

# **Animal Rights in the British Broadsheet**

**Andrew Owen**

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by Andrew Owen

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## Abstract

This dissertation charts the rise of animal rights as a movement in modern British politics and examines how broadsheet newspapers have reported this issue over the last three years. By discovering the relationship between successful organisations and those who have gained media attention we can see how a group can harness the media to improve its fortunes.

The British animal rights movement, which began in the 1970s, is based on the belief that animals, like humans, have inalienable rights that must be protected. Over the last 25 years the movement has steadily gained acceptance and its membership has increased accordingly. The number of groups has mushroomed and the variety of causes has diversified to the extent that there are now hundreds of animal rights groups in Britain with very different aims. Methods have also changed over the years and there has been a steady move away from the violence of groups such as the Animal Liberation Front (ALF). New words such as 'speciesism' and 'eco-terrorism' have arisen out of the movement.

I will begin by looking at the historical origins of the movement. From this it is possible to see how it has come to its current prominence over the last five years. Since 1994 hardly a day has gone by without at least one broadsheet newspaper in Britain printing a story about animal rights. Then I will move on to examine the framework of pressure group politics in which these organisations work, and to look closely at the methods they use to achieve their goals. I will then investigate the relationship between the press and animal rights pressure groups before coming to some general conclusions.

The research involved cataloguing every available article on animal rights printed in the broadsheet press between January 1993 and September 1995. Only three papers were available for 1993; the Guardian, The Times and the Sunday Times. But all papers between January 1994 and September 1995 were available.

Each article was classified according to the pressure group or individual, the issue, and the activity involved. There are a vast number of issues in animal rights but for the purposes of this study I have put them into nine categories: Cosmetics; the use of animals in product testing. Farming; anything relating to farming, such as milk production and live exports. Fur; the use of animal fur, wool or hide (leather) for clothing or accessories. Hunts; the hunting of game animals. Performance; the use of animals in shows including circuses, dolphinariums and zoos. Pets; from cruelty in the home to the Dangerous Dogs Act. Sport; includes horse racing, bull fighting and angling which, although strictly defined as a blood-sport, is usually left alone by the main anti-hunting groups. Vegetarianism; as a lifestyle choice, distinct from farming issues. Vivisection; medical or other research on live animals excluding testing of cosmetic products. I have made the distinction between cosmetics and vivisection because some regard the former as unnecessary and the latter as a necessary evil at the same time.

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# Chapter 1. The Origin of the British Animal Rights Movement

The animal rights movement is now a major force in British politics. It began in its present form in the mid-1970s although many of the groups still involved today date back to Victorian times. But it is in the 1990s that the movement has really come of age. Membership is up, press coverage is extensive, and animal rights is firmly on the agenda of the three main political parties.

Despite its lack of coverage until recently in the press, the British animal rights movement is not a new phenomenon. It began in the early nineteenth century with the founding of the Liverpool Society for Preventing Wanton Cruelty to Brute Animals. This was followed by the formation of the Royal Society for the Protection of Animals (RSPCA) in 1824. Originally known as the SPCA it was given its royal charter in 1840.

Other societies followed but most of them were concerned with a single issue, usually vivisection, the use of live animals in experiments. Nineteenth century activists were also closely tied with other campaigns:

Most suffragettes tended to be also in the forefront of campaigns against vivisection. Likewise, William Wilberforce and Fowell Buxton, two founding members of the RSPCA were also leading lights in the fight against slavery. Lord Shaftesbury, similarly, was not only a campaigner against cruelty to animals but also author of the Factory Acts and instrumental in the setting up of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.”<sup>1</sup>

The NSPCC actually started as an off-shoot of the RSPCA. Before it was argued that children had rights cases of cruelty could be prosecuted under laws designed to protect animals. It was argued that children were ‘brutes’ and thus entitled to the same protection.

By the end of the First World War the plight of animals, it seemed, had been largely forgotten. This would remain the case until the 1970s. Possibly the struggle of rebuilding after two World Wars and a long period of depression left the British public with other concerns. The situation began to change in the 1960s with the rise of youth activism. Several groups were set up but membership remained small. One reason for this is that the energy was directed into the peace movement. With the war going on in Vietnam it probably seemed more important to save the human race from itself before worrying about animals.

The true revival of the movement began in 1975 with the publication of Peter Singer’s *Animal Liberation*<sup>2</sup> and Richard D Ryder’s *Victims of Science*.<sup>3</sup> This was also the year that saw the end of the Vietnam war. With the threat of nuclear holocaust receding many peace activists now turned their attentions to another cause and many young people who had missed out in the 1960s became activists for the first time.

New groups continued to be formed and membership of existing groups started to increase rapidly. Many of the major groups today were formed around this time; the Hunt Saboteurs Association (HSA, 1964), Compassion In World Farming (CIWF, 1967), Fund for the Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments (FRAME, 1969), Vegetarian Society (1969), Friends of the Earth (1970), Chickens Lib (1973), Animal Liberation Front (ALF, 1976), Animal Aid (1977), Greenpeace (1977).

The growth in animal rights activism has continued through the 1980s to the present point where it has been at the forefront of media attention. Press coverage reached its peak in February 1995 (Figure A.7, “Totals 1994-95”) with 150 articles on animal rights in the broadsheets for that month alone. There are now a very large number of groups for individuals to join and many belong to more than one group. To give an idea of the expansion in Animals, Politics and Morality Robert Garner provides the example of the World Wide Fund for nature (WWF, formerly the World Wildlife Fund):

The WWF increased its membership from 12,000 in 1971 to 124,000 in 1987. The income of the UK branch of WWF rose from £9 million in 1988 to £22 million in 1990.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Garner, *Animals, Politics and Morality* (Manchester: 1994) p. 41.

<sup>2</sup>Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 2nd edition (London: 1995).

<sup>3</sup>R.D. Ryder, *Victims of Science* (London: 1983).

<sup>4</sup>Garner, —*Politics and Morality*, p. 44.

Although the individual groups that form the larger whole may seem disparate at first glance they are all based on the same founding principle, that animals have rights. The nineteenth century philosopher Jeremy Bentham said the key question regarding animals was not “Can they reason? nor Can they talk? but, Can they suffer?”<sup>5</sup> This was written before the civil-rights and women’s liberation movement. It is now accepted that discrimination on the basis of gender or the colour of a person’s skin is unacceptable. The modern animal rights movement takes this one step further to include discrimination against animals. In *Animal Liberation*, known by many as the Bible of Animal Rights, Peter Singer builds a solid case against racism and sexism. The title refers to the other liberation movements and does not simply mean releasing caged animals. Singer then goes on to make a case for animal rights:

The attitude that we may call “speciesism,”<sup>6</sup> by analogy with racism, must also be condemned. Speciesism—the word is not an attractive one, but I can think of no better term—is a prejudice or attitude of bias in favour of the interest of members of one’s own species and against those of members of another species.<sup>7</sup>

In part the movement owes much to the work of Charles Darwin. In *The Origin of Species* (1859), he lays the foundations of the modern view that humanity is an animal, ultimately evolved from the same routes as the other species that inhabit the Earth. Singer argues that it would be morally wrong for the human population with IQ scores of over 100 to enslave those with a score below 100 he asks:

If possessing a higher degree of intelligence does not entitle one human to use another for his or her own ends, how can it entitle humans to exploit non-humans for the same purpose?<sup>8</sup>

The only right Victorians attributed to animals was the right not to be treated cruelly. Its supporters were primarily concerned with the mistreatment of pets and working animals. But, many were opposed to vivisection. The modern movement borrows extensively from the idea of human rights but individuals still take different views of what those rights are when applied to animals. Obviously an animal does not have a right to freedom of speech or the vote. At one end of the spectrum an individual may argue that an animal has a right not to be treated cruelly and define that in terms of free range farming. At the other a vegan may argue that as an equal of man an animal has the right not to be killed for sport, eaten or skinned.

The arguments are further confused by the fact that not everyone in the same group has the same views on what those rights are, never mind what action should be taken to enforce them. Although this may lead to splits and occasionally dissolution of groups it is a characteristic of pressure groups themselves and not of the animal rights movement.

There are three consequences of this splintering effect. First, it has led to an even greater number of animal rights groups in Britain. Second, at the same time it has led to an increase in membership of single issue groups—those that target one specific area of animal rights—and a decline in membership of cause groups or umbrella organisations. Third it has shifted the balance between the organisations involved. In part this accounts for the decline of RSPCA membership and the rapid increase in groups such as Animal Aid (Figure A.12, “Group Membership”). The other important characteristic of pressure groups is their use of the media to get their point across and in recent years the animal rights movement has been one of the most successful in doing this.

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<sup>5</sup>Jeremy Bentham, *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, (New York: 1948), p. 311.

<sup>6</sup>The word “speciesism”, coined by Richard Ryder, now appears in the Oxford English Dictionary.

<sup>7</sup>Singer, —*Liberation*, p. 6.

<sup>8</sup>Singer, —*Liberation*, p. 6.

