

ARCHIVES - October 12, 2004

ANIMAL FARM

Tonight on Insight - what happens to animals behind closed doors, and can this type of treatment be justified?

JENNY BROCKIE: Hello and welcome to Insight, I'm Jenny Brockie. Every week animal activists raid a farm somewhere in Australia. The focus here is largely on conditions on chicken and pig farms, as well as live sheep exports. But in Britain, animal liberationists have gone to far greater extremes. Individuals have been violently attacked, properties been destroyed, and shareholders and companies regularly targeted and intimidated. Tonight we debate the rights of animals and humans, with scientists, farmers and animal rights activists.

JENNY BROCKIE: I'd like to welcome you all very much to Insight tonight. And I'd like to start first with you, Jerry Vlasak, in Los Angeles. Now, you're a trauma surgeon in accident and emergency at a hospital there. You are also a prominent and radical animal rights campaigner. What sorts of things are you objecting to in terms of the treatment of animals for testing, for example?

JERRY VLASAK, TRAUMA SURGEON: Well, I'm against all testing on animals in laboratories, and I'm against that for several reasons. First of all it's unethical, it hurts animals, and it takes away their right to freedom. Second of all, it's completely and totally scientifically invalid in the 21st century. It has no business being used in scientific laboratories. We are wasting hundreds of millions, if not billions of dollars, on unscientific, unfounded research when, meanwhile, people continue to die of diseases which we know how to treat and cure, and otherwise take care of. So we are wasting money that could be used in human health care, while we torture animals to death in laboratories. I'm against all of it and it should all be stopped.

JENNY BROCKIE: Now I know the focus of a lot of attention in the movement internationally has been on this company, Huntington Life Sciences, which is based in Britain. What is it that that company does that you object to? Can you describe for me some of the kinds of things that you object very strongly to?

JERRY VLASAK: Huntington Life Sciences is the largest contract animal testing facility in Europe. Inside Huntington Life Sciences, 500 animals are tortured to death every single day of the week. In the last 10 years there's been five different undercover investigations in which activists have gone in, gotten jobs at Huntington and filmed the abuses that go on there. Not only are they taking animals and stuffing chemicals down their throats until they die, they are doing transplants or taking organs out of one species and putting them into other species, all in the so-called name of science. But, at the end of the day, none of this is ever going to improve human health, and again this money being wasted in places like Huntington Life Sciences could be going to more legitimate modern research.

JENNY BROCKIE: Now, you've been banned from entering the United Kingdom and I just wonder how far you are prepared to go with this campaign. I mean, we've heard a lot about the kinds of things that have been happening in Britain, people have even been kidnapped in the past by animal liberationists. We've had people intimidated, threatened, other companies associated with companies threatened. How far are you prepared to go? Is violence acceptable in your view?

JERRY VLASAK: First of all, let me say I'm a physician, I spend my day - day in, day out - helping human beings. I am opposed to violence. I'm opposed to violence though, in laboratories, as well as elsewhere, and when you look at the magnitude of suffering that's going on in places like Huntington Life Sciences, there's far more suffering going on there than any place else, and I'm against that suffering and I'm against violence going on in these laboratories. I'm also against violence used against animal rights campaigners. There's been at least half a dozen...

JENNY BROCKIE: How far are you prepared to go though, because you've been quoted as

saying, I think, five lives, 10 lives, 15 human lives would save 1 million, 2 million, 10 million non-human lives. And you've also said that violence is a morally acceptable tactic, and that it might be useful in the struggle for animal liberation. Do you stand by all that?

JERRY VLASAK: I do stand by all that. If you look at historically, at all the struggles against oppression, whether it was against apartheid in South Africa, slavery here in America, other struggles in Northern Ireland, Ireland, Iraq, Vietnam - everywhere that there's been struggles against oppression and for liberation, violence has been used. And, by the way, they are using violence on their side all the time. They are using violence in laboratories where they kill all these animals in slow tortuous ways, and they are using violence against animal rights campaigners. At least a dozen animal rights campaigners have been killed by the animal abusers, but yet no-one seems to be talking about that.

JENNY BROCKIE: So would you take a human life to save an animal life, is this what you are saying?

JERRY VLASAK: I am not saying that's never going to happen.

JENNY BROCKIE: That's pretty close to what you said in the quote.

JERRY VLASAK: Would I advocate taking five guilty vivisector's lives to save hundreds of millions of innocent animal lives? Yes, I would.

JENNY BROCKIE: Pretty scary prospect Professor Graham Jenkin in London. What do you think when you hear that? You're a scientist, you experiment on animals, what's your response to this?

PROFESSOR GRAHAM JENKIN, MONASH UNIVERSITY: Yes, I'm somewhat intimidated by Jerry's attitude. However, I think that I should correct a few statements that he's made, if I may. First of all, in my own field - I'm a scientist, as you said, I experiment on animals, and I don't agree with him that scientific research is invalid, and inappropriate. Scientific research is very strictly controlled. It's controlled very strictly in England, I understand, from the Animal Scientific Procedures Act of 1986. But more specifically in Australia, scientific procedures are very strongly regulated by the Australian Code of Practice for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes and in that code of practice, which is enshrined in law, the types of work which one can undertake in animals is very strictly controlled. So using terms such as "tortured to death", 'violence', and terms like that, I think, are inappropriate in a reasoned debate.

JENNY BROCKIE: You said before you...

JERRY VLASAK: Can up interject for a moment?

JENNY BROCKIE: Just one moment, Jerry. You said before, Professor Jenkin, that you felt intimidated by what Jerry had said. Does it frighten you? Does it make you fearful as somebody who works in this area, when you hear somebody saying that it's appropriate to take a human life to save animal lives?

