University of Essex

Meet, Greet and Eat: Farmed Animals as Dark Tourism Attractions

Accepted for publication in Nitasha Sharma, Annaclaudia Martini, Dallen J. Timothy (eds). 2024. Critical Theories in Dark Tourism: Issues, Complexities and Future Directions. De Gruyter.

Research Repository link: https://repository.essex.ac.uk/36544/

Please note:

Changes made as a result of publishing processes such as copy-editing, formatting and page numbers may not be reflected in this version. For the definitive version of this publication, please refer to the published source. You are advised to consult the published version if you wish to cite this paper.
https://www.degruyterbrill.com/document/doi/10.1515/9783110792072-006/html

www.essex.ac.uk

University of Essex

Meet, Greet and Eat: Farmed Animals as Dark Tourism Attractions

José-Carlos García-Rosell and Philip Hancock

Introduction

In July 2022, UK celebrity chef and restaurateur Gordon Ramsey upset the world of social media by posting a TikTok video of him entering a farm enclosure full of initially inquisitive lambs while singing 'yummy yum yum, I'm going to eat you!' and asking, 'which one's going in the oven first?' (Atkinson, 2022). While nothing entirely new in itself – for example, seafood connoisseurs have long chosen their living lobsters from a tank before condemning them to death and ingestion - the post received many critical comments from people who, while not adverse to eating meat felt that Ramsey had gone too far and that his commentary was distasteful if not somewhat disturbing. Whatever one's reaction to Ramsey's actions, they reflect a broader question about the extent to which people can engage with livestock in what appears, at first sight, contradictory manner, both as living creatures and dead foodstuffs, within a relatively bounded space and time, particularly with reference to the emergence and growth in farm tourism.

A response to both the increasing economic pressures faced by rural farming communities, alongside a growing public interest in the sourcing, reliability, and, most importantly, the safety of everyday foodstuffs, farm tourism has become very popular across Europe. While originating in mainland Europe over a century ago (Phelan & Sharpley, 2011) it has, since the 1980s, become the focus of both state and local promotion often based on the principle that farms can provide for the accommodation and catering needs of groups of tourists, especially those who wish to experience the calmness of country life at a relatively low cost and often not too far from home (Frater, 1983; Nilsson, 2002). And while the UK has been something of a slow starter compared to mainland Europe, its popularity is clearly on the rise with a 200% year-on-year increase in traffic being reported in 2020 (Sharpley & Vass, 2006; Paterson, 2022). As with all sectors, however, the farm tourism market is a clearly differentiated one with some operators offering full accommodation, and even opportunities to experience work on the farms in question, while others position themselves as tourist attractions suitable for no more than a day trip (Nickerson et al., 2001; Sayre & Henderson, 2018).

In this chapter, we focus primarily on the latter type of tourist operation, namely small farms in the UK that cater primarily to day trippers, offering a largely petting zoo-type experience. In

doing so, they offer their patrons an opportunity to meet and greet predominantly, although not exclusively, farmed animals and experience the conditions under which they are raised and live. As we argue, however, such tourist attractions also have a decidedly darker aspect to them. While the immediate attraction offered to visitors is the experience of encountering calves and lambs nuzzling their mothers, chickens pecking freely, and other farmyard creatures living their best lives, there is another side to these venues, namely the almost ubiquitous farm shop and restaurant where if not these exact animals, then certainly their near relatives and possible playmates, are dismembered and served up both cold and hot as objects of gastronomical approval and consumption. In this chapter, we use the term animal in reference to nonhuman animals exclusively. We also use the term "farmed animal" instead of "farm animal" to acknowledge that farming is something done to these animals against their will, not something inherent to their nature (Freeman, 2009).

Taking a critical animal studies perspective (Best, 2009; Matsuoka & Sorenson, 2018), we argue that such attractions, rather than just promoting an idyllic view of farming and farmed animals, represent a curious form of dark tourism whereby animal life and death become intimately entwined as objects of profoundly embodied consumption practices (cf. Fennell et al., 2021; López-López & Quintero Venegas, 2021). Critical animal studies allow us to challenge the anthropocentric nature of dark tourism as a field of research and, thus, to extend the moral debate surrounding the commodification and commercialization of death and suffering beyond humans to include animals (see Matsuoka & Sorenson, 2018). As the attraction discussed in this chapter reflects, gaze, touch, and practices of embodied incorporation are all combined as the living are looked upon, petted, and often internalised as anthropomorphic friends and companions, while the dead are equally evaluated by eye and hand and, ultimately, both ingested and excreted (see Tully & Carr, 2021). In doing so we also reflect on some of the possible ethical implications of such practices and the forms of tourism they promote.