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# Chapter 2. Pressure Group Politics in Britain in the 1990s

As we have seen there has been a great increase in membership of animal rights and welfare groups. An increasing concern for animals has inspired many to take up the cause but why do these people join pressure groups? In a constitutional democracy power resides in government. It would therefore seem obvious that to change the legislation one would support a political party who represented ones views on animals. This is precisely the reason why people join pressure groups. Until recently the Conservatives, Labour and the Liberal Democrat parties did not have a policy on animal rights. This helps to explain why more people are members of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds than of the Labour Party.<sup>1</sup>

The other reason is the post-war decline of the general public's interest in party politics. The number of individuals participating in elections has been in general decline since 1945 while their involvement in pressure groups has grown considerably. Although the animal rights movement took a further 30 years to get going after the end of the Second World War, by that time other pressure groups such as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) had established public protest as an everyday feature of modern British politics.

Pressure groups do have some similarities with the political parties they seek to influence. They may be mass campaigning bodies but they are usually dedicated to a single issue whereas political parties address many issues and seek to exercise power by forming a government. The advantage for the individual groups is that they can concentrate on the issue at hand without having to worry about other issues. Some would argue that as these individuals exert pressure on government democracy is usurped but in Britain the wide range of pressure groups ensures that all sides are usually heard.

Pressure groups need a number of qualities to be effective:

They need a coherent organisational structure; high-quality and efficient staff; adequate financial resources; good leadership; and a clear strategy.<sup>2</sup>

Political scientists separate pressure groups into two broad categories; Sectional or Interest Groups, and Cause Groups. Sectional groups represent their members interests. They include trade unions such as the National Union of Journalists and professional bodies such as the British Medical Association. Cause groups however represent an idea not directly related to their members interests. All animal rights groups fall into this second category.

Wyn Grant further subdivides these categories into insider and outsider groups.<sup>3</sup> An insider group is one that has direct access to government. This may be through sympathetic ministers putting forward private member's bills, being consulted by select committees, providing background on policy making or other means. In the animal rights movement the RSPCA is one such example. As an insider group they were consulted during the drafting of the Dangerous Dogs Bill by the government. Outsider groups are those who work outside the system either through choice such as local groups who oppose live exports or by necessity such as the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) whose methods are illegal.

Grant points out that there is also an element of strategy in this position. An outsider group may pursue an insider strategy to achieve insider group status. For instance Compassion In World Farming (CIWF) began as an outsider group but has continually pursued an insider strategy. It has now achieved what I would class as secondary insider group status. CIWF is consulted by the National Union of Farmers (NUF) which is itself an insider group and is consulted by the government when formulating agriculture policy.

To become an insider group an outsider group must demonstrate that it represents the views of its members, that it has a body of experience, that it is willing to compromise, and that it is prepared to work within the constitution. In this regard CIWF is beginning to out-rank the RSPCA on its knowledge of farming and is well on its way to becoming a full insider group. At the same time the RSPCA has a declining membership and is losing the support of its remaining members. It is entirely possible that it will go the way of the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection (BUAV) which has recently faced a split in its leadership and may eventually be dissolved.

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<sup>1</sup>Wyn Grant, *Pressure Groups, Politics and Democracy in Britain* (London: 1994), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Bill Jones et. al., *Politics UK*, 2nd edition (London: 1994), pp. 224-225.

<sup>3</sup>Grant, *Pressure Groups*, p. 15.

The ALF in contrast has no desire to work within the system. It will not compromise in what it sees as its mission to end animal suffering. But, in the early 1990s many members of the group found it lacking in conviction and set up splinter groups such as the Animal Liberation Militia (ALM), the Animal Rights Militia (ARM), and the most extremist of all; the Justice Department. While these splinter groups continue to use methods of terrorism the ALF itself has taken more of a back seat and now tends to act as the voice of the others. In this respect it is playing a Sinn Fein to the Justice Department's Provisional IRA. The ALF is gaining respect and has a policy of at least trying not to injure humans. However, as with Sinn Fein, the refusal to abandon violence keeps it outside the system.

Whichever method is used Grant finds a general process is usually followed. Some stages may of course be missed out. In stage one, groups work to place the problem on the policy agenda. If they are successful and the government recognises the problem then stage two begins. This includes consultations with interested parties, including the group itself if it is an insider. If stage three is reached the government will release a Green Paper or even a White paper on policy. Further consultation will result in the drafting of a bill. If successful in stage four the bill becomes an Act of Parliament. In stage five groups will be consulted over implementation and secondary legislation may be passed. The group will then examine the limitations of the Act and, in seeking to address them, the whole process starts again.

The case of live exports provides a good example of how this can work even for an outsider group but success is not always ensured. In this case when a bill was proposed Oliver Heald, MP for Hertfordshire North and parliamentary aide to William Waldegrave, the Minister for Agriculture caused it to run out of time:

Mr Heald won infamy in the eyes of animal rights campaigners for his part in 'talking out' a back-bench Bill to ban the export of live calves. During a 24-minute speech, ensuring the Bill was not debated, he read from the Encyclopedia Britannica on the history of the Olympics.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Independent, February 7, 1995.

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# Chapter 3. Methods Employed by Animal Rights Activists

The methods used by animal rights pressure groups vary widely. There are broadly two categories that we are interested in. First, those that are targeted at the general public. Second, those that are reported in the broad-sheet press. It is true that activities that are reported by the press may be the most successful at reaching the public but, before animal rights came to the attention of the press it had to begin somewhere. There is also the sub-category of activities that are not intended to have any publicity but gain it because of their very nature. This is often the case of bombing campaigns which are clearly linked to animal rights but where no-one claims responsibility. Their purpose is to intimidate their targets but as they are usually reported in the press I have included them in the first category.

In the first category, which is of less interest to us, we find activity in common with that used by community action groups. This includes raffles, village fairs, leafleting, writing to local MPs, local poster campaigns, publishing newsletters, provision of educational material including videos, sale of car stickers and badges, mail shots, door to door campaigning, collections and the setting up of stalls in shopping centres. This sort of action is chiefly used by smaller groups that do not have access to the large funds of other organisations. Of these, leafleting is the primary activity.

Groups using these methods include the League Against Cruel Sports (LACS), Campaign Against Angling (CAA), Animals' Defenders (concerned with stopping the use of animals in circuses), Compassion In World Farming (CIWF), Friends of Animals Under Abuse (FAUNA), Animal Aid, Campaign Against Leather, Vegan Society, Animal Cruelty Investigation Group, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA). You may never have heard of many of the above organisations but they represent the organisations whose leaflets are available from just one stall run by FAUNA in Cardiff's shopping centre. FAUNA demonstrates another aspect of these groups. They are mutually co-operative and by distributing each other's literature can gain wide support without the need for media exposure.

The main category, activities that are reported in the press, is far more wide ranging. These can be broken down into two sub-categories; legal, and illegal. Legal activities include peaceful protest (marches and rallies), promoting education, writing to the newspapers, writing books, publishing newspapers, lobbying parliament, picketing docks, collecting research and publishing findings, and advertising. Illegal activities include arson, fire bombing, sending letter bombs, attacking individuals, disrupting hunts, invading annual general meetings, releasing animals into the wild, invading racecourses, hoax bomb threats, and sending threatening or abusive letters.

Groups involved only in legal activities (those which are or may become insider groups) include the Vegetarian Society, RSPCA, Respect For Animals (the successor of Lynx), The Protesters (a company set up to fight for animal rights in court), International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), Fund for the Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments (FRAME), Fight Against Animal Cruelty in Europe (FAACE), Compassion In World Farming (CIWF), British Union Against Vivisection (BUAV), Body Shop and Animal Aid. Groups involved mainly in illegal activities include the Justice Department, Animal Rights Militia (ARM), and the Animal Liberation Front (ALF).

A third type of group exists. These groups are involved in peaceful protest and do not usually seek to injure anyone but their activity may go beyond the law or may have become recently criminalised by the Criminal Justice Act (1994). These include the Hunt Saboteurs Association (HSA), Greenpeace, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), League Against Cruel Sports (LACS), East Kent Animal Welfare (EKAW), Brightlingsea Against Live Exports (BALE, now disbanded to avoid prosecution), and other local anti-veal organisations.

In the 1980s the most successful animal rights campaign was the attempt to stop the use of fur. Spear headed by Lynx with an advertising campaign photographed by David Bailey the campaign did serious damage to the trade. The adverts included a woman wearing a fur coat drenched in blood and fur sales plummeted. However, the industry finally sued Lynx and it finally went bankrupt although the organisers then set up Respect For Animals which is doing quite well (Figure A.11, "Coverage by Group").

In the 1990s there have been many successful campaigns but the one with the highest profile in the press has undoubtedly been that against live animal exports. Organised mainly at a local level it attracted unprecedented

coverage in the press. The peak coverage of animal rights came in February 1995, the month that saw the death of protester Jill Phipps, run over by a veal lorry. There were a total of 150 articles in the broad-sheet press that month concerned with animal rights and extensive television coverage was given to the protesters.

In February 1994 CIWF held a press conference to highlight the cruelty of animal exports. It reduced actress Joanna Lumley to tears. She subsequently urged the Government to end the export of live animals from Britain. Then Granada's World in Action programme alleged that hauliers were failing to feed and water animals. The media were interested and pictures of doe-eyed calves in crates on the evening news helped to mobilise a group of people who until now would never have thought of joining a pressure group or protesting in the street.

In June 1994 a secretary was injured by a letter bomb at the offices of Stena Sealink. In August the company stopped carrying live exports after pressure from its customers. The customers had been targeted by a leafleting campaign as the boarded ferries by local organised groups such as Brightlingsea Against Live Exports (BALE).

In July P&O agreed to stop carrying live exports and all the remaining passenger companies soon followed suit. In September Phoenix Aviation tried to open an 'air-bridge' from Bournemouth but the local authorities refused permission.

