



Our Hen House Podcast: Transcript for Episode 661, Interview with Rachel McCrystal & Hervé Breuil

Mariann: Welcome to Our Hen House. Welcome back, Rachel and welcome for the first time, Hervé. It's such a pleasure to have you.

Rachel McCrystal: Thank you so much Mariann. We're very happy to be here.

Hervé Breuil: Thank you for inviting us.

Mariann: The thing we're specifically talking about today, though there's many things I could talk to both of you about, but we're talking about state fairs and county fairs.

And I would imagine there are a lot of people listening who don't know much about them, maybe have never been to them, think of them as places with roller coasters and junk food. So let's start out with the basics about what state and county fairs mean for animals. What happens to animals at fairs?

Rachel: Yeah, so the history of state fairs in this country is pretty long. They were founded as agriculture fairs and then the state fair came about...actually the first one was in Syracuse in 1841. So the New York State Fair was the first large state fair in the whole country. And they were sort of a mix of commerce and community and entertainment.

But part of that commerce has always been the showing and the selling and the displaying of farmed animals. What that has evolved into now is these more rural agriculture fairs. They feature 4H shows, Future Farmers of America, FFA, shows and then a bunch of local farms bringing animals to show, to do sheep shearing demonstrations, to do horse races at some fairs to do pig chases at some fairs.

So sort of a mix between entertainment, commerce and then I would also say propaganda for small farming as well. I think you're right, Mariann, that a lot of people have a very nostalgic feeling about fairs. If you went to one when you were a kid and you mostly remember the rides and the candy, but the backbone of them is really promoting agriculture and, as part of that, displaying and exploiting animals.

Mariann: And let's talk a little bit more in detail about some of these exhibits that you were talking about. You mentioned pig races. Can you talk about how that works?

Rachel: There's a few different types of pig-specific entertainment exploitation that happens. Mostly in New York state, which is where Woodstock sanctuary is based, it's actually people bringing in a traveling display of pot belly pigs and then they basically race them in a small, miniature race course. Everyone stands around and it's basically a novelty show. They also have a pig scramble or a pig chase at some of these fairs and that's literally small Yorkshire pigs, usually, which are the pigs that are destined for the slaughterhouse when they're babies. They're brought to the fair when they're still really young. Kids chase them, try to grab them and win prizes for grabbing the pigs. So that is also very common, especially at the more rural fairs.

Mariann: It's kind of a combination of an entertainment factor, but also competition? People bring their animals to compete and they win prizes? Is that right? What is that process like for the animals?

Hervé: Farmers will transport them from their local county. And if it's a state fair, from further away. So that's the first stressful experience for the animals is the transport. Some of them are pregnant and made pregnant on purpose for the fair.

And they tend to bring what they call their champions. So those are animals that look much better than they would on any farms. And they have different prizes like largest udder, for instance...largest milk producer. There's a jury that will give prizes to those animals, that often will be coming year after year. And those are what the farmers want to show us. What's actually really happening at the farm is very different from what we are shown at the fair.

Mariann: You mentioned that some of them are pregnant on purpose. And I think I read in your materials that there are actually live birthing demonstrations. So animals actually have to give birth for an audience. That's really distressing.

Rachel: Hervé actually went to the state fair up in Syracuse last year. And we were just sort of exploring the idea of communicating about this. But one of the things that really struck him actually was the birthing demos that happened up there.

Hervé: They do impregnate cows nine months before the fair on purpose. And they tell you they don't know exactly when the babies are going to be born. It takes about nine months for a calf to be born.

The message is that they want to show people what their job is. And so the babies are born at the fair, surrounded by a crowd of people. It's obviously stressful for a cow, or really it would be stressful for any mammals, to be around a crowd of people while you're giving birth.

They leave the baby with the mom, like it happens on the farm, for a few hours so the baby can get the colostrum, the first milk, from their mother and the mother can clean the baby. Then, like they do on the farm, they remove the babies and put them in a separate pen.

