



Our Hen House Podcast: Transcript for Episode 695, Interview with Spencer Roberts

Mariann Sullivan: Welcome to Our Hen House, Spencer.

Spencer Roberts: Thanks for having me.

Mariann: I'm thrilled to have you. I really love the stuff you write about.

You write about a lot of stuff that nobody else seems to be covering. And actually, before we get into the substance of what you write about. I'd kind of like to ask you about how you do this, like about your career.

You seem to write pretty in-depth pieces on issues that you seem to be very passionate about, and sometimes you uncover scandals that nobody seems to be covering. Or you get at least some of them...I don't know whether you get all of them published because I don't know about the ones you don't get published... but you get them published.

So can you tell us how you pull that off?

Spencer: A lot of patience, a lot of digging, following leads online. I've learned over the years to use Freedom of Information Act requests and things like that, and that helps to get government documents. Obviously, it's not always the government that's doing something bad, so it gets tricky there.

But as you start paying attention and following certain industries and you search these patterns, and sometimes things, when they hit the media, look a little bit sketchy to me and to people who are familiar with the industry that I'm covering- be it ranching, fishing, et cetera- and that's how you get a lead, and you basically follow it from there, and you go where the evidence takes you.

Mariann: Do you have an idea of whether you're going to get something published when you start out, or do you do all of this research and put all this effort in and then hope that somebody will pick it up?

Spencer: Yeah, so I'm a freelance writer, so I do everything and hope that someone will pick it up. If no one wants it, I can always put it online on Medium or something. Usually, I have a good sense of what can be a successful pitch and end up as a story and maybe who would want it, but it definitely takes some tenacity.

If there're any writers listening, it can be tedious, and it can be sometimes discouraging when you're pitching outlets. Especially when you're writing stories focused on animals and things like that. Sometimes they don't find them as newsworthy as some other topics. So you've gotta be persistent.

Mariann: Yeah, I can imagine. We all know that.

How do you decide what to focus on? Do you start out by thinking what would a certain outlet be interested in? Or is it just like you see something, and it pisses you off, and you decide to write about it?

Spencer: That's exactly it. Yeah. *both laugh*

Mariann: So when we asked you what you would like to focus on in this interview, you didn't say, "Well, I'd like to explain my career." You obviously wanted to talk about the substance.

Spencer: That's right.

Mariann: And you mentioned that marine life was your biggest passion, which I am very happy to talk about.

We don't talk about it enough. And so let's start there. Why marine life, and why is it your biggest passion?

Your stories are such a deep dive, it's hard for me to focus on a question. Can you just give us kind of an overview of your current view of what's going on in the oceans?

Spencer: Sure. So let me start with the first question, why marine life? Well, it's most of the life on Earth, right? We're terrestrial animals, so it's easy for us to focus on what's going on topside and what we see, but really most of the life on

Earth and the biggest ecosystems that sort of uphold the conditions that we need to survive in terms of our air, the temperature, and everything that makes up our environment are hugely influenced and upheld by marine ecosystems and the life that lives in them.

And also, I feel that marine life are just tragically overlooked in so many ways and discredited, whether it's fish or invertebrates or cetaceans, even, meaning whales and dolphins, we just tend to kind of forget because there's some out-of-sight and often, unfortunately, out of mind.

What's going on in the oceans is not a positive picture. There are a ton of threats to marine life, and we hear about a lot of them in the media. We hear a lot about plastic pollution, we hear about oil spills, we hear about things like that, and we hear about sometimes offshore winds, right? That's a big thing right now. There are groups pushing narratives that offshore wind is going to kill marine life, and it does. There are threats posed by offshore wind, but there are ways that we can build it better and more safely and with less noise pollution. But the biggest threat to our oceans and the animals that live in those ecosystems is fishing. And this is an issue that the media is very reticent to talk about.

They feel like it is unpopular, and they also feel like when they cover fishing, they're pushing an agenda or something like that. There is a ton of misinformation, and it has a lot of purchase in the academic community, unfortunately. We can talk about that if you want, but it makes it very hard to cover these issues because a lot of the time, people raising concerns and telling the truth about how commercial fishing is impacting our oceans are discredited by people in the academic community.

It becomes very difficult to filter the truth out of all the noise, out of all the controversy.

Mariann: I do want to talk a little bit about the role of the academic community, but first, I just wanted to note that it's not that different from the situation on land. We talk about all sorts of crises, and people are sympathetic about them, but when we start talking about food... The enormous, enormous number of animals we all stuff down our throats. Or not all of us, but you know, most of us stuff down our throats the conversation changes.