In October the RSPCA began a national advertising campaign against animal exports. When the freighter Angus Express sailed from Grimbsy carrying 3,000 lambs bound for Poitiers in France members of the RSPCA and CIWF picketed the docks. Flights of livestock began from Aldegrove Airport, Belfast.

In November Joanna Lumley joined Scottish animal rights activists in calling for a boycott of Prestwick Airport in Ayrshire for exporting live animals to France and the Coventry Animal Alliance began protesting at Coventry Airport against veal flights to the Continent.

In December an Air Algerie Boeing 737 crashed at Coventry Airport, killing its crew. Phoenix Aviation, which had leased the plane to carry live exports, became a target for protesters.

The peaceful protest ended in January 1995 when Shoreham harbour in West Sussex became the first scene of violence. The movement had been gathering strength but 'rent-a-mob' types from the Socialist Workers Party had started to attend demonstrations at the docks. On January 11, Tesco announced it would stop buying veal from Holland. Two days later Dutch officials offered guarantees that all calves sent from Britain would be kept on humane veal farms, not in production crates but the ban remained in force.

On January 15 campaigners began protesting at Agriculture Minister William Waldegrave's farm. He had admitted that some of his calves were sold for export. The next week saw the first major protests at Brightlingsea in Essex over a new shipping route for livestock from the port to Nieupoort in Belgium. More than 500 protesters tried to block the main road into the harbour.

On January 18 protesters prevented two lorries containing calves and sheep from crossing to Cherbourg from Plymouth's Millbay Docks. The lorries arrived after six others had boarded a cross-Channel ferry. Police arrested two people. On January 31 veal flights to Holland and France resumed for the first time at Coventry Airport since the Boeing 737 crash.

The movement had now reached its peak but a terrible turn of events helped to prolong its media coverage when on February 1, Jill Phipps, 31, a veteran animal rights protester, was killed after falling under a lorry carrying calves to Coventry Airport. On the same day Peter Gilder & Sons of Gloucestershire, one of Britain's biggest transporter of live animals, was given leave to seek a judicial review of a ban on shipments by the Dover Harbour Board. Shoreham Council also stopped livestock shipments from its harbour although this was later declared illegal.

The protests continued throughout 1995. Jill Phipps' funeral, held in Coventry Cathedral, was attended by Alan Clarke and Brigitte Bardot but it did not become the media circus some Conservative MPs had feared. The newspapers continued to write about Ms Phipps throughout the year to the point that, as an individual, she got more column inches than any single protest group (Figure A.11, "Coverage by Group"). Vicki Moore, who was gored by a bull while protesting against bull fighting in Spain, received very little attention by contrast. But, Ms Moore's injuries were not fatal and one can detect a certain morbid fascination in the press.

Other ports banned live exports and the high court ruled that this was in breach of European free trade law. Mr Waldegrave went to Brussels to try to agree to Europe wide restrictions on the length of journey times and Britain

imposed a unilateral limit of eight hours between watering and feeding stops. Phoenix Aviation went bust because of falling income and other companies not paying in time. All the major passenger ferry companies banned live exports after protests from their customers and competition from the channel tunnel which never carried live exports. A farmers collective bought an airport to fly calves to the continent but it was closed down when the sea route was re-opened because it could not compete.

The veal trade continues and so do the protests but serious damage was done to the farming community and it has already changed its practices so that cows are now bred with a different type of bull to produce calves whose meat is suitable for the British market.<sup>1</sup> The protest cost tax-payers a total £6 million pounds in extra policing at sea ports in Shoreham, West Sussex, Brightlingsea, Essex, and Plymouth and Coventry air port.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The veal trade has now ceased because of the EU ban on British beef. The effect of the destruction of a large part of the British herd will clearly have a serious effect on British farming practices.

<sup>2</sup>Jon Hibbs, Daily Telegraph, 25 March, 1995.

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# Chapter 4. Coverage of Animal Rights in the British Press

In chapter two we examined Wyn Grant's model of pressure groups. There is one important omission from his model—the media. In the first stage of getting legislation passed, the media and newspapers in particular play a key role in bringing issues to the attention of individuals and the government. Robert Garner says:

“That the public are now much more aware of both the capabilities of animals and what is actually done to them is primarily a product of the greater coverage of animal issues in the media, but this in itself is a product of the movement's efforts to get the issues on to the political agenda. The press have found that the emotive nature of vivisection provides good copy and the development of television has greatly aided the cause of animal protection since it involves issues which can have a considerable visual impact. Just as coverage of the starving in Ethiopia provoked a huge response in the West, the sight of animals in factory farms and laboratories would seem to offer similar prospects of public sympathy and revulsion.”<sup>1</sup>

Looking at the media as a whole we see that advertising plays a key role for many animal rights groups. Many of these groups lack sufficient funds to launch their own television or newspaper advertising campaigns. They must therefore find other ways of gaining attention. The methods that we have discussed in the previous chapter are primarily aimed at getting publicity which may result in an increase in support.

The animal rights campaign has one distinct advantage over other pressure groups; animals are “cute and cuddly”. They may in fact be vicious killers, such as dangerous dogs, but they look nice and appeal to the sentimentality that runs through British culture. Polly Toynbee, in the Independent on Sunday, writes:

The old lady weeps. “Those little faces,” she says between sobs, “I am haunted by the look on those little faces.” It was a television news clip the other day that could have been run with all kinds of stories: babies dying of neglect in Romanian orphanages, the war-torn faces of children in Grozny or Rwanda. But this old lady was lamenting the fate of a lorry-load of calves she had watched passing towards the docks in her home town of Shoreham, the little faces belonging not to children but big-eyed creatures with soft, wet muzzles.<sup>2</sup>

Getting the message across in print is not so easy. Broad-sheet newspapers seem to prefer not to run pictures of lab animals undergoing vivisection. This is quite understandable, as it is not what one would like to see first thing in the morning. They also prefer photographs of people to those of animals. It is well known that the tabloid press like celebrities. The broad-sheet press like them even more when they are backing a campaign. This is why Brigitte Bardot gets her picture in the papers so often. It still does not really explain what Joanna Lumley breaking down in tears has to do with live exports. In this specific example what captured the papers imagination was the “rebellion of middle-England”.<sup>3</sup> The generally conservative heartland of England going out of their homes and on to the streets to protest. Campaigns for other causes including the anti-road protesters joined together with animal rights protesters in opposing the Criminal Justice Bill and government claims that protesters were just a “rent-a-mob” did not stand up to the evidence. Pensioners, house-wives, and children all turned out in force. To paraphrase Howard Beale they were “mad as hell and they weren't going to take it anymore.”<sup>4</sup>

Harnessing the media is crucial for a successful campaign. It brings publicity which in turn generates new members and donations. Groups such as Greenpeace, which is not limited to animal rights activity, have a large disposable income and can afford to take out a full page advert in the broad-sheet press. Even so they have also been clever in providing television journalists with footage. A question of the ethics came into play when Greenpeace supplied prerecorded material to television news programmes during their recent campaign to stop oil giant Shell from sinking the Brent Spar oil platform in the north sea. Other groups may soon follow this example. Also, as we are concerned with the papers rather than television, it should be noted that a well written press release with a good

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Garner: —Politics and Morality, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup>Independent on Sunday, January 25, 1995.

<sup>3</sup>“Middle-England” is a vague term but it does seem to include the pensioners and housewives who turned up day after day to protest against live exports.

<sup>4</sup>Played by Peter Finch in Sidney Lumet's film Network (1976).

set of accompanying photographs is as tempting to a news editor on a paper as it is on television. Julia Hobsbawm, writing in the Guardian says this:

Suddenly PR isn't about making news; it is the news. Increasingly, the news and features agenda is being led by the so-called New Protesters—from animal rights to anti-road campaigns. A large section of the media see these campaigners as plucky, passionate underdogs defending the high moral ground from an assortment of bulldozers, oil rigs or other instruments of “big business”. They are seen as untouchable—how can you raise a vigorous campaign against elderly middle Englanders clutching their pets at British ports? Corporate and government campaigns do attract considerable attention but if media coverage is anything to go by (and research suggests it is) then New Protesters, unaligned to any political party, espousing single-issue politics and new age passions, can do no wrong.<sup>5</sup>

This was not always the case. The media regularly misrepresented animal rights activists in the early 1990s, grouping them all together with the more extremist elements. Janet George, in the Guardian, writes:

The media must share the blame for the public confusion over the animal rights agenda, Hunt saboteurs are regularly described as protesters, except when they fire-bomb high street stores - then they become extremists. Yet the people and their beliefs are the same, only the targets and the names have been changed.<sup>6</sup>

The newspapers do not generally endorse the movement but, as far as activists are concerned, any news is good news. It seems that those who are innately sympathetic to the cause are not swayed by what they read in their paper. Auberon Waugh wrote at least one column in the Telegraph a month deriding animal rights activists during 1995 but readers letters did not support his view. The papers increase awareness even when they are being flippant. The BBC, perhaps aware of this, edited out pictures of animal rights protesters at the Grand National that failed to run.<sup>7</sup>

There has been a marked shift in the perception of the animal rights movement. In 1993 activists were seen as extremists, more because of their views than their actions. By 1995, with the increase in public support newspapers had changed to a fairly positive stand. The Independent and Independent on Sunday are the two papers most favourable to animal rights followed by the Guardian. The Observer, The Times, The Sunday Times and the Sunday Telegraph are the most even handed and the Daily Telegraph is the least favourable. However, readers of the Daily Telegraph, seen as the paper of “middle-England” and the middle classes, were in general very much in favour of animal rights.

