

Women at Warp Episode 226: Animal Rights in Star Trek

Women at Warp theme]

Andi: Hi, and welcome to Women at Warp: A Star Trek podcast. Join us on our continuing mission to explore intersectional diversity in infinite combinations. My name is Andi and thanks for tuning in. With me today are Sue.

Sue: Hello.

Andi: And Jarrah.

Jarrah: Hello.

Andi: And our special guest, Anika.

Anika: Hi.

Andi: Before we get into our main topic, we have a little bit of housekeeping to do first. Our show is made possible by our patrons on Patreon. If you'd like to become a patron, you can do so for as little as a dollar per month and get awesome rewards from thanks on social media up to silly watch-along commentaries. Visit www.patreon.com/womenatwarp.

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Yeah, today our main topic is going to be animal rights, which was the patron topic from Alex. But before we dive into that, Anika, do you want to give us just a little bit of background about you and your history with *Star Trek*?

Anika: Sure. I have been a *Star Trek* fan since childhood. I was introduced to the original series, although in a strange way, through a live performance of *Balance of Terror*.

[chuckles]

Andi: Amazing.

Anika: And then I found out that there was a television show, it was *Next Generation*, and I was a fan since then. I love all of the series in their own special way. And now, I have a *Star Trek* podcast of my own too.

Andi: Very cool. What's your podcast called?

Anika: Antimatter Pod.

Andi: Love it. And we will definitely link it for folks that want to check it out. So, animal rights. Thank you for joining with us on this one, Anika. We thought of you right away. Basically, this was a patron topic from Alex, who said, "Does the franchise have anything to say on the rights and treatments of non-intelligent animals? The show has a clear message about respect for all intelligent life in all its forms. So, is this a blind spot or am I missing something?" And I definitely do think that *Star Trek* does have some things to say about this that we will get into.

But I do think it's interesting that it is true that when I first started thinking about what we might talk about on this, I didn't feel like there were as much as I expected on this topic. So, it's kind of cool to be able to do a deep dive on this and kind of get into what it does say. So, right off the top, I think it's probably a good idea for us to do some definitions. So, I'm going to kick it over to our definitions nerd, Jarrah, to walk us through some of the definitions in this space.

Jarrah: Well, what I wanted to talk about a bit was how *Star Trek* defines what is intelligent life. Because I think, personally, I would challenge the idea that there really is such a thing as a non-intelligent animal. It's just that we define our standards of intelligence. But *Star Trek* has a bit of a history of defining the rights of "sentient life" in our world. In the scientific and philosophical communities, sentient just means that one senses things and feels things, so the ability to feel or perceive. And it doesn't necessarily indicate self-awareness. However, in *Star Trek* and in science fiction more broadly, sentience usually means self-awareness as well as the ability to feel and communicate.

In the original series, they're actually a little bit better with the terminology here, and they use sapients to mean self-awareness versus sentience, but later on in *Star Trek*, they pretty much exclusively use sentience. In a *Measure of a Man*, Bruce Maddox cites three requirements for sentience, which are intelligence, or defined as the ability to learn, understand, and cope with new situations, self-awareness and consciousness. And then, other *Star Trek* episodes reference that a sentient being should be capable of sophisticated communication. And it defines specifically that housecats are non-sentient, which I think Sandwiches would disagree with.

Andi: Well, yeah, I mean, sophisticated communication, Jerry Cat once was angry at me, and he barfed on my bed while maintaining eye contact. That, to me, is sophisticated communication. He was very much saying, "This is your fault. I'm doing this to punish you. Enjoy."

Jarrah: Yeah. Do you have to be aware of, for example, all of the messed-up stuff in the world to be self-aware? Can you just live in the moment? Do you have to be able to have an existential crisis?

[laughter]

Sue: I mean, I checked, once we start defining, I just want to go down the definitions rabbit hole.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Andi: Are you also a definitions nerd, Sue?

Sue: Yeah, of course.

[laughter]

Sue: But according to the OED, self-awareness is conscious knowledge of one's character, feelings, motives, and desires. Like, my cats know when they're hungry.

Andi: Yeah, definitely. And then, they communicate that.

Sue: Oh, yeah. One of them knows exactly what to knock over to get me out of bed to feed her. Another one will grab my hand and pull it towards her face so I will pet her. Like, that

also seems like sophisticated communication to me. They're very clearly expressing what they want, and they know how to get it.

Sue: Do they know how weird they are though?

[laughter]

Anika: I would say that when my cats want to punish me, they definitely knock things over. [unintelligible 00:06:10] in particular is very good at making her awareness of me very clear and making sure that I'm paying attention.

Andi: I find it so interesting that communication is such a huge bar for people to think of something as having feelings or having intelligence or having self-awareness, whatever we want to say. Because to me, that means it's more important that they are able to communicate to you, the human, what they're feeling than the fact that they have feelings at all. Do you know what I mean? It's centering the communication aspect rather than the feelings aspect. I think it's often used as a justification for why certain animals we value more highly or consider to be more intelligent, and it's because we can see it, or we can anthropomorphize them, or we can project communication onto them.

