

## History of animal rights in Sweden

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Sweden's first society for the protection of animals was founded in 1882. Today among the world's strictest animal protection laws are found in Sweden.

Campaigning for Animal Rights has a long tradition in Sweden. The organisation [Djurens Rätt](#) (Animal Rights) was founded 1882, originally named Nordiska Samfundet (Nordic Association). It was intended as a Scandinavian organisation against animal cruelty within science. In 1999 the name was changed to Djurens Rätt. Today it is the leading animal rights and animal welfare organisation in Sweden with 32,000 members. Djurens Rätt is focused on giving information to the public and decision makers in the country to bring about changes in attitude as well as legislation.

### Animal protection legislation

Sweden has amongst the world's strictest animal protection laws and control measures available to make sure that the laws are followed. These laws were in part due to a public campaign led by the author Astrid Lindgren and were focused on industrial scale farming. The new laws were presented at the author's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday 1987 and the new laws ([Lex Lindgren](#)) were named as a birthday present to her.

Previously there had been an animal protection law from 1944 and a law from 1937 concerning the slaughter of domestic animals. These two laws were replaced by Lex Lindgren. Currently there is a process in Sweden focused on updating the legislation from 1988.

The Swedish Minister of Agriculture claims on the [Government website](#) that "Sweden has a long history of working with animal welfare and my ambition is that we continue to be a pioneer in this area" and the Swedish government declares "The basic idea of Swedish animal policy is that all animals should feel good, be healthy and be able to behave naturally. This also requires that the environment in which animals

live be as animal-friendly as possible. The goal is to maintain good animal welfare among farm animals, pets, experimental animals and wild animals in captivity."

### Militant Vegans

In the mid 1990's the public debate about animal rights in Sweden became more vigorous, mainly as a result of a series of attacks by animal rights extremists calling themselves [Militanta Veganer](#) (Militant Vegans). These attacks, part of a new style of violent campaigning raised the issue of animal rights to the front pages in national media but also caused animal rights activists to be labelled as criminals by a large part of the public. Meat trucks were set on fire outside meat factories, mink were released from fur farms and criminal damage occurred at restaurants serving meat. The term Militant Vegans was used commonly to describe animal rights activists. Aggressive tactics also caused some division within the animal rights movement itself, where the moderate animal rights activists didn't approve of the criminality and violence of Militanta Veganer.

### [Djurens Befrielsefront](#)

The Militant Vegans of today can be found within [Djurens Befrielsefront](#) (Animal Liberation Front) and Djurrättsalliansen (Animal Rights Alliance). They either perpetrate or morally support crimes in the name of Animal Rights. Djurens Befrielsefront (DBF) claims that the first known "liberation" of animals in Sweden occurred in 1975 when two dogs were taken from a hospital in Gothenburg. This was followed by a few actions in western Sweden in the following years. The organisation DBF itself was founded in 1985 inspired by a film featuring animal rights extremists from

United Kingdom and they perpetrated their first liberation the same year.

A few years later a splinter group Organisationen för djurens Existensberättigande Nu! (ODEN) claimed a couple of animal liberation actions but closed down after that.

In 1993 a group called Djurens Hämnares (Animal Avengers) appeared in Stockholm and claimed responsibility for animal liberations as well as vandalism in Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö. This was followed by the era of Militanta Veganer. Arson attacks claimed by Djurens Aktionsgrupp (Animal Action Group) were followed by several arsons and animal rights related attacks, some claimed in the name of Militanta Veganer. It was also during this time that DBF changed from being an organised group requiring approval for membership to becoming merely a name that anyone could use to publicise their criminal animal rights activity.

### **Djurrättsalliansen**

[Djurrättsalliansen](#) was founded in 2005 and started in Stockholm as a local group but in 2007 launched as a national animal rights organisation that organised several groups and activists in different parts in Sweden. The organisation claims to fight against all forms of animal oppression. Activities that are arranged in the name of Djurrättsalliansen are demonstrations, leafleting, information stands and fundraising activities but they also openly supports criminal acts claimed by Djurens Befrielsefront.

Criminal acts in the name of animal rights have been frequent the last couple of years. Arson, blackmail, slandering, vandalism and sabotage are crimes that have been reported. In a few of the cases suspects have been arrested and sentenced for the crimes. The vast majority of the crimes are still unsolved though. Some activists who are found lawfully protesting during the day change into hoods, balaclavas and gloves in the night to commit crimes in the name of animal rights. The crimes are primarily directed towards the pharmaceutical, food, fur, hunting and fishing industries.

### **Undercover investigations**

Djurrättsalliansen has recently taken it upon themselves to make their own [undercover investigations](#) of fur and food farms in order to expose maltreatment of animals. These investigations have been able to get coverage in national media. The industries that have been covered claim that the investigations are biased. They also claim that the main aim of these investigations is not to expose maltreatment but is to close down the targeted industries permanently.

### **Most activists are lawful**

While criminal acts in the name of animal rights have been frequent in the last couple of years it is important to emphasise that the animal rights related crimes are perpetrated by a small number of extremists. The lion share of activist's campaign lawfully and try to raise support for their views within the political space available to all people living in Sweden.

### **References**

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