



Australian T.O.S. Links

December 2006

At this time of year, as we are having our Annual General Meetings and closing activities for the year, we have the opportunity to look back over all we have achieved; to celebrate the relationships we have built and the things we have done individually and together. I trust that we share a sense that we have served all life through our work.

The unity of all life and animal welfare

One of the cornerstones of a theosophical world view is the concept of the unity of all life; that the Universal life force or energy flows through everything in the manifested world. We are brothers and sisters not only to our human fellows, but to the stars, to our planet and to all that share its surface. Our challenge is to extend our sense of brotherhood to include animal life and reflect this in our day-to-day actions.

Many of us share a sense of compassion for the companion animals in our communities and extend that to the world's wildlife. We are concerned and often spurred to action when we hear about horrific cases of cruelty in our Australian communities and overseas. In the face of reports from the RSPCA of the shocking increase in the number of animals arriving at shelters (a growth of almost 10,000 animals in the past year in Queensland alone), we recognise the importance of educating people about responsible behaviour. The increase in violence towards animals in Australia is particularly worrying because there is a strong link between cruelty to animals and domestic violence.

Education about the actual cruelty inflicted on animals and viable alternatives is also the key to many successful campaigns related to animal derived products. Milking moon bears for the bile used in some Chinese medicines, factory farming

Our focus service area: Animal welfare

What's in this newsletter

- The unity of all life and animal welfare
- Pritchard Trust Fund donations
- Annual General Meeting & convention session
- International T.O.S. conference
- Invocations for brotherhood
- Sharing ideas about animal welfare activities
- Manufacturers that don't use animal testing
- Tips for writing letters on animal welfare issues

and live sheep exports are current focuses for action in many animal welfare groups we can support.

Scientific evidence also provides support for challenging practices such as whaling. A recent report in New Scientist explained that spindle cells had been found in the brains of a number of species of whales – and in the same part of the brain as in humans. They occur in the part of the brain that in humans is linked to social organisation, empathy, speech and intuition about the feelings of others. It appears that whales could share

potentials thought to be unique to humans and our closest primate relatives.

But while sharing emotional and intellectual capacities makes it easy for us to recognise that we should not exploit some animal species, it is not the underlying reason from a theosophical point of view. It is this wider recognition that one life flows through us all that leads some people to make a decision to become vegetarian. The healthy lives of many people world-wide is evidence that we do not need to kill animals to eat.

Perhaps the most difficult dilemma facing us today is the moral issue of whether or not we have the right to exploit animals to help maintain our health. Increasingly our society is faced with life-style related illnesses treated with drugs and surgery. At the same time millions of animals are used annually in medical and drug company research. Many of these animals are bred with genetic modifications to suit particular research. Although most countries have requirements for the care of laboratory animals, the reality is that most experience pain and are killed. The moral dilemma for us comes when we need to make treatment choices for our own well-being, drawing on the results of this research. Do we have the right to exploit small animals for the sake of maintaining the human physical body?



It is a question we can only answer individually.

Action towards animal life that is motivated by love and compassion is our aim.

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Theosophical Order of Service in Australia will be held during the Annual Convention of the Theosophical Society in Australia. It is scheduled for Thursday 18 January, 2007 at 2.00pm at New College, the University of New South Wales. This is a wonderful opportunity to meet T.O.S. members from around the country, learn about the range of service activities that the various T.O.S. groups organise and contribute to planning the national focus for 2007.

T.O.S. Convention session

The T.O.S. session at convention is not to be missed. The Sydney T.O.S. group has arranged for two dynamic speakers, Dr Keith Suter and Rev. Bill Crews, to talk on the topic, *Reconciliation and its contribution to peace*. If you can get to the University of New South Wales, put 2.00 pm, Tuesday 16 January, 2007 in your diary

Donations from the Pritchard TOS fund

Interest from the Pritchard TOS Fund became available this year and was distributed as follows:

- \$2000 Brazil - orphanage
- \$1000 Philippines - Golden Links school
- \$1000 Chennai - tsunami rehabilitation, women's cooperatives
- \$1000 India - Adyar Animal Welfare Centre
- \$1000 Indonesia - Earthquake appeal.

International T.O.S. conference

27 to 30 July, 2007 is the firm date of the International T.O.S. conference, being hosted in Chicago by the T.O.S. in the USA. The conference will be held at the TS in America's headquarters after their summer gathering. A small amount of accommodation is available on campus and a special deal is available at the Holiday Inn, with a shuttle bus to the conference venue.

