

Animals will suffer in Trump Administration



Chains are used to tie an elephant's legs after it was caught during a hunt west of Phnom Penh, Cambodia. (Heng Sinith/Associated Press)



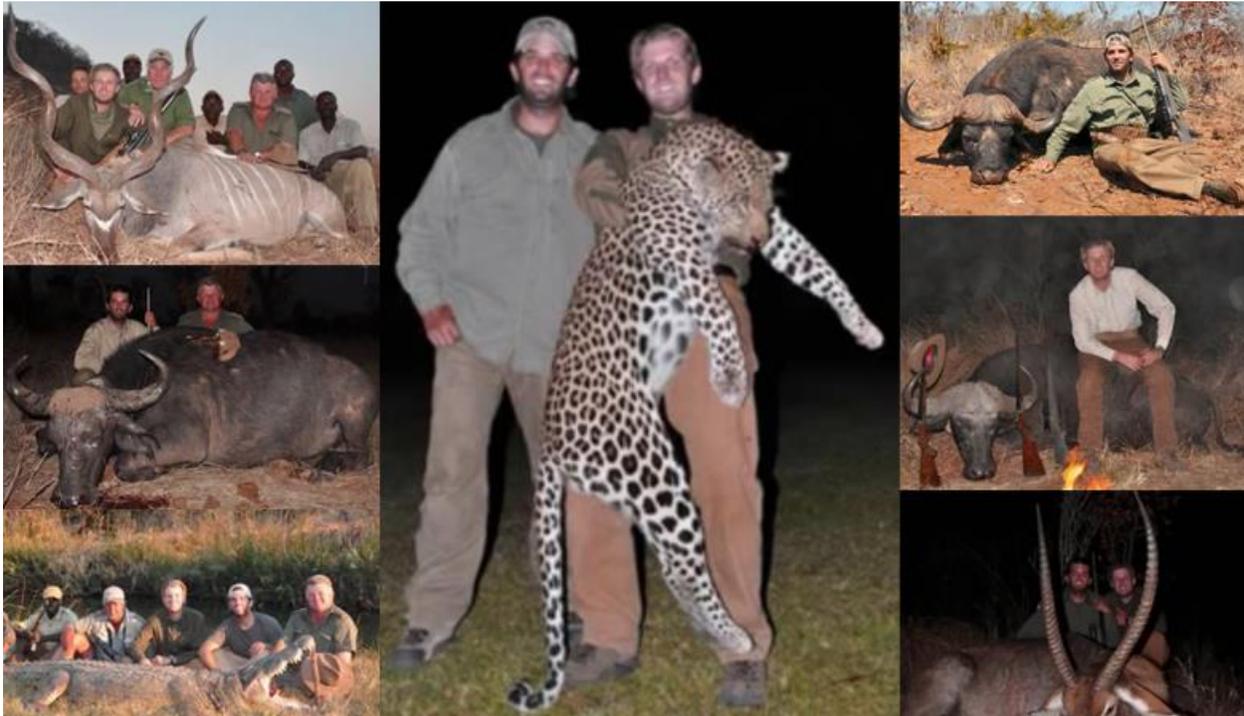
By [Kathleen Parker](#) Opinion writer September 6, 2016

The animal kingdom will have lost one of its staunchest defenders when the Oval Office is abandoned by Barack Obama, who through a series of critical administrative rulemakings has done more to protect animals than any other president in recent memory.

This will be especially devastating if Donald Trump replaces him — not only because of his sons' lust for hunting exotic game but also because his recently announced agriculture advisory committee includes several active opponents of animal protection policies.

By now, many will have seen the photographs circulating on social media of Eric Trump and Donald Trump Jr. displaying their trophy kills. One shows [the two young men posed with a leopard they killed](#) in Africa. Another shows [Junior holding the tail of an elephant](#), which he appears to have just sliced off with the knife in his other hand, and another of him lounging against the lifeless hulk of a Cape buffalo bull. A fourth photo shows the brothers' smiling faces framed between the horns of a magnificent waterbuck.

If these snapshots were intended to capture the rapture of proud manhood, they missed their mark. Trump's spawn aren't Maasai warriors, suffice it to say. But even the Maasai [have stopped killing lions to prove themselves](#), thanks to conservationists, and now determine leadership according to who jumps highest — evidence that one can easily jump a rival's fence when raiding cows.



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What sort of person could kill this beautiful animal? Trump sons could.

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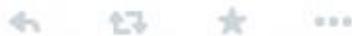
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When asked about his sons' bloody hobby, Trump demurred except to say that his sons are [excellent marksmen](#). Trump prefers golf, he said, and he obviously limits trophy collecting to women. Junior, meanwhile, says he'd like to head the Interior Department, which, among other things, oversees trophy-hunting imports. Under Obama, [elephant trophies from Tanzania](#)

and Zimbabwe were halted and African lions were listed as threatened. What would a trophy-hunting Trump do with such protections?

Meanwhile, the Republican nominee's anti-animal animus may be gleaned from his choice of agriculture advisers, which the Humane Society Legislative Fund has called a "rogues gallery" of anti-animal welfare activists. (Disclaimer: My son works for the Humane Society.)

Foremost is Forrest Lucas, billionaire founder of Protect the Harvest, an organization focused on fighting the Humane Society and opposing any legislation aimed at restricting cruel animal practices in the production of meat, dairy and eggs.

Such humane propositions are viewed by Lucas's group as unnecessarily restrictive to business, limiting our freedoms and attacking our all-too-American culture. Among the "traditions" the harvest group has sought to protect are circuses, illustrated on the organization's website with a photo of elephants absurdly parading in a conga line on their hind legs. Thanks to animal activists and enlightened spectators, Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus recently retired its elephants from the ring, to the lasting deprivation of no one.

Lucas and Co. have also opposed efforts to establish felony-level penalties for malicious cruelty against dogs, cats and horses, even fighting standards for dogs in commercial puppy mills.

Also on the committee is Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad (R), who has the distinction of being the first governor to sign into law an "ag-gag" measure that punishes whistleblowers, giving factory farmers free rein over animal welfare and worker safety. The bill's sponsor, former Iowa state representative Annette Sweeney, also a Republican, is also a Trump adviser. Another adviser, former Nebraska governor Dave Heineman, vetoed a bill to end the sport hunting of mountain lions and has defended factory farming practices that many happy omnivores find reprehensible, including the use of battery cages and gestation crates.

Adviser and Iowa factory farmer Bruce Rastetter is reported to be a leading candidate to become Trump's agriculture secretary. His brother is the chief executive of a company that builds large-scale hog facilities as well as gestation crates for breeding sows. Which way Trump leans — animal welfare or business profits — doesn't seem to be in question.

Let's just say that his selection of advisers, coupled with a cavalier attitude toward his sons' big-game hunting, bodes ill for animals and the protections so many Americans find both reasonable and desirable. I guess it's all in how you define freedom. Personally, I'd like to see how high these merciless profit warriors and trophy hunters can jump — not as a prelude to leadership but rather to the ever-popular flying leap.