You know how those people have those buttons or whatever that they have their dogs press, and they convince themselves that they are communicating really intense communication of very complicated ideas with their button that's like, "Food. Food. Food"? I really don't know if they are, but people definitely think they are, that then has an impact on their estimation of that creature's importance and intelligence.

Anika: Something you said, I think, really resonated with me, and I think is central to this whole conversation. You said that they're centering human communication over the animal's feelings. And I think what we're actually doing is centering the human. And that when we think of ourselves as more important intrinsically, then we don't have to weigh the animal's feelings or self-awareness or anything about the animal as much as we're weighing our needs.

Andi: Mm-hmm. And I think that's a good point, because the other thing is we are defining for other creatures whether or not they are intelligent or self-aware. So, by necessity, we are making ourselves the arbiter of what rights or whatever you want to say is appropriate for that animal based on our interpretation of their worth.

Sue: Yeah, well, God gave us dominion over them, don't you know?

Anika: [laughs]

Andi: Yeah, exactly. And one thing that I wanted to start this conversation out on, because when I was thinking about this, one of the first things I thought about was veganism and vegetarianism. I am a vegetarian. And there are differences in the kinds of vegetarianism that you have in veganism. So, just as a heads-up, some more definitions for you definition nerds. Veganism is you don't eat anything that is animal products. This can include eggs, dairy, honey. Anything that could be considered animal product, vegans don't eat. And there's different kinds of vegetarians. The most common is like an ovo-lacto, which is someone-- I am an ovo-lacto vegetarian, in which I eat dairy and eggs. And then there's also, obviously some folks who are pescatarian that will eat fish but will not eat any other type of meat. So, there's lots of different versions of the same kind of idea, which is making dietary choices that do not include animals or animal products. And we actually do, from the very beginning, have a very famous, I think, probably vegan. I don't know if he ever actually specifically says but Spock, as our very first and most important and most foundational

Vulcan, is very, very clearly a good example of the Vulcan culture around vegetarianism and veganism.

Anika: Can I tell a story about my childhood?

Andi: Absolutely. We love that.

Anika: I have been a vegetarian since I was seven, although I have gone back and forth on the definitions that Andi just went over. Like, when I was pregnant, I was pescatarian because they forced me, and I also ate eggs. But most often, I too am an ovo-lacto vegetarian, and I sometimes flirt with being a vegan when I can get away with it. But when I was seven, it was very difficult to be a vegetarian. I was the only one in my family, and I was the only one really that I knew of in the late 80s and early 90s America. And through elementary and middle school, everyone would ask me why, and I didn't really have a good answer. My answer was because I didn't think it was right but people didn't-- Like, they had a lot of reasons why I was wrong. And sometimes, they would push back on me. And so, starting in seventh grade, I started telling people that I was a vegetarian because Spock was a vegetarian.

Andi: Amazing.

Anika: And I wanted to be more like Spock. And that shut everyone up-

Andi: Nice.

Anika: -because it was super nerdy. And so, they were like, "Okay, we're done talking to you. We don't have to worry about this anymore. We're not going to be able to convince you."

Andi: You were signaling, "Oh, don't talk to me, or I'll talk too much about *Star Trek* at you."

Anika: Exactly.

Andi: Yeah. And I think it's an interesting thing for especially TOS to do, because you're talking about the 80s and 90s, it was hard. It's a lot easier now. There's a lot more accommodation for it.

Anika: Absolutely.

Andi: Especially when it comes to restaurants. Because to me, I tell people that being a vegetarian is extremely easy until you leave your house. As soon as you're going to somebody else's house and they are cooking for you or you are going to restaurants, it immediately becomes much more difficult because you no longer have complete control over what you're eating.

Anika: I will say, pro tip, always ask if there's a vegetarian menu because often, they have a special one, but you have to ask.

Jarrah: I'll also mention that it is even harder if you're not in a city and not in certain parts of the country or in foreign countries sometimes, that said like it's also hard for people, for example, who eat halal, to eat halal in a lot of places.

Sue: We're sort of talking around it, but it comes back to a level of privilege. Because in a lot of ways, if you're getting your protein, especially from another source, it can also be much more expensive. So, there's a cost level, there's an availability level. I was a vegetarian, a

lacto-ovo vegetarian for many years, from like the mid-90s to the early 2000s, and I felt terrible. I physically could not maintain it. I could not get my own nutrition correct, but that's another part of the story. But even in Boston, in Downtown Boston in the early 2000s, it was sometimes difficult. And you still had people, if you were out, if you left your house and ate somewhere else, who didn't understand or who would say, "Oh, it's chicken. It's not meat." The knowledge isn't there either for a lot of the population, at least in the US.