People congregate around the new calf. Obviously they are very cute and they draw a lot of attention but there is entire part, obviously, that is left out of this. When they want to show the public what's happening on the farm, is the part where the baby is never reunited with the mother.

While we know what's happening in the dairy industry. If it's a male, they will be raised often for veal. And actually there was a sign at the county fair that was really fascinating...a billboard that said, "Farming. It's what farm families love to do." And it showed a little calf in a crate with bars around him and then on the other side, there was a little girl that was tenderly leaning against her dad who was extending his arm to touch the calf. And the reality of this is that while that little girl gets to be with her dad looking at that cute calf, the calf will never be with his mom again, will be raised for four or five months and then sent to slaughter.

So this is the reality that is not shown at the farm. The only thing that is shown is the birthing, letting us believe that this is the miracle of life. As I've heard farmers say, they want the public to observe the miracle of life but leaving what comes next out of the public eye.

Mariann: A lot of these animals are show animals and they come year after year, but some of them are going straight to slaughter right after the fair, right? Do they tell people that?

Rachel: No, depending on the fair, there are some that we've had coalition members, as part of our animal ag coalition, get footage of the slaughter trucks pulling up behind the fair. Or after 4H auctions some of those animals are immediately sold for slaughter. As far as I'm aware, as far as I've seen, that isn't part of the messaging.

Mariann: These fairs are a really important part of the whole 4H and Future Farmers of America world, aren't they? These are really entwined.

Hervé: The 4H organization has been in existence since 1901 and there's also the FFA, which is Future Farmers of America, and that's also since the beginning of the 20th century, 1917. They are very similar.

4H is an after-school program, whereas the FFA is a formal education program sponsored by local schools. But they do more or less the same thing, they raise one or two animals, sometimes for months, but sometimes for years. If it's a cow, for instance, who will be slaughtered later on.

They show the animals and they are very proud. When I was at the Dutchess County Fair here in New York, I saw these turkeys with weights and the children were around and really proud of having raised the fattest turkey that they could. We know here at the sanctuary, for those turkeys this extra weight is really an issue, but when it comes to farming, this is what they want. They want to fatten them up.

What is really sad is that the children have to part with their animals at the end. And a lot of children are really upset about this, but like one of the 4H slogans is "learn by doing." And notably the separation between children and animals- so they are taught to get over the selling of animals.

And some parents lie to their children and don't tell them they will be sent to slaughter. And some parents do tell the truth to their children, notably when they're coming from farming families and that it's just part of learning how to market your animal. You have to add the cost and weigh them against the future profits and that slaughtering an animal is just part of farming. So at a very young age, those programs teach children that any compassion for animals is not something you should have and you should see them as commodities.

Mariann: Right. That's clearly an effort to just enculturate these values.

Now I want to get into the campaign, but just one more element of painting the picture of what people would find at one of these fairs. This isn't exactly your

issue, but there are also exotic animals exhibits at these fairs, aren't there? I know I've seen the pictures, these horrible pictures, of like a giraffe in this tiny pen with her head sticking out. How big is that part of this?

Hervé: This is actually a pretty small part. There are camel rides and then there was a kangaroo and a zebra that definitely demonstrated some very anxious behavior. Actually the kangaroo looked quite unhealthy to me. The only thing the giraffe is doing...she's completely static, there's no room for her to move. And she just lays her head down to grab carrots that are given to her. It seems it's only to attract people to the fair, there's no education like, well, like in zoos, there's really no education around those animals. It's purely to entertain the public and they look so distressed. They look so unhappy. There was a little zebra also in a tiny pen. Interestingly enough, they also have farmed animals next to the exotic animals. So it's really a small part of the fair.

Now if you go to the state fair, over there they have those petting zoos with goats and notably it's for the farmed animals or goats and there are many, many of them. They are really overcrowded in the pen. You can put 25 cents in a machine and buy some food for them and then you can hand feed them. Which again, working at the sanctuary, we know how dangerous that can be, to over feed those goats, because they can develop acidosis and bloat and die.

