusive.

In fact, growing vegetables and fruit kills many small "pests." Number-wise in body count, vegans likely cause the death of many more animals than meat-eaters do.

So, East Coast vegan Alex Melonas just gave me another reason to say: Outsiders, stay out of Nevada and specifically Pahrump.

ZUZANA KUKOL

President Responsible Exotic Animal Ownership

Mar. 06, 2009

Letters to the Editor

Questioning 'challenge'

A Feb. 18 article titled "Animal enthusiasts challenge Humane Society agenda" is a rather evasive response from local "animal enthusiasts" to the Humane Society of the United States' actions in Nevada. This response has nothing of any real substance to it -- it's a string of assertions disguised as an "argument."

The position against HSUS seems to be a textbook example of a fallacy of assertion: Bold assertions are made without any substantiating proof predicated on the communicator's assumed "authority" rather than mere opinion. Deconstructing the article and thus exposing its errors illuminates this.

"The group, speaking in support of animal welfare, pointed out that the Humane Society is a national lobbying group, is not affiliated with any of the humane societies or shelters in Nevada and does not represent the interests of Nevada voters."

Perusing HSUS' Web site, in which it details legislative proposals being supported by the organization, the only law -- it's currently pending in Nevada's state legislative body -- being supported by HSUS, would "prohibit the import, export, transport, sale, receipt, acquisition, purchase or possession of any wildlife that is taken, possessed or sold in violation of a law or regulation of the United States, an Indian tribe, another state or territory or a foreign country; increases civil penalties for poaching; allows for the revocation of permits for people convicted of poaching."

Presumably, these "animal enthusiasts" don't intend to argue that existing federal law, for example, is somehow an affront to the interests of Nevada voters. However, this seems to be their contention, given that the legislation in question is primarily an enforcement mechanism for current law. It would seem that the anger here is quite misdirected. It may be a means to circumvent a reasoned, democratic process by inserting an argumentum ad hominem into the legislative framework: If you support putting teeth into existing law, you also support HSUS, and therefore you don't want people to eat the bodies of nonhuman animals.

This conclusion certainly doesn't follow from the legislation in question. It's a veiled slippery-slope argument at best.

"The group ... requested lawmakers look to Nevada animal owners and caretakers, those who are hands-on with animals, to help shape any proposed legislative measures put forth by national animal rights groups like PETA or the Humane Society."

The initial sentence is reasonable but its substance is belied by the deception in the latter half of the sentence: HSUS and PETA are not "shaping the legislation." It's

existing law, and it certainly isn't "animal rights" legislation as these "animal enthusiasts" conceive of the concept.

Two assertions follow, one fact, one ad hominem. It is correct to argue that if the property status of nonhuman animals was eliminated, various forms of exploitation would end: buying and selling "pets" and "food animals," for example. However, the legislation would not begin to accomplish this end.

Juvenility then enters the discussion and the assertion is made: "Many animal rights groups have an agenda of removing the status of animals as property, and they will not be satisfied until everybody is a grass-eating, carrot-eating vegan. We need to be vigilant and stop the insane, lunatic animal rights legislation."

Considering two of the sources, Zuzana Kukol ("president of Rexano, a nonprofit organization based in Henderson, which supports responsible exotic animal ownership") and Chris Vaught ("Vaught owns and works with Australian Kelpies, a herding breed of dog"), the motivation is obviously financial. (That's an ad hominem argument.).

Perhaps not though. I don't believe the passage of this legislation would harm the businesses of these gentlemen. So why the outrage?

Any argument I make would be based on inferences and assumptions, so I'll refrain. However, given the lack of depth here, it seems reasonable to assume that, in keeping with most discussions on the topic of taking the suffering of all animals (human and nonhuman) seriously, reliance on baseless assumptions (just because everyone makes the same assumption, that doesn't make it any less ridiculous) and rhetoric in place of reason (you know, that capacity that makes us "special" and "unique") is the preferred method.

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Washington, D.C.

<http://www.pahrumpvalleytimes.com/2009/Feb-18-Wed-2009/news/26972439.html>

Feb. 18, 2009

Animal enthusiasts challenge Humane Society agenda

The Wendover Times

CARSON CITY -- A group of animal enthusiasts from around the state visited Carson City last Monday to meet with lawmakers as a preemptive measure against the Humane Society of the United States' schedule to lobby for its animal rights agenda in Nevada this past Saturday.

Tim Stoffel from Reno, organizer of the group's efforts, Chris Vaught from Washoe Valley, Zuzana Kukol and Scott Shoemaker from Pahrump and Deanna Croasmun from

Wendover registered as non-paid lobbyists and spoke with various assembly members and senators.

They explained the difference between the animal rights movement and animal welfare, and asked legislators to look into the Humane Society agenda and its connections to People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and other animal rights groups.

The group, speaking in support of animal welfare, pointed out that the Humane Society is a national lobbying group, is not affiliated with any of the humane societies or shelters in Nevada and does not represent the interests of Nevada voters.

The group requested lawmakers look to Nevada animal owners and caretakers, those who are hands-on with animals, to help shape any proposed legislative measures put forth by national animal rights groups like PETA or the Humane Society.

Animal rights is the concept that animals should not be used by or regarded as the property of humans and therefore should not be used as food, clothing, research subjects or entertainment.

In contrast, the animal welfare viewpoint is that it is morally acceptable for humans to use animals for food, in animal research, as clothing and for entertainment, as long as the animals are treated in a reasonable, humane manner.

Kukol, president of Rexano, a nonprofit organization based in Henderson, which supports responsible exotic animal ownership, explained the importance of animals staying labeled as property.

"The U.S. Constitution guarantees American citizens property rights. Animals are considered property under our legal system, and rightly so. Even though we think of our animals as our beloved family members, legally they need to stay property," she said.

"If animals have rights and we are their guardians, we can no longer buy and sell pets and food animals, and if somebody takes your animals from you, it would no longer be considered stealing if we get rid of the legal status of animals as property.

"Many animal rights groups have an agenda of removing the status of animals as property, and they will not be satisfied until everybody is a grass-eating, carrot-eating vegan. We need to be vigilant and stop the insane, lunatic animal rights legislation that has been introduced in many states and at the federal level."

According to Vaught, who owns and works with Australian Kelpies, a herding breed of dog, Nevada animal owners, caretakers and enthusiasts are organizing via an online Yahoo list, NVPetLaw, in response to anticipated animal rights legislation that may be introduced now that the Humane Society has made Nevada one of its targets.

After spending the day with lawmakers, Vaught said, "I think we did good and I am positive we can work together effectively to fight whatever might come our way."

After returning to Wendover, Croasmun, pet owner and exhibitor, said, "This was an important first step. It was a good learning experience for us and gave us the opportunity to introduce ourselves and our position to our lawmakers."

"An interesting point I noticed during the meetings is that many of the lawmakers we talked to said they hunt and fish, and a couple were also ranchers. I think the Humane Society and the other animal rights groups may find Nevada lawmakers a hard sell."