With the anti-fur campaign of the 1980s virtually triumphant and the decline of terrorist activities by animal rights activists following the peak in 1990 newspapers were not devoting much time to the issue. Cal McCrystal reports:

Since 1990, when the infant son of a Bristol University researcher was seriously hurt by a car bomb, injuries to humans have been relatively minor: an Oxfordshire cat breeder, for example, damaged both his hands opening a mailing-tube bomb, as did a Buckinghamshire farmer who had convictions for cruelty to animals.<sup>8</sup>

But then two things happened. In December 1993 a splinter group of the ALF calling itself the Justice Department began a spate of bombings on high-street stores linked with vivisection and began sending letter bombs to researchers and people they believed to be abusing animals. After two comparatively quiet years animal rights was back on the agenda. The theme of 1994 was mass protest; against roads, against the Criminal Justice Bill, and against the government. Middle-England, the heartland of Tory voters, was angry and active and this captured the imagination of the media. Pensioners, housewives, children from respectable Conservative voting families were turning out in droves to protest. It made great news, but at the same time it brought the other half of the animal rights movement back into the spotlight. June 1994 saw the beginning of the mass media coverage of live export protests which continued throughout the year. Although the campaign began in February, there is a clear link between the television coverage and the increased support that followed, groups such as BALE rose to prominence and gained more coverage than Greenpeace's animal rights activities without a single penny spent on advertising in the national press.

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<sup>5</sup>Guardian, June 26, 1995.

<sup>6</sup>Guardian, December 31, 1993.

<sup>7</sup>Guardian, April 6, 1993.

<sup>8</sup>Independent on Sunday, 28 August, 1994.

Totalling the figures we find that in 1993 the Guardian carried a total of 54 articles on animal rights, in 1994 this was up slightly to 62 but in 1995 it had 153 articles between January and September. The Times printed 51 articles in 1993, 60 in 1994 and 108 between January and September of 1995.<sup>9</sup> The Sunday Times had 20 in 1993, 37 in 1994 and 39 between January and September of 1995. This represents a clear increase in coverage. What we are looking for is an indication that the different newspapers are giving similar amounts of coverage in the same month. This would tell us that a coherent news agenda existed at the time which the broadsheet press were following.

Looking at the graphs for 1993 (Figure A.1, “Dailies 1993”, Figure A.2, “Sundays 1993”) it is clear that there is not much correlation between the newspapers in terms of coverage. From this we can see that animal rights is not “on the agenda”. Correlation generally only occurs during the reporting of news stories such as bombings. There are two months with noticeable peaks however, April and December.

When we look at the graphs for 1994 (Figure A.3, “Dailies 1994”, Figure A.4, “Sundays 1994”) we find that there is a shift towards more correlation. This is the first sign of an emerging agenda. There has been a marginal increase in coverage that continues throughout the year and the peaks in April and December are still noticeable. By 1995 we find a strong correlation in coverage in the different papers. Coverage hits its highest level in January and February and then declines gradually throughout the year but remains above average levels for the previous year. Again there is a peak in April although it appears small in comparison to those of January and February.

Examining the combined figures for 1994 and 1995 (Figure A.7, “Totals 1994-95”) we can see two April peaks. What would have been a December peak for 1994 is dwarfed by the January peak of 1995 which increases to February. The explanation for this is very simple. The Grand National is held in April and animal rights campaigners usually threaten and sometimes attempt to stop the race. When the race was cancelled in 1993 protesters tried to take the credit and every following year amidst fears of a repeat security was stepped up following speculation in the press. The December peaks are due to the run up to Christmas. With thoughts turning to the festive season it is the crucial time for animal rights campaigns targeting farming to get their message across. Television programmes which show how turkeys are really treated provide free publicity and the press tends to carry more comment pieces. This is also the traditional peak time for autumn bombing campaigns because of the increased publicity generated.

January 1995 would have been the peak of the year with the anti-veal protesters beginning to win convincingly. Major obstacles had been overcome and the trade looked as if it would end completely within a month or two. February became the peak because of the death of protester Jill Phipps. Although protester Vicki Moore was gored by a bull during the same year, media attention only lasted a few days while she was still critical. In contrast people were still writing about Jill Phipps in September and probably continued after that. Her relatives were interviewed, her life history discovered, her funeral narrowly avoided becoming a “media circus”, famous names paid tribute to her. The press all followed the inquest after her death. Within a week most of the press alleged that it was the fault of the lorry driver, then the police officer and then of Ms Phipps herself. The inquest finally concluded death by misadventure.

For the anti-veal protesters Ms Phipps’ death was not entirely in vain. Almost every time her name is mentioned so is her cause. As an individual she was mentioned more times than any single interest group (Figure A.11, “Coverage by Group”). This means that she alone played a significant role in making live exports the dominant animal rights issue in the press in 1995. It represented 66.6 per cent, up from 22.7 per cent in the previous year. (Figure A.9, “Coverage 1994”, Figure A.10, “Coverage 1995”).

Examining the issues covered by the press in conjunction with the exposure given to individual groups gives a good idea of the effectiveness of the methods used by those groups. The groups with the most exposure were the RSPCA, CIWF and the ALF. CIWF began the campaign against live exports in February 1994. The RSPCA while remaining an umbrella group spent most of its time in 1994 and 1995 getting behind the live export campaign. The ALF coverage can be explained by their press officer acting as a spokesman for other extremist groups as already discussed. Although the RSPCA has a declining membership it is still one of the biggest groups in the movement. CIWF itself is beginning to have a very large influence. The result of two large groups combining efforts is that they can overcome obstacles and achieve their goals.

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<sup>9</sup>See figures 1.1 through 3.2 (Appendix A, *Figures*)

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# Chapter 5. Conclusion

We have seen that animal rights as a movement has come a long way since its inception in the early-nineteenth century. From our investigation we can draw some general conclusions. There have been three major successes in recent years. First the reduction of the use of fur in clothing. Second the reduction of animal testing in cosmetics. Third the end of live exports. True, some people still wear fur and although most cosmetics are no-longer tested on animals the practice has by no means been wiped out. Each of these campaigns was lead by groups that followed these principles:

To be successful a pressure group needs to have a solid leadership to avoid fragmentation. This can be bolstered by combining efforts with other groups such as the CIWF/RSPCA alliance during the live exports campaign.

The best time to launch a campaign is over the Easter or Christmas period. It is still not quite clear why the press are more interested in animal rights at this time but obviously when coverage is at its highest a group has the best chance of gaining media exposure.

It is not as important to have a large number of members as it is to have a visible public presence. While the CIWF and RSPCA led the political campaign against live exports it was the members of local groups such as BALE that turned out in force to picket the docks.

Striking images can give a massive boost to a small campaign. David Bailey's work for the anti-fur movement and the sight of doe-eyed calves in crates increased public support for both those campaigns.

However, the fortunes of a group may not always be related to their strategy. Unexpected events such as the death of a protester or the outbreak of disease can have a profound effect on media coverage and hence public interest. Live exports was kept in the media because of the death of Jill Phipps and only ended with the advent of the European ban on all British beef exports.

Recent campaigns have been successful because they have harnessed the power of the media and newspapers will continue to play an important role in representing these groups. Fortunately reports in the press are, for the most part, balanced and the reader is not being fed a constant stream of propaganda.

Students wishing to take this research further should be aware of some of the limitations of the methods used. The material provided gives a good general idea of trends but it would be interesting to see how group membership relates to media coverage. The problem lies in obtaining accurate membership numbers over a period of time. Originally I also set out to include an examination of the type of coverage that the media gave animal rights. I began cataloguing it on the basis of whether it enhanced or reduced a group's reputation. After going through the papers for 1993 and 1994 I could not find a clear pattern emerging and so abandoned that line of thought. A more detailed analysis would be necessary to produce usable data on that subject. While the data provides a comprehensive study of broad-sheet newspapers for 1994 to September 1995 a more complete analysis of 1993 and data for October 1995 and beyond would be very useful. Unfortunately newspapers for these dates were not available in a convenient form at the time of this study. Another area of interest would of course be the tabloid newspapers for the same period. Including these in this study was impossible due to time constraints. Finally, the BSE crisis, which occurred as this work was drawing to a close, clearly merits further investigation with regard to its implications for animal rights.

In the future we can expect greater co-operation from groups who have learned the benefit of presenting a united front. With the end of the IRA cease-fire security forces will have to take officers away from investigations involving animal rights extremists and it seems likely that violence will continue. The ALF, which has never had more than around 100 active members, could well step back to become the voice of the other groups it has spawned and it is even conceivable that dialogue could take place to try and persuade these groups to limit their campaigns. Either way, anti-veal protesters have proved that peaceful protest is the most effective action available. Violent protest is the quickest way to alienate a sympathetic public. Convincing the hearts and minds of Conservative voters appears to have been as effective as directly lobbying the Government.

As more of the population turns to vegetarianism through increased awareness, and in part due to the worries over meat products, it will continue to become a more acceptable way of life. We can expect to see a further increase in the availability of vegetarian products and an increasing range of choice.

