# How humane are we?

Suggested Grade Level: High School
Relative Subject(s): Social Studies

## OBJECTIVE
To understand what it means to be "humane." Students will gain an understanding of the history of the Humane Movement and how it has affected animals and people alike.

## MATERIALS
Book: *Out of the Darkness, The Story of Mary Ellen Wilson*, by Eric A. Shelman & Stephen Lazoritz
Copies of the "Growth of the Humane Movement" outline
Poster paper for new timeline

## ACTIVITY
*Preliminary Discussion*
- Define the word "humane." In Webster's Dictionary it is defined as "marked by compassion, sympathy or consideration for other human beings or animals."
- Give an example of how to treat animals humanely. Give an example of how to treat people humanely.
- Describe a time when you treated an animal and a person humanely. How did you feel? How do you think the animal and person felt when you treated them in this manner?

*Procedure*
Each student should receive a copy of the "Growth of the Humane Movement" outline. Discuss the following points:
- What sparked the beginning of this movement?
- What is the connection between animal abuse and child abuse? Why were preventative organizations for each issue formed around the same general time?
- What was the Mary Ellen case and how did its outcome affect the future of child welfare?
- Who was Henry Bergh and how did his work affect animals and people?
- What is the history of the Nebraska Humane Society? What services and programs does the Nebraska Humane Society offer to benefit animals and people?
- What does the Humane Society of the United States do?
- What is the difference in philosophy between organizations like People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals and the American Humane Association?
- Regardless of philosophy and methods of action, how do all of the organizations that dedicate themselves to helping animals fit into the Humane Movement?
- What do you believe are the main goals of the Humane Movement?

Each student should choose one event on the timeline to research. This should be an event that the student feels was significant in the history of the Humane Movement. The internet would be a good resource for researching the history of the event, who the key players were, how the event has impacted animals and/or people, and why the event is

considered part of the Humane Movement.  If there is more than one student studying a particular event, students can work together to do their research.  Each student or group will then present their information to the rest of the class.

As a class, work together to develop a new timeline.  Students should "dream up" events and humane organizations they would like to see created that will help animals and people live happier, healthier, and safer lives.  Have the students create their own timeline with these ideas.

*Post-Discussion*
- Why do you feel that the event you chose to research was significant?
- Choose one or two events that you feel were the most critical to the overall Humane Movement.
- What role do you see yourself playing in your new timeline?  How do you feel you can contribute to this movement in your daily life?

## EXTENSION ACTIVITY
Arrange to take a tour of the Nebraska Humane Society to learn about the history of the organization, how it has contributed to the Humane Movement and what services and programs it provides to help animals and people.

# Growth of the Humane Movement

**1822** The British Parliament passed the first law recognizing the rights of animals and outlawing cruelty to large domestic animals. Richard "Humanity" Martin was its sponsor.

**1824** The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) was founded in Great Britain.

**1829** New York passed a law to prohibit cruelty to large animals.

**1836** Massachusetts passed an animal anti-cruelty law.

**1847** The Vegetarian Society was founded.

**1859** Darwin published The Origin of the Species.

**1863** The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) was founded.

**1866** Henry Bergh founded the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

**1874** Henry Bergh and Elbridge Gerry successfully prosecuted a child cruelty case under animal cruelty statutes (The MaryEllen case).

**1875** The Nebraska Humane Society was founded and The New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children founded "The parent institution of child-saving work."

**1876** The Cruelty to Animals Act passed in British Parliament; first law regulating animals used in research.

**1877** The American Humane Association (AHA) was founded for the prevention of cruelty to children and animals.

**1883** The American Antivivisection Society was founded.

**1905** The National Audubon Society was founded.

**1954** The Humane Society of the United States was founded.

**1957** Friends of Animals was founded.

Nebraska Humane Society
8929 Fort Street  Omaha, NE   68134  402.444.7800   www.nehumanesociety.org

Information adapted from the Denver Dumb Friends League

1959 The International Society for Animal Rights was founded.

1966 The Animal Welfare Act of 1966 was enacted.

1967 The Fund for Animals was founded.

1968 The Animal Protection Institute of America was founded.

1969 Greenpeace and International Fund for Animal Welfare were founded.

1975 Peter Singer published *Animal Liberation.*

1979 The Animal Legal Defense Fund was founded; The Association for Biomedical Research formed to combat the animal rights movement and promote research.

1980 People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and Mobilization for Animals were founded.

1981 Professor Andrew Rollin published *Animal Rights and Human Morality.*

1983 Tom Regan published *The Case for Animal Rights.*

2003 Animal Cruelty was made a felony in Nebraska