



Following is the response to a question that was asked of Kurma Rupa Prabhu about the sustainability of Cow Protection. This was published in the May Care for Cows newsletter. It is a wonderful answer.

"If a family keeps a cow and calf and has a few acres of land, a vegetarian diet is easily sustainable. I know a family in Colorado whose cow gives nine gallons of milk a day and she lactates for four to five years. They have enough land for the cow and her offspring to graze on and even with several months of winter they can easily maintain their cow. (See CFC News July 2010).

If you mean to ask will protecting a family cow produce enough income to maintain herself and provide for a family of five people with urban habits, then no, it won't. In an agrarian setting cows actually give more than they take. However, when one tries to produce milk for commercial purposes and requires expensive farming equipment (tractors, bailers, combines, silos etc.) has to pay outrageous prices for veterinary aid, purchase homogenization and pasteurization equipment, conveyances to transport the milk to urban areas and so on, sustainability becomes a problem. In short, what makes cow protection unsustainable today is urbanization and consumerism.

Remove these two from the picture and you have the formula for a peaceful existence. A large herd is sustainable in an agrarian community with common pasturing grounds and bordering forests, not otherwise. I have visited village communities in India which still resemble the ancient Vedic model where every household hosts a few cows and a few cowherd men or women take the collective herd out to pasture daily leaving the calves behind. At the end of each day there is a celebration when the cows return with their stomachs full and many with udders full as well. The only investment is the time it takes for a few people to accompany the cows in their daily wanderings.

The cows are milked; the calves are fed; the milk boiled on a cow dung fire; hot milk is served; the remainder left overnight to become yoghurt; which is later churned to make butter; and the nourishing buttermilk is offered to unexpected guests and whoever else. I have never witnessed a more joyous existence. But the villagers I have examined pay their bills by farming, not selling dairy products.

"Excess males and unproductive females" are terms used by commercial dairy farmers that have nothing to do with cow protection but everything to do with cow exploitation. Urbanization and mechanization have rendered bulls unemployed whereas in the Vedic model the bull calves are valued more than the females as there is always ploughing and draught work to be done.

Since their dung and urine have numerous practical uses in agrarian life, and since Vedantists consider tending cows and pleasing them to be an activity which pleases God, real cow protectors always consider cows and bulls productive even when dry, retired or diseased. We do not encourage commercial dairy farming or any type of attempt to make living from selling cow products. A profit orientation invariably leads to decisions which sell the cow short.

The term "humane culling" is an oxymoron at best or a euphemism at worst. If you are humane, how can you take the life of a creature who has not agreed to give it up? Why not call it what it is? - killing to increase profit. People who coin such terms do so to minimize the guilt resulting from acting against their conscience. Other examples are "terminating the pregnancy" instead of saying "killing the child in the womb"; or "pacifying the enemy" instead of bombing the hell out of them; and so on. When the sinister want to manipulate others to perform horrible and unbeneficial acts which may disturb their conscience, they employ such devices to facilitate the phenomenon of self-deception. Creation and employment of such devices indicates malignant

narcissism.

In an agrarian society cows have a wonderful effect on the ecology. Their dung is known to be the best fertilizer and their hooves and horns have a nourishing effect on the earth. You may find Rudolf Steiner's (the founder of biodynamics) work interesting. A Google search will yield much on his work. Since in the Vedic formula, ahimsa is the first principle, I think a vegan diet is better than one including commercial dairy products obtained by violence. But the best and most wholesome diet is one which includes milk obtained from a loving cow who is treated like one's own mother. References to cow protection abound in Vedic literatures like Mahabharata, Ramayana, Srimad Bhagavatam and other Puranas which describe an agrarian social structure and lifestyle focused on attaining spiritual rather than material goals. Frankly, I think you will be hard-pressed to find much published research today condoning cow protection since it does not serve the purpose of urbanization which is to make the citizens dependent on exploitative and manipulative oligarchs. Modern man has lost his roots. Cow protection hasn't lost importance but because urban man has become so successfully indoctrinated and acclimated to artificial living and consumerism he no longer understands or values the fruits of it.

The real purpose of cow protection is to please the Supreme Lord Krsna. Milk, dung, urine, ghee, yoghurt and draught are the natural by-products and are considered most essential for religious rituals and producing the necessities for a wholesome life. In the Vedic agrarian model milk is not considered the goal of cow protection and a bull calf is celebrated more than a female calf as once trained, he is productive for more years than the dairy cows.

Go-raksha (cow protection) is done properly if one takes it as a religious duty rather than a career opportunity. In the former mindset one attempts to serve cows rather than be served by them; one aspires for spiritual gain rather than material gain. This is what makes it work.

One famous verse explains, "One should follow the cows, feed them sufficiently, and circumambulate them. If the cows are happy then Lord Gopala is understood to be satisfied." (Hari Bhakti Vilas 17.244)

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When the Supreme Lord is satisfied with one, He carries what one has and provides what one lacks. Thus, cow protection, if done properly is completely sustainable from the spiritual viewpoint."