The chapter proceeds with a critical evaluation of the concept of dark tourism, noting its predominantly anthropocentric focus and, therefore, its tendency to marginalise the death and suffering of animals as a worthy subject of either tourist or academic moral consideration. It then considers the historical importance of animals to many tourist destinations and, in particular, the role they play in underpinning the appeal of forms of farm tourism and the atmospheric qualities of such attractions.

Moving beyond their importance as living signifiers of the attractions and benefits of a natural environment, the following section then considers the parallel rise of a secondary discourse surrounding such animals, namely that of Happy Meat and the benefits of eating organically and free-range raised animals and how this has also bolstered the tourist farm cause. The final sections offer up an illustrative discussion of such tourist attractions, drawing primarily from online publicity material and an observational visit to one such farm in the UK[i] before considering the implications for how we conceptualise dark tourism within the field, as well as reflecting on the ethical questions such a reformulation of activities might generate. The chapter concludes with some final reflections and a discussion of the importance of approaching farm tourism through a dark tourism lens. It also draws attention to potential avenues for future research.

Dark Tourism Beyond Anthropocentrism

While contested and complex in nature (Light, 2017; Stone, 2013), and despite numerous conceptual and empirical studies contributing to a growing body of scholarship, dark tourism (or thanatourism) remains a largely anthropocentric concept (Fennell et al., 2021) that continues to privilege a human-animal dualism in which animals are considered lesser species (Freeman, 2009; Weitzenfeld & Joy, 2014). As an academic field, it has focused predominantly on exploring the commodification and commercialization of significant human suffering and is most widely used with reference to the act of visiting and experiencing deathscapes; that is, places where tragedies, disasters or historically noteworthy human deaths have occurred and continue to affect the lives of other human beings (Martini & Buda 2020; Stone, 2013; Tarlow, 2005). From this perspective, the ethical dimension of dark tourism has been discussed in relation to how places associated with human death are presented to visitors (Sharma, 2020) and their potential impact on those who experience them. Even where dark tourism may occasionally refer to animals, their role is circumstantial as simple objects for human purposes or accompanying human death and suffering (Fennell et al., 2021; López López & Quintero Venegas, 2021).

Nevertheless, if we consider the growing public and interdisciplinary academic interest in human-animal relationships (Coulter2016; Irvine, 2008; Matsuoka & Sorenson, 2018; Räsänen & Syrjämaa, 2017; Tallberg & Hamilton, 2022; Thomas, 2022) including tourism (Fennell, 2011; Markwell, 2015; Giampiccoli et al. 2020; Rickly & Kline, 2021), then it may be time to move beyond limited discussions of dark tourism as pertaining exclusively to humans. This should not only be considered an ontological issue, but should also be thought of, in our view, as a

profoundly ethical matter given that the lack of a non-anthropocentric perspective on dark tourism contributes to reifying tourism practices that position humans above animals, thus reproducing a worldview in which animals are denied subjectivity and agency (see Äijälä, 2021; Colling, 2018; Dashper, 2019; Fennell, 2022; Haanpää et al., 2019; Tallberg et al., 2022). This is problematic as it contributes to speciesism and, thus, the legitimization of a social order that supports exploitation, prejudices, and discrimination towards animals (Matsuoka & Sorenson, 2018; Schneeberger, 2022; Taylor & Twine, 2014).

As such, dark tourism not only reinforces the human-animal divide in the realm of death and suffering but also reaffirms the anthropocentric line of thinking in tourism, where animals are considered only insofar as commodities for the tourist experience (see Colling, 2018; Derrida, 2008). Indeed, although the modus operandi of killing and inflicting pain on animals and humans is very much the same (Pedersen, 2011), it is only the commodification of human death and suffering that is given moral consideration. By limiting the notion of thanatourism to an anthropocentric worldview, dark tourism scholars construct a body of knowledge in which the exploitation, suffering, and killing of animals are normalized and rendered completely neutral. While death is at the core of dark tourism (Hartmann et al. 2018), a critical animal studies perspective on dark tourism draws attention not only to the killing but also to the breeding and management of animals for the sake of human entertainment (see Pedersen, 2011). An extension of dark tourism to include animals contribute to promoting compassion and empathy towards the suffering of both other species and human beings (see Aaltola, 2022; García-Rosell & Hancock, 2022). Some headway in this direction has already been made, of course (e.g., Fennell et al., 2021; López López & Quintero Venegas, 2021). Take, for example, bullfighting, where a matador kills a bull in an arena in the presence of domestic visitors and foreign tourists. This has been identified as one example of dark tourism that seemingly requires the human-induced suffering, dying and death of animals (Fennell et al., 2021; Lopez-Lopez & Quintero-Venegas, 2021). According to López-López and Quintero-Venegas, (2021), this slaughtering of bulls in the arena is an anthropocentric action that reinforces not only patriarchal thinking but also the treatment of animals as resources to be exploited and merchandised. Other animal-based tourism attractions that have also been classified as objects of a dark form of tourism are museums of natural history, European animal extinctions, and zoos and aquaria where dead animals are dissected and necropsied in public events (see Fennell et al., 2021).

