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## Capitalism and the Value of Life: Foot-and-Mouth and the Culling of Herds

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**Abstract.** This article describes some psychological implications of culling as an intervention to help combat the spread of foot-and-mouth disease.

A previous IBPP article explored some political psychological Issues surrounding the choices of vaccination and culling to help combat the spread of foot-and-mouth disease. What was not directly addressed concerns the differential values of life for humans versus animals--and the psychology related to the differential values.

Unlike bovine spongiform encephalopathy--i.e., mad cow disease--foot-and-mouth disease is rarely fatal to animals, is apparently not dangerous to humans, usually runs a transient course, and does not preclude the ingestion of meat from infected animals. The negative consequences of foot-and-mouth disease do include lowering the weight and milk production of infected animals and activating export bans on countries with infected animals concerning conspecifics and products from them. One can make a strong case, then, that the culling of infected and uninfected but proximal animals to combat foot-and-mouth disease is based not on health threats but on financial threats--that the spirit of capitalism is fomenting the deaths of animals on a significant basis.

What should one do to advocate that one should at least consider that the culling is not necessary? Wax on the possible congruence or approximations of human and animal souls and/or spirits? Embrace some statistically deviant version of animal liberation including the use of terrorism to achieve liberation objectives? Equate the value of human and animal life? Reify the value of animal over human? Perhaps one needs only to consider that intentional destruction of life--any life--may deserve at least some moral/ethical calculus, even if that calculus may soon be characterized by automatic processing. Otherwise, the pursuit of human material advantage may leave one all too less than human. (See Blumberg, M. S., & Wasserman, E. A. (1995). Animal mind and the argument from design. *American Psychologist*, 50, 133-144; Parker, S.T. (1997). A general model for the adaptive function of self-knowledge in animals and humans. *Consciousness & Cognition: An International Journal*, 6, 75-86; Plous, S. (1996). Attitudes toward the use of animals in psychological research and education: Results from a national survey of psychologists. *American Psychologist*, 51, 1167-1180; Stam, H. J., & Kalmanovitch, T. (1998). E. L. Thorndike and the origins of animal psychology: On the nature of the animal in psychology. *American Psychologist*, 53, 1135-1144; The burden of containment. (March 15, 2001). *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com>; The psycho-politics of foot in mouth on foot in mouth: Pigs, sheep, cows, politicians on the animal farm. (March 30, 2001). *IBPP*, 10(11).) (Keywords: Capitalism, Culling, Foot-And-Mouth Disease.)