PROFESSOR GRAHAM JENKIN: I think that's a terrible statement to make, absolutely terrible statement to make. but to mention the fact that you should be able to kill humans to stop animal experimentation is abhorrent to me.

JENNY BROCKIE: Sorry, go on.

PROFESSOR GRAHAM JENKIN: And I'm sure it's abhorrent to the rest of the community.

JENNY BROCKIE: Jeffrey Masson, I'd like to bring you in at this point. You're a psychoanalyst who's written books about the rights of animals. What is your reaction

when you hear Jerry Vlasak say what he just said?

JEFFREY MASSON, AUTHOR, 'THE PIG THAT SANG TO THE MOON': Well, I'm definitely opposed to killing animals or humans, but I do believe it's important to recognise that more and more scientists today are aware of the fact that animals have deep feelings, and these include things - you mentioned suffering, but they also can feel joy, they can miss their loved ones, they can miss their relatives, and all of us who have lived with animals, especially dogs and cats, know this. And one point I'd like to bring up is that the animals in these cages, in laboratories, have the same feelings that our cats and dogs have, and we would be appalled if someone were to say, "I'm going to take your child and I'm going to give them a life of welfare for six years. They are going to have a wonderful life for six years, and then I will have to kill them, they will have to be sacrificed for the greater good of understanding medical problems", we would not accept this, nor would anybody, I think, in this room, accept that this could happen to our cat or our dog. And I think I'm asking scientists to put themselves in the place of those animals and think would they want to be there?

JENNY BROCKIE: I am going to get on to that debate in detail in a moment, but just before we leave this question of tactics about how acceptable, how far it is acceptable to go. I mean, where do you draw the line then, on protests?

JEFFREY MASSON: Well, I used to be a professor of Sanskrits, so I lived in India for many years, and lived sometimes with Ghandians, and I do believe that Ghandi was right about this. I think that in the end you make a deeper impression if you refuse to harm the concept of Ahimsa in India, of not harming any living thing, including any sentient being, including humans or animals. So I would be opposed to any form of violence.

JENNY BROCKIE: Mark Pearson, what about Animal Liberation here in Australia? How far would Animal Liberation here go to protect animals?

MARK PEARSON, ANIMAL LIBERATION NSW: We see that violence is violence, irrespective of how it is applied, and whether it's applied to an animal in an experiment situation, medical research situation. If there is an invasion of the animal, if suffering has occurred, pain, distress, then that is a form of violence. So, therefore, whatever approach we would take would certainly not be a violent approach.

JENNY BROCKIE: So where do you draw the line on protests, how far would you go? Would you break the law?

MARK PEARSON: We would be willing to expose what's happening. If that means opening the door and showing the community what is actually happening behind that door, and that is what the scientists who say 80% of the community are accepting of animal experiments, but a great deal of effort, a great deal of work is put forward through the scientific research establishments to ensure that the public don't see what really is going on, and so the public is kept in the dark.

JENNY BROCKIE: So just to clarify though, opening the door, does that mean breaking into property, breaking into farms, doing what kinds of things?

MARK PEARSON: I think we would see the best way to do it, and that's certainly what happened at Huntingtons, was to actually get people to work in there, wear cameras, film what's happening and expose that to the world, to the public, to bring about change on that level.

JENNY BROCKIE: Professor Graham Jenkin, tell me a little bit about what you do. You experiment on sheep at Monash University in Victoria. Can you tell us exactly what you do to those animals and why you do it?

PROFESSOR GRAHAM JENKIN: Yes, so my research is involved in foetal wellbeing, the wellbeing of the human foetus, and, in fact, the wellbeing of animal foetuses, because there are many situations where the human foetus can be disadvantaged, it does not grow properly or may

have a difficult birth or a premature birth. And an example of this, where animal experimentation has led to advances in the wellbeing of humans and animals would be basic research which was done in the '70s on the mechanisms which initiate parturition.

JENNY BROCKIE: And what exactly do you do to the sheep?

PROFESSOR GRAHAM JENKIN: We measured blood hormone levels. We took blood samples. And that brings up another point in that not all experimentation of the type that I do involves invasive experimentation. A lot of it may be observational, of wildlife, for instance, so we must be careful to define what we are talking about. Anyway, back to the work that I do, the work showed that the hormone cortisol is increased in the foetus very close to the time of birth, and that helps to mature the organ systems in the foetus ready for extrauterine life. That now is used for almost every threatened premature birth in the Western world. That knowledge is used to give women corticoids, which has decreased the incidents of death in premature babies by 50%. It is also used in the veterinary practice to mature the organs to aid animals as well, and that's just one example of the work that I do, which has been of benefit to animals and to humans, through some fairly simple basic research.

JENNY BROCKIE: Jeffrey Masson, can you see benefit in that?

JEFFREY MASSON: It's very difficult to say because I think that we are very rarely allowed - I tried when I was in the United States, and I was writing my book on dogs, I wanted to see how dogs were treated in laboratories, and I was amazed how difficult it is to actually enter. It's true I had the reputation for having written 'When Elephants Weep', in which I was on the side of the animals, but I merely wanted to observe what they were doing, and I think they were not proud of what they were doing, so it sounds good when they talk about it, but when you actually see it. In that case they were doing sleep research, animals that are bred to fall asleep the way pilots sometimes do, and when I saw these animals confined to these small cages, I could see the researchers were very embarrassed by what they were doing because they told me, "We have dogs at home, we play with them, we live with them, these dogs cannot be touched, we cannot take them out." And the general public, and I think that's part of that 80% that seems to come up a lot, does not know about this because it's the old George Bernard Shaw comment that if slaughter houses were made of glass we'd almost all be vegetarian. I think many of us would stop animal research if we could actually see what goes on.

