

## A Call to Feminists

by Butterflies Katz and Angel Flinn



*“After repeated cycles of forced impregnations, painful births, relentless milkings, and crushing bereavements, their spirit gives, their bodies wither, their milk dries up. At the age when, in nature, a female cow would barely enter adulthood, the life of a dairy cow is over. When her milk ‘production’ declines, she and her other ‘spent’ herd mates are trucked off to slaughter. Some are pregnant. All are still lactating. As they are shoved towards death, they drip milk onto the killing floor... All dairy operations, including Organic, exist solely by doing to millions of defenseless females the worst thing anyone can do to a mother. Dairy consumers support this practice with their purchases.”*

“Milk Comes from a Grieving Mother” ~ leaflet by Peaceful Prairie Sanctuary

When visiting the non-vegan home of a self-proclaimed feminist, she offered me cow’s milk with my tea. That’s when I made the profound connection that it’s impossible to truly be a feminist while consuming dairy (or any animal products), as the entire animal industry is built on the exploitation of the female reproductive system. This must be recognized as a feminist issue because it is analogous to the feminist movement’s struggle for women to have control of their own bodies.

Animals of both sexes suffer under institutionalized exploitation. However, the female of the species often experiences more prolonged abuse, including an ongoing cycle of forceful artificial insemination (mechanical or manual rape), physical abuse of her mammary glands, and invariably being separated from her young; all of these are emotionally brutal experiences for the female members of any species.

*(Male animals are also sexually abused; not only through the industry practice of castration, but also by being used as semen ‘donors’. There are photos online showing bulls in contraptions being forced to supply the ‘artificial insemination’ industry. All of this is a part of dairy consumption. It’s pretty perverted; as is all animal use – when you think about it candidly.)*

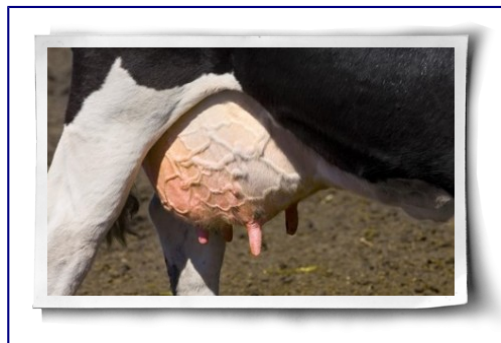
The animal farming industry has done quite a job of advertising images of ‘happy cows’ gladly giving us their milk, as well as covering up their offensive procedures. However, even if all the heartless practices associated with factory farming were not customary, it is deeply troubling that the female reproductive system of any species is widely perceived as nothing more than an economic resource.

Many in the feminist movement might be interested to learn that some in the animal industry actually use the term ‘rape-rack’ to describe the piece of equipment used to restrain and artificially inseminate cows and pigs. Even on many small-scale farms though, inseminators invade the animal’s body by putting their arm up her rectum, to push on the cervix, while inseminating her with the other hand. Inconceivably to me, even women perform this job.

I often ponder in disbelief our culture’s uncivilized ways and what people choose to fund with their purchases. It’s hard to imagine a human being taking a crying baby from his mother shortly after birth, to have his throat slit. However, this is the fate of calves born to cows used for dairy production. ‘Bobby calves’, the unwanted male calves who are an

unavoidable by-product of the dairy industry, are generally taken away soon after birth (both on organic and non-organic farms), and are frequently sold to be turned into 'veal'. In some countries, male calves are shot at birth.

Both mother and calf are traumatized and bellow loudly after their forced separation, and some mothers even try to get in between farmer and calf. In one astonishing story, an unsuspecting veterinarian discovered a mother cow's remarkable attempt to hide one of her calves in an attempt to save him.



Because she is re-impregnated every year, while still lactating from the previous pregnancy, a 'dairy cow' will spend six to seven months a year producing milk while she is also pregnant. This is true on organic and free-range farms as well. A calf would naturally feed five to six times a day, so that the maximum amount of milk in his mother's udder would be around two liters at any one time. But on modern dairy farms, a cow is only milked twice a day, allowing milk to accumulate in the udder; thus forcing her to carry around 20 liters of milk or more. This greatly enlarged udder leads to lameness in her hind legs and predisposes her to mastitis (a painful udder infection). Her only rest from this appalling existence is during the last two months of her pregnancy when she is not milked in preparation for giving birth. Then the awful cycle starts again.

Hobbles and shackles are commonly attached to the hind legs of cows who have suffered damage during 'calving', and would not be able to stand of their own accord. Injured cows are often forced to continue in pain, for seven to eight months, until their milk yield drops (so the farmer won't lose a large quantity of milk) and then they are killed. Seeing photos of these shackles online conjures up images of slavery and shines a light on the very real fact that bred and farmed animals ARE slaves; owned by human 'masters' and treated as if they were lifeless objects.

The 'dairy cow', riddled with painful ailments as a result of her exploitation, and physically ravaged from the sexual abuse she has experienced, is eventually killed to be eaten when she is no longer producing; typically at around five years of her otherwise 20-25 year lifespan.

It's unjust for humans to steal milk that was designed by nature to nourish growing babies of another species. For the life of me, I can't figure out why anybody would want to drink cow's milk; perfectly designed for baby calves. Cow's milk provides the calf with the nutrients to grow to 450 pounds, in just a year. A cow's breast milk is much higher in protein than the requirements for humans and provides everything calves need for rapid growth. How could anything that was not meant for us by nature, and is so disrespectful to other animals, possibly be healthful for humans?

Humans have no physical need to consume products that are the result of horrific practices such as tail docking, dehorning, branding, castration, rape racks, induced calving, artificial insemination, painful procedures performed without pain relief, embryo transfers and hormone treatments resulting in 3-6 calves instead of the usual single birth, separation of mother from newborn, and killing infants. It is becoming increasingly clear that there is perhaps even more suffering involved in milk, cheese and egg consumption than flesh consumption, therefore choosing to be vegetarian (for ethical reasons) is not logical. Abstaining from ALL animal products is the ethical stance that gives basic minimal respect due to sentient beings.

Oppression is oppression. Violence is violence. The species of the victim is irrelevant. The way I see it, to be an animal rights activist is to be a vegan. To be an abolitionist is to be a vegan. To be a nonspeciesist is to be a vegan. To be an environmentalist is to be a vegan. To be a peace-loving-pacifist is to be a vegan. To be an ethicist is to be a vegan. AND YES - *to be a feminist is to be a vegan.*