Andi: Once my mom gave me something and she said it was "mostly" vegetarian. And I was like, "Mom, this is an either/or conversation." "Is there meat in this?" "Yes." "Then, it's not mostly vegetarian." [laughs] And then I just think also when you're talking about food in general, there are so many personal health choices that you have to make for yourself. There's so many personal cultural choices that you're making. And so, in general, I think any discussion of veganism or vegetarianism should make clear that this is not right for everybody. But it is something that if folks are interested in exploring, I recommend doing a lot of research first. You want to make sure that you're getting all of the nutrients and minerals that you need to get, because as soon as you take out meat as a huge source of a lot of the nutrients that your body needs. So, just don't do it on a whim. Definitely think through how you're going to do it.

And then kind of going back to *Star Trek*. I find this interesting that in the 60s, they had a vegetarian character, and they also made it clear that it must be philosophical because in the episode, *All Our Yesterdays*, which I rewatched, that's not a great episode. [laughs] Not a great episode. But one thing that they do in that episode is Spock and McCoy both revert back to caveman days but like the Vulcan version of caveman days, in terms of Spock. And he was like, "I want meat, nom-nom-nom." So that, to me, is interesting because it says that Vulcans can and did eat meat, which means to me that it must be a moral decision-- moral or philosophical decision for them to not eat meat.

Sue: We kind of get more of that in *Enterprise*. T'Pol is vegetarian and makes her disdain for her crew members eating meat very clear. Maybe disdain isn't quite the right word, but it is in *Enterprise* that they find the Kir'Shara, the writings of Surak. It is common, at least, for Vulcans to be vegetarian before they're sort of revolutionized by the teachings of Surak.

Jarrah: Yeah. And actually, there's an episode where T'Pol is on earth and asks if the food contains animal products. So, that implies she may be vegan, but I don't know if that's contradicted elsewhere. But I think that it's pretty clear from *Enterprise* and even from *Original Series* and just Vulcan episodes in general, that it is equated with being like-- meat eating is equated with human barbarism from the Vulcan's perspective, and that it's the enlightened and logical thing to do, to not consume animal products.

Sue: And spoilers for *Strange New World*, Season 2. There is the episode where Spock is made human and devours some bacon. And a lot of the internet was really upset because Vulcans don't eat meat. But he's not Vulcan at the time. And there was a lot of our favorite word "discourse" online-

[laughter]

Sue: -about whether this was disrespectful to Spock as a character, that human Spock really loved bacon.

Andi: Mixed feelings.

[laughter]

Anika: It was disrespectful for me as an audience, because I didn't like watching him eat the bacon.

Andi: It was an aesthetic disrespect.

Anika: Yes. Doesn't he say something like, "Does food always taste like this?"

Andi: Mm-hmm.

Anika: Which a non-vegetarian wrote that episode, an episode I love. I just want to put that out there. So, I'm not opposed, and I don't think it's disreputable as a Spock, but the idea that you have to have animal flesh in order for it to taste good, I'm opposed to that concept.

Jarrah: Yeah. That's definitely a stereotype about vegetarianism and veganism is that all you eat is tofu and isn't tofu gross? Well, it is if you don't know how to prepare it, like every food. Meat is also very gross if you don't know how to prepare it.

Andi: You do not want me to make you any meat. Do not let me cook you meat. And then, another interesting aspect to this for me is, well, one, we talked a lot about Vulcans, but I feel like in many other ways, we have the complete opposite in the Klingon culture, in which they are very much like, "Meat is delicious. Let's eat meat."

Jarrah: If it's not moving on the plate, something's wrong.

Andi: Exactly. Not only do they consume animal products, but they consume animals while they're still alive. Or do we even know if we would classify Gagh as animal?

Jarrah: Yeah, I mean, it's worms, right? Basically.

Andi: But that's kind of what I mean. Like, is it insect? [crosstalk] [laughs]

Jarrah: It's still an animal even if it is. Like, it's just not a mammal. And that's the other thing that in human culture, and I think this is-- We see some kind of funny instances of this in *Star Trek*, but I think, as you were saying before the show, Anika, is the animals that we see as the most like us or we see as the cutest, we see as the ones that deserve the most rights. But there are some funny moments in *Star Trek* that kind of challenge that, like the thing where I think Kira is describing like the giant spiders on Bajor and Dax is kind of grossed out by it, and they were basically just like pets.

Andi: Yeah, that's cool. But I have to say, as a vegetarian, the idea of not only eating an animal, but eating a live animal? No, thank you. No, thank you, Klingons. I will skip that one. And then, another aspect of this that's kind of interesting is, we were talking about how vegetarianism is easier than ever to do now. And one of the reasons why it's gotten so much easier is because the vegetarian substitutions-- or you've got Beyond, you've got Impossible, you've got vegetarian versions of a lot of different kinds of food, and it's not meat, but it's kind of meat-like. I feel like the *Star Trek* version of this is the replicator.

Anika: And they are trying to grow meat in a lab now. They are actively trying to come up with fake meat that isn't even necessarily a vegetable product made to taste like meat but is the same as meat but not from an animal.