A non-anthropocentric perspective on dark tourism contributes not only to making visible the death and suffering of animals as part of tourism attractions but also to understanding how aesthetic and affective socio-spatial encounters shape the human-animal relationships connected to death and its representation (see Martini & Buda 2020). Moreover, if dark tourism provides liminal spaces for reflexivity on the ethics of contemporary consumption, as some scholars have argued (Sharma, 2020; Stone, 2009), then a critical animal studies lens offers an opportunity to use dark tourism as a means for reassessing our relationship and moral reasoning towards animals more widely. It is within such liminal spaces that we can critically examine the use of animals not only through rational deontological judgments (rights and justice) but also in terms of affectual relations, compassion, or any forms of feeling experienced through the body (Aaltola, 2022; Hancock, 2008; Pullen & Rhodes, 2015; Tallberg et al., 2022).

In the next section of this chapter, we draw attention to animals as objects that are exploited for the creation of farm tourist experiences. In so doing, we also consider the importance of animals to the positioning and aesthetics of tourist destinations, particularly in the area of agricultural and animal husbandry and the growth of animal and farm tourism in the UK and beyond. Farmed Animals as Objects of Consumption

Animals play a significant role in the tourism industry, both as primary attractions and as contributors to the overall destination atmosphere. Tourist destinations worldwide capitalize on the appeal of animal encounters to attract visitors and create desirable experiences (Fennell, 2011; Kline, 2018; Markwell, 2015; Rickly & Kline, 2021). In some instances, animals are the central focus of tourist activities. For example, African wildlife safaris allow visitors to observe and interact with iconic species such as elephants, lions, and zebras. Similarly, Australasian diving expeditions enable tourists to encounter tropical marine life, while Arctic excursions often revolve around the quest to spot polar bears, reindeer, and other Arctic wildlife. These animal encounters are regarded as primary objects or resources of the tourist experience. Visitors directly engage with animals, creating value through close interactions, observation, and sometimes even participation in conservation efforts. These encounters are often the main reason tourists choose specific destinations, shaping their expectations and defining their experiences.

Animals can also contribute, however, to the more general ambience of a destination, even if they are not the main attraction. They become part of the destination's atmosphere, adding to

the overall appeal and creating a sense of place. For instance, a coastal town may have seagulls and other seabirds that enhance the seaside experience. In such cases, animals are not the primary focus of the tourist experience, but they play a crucial role in creating the destination's atmosphere. Not that these two roles are mutually exclusive. Many destinations incorporate both primary and secondary animal experiences. For example, a safari may include encounters with a variety of wildlife while incorporating the natural sounds and presence of animals in the surrounding environment, thereby contributing to the overall atmospherics of the destination (Äijälä, 2022; Kline, 2018; Mkono & Holder, 2019; Burns, 2015).

A field of interest in which the role and importance of animals have grown in recent years is that of farm tourism, which refers to tourism activities within a farm setting (e.g., Cassel & Petersson, 2015; Nickerson et al., 2001; Sayre & Henderson, 2018; Sharpley & Vass, 2006). Opening up a new space for tourist activities in which embodied encounters with animals has become both the aim and the backdrop, it has brought into sharp relief both our aesthetic as well as our ethical relationship to these creatures (Bertella, 2021; Tully & Carr, 2021). Unlike traditional zoos, these encounters take place on what remain working livestock farms whereby visitors are able to enjoy close contact with both recognised farmed animals as well as more atypical or even exotic species usually brought in to directly attract further visitors (Tully & Carr, 2021).