The immediate future of animal rights in the media is again uncertain but it cannot be long before another cause comes along that captures editors' imaginations. Despite this, coverage was declining towards the end of September 1995 and although there may have been a small peak in December the agenda has moved on. Animals are still at the forefront of the agenda but now in the form of the BSE, or "mad cow", crisis. The veal trade is over and is unlikely to resume after the inevitable cull required of Britain by its European partners. The farming world has learned to value public opinion and will be watching the press much more closely in future.

Politics is changing too. In the run up to a general election in April 1997 Conservatives are worried about facing defeat and if unity can be found in their ranks they may have to rely on the interests of single issue cause groups to win. This seems unlikely to happen. In addition to the formation of The Protesters, a company created to fight for animal rights in the courts a new coalition of pressure groups including Oxfam and Christian Aid has been formed that will enter the political process.

Calling itself the Real World Coalition, the group will not field candidates at any elections. It is against the law for charities to do this. It has three main aims; to talk to people, to talk to politicians and to influence the media. This is a bold statement. Of course all pressure groups seek to influence the media but this is usually at least partially veiled. The group hopes to set the agenda. By forming a view on a wide variety of issues that have remained in the domain of single issue groups in the past it will pass judgement on candidates from all the political parties and say who it believes is going to be most likely to pursue this agenda. If successful this will mark a major departure for pressure groups in British politics and it could have important implications for the animal rights movement. If they do not act they could find themselves left behind.

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# Appendix A. Figures

Except for the data on group membership, the data presented here is original research by the author. The group membership figures were obtained from the following sources:

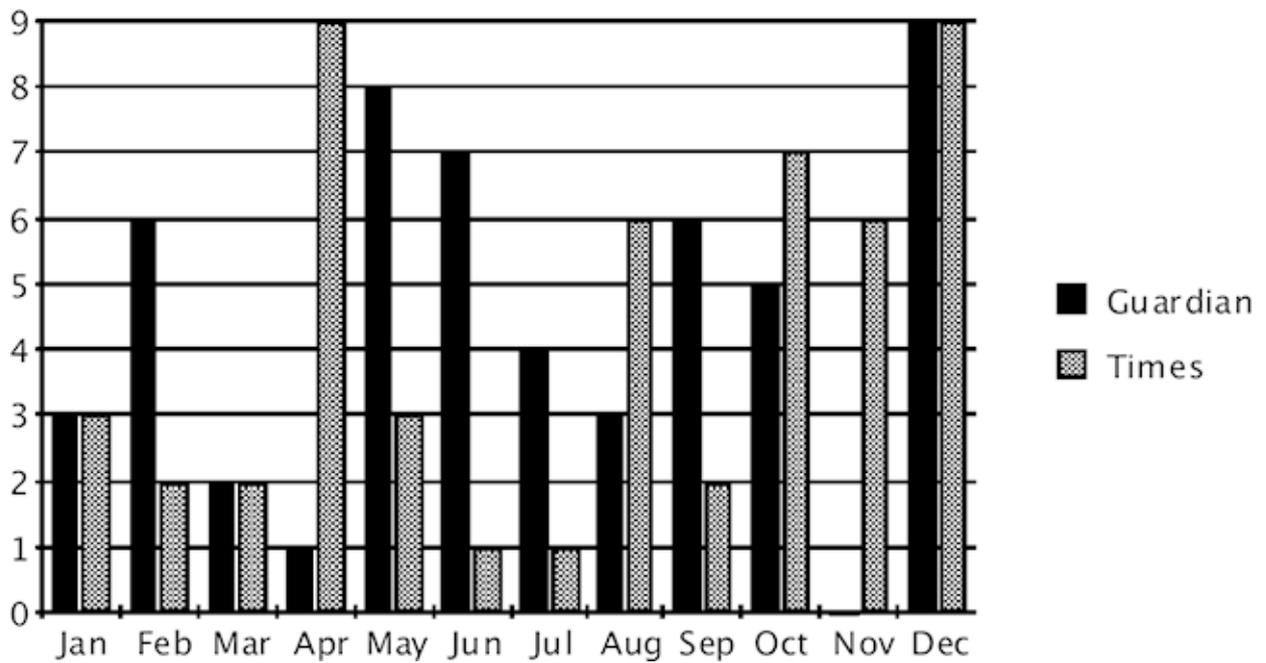
Taggart King, BUAV executive member, 21 September 1989

Jean Pink, Animal Aid Organiser, 1993

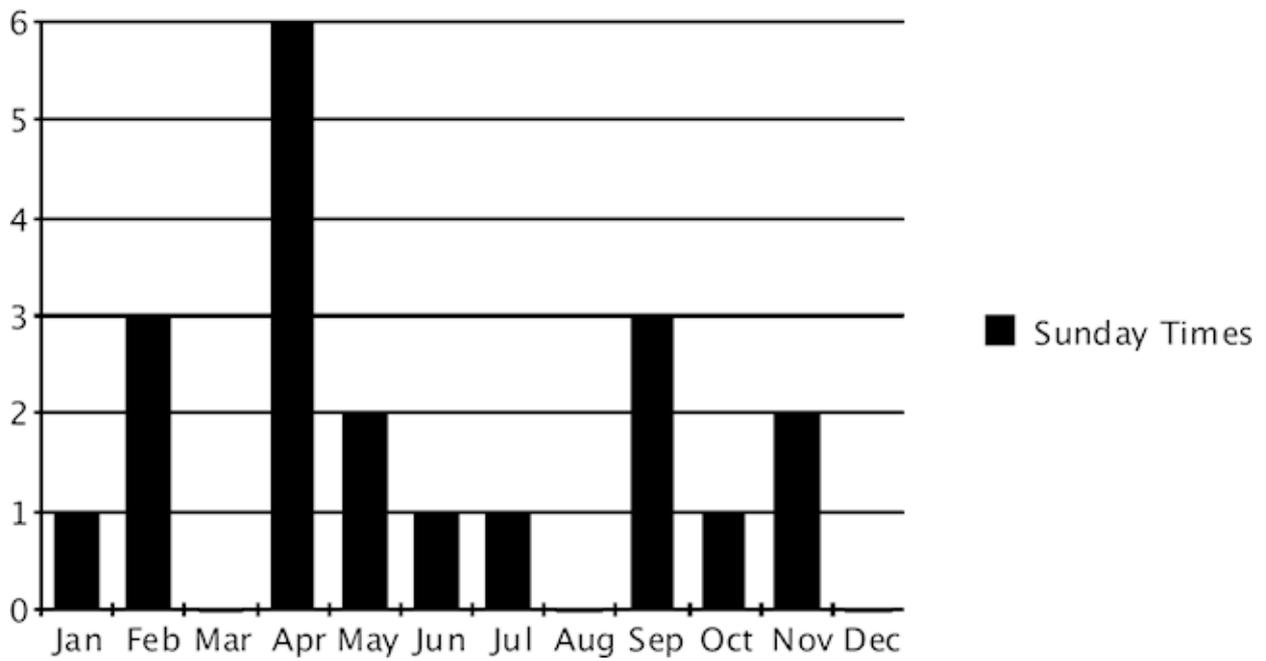
Angela Smith, League Against Cruel Sports Political Officer, 1 September, 1989

Rita Mayer, RSPCA Archivist, 1993

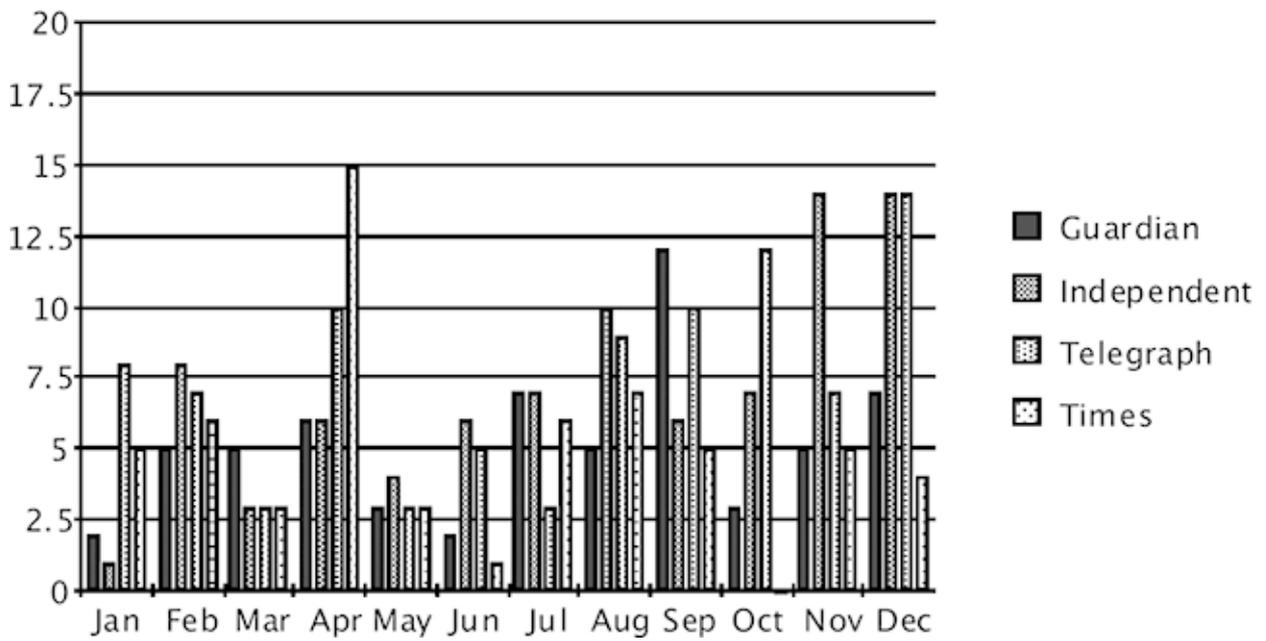
**Figure A.1. Number of Articles Appearing in the Guardian and The Times 1993**