Sue: Well, there's also a question of if you are making the active choice for yourself to not consume meat, is it your goal to find something to replace it that is as much like it as possible?

Jarrah: Mm-hmm. The first time I cooked a Beyond Burger, I was really grossed out because I'm not a vegetarian anymore, but I don't eat beef. And just the smell, it smelled so much like beef, and I was very not appetized.

Sue: Well, it's not exactly the same thing, but I was talking to a friend of mine who keeps kosher about, "Well, do you consume turkey bacon? Do you consume fake crab that is actually fish that is made to look like crab?" And she said, even though these things would technically be kosher, the point is to abstain from these things for her. "Getting the substitute that tries to replicate the thing that I'm not supposed to have doesn't feel right to me," in her words. And I thought it was a really interesting take on that.

Andi: For me, personally, I do have a handful of things that I do do substitutes for. For instance, there is a vegetarian Chicago dog that Portillo's does. But for the most part, for me, I'm not looking to substitute meat. I eat fruits and vegetables, [chuckles] that's what I eat. I don't necessarily need meat, but I wouldn't mind eating a cheeseburger that is from the replicator. That's totally fine for me. I feel like it depends on the person, and it depends on their diet. In some cases, people aren't eating meat because they don't like it. They don't like the taste, or they don't like the texture. And in that case, I feel like a replicator or a Beyond Burger is not actually doing anything for them. But everyone has different reasons for why they eat the way they eat.

Anika: Right. I've been a vegetarian for so long, I've never had a hotdog. And so, the idea of having a fake hotdog, why would I want to do that? It just seems completely antithetical, regardless of my reasons, because it's not something that's ever been a part of my diet.

Jarrah: Yeah, but I also support them being made if it's helpful for some people who might not otherwise consider being vegetarian or vegan.

Anika: My son, who when he was little, called himself a carnivore because he wanted to be a dinosaur, is now pescatarian and we eat mostly vegetarian at home. And so, he has tried the Beyond Burgers. And it's interesting because he came out of it saying, "No, I think I'd rather have like a black bean burger," or something or like a veggie burger, where you could actually see the vegetables.

Andi: Or portobello.

Anika: If I can't see, like the corn or-- Yeah, or portobello, then I don't want it in my taco because I want it to taste like vegetables. But I do appreciate that there are these options. My family has gone from me being the only one to all but two of us are on the spectrum of vegetarianism in some way. And so, it's easier for people to substitute something if they miss having a steak or a scallop or something. If they can have that same idea and it's made of mushrooms, then why not?

Andi: Yeah. And I do think we do see, however, folks eating real meat and real cheese that is not replicated. We have a couple of examples of that. Pike, apparently, in *Strange New Worlds*. Joseph Sisko specifically says he makes "real food." Neelix uses, unfortunately, in some cases, real eggs and real cheese. So, I think it's clear that there are still, at the very least, humans that still eat animal products in the future in *Star Trek*.

Jarrah: Yeah, and that goes back to the whole sapient-sentience thing. So if we're talking about sentience the way that it's used in our world today to mean beings that the ability to feel and perceive, there's a lot of, including a European Union Convention and conventions that are meant to strengthen animal rights, that recognize that animals are sentient by that definition, and that therefore you should have measures in place to minimize suffering of animals. Although, apparently, you're still allowed to do a lot of sketchy farming processes.

But you're not supposed, I guess, really, really treat them badly. You're supposed to try to make sure that you're-- debatable whether you can have ethical slaughterhouse methods. But that's, I think, the ideology behind it.

But Riker has that line in *Lonely Among Us*, where he says, "We no longer enslave animals for food purposes," which seems like humanity has arrived at an idea that you should not keep chickens in battery cages and then slaughter them for meat. But then, there's all these examples of people insisting on cooking with "real meat," including Riker later in *Picard*, cooking with bunnicorn. Maybe it's okay because they're not enslaved for food because they're presumably free-range bunnicorn.

Andi: Or maybe this was all written by a bunch of different writers that just didn't think about maintaining a consistent, thorough line.

Jarrah: Exactly. Yeah.

[chuckles]

Andi: Moving on from animals as food, I wanted to spend a little bit of time about talking about working animals. So, Kirk still has horses. *DS9* has a horse drowned carriage. So it seems that there are still, at least in some cases, working animals around. And then one of the first examples of when I was thinking about aspects of animal rights in *Star Trek* that I thought of was in *Discovery*, the tardigrade, the way they plugged it into the spore drive and how uncomfortable that made me and how I really did not enjoy that and how that brought up a lot of ethical concerns, I think, for the audience. That was the clearest example I could think of as like a "working animal" in *Star Trek*.