JENNY BROCKIE: Well, Dr Wayne Hawthorne, you do research on pigs for diabetes, to do research into diabetes, can you tell us what happens, and is what Jeffrey is saying right? Do you feel ashamed of what you do, are you reluctant to show it?

DR WAYNE HAWTHORNE, UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY: The reason I'm here tonight is to actually say what we do. We have very much an open door policy. So much so that part of the legislation now formed involves putting lay people and people like yourself, concerned individuals, on to those ethics committees to ensure that there's adequate oversight of what researchers do.

JENNY BROCKIE: So what do you do to the pigs, can you tell me what you do?

WAYNE HAWTHORNE: Certainly, our work is looking at trying to develop cures for diabetes. As part of that we've been developing different models by which we can actually treat the more than 171 million diabetic people with diabetes. Now, with these experiments, what we do is we try and develop alternate strategies of insulin treatment. Insulin, as you are probably all aware is a hormone that was developed in an animal model back in 1922 by Banting and Best.

ELIZABETH AHLSTON, PRESIDENT HUMANE RESEARCH: No.

WAYNE HAWTHORNE: It's been then used, pig insulin has been used to treat diabetic patients for some 82 years.

JENNY BROCKIE: Elizabeth, you are disputing this.

ELIZABETH AHLSTON, PRESIDENT, HUMANE RESEARCH: Well, I'm sorry, I'm just getting very worked up about this because one of the things that researchers always do is to go right back to the 1920s and the 1930s. Now, it isn't true that Banting and Best discovered that insulin was in the pancreas. It was discovered through autopsies on patients who died from diabetes.

JENNY BROCKIE: But are you arguing that there is no benefit.

ELIZABETH AHLSTON: Yes.

JENNY BROCKIE: From testing on animals.

ELIZABETH AHLSTON: Yes.

JENNY BROCKIE: At all?

ELIZABETH AHLSTON: At all.

JENNY BROCKIE: How can you say that there's no benefit involved in testing or using animals in relation to medical science?

ELIZABETH AHLSTON: Because they don't react like we do, because a quadruped is not a model for a human. Now, they mostly use rodents because they are cheap. A rat is not a little furry human being, it has no gall bladder, it can't vomit, it runs around on four little feet with a long tail and whiskers. It can manufacture its own vitamin C, which we can't do. It can gnaw through a lead pipe, and I would...

JENNY BROCKIE: All right. Fiona has been dying to say something in relation to this.

ELIZABETH AHLSTON: So have I, for ages.

JENNY BROCKIE: And I would like to hear from you, Fiona, because I now you have a specific interest in spinal cord injuries.

FIONA SHEPHERD, SPINAL CURE AUSTRALIA: That's right.

JENNY BROCKIE: What's your reaction to that?

FIONA SHEPHERD: Well, I've got a few comments for everyone here tonight that's already had an opportunity to speak. I'm an animal lover, I love animals. If we say we don't have any medical research experiments on animals, we wouldn't be here today as advanced as we are. We are in the 21st century, that's correct, we need to move forward. There's no excuse for a person like myself, at 25 years of age, to be imprisoned into a wheelchair. My life is a prison, and I refuse to accept that we cannot continue medical research for that. Look, I agree...

PROFESSOR GRAHAM JENKIN: Jenny, can I interrupt here, please?

JENNY BROCKIE: Just let Fiona finish, and then by all means, yes.

PROFESSOR GRAHAM JENKIN: OK, that's fine.

FIONA SHEPHERD: OK, we talk about the Nazis, and we don't want to go back to that stage, we definitely do not want to go back to that stage, but if we do not allow animal research to happen in a clearly controlled environment, we will possibly go to a situation where we are having to do

treatments on human beings. Now, we have test tubes and we have tissues. We cannot in every situation - there is a lot of place for that and there has been a lot of developments for that as well - wonderful work, but we can't say, in everything, especially the spinal cord - yes, you can, that's your opinion, I've got my opinion and I'd like to be given the opportunity to finish. I'd like to be given the opportunity to finish, if that's OK?

CARLIE MARTIN, HUMANE RESEARCH: OK, OK. OK.

FIONA SHEPHERD: Now we can't replicate everything from one tissue to another bodily tissue. It's not possible in every situation. We need to be able to see what happens in the total system, the total body. We can't see that in a test tube and I feel sorry for anyone who believes that, because I think we all need to go back to school.

CARLIE MARTIN: I feel sorry for you Fiona because you are living on false hopes. You are not going to be ever cured by trying to recreate spinal injury in a rat which has a completely different spine to humans. That's what's so sad that you are totally misled.

FIONA SHEPHERD: It is actually the most similar, if you ask any scientist...

CARLIE MARTIN: I really feel sorry for you that you are living on these hopes that you are going to be cured and it's not going to happen, it's not going to happen.

FIONA SHEPHERD: Do you not understand that? It is actually the most similar to any - the spinal cord of a rat and a mouse is very similar to the human spinal cord, a lot more similar than a...

CARLIE MARTIN: It's upright, it's different.

JENNY BROCKIE: I don't think we are going to resolve it here. We obviously have two very different points of view, and I would like to involve some other people, Fiona, so quickly, very quickly.