This is really some behavior that should never happen.

Mariann: It should never happen, but I think it's so interesting. That they use this act of feeding animals, which children love to do because they love animals. And it's kind of this idea of "we're showing you how to be good to animals." It's almost part of the whole propaganda effort.

Can you just talk a little bit more about any other efforts to, you know, this enculturation of trying to teach children and adults that this is the way the world works?

Rachel: That's why I keep thinking about propaganda, because I think we already have a fallacy of authority in our culture, thinking that farmers are caretakers of animals and that what they say is true. You know this as a long time animal rights activist, Mariann. Like when you say, "Oh, actually separating baby cows from their mothers is bad." The farming response is like, "Well, no, you don't know what you're talking about. We care for these animals. We have hands on experience." Which is why I think coming from a coalition of farmed animal sanctuaries, talking about this stuff is powerful, because we

actually do have hands on experience of caretaking animals for their benefit, not for profit. People that work at farm sanctuaries can address that stuff.

When I think about the FFA and 4H components, Cheryl Wiley from VINE wrote a really powerful piece a while ago about her experience growing up in those programs as part of a farming family and how incredibly traumatizing it was for her as a small child who loved animals, but was being told by everyone around her that her feelings were wrong.

I think she's still very traumatized by that experience, but that's all hidden. The birthing demos specifically are full of propaganda. At the New York State Fair up in Syracuse, they're sponsored by the New York Animal Ag Coalition and this is all kind of under, so that's a separate farmer funded lobbying group, and this is all under the Department of Ag & Markets, the whole fair. So it's all, it's like very on the front propaganda for the farming industry.

The live birth demonstrations of the cows, it's in a dairy cow "birthing center." So we're using the language of a human birthing center ie a care taking, medical providing space. The hashtag they use is udder miracles and everything is about learning about the joy of birth. The survey said learning about like, "let's see the miracle of birth and let's be witness to this," using the language of human birth and that this is something that's not only natural, this is a "we're being kind and good to these cows by putting them on display." Everything is all about, "Let's sanitize and promote this on every front." I think it's definitely the mission of the whole ag component.

Mariann: So how big a deal are these fairs? How big are they? Is there a state fair in every state, are the county fairs all over the place? Interestingly, unless you live in a rural area, you kind of don't know anything, you've never heard of them.

Rachel: No. And I grew up in Arizona, which was a really rural area. And, there was a 4H program. I remember going to one of their meetings when I was a kid, as a little animal loving girl who read *Charlotte's Web* and just wanted to be Fern. And I remember going to one of these meetings and I literally walked out when I heard that you had to sell the pig at the end of it. I was like, "Oh no, you don't get to keep the pig?"

So we had 4H but our big thing was rodeo. So I didn't know that these fairs were such a big deal until I moved to New York State, actually, but they're very big. The one up in New York is two weeks and they get a million people. So

huge. They employ over 2000 people. There's demonstrations, there's live music events, there's rides.

So the big state ones can be very large. They're all over. And those tend to be the biggest in the state. The county ones, they really vary. Some are very small. Some are only the ag components. There's about 20 in other counties all around New York state. So there's hundreds around the country.

Some only really have the ride components and they've really gotten rid of the ag components. Maybe they'll have an exotic petting zoo. Maybe they'll have the pig races. These are very, very common. And if you talk to people who grew up in like rural farming areas, it was a part of their childhood, even if they weren't an active participant, they all went.

And I don't think...when we were starting to talk about what we were witnessing on state fairs and the experience of the animals last year, the amount of people that were saying, "Wait, what happens to the animals?" or "Wait, why were they at the fair?" I think it's such a sanitized entertainment space that there is an assumption that this is all fun, that this is not about farming, that this is not about exploitation. That this is all fun.

Even people who are like animal rights people, I think didn't fully understand what the purpose of having the animals at the fair was.