But tell me a little bit about the role of the academic community because I have noted this. I've never done a deep dive. I've never focused on this, but I find the information out there, to the extent I've seen it, on what's okay and what's not

okay...obviously, I don't think any of it's okay, but you know, all of that information is unbelievably confusing.

Spencer: Right. So, you're right, absolutely. With terrestrial matters, there's certainly a reticence to talk about food issues as well, but there still is, I think, a consensus in the scientific community that...and obviously, there are people from the industry and with their own cognitive dissonance, essentially trying to break down that consensus...But there's a consensus that animal farming is a huge contributor to not just the climate crisis but our ecological crisis broadly.

With marine science, it's very difficult because there's a huge influence of what's called fishery science. It's essentially an approach to marine ecology from a business perspective, and this is a science that's sort of developed by the industry, and it's heavily funded by the industry. And this is where a ton of academics get their funding.

Basically, the way that fishery science works is, I would say, in the modern day, it's predicated on this concept of maximum sustainable yield. And that's this idea that we can find this sweet spot by exploiting fish populations or squid or whatever marine population it is.

Basically, the theory is if we cut the population in half, then there's a balance between the number of individuals that can reproduce and the number of environmental factors limiting that production, that they'll produce more each year, and we can catch the maximum amount. That's the premise of sustainability in fishing.

So when we talk about sustainable fishing, that's the underlying mathematics, and it's very sketchy. It extracts everything except for this narrow conception of population dynamics. It only looks at the population in question. It ignores ecological factors, and our estimates for populations of fish and other animals under the sea are questionable. Our methods are prone to error essentially. And all of our government policy, whether it's at the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration or at the UN, is sort of based on these fishery science concepts where we're essentially treating marine life as resources rather than wildlife, which is a totally different framework for how we treat terrestrial wildlife.

So essentially, the core of sustainable fishing, the unspoken goal is to have all the world's fish populations and insist that our marine ecosystems can be sustained in that state. There is a ton of evidence and anecdotes showing that this is a very poor, catastrophic approach to regulating fishing.

Mariann: Wow. That's crazy because I've never heard it expressed exactly like that before. You tend to think, "Well, they're just not doing what they should be doing." But it's really that they've decided that what they should be doing is insane and is going to decimate populations, even if they do everything that they say they should do.

Have I summarized that correctly?

Spencer: I think so. I don't think that's overreach, and it's not just us animal rights people who are saying this. There are many fishery scientists throughout history who have raised this objection to the maximum sustainable yield concept.

Sidney Holt, one of my favorites, said something along the lines of, "it is the worst idea in fishery science. It enthrones and institutionalizes greed."

So there are people in marine science pushing back, but unfortunately, there's a ton of money elevating and amplifying those voices who are rationalizing this system.

Mariann: Yeah, of course. Very recently, at the moment that I'm talking to you, this High Seas Treaty was agreed to at the UN. Can you share your thoughts on that?

Spencer: Yeah. I hesitate to get too in the weeds because it's a little political for me, and it's confusing for me.

I have some acquaintances that I talked to online who were at the conference, and they have offered some mixed takes. I guess my general take is it's a UN treaty. Remember the Paris Agreement? We haven't stuck to that. We've laid the framework.

Essentially, the high seas are... basically, the way that marine law works is from 200 miles from the coast is what's called the exclusive economic zone of a country, and that's where you get to enforce your national laws.

But outside of that boundary is what's called the high seas, and it's essentially lawless at this point. I mean, there is international maritime law, but it's incredibly difficult to enforce and track everything. That's a huge issue in terms of where we see illegal fishing and where we see human trafficking, which is massive in the seafood industry.

What the High Seas Treaty does is lays out a framework for, among many other things, establishing marine protected areas in the high seas. So that is huge. That's never happened before, so there's a ton of potential to actually do something about these high seas fleets that are mass finning sharks, that are catching whales in their tuna nets, that are running squid jiggers and stuff right outside of the Galapagos Marine Reserve, for instance, and things like that.

So, a lot of things that people have been watching for a long time and wondering what we can do about this now we do have a legal framework for setting up protections. Whether it goes well and whether these protected areas can be established and enforced is still an open question. And that's going to be a continuing legal and political battle that I don't know too much of the details.

I mean, I don't think anybody really does at this point, so we're gonna have to wait and see, but I'd say I'm cautiously optimistic about it, but also not necessarily blasting the air horn at this point.

