

# Levels of Harmful Discrimination

Key question: Does speciesism exist, or are animals impartially treated according to a system that favors “marvelous mental characteristics” such as rationality, language, ability, moral agency, self-awareness, autonomy, and other mental abilities?

what opponents of racism, sexism, homophobia, etc. aim for; Western societies *aspire* to treat mentally disabled humans at this level; animal rights activists wish animals to be treated at this level

**Level 0: No harmful discrimination**

**Level 1: Minor h.d.**  
(e.g., insults)

**Level 2: Major h.d.**  
(e.g., poor food, clothing, shelter)

**Level 3: Very major h.d.**  
(e.g., eaten, skinned, body parts used in products, hunted, vivisected, but *supposedly* must be done “kindly” or “humanely”)

**Level 4: Extreme h.d.**  
(e.g., same treatments as in 3, but no pretence as to kindness: the Holocaust, extreme slavery, factory farming, extreme vivisection)

We say that humans are doing “well” in general if situations are consistent with their good and there is no avoidable bad. If animals are treated this way it is called “animal rights.” So is animal rights the only true sense of “animal welfare” or of animals doing “well” overall?

mentally disabled humans treated at especially levels 0-1 (but too often 2)

many animals and mentally disabled humans have similar levels of rationality, language, self-awareness, moral agency, autonomy, etc, **but** they are treated at radically different levels; apparently the key difference here is species: hence **speciesism**?

this is the level commonly referred to as **animal welfare**; “welfare” means overall well treated, but we would **never** say a human is overall well treated if hunted, vivisected, etc., even if efforts are made to curtail suffering within these practises; we would say these humans are still faring ill overall; in nonspeciesist analysis, then, is Level 3 “animal illfare” rather than “animal welfare”? We would also say these treatments of humans would **never** be overall “kind” or “humane.” So is Level 3 “kind and humane animal welfare” after all, or merely a speciesist masquerade for unkind and inhumane animal illfare?

most animals are actually treated at this last level since 95% of deaths are for flesh-eating, and well over 90% of these animals are factory-farmed