FIONA SHEPHERD: I feel very sorry for the people - Jeffrey Masson I think you are a wonderful person, and I love what you are doing, I feel sorry that people like yourself are unable to go into a lab and have a look at animals and what's going on because there's people like the people sitting behind you and the gentlemen sitting next to you that are hindering that. I'm from Western Australia and anyone here is invited to have a look in those labs. I do it all the time. Everyone off the street goes in. We invite politicians, everyone goes in.

JENNY BROCKIE: OK. OK. One at a time. Wayne, you wanted to have a comment here.

WAYNE HAWTHORNE: I just wanted to follow up on the issue of not being able to cure things. Now, we've been using insulin. We've now been able to do, through our animal research in our facility, we've been able to develop a whole pancreas and kidney transplant program. We've transplanted 200 patients with kidneys and pancreas. We've now, for expediency, looking at trying to transplant the individual islet cells, we've now been able to find a cure there and transplant patients with the islet cells. We've transplanted six patients so far with that program.

JENNY BROCKIE: Jerry Vlasak I know that you hold this view very strongly that none of this kind of research is useful. I mean what about all those people with pig's tissue as heart valve replacements what about that kind of thing? Aren't they life-saving operations?

JERRY VLASAK: Let me just address this whole issue about diabetes. First of all, half of the diabetic cases in the world can be cured with a change in diet and a decrease in the amount of obesity that we are seeing. I'm the only clinician here and if you are talking about really making a difference for people out in the real world, this is where the strides are going to be made. If you look at the transplantations, islet cell transplantations, pig organ transplantations, all of these other things, these are incongruously expensive procedures that are going to be done for the few thousand of the world's richest people, while meanwhile 20,000 children a week die of

preventable diarrhoeal diseases because they don't have access to clean water. To me it's unethical to be spending...

JENNY BROCKIE: I would just like to call you to account for some of your claims. I mean you say that this stuff is never ever useful. I wonder what you say to people walking around with pig's tissue as heart valve replacements, about how useful they think it is?

JERRY VLASAK: I would say that those may be useful, but there are other ways, there are heart valves that don't come from pigs that are walking around in just as many people as pig valves are. So I am not saying that nothing has ever been useful, I'm saying that the things that are useful, there are other ways to provide the same aspects of health care.

JENNY BROCKIE: Rachel Harris, what about you? You are a diabetes activist, if you like. What do you think when you hear this debate?

RACHEL HARRIS, JUVENILE DIABETES RESEARCH FOUNDATION: There's a lot of misconceptions about this disease. It's a deadly disease, it's not the type you get when you are older and it's connected to diet and exercise, this is something children as young as 8 weeks old can get and within 20 years they are looking at kidney failure, blindness, amputations and if you put yourself in the position of a parent or a person with that disease, you'd be wanting that sort of research to be going ahead.

JENNY BROCKIE: But can you understand people being concerned about animals being the victims of this kind of research, if you like, that we are treating animals as the victims.

RACHEL HARRIS: No, you see I actually look at it in a different way, and I actually think that it's unethical not to do it.

JENNY BROCKIE: And why do you think that.

RACHEL HARRIS: Because what is ethical about letting a person with a serious disease, or a spinal cord injury, live with pain, with suffering? How ethical and moral is it to say to them, "We could fix it, but we are not going to."

JENNY BROCKIE: Jeffrey Masson, this is a question for you - what do you think about that argument, about the relativity?

JEFFREY MASSON: Well, I'm a little bit troubled by it because I've been doing a lot of research. I lived in Germany for a while and I was looking in some depth at what was going on during the Third Reich, and they were making the argument and I realise you're not, probably nobody in this room would make it, but they were making it. The Jews were animals, and therefore anything you did to a Jewish prisoner of war was justified, especially if it was going to help a superior race, namely the Germans, and we do a little bit of that with respect to animals, we think of them, in some ways, as inferior, and I'm urging people to think that in certain ways - let's talk about rats for a second - rats may be our superior when it comes to affection. I live with two rats and they are remarkably affectionate animals, they really are. People are shocked to hear this. But the people who experiment on them don't know that because they don't give them a chance.

JENNY BROCKIE: So you are saying they've got feelings, they feel things?

JEFFREY MASSON: They have very deep feelings and they may be... I mean, I think dogs are better at friendship than humans, I think that elephants grieve more deeply than humans, I mean we admit this when it comes to climbing or swimming or flying, but I think in the next 20 years we are going to have to recognise that we have a great deal to learn from animals, about our own emotions and we are selling them short if we treat them only as replacements for humans.

JENNY BROCKIE: Graham Jenkin, what do you say to that, do animals suffer in this research, and can you understand what Jeffrey is saying, that his concern is that we are

treating animals in an appalling way, we are not giving them the respect they deserve?

PROFESSOR GRAHAM JENKIN: I come back to the point that suffering must be minimised and to exemplify that point I must come back to something that Wayne said, and Jenny, the person with the spinal cord defect very bravely explained. I just have to clarify the situation in Australia because Wayne mentioned animal ethics committees, and I think it's terribly important that your audience should be aware that any experiment which is performed in Australia on animals has to be justified, and I use the term strongly, justified to an animal ethics committee which is properly constituted. That would be appropriate.

JENNY BROCKIE: Dr Shae-Lee Cox, you are a reproductive physiologist and you've sat on these animal ethics committees, how strict are they and how much of what they decide is actually followed through on in terms of protecting animals.

DR SHAE-LEE COX, MONASH UNIVERSITY: The committees have a lot of power over what scientists do. If an application which is written in great - should be written in great detail is not accepted by the committee the researcher is not allowed to do anything to an animal.

JENNY BROCKIE: How heavily is that monitored? I mean how do we know that whatever decisions you make on those committees are actually followed through, that people are checking that this is actually what's happening?