Jarrah: Yeah. Well, and there's also the space whale, which we learned there's legislation in place to protect. But, yeah, it feels like there are some areas where they're comfortable having animals that are working, although presumably on the maybe more ethical side of the treatment spectrum than if it was completely deregulated. In our world today, we have animal cruelty laws, and we have bodies to enforce them, at least in the US and Canada, and with varying degrees of success. But there are rules on, you can own a horse, but you can't mistreat it. You can own pets, but you have to feed them. You can't lock them in a car in the sun forever. And so, it's not surprising to me that the Federation would, especially being written by people in our world today, have maybe a similar model where Pike and Kirk have horses. But presumably, there are rules so they can't just do whatever they want.

Andi: Well, I think the tardigrade, they were breaking--

Sue: Well, yeah, but let's keep in mind that ship at the time was being captained by Lorca from the Mirror Universe.

Anika: But Starfleet, there was a whole meeting about how they were going to get some more tardigrades and they're going to make some more spore drives, and they put them in all their ships. In "fairness" to Starfleet, it was because they were at war and it was like wartime decision. I don't think that matters, but Starfleet does.

Jarrah: And that also mirrors our real world, where animals and also people who are more marginalized to tend to be put to use to serve the instruments of war, sometimes in ways that completely disregard their rights.

Andi: And also, that their rights are conditional on how difficult it is for us to give them to them.

Jarrah: Yes.

Andi: It's like, "Yeah, you can have rights when it's easy and convenient. Once it's not convenient, and we want to break them for whatever reason, then your rights are more conditional. So, sorry, Tardigrade. We're at war, therefore--" So, that whole storyline on *Discovery* always made me uncomfortable, and I'm very glad that poor tardigrade went and frolicked off into the sunset because, yikes.

I did also want to talk about pets. We do have an episode specifically on pets in which Jarrah was on, and also Sandwich's purring. So, if you want to hear Sandwich's purring, definitely listen to the Pets episode where we get into this more. But I did want to say that it's very clear that they certainly have pets, and it's treated as normal and moral. So, I don't think that they don't really get into any ethical considerations on whether or not it's ethical to own animals as pets. Even in Vulcan, because there are pets for Vulcans in the sehlat.

Jarrah: Well, and this sort of overlaps back with the working animals thing. But I did want to raise that *Star Trek* uses working animals in the animals that work in the film industry. Just think of our fun little dog in that unicorn suit.

[laughter]

Andi: Oh, I love that. When I first time trekked *TOS*, that was the moment where I was like, "Oh, I love this show. This show is amazing." That poor little dog in his unicorn outfit. [laughs]

Sue: In the animal rescue community, at least where I am and the shelter animals, I'm just a volunteer, so that-- But we're moving away from even now saying words like "ownership," and you're not a pet owner, you're their caretaker. And for some people, they sort of roll their eyes. But it sounds more correct to me. I don't like to think of myself as owning pets. I'm their caretakers, or I am their caretaker, I'm a singular person. And I would hope that that sort of shift in perception would continue and grow.

Andi: Yeah. Because one reason why I said that I don't think that there's much ethical discourse around this is because I think even for our world, we really haven't shifted that paradigm very much yet. I think it's in the very beginnings. But when you really start to think about it, you are taking an animal and making it depend on you and then controlling what it eats and where it goes. And it doesn't have to be a malicious thing for it to-- you start to think, like, "What gives us the right to control an animal in that way?" But I do think that's just a conversation that is very much in its infancy, even in our time.

Sue: Well, I was listening to-- admittedly, I am not anywhere close to being an expert on animal rights, but I was listening to the *Factually!* podcast with Adam Conover that spoke to an author who was talking about some of the bigger questions of, I guess you would say wild animals. Should we go out into their wilderness and vaccinate these animals against diseases, or should we let things run their course? And I thought it was really interesting-- that her statement on this was, it depends on what you value. Do you value keeping them from pain and suffering? Or, do you value their autonomy and wildness? And what is more important really for the wellbeing, the whole wellbeing of those animals?

Jarrah: The other thing is partly just that I think as an intellectual exercise, it's really interesting to think about the idea of all animals having autonomy in the challenges we're in a society that has pets that have been created over thousands of years of breeding, and no one's advocating like let's just all our cats and dogs loose. That's not good for them or anyone.

Sue: Or local bird populations.

Jarrah: Yeah, exactly. But it's like if we want to move to a world where people don't have animals that they essentially control, then how do we get there respecting the fact that basically these animals have been engineered in such a way as to fill that role and can't necessarily just make it on their own?

Andi: Well, look at pigeons. Pigeons were specifically domesticated by humans for messaging, to send messages. And then, when as soon as they no longer needed pigeons for messaging, they just dropped them. And now, pigeons apparently take care of themselves, and now they just eat human food when they can get it and are "nuisance animals." If you breed and train animals to do one thing, and then that one thing is no longer useful to you and then you just abandon them, that is an issue.

Sue: That applies to horses in a lot of ways too. They have been bred for years to be ridden, really. So, not riding a horse could actually be detrimental to it if it is a domesticated one.