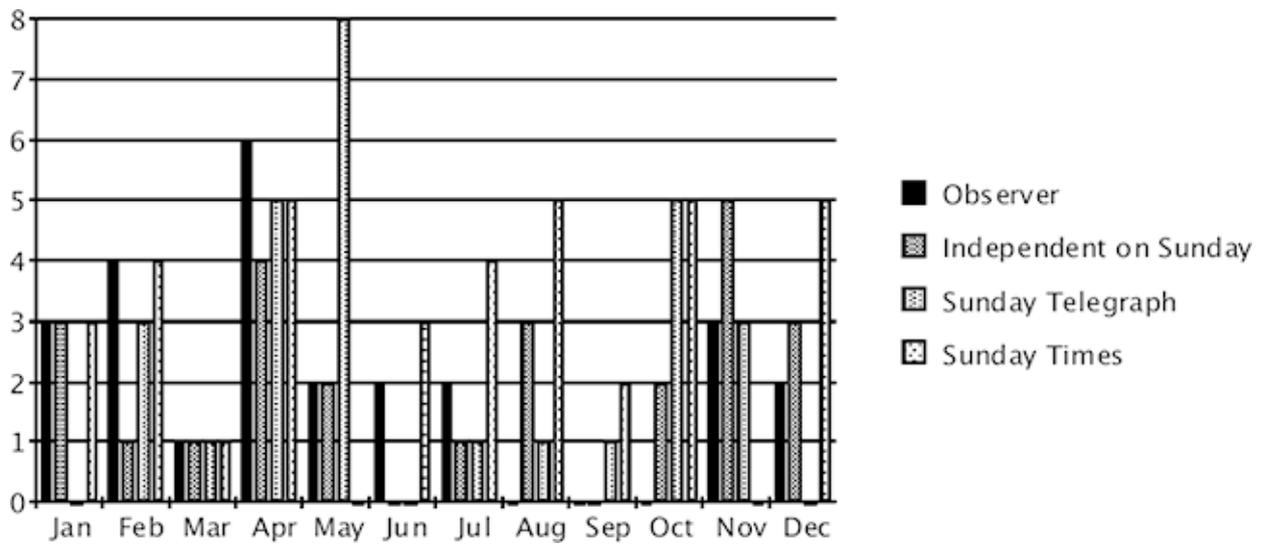
**Figure A.2. Number of Articles Appearing in the Sunday Times 1993**



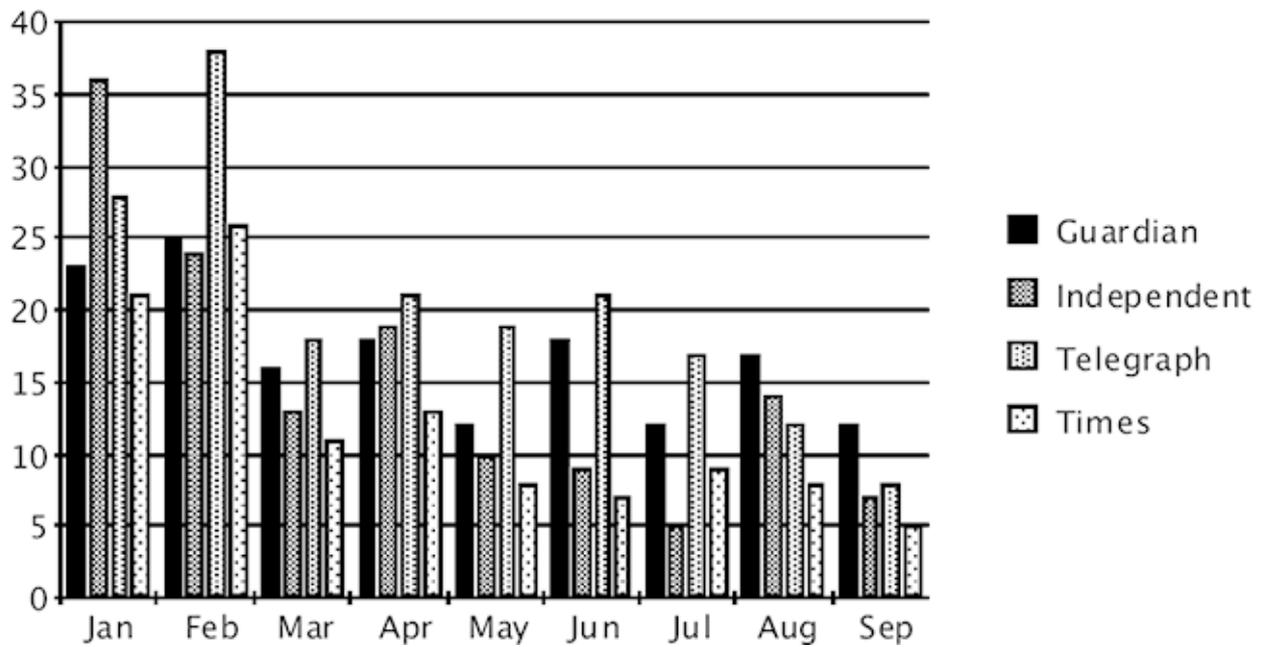
**Figure A.3. Number of Articles Appearing in Dailies 1994**



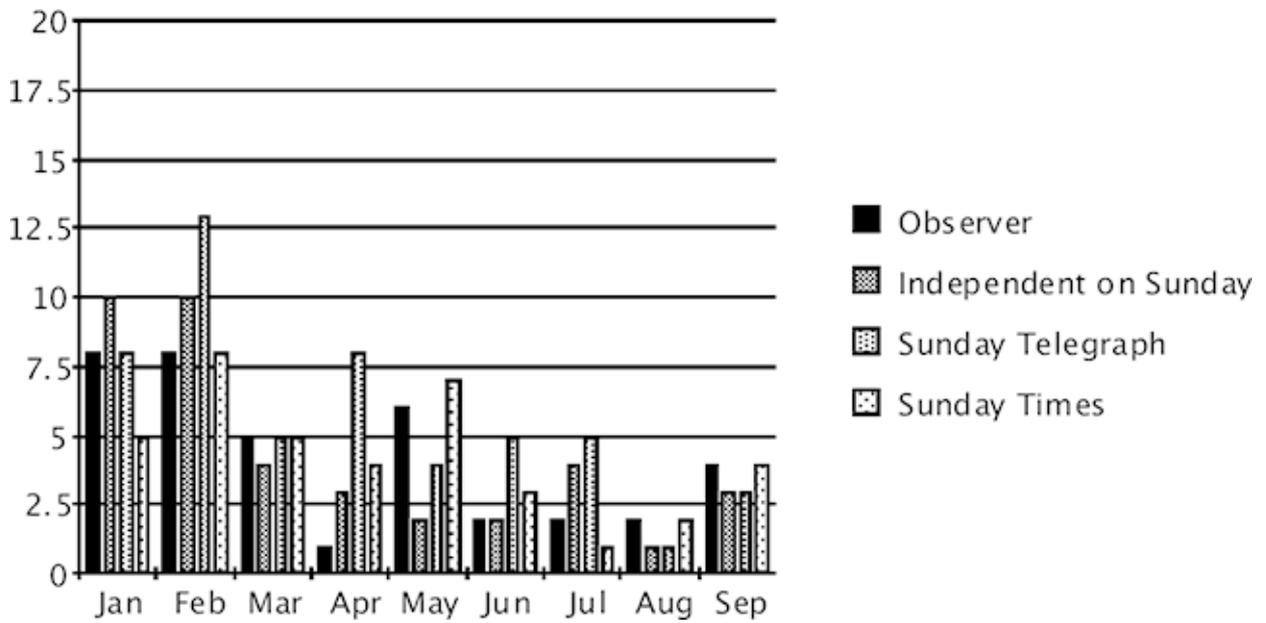
**Figure A.4. Number of Articles Appearing in Sundays 1994**