DR SHAE-LEE COX: There's a reporting process whereby annually, the scientists - or more frequently as deemed by the committee - report to the animal ethics committee on how their experiments are progressing in relation to the aims of the experiments, and also to the welfare of the experiments, of the animals.

JENNY BROCKIE: But does anyone go and look?

DR SHAE-LEE COX: Yes, they do. The animal ethics committees inspect laboratories and the animal house facilities.

JENNY BROCKIE: And how many inspectors are there?

DR SHAE-LEE COX: That would depend on the size of the committee, but there has to be...

JENNY BROCKIE: How big does the committee get? I'm trying to get some sense of how realistic it is to expect that you are going to be monitoring this sort of thing effectively.

DR SHAE-LEE COX: Sure, the minimum size of a committee is one member from each of the four categories.

JENNY BROCKIE: Yes, just quickly, Jerry.

JERRY VLASAK: I would just say I've been on those committees and I can just tell you that there's virtually never a proposed project that's rejected. These are the same ...

PROFESSOR GRAHAM JENKIN: Jerry, you've not been on our Australian committees.

JERRY VLASAK: These committees are also having either the same scientists sitting on their committees, so it's a good old boy rubber-stamp network in the vast majority...

PROFESSOR GRAHAM JENKIN: Jerry, that is...

JENNY BROCKIE: OK, OK. I don't think it's worth pursuing this because I think, with respect, Jerry, you are really not across the situation in Australia, in the kind of detail that

some of the people here are. Yes.

WAYNE HAWTHORNE: With regard to the make-up of the ethics committees. These can be private individual veterinarians that are involved. They have no vested interest in the research that's being done, nor do the people who are there from the antivivisection or other sectors. We, ourselves, have people from the RSPCA on our committee. Now the lay people are also - anyone like yourself - is more than welcome to be members of these committees.

JENNY BROCKIE: We do have to move on. Just very, very quickly, Graham Jenkin, one of the things that interests me about this is that we did have real trouble getting scientists who experiment on animals to appear on this program tonight, and I appreciate that you have, and a couple of others have, but we contacted many, many scientists who wouldn't appear. Now, I wonder if there is some discomfort about what you are doing, or about defending what you are doing in the profession, if people are a bit uncomfortable about admitting what they do, or is it fear of being targeted by the kind of tactics that we heard described earlier on?

PROFESSOR GRAHAM JENKIN: I would think it's fear of being targeted, I think it's the latter. I was trained in the United Kingdom, and I know that the lack of openness there led to the problems which they are even now experiencing. We don't have so much of that problem in Australia because we work very closely, as scientists, with the animal welfarists and the lay people and the veterinarians, as Wayne mentioned. However, I do know of scientists who have had bomb threats against them in Australia, who have had their children threatened, and themselves personally threatened, and I am, therefore, very concerned myself by appearing on this program I might well be targeted.

JENNY BROCKIE: Have you been targeted, Wayne?

WAYNE HAWTHORNE: I, myself, yes, and the reason I came on this program was to actually say I am not proud of what I do, but I am involved with the research work because we are trying to find a cure for these diseases.

JENNY BROCKIE: When you say you are not proud of what you do, I'm interested in getting you to explain that. What do you mean by that?

WAYNE HAWTHORNE: Obviously I care for animals, I have pets of my own, but I feel for the greater benefit for mankind and people suffering from diseases such as diabetes. We have to make some decisions which are hard. Unfortunately, these involve experimentation, but with appropriate care we can do this. We allow our animals, when we've finished with them, we've rehoused animals. I, myself, have taken animals home as pets following experimental work. So there is no such thing as animals always dying in experimental programs. That's not true.

JENNY BROCKIE: Well, let's have a look at what's happening with animal rights activism here in Australia. Ruth Ballint has been spending some time with animal liberationists in Melbourne.

REPORTER: Ruth Ballin

MAN: Now, look, there's some animal rescue crowd here, there's about eight of them, by the looks of it. They want to stop the transport of the animals, mate. What do you want to do about it?

This stand-off is happening at a broiler chicken farm late on a Sunday night in Victoria.

FARM OWNER: I really haven't got anything to discuss with you.

A group of animal liberation activists has been secretly visiting this farm for the past seven months, rescuing chickens and documenting cases they allege demonstrate cruelty and neglect. This is the animal rescue team's 13th raid on this particular farm. It is

10:30pm when they start, and it's going to be a long night.

PATTY MARK, ANIMAL LIBERATION: OK, now crossing the paddock because it's really flat, and headlights travel far, if we see a car coming everybody has to get down flat, wear your face masks - it will protect your lungs, and we'll disinfect our shoes here, and when we get there we'll put our biosecure gear on. Make sure your phones are on silent.

From their meeting place it's just a short drive to the farm.

How are you feeling? Are you feeling nervous?

MAN: Not really, we've done it so many times before, so it's just..

WOMAN: It's a bit exciting, actually.

WOMAN 2: Everybody meet at the container.

WOMAN 1: There's a car coming.

The birds they rescue tonight are in pretty poor shape.

PATTY MARK: It's actually an open fracture, that's her bone, it's broken through all the layers of tissue here. That's a really traumatic injury.

For Animal Liberation, it's been a long road to try and get what they see as justice for these chickens, but it doesn't look like it's going to pay off tonight. Patty Mark calls the police.

PATTY MARK: We would really appreciate if you could come, sir. There's some appalling cruelty in that shed. Because we've been doing an investigation, we have - we've rescued over 150 birds. We have video evidence, vet reports. We have the birds' permission, we are here for them.