Mariann: I mean, as big as they are though, compared to factory farming or other issues you could be taking on, they're tiny. But I really found it very compelling that sanctuaries are in a particularly good place to criticize this kind of... because I've always found it a limitation on advocating for animals that, you know, what do I know?

I can care about animals, even though I didn't grow up on a farm, but it's always a disadvantage to not know a lot. And you, of course, know a lot. But is the other reason you have chosen this issue because it has such cultural play and is a kind of cover up for farming?

Rachel: Absolutely. A lot of people engage with these fairs. So it's something that people understand. It's an entry point, I think, for people. Anything we're talking about in terms of the harm that happens to animals in the context of these fairs. So being shipped, transported pregnant, not given proper care, put on display when it's really hot, sold for auction. What happens to the moms and the babies during birth, and then also after birth. All of that actually happens as part of course in farming, but it's something very specific as an entry point

where we can point to these things and take photos and educate people. And there's something very tangible that they can do in terms of advocacy.

But of course, it's also about this as a propaganda machine for farming. And also these places really, really perpetuate the myth that we as vegans talk about all the time, the myth of the small farm. That isn't really reality. And even when it is a reality, all these harms still occur. So I think just kind of pulling that apart.

What does that mean? What still happens to these animals? Like sure, you see a little kid proudly displaying their turkey. What is that turkey experiencing? What happens to that turkey? What happens to that kid during the process of that? What is the purpose of 4H? I think it's really powerful. So it's a little bit of a Trojan horse campaign, to speak about the bigger issue.

Mariann: And now that I think of it, there are just so few places in which animal agriculture chooses to make itself visible in any way. It's just very rare. They're always trying to keep us out, but there's this one little...it's not entirely true, but they do give you a little glimpse inside.

Rachel: Yeah, absolutely. So with the rare exception of the few farms that have visitor days, which are all highly constructed theater, most people will never actually see a farmed animal during the time of their life where they're being farmed.

Mariann: Not unless they want to get arrested.

Rachel: Exactly. I mean, we're prohibited from doing it.

So this is an entry point that is probably one of the few times that people will ever meet an animal who is being farmed until, of course, after they're dead. And then we're surrounded by their bodies. But while they're actually being farmed, there's a point where we can educate and hopefully even intercede.

And when you think about it that way, it's such a hidden industry. This is the moment where they're actually what is being displayed here.

Mariann: So tell us about this coalition. Who's in it and how did it come about?

Rachel: We just sort of decided to go to some fairs last year. We are in the Hudson valley where there's many, many county fairs around. We had some staff people go to some different ones. Hervé really took the lead and got a bunch of footage. And when we shared that footage, we discovered that most

people either were like you, Mariann, where you didn't grow up knowing this was happening and were sort of like, "Wait, what is the county fair? What is the state fair?" Or there are people that had a very nostalgic perception or had never thought about the exploitation happening at these fairs, because it was in the guise of entertainment. A fun event.

We had a lot of people asking what they could do. And so when we are looking at our calendar this year, we wanted to really put together a coalition of farmed sanctuaries and farmed animal advocates all around the country that could collect information and footage of what was happening at their local fairs and share it and be amplified.

So we have about 20 sanctuaries and orgs right now and the list is growing. With that, we've already reached, I think, about one to 2 million people just on social media with our messaging. By the end of the year, we plan to reach between three and 5 million. We have a website. We have a petition that is up right now with footage of the birthing demos from the state fair in New York, with the petition to try to ban these birthing demos in New York.

It's really interesting. And so many sanctuaries have been very excited about it because sanctuaries are in rural areas. So these are our communities that are holding these fairs and propagandizing about the animals in our care. So I do think we have a very unique perspective in order to be able to go to these fairs, document what is happening and talk about the animal experience, the farming experience, and also the messaging around the beings on display.

Mariann: So a lot of what you're doing is educating, but you do have an advocacy component.

You mentioned petitions. What other advocacy opportunities do people have? Is that just starting up?