Exploring our potential for service, is the conference theme. The program is currently being finalised and will provide lots of time for active participation in workshops and discussion groups as well as sessions with speakers. A booking form is included in this mailing.

Invocations for peace and brotherhood

In our August newsletter we shared a number of invocations that reflect the aims of the T.O.S.

Another beautiful invocation is included in this issue, with a commentary by Joy Mills.

O Hidden Life, vibrant in every atom;
O Hidden Light, shining in every creature;
O Hidden Love, embracing all in Oneness:
May each, who feels himself as one with thee,
Know he is therefore one with every other.

Annie Besant



Surely what is intended in this mantram is the realization that when the feeling of oneness is present, a recognition of the oneness with the Supreme Reality which is Life and Light and Love, then there follows upon that recognition the realization that one is inevitably united with all other creatures. For how can man be one with the Supreme and remain separate from, distinct from, all others who are equally rooted in the One Reality?

It is truly a reaffirmation of the entire creative process in which we – and all life – are immersed; a reaffirmation that we hold within our power, as self-conscious units of life, the ability to perceive life, whole and splendid. This is the vision we can send shining out over the entire world; the vision to which we can give wings and voice and form; it is the vision which can recreate ourselves every time we chant the mantra, and recreate our world, transform our world. Such a vision alone can bring about a new consciousness in the world, a consciousness of unity, of brotherhood, of peace and harmony and wholeness and holiness. When we repeat these few simple lines, either alone or in a group, we invoke the One Reality to manifest itself anew, and this surely is to make whole and make holy all that is in the universe about us. No more wonderful act could we perform.

Joy Mills, Vedanta Press, Adyar, 1976

Do you have a favourite invocation? Please share it by sending it to either my postal or email address, listed at the end of the newsletter.

Sharing ideas about animal welfare activities

There are a wide range of opportunities to become active in animal welfare work in our communities and our lives. Some of them are individual actions based on our beliefs in the oneness of all life.

Others involve us in service work through any of the range of groups that work for animal welfare in Australia and overseas. Below are a number of ideas for putting our philosophy into action:

- Working as a volunteer in a local animal refuge.
- Raising money or seeking sponsorship for needed equipment or food for a local animal refuge.
- Being a responsible companion animal carer and educating others to be likewise.
- Supporting campaigns for political action on animal welfare issues by writing letters, donating funds for publicity and giving information to friends or members of the wider community. Groups currently campaigning include RSPCA, Humane Society International, International Fund for Animal Welfare, World Wide Fund for Nature & Animals Asia Foundation. Some of these groups are active in providing help to animals in need as a result of natural disasters and war. Go to their websites for latest news on activities.
- Educating ourselves about issues related to endangered species and bio-diversity and supporting campaigns to promote awareness and positive action.
- Reading labels carefully, to ensure we never buy products that have been tested on animals and encouraging our friends to do the same.
- Ensuring that we don't buy fur and products from endangered and protected species. This needs particular caution because some toys and clothing items from Asia use cat or other animal fur rather than synthetic material.
- Educating others about the cruelty involved in testing products on animals.
- Making brochures on issues such as factory farming, export of live stock, product testing on animals and the use of animals in research available where they can be readily accessed by members and visitors. Many animal welfare groups provide brochures free of charge.
- Supporting the Animal Welfare Centre at Adyar with donations.
- Considering a vegetarian diet as a healthy alternative to the usual Western diet.
- Buying rennet-free cheese.
- Writing to companies that still test products on animals, telling them why you won't be buying their products and pointing out that products of

equivalent quality but produced without cruelty are on your shopping list.

If members of your T.O.S. group are involved in other animal welfare activities, please let me know so that I can share them through our newsletter.

Constantly remind yourself, 'I am a member of the whole body of conscious things.'

Marcus Aurelius

Manufacturers that don't use animal testing

One easy but powerful way of expressing our unity with and compassion for the animal kingdom is to ensure that we only buy household and personal products that are not tested on animals. You can make sure you avoid animal tested products by going to the Choose Cruelty Free website:

<http://www.choosecrueltyfree.org.au> and using the Preferred Products List. To get you started, the following are some of the manufacturers who guarantee that their products and ingredients are not tested on animals.

