

Natural Law and Animal Ethics

- 1. **What** is natural law and how does it work?
- 2. **How** is natural law applied to issues in animal ethics?
- 3. **Why** is the application of natural law to issues in animal ethics important?

1. **What** is natural law and how does it work?

Natural law is a branch of normative ethics, and normative ethics is concerned with investigating different frameworks that help decide whether an action is right or wrong. Different normative ethical theories provide different frameworks for ethical decision-making, and natural law is one of these frameworks. Although natural law is referred to as a single framework, it is actually a group of frameworks, because various thinkers have presented different versions over the years. Write a definition for "natural law".

Natural Law

Natural law has various components that are relevant to its application to issues in animal ethics, particularly within the version presented by Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). Make a note about the various components (i.e. nature, reason, human purpose, and the hierarchy of souls) and how they work.

How Natural Law Works	
Nature	Reason
Human Purpose	Hierarchy of Souls

2. **How** is natural law applied to issues in animal ethics?

Natural law can be applied to issues in animal ethics, including farming, medicine and science, and sport, by using it as a framework to guide human actions when addressing ethical decisions relevant to these areas of debate. Generally, the version of natural law presented by Thomas Aquinas promotes actions that help human beings to

achieve their God-given purpose (i.e. union with God), and accepts actions that involve using animals to achieve this purpose (because animals are lower down Aristotle's hierarchy of souls than human beings). Make a note about how natural law is applied to each issue in animal ethics, and what human actions it allows.

How Natural Law Is Applied to Issues in Animal Ethics	
Issue	How
Farming	
Medicine and Science	
Sport	

3. **Why** is the application of natural law to issues in animal ethics important?

The application of natural law to issues in animal ethics is important, because it influences what the lives of animals look like, and the ethical decision-making of human beings who follow this normative ethical framework (e.g. Catholics). Make a note of three reasons why the application of natural law to issues in animal ethics is important.

Why the Application of Natural Law to Issues in Animal Ethics is Important	
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