Mariann: Yeah, I can imagine. We haven't fixed everything. Hopefully, we've made a step.

I'd like to talk about that disappearance of the snow crab story because that was really an interesting story, and that gets a little bit more into the specifics of how crazy some of these numbers are. Can you just give us a quick glimpse of what was going on there and what was so crazy about it?

Spencer: Essentially, what happened was this past year, in 2022, The US government shut down the snow crab season for the first time in history in the Bering Sea.

This is a huge deal, not just for people who care about crabs but for people whose livelihoods are built on this huge, multi-billion-dollar industry. And tons of people whose jobs rely on this. So this got a lot of news, right? And essentially, it was communicated to the public through the regulators at NOAA and the Alaska Department of Fish & Game.

And they were telling the truth, but essentially they were saying, "We don't really know what happened to the crabs." But they were telling the truth sort of within the framework of how they think about these issues. And essentially, what happened was the models that we were using in the government were telling us that there was a decrease of about over 10 billion snow crabs in the Bering Sea within a matter of two years.

And, you know, speculation started to swirl around what's going on. Obviously, the climate is gonna be a factor, and in the Bering Sea, it's been a huge factor, especially in the years leading up to this crash where we saw the sea ice retreat massively. And what happens when the sea ice retreats is what oceanographers call the cold pool. It's this brainy water that gets almost freezing temperatures where the crabs live and grow up as juveniles sort of disappeared.

The default explanation was something that we got from the government. "We think it's related to the climate." That's a good hypothesis, but there are some issues with it because we've seen the cold pool collapse before, and the crabs did not disappear.

Like I was saying earlier, when you follow NOAA and the fishing industry, you start to see these patterns where regulators, be it at the NOAA or at their fisheries management councils, are very reticent to talk about the impact of fishing, but we've been heavily fishing these ecosystems in the Arctic for decades.

We're dragging these huge trawls all over the place. So I just sort of put together the leads and the information on how fishing impacts could have played a role here. And I stumbled across all sorts of really interesting anecdotes and information that a lot of people hadn't covered. And I actually got in contact with a whistleblower, a crab biologist who had studied king crabs in the nineties and had seen the king crab populations collapse in both the Bering Sea and the Gulf of Alaska, which is on the other side of the Aleutian Islands there.

Essentially he had his career sort of ruined by these government regulators when he tried to talk about the impact of fishing and also the errors that he saw in our methods of estimating the crab populations. So we had seen massive crab crashes before when the climate was more stable. And we've also seen populations of cod collapse, halibut...All across the ecosystem of the Bering Sea, we're seeing these huge crashes, these fishing seasons getting shut down, and the pattern of pointing to the climate all the time is starting to look a little suspect. Not just to marine conservationists and animal rights activists, but the fishermen as well are looking at this, and they're saying, "It's not the climate."

It's not just the climate, at least. We have to look at, specifically, the trawling impacts but also the quotas that the government's setting that the fishermen are following are based on not only this idea of maximum sustainable yield but these very old and very myopic survey methods.

There are a lot of reasons to think that we might have overestimated how many crabs were there in the first place. So if you wanna get deep into the details of that, you can check out my article in Nautilus. It's called "Where Have All the Snow Crabs Gone?"

Mariann: I think the thing that drove me so crazy about it is that I'm always very open to climate panic, and when somebody actually admits climate is having an impact here, instead of trying to deny that, I'm ready to buy that. Now they're actually using climate as a cover or possibly using climate as a cover for the damage that overfishing is probably doing.

Spencer: That's very common in the seafood industry. There's a conflict of interest there because there are programs set up to compensate fishermen for when these seasons get closed. But if the crash is determined to be a result of overfishing, then that compensation doesn't happen.

So, the government...

Mariann: Oh, wow.

Spencer: Exactly. And it's not just impugning their own regulation to say that fishing has caused this collapse or at least contributed to this collapse. And the thing is, I'm not denying that climate has played a role. I think it definitely has. And when you read my article, you'll see what I'm talking about. But denying that fishing has played an impact is crazy.

But that's the thing, the whole system is set up to deny that fact and sort of just truck forward and hopefully try to open the season again in a couple of years, and I'm not sure that...

Mariann: And in the meantime, protect the fishermen with these kinds of payouts. Is that right?

Spencer: Yeah. It's complicated because there are levels of complicity, right? Where there are people at the top making millions of dollars and things like that. And then there are people in poverty who are on these fishing boats, and they are working really hard, and they're just trying to get by.

