

S.C. Allowing Brutal Bear Killings

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When we were a largely agricultural society and the practice of husbandry was well spread, a noble relationship endured between beasts of burden, cattle and fowl and the people who tended to them.

To a smaller extent that relationship still exists; albeit tempered in massive feed lots and pens geared to serve our appetite for chicken, pork, beef and poultry. The animals were and are a commodity that serves to feed mankind. But cruelty to animals should never have been part of the process; yet it happens and continues in the way we treat some of our wildlife

As South Carolinians, we should be outraged by the fact that we are the only state in the union that allows a bear training practice called "bear baying". Bear hunters from all over visit us because their states have outlawed the practice. In addition, each year an attempt is made by those who cherish the practice to legitimize it by expanding and redefining language to suit their specific needs or finding some other legal loophole to wiggle through and perpetuate animal cruelty. For years, hunters have engaged in bear baying, in which they chain a captive bear to a stake and allow hunting dogs to bark at it as part of a training exercise. There are dozens of captive bear in South Carolina, mostly in Greenville, Pickens and Oconee Counties, kept for the sole purpose of serving as victims in bear baying and dog training.

This year, another legislative attempt was made to expand the bear hunting season from one to eight weeks (it failed) and exempt wildlife from the definition of animals (it also failed). Imagine the self-serving irony, wildlife is not defined as animals and therefore not subject to the State's animal cruelty laws.

Let's not let our guard down. We must remain vigilant, stay abreast of relative news and do everything we can to end it, once and for all. Can we count on your help? Punch up "bear baying" in Google and see what pops up; then write or call your South Carolina legislator and tell them how you feel about this practice. Perhaps we will see an end to this cruelty in our lifetime. Don't be like most - All talk and no action - our state grows worse when we continue to take no action!