When the police finally do arrive, they seem reluctant to take Patty Mark's request seriously.

POLICEMAN: To prevent any kerfuffle here, because I don't have the resources that I really need in case this turns ugly, OK. Now...

PATTY MARK: If I can't turn to you, who...

POLICEMAN: They are going to start their loading, that's what they are doing...

PATTY MARK: You can't let them start.

POLICEMAN: ..and we are going to go from there.

PATTY MARK: No, you can't let them start.

Tensions are running high by the time the owner appears on the scene.

FARM OWNER: There is no need for you to be here.

ACTIVIST: For as long as there's animals suffering like they are in those sheds, we'll be here.

FARM OWNER: There's a court, go to court. Just go to court. Go to court.

PATTY MARK: No, I want them to see.

FARM OWNER: Get off.

In the end, the team are unable to stop the transportation of these 40,000 chickens to the abattoir. Four of them are arrested for trespass and four of them are escorted off the property. With them is one very lucky chicken.

JENNY BROCKIE: Ruth Ballint with that report. Well, Patty Mark, you were there in that report. I understand the farm you raided is relatively new and it's been inspected and it complies with the regulations, is that correct?

PATTY MARK, ANIMAL LIBERATION, VICTORIA: It absolutely does not comply with the regulations. I've been in over 100 factory farms on four continents. I've yet to see any of these factory farms comply with the regulations. Every single farm we go into we find serious and appalling violations to the code of practice and to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. We find sick and dying birds. We find live birds eating the rotten, green, mouldy carcasses of other birds. We find birds too weak to stand, too crippled. They are lame and crippled, they can't access food and water.

JENNY BROCKIE: When I was saying about the regulations, I meant the actual building complies with the regulations, is that right?

PATTY MARK: No. For instance, we were able to get - like you said, it's a brand new farm they are still proposing to build four sheds, which we are going to try everything we can do to stop. They are totally outside their planning permit. For instance, they still don't have locks or even handles on the doors, it's still a building site, yet they have, like you pointed out, 40,000 birds in each of four sheds. The sheds aren't even complete yet. The conditions in the sheds, they are not doing the litter properly, none of the actual code conditions are being followed for the building as well as the animal cruelty ones.

JENNY BROCKIE: John Wilkinson, you are a chicken grower. Do you think it's acceptable for chickens to end up like the ones we saw in that story, do you have any qualms about that?

JOHN WILKINSON, BROILER CHICKEN FARMER: No, no, I don't, but I am not here to defend the very, very few in this industry who don't meet those sort of guidelines, and I challenge you to come into my shed and find chickens that have been dead like that for so long, and we don't - we get rid of those birds, put them down humanely, the very few that are lame.

JENNY BROCKIE: But do you accept that that is going on? I mean obviously it's going on in the industry somewhere.

JOHN WILKINSON: Once again, I said I am not here to defend the very few. What I'm more concerned about, and what some of the animal liberationists haven't focused on is the recent review into the density of chickens in sheds where, against the recommendations of the people who provide the genetic stock, chickens are allowed to be housed in those sheds up to 40kg per square metre. This is where some of those examples arise. In fact, a former director-general of NSW Agriculture once thought it was a bit of a joke to say, "Well, the chickens are so tightly packed in those sheds, they don't know they are dead because they can't lie down." We are totally against that.

JENNY BROCKIE: Now where is the pressure for that coming from because you are a grower, I'm interested in the relationship between the big companies here.

JOHN WILKINSON: Yes, we grow chickens under contract. Many of us are well and truly in debt

because every few years they come along and demand new infrastructure be put in without any promise or any repayment for that infrastructure, and recently they've increased the number of chickens at quite a few processors, to the point where there are far too many chickens in that shed. When this might work fine under a lot of conditions, but when things come unwound, those birds die in large numbers and, as a result of that, one of the reasons why I have only a very short-term contract is because I've objected to that, I objected to the fact that some of the designs of the sheds do, in fact, deny chickens access to fresh air, only except by ventilation, and there's no natural ventilation allowed in those sheds.

JENNY BROCKIE: And you were denied a contract as a result of that objection?

JOHN WILKINSON: As a result of that, yes.

JENNY BROCKIE: Patty, do you think you are targeting the right people here, if you are targeting the growers? If they are under pressure from bigger companies to do this kind of thing, is the targeting correct?

PATTY MARK: This gentlemen was right to point out they're under tight restraints. And he has rightly pointed out - I've been in sheds with 40,000 birds per shed and 20,000 birds per shed.

JENNY BROCKIE: And how widespread are you saying this ism, though, in this industry?

PATTY MARK: Like I said, I've been on these farms on four continents. It's the same - each shed is almost identical, exactly like you see a KFC or a McDonald's anywhere in the world. You walk into them anywhere in the world and you find the same thing.

JENNY BROCKIE: Sean Rodger, you are also a chicken farmer yourself, how do you feel about this, and how do you respond to those comments?

SEAN RODGER, BROILER CHICKEN GROWER: Well, let's look at another issue - you get eight or 10 people, as they had on that farm, going into a shed with video cameras and things like that. They are going to go in there and disturb the birds, scare them, and cause more harm than what's going on in there. We do our best under very trying conditions. It's not how many birds you have in the shed - it's, as John said, the kilos per square metre. Now, you can have 60,000 birds in there. If they are removed at the right weight, it's not a problem. But it's when you get a lot of kilos per square metre and the welfare rules in this country say you are allowed to have 40kg a square metre. Now, not all the processors go to that level, but some of them do push that level, and what we are saying is that is totally incorrect. We believe that it should be closer to 30kg per square metre because we are concerned about what goes on in our sheds. We do go in there and look after our sheds.