Some of them don't even wanna do these jobs, and they would much rather transition to a different career. And there's actually a lot of support in some of these fishing communities for job diversification programs and things like that. So, we have to look at the economics and the complicity of it with some nuance.

Especially when you look at the top, these people are getting away with ecocide.

Mariann: Yeah. Well, that's true pretty much everywhere.

Now, none of my listeners probably are interested in substituting aquaculture for deep sea fishing, but can you just go into a little bit about why aquaculture is definitely not a solution to all of these problems?

Spencer: Yeah, great question. So similar to the way that we talk about sustainability and fishery science, there is a lot of sketchy pseudoscience around aquaculture and fish farming. And the narrative essentially goes that fish farming is allowing us to relieve pressure on the wild capture of fish.

And the data really show us that that's not the case. It's something like a fifth of all the fish caught today are now processed into oil or fish meal, and the vast majority of that is used for fish farming. So it's something like more than half of fish in the US, I believe, now do come from fish farms.

So as large predatory fish, which we have traditionally and historically targeted, start to become more scarce, the smaller fish that they would prey on- the industry is shifting toward those fish which are still there. And they're saying, "Oh, well it's more sustainable if we catch these fish and then turn them into, essentially, by feeding them to larger fish in these farms, these fish like salmon that people like to eat."

There are so many impacts beyond. So, first of all, it's not alleviating the pressure of wild capture fishing, but it's exacerbating it, right? It's shifting the target to these smaller fish. And when you target the smaller fish, you need to use a smaller mesh net. So, We're catching more of what's called bycatch, just like collateral deaths of other fish that are not the target species, and not just fish, but we're talking about turtles, dolphins, whales, et cetera.

But the impacts of fish farming, the amount of water that it uses, especially on land, is incredible. It vectors diseases when we have these fish confined in these small areas, the parasites have a very easy time spreading through these populations. And then those populations in these fish farms become concentrations for parasites, which vector to wild populations.

The fish in these farms and the species that are being farmed can escape. So we have Atlantic salmon out on the Pacific coast, and that's causing huge ecological problems for the Pacific Salmon, who are already in huge trouble.

The pollution is incredible in terms of, we're basically just dumping nutrients from this processed fish oil, fish meal. Sometimes they're using additives like soy and things like that, dumping things into the water. A huge proportion of it doesn't get eaten by the fish and sort of just settles at the bottom, and that huge pulse of nutrients washing down the rivers into our oceans also causes issues with harmful algal blooms and things like that in the ocean. We're seeing things in Chile, which produces something like half of a world's farmed salmon, where we're seeing whales washing up on the shore in these huge red tides because they've basically just filled all the fjords with these salmon farms.

There are huge movements of people on the ground, from conservationists to animal rights activists, to the Native nations who live in these areas, that are trying to stop these fish farms. And there's a whole other thing with krill. They're now shifting from fish to Antarctic krill. So they're actually stealing food from blue whales to feed these fish farms. And we're starting to see malnourished blue whales washing up on the shores, and we're seeing these fishing fleets targeting these concentrations of blue and fin whales in the Antarctic to steal their food.

So it's absolutely not a sustainable solution to produce environmentally friendly seafood or anything like that.

Mariann: Yeah, it's pretty horrifying. We actually frequently have trouble getting guests who are deeply knowledgeable about specific wildlife issues the way you are about...well, not just about marine life, but about other issues as well, who are also vegan, who also have this big picture about animals.

Can you talk about a little bit of that disconnect? Is that getting better, or is it still just a nightmare? When we do have people to talk about a wildlife issue... like I'm fascinated by beavers. We had somebody on to talk about beavers who wrote a great book about beavers. I just don't go anywhere else. I just stick to beavers, and I'm okay. But it just always troubles me.

Why don't wildlife people see it as a big-picture issue? Especially when you know the things you're talking about. Even if you don't care about individual animals, I don't even know what that means, but even if you don't, the environmental issues are so huge.

Spencer: That's a good question. I think it's kind of like anything else where it's just a very hard topic for people to admit they were wrong about and admit that they've rationalized their whole life in terms of the way we treat other animals. I do think it's getting better, especially as we see the consensus forming in terms

of the environmental impacts of farming animals and, increasingly but more slowly, fishing and aquaculture.

It's really difficult, but what I try to do a lot in my work is I try to bridge that gap because I see the conservation movement and the animal rights movement, and it seems like we're just natural allies.

