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Hunting cases for discussion

Note: Situations #1 and #3 are entirely fictional, but realistic. Situation #2 is based on an actual situation in Yellowstone in the early 1960's, although the contemporary management practice is not as described.

Situation #1: Peter Kirk is a midwestern farmer who hunts deer every fall just like his father and grandfather before him. Each year, Kirk spends several weekends afield, tracking deer and eventually killing one. He cures and freezes the venison, which is treated as a delicacy in his family.

Situation #2: Rick Pearson is a National Park Service ranger in Yellowstone. One of his jobs is to serve as a marksman during yearly culling of the northern elk herd, which has repeatedly exceeded the carrying capacity of its range. After extensive attempts at trapping and relocation, the Park Service killed about 4000 animals (upwards of one third of the population at the time) during the winter of 1961-62. The hunt was staged in the winter, when the animals are concentrated at lower elevations, it used Park Service marksmen, and the carcasses were processed on the scene, the meat being given to area Indian tribes. The initial herd reduction caused a public outcry because the methods seemed so unsporting or cruel, but an influential government report endorsed the technique and now each winter, several hundred elk are shot under similar circumstances, and this has stabilized the population within the carrying capacity of the range.

Situation #3: Howard Stancer is a successful Hollywood actor who has traveled the world for years trophy hunting. He has heads of 19 big game animals on his wall and needs only the head of a rare cat to have completed the prestigious "big 20" of trophy hunting. So this summer he is going to a game ranch in central Texas and paying \$3500 to be guaranteed a cat of the species in question. These cats, along with a dozen other exotic species, are bred on the ranch in one acre pens for the purpose of such "canned" hunts.

Questions:

1. What conclusions would you personally reach about the morality of hunting in each of these cases? Why?
2. What would a person thinking from the animal welfare perspective (as described in the "Representative Views on the Moral Status of Animals" handout say about this practice? Why?
3. What would a person thinking from the human dominion perspective (as described in the other handout) say about this practice? Why?
4. What would a person thinking from the animal rights perspective (as described in the other handout) say about this practice? Why?