

**Anat Ben-Yonatan**

**“It is a Violent and Cruel Act, But it is Permitted By Law”:  
Violence Towards Animals at the Intersection of Law and Society**

This article will outline the violent, complex, and ambiguous attitude of humans towards animals and will present cultural perceptions underlying this attitude: Its motives, its courses of action, and its connection to the law.

The discussion of the issue will address two main axes, which constitute and confirm this attitude: The first axis will focus on two types of violence towards animals –one that is considered legitimate, and one that is considered illegitimate. The second axis will touch on the meaning of the division of animals into arbitrary categories, which constitutes the differential construction of animals and of human relations with them. This part will compare the attitude towards “farm animals” versus the attitude towards “companion animals”.

The article will examine the different combinations created by the intersection within and between these two main axes, through cultural dimensions that relate to different contexts. It will emphasize the categorical context – focusing on the identity of the perpetrator and the victim of the violent action; and the procedural context – focusing on the way the action is executed.

In doing so, the article will delve into three situations that characterize human violence towards animals, based on the author’s prior research on Jewish slaughterers, as well as legal cases that address human-animal relations.

As the article will show, the intersections between types of violence and categories of animals challenge absolute distinctions between them, and serve as a catalyst for perceptual, social, and legal changes.