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Lesson Plan: Animal Rights

Materials:
- Paper cut-outs of different animals: Lamb, cow, dog, cat, oyster, shark, dolphin, elephant, mosquito/wasp, human, panda, lion

Goal: Discuss how animal hierarchies are created by humans and the implications of such rankings, both among non-human animals and between non-human animals and humans.

I.   **Warmup activity**:
Collaboratively, the students sort cut-outs of animals (including a human cut-out) in multiple rounds with the criteria below. Give the students the option of not ranking them.
- Which lives do you feel are worth more?
  - Killing for sport vs. killing for consumption
  - Factory farming vs. farm raised
- Which animals are okay to confine in zoos?

II.   **Discussion**:
- Ask the students what their thought processes were in their rankings—did they decide to rank any? Why or why not? Discuss disagreements that came up.
- Discuss shellfish debate: Recent evidence shows that shellfish can feel pain and should not be boiled alive. As a result of this data, some countries have banned boiling these animals alive (Switzerland, the UK) while in America it remains a debate.
  - Do we have an ethical obligation to stop boiling these animals?
  - How do these obligations differ by country (For example, a country where the preparation of shellfish, including boiling, is deeply ingrained into the culture, like France)?

III.   **Questions**:
Why do we eat certain animals and not others?
Why do humans consider themselves to be separate from other animals?
Ignorance is bliss: how does communication/feedback from an animal influence our perspectives on harming them?
Do we have certain priorities in creating these hierarchies (intelligence, cuteness, strength)?
What about animals that provide benefits: food source, water filtration, land health, garbage disposal, pollination.
What goes beyond/against evolutionary bias?

IV.   **Conclusion**:

Is it ethical for us to create these hierarchies? How will future generations conceptualize these hierarchies and look back on the present day thinking?