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Misanthropy, idealism and attitudes towards animals

Authors: Wuensch, Karl L.; Jenkins, Kevin W.; Poteat, Michael G.

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Abstract:

When evaluating the ethical status of an action that harms a nonhuman animal (henceforth animal), one might weigh the benefit to humankind against the cost of the harm done to the animal. To the extent that one does not like humans (is misanthropic), one will not be likely to think that benefits to humans can justify doing harm to animals. We hypothesized that misanthropy would be less strongly related to support for animal rights among idealists (who tend not to do cost-benefit analysis) than among nonidealists. College students (n=154) completed a questionnaire which included questions designed to measure their ethical idealism (ten items), misanthropy (five items), and attitudes towards animal rights and animal research (28 items). Respondents were classified as being idealistic if their score on the idealism scale was greater than the median score. The regression lines for predicting attitudes towards animals from misanthropy differed significantly between idealists and nonidealists. Among nonidealists there was a significant positive relationship between misanthropy and support for animal rights, but among idealists the regression line was flat.

Keywords: [ANIMAL RIGHTS](#); [ATTITUDES](#); [COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS](#); [ETHICAL IDEALISM](#); [ETHICS](#); [MISANTHROPY](#)

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