Rachel: Yeah. So if people go to our website and click on learn, there's a whole state fair page. We have sample messaging to send to the sponsors of fairs, samples letters to the editor. So you can say like, "I'm boycotting my local state fair. I'm not going to participate unless there're no animals on display."

And we're also hoping that if we get traction in New York State, that other sanctuaries and animal organizations can take the lead on pushing for the prohibition of certain aspects of the fair as well.

I really hope that someone takes on the exotic animals ban. It's not our lane, but that is something that I think is really horrific and could be easily stopped on a state municipality level. Those animals really, really suffer and it's entirely entertainment. It's ridiculous.

Mariann: You mentioned sponsors. Are corporate sponsors an important part of fairs?

Rachel: Absolutely. So again the big state fairs sort of get the big money. The New York State Fair has Toyota as a sponsor. They always have these really large corporate sponsors that get a lot of free publicity out of the millions of visitors. Smaller places do have smaller local, like credit unions, local grocery stores will sponsor.

So I actually think that if people wanted to take this on, on a local level, targeting the small county fair sponsors is probably something that's an easier thing to take on. If you live in an area where there's like three or four local places that are sponsoring your fair, public pressure can really make a big difference.

Mariann: Yeah, that certainly seems really primary for advocacy, hitting corporate sponsors. Because they probably have the same image that I do. That it's just rides and fun and probably don't really know that much about it. You used the word boycott and, "we're not going until there are no animals." And I know that's a big lift and that probably won't happen in the immediate future, but there's really nothing wrong with the whole idea of celebrating agriculture and traditions and bringing celebration to rural areas, which God knows don't have enough of them, if we could leave the animals out of it.

So do you have a vision of a county or state fair that that would actually be a benign enterprise? Judging pickles?

Rachel: I would like to sign up to be a pickle judge. It's funny, the fairs that are closer to big urban areas, the ag components have sort of fallen off. So that is with the exception of some of the entertainment.

So the new big New Jersey state fair happens at the Meadowlands. Actually it's mostly rides. It's basically like a carnival, it's rides and it's candy. And then, sadly and unfortunately, there's still the pig races. There's still the exotic petting zoo. That could just be taken out. That's not going to impact anybody.

They probably made that transformation over a hundred years or so because that area of New Jersey is no longer a farming area. It suddenly is no longer an ag fair, it's just a fair. And I think that sort of transition could really happen, but I think it would be so fun to have these smaller fairs really be kind of going back to the quilts demonstrations and the...

Mariann: I would go to that.

Rachel: I know! And like, from...I dunno if it was like Berenstain bears or something, like who grows the biggest tomato? And just sort of leaning into the actually animal friendly and planet friendly and more community building farming.

And, you know, I don't think any child was permanently traumatized by a tomato growing contest. So, let's go in that direction.

Mariann: It kind of reminds me, I don't know whether you've ever seen the old Rogers and Hammerstein musical movie *State Fair*, but it's one of my favorites. Though you can't watch it because it's all animal exploitation...

But in addition to the animal exploitation, there's all these other lovely things about old fashioned state fairs, which would be lovely to bring back. So a lot of sanctuaries are very busy and they're already doing a lot and they're caring for animals, which is a lot. And then they're inviting people in to see these animals, which is really a lot!

Sanctuaries are doing advocacy already, but this coalition might be bringing a whole new way for sanctuaries to advocate. Even beyond this issue, once you win this one, by pooling resources, by this idea of sanctuaries coming together with their particular expertise that you mentioned, do you see this as a future for sanctuaries?

Rachel: Yeah, we're really trying to do a lot of coalition building. It's so true. There's very little resources. We don't have the money or the bandwidth of the large animal rights orgs, but we can definitely share resources. And we also are uniquely positioned.

I would love it if we can get a win about the birthing demos in New York, I think other places could take that. I think about the Iowa Farm Sanctuary's in our coalition. They're really fabulous, the only sanctuary in Iowa. Which is a huge, huge ag state. They're surrounded by farms. Their local fair is really a pork propaganda. So the Iowa Pork Producers sponsor everything.

