

Essay Sample

Excerpt from: **Loving One and Eating Another: How Americans Treat Dogs and Pigs**

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The average layperson does not have the resources or time to consume and remember these data in regards to the similarities and differences of pigs and dogs, and therefore, their thoughts on the two usually come with a skewed perception of them. When S. Davis and P. Cheeke polled university students and faculty in the United States of their perception of domestic animal minds, ability to think, and degrees of intelligence, they unanimously ranked dogs as not only more intelligent than pigs, but as the most intelligent of the lot (Davis, 1998). When Leach et al analyzed four different studies on the perceptions humans have on dog and pig minds, they found people (meat-eaters and vegans alike) had a tendency to not only underestimate pig minds and overestimate dog minds, but became unjustifiably skeptical of evidence suggesting pigs have strong cognitive abilities and unjustifiably accepting of the idea when presented with evidence that they did not (Leach, 2023). Not only did participants grant dogs more mind than pigs, but more moral standing as well (Leach, 2023). However, Leach et al attributes these findings to beliefs of human superiority over animals and not the belief that dogs are necessarily superior over pigs, a conclusion that L. Caviola, J. Everett, and N. Faber contest by claiming speciesism drives a stark differentiation in treatment, separating animals into “inferior” and “superior” castes (Leach, 2023; Caviola, 2018). Regardless of the evidence placed in front of someone, the majority of people staunchly believe dogs have a higher intelligence than pigs do.

Along with differences of perception, Americans also treat dogs and pigs differently. Most obviously, dogs receive preferential treatment as family members in the home, even sleeping in the same bed as their guardians, where as pigs not only live in torturous conditions in CAFOs but function in society simply as food (Lutwyche, 2019; Morey, 2010). Americans will treat dogs differently depending on their breed such as adopting purebred dogs from shelters faster and banning pitbulls from some cities but tend to treat all pigs as the same (Amiot, 2019). When a country has an outbreak of rabies or trichinellosis due to their dog meat industry, Americans call for the demolition of the entire industry (Cui, 2001; Meng, 2016). However, when the United States has an outbreak of swine flu or another pig related zoonotic disease, no one calls for a ban or even decreasing eating pig meat (“A Look Back at Progress since the 2009 H1N1 Pandemic,” 2020). Americans give dogs preferential treatment as they voice their outrage about other countries eating dogs through petitions and articles, yet remain remarkably silent about other animals they do not eat that other countries do such as horses (Lindsley, 2022; Meng, 2016; Stop the Yulin Dog Meat Festival, 2015). And of course, when animal rights activists or vegans protest the killing of pigs for food or the horrible conditions in which they live in factory farms, meat-eaters turn their anger towards the activists and vegans in question, due to their vegaphobia (Cole, 2011; Lutwyche, 2019; Traïni, 2016). Regardless of the actual scientific differences and similarities between dogs and pigs, humans will take their own preconceived notions of their worth and treat them accordingly.