



Questions for interview

Note: Our group is called the Animal Protectors Alliance but we have been authorised to speak on behalf of ALACT at this meeting. Our philosophy is the same as ALACT's but APA has a stronger focus on compiling, critically evaluating and disseminating detailed information online. APA's main focus since its formation has been on kangaroos, particularly kangaroos in the ACT

Group 1

1. What do you know about animal cruelty?

Pretty much everything.

2. With your knowledge what is the most common reason that people abuse animals?

The four main ones are greed, habit, culture and ignorance. At the more personal level (eg companion animals), animal cruelty (as well as cruelty to other humans - but animals can't fight back) may result from human stress and frustration (eg with work, relationships etc). Cruelty can also result from a failure to recognise that our duty to animals in our care is no different from our duty to dependent humans such as children, disabled people and the frail aged.

3. What are some facts about animal cruelty?

Very few animal species, in very few circumstances, are NOT subjected to cruelty at some point. This includes: farmed animals (intensive farms), farmed animals (extensive farms); wild animals (native); wild animals (naturalised); animals used in science and education; animals used in entertainment (eg racing, rodeos, circuses, zoos); and companion animals.

4. What are some of the outcomes of abuse over a long period of time?

Animals subjected to long term or lifelong cruelty suffer permanent damage in much the same way humans do, mainly by reducing them to a permanent state of terror not unlike human PTSD which is hard (but not impossible) to overcome even when the animal is rescued. Also as happens with humans, aggression towards animals will often make the animal aggressive. Denying an animal the ability to engage in its natural behaviours can also result in aggression, along with physical weakness, obsessive repetitive behaviours, and other damage.

Humans inflicting or witnessing cruelty to animals also suffer permanent desensitisation, PTSD, and escalation (to cruelty to humans)



5. **What are the consequences for abusing animals?**

For individual animals, perpetrators and witnesses, see above. When these consequences become multiplied by millions of people, they result in the violent, callous, greed-driven society we live in today. Even though there are many people who resist the culture of cruelty, there are not yet enough of us to change that culture, the economic imperatives of production and consumption, or the way people are prepared to vote. As a result, our governments remain powerless against the pressure of the big, greed-driven industries that are absolutely dependent on animal cruelty for their survival.

6. **What can people do to help stop animal abuse?**

This will depend entirely on the circumstances, and will vary from individual direct interventions to joining public campaigns, but the most important things are to always:

- choose a lifestyle that minimises our personal contribution to systemic cruelty (eg adopting rescued animals rather than buying animals as items of property, avoiding products of cruelty);
- vote only for political parties or individuals who have a track record, or are at least vocal in opposing animal cruelty;
- take every opportunity to speak out against cruelty.

7. **Have you ever experienced animal abuse? What did you do about it if you did?**

This would be a tale of many years! At the personal level, we have rescued many companion animals from various circumstances, sometimes adopting them ourselves, sometimes rehoming them. However most of our work has been working against systemic cruelty to farm animals, wild animals, and animals used in entertainment or science, where we conduct public education campaigns, political campaigns and direct interventions where possible.

8. **Can you recommend anything to help with doing our project?**

Our main advice would be to always think critically; do not accept at face value any information given to you that comes from anyone who has a vested interest in animal abuse (eg ACT government assertions that its annual massacre of kangaroos is either humane or necessary; meat industry assertions that meat is a necessary part of our diet).

9. **What does your company do to help?**

APA focuses on: researching to obtain independent information; making detailed critically analysed information available to the public; lobbying governments; direct interventions where possible; working closely with other like-minded groups (eg ALACT on general issues, the Animal Defenders Office on how the current legal system impacts on animals, the Animal Justice Party on how to change this legal system).

10. **What is your experience with animal abuse?**

Other than ad hoc instances involving companion animals, our direct experience has been in the context of direct interventions to protect farm animals or wild animals eg we have borne



witness to the conditions of birds in battery cages and intensive turkey farms, the orphaning of hundreds of at-foot joeys during the ACT government annual kangaroo massacre and the long delays between shooting kangaroos and finishing off the wounded.