They have a really heartbreaking, to me, program called “Bacon Buddies” that basically sponsors disabled kids to participate in the 4H program. Everything is like... The fair is basically... pork chops on a stick is like the number one seller at the state fair. I would love to be able to see Iowa farm sanctuary, like what is the specific thing that they could do in Iowa that is targeted for that population and that kind of undercuts what the pork propaganda are doing. I think that's really powerful.

We're very happy that Horseracing Wrongs is part of the coalition because they can speak specifically about horse racing, which is a component at many of these fairs. And that ties into a lot of national efforts that are happening. We are really very happy to be able to help provide a platform. And we have a fish sanctuary because fish are often sold as entertainment at the tosses and the balls...and they just die.

Mariann: We just had Gwendolyn on from fish the sanctuary. Great interview!

Rachel: They're doing really fantastic work and I think they're probably not included in many big picture animal campaigns because fish are forgotten. But fish are exploited and sold and suffer at many of these fairs. You know, that is a unique thing that they can talk about. And hopefully they could push to stop the giving away of fish as raffle objects in their local communities. And we could all amplify that

Mariann: And just enhance, at the end of our interview, what people can do to help.

Rachel: Hervé, do you want to talk anymore about what the animals on display go through? Like we talked about the sheep...

Hervé: And I think actually sanctuaries are in a good place to go to those fairs and see how the animals are kept, compared to how they should be kept. Even though it's a step up from a farm it's 10 steps down from a sanctuary.

And one of the things that you can see is that, first of all, they don't use metal chain there, I did not see those. At least they use rope instead to tie up the animals at a pole, notably the cows. So for the entire time the fair is lasting, those cows stay in the same area outside, right? So they cover the area, but they are tied up to a very short rope. The areas also are very clean, because farmers, you see them actually, as soon as there's something to pick up...some feces... the farmers will clean that up. Obviously it is not happening on a farm. Another thing that I witnessed over there is that they shave the cows.

And I had never seen that before. They do shave the cows to make them look better. And we got footage of that process and the cows look very, very stressed. I just can't believe that somebody thinks it's okay to do that. So they tie them up too, it's very short, there's a few inches, so they can't move at all and then they shave their entire body. They just leave a very short amount of hair.

So those are the things that you witness that are really not something you should be doing to animals. It's so useless, it's just for show. Another thing that they do, they keep the sheep covered and you know, when you go to the fair, you see that and you wonder why. And actually they do this to keep the wool clean, so it doesn't mix with hay. Notably, when they sell the wool, then it's really hard to remove those little particles of hay from the wool if it's not industrially treated. And you go to these fairs and it's really hot, and those sheep are fully covered, head and body.

They already, we know at the sanctuary, they are probably the species that have the hardest time with the heat, even when they have been shorn. So adding an extra layer on them is, I think, is really cruel. I really think one of the goals of those fairs is really like low grade desensitization of what's happening to animals. Because they are mistreated, but they don't look unhappy, I would say, for most of the time, unless they are being handled. Just like when you witness animals being milked by hand. There's like a row of people milking goats, for instance, the animals look a little distressed when they are being milked. Because, you know, people don't know what they are doing, first of all, and they're hurting them.

But in general, I think for the general public, at least, it looks clean and the animals look content and the farmers will tell you they have everything they need. They have a bed of straw, which is true, but often not the case on farms. The pigs are on straw and we know that usually in farms, they are not.

And so the people think it's okay. If you don't know better, you think it's okay to treat animals like that. But it's also much worse in farms and that's something to remember. I wanted to mention that the pig races, I witnessed pot belly pig races. And, you know, they give really horrible names like, obviously as you would imagine, Mr. Bacon, for instance. And they talk in a very affectionate way about their pigs and then they make them race and people are clapping. But we could see what was happening behind the scenes for those big races, for instance. And before they start the race, and the public doesn't see that, they are kept in small cages, it's not like they have any outdoor space. They are not on grass. So that's how they keep them and the only thing that is shown to people is that it looks like the pigs are having fun. When they win, they get a little treat.