Such farms promote themselves, therefore, as tourist attractions that not only offer an opportunity for visitors to be immersed in a healthy rural environment (Nilsson, 2002; Sayre & Henderson, 2018) but also to experience an atmosphere that exudes fun, sentimentality, and the immediacy and vitality of embodied spontaneity as living animals are seen, heard, petted, and even befriended (Tully & Carr, 2021). Roaming, if not always freely, then usually in large pens and fields, they bring to the tourist experience a sense of vitality and the natural spontaneity of life, something perhaps most evident in the spring when the noises, sights, and sounds of lambing and the birth of other farmed animals reverberates around the fields and pens, often combining with the delighted squeals of visiting children and the hustle and bustle of farm workers. It is through these human-animal relations and the pseudo-human status assigned to animals through anthropomorphic symbols such as names and the attribution of human traits that the mythical rural idyll and authentic farm experience are created (see Tully & Carr, 2021). Even though the naming of animals and the acknowledgement of their subjectivity may bring them closer to the realm of moral subjects, the anthropocentric nature of food production and consumption systems continues to make humans morally indifferent to farm practices leading to the

exploitation, manipulation and slaughtering of animals (see Clarke & Knights, 2021; Freeman, 2009; Pedersen, 2022). Indeed, as Pedersen (2022) argues, the implementation of animal-friendly farming models works as a form of disciplinary power that makes the breeding, managing, and slaughter of animals morally acceptable in the eyes of the public.

While these animals are integral to that constellation of factors that attributes to the atmospheric attraction and appeal of such tourist spaces, their presence is also entwined within a darker story. While profoundly embodied in character, this is a story in which they are largely stripped of their anthropomorphic status and personalities and reduced to mere objects with nothing more than their flesh, and perhaps heritage, to speak for them (Bertella, 2021). This is a story of their appearance as reformulated and repackaged commodities of consumption in the various farm shops and outlets that are often integral to the economic sustainability of such attractions. At this point, these animals are not appreciated anymore for their personalities but for their flesh and meat, which is described as tasty, superb and of excellent quality (Sayre & Henderson, 2018).

In the next section, we consider some of these issues in greater depth, drawing on research into both the self-presentation of such farms alongside other similar tourist environments and attractions. In doing so, we describe and reflect on the empirical manifestations and processes of this transformation before then moving on to consider not only the aesthetic but ethical implications for the animal-tourist relationship.

Welfare, Happy Farms and Happy Meat

Farm tourism is not an entirely new phenomenon (Frater, 1984). Originally a response to a need amongst many farmers to diversify income streams and contribute more widely to local economies (Busby & Rendle, 2000; Sharpley & Vass, 2006) it has grown globally as tourists seek out both new and often locally accessible short holiday or day trip destinations. More recently, it has also been buoyed by a public increasingly interested in both the healthy production of human foodstuffs and, when it comes to questioning the rearing of livestock, the animal welfare conditions under which animals are bred and kept. In the UK, for instance, incidents such as the outbreak of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE or 'mad cow disease') during the 1980s and 1990s, brought together these two concerns as animal and human welfare were increasingly viewed as interrelated (Mayfield et al, 2007). This interest, and the market it has created, has led

to the formation of the UK's *National Farm Attractions Network*, and around 400 farm and rural attractions that receive around 25 million visitors annually[ii].

While such attractions can feature numerous activities ranging from adventure playgrounds and treasure hunts to seasonal events such as haunted pumpkin fields at Halloween, and Christmas markets in the winter, perhaps two of their staples are the opportunity to meet and greet farmed animals, and to enjoy fresh farm produce, including animals either purchased and cooked in the farm restaurant or café or processed for home preparation and consumption in the farm shop. For farm owners themselves and, they would argue, the consuming public at large, such a combination of ethical and therefore tourist friendly animal farming practices, and the commercial activity of direct selling to the public makes sense for all parties concerned, including the farm's animals. For the farmer, it provides a source of direct income stripped of many of the overheads commonly associated with the shipping and marketing of animal-based products (Sharpley & Vass, 2006). For the consumer, it provides what is deemed to be better quality meat due to the lack of stress placed upon the animals during their lifetime, as well as a leisure opportunity that itself doubles up as a form of self-assurance as to the quality of both the lives and arguably the deaths of these creatures they are about to consume (see Sayre & Henderson, 2018).