JENNY BROCKIE: Mark Pearson.

MARK PEARSON: I think what's important to recognise with this is not only the problems with some of the birds that are crippled and are dying, or have died, but that is a measure of exactly what are the welfare standards or situation for all of the birds that are surviving. These birds are bred by the growers to become cripples, and we are looking at baby young birds. And I agree with the growers here, they're caught up in the abusive system just as much as the animals are. It is the growers, the Inghams, the Barter, the big corporate farming enterprises that are pushing these birds to become cripples within two to three weeks.

JENNY BROCKIE: I should point out that we did invite those companies, and some others, I think, to appear on tonight's program, but they declined, just for anyone who's wondering why they are not here tonight. Do you support any kind of factory farming, though?

MARK PEARSON: Absolutely not, because any intensive or factory farming, it is just an absolute part of the farming that animals will always suffer immensely because basically all of their

behavioural needs and interests cannot be met in such confinement.

JENNY BROCKIE: Paul Hemsworth, you've been studying animal welfare in farming situations. Do you agree with what Mark's saying, do you think these animals suffer?

PROFESSOR PAUL HEMSWORTH, ANIMAL WELFARE SCIENCE CENTRE, VIC: I think there are examples of suffering, but I think we just need to go back a step and have a look at how these intensive systems developed. I mean these intensive systems developed as a consequence of society giving farmers signals that they wanted cheap and safe food, and for many decades the industry responded. And these intensive systems developed, particularly in terms of trying to control things like feed intake, hygiene, etc. But I think we've got to the situation now where there are some difficulties with some of these intensive systems and research is being conducted to look at some of the alternative production systems. But what we often find is that once we move animals from these conventional intensive systems to some of the alternative systems, we just change the type of welfare problems that we encounter.

JENNY BROCKIE: But would you have the problems if they'd never been put in the intensive situations in the first place?

PROFESSOR PAUL HEMSWORTH: Well, there are problems, also, in extensive systems. I mean, the difficulties in extensive systems is the issues that relate to, for example, the frequency of inspection and the opportunity to intervene when a problem develops. I mean, I think most of the research indicates that irrespective of the housing system you look at, there are positives and negatives in terms of the welfare of the animal. I think the challenge is to try to minimise those negative elements in the production systems that exist.

JENNY BROCKIE: Another contentious area is the live export trade. Now Ralph Hahnheuser, you caused quite a stir when you put pizza ham into the feed-lot of sheep that were bound for export to the Middle East making them, as a result, unacceptable as a product for religious reasons. Now, those animals were eventually killed for consumption anyway - how did that help animal welfare?

RALPH HAHNHEUSER, ANIMAL LIBERATION, SA: Well, one of the interesting things about the live export trade, it is one of the most vile trades that Australia is involved in. Literally millions of animals have died en route on transport on these ships of shame. We've seen many more millions of animals suffer, that haven't expired on these ships, and at the end of the day these animals are subjected to a very cruel and brutal ritual slaughter in the overseas country of destination. And so, it's certainly my view that any protest action that removes this additional burden of suffering from the animals, so that the animals are spared this journey and this terrible fate when they arrive in the country of destination, can only be a positive one in terms of animal welfare outcomes.

JENNY BROCKIE: So you are looking at a bigger picture, you want to stop it altogether and you think it's a way of doing that - by making the trade unreliable?

RALPH HAHNHEUSER: It's not just the animal liberation movement that's saying that. You look at senate committees, even 20 years ago, that looked at the animal welfare implications of the live export trade and they recommended to the government of the day that on animal welfare grounds alone this trade should end, and that perhaps a carcass trade or value-adding in this country in exporting carcasses would be the more appropriate way to go because of the cruelty and suffering inflicted on the animals in the live export trade, and it recently, with the Keniry inquiry has also vindicated the position of the opponents to the live export trade and indicated that there are very severe problems within the industry, and even the very mild recommendations to reduce the shipments during the Australian winter were simply not implemented by the Government here.

JENNY BROCKIE: Malcolm Edward, you export sheep. What do you think about what Ralph Hahnheuser did?

MALCOLM EDWARD, SHEEP FARMER AND EXPORTER: Well I understand the matter is before the court so I am not really certain when I could make statements, but when the incident happened, the general consensus within our industry was it was industrial sabotage, it was no different to the pharmaceutical situation where the drugs were doctored. And probably in his case, he thought it was a good idea at the time, but it didn't achieve anything. The animals themselves, if they had of stayed there they would have had to have been slaughtered anyway because they'd gone into a quarantine situation. It didn't achieve anything.

JENNY BROCKIE: But what about the conditions of live export, I mean when we see images of sheep bound for export very often the conditions look appalling.

MALCOLM EDWARD: The reason why I am here is because the media that I have seen in the past is not correct. It's false. There's a lot of false media that's been put forward, it's old footage, and things have improved. I have got to thank these people to some degree because we need to stay in this trade. The benefit is that if we are there we will make things better. If we don't supply that trade other countries will do because the Saudis and so forth will not stop buying sheep just because we don't supply them. At the moment the Saudis are getting sheep from Uruguay. Now, they are not putting sheep under the same conditions in there as we are.

JENNY BROCKIE: So what efforts do you make to make sure the conditions are good?

MALCOLM EDWARD: Not me personally, but the industry itself is working very, very quickly on improving the conditions and the Keniry report is part of it.

JENNY BROCKIE: I would like to wrap up now and try to draw all the threads of some of this together, because we've talked about a lot here tonight. I wonder in the end, when we talk about the rights of animals, and we hear the arguments put on both sides of this debate, I mean, Mark Pearson, what ultimately do you want? Do you want to convert everybody to being vegetarians, that we never kill animals, that we never eat animals - what is the aim of animal liberationists?

