

Summarize, Analyze and Critique the following argument, then check your response to the model answer that follows

“Food Animal Cruelty”

Each year in the United States, hundreds of thousands of animals are slaughtered to please the palates of Americans. Before their death — usually by electrocution or blunt force head trauma — most of these livestock are kept in deplorable conditions. Cattle feedlots are packed so tightly that animals can scarcely move; chickens are held in cages too small for them to turn around in; veal calves are denied any motion at all to keep their flesh tender. For what? So that *people who can afford the privilege* can enjoy tasty meat products.

These methods are not necessarily bound to eating meat. People can raise animals the old-fashioned way — on farms with ample pasture and free-ranging animals — and still produce enough meat for America. Mass production methods of raising animals, like those described above, must change if we are to think of ourselves as ethical people; as long as we tolerate such tremendous and pointless suffering, we cannot.

Possible ambiguous terms which I may deal with are in green

Each year in the United States, hundreds of thousands of animals are slaughtered to please the palates of Americans. Before their death — usually by electrocution or blunt force head trauma — **most** of these livestock are kept in **deplorable** conditions. Cattle feedlots are packed so tightly that animals can scarcely move; chickens are held in cages too small for them to turn around in; veal calves are denied any motion at all to keep their flesh tender. For what? So that *people who can afford the privilege* can enjoy tasty meat products.

These methods are not necessarily bound to eating meat. People can raise animals the **old-fashioned** way — on farms with **ample pasture** and free-ranging animals — **and still produce enough meat** for America. Mass production methods of raising animals, like those described above, must change if we are to think of ourselves as **ethical people**; as long as we tolerate such tremendous and **pointless suffering**, we cannot.

Conclusion: Mass production methods of raising animals, like those described above, must change if we are to think of ourselves as ethical people

Reasons:

1. Before their death — usually by electrocution or blunt force head trauma — most of these livestock are kept in deplorable conditions

- a. Cattle feedlots are packed too tightly
- b. Chickens are held in cages too small for them to turn around in
- c. Veal calves are denied any motion at all to keep their flesh tender
2. These methods are not necessary
 - a. People can raise animals the old-fashioned way — on farms with ample pasture and free-ranging animals — and still produce enough meat (unsupported claim without evidence)
3. The animal suffering is pointless—and that is unethical.

Ambiguous terms that are a problem to the conclusion:

- What is **blunt force head trauma**? Does it cause suffering for some extended period of time?
- **pointless suffering**? What/how much suffering would not be pointless/unnecessary in slaughtering food animals?
- What constitutes “**ethical people**?”

Value conflicts and assumptions:

- **Animals not suffering** and **human ethics** vs. **efficiency** and **economy**.
- Animals are in some ethical or moral way equal to human beings in dignity and rights.
- Animals who eat humans, sometimes in “cruel” fashion, are somehow morally justified.

Descriptive Assumptions:

1. “Millions of “people“ would be able to get *land, time, and education* to raise animals this way.
2. That the animals “*suffer*”...in some way **similar** to the human experience of suffering: they suffer emotionally and psychologically as humans do and would if so “imprisoned.”
3. These descriptions of treatment are **accurate** and **typical**, rather than exaggerated or rare.
4. Changing our methods of mass production of food would **not** have **negative consequences** on the food supply:
 - a. Enough food could be produced this way.
 - b. It would **not** be significantly more expensive to consumers, many of whom already can't afford healthy food choices.

Fallacy of ad hominem?

Those of us who disagree or continue to support/eat this way are “unethical?”

Fallacy of Either/Or?

(Either we change the way we raise food animals or we are unethical people.)

Sample critique:

The writer of “Food Animal Cruelty” claims many of the livestock that are grown to feed economically “privileged” Americans are raised in “unethical” conditions that cause the animals unnecessary “suffering.” These animals are most commonly raised in the “deplorable” conditions of unnaturally small spaces. He proposed that, to be the “ethical” people that we want to think we are, we should not use mass production methods of raising cattle, but ample, open space -- “free ranging” conditions of the “old-fashioned” way.

*This argument is premised on two values not likely to be shared by many Americans: that animals in tightly packed conditions “suffer” in some way similar or common to the emotional and physical suffering that imprisoned humans would feel. Certainly, humans in these conditions would suffer “deplorably”, which is a highly subjective and **ambiguous term**, as well as the degree of “pointless suffering” that animals might experience from the conditions. And these*

assumptions seem to be predicated on an even more controversial assumption that animals have some equal dignity with humans that accord them equal status and rights as humans.

Moreover, his suggestions for eliminating animal “suffering” are highly impractical if not impossible. The agricultural lifestyle of living independently on one’s own farm common to the majority population a hundred and fifty years ago cannot be returned to by the vastly larger populations in the cities of today. There simply is not enough space. And, in contradiction to the author’s concern for the animals, the modern methods of “mass” production have made it possible to feed many, many more people more reliably, and at lower cost to poor consumers.

One wonders if the “ethical” writer of this argument has ever experienced real hunger or poverty...