Interestingly, the term that has increasingly come to identify animal-based products - albeit not exclusively – reared at such tourist-orientated farms is that of 'Happy Meat'. While aiming to appeal to several concerns, including human health and environmental spoilage, one of the primary selling points when it comes to marketing Happy Meat products is a commitment by those rearing such livestock to ensure that animals experience a high quality of life; one usually characterised by them living and eating in a natural, free-range environment, and dying in a gentle and managed way (Clarke & Knights, 2021; Renton, 2007). As such, Happy Meat is considered to be an antidote to intensive factory farming, something that is often characterised by cramped living conditions, livestock growth and development regulated by drug use, genetic modification, and mechanised forms of slaughter amongst other things. It is also widely argued that Happy Meat, while representing an improvement in the quality of life for farmed animals, also constitutes a better end product for the consumer. Meat is presented as both organic in nature and, as such, healthier as well as tastier. Beef is, for example, often described as richer and better marbled coming from such animals (Renton, 2007), due to these animals experiencing less stress and enjoying better diets.

While practices associated with the production of Happy Meat may indeed be considered an improvement on those associated with intensive animal rearing, it has also encouraged many critical voices to be raised. Many of these have come from those associated with the cause of animal welfare, as well as vegetarianism and veganism. In their 2013 book, *The Ultimate Betrayal: Is There Happy Meat?* Bohanec and Bohanec (2013) argue that the very concept of Happy Meat is built on a betrayal of the animals that are one moment seemingly cared for and the next slaughtered or butchered by those very same carers, one that defiles both the animals and humans involved. Similarly, Vinding (2014) objects to what he considers to be the deception behind Happy Meat in that it is posited as an ethical alternative to mass farming when in fact, to take the life of any sentient creature, however they have been raised, is profoundly unethical. From a more academic perspective, several studies draw on the Foucauldian concept of biopower to offer a further critical analysis of Happy Meat and its legitimating discursive formations (e.g., Cole, 2011; Pedersen, 2022). In essence, Cole (2011) argues that attempts to position farmed animals as happy via the introduction of animal welfare initiatives represent a discursive shift towards a form of pastoral power that, once again, deceives all parties concerned as to the nature of the exploitive and ultimately murderous relationship between farmer and farmed. As Cole (2011: 96 *original emphasis*) himself puts it:

> Happy meat discourse then, represents the 'popular' expression of pastoral power relations manifested in 'animal centred' welfare discourse. It facilitates adoption of the benevolent role of pastor in place of the disciplinary role of gaoler. It reassures consumers that they *know* the needs and desires of 'farmed animals', and that those needs and desires are being fulfilled precisely *because* they eat the flesh of those animals.

Beyond the intractable contradiction of such a position what most, if not all critics of the Happy Meat idea and other animal friendly farming models point to, is the fact that first and foremost it represents an attempt to market the flesh of animals to an increasingly concerned, or is that squeamish and ultimately self-interested, market. And even if one were to consider such meat to be a path to a better future for such creatures, one in which those who care are not also those who ultimately slaughter, as it stands, it appears to reproduce little more than a form of PR razzle-dazzle (LaVeck, 2006); one that obscures the real relations of death and exploitation that underpin the global meat producing industry (Hamilton & McCabe, 2016). It may well be true that such animals are treated relatively better or more humane than other creatures that find their

way into the global meet industry. Yet, this interpretation fails to address the underlying repression of these farmed animals and thus, making their exploitation to look less painful and more acceptable (see Gunderson, 2014).

In this chapter, the concern is less with the activities of a global meat industry and more with, as noted above, those small farm producers that have decided to turn to the virtues associated with animal welfare and Happy Meat to not simply sell chopped and sliced flesh, but equally to share and sell the very happiness of these animals itself, whereby as consumers we are invited to now consume the lives, as well as the fruits of the deaths, of these creatures.

Life and Death Down on Jollity Farm

In this section, our aim is to demonstrate the presence of these farms and how they operate by examining a few illustrative instances located in the UK. Methodologically, the information collected has been drawn predominantly from relevant public-access websites and supplemented by informal visits to such establishments designed to confirm first-hand what was claimed on the various websites. While the ambition of this chapter is not to criticise or evaluate the actual businesses and tourist attractions discussed but to protect all parties involved, pseudonyms have been used when referring to particular examples of such farms. In doing so, we hope to illustrate how such tourist attractions seek to manufacture, both discursively and materially, a series of conditions under which they can reconcile a conception of such attractions as both live(ly) and happy places while, at the same time reconciling visitors with the far darker role they play as purveyors of both death and flesh, integral to the experience they offer.