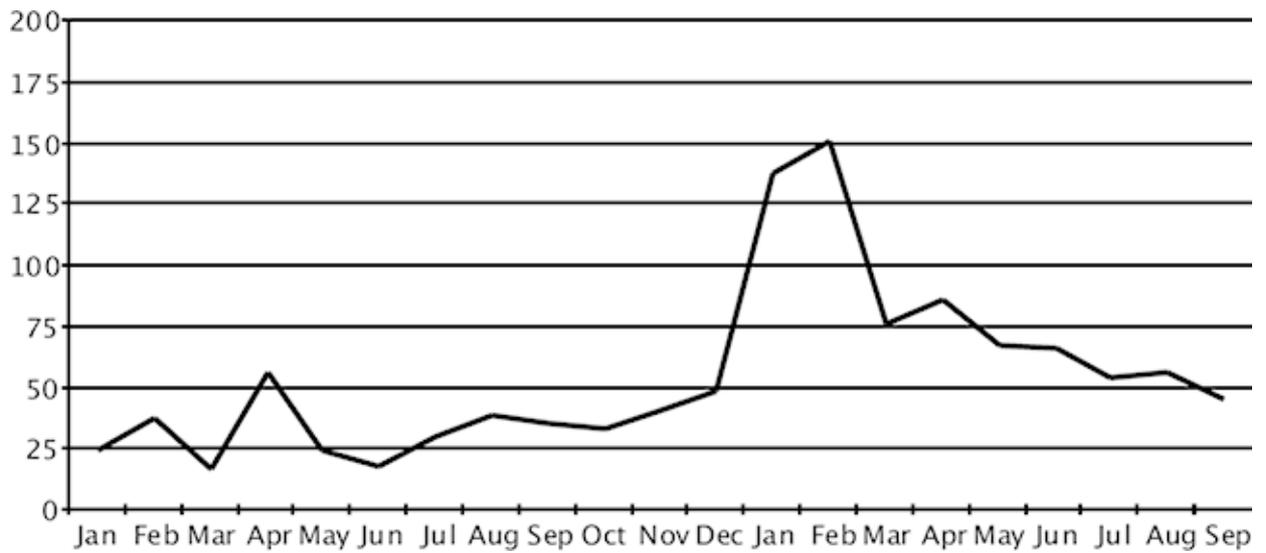
**Figure A.5. Number of Articles Appearing in Dailies 1995**



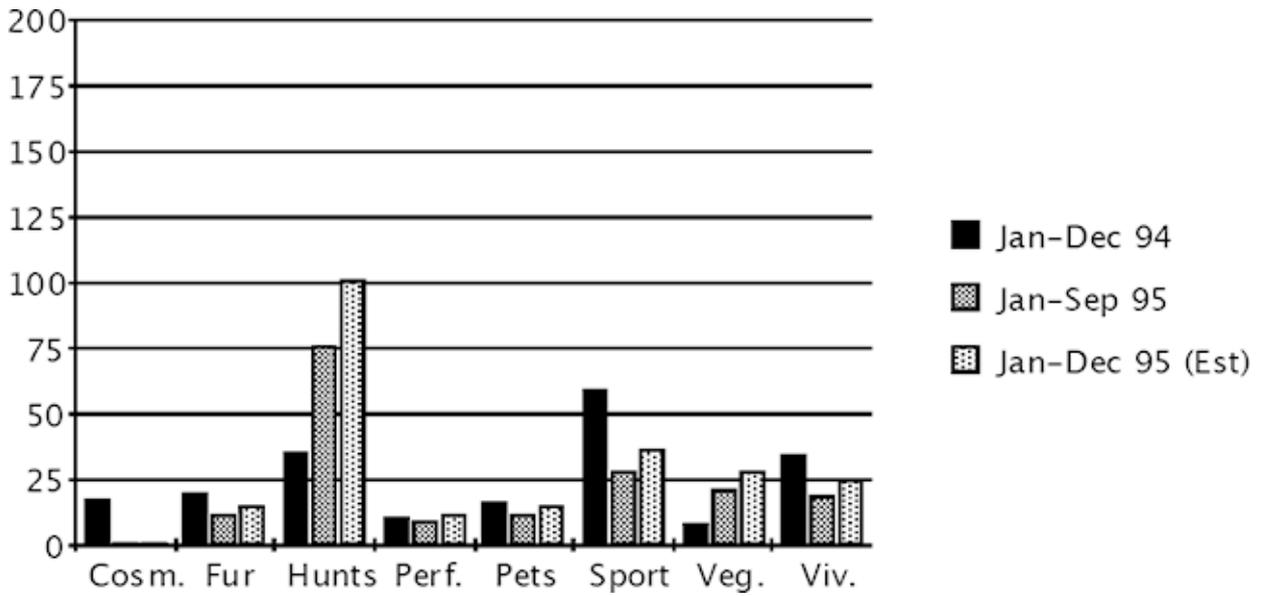
**Figure A.6. Number of Articles Appearing in Sundays 1995**



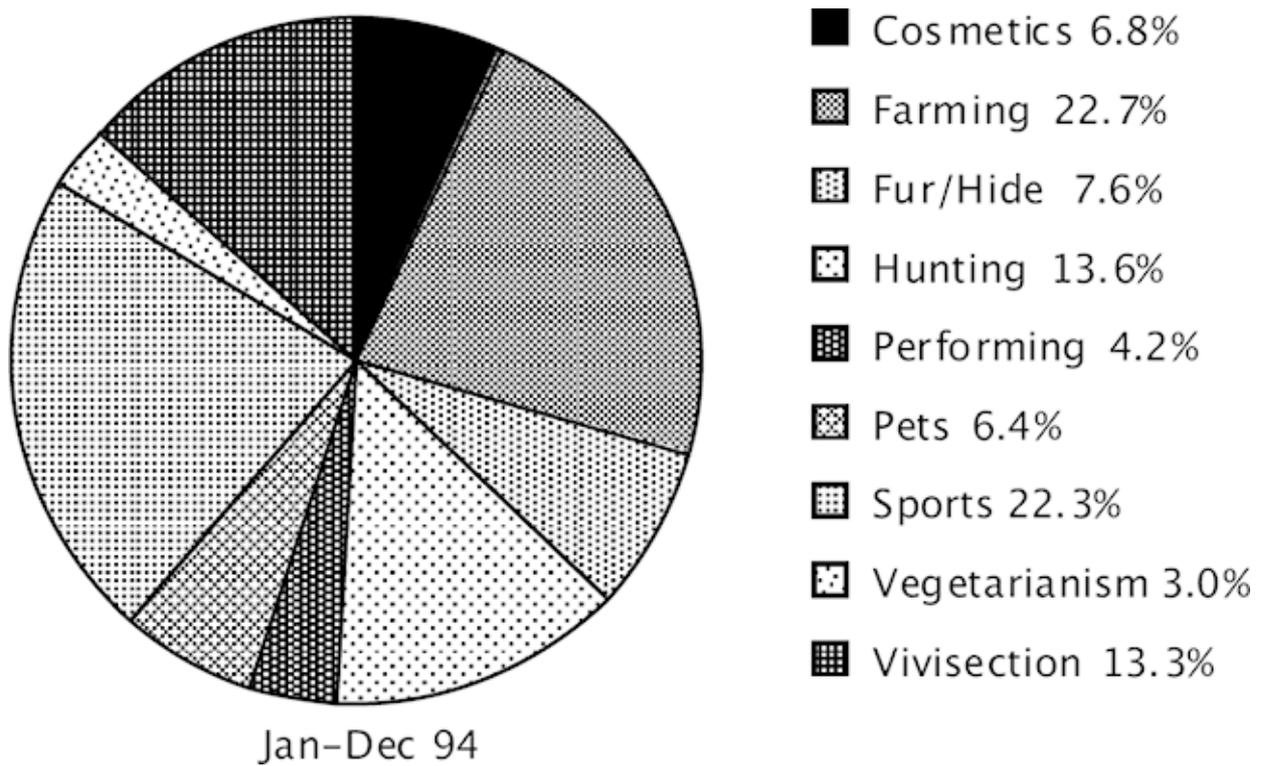
**Figure A.7. Total Articles in Dailies and Sundays from Jan. 1994 to Sep. 1995**



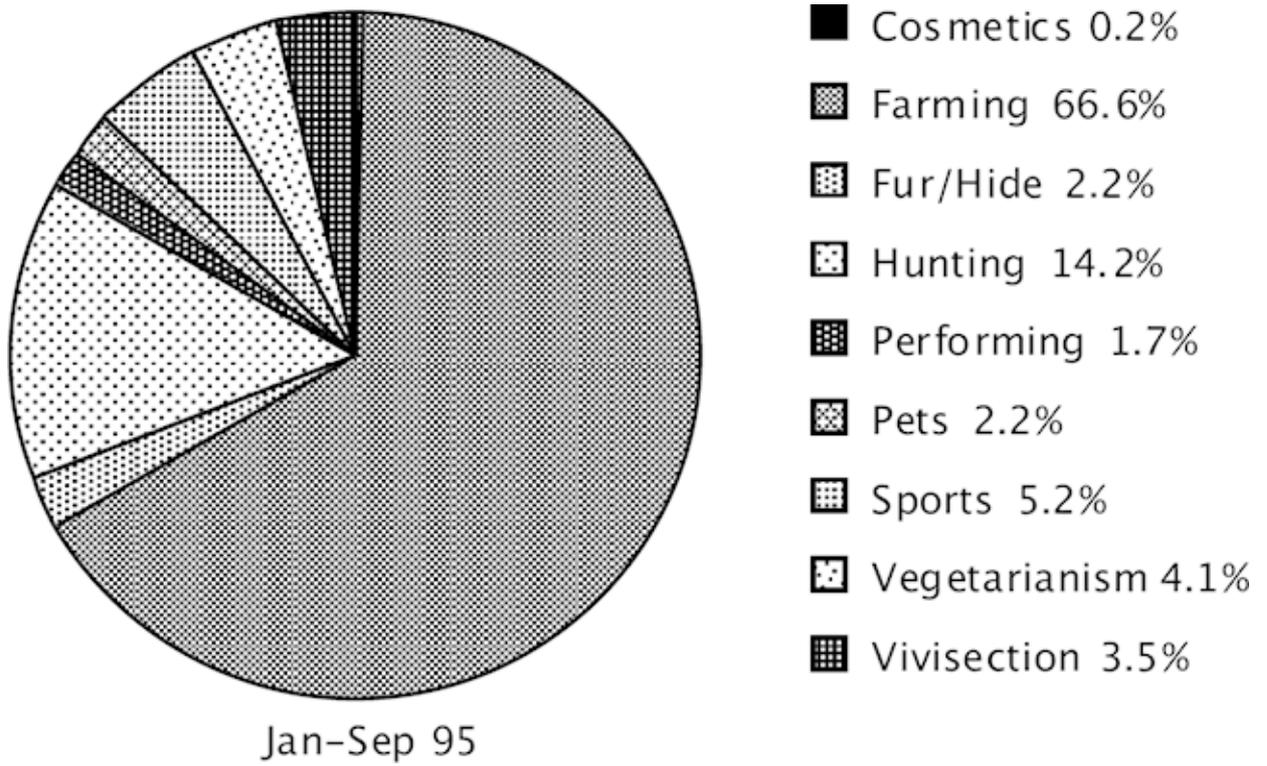
**Figure A.8. Number of Articles on Each Issue (excluding farming)**