Ahimsa	Australis
Australian Organics	Bioforce
Biossentials	Cruelty Free Care
Earth Choice	Herbon
Innoxia	Jurlique
Lentheric	Le Reve
Le Tan	Lush
Natio	Perfect Potion
Planet Ark	Pure Earth
Pure Essence	Red Earth
S & N Products	Swisse
Skinessence australia	The Oil Garden
Thursday Plantation	Yardley

Tips for writing letters about animal welfare issues

The following advice comes from an advocacy group in the USA, PETA.

Letters to the Editor

When you write letters to the editors of local newspapers instead of writing to just one person, you reach thousands! And it's easier than you might think.

- Read local papers and magazines for fuel for letters. Watch for articles, ads, or letters that mention animals.
Some examples:
 - ads for rodeos, circuses, and fur stores
 - articles about products involving factory farming or testing on animals
 - features about local humane groups, habitat groups or companion animal care
 - global topics related to animal welfare.
- Letters don't have to be rebuttals. Circus in town? Noticing a lot of strays? Or use the

calendar for inspiration: At Easter, tell readers why they should look out for the bunny emblem on products that don't use animal testing. On Mother's Day, remind your community of the animals whose babies are taken from them on factory farms.

- Write on good news, as well as bad. Thank the paper for its coverage of an anti-fur protest or for running profiles of animals available for adoption at shelters.
- Be brief! Sometimes one short, pithy paragraph is enough - try to stay under 300 words (about one typed page). Editors are less likely to print long letters.
- Type, if possible. Otherwise, print legibly. Be sure to use correct grammar and spelling, and remember to have it proofread.
- Make sure you include your name, address, and telephone number in your letter. Some newspapers verify authorship before printing letters.
- Look for opportunities to write longer articles of about 500 - 800 words that summarize an issue, develop an argument, and propose a solution. Send the article to the Editorial Page editor of your local paper.
- You can also write (or call) television and radio stations to protest glorification of animal abuse or to compliment them on a program well done.

Some Tips on Style

- Increase your credibility by mentioning anything that makes you especially qualified to write on a topic: For instance, "As a nutritionist, I know a veggie diet is healthy," or, "as a mother," or, "as a former fur-wearer," etc.
- Try to tell readers something they're not likely to know - such as how chickens are raised to produce eggs - and encourage them to take action (such as to stop buying cage eggs).
- Whenever appropriate, include something for readers to do, such as writing to a given person or company's address, or buying products that are not tested on animals.
- Keep personal grudges and name-calling out of letters; they'll hurt your credibility.
- Speak affirmatively. For example: Studies show that a vegetarian diet is good for our health. Vegetarians tend to
- Avoid self-righteous language and exaggeration. Readers may dismiss arguments if they feel preached to or if the author sounds hysterical.
- Don't assume your audience knows the issues. For instance, instead of writing, "Don't support the cruel veal industry.", provide factual information such as: "Calves factory-

farmed for veal are tethered in small stalls and kept in complete darkness. Their mothers also endure sad fates, starting with the loss of their infants a few days after birth."

- Inclusive language helps your audience identify with you. For example, "We know that....."
- Use positive suggestions rather than negative commands. For example, "Let's take our families to non-animal circuses."
- Personalize your writing with anecdotes and visual images. For example, "Have you ever seen a yearling fox with her face caught in a leg hold trap? I have, which is how I know traps tear into an animal's face, leg, or stomach."
- Instead of referring to an animal with an inanimate pronoun ("it" or "which"), use "she" or "he."
- Avoid euphemisms ("negative reinforcement," "culling the herd"); say what you really mean ("painful electric shocks," "slaughtering deer").
- Criticize the cruelty, not the newspaper.

Letters to businesses

Use your clout as a consumer to protest companies that exploit animals. Tell cosmetics manufacturers you will purchase other brands until they stop testing on animals, or ask a store to carry products that are not factory farmed - and explain why. If a business offers a fur as a prize, explain why you object to furs and ask the sponsor to offer a prize that does not reflect animal cruelty, such as a trip or jewellery.

A thought to share

If you have men who will exclude any of God's creatures from the shelter of compassion and pity, you will have men who will deal likewise with their fellow men.

St. Francis of Assisi

Contact

Please contact me by email at cdharrod@bigpond.net.au or by mail at Ms C Harrod, 26 Lytham Street, Indooroopilly Q4068.

With best wishes that your life will be filled with Love, Light & Harmony in this Christmas – New Year season.

Yours in service
Carolyn

