

Study reveals how media representations of animal rights advocacy contribute to its depoliticization

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Despite the pervasive public interest in animal welfare, the framing of animal rights activism in the media has largely contributed to its depoliticization, argues a paper in *Polity*. "[Vegans and "Green-Collared Criminals,"](#)" by Serrin Rutledge-Prior, presents the reaction to a day of animal rights protests in cities and towns around Australia in 2019, and ultimately concludes that the public narratives about the activists delegitimized their endeavors.

On the first anniversary of the release of the documentary film *Dominion*, which presented covertly obtained footage of Australian slaughterhouses, protesters engaged in a series of [animal rights](#) actions, including a sit-in at a Melbourne intersection, and "locking-on" to machinery in abattoirs in New South Wales, Queensland, and Victoria. Shortly after these events, the New South Wales Legislative Assembly introduced the "Right to Farm Bill," a piece of legislation that sought to deter protesters from interfering with farm business and property.

Several politicians and media outlets, Rutledge-Prior writes, responded to the protests and the legislation by labeling animal activists as "vegans" and as "terrorists." The criminal framing portrayed animal rights activism as threatening to public safety. The vegan framing, meanwhile, had the effect of casting [animal welfare](#) as an individual interest, within the "private sphere of personal belief," rather than a cause affecting the public good.

Pivoting away from an explicit link with veganism (understood as a personal ethical or dietary choice), Rutledge-Prior argues, and focusing instead on "the frame of justice when making claims on behalf of animals in the [agricultural industry](#)," could serve to better legitimize animal rights as a matter of public concern.

More information: Serrin Rutledge-Prior, Vegans and "Green-Collared Criminals": the Depoliticization of Animal Advocacy in Public Discourse, *Polity* (2023). [DOI: 10.1086/727840](https://doi.org/10.1086/727840)

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