And there are so many ways that our interests and movements intersect, and if we could learn to build that coalition where we can, I think, get a lot more done politically and have a lot more impact. So I think part of it is on the animal rights community to reach out more and engage on these issues more, but obviously, I would love to see the conservation community do the same in terms of animal rights and animal cognition, just changing the way that we think about these animals.

So it is a strange kind of disconnect, and I think part of it is just the way that popular media and social media silo us into echo chambers if you will. And sometimes we find obscure differences to argue about, and sometimes those can be interesting philosophical conversations, but they're just terribly politically unproductive, I think.

So I think what we should be doing is trying to find those places to build coalitions and building consensus there. And then we, you know, can sort of naturally bridge into those more difficult conversations once we establish sort of some trust, I guess, going back and forth. And it goes both ways, so it's tricky.

Mariann: Yeah, it's really tricky. I feel like it's possible that it's better than it was mainly because of the climate. The impacts of animal agriculture and climate are the kind of issue that conservationists can get behind without going into that individual animal thing, which there seems to be so much resistance to, but I totally agree with you.

We're such tiny groups of people when you look at the world. Fighting the good fight, and we just see the good fight a little differently, and we really can't afford it because there are a lot of really bad people out there on the other side. And then really a lot of people who just don't pay any attention to any of it at all.

It's hugely important. You know, one of the things that you've talked about, and that's related to this, is veganism as an individual practice as opposed to veganism as a mass boycott. And veganism is an individual practice, it's very easy for anyone who doesn't want to go there to just say, "Well, maybe it's morally virtuous, but it's not going to accomplish anything. When you look at

the enormity of animal agriculture, obviously, one human cannot have any impact. So if you wanna do your moral purity, that's fine, but you know, I don't have time for that." But that is not how you expressed it.

But even as a mass boycott, obviously, it's not all that massive. We're still a very small group of people. So how does it contribute to change? How do you see that?

I've always kind of resisted using the word boycott here because I feel like a boycott is something you do until you win. Like I refuse to buy from that company until they change their practices, and then after they change their practices, I'll go back to buying from them. But that's not exactly how we're talking about veganism, and you're talking about it as a mass movement.

Spencer: Right. So I don't think of a boycott that way. I think you can find something inherently immoral or inherently not worth participating in or actively non-participating in, and there's nothing that would change your mind about that.

So I've heard that before, and I understand why that's a connotation that is associated with that word, but it's hard to express in other terms. But what you're getting at, and I think this is very important, is this argument that boycotting animal products... And I would actually argue that the movement is very big when you think about not just vegans, right? And obviously, vegans, of which I am one, are taking this concept most seriously. But everything from vegetarianism to meatless Mondays and all that stuff- I think there are obvious philosophical inconsistencies and things like that, but they are applying this same principle where we're boycotting animal commodification in some way.

So we have that in common. And when you look at the whole world, some people do this simply because of just their means because they can't afford meat. But when you look at the whole world, there are hundreds of millions of people who don't eat meat in some capacity. Vegetarians across the whole world.

And there are religious motivations, and there are political motivations, but when we think about it, this idea of an individual lifestyle choice is absolutely a talking point designed to denigrate and discredit the collective act that is boycotting animal products.

People use this argument against voting, right? I'm just one person voting. Why should I do it? Because you're not one person because all of our votes added up

make a difference. And there are obvious problems with believing that boycott alone or veganism alone is going to solve all of our problems.

That's obviously not true, but to throw this tactic out or dismiss it out of hand is incredibly unwise because it's something that has a material economic impact that we can do every day. And when we all do it together as a collective act that impact compounds. So we do have power in terms of how we direct our wages in the economy.

And so people will say things like, "You should divest from banks that are financing fossil fuel infrastructure." And that's absolutely true. You should think about where you work and the place that you work, and you should try to find a job where you're not contributing. And this is not, you know, necessarily easy for everyone depending on their economic situation and where they live, but you should try to participate in the economy in ways that align with your values.

And all these are forms of economic activism, but we don't really like to talk about that because, under our capitalistic system, the consumer is systematically disempowered. So we feel powerless. But regardless, we do have some agency in terms of how our money funnels through the economy and why shouldn't we use that to what capacity we can?

And we need not just economic activism. We need electoral campaigns, we need all sorts of approaches, but it has to be a part of the picture. And when you look at successful movements, protest movements throughout history, boycott is very commonly there. It's almost always there in terms of when you look at the Civil Rights Movement and the Montgomery boycott. When you look at Cesar Chavez and the Delano grape boycott.

