

Topic One Religion and animal rights

This topic starts the course, and will start the exam paper. It has always been a popular exam choice on other courses, so let's enjoy it. We need to check out – the different ways humans use animals; the rights and wrongs of that usage; the status and rights animals (should) have; and what the religions think about the use of animals.

Revision Tips

As you go through this course, collect stories and images from newspapers and the internet. These give you real examples to use in your answers. They give you images to help remember. They also give you a chance to ask yourself what the religion(s) you are studying would say about the situations. This reinforces what you have learned, especially if you make notes with the clippings you take.

How do we make use of animals?

On this page, there are lots of ideas of how humans use and interact with animals. You could be asked about specific uses of animals as well as attitudes generally.

Let's take some time to think of the ways humans use animals – with a partner, come up with a list. Now decide which ones are good for us, and which are good for the animals. Are any of them exploitation? In other words, do humans take advantage of animals? Why do you think this happens?

Any of those attitudes could be the statement you have to argue about in evaluative questions on the exam. Let's think them through – for each attitude, try to give some reasons and examples why a person might say them.

What rights do animals have?

Have a look at this attitude-line, which gives answers to this question from one extreme to the other – where are you, and why?

None at all – humans are superior to all other species, so we can do what we want.

We should treat the animals we need with respect, but can do what we want with the others.

Some animals deserve more respect than humans do.

Some animals should have more rights than others.

All species are equal – human, animal, insect, bird, the lot.

All animals should be given more rights than humans – they were here first.

Research Task

There are lots of **animal rights** organisations, many of which have websites. The following give religious attitudes to the status of animals, and lots of information about the issues to do with animal rights and our use of animals. Write a report on one of the websites – its accessibility, presentation, and how clear the info is. Then check out the religions you are studying from the notes it has.

www.animalaid.org.uk

www.animaletics.org

www.animalsuffering.com/religion.html

Now you know what we are trying to do in this topic.