They have funny names and there's no thoughts...I think people don't realize what's happening behind the scenes.

Another thing I want to mention is the products sold at the farm. So you will find soaps for instance, made out of goat milk. So people are promoting their dairy farm, for instance, and selling the soaps. Sometimes there are sausages that you can buy or they give you a website where you can directly buy from the farm.

What I find fascinating, I think a way to stop those fairs radically, is to not cut the step between the sausage and the live pig that you see there. If people could visit the step in between, if you could visit a slaughterhouse at the fair, I think those fairs would not last very long. I wanted to mention that because that's always the step that nobody wants to show.

Mariann: Yeah, it certainly is. And I mean, I think you're right. I'm not sure it would hit everybody because my opinion of humans is remarkably low, but I think it would hit a lot of people. Making that connection between the live animal, who they're thinking is so cute, and the product, which they think is so lovely. Filling in those facts would certainly be very powerful.

Rachel, I don't think you finished answering my question. We went over it, but I just wanna reiterate it. What can people do?

Rachel: Yeah. So I think everyone should go to our website, which is Woodstocksanctuary.org, click on learn. We have all of the details about the coalition there, including all the pages of people to follow, who are sharing. All the coalition members.

So I encourage everyone to follow everyone on social media, to interact with the content being put out, and to see if there's anybody in that coalition who's local to you who might be doing something to help your local fairs. Even if not, people can research if there's a local fair in their area, take our resources... Please do. There's slides that people can share on Instagram. They can actually just send to local fair sponsors. There's also suggested language for letters to the editor. If you live in a rural area, basically, if you write a letter to your editor, it's pretty sure to be published. They're desperate for local content.

So that's an easy advocacy thing you can do. So I think definitely there's social media components. If you live in New York, on our website, we'll have information about people to contact, the local legislators about supporting these birthing demo bans. That's something that would be really great.

And I also encourage people to take this and run with it. If there's something that is happening that is exploiting animals there in your area, you can always try to get that stopped on a local level. Local advocacy is often the easiest and most effective. And I think especially if you have any connections to your community and you can educate about why pig racing is harmful and try to get a local pig ban.

I was actually very heartened that city officials over in Orange County were speaking up about how they no longer wanted to have these monkey...what's called a monkey rodeo happening at their local fair, which is monkeys riding pigs.

Mariann: Oh my God.

Rachel: Yeah, I worked on a campaign years ago where they had a minor league baseball team in Delaware, they would bring out a monkey rodeo at midway through the, whatever the halftime is called...Seventh inning stretch! There you go. Baseball! *laughs* They would bring up, for that case it was monkeys riding dogs, and I worked for a dog advocacy organization. So we were able to really like do a lot of education around why that was so harmful for both the monkeys and the dogs, but they also have these monkey rodeos where they ride pigs.

And I was very heartened that that is something that the people in Orange County, New York were obviously disturbed by. So I think you can do very targeted advocacy as well as encouraging overall boycotts. It is something that is very easy to talk about, very easy to witness. It is actually legal to go and get documentation. Unlike the majority of farming where it's all hidden from us and we can get in a lot of trouble if we try to get documentation of it, this is all out in the open and they're proud of it. So I think the more you can do to educate people about that and we have a ton of resources on our website.

There's lots of stuff happening and there's lots of ways to plug yourself.

Mariann: Yeah, absolutely. Those are all really powerful suggestions. And it occurred to me as you were talking about it...I mean, I live in New York state... where even if you don't have an impact that you are able to identify, always writing to your legislators that dairy is horrible. They're always promoting dairy, like constantly. And if they just get this idea that certain percentages of their constituents think it's horrible they might shut up about it a little bit.

So you never know when you're having an impact and there's so many great ideas here. Thanks for everything you're doing and thanks for sharing it with us today on Our Hen House.

Rachel: Thank you.

Hervé: Thank you, Mariann.