Perhaps nowhere is this better illustrated than *Davidsons Farm and Zoo*, based in the southeast of England. Combining a working farm and zoo, with the latter featuring in particular various species of reptile, *Davidsons* pitches itself as an educational as well as a recreational tourist destination. The website, in particular, stresses its passion for ensuring education and fun for all the family by providing admission to both the farm and zoo for visitors to understand how animals are farmed and ranched, as well as their importance to the environment[iii]. In particular, its website prides itself on its zoological attractions, which include reptiles such as alligators and snakes and a host of exotic creatures such as wallabies, meerkats, and buffalo, amongst others, plus other attractions such as a small adventure playground. Equally integral to the attraction,

however, is the attached farm shop that, while selling most of the usual goods associated with such outlets, including beers, cheeses, vegetables, and preserves, features, perhaps above all else, an impressive butchers counter. The framing of the farm and zoo attraction in terms of education and entertainment indicates how the commodification of animal life and death can be justified and made morally permissible or even neutral (see Christien, 2023; Pedersen, 2022). In doing so, the farm and zoo reinforce the position of humans as privileged and superior beings who can legitimately breed, manage, and kill animals so long as they do so humanely (Best, 2009).

Here, the flesh of those animals that the visitor had only moments ago cooed over or admired is presented in a very different form. Boned, splayed, and displayed in large, refrigerated cabinets, they are both abject and yet compelling in that they demand not only a cognitive repositioning as what was perhaps only moments and meters ago witnessed to be vital and alive is now transposed into what is both dead and dismembered, but also scrutiny and discussion as they are presented up as choice objects of consumption. Here these animals enter into a new embodied relationship with visitors whereby they are still subject to forms of evaluation based on the eye, touch, and possibly ear of the visitor, but now the criteria are less of, say, 'cuteness', 'adorability' or 'liveliness' and rather the colour of their stripped flesh and the amount of fat, or rather a lack of it (see Sayre & Henderson, 2018).

Curiously, it is not only those animals that might be accepted as traditional farmed animals and, therefore, perhaps considered destined for such public display and consumption post-mortem that is presented here. Many of those animals that are exhibited in the zoo share the same status as their farmyard brethren, such as crocodiles, wallabies, and emus, amongst others, and are both regarded as attractions as well as sold and consumed as dead flesh. Not only do they share the same temporal and spatial environment, but they are also, in many instances, destined to share the same premature demise. While the zoo is both a site of carnivalesque spectacle and zoological exhibition based on the construction of wild animals as the unknowable other and, thereby, thrilling to its visitors (Christien, 2023), it is this otherness that turns these wild animals into exotic objects to be eaten and digested (Molz, 2007).

It could, of course, be argued that to conceptualise such attractions and activities as sites of dark tourism misunderstands the concept in that it is almost exclusively associated with visiting places of human death and suffering (Light, 2017). As we have already noted, this is the kind of anthropocentric understanding we are seeking to rethink as it overlooks the kind of

anthropomorphic representations deployed across many such venues to profoundly humanise their farmed animals for the benefit of visitors (Tully & Carr, 2021). Take, for example, *Green Leaf Farm* in East Anglia. Focusing solely on the rearing of traditional farmed animals, *Green Leaf Farm* offers a regional tourist attraction that combines the opportunity to meet and greet a range of animals, including pigs, cows, and chickens, with a range of predominantly children's attractions including playground rides and farmyard equipment. Again, it stresses its ambition to address the needs of wildlife and conservation while being a working farm and a 'great day out'.

Yet these are no ordinary farmed animals, simple objects to be exhibited and consumed. They are anthropomorphised and accredited with personality characteristics that give them, if albeit illusionary, quality of voice and even imputed autonomy on par with their human carers. As such, visitors are invited to 'meet' everyone 'from cheeky goats and happy pigs to clucking chickens and thoughtful cows'[iv]. Or one can always say hi to one of the farm's 'friendly alpacas' who enjoy a good 'nuzzle and scratch'[v]. These are, therefore, animals that one can get to know, that one can come back to see time after time, and even possibly build relationships with, sharing and celebrating their cheeky and thoughtful lives (see Fudge, 2008; Tully & Carr, 2021).

Where life is enjoyed and celebrated, death, however, is once again not far away. While animals are not slaughtered on the premises, with the proud addition of its butchery a decade ago, Green Leaf Farm celebrates its ability to provide 'home-grown and freshly butchered meat' to its visitors through its shop and café. The website and the attraction are replete with images of freshly carved, processed, or packaged flesh, both raw and cooked. Alongside images of calving mothers, snuffling piglets, and gambolling lambs, we see whole chickens, slices of cured pig and fillets of cow flesh ready to be examined, chosen, and consumed by tourists who still consider them to be cheeky, happy, or indeed thoughtful.

