

Pet "Owners" or "Guardians," that is the question!

"They are not our property. We are not their owners," according to the Animal Rights Movement.



Veterinarian Elliot Katz, president of In Defense of Animals, says, "Now is the time to get rid of the concept of pet ownership!"

Language is a powerful tool.

Usage of certain words can eventually lull us into acceptance of an ideology.

At least that's what the "animal rights" extremists hope will happen with their campaign to change the term "Pet Owner" to "Pet Guardian."

Veterinarian Elliot Katz, president of In Defense of Animals (IDA), has declared, "Now is the time to get rid of the concept of pet ownership

Katz said changing the language is an important part of a "revolution" that will change the way people see their cats, dogs, and other pets.

Katz considers pet "ownership" to be an offensive term and likens his cause to black slavery and the suffrage movement that gave American women the right to vote.

The Great Ape Project, USA, which includes IDA's Dr. Sheri Speede on the board of directors, is a social and legal crusade to gain certain legal rights for primates.

IDA says they intend to do the same for other species.

At the 11th annual meeting of the Summit for the Animals held in 1995, representatives from 47 animal rights national organizations passed a resolution entitled "Adopting Language That Recognizes Animals as Individuals and Not As Property or Things" and proclaims, "We see this as an important first step."

Martha Armstrong of the Humane Society of the United States said her organization is "very sympathetic to what the IDA is trying to do in their program.

We frequently refer, if not always refer to the person that has an animal in his home as the guardian, caretaker or caregiver of that animal rather than owner."

Wayne Cavanaugh, United Kennel Club president, states: "This proposal is a deadly serious first step by the animal rights movement toward the abolition of all domestic animals.

It starts by changing language and ends up by changing the law."

In Taking Command, November 1999, the American Kennel Club expressed the following concerns about the wording: "To the many dog owners who share a special, undefinable bond with their animals, this idea may sound appealing.

However the long term legal implications of designating pets as more than property blurs the legal responsibilities of pet ownership.

While they may seem insignificant on the surface, they represent a significant step forward for animal rights activists looking to terminate our sport."

The state of Rhode Island and the following nine cities have passed this legislation: San Francisco, Berkeley and West Hollywood, CA; Boulder, CO; Sherwood, AR; Menomonee Falls, WI; Amherst, MA; Woodstock, NY and Wanaque, NJ.

Ronald Cole, San Francisco Dog Training Club, says: "With ownership comes responsibility. Ownership is recognized by our court system and dates back to English common law. Just as there are bad and even cruel parents, there are bad and cruel pet owners.

Calling one of these bad parents a "guardian" instead of a "parent" won't change their behavior or attitude. It won't have any effect on the behavior or attitude of a pet owner either.

Ownership and property rights are privileges found in democratic governments."

Marshall Tanick, national counsel to the American Dog Owners Association, writes: "The repercussions from calling owners of dogs and other pets "guardians" could result in substantial restrictions on pet ownership; such as: 1) Restrictions on buying and selling pets; 2) Impediments to adopting pets from shelters; 3) Limitations on the number

of pets per household; 4) Law enforcement searches of private residences without warrants; 5) Curtailing participation in dog shows; 6) Prohibition on breeding; 7) Challenges to veterinary procedures, including spaying and neutering; 8) Preventing appropriate euthanasia or other dispositions; 9) Lawsuits by animals against their owners or keepers; 10) Taking away animals from their owners."

US News & World Report wrote: "A dozen law schools now feature courses on animal law, and in some cases, the teaching seems to be a simple extension of radical activism.

Steven Wise talks of using the courts to knock down the wall between humans and apes. The advantage of the litigation strategy is that there's no need to sell radical ideas to the American people.

There are almost no takers for the concept of "nonhuman personhood," the view of pets as slaves, or the notion that meat eating is part of a "specter of oppression" that equally afflicts minorities, women, and animals in America.

The rhetoric is highminded, but the strategy is to force change without gaining the consent of the public."

According to a briefing sheet published by the Washington, D.C. based **Capital Research Center**, animal rights groups profess to work for improved animal treatment while their ultimate goal is to abolish the following: 1) the breeding and owning of pets; 2) the use of animals in biomedical research; 3) the raising of farm animals for food, clothing, and by-products such as insulin; 4) the use of animals in education and entertainment, including zoos, aquariums, circuses and rodeos; and 5) all forms of hunting (including field trial competition), trapping and fishing.