Theriocide: Naming Animal Killing

Piers Beirne
University of Southern Maine
United States

Abstract
In this essay I recommend ‘theriocide’ as the name for those diverse human actions that cause the deaths of animals. Like the killing of one human by another, theriocide may be socially acceptable or unacceptable, legal or illegal. It may be intentional or unintentional and may involve active maltreatment or passive neglect. Theriocide may occur one-on-one, in small groups or in large-scale social institutions. The numerous and sometimes intersecting sites of theriocide include intensive rearing regimes; hunting and fishing; trafficking; vivisection; militarism; pollution; and human-induced climate change. If the killing of animals by humans is as harmful to them as homicide is to humans, then the proper naming of such deaths offers a remedy, however small, to the extensive privileging of human lives over those of other animals. Inevitably, the essay leads to a shocking question: Is theriocide murder?

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Published: 2014-08-01
ISSN 2202-8005

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