However, not all farms operate in this manner. A few, such as *Water Farm* in the northwest of England, present themselves first and foremost as a provider of reared and butchered meat, with animal encounters carefully choreographed and predominately informative (with lamb feeding to one side) rather than sentimental. At the same time, a few visitor farms deliberately choose not to sell livestock meat directly from the premises or online in order to maintain a clear distinction between the living and the dead, the cared for and the consumed, and, as such, avoid any scrutiny. Neither is this unique to the activities associated with farm tourism. These choices can be seen as strategies to hide or reduce the caring-killing paradox, that is, the emotional

contradiction of first caring and then killing animals (Tallberg, 2022). While this paradox is largely hidden from those who are not directly involved in the killing, the slaughtering of animals and the selling of butchered meat can contribute to negative emotional experiences among workers and visitors in a farm tourism context.

A similar relationship between life and death, light and dark, can also often be found where animals are a key ingredient in the production of atmospheric tourist destinations. As we have observed elsewhere (García-Rosell & Hancock, 2022), the role played by reindeer across Christmas tourist resorts in Finnish Lapland reflects this bifurcation in which they are encountered and consumed as both living if not supernatural embodiments of the festive spirit and seasonal atmosphere, and dead if still embodied signifiers of a hearty winter's meal in the form of Poronkäristys (sautéed reindeer), or a holiday well-enjoyed as their flesh, skin and bone are sold as tourist souvenirs, especially in the form of the ubiquitous 'reindeer pelt'. Indeed, it is not unusual to witness visiting tourists board their homeward bound flights with young children carrying plush 'Rudolph' souvenir toys and wearing their 'I Met Santa's Reindeer' t-shirts while accompanied by parents or guardians carrying the skins, and even the consumable flesh, of these creatures alongside them.

The difference here is that, unlike farm tourism, the animals here are not in themselves the primary attraction for tourists despite playing an integral role in the atmospherics and, indeed, the mythology of the destination. Nor is their eventual slaughter and consumption the primary function of the destination in question or part of the attraction as per the ability of farms to also offer customers meat that is purportedly organic and happy. Nonetheless, what they do share in common is how they constitute such playful destinations as places of death, dismemberment and, ultimately, the ingestion of those creatures that are equally charged while living, with the responsibility of bringing life, fun, and playfulness into the lives of those tourists who visit them. This is an interesting paradox which needs serious contemplation within a nonanthropocentric dark tourism perspective.

Discussion and conclusion

In this chapter, we have aimed to make a case for recognising that the exploitation of animals, or more accurately, the death of animals in a farm tourism context, constitutes an object of dark tourism. Unlike established, anthropocentric examples of this phenomenon, however, a major

distinction is that in the majority of cases, the kinds of farms we have discussed above are not visited primarily because they are places associated with death and disaster (Foley & Lennon, 1996). Rather, it is important to highlight that these farms often go to great lengths to embrace and showcase their commitment to the well-being, vitality, and joy of the animals under their care. Marketing themselves as anthropomorphised attractions whereby visitors can experience the immediacy and vitality of animal life often portrayed as unfettered and joyful, death, or any hint of death, is largely excluded from how they present themselves to the outside world (Sayre & Henderson, 2018; Tully & Carr, 2021). The exclusion of death from the farm tourism context contributes to hiding any form of animal experiences related to pain and suffering (see Bertella, 2021).

At the same time, such attractions have also responded to concerns about the negative impact on health and sustainability of conventional farming systems by opening farm shops that offer, amongst other things, fresh farm-reared meat direct to the consumer. Often promoted as integral to the production of 'happy meat' (Renton, 2007), they celebrate the adoption of a more pastoral conception of animal husbandry (Cole, 2011) in which death and butchery are excluded in favour of a discourse of quality, health, and a life well lived. However, this is not the case. Such venues rely not only on an idyllic representation of life but also, economically at the very least, the reality of death, as the dismembered and packaged flesh of these creatures exposes their true status as livestock or farmed animals, an asset to be slaughtered and realised in the market for prime organic meat (see Tully & Carr, 2021). As we have observed, visitors, in most instances, initially fascinated by the environmentally attuned atmospherics of such tourist attractions and the promise of interaction with live animals, are quickly drawn into a new relationship with such creatures. This relationship is not only born of their presence as tourists or sightseers but also extends their engagement with the primary objects of their interest and as lifeless commodities that remain evaluated by eye and hand if albeit now as carriers of taste and nourishment.