Andi: Yeah. I think just in general, we need to have some conversations about this. Obviously, as Jarrah said, we're not saying free your pets--

[laughter]

Andi: Like, I'm just going to chuck Jerry Cat out into the street and say, "You're on your own. [chuckles] Autonomy. This is a morally correct decision." Jerry will be very upset with me if I do so. That's not what we're advocating. But I do think it's important to start thinking through some of these issues and figure out where do we go from here and how do we do this in a way where everything is thought through of what their rights are to be autonomous creatures and what our rights are to get snuggles.

I did want to move on a little bit, and this piece, I don't really feel like we see very much in *Star Trek* and if I'm missing anything, please let me know. But I wanted to talk a little bit about animal testing. I thought it was interesting that the examples I could think of were examples of humans or humanoid creatures being "treated" like lab animals. So, they are referencing lab animals and animal testing, but they're doing it while talking about, for instance, Beverly in *I, Borg* refused to hew as a lab rat, when they're doing all the tests on him and stuff. I can't think of, and if you all can think of some, please let me know, an actual lab rat being on the show.

Jarrah: I mean, I think the tardigrade sort of is.

Andi: Sort of. Yeah.

Sue: I don't recall any time that Phlox used any of his menagerie for testing. But just before we started recording, I was watching *Voyager's Equinox*, and I think you could make the argument there that was animal testing for sure.

Andi: Can you remind folks what that episode is?

Sue: So, that is *Voyager* comes across another Federation starship in the Delta Quadrant and they have found a way to pull in aliens, I guess it's from like another plane, you could call it, because they emit antimatter. And because they have run out of dilithium. They did a series of tests to figure out the best way to use these animals or creatures, that's probably more accurate, and exploit them to run their engines. And they have calculated how many more they're going to have to kill to get home.

Anika: I think that this is a very tricky topic in reality. And so, *Star Trek* doesn't necessarily want to go there. Like Sue's example, the Equinox people, they're clearly wrong. They're on the wrong side, and it wasn't our people. The Voyager wasn't doing this, it was another ship doing it. And when Odo was being treated like a lab animal, when he was being treated like a lab animal, it's clearly wrong because we know Odo, he's our friend. He was like a child, so that's wrong. And it's hard to have those same conversations, as they were saying, when it's not someone that we're already on their side. So, like a rat who is being tested on in order to cure a human disease, it's harder to be on the side of the rat for mainstream people who aren't thinking of this. And so, it would be difficult for *Star Trek* to do that in a way that really centers the rat. So, they do it in a way that centers us again.

So, they're still telling the same story, and they're still sort of making us think about those questions. But like I said when I quoted *I, Borg*, it suggests that laboratory animals are no longer used. They say centuries ago when laboratory animals were used for experiments. So what is being used for the experiments now? Are we not having experiments anymore? Are we going right to human trials because they can consent?

Jarrah: Holographic simulations?

Anika: Yeah.

Sue: Yeah, we've seen holographic simulations, and we've seen the computer running simulations, and I guess what I've always taken from that, the implication I get is that the simulations have become so much more advanced that that can serve as the trial.

Jarrah: Like, consider that episode with B'Elanna and the war criminal hologram. I mean, he experimented on other people, but they are using a holodeck to simulate testing other solutions. But I can think of two examples where they do test a solution on an animal before they test it on people. One is in-- Uh, is that-- Oh, man, why can I not remember the name of the episode? But it's the unicorn dog episode.

[chuckles]

Anika: Oh, yeah, they beam.

Jarrah: Yeah. I mean, it's also the evil and good Kirk episode, and there's all sorts of things with that. But they test the solution of reintegrating the unicorn dogs, and it kills one of the unicorn dogs.

Andi: Oh, I forgot about that.

Jarrah: Yeah. And the other one is, and Sue can correct me if I'm wrong, remembering this, but in *Genesis*, I know they derive the solution from Spot, but they essentially solve it for Spot before they solve it for other people and test it on other people. Is that correct?

Sue: I don't remember, but I think so.

Anika: I think that isn't it like Spot was pregnant, and so they find that Spock has antibodies?

Jarrah: Right.

Anika: Babies have antibodies or something like that. And then, they mine them from Ogawa.

Sue: Yeah, the Spot turned into a lizard, but the kittens didn't.

Anika: Because of the antibodies.

Jarrah: Yeah. So, in that case, they're like deriving a cure from an animal that doesn't have the ability to consent in it being used that way.

Andi: Sorry, I have to correct you, Jarrah. That episode is not called *Genesis*. That episode is called *Troi Frog*. Sorry, I like to be precise.

Jarrah: Awesome.

Andi: Kind of going back to *Equinox*, I found it interesting when you're describing that, Sue, as possibly animal testing. I think that it could also be an example of industry of animals being used as a product. So, in this case, it seems like they are being used for energy.

Sue: The reason it came to mind for testing is because Janeway says to the other captain, "I saw your data. I read about your tests. You've done extensive testing." So, that's why it popped into my head. But it's also not totally clear if these are what we would consider animals or like other aliens. And as we've talked more about this, the line becomes fuzzier because Janeway also calls it genocide.