MARK PEARSON: Well obviously Animal Liberation agrees and welcomes vegetarianism and veganism, but we also welcome people who, like tonight, have seen conditions inside farms, behind the closed doors of meat that they have been eating and they want to choose something else, to eat meat where the animal has been brought up in better conditions, in more humane conditions. So we see that for the time being many thousands of people are still going to want to eat meat or consume animal products in Australia, and so right at this moment, not far down the road from where we are sitting at this moment, thousands of animals, hundreds of thousands of animals are kept in conditions and confinement and in situations which most reasonable people, if they walked through the door, would find appalling. So we say we have a direct responsibility to each individual animal in that situation, to do everything we can to bring a far better quality of life, while the legislation and while the community are still wanting to consume them.

JENNY BROCKIE: Jeffrey Masson, is your aim to wipe out the raising of animals for food altogether?

JEFFREY MASSON: I think we need to take - we've heard a lot about the word welfare, and I think we have to take a quantum leap and move from welfare to happiness, what makes these animals happy. What would these animals choose if they have a voice, and that's why we speak for them, because they don't have a voice. Would they choose to live under these circumstances? Most people who 'raise' or grow these animals are not doing it because they love the animals, they love the profit. We have to stop thinking in those terms, just as slave holders 200 years ago were saying, "What are we going to do if we can't export slaves any longer?"

JENNY BROCKIE: But you are saying we've got to think about what the animals like, I mean a lot of people like eating meat.

JEFFREY MASSON: Yes, but more and more people are recognising that it's not good for our planet, it's not good for the animals and it's not good for us. I think 100 years from now, nobody

will be eating meat.

JENNY BROCKIE: What do some of our other audience think of that, yes.

MAN IN FOCUS GROUP: When you just said a lot of people like eating meat, I'm sure a lot of people enjoyed having slaves, it meant less work for them. I'm sure a lot of men enjoyed not having women in a political sphere, enjoyed having women sitting at home cooking dinner for them every night. It doesn't mean it's the correct thing to do. It means a certain number of people do it.

JENNY BROCKIE: What about some of the others here, yes, up the back.

WOMAN IN FOCUS GROUP: Continually we seem to value anything in the planet, including animals - you know, their worth - on how human beings can benefit from them. They have a worth of their own to this planet, not just how much they can benefit human beings. So I just think that we don't look at the worth of the animals enough.

JENNY BROCKIE: Do you eat meat?

WOMAN IN FOCUS GROUP: Yes, I do, and I'm - you know I struggle with that myself, so, yes.

JENNY BROCKIE: Final comment from the farmers, yes.

SEAN RODGER: I'd just like to say that we need to make a decision, especially the animal libbers, as to whether they want intensive agriculture or not because we have to decide whether we want the world's population because we are struggling as it is now to feed the world's population. We are quite happy to let our chickens outside, roam around in the paddocks, but we are not even going to meet the demand of Sydney, let alone the whole of Australia. Now maybe we could put our hands up and kill off half the population and do our scientific experiment on that human half who is going to die because we are not going to be able to feed the world's population.

JENNY BROCKIE: And just a final comment from our two guests overseas. Graham Jenkin, I'll go to you first, and we've heard... actually no, I won't go to you first. I'll go to Jerry Vlasak first, because from what you said earlier on, Jerry Vlasak, you seem to take the most extreme position here of all the animal liberationists we've spoken to. Certainly the people in Australia don't seem to take as extreme a view as you do. Now this seems a very polarised debate from where you sit. Can you see any room to actually move, negotiate with the other side on this question of animal testing, for example?

JERRY VLASAK: I think the negotiation is that if they stop wasting our money on animal experimentation, humans will be a lot better off. I don't think it's an either/or. It's time to enter the 21st century, it's time to use modern experimentation techniques and it's time to help more human beings.

JENNY BROCKIE: You'll keep pushing as hard as you suggested earlier, including violence against other human beings, in the name of this cause?

JERRY VLASAK: Again, I'm against violence, I'm against the violence that's done to millions of animals and I'm against the violence in this world. It's a violent place and I think each of us is responsible for decreasing the violence in this world as best as they can and that's what I intend to do.

JENNY BROCKIE: Professor Graham Jenkin, a final comment from you and the same question, I suppose - do you think there's room to meet, to negotiate at all in what seems a very polarised debate and do you think scientists should lift their game on some of this

stuff?

PROFESSOR GRAHAM JENKIN: I'll finish by agreeing with your previous speaker in that I'm also against violence and, I think, all credit to the Australian system in that they are trying to incorporate interaction between scientists and animal welfarists.

JENNY BROCKIE: Thank you very much, both of you. I would like to thank Jerry Vlasak in Los Angeles for joining us and also to you Professor Graham Jenkin in London, thank you very much indeed. And thanks to everybody here as well.

CLOSING COMMENTS

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'd rather see someone like Fiona walk again than say 100 animals dying.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: There are all these rules and regulations in place. Well, if they were being monitored properly then we wouldn't have these things being exposed by animal activists behind closed doors.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I still have the thoughts or the belief that we are all here today as we've benefited from animal testing in the past.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I fail to see how they need to keep these animals in such crowded conditions. It's unnecessary and it's really only for profit.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: We should be phasing out this old-fashioned method of medical research.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I don't know what goes on inside animal labs. It may not be all that good, but I suppose we need to see. And you're right - if the walls were glass maybe we would all turn vegetarian.