11. **Why are you passionate about anti animal abuse?**

Once one accepts that animals are (by definition) sentient beings, it follows that one must be passionate about them. Sentient beings are the only things in the universe that can possibly matter because they are the only things anything can matter to. People who are passionate about animal rights are usually also passionate about human rights. The reason we choose animals as our focus, when there is still so much injustice and cruelty being inflicted on humans around the world, is that humans almost always have at least some power to fight for themselves, if only through the power of speech. Animals have none.

Group 2:

1. **How are you involved in what ALACT does?**

Frankie was president of Animal Liberation (ACT) ALACT for many years, is a life member, and represented ALACT on the ACT Government's Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC) for nearly 18 years. Robyn served on the ALACT's executive committee for many years.

APA is an independent offshoot of ALACT formed mainly for the purpose of compiling, critically evaluating and publishing information from a range of like-minded individuals, organisations, environmental scientists and ecologists.

2. **What are some of the things ALACT cares about the most?**

ALACT and APA care about animals – all animals in all circumstances. As an ACT based organisation, ALACT tends to focus on local issues and these have covered a vast range of animals and situations over the last 40 years. ALACT began in the late 1970s with concerns about the treatment of farmed animals at Goulburn abattoirs. Their most successful campaigns have been against rodeos, animal circuses, monkey experiments and battery cages. Their least successful campaign to date has against the massacre of Canberra's kangaroos.

3. **What are some of the many things we can do to stop animal suffering?**

(See Group 1) This will depend entirely on the circumstances, and will vary from individual direct interventions to joining public campaigns, but the most important things are to always:

- choose a lifestyle that minimises our personal contribution to systemic cruelty (eg adopting rescued animals rather than buying animals as items of property, and avoiding products of cruelty);
- vote only for political parties or individuals who have a track record, or are at least vocal in opposing animal cruelty;
- take every opportunity to speak out against cruelty.



4. How did you come to ALACT and how long have you been part of it?

Frankie joined ALACT in 1986. She had been an animal advocate virtually all her life, and had served in the *Sea Shepherd* in 1981-82, but had been involved in other things when the various branches of AL started to form. She was eventually persuaded to go to an ALACT meeting when she learned the group was planning the rescue of baby lambs born at Goulburn abattoir. Frankie became vegetarian at the age of 23 than progressed to veganism in her 40's.

Robyn joined ALACT in 1990 after meeting Frankie while working in the Australian Public Service. Like Frankie she has been involved in many of ALACT's campaigns such as banning the use of animals in circuses and rodeos. However her main focus to date has been to stop the annual slaughter of Canberra's kangaroos by the ACT Government. She has been vegan since 2003.

Robyn and Frankie founded APA in 2014 to focus their efforts to stopping the annual kangaroo slaughter.

5. Which animals are abused the most and why?

It is difficult to single out any cruelty as either more or less cruel than another. Some abuses are "worst" because they inflict the most extreme suffering (eg exportation of farmed animals by sea; life long confinement and abuse in a factory farm; or the extreme suffering caused to "pest" animals by poison baits or germ warfare). Others are "worst" because of the scale, the sheer numbers who are suffering (eg animals killed for meat, eggs and dairy products; the hundreds of millions of kangaroos being slaughtered – the largest scale wildlife slaughter on Earth; and the millions of all species suffering as a result of ongoing habitat destruction). Some are "worst" because of the sheer scale of public deception involved (eg again the lies surrounding the killing of kangaroos and animals used in unnecessary and cruel scientific experiments).

6. How does what you and ALACT do impact on the animals?

Primarily both ALACT and APA try to make positive impacts for animals by raising public awareness of issues and by lobbying governments for systemic change. Direct rescues and protection actions have saved many individual animals while at the same providing a media hook for promoting broader campaigns.