Andi: Yeah. And I think that's a problem that's unique to *Star Trek* that's not necessarily analogous to our real-world conversations, is that because we have alien species in the mix here, there is often a conflation sometimes of what is an alien species and what is animal? In some cases, I think it gets a little bit fuzzy, as you said.

Sue: Well, like the Horta. It's okay to kill the Horta until they realize that it's sentient and trying to protect its young.

Andi: Right. So that's where I was going to next, actually, with this, because *Devil in the Dark* in general, which, if folks do not remember it, rewatch the episode, it's so good. I love that episode. But *Devil in the Dark* is a great example of the Horta aren't industry, but the Horta are in the way of industry, and therefore, they were just-- It made me think of logging or something where the industry is not around animals, but it is clear cutting where the animals are living. So, it's like destroying the habitat of the animals and therefore, it is impacting them. And the Horta is also a great example of, is this animal or is this a sentient creature? I think we would say-- or even sapient. Right, Jarrah?

Jarrah: Yeah.

Andi: I think we would say they're sapient because they communicate very clearly. But because they look so alien to what we would think of as a person or sapient creature, it gets a little bit blurry again.

Anika: And it's also only our crew, like the miners didn't think they were communicating. The miners thought they were just going after them. It was our crew of scientists that figured out that they were communicating.

Jarrah: Yeah, they're just like the orcas, people. They're communicating.

Andi: Yeah, they're communicating, "Get the hell out of my ocean."

Jarrah: Yup.

[chuckles]

Sue: It also takes me to *Rogue Planet for Enterprise*, which is this is hunting. So, it is very different. But it was really interesting to me that the Enterprise crew was not okay with the creatures on this planet being hunted, but were totally okay with eating them, because Trip definitely describes what it tastes like when he brings it to Phlox. But then, what they called the wraiths on this planet, Archer wasn't super interested in saving until one appeared to him as a humanoid that he wanted to get down with. [chuckles] It's a very *Enterprise* plotline.

[laughter]

Jarrah: And I wanted to mention the trouble with Edward where while Lynne does question whether it's ethical to breed them and kill them for meat, no one actually questions the fact that Edward is animal testing on this tribble.

Andi: And I rewatched *The Trouble with Edward* because I was like, "It can't be as disturbing as I remember it was." It is.

[laughter]

Andi: It is very, very disturbing. I don't understand how this thing is like 15 minutes long, and it's like, "Wait a minute. What [crosstalk]" [laughs] The implications of this is really upsetting." So if folks don't remember the *Short Trek, The Trouble With Edward*, as I said, it's 15 minutes. So, go ahead and take a gander.

Sue: Or don't.

Andi: Or don't, [laughs] whichever. I remember the first time I watched it, I actually did find it funny because I was so horrified. Like, I was doing that like, "Oh, my God." Like, just laughing. So, *The Trouble with Edward* is basically, I think if we were doing a timeline, like a prequel to *Trouble with Tribbles*, where apparently the tribbles were bred and tested on, as Jarrah says, by Edward, not the best and brightest of Starfleet scientists. But basically, his idea was that they would breed it for food, to eat meat and very graphic detail about how good it would be to eat this. And then, that's why the tribbles breed so quickly, is because Edward changed them to do that. Then it goes right back into know where *The Trouble with Tribbles*, the tribbles apparently spread out from this incident with Edward out into Klingon space and then became a problem for the Klingons.

So, that's a lot. [laughs] That is a lot to deal with. I find it very odd. This whole episode is odd. I will just leave it there. And *The Trouble with Tribbles* is a great example of what I think is the funniest things about classic TOS episodes in which at the very end, they'll make a joke to wrap up the episode and it's actually like, "Wait a second. What?" Scotty is basically like, "Ha-ha, ha-ha. I beamed all these tribbles over to the Klingons. The Klingons will definitely kill them all."

Jarrah: "Where there'll be no tribble at all."

Andi: Ha, ha, ha.

Jarrah: [humming the ending]

Andi: Hon, Scotty, why did you do that? Yeah. The tribbles are an excellent example of something that's just like, it's fun and funny and then also, oh, no.

Sue: Yeah.

[laughter]

Jarrah: I think there's a sort of similar thing with Cardassian voles referenced on *Deep Space Nine* that are definitely treated as like a pest that needs to be exterminated.

Sue: Oh, yeah. I think they specifically called vermin?

Jarrah: Yeah.

Andi: So, I wanted to circle back around, Sue, you mentioned hunting, so what I did rewatch that I very much enjoyed rewatching is *The Voyage Home*, aka *The One with the Whales*.

Sue: There you go. Correct title.

Andi: Yeah. I mean, we want to be precise. I really think that *The One with the Whales* actually might be our most explicitly environmental message that we get in *Star Trek*. And I love this movie for 1 million reasons, and obviously, we all love this movie. Well, I shouldn't paint Trekkies as all having one opinion, but this is a beloved movie. One of the things that struck me right from the beginning, kind of goes back to what we were talking earlier about communication and how everybody in Starfleet is assuming that the probe is trying to communicate with humans, and Spock was like, "This is the height of arrogance. The probe might not be trying to communicate with you all at all. Maybe it's trying to communicate with someone else on Earth." And Kirk's like, "Hum-nah, what?"

