



## Cecil Was a Bad Boy

BY RICHARD W. RAHN

PEOPLE WHO WOULD SOONER KILL A HUNTER THAN A LION  
FORGET THE KING OF THE JUNGLE'S PREY

“American, single-handedly, saves 600 African antelopes and 12 baby elephants — by killing a lion.” As you read the first part of the previous sentence, you most likely are thinking “this is a good guy.” But when you read the last part of the sentence — particularly if you are a cat lover — you may be thinking “this is a bad guy.”

Adult lions on average eat about 15 pounds of meat a day. In the wild, they feed primarily on medium-size animals, such as antelopes and occasional baby elephants. The late Cecil the lion, killed by the American dentist, was reported to be about 13 years old. Cecil probably killed and consumed roughly 70,000 pounds of meat during his life, which likely included many hundreds of antelopes and baby elephants.

When you see a wildlife movie where a lion is chasing an antelope, do you root for the lion or the antelope? Even if you are a cat lover, how many antelopes do you think should die to feed one lion?

In Northern Virginia where I live, whitetail deer are very plentiful — too plentiful, according to the wildlife biologists. So the county police and others kill deer from September to February by shooting them with guns or arrows. The local animal rights people are opposed to such deer “culling,” but seem to have no good answers as to how to control the deer population. The deer reproduce rapidly because their natural predators have been eliminated — and have only partially been replaced by the automobile. Each year, there are thousands of collisions between deer and automobiles. A few years ago, in a tragic accident, a local school librarian was killed when her car hit a deer. If we killed all of the deer, how many automobile accidents, including some human deaths, would be reduced? How many deer lives should be sacrificed to save one human life? Some may consider this to be a politically incorrect question, but biologists, economists, political leaders and others are forced to think about such questions. The statistics about deer populations and related auto accidents are quite robust, so the question is not academic.

People naturally do not like to think about such tradeoffs. The American dentist who killed the lion (and apparently did not realize that he was not in a legal hunt) has received death threats. If some of these death threats are serious, one wonders if the people who make them have thought about how many human lives are worth one lion life or vice versa — and how they came to such a conclusion.

Many vegetarians are opposed to killing animals for food. Even though I am a meat eater, I have little doubt that very few humans will be killing animals to eat a few decades from now. The reason is based in economics rather than a great moral awakening about eating animals.

Food scientists are rapidly increasing their ability to produce (or grow) artificial meat — with all the texture,

appearance and nutrition of meat from animals. At some point, this will become more efficient than raising cattle and chickens, and the switch will take place. But the consequences are unlikely to be wholly to the animal lovers liking. If there is no commercial market for cattle — given that artificial meat and milk will become less expensive and more nutritious and tasty — few will go to the trouble, cost and time of raising cattle, and the number will plummet from hundreds of millions to a few thousand in zoo-like settings. Dairy cows and beef cattle are no longer capable of happily romping around fields, taking care of themselves without the helping hand of man.

Sea turtles are an endangered species because there are international prohibitions against trading in sea turtle products, such as meat and shells, and Americans are not allowed to raise them for commercial purposes. The late Sir Antony Fisher (a major British chicken producer) and his colleagues developed the technology and a farm for raising sea turtles, like chickens, decades ago, in the Cayman Islands. Their plan was to replenish wild stocks of turtles by raising them in ponds until they were large enough to avoid most predators, at which time a certain percentage would be returned to the ocean. This effort would be paid for by selling turtle meat and shells of those that were not set free. Alas, animal rights activists, who could not think beyond stage I, successfully lobbied for the trading ban — leaving sea turtles unnecessarily endangered.

When I was a teenager, I worked one summer on a dairy farm and was warned not to name any of the animals that we might later eat. It is hard to eat a cow that you had named Marilyn, or a pig you had named Dan. So my advice to my friends who like to hunt — don't shoot animals with first names like Cecil.

*Richard W. Rahn is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute and chairman of the Institute for Global Economic Growth.*

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/aug/3/richard-rahn-cecil-killed-jungle-prey/>

Copyright © 2015 The Washington Times LLC. All rights reserved.