An Animal Ethic

Science and animal studies have shown us enough about the potential and capacities of animals to give pause. Sentience is a strong criterion to act on. This would require a massive societal shift, but it’s worth visualizing. It may be that consideration of animals will take place in stages and layers. I believe we should acknowledge rights for sentient creatures; like all rights, including our own, these are not absolute. I list some qualifications in parentheses:

**Life** (unless the animal threatens your life).

**Freedom, including to be free from torture** (Unless this interferes directly, not hypothetically, with human mortality. Judged only in reaction to an initial action by an animal. In other words, interfering with a human’s wish to eat meat is not valid because not eating meat does not threaten his/her mortality. However, not eating meat could be a threat to mortality for a subsistence hunter in Alaska).

**Ability to seek the means of one’s own survival**: food, shelter, warmth, water (unless the animal’s pursuit of these items directly threatens one’s own life).

* In all cases, non-lethal means would be used as humans have encroached on animal habitats and so conflict is expected. Humans proactively killing animals would come to an end if such rights were extended. Animals would only be killed “in response” and not as a vendetta, but rather, to defend one’s self.