And it's that insight that allows them to even figure out that it's whale song, because he's like, "Well, wait a second. It's going into the water," make the sound underwater, and then you hear it, and it's clearly whale song. And it's like, "Actually, they're trying to communicate with the whales. They don't care about you silly humans." And that's just such a cool way to reframe that from the very beginning.

Anika: And it's very explicit, because the problem is that the whales aren't there anymore, and that's all humanity's fault. And so that's why we get adorable time travel shenanigans.

Andi: Yeah. And Spock really is the voice of, "You all suck around animal rights," through this, [chuckles] which makes sense as a Vulcan. They are very comfortable with telling us we suck for various reasons. He also has a ton of really great moments in this movie where he's like-- One of my favorite lines from him is, "Hunting to the point of extinction is not logical." Of course, Gillian also has a great response to that is like, "Who said humans are logical?" Like, silly Vulcan. And she also has a great moment where she says that, "My compassion for someone is not limited to my estimate of their intelligence," which is going right back to our very first conversation about this, is so much of the value placed on forms of life are like, how intelligent is it? And I think that's kind of not how I would do it.

Anika: Well. And it's also very shortsighted because what about bees? I would say that everyone would agree that bees are not intelligent in the same way that humans are. That we know of, at least. They have not communicated so far. But bees are vital to our ecological sustainability as a planet, and they've only just figured that out in the past decade or so. And so, there is this big outcry about how we need to make sure that bees stop dying off so that the rest of us will make it as well. And it's, of course, upsetting that we have to have a personal stake in order to care about something. But it brings that back to just because you don't see why they're necessary-- just because their necessity isn't obvious to you doesn't mean that they aren't. We are a big living organism made up of living organisms, and we need to be able to see that the whales are going to talk to the aliens in 400 years, and so we have to make sure they're still here.

Andi: Yeah, I think it really comes down to, for me personally, and one reason why I became a vegetarian is because I feel this is that all life has value, and I do not enjoy the idea of something dying when it doesn't need to die in order for me to eat it. And that's a personal choice. Everyone needs to make their own choice on stuff like that, especially since food is so personal when it comes to your health and nutritional needs. And as we talked about extensively at the beginning of this episode, dietary choices can often be extremely privileged on what your choices are. But for me, that was what it was. It was like I feel all living beings have value, and I wanted to honor that.

Jarrah: And I'll bring in just a little bit of sort of 80s, 90s feminist theory. There is a subset of feminist theory that is about feminism and animal rights and probably kickstarted by Carol J. Adams in *The Sexual Politics of Meat*. And there are issues with some of these early works today in terms of their portrayal of sex work and of conflation of gender and sex. But basically, there are some kind of key tenets that are still mentioned today around how eating animals and the portrayal of animals in media is a form of dominance and control. And that's similar to gender oppression, as well as other forms of oppression in our society. And that only by liberating animals or bringing animals into a place where they're also allowed to have rights, are we going to also end oppression between different groups of humans.

Andi: That makes sense to me.

Jarrah: And they point out, for example, how women are often objectified or compared with meat. For example, there are both advertisements for meat where meat is weirdly sexualized, like sexy cows and stuff, as well as women being referred to by a variety of animal terms and infantilized and dismissed as those animal terms. So, those are some of the points that they raise in terms of those connections.

Andi: Everything is connected.

Anika: Absolutely.

Andi: Well, I think went through a lot of stuff here. I'm sure there's more that we missed. So, if folks have a particular example they'd like to discuss, absolutely feel free to do that in our comments because I know that there is more to say on this topic, but I think that's all the time that we have for today. Thank you, Alex, for the topic suggestion. I think it was a good one, and we had a nice time discussing it. Anika, where can people find you on the internet?

Anika: It's so hard to find me or anyone on the internet these days. So, I would say if you go to linktr.ee/pixiedane, it has all of my current social medias and other places to find me. And you can also find my podcast, Antimatter Pod, at antimatterpod.com.

Andi: And, Jarrah, where can people find you?

Jarrah: Look for me over at trekkiefeminist.com.

Andi: Perfect. Sue?

Sue: No. Social media is a weird place.

[laughter]

Sue: So, I'll just say, you can follow my cats on Instagram [@noodlebeanpotato](https://www.instagram.com/noodlebeanpotato).

Andi: Very nice. And I'm Andi, you can find me [@FirstTimeTrek](https://www.instagram.com/FirstTimeTrek) on most social media sites. To learn more about our show or to contact us, visit womenatwarp.com, email us at

crew@womenatwarp.com or find us on Facebook or Instagram at *@womenatwarp*. Thanks so much for listening.

[Women at Warp theme]

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