

# Public manipulated by staged videos

BY NATALIE MACLELLAN

Seal penises are being cut from living animals and sold as aphrodisiacs in Japan. The seal is left to die.

We've all seen the ads on TV. But should we take them at face value?

There are many misconceptions about the seal hunt in Atlantic Canada, primarily because the majority of publicity given to the hunt is provided directly or indirectly by animal rights groups.

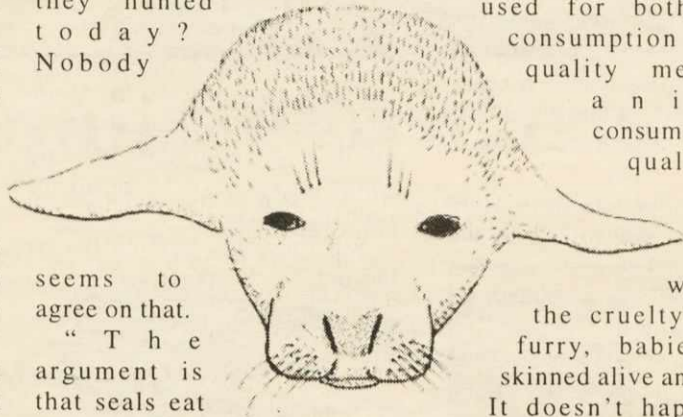
Seals have been hunted in Atlantic Canada since the first settlers came to the area in the 1700s, said Jerry Conway of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO). At that time

they were hunted primarily for a source of oil for lighting and heating.

So why are they hunted today? Nobody

seems to agree on that.

The argument is that seals eat fish. It's true, but not to the degree that some people would have you believe," Conway said.



What is done with the seals? Contrary to popular belief, they aren't just hunted for their penises and fur. Seal meat is used for both human consumption (high quality meat) and animal consumption (low quality meat and entrails).

And what about the cruelty? White, furry, babies being skinned alive and the like. It doesn't happen, not legally anyway says the DFO. Seals must be harvested humanely, according to the Marine Mammal Act. It has

been illegal to harvest white coats since 1985.

There are two legal ways to kill seals: by clubbing (with a

**"The argument is that seals eat fish. It's true, but not to the degree that some people would have you believe"**

wooden club or with a hacker pick) or by shooting them. The seals must be proven dead or irreversibly unconscious before the pelt can be removed and the

carcass must be retained. Fishermen are not allowed to only harvest the pelt.

Conway said that the images seen on television, filmed by the Canadians Against the Commercial Seal Hunt, a division of the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), do not represent the legal seal hunt. He also said that the video was staged, in an attempt to use shock value to get public support.

That is not to say that the cruelty isn't taking place, of course.

"There are always incidences of unlicensed fishermen," Conway said.

Last year, 101 sealers were charged in Newfoundland.

## Beyond Boundaries challenges assumptions

Noske's analysis of the human-animal relationship is stirring and thought provoking

Barbara Noske's book, *Beyond Boundaries, Humans and Animals* is written for humans, dedicated to "all animals, wild and tame" and is of great importance for us all. I think it would be rare for a person to read this book and remain unchanged in their feelings toward other animals.

**Beyond Boundaries, Humans and Animals**  
Barbara Noske  
Black Rose Books

Within its pages the reader will not find any statements calling them to take action, however, the facts one will encounter are often of such riveting consequence that one's very behaviour and action in the world is likely to be reformed.

Although it is fundamentally the human-animal relationship that is examined, the scope of Noske's vision is unusually broad. We thus find ourselves looking at language, Marxism, history, technology, Capitalism, starvation, science, knowledge, culture, genetics, feminism, and communication and how these things invariably tie in to our ideas and opinions about humans and animals. Noske points out that in many situations scientists, feminists, ecologists and others are working on assumptions which have not been examined — I can almost feel the frustration she must encounter in her dealings with the fields of Anthropology and Animal Science.

Noske is a compassionate person with regard for animals in her daily life (she does not even kill insects). For that reason alone

one should read her book. As ridiculous as it may sound, our understanding of the world has largely been acquired from people who kill insects. Noske's heart is evident in some of her statements and, although some academics may frown upon this, it does make the book more alive and more honest.

The book is only 253 pages long (71 pages of which are footnotes and bibliography), but one would be hard pressed to read it in one or two days. Noske's writing style is ultra-concise, the examples she uses are straightforward and once a point is made it is not repeated. The volume of information and argument in *Beyond Boundaries* is such that I needed a month to read it.

Noske draws "striking parallels" between factory and laboratory animals and human industrial workers:

"The animals' natural capacity for movement, play, preening, social interaction and contact with the natural environment is almost felt to be subversive: much animal behaviour is referred to as 'unbusinesslike'. Like the human worker's creativity it has to be kept under control, or better still, done away with."

She also points out how "companies in agribusiness sometimes run their own courses in university departments." (Could such an education in food production be unbiased?)

Jumping to animal experimentation, she says, "The practice of animal experimentation appears to exist for reasons of profit and career making rather than for the

promotion of human health and wellbeing."

Then there is our view of nature, which she sees as biased by science; interested only in those things which are measurable to humans or which have the capacity to be reduced to some law.

I would mention more but I am limited by space.

Some footnoted statistics

surprised me:

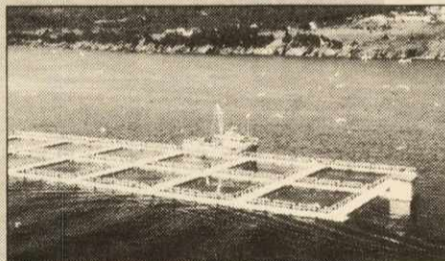
- Humans raise enough food, each year, to feed 45 billion people
- Over the last 600 years, 50 cases have been recorded of animals adopting human children and raising them
- Between 20 and 60 million animals are experimented on in the USA each year.

Again and again I was astonished by the figures quoted.

I think future generations will look upon our society's treatment of animals like we look upon the white men who kept slaves, killed aboriginal peoples, and suppressed the rights of women. I hope you will have the opportunity to read this book. I highly recommend it.

C. DEREK BOWER

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### OBJECTIVES

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The Registrar

Fisheries and Marine Institute of Memorial University of Newfoundland  
P.O. Box 4920, St. John's  
Newfoundland, Canada A1C 5R3

Tel: 709-778-0380

Toll Free: 1-800-563-5799

Fax: 709-778-0322

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