When the public finally gets behind this issue and participates in the protest, it has an impact that transcends just that direct economic factor and it becomes a social factor as well. And we simply have to have the public participating in making that connection to build solidarity with the people who are most directly affected. And, of course, in the case of animal commodification, the other animals who are most directly affected by the industry.

And I think that is a more viable pathway to social change.

Mariann: Yeah, I couldn't agree with you more. I think it's really central to one's individual identification as to who you're on the side of to actually not be eating who we are on the side of.

It occurred to me when you were talking that my somewhat persnickety definition of boycott can be overcome these days because I can say I'm boycotting meat until we can raise it without animals. Now there is a point where one might be willing to eat meat. So I don't have to worry about my grammar, particularly using the word boycott.

You basically come from a left point of view. You write for left-oriented publications. So here's the question, what's the story regarding the animal movement and the American left?

It has consistently been a disaster for as long as I can remember. Why have animals been ignored or actually even disparaged, and is that changing? Are you seeing changes?

Spencer: I think it's the same reason that the issue is ignored in all aspects of society, and we sort of touched on it earlier; you have to admit that you were fooled, you know?

To really internalize that opposition against animal commodification industries. I think a lot of people, on principle, do want factory farms to stop killing animals and polluting our water and air and all this. But in terms of the interface, where they are financing those operations every day, and they have a choice not to, that becomes very difficult to make that connection because you have to admit that you were wrong.

So on the left...I hesitate to use that term left. I don't like describing politics as a left-right thing because it implies a balance in the middle, and I think that's crazy. In terms of progressive groups to use a super broad term, it's difficult. And I think the way that we sort of gain ground in those social circles is to make the connections to intersections with other movements and other social crises.

And I don't think we should ever dismiss the animal cruelty, I think that's central to the whole thing. But people know about that, right? And they've rationalized that. They've heard about it a lot. So I like to raise some of those other issues. People know about the climate to a degree now, but a lot of people don't think about how their own river- they can't swim in it.

The EPA deems more than half of the rivers in the United States as unswimmable and undrinkable, and the biggest contributor to that is animal farming. And air pollution, we talk about greenhouse gas emissions all the time, but the particulate emissions that actually kill more people, that cause

respiratory illnesses, more of those actually come from animal farming than from fossil fuel.

So when we start to make these connections and, of course, the human impacts too. And I think those are unfortunately overlooked in a lot of cases, even by the animal rights movement. It's really horrible what we're putting people through in order to get these products on our plates. Whether it's children cleaning slaughterhouses, whether it's prisoners being trucked into these facilities where, if they speak up about being abused in the workplace, they can get deported. Whether it's people in South Asia who are kidnapped and enslaved on these fishing vessels. These are the issues we need to be bringing to the forefront and just connecting to the animal cruelty that people generally associate veganism and animal rights, and in terms of our movement, associate it with. I think we need to try to broaden that approach and argument, and maybe we can gain ground, and I do think we have, and we're slowly doing it in progressive circles. But I think that's the approach I try to take.

Mariann: I think that makes a lot of sense, and I do think it is happening. It's a small movement with a big job.

But, one of the problems, I think you're totally right, and I really like the way you put it about how people would have to kind of say they were wrong all these years in order to change their minds. But if you bring in some new issues, issues that perhaps hadn't gotten the attention before.

And I also think it frequently... this isn't true for everybody, and for most people in the animal rights movement who are vegan, it's probably not true, but for a lot of people, while they're still eating animals, they just can't hear that story.

It's the cognitive dissonance that is just built in. It's connected to the digestive system, you know, it's just like you can't hear it. So, I think that's part of what's going on. Some really insightful thoughts and, you know, almost giving one a little hope that there are avenues that haven't been explored.

Not to disparage you by saying you're being hopeful *laughs* but, such a fascinating conversation.

I feel like we could talk for a really long time, but unfortunately, we can't. So for people who do wanna go read some of those articles that I've been talking about, and there are more as well, or follow you, can you tell people where to find you?

Spencer: Yeah. The best place to read everything I write is on Twitter. My tag is @unpop_science. I also have a linktree if you don't have Twitter, linktr.ee/spencerroberts where you can check out some of my recent articles.

Also building a website where I'll be running a newsletter and hopefully hosting some other people's newsletters. And it's basically like a substack or Patreon alternative, but it charges way less money from the writers and content creators. So look out for that. It's called Authorize.org, and hope to see you there.

Mariann: Excited to hear about that. Thanks so much for sharing that and for sharing all of your thoughts today.

Spencer: Yeah. Thanks again for having me. It's been great.