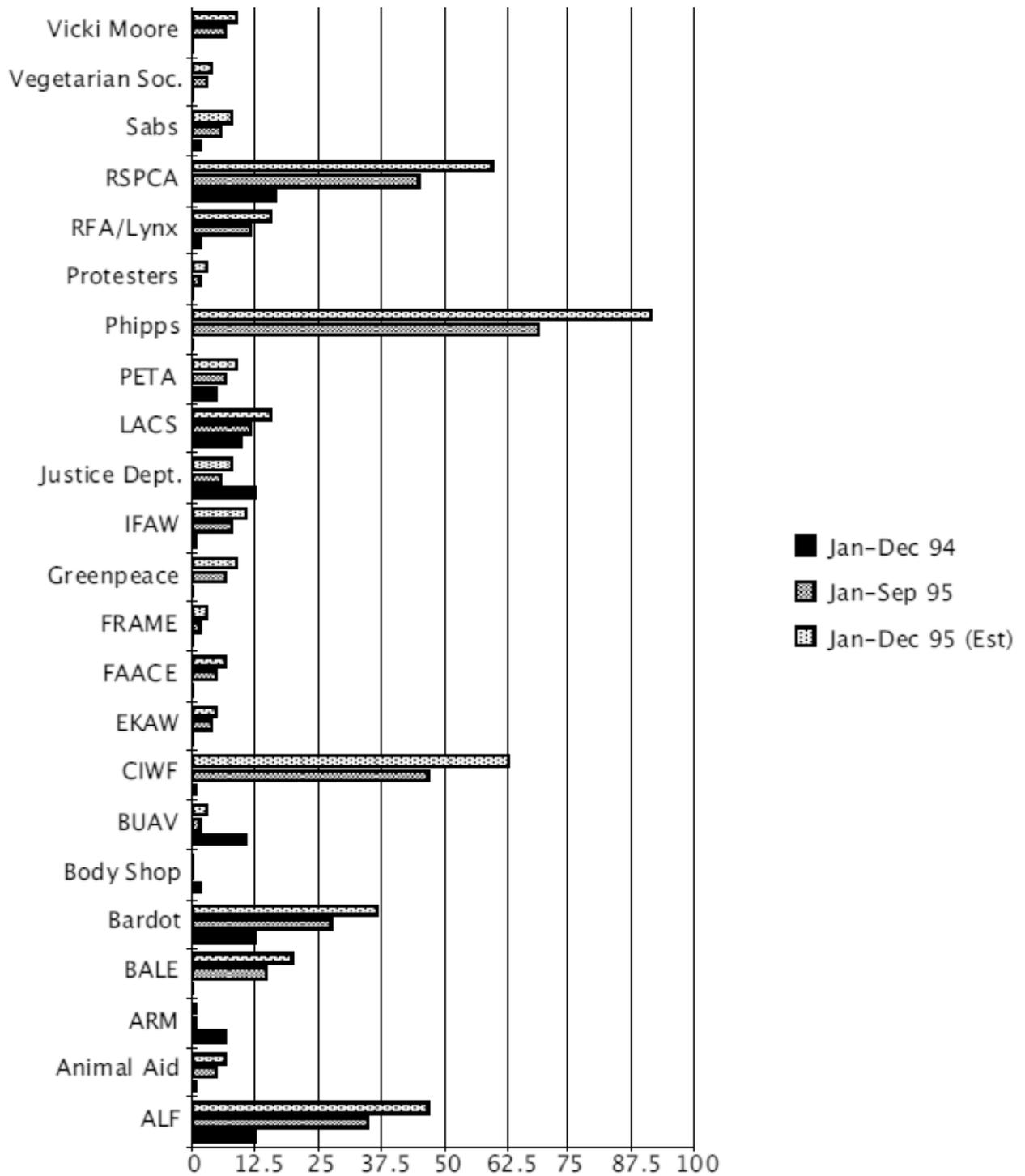
**Figure A.9. Percentage of Articles on Each Issue in 1994**



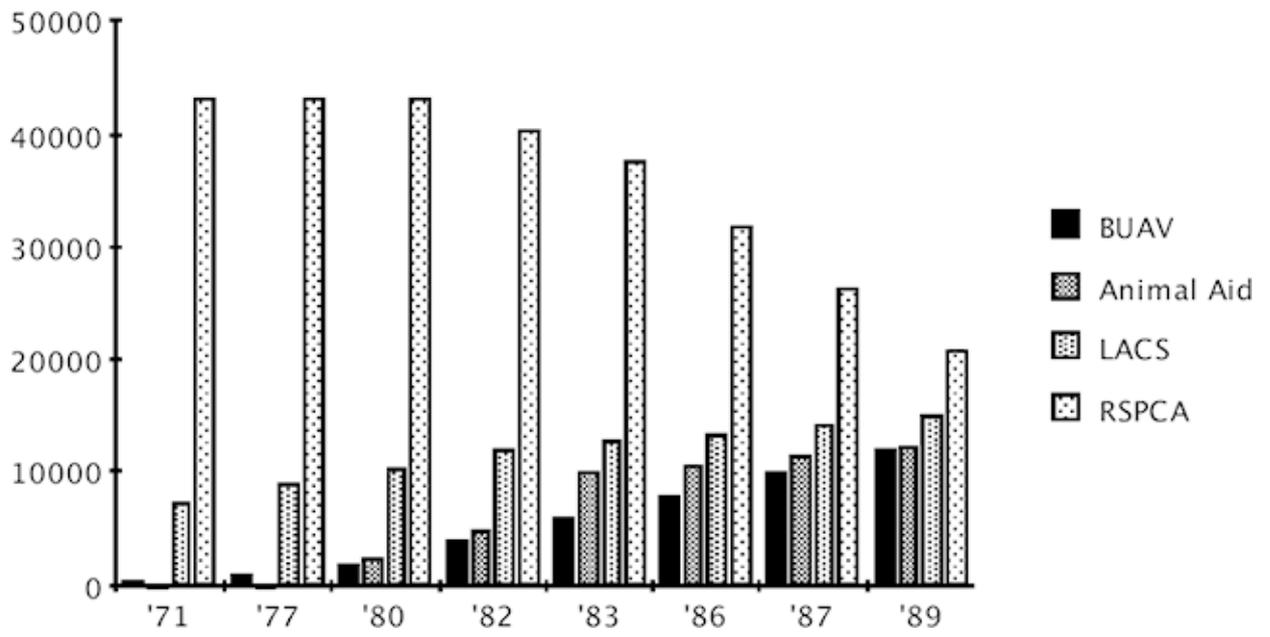
**Figure A.10. Percentage of Articles on Each Issue in 1995**



**Figure A.11. Number of Articles on Each Pressure Group**



**Figure A.12. Group Membership (Rough Estimates)**



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# Appendix B. Contacts

Students interested in finding out more about individual pressure groups in the animal rights movement may find the following contact numbers useful:<sup>1</sup>

Animal Aid Society: 0171-928 3535

Animal Health Trust: 01638-661 111

Animal Welfare Trust: 0171-248 4759 or 0181-950 8251

Animals in Medical Research: 0171-588 0841

Beauty Without Cruelty: 0171-254 2929

Blue Cross: 0199-382 2651 or 0171-834 5556

British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection: 0171-700 4888

Campaign Against Live Freight: 01273-720401

Cats Protection League: 01403 261 947

Council of Justice to Animals and Humane Slaughter Association: 01707-639 040

Donkey Sanctuary: 01395-578222

Farm Animal Welfare Council: 0181-330 8022

Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group: 01203-696 699

Friends of the Earth: 0171-490 1555

Fund for the Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments: 0115-958 4740

Greenpeace: 0171-345 5100

Hunt Saboteurs Association: 0115-959 0357

League Against Cruel Sports: 0171-407 0979 or 0171-403 6155

London Wildlife Trust: 0171-278 6612

Marine Conservation Society: 01989-566 017

National Anti Vivisection Society: 0171-580 4043 or 0181-846 9777

National Canine Defence League: 0171-388 0137

Respect For Animals: 01371-872 016

RSPCA: 01403-264 181

Vegetarian Society: 0161-928 0793

Whale & Dolphin Conservation Society: 01225-33457

World Society for the Protection of Animals: 0171 793 0540

World Wide Fund for nature: 01483-426 444

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<sup>1</sup>These numbers are no longer current.

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