As we indicated earlier, it is not the desire for contact and connection with the death of animals that attracts visitors to farm tourism attractions, despite death being an intrinsic part of a farm's daily life. Rather, it is the promise of a rural idyll where farmers care for their domesticated animals in the quietness and greenery of the countryside (Sayre & Henderson, 2018; Tully & Carr, 2021). But the question remains: why do we approach this type of tourist attraction as a form of dark tourism? In essence, our ambition is essentially a sensitising one in that it exposes the essentially anthropocentric values and practices that legitimize the operation of such tourist

attractions, as well as bringing to the fore a similar problem within the current dark tourism literature. In the case of the former, we believe that a critical animal studies perspective on dark tourism offers a powerful lens through which farm tourism can be critically examined as a site of objectification, exploitation and death, a relationship often little thought about by those patrons who frequent such attractions. In doing so, by approaching farm tourism in such a manner, we might shed light on how society perceives and deals with the life and death of animals and how society legitimizes the fact that billions of animals are exploited and slaughtered annually for food and other commercial purposes (see Clarke & Knights, 2021; Hamilton & Taylor, 2016).

Moreover, by exploring such a relationship, we also challenge the underlying anthropocentric binaries that underpin the concept of dark tourism itself, one that continues to predominantly conceptualize the death and suffering that defines the field in terms of that directly consequential to human life. This being so, dark tourism emerges as a space for compassion, empathy and the mutual recognition of both animal and human suffering as the basis for responsible behaviour and moral action (see Aaltola, 2022; García-Rosell & Hancock, 2022. By answering the call to apply dark tourism to an animal context (Fennell et al., 2021), our chapter contributes to paving the way for future research, taking a non-anthropocentric perspective on dark tourism whereby future studies can focus on gaining further insights into the human-animal relations, values, feelings, and emotions whereby death is an intrinsic aspect of both the animal and tourist experience. Exploring attractions such as zoos (live animals), museums (dead animals) and so-called sports such as steeplechase racing or bullfighting (live/dead animals), taking a dark tourism perspective on animal attraction can promote an acknowledgement of such animals as sentient, suffering beings rather than simply as objects of consumption. Such recognition is needed to change the system that exploits, enslaves, and kills animals in tourism and society in general. It does so by creating opportunities for re-imagining multispecies tourism organizations and developing more sustainable spaces for humans and animals to respectfully coexist (see Coulter, 2022).

References

Aaltola, E. (2022). Empathy and inclusion: A philosophical reading of the ethics of nonhuman animals in organizations. In L. Tallberg & L. Hamilton (Eds). *The Oxford handbook of organization studies* (pp. 331-345). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Äijälä, M. (2021). Mobile video ethnography for evoking animals in tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 89.

Äijälä, M. (2022). *Tourist landscapes as multispecies trails: Storying a mushing landscape through mobile video ethnography*. Rovaniemi: University of Lapland.

Bertella, G. (2021). Animal-based experiences and animal experiences: Farm animals' perspective on human leisure in rural settings. *Annals of Leisure Research*, 24(5), 631-645.

Best, S. (2009). The rise of critical animal studies: Putting theory into action and animal liberation into higher education. *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, 7(1), 9-52.

Bohanec, H. & C. Bohanec (2013). *The Ultimate betrayal: Is there happy meat?* Bloomington: iUniverse.

Burns, G. L. (2015). Animals as tourism objects: Ethically refocusing relationships between tourists and wildlife. In K. Markwell (Ed.), *Animals and tourism* (pp. 44-59). Bristol: Channel View Publications.

Busby, G. & S. Rendle (2000). The transition from tourism on farms to farm tourism. *Tourism Management*, 21(6), 635-642.

Cassel, S. H. & K. Pettersson (2015). Performing gender and rurality in Swedish farm tourism. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 15(1-2), 138-151.

Clarke, C., & D. Knights (2021). Milking it for all it's worth: Unpalatable practices, dairy cows and veterinary work? *Journal of Business Ethics*, 176(4), 673-678.

Cole, M. (2011). From "animal machines" to "happy meat"? Foucault's ideas of disciplinary and pastoral power applied to 'animal-centred' welfare discourse. *Animals*, 1(1), 83-101.

Colling, S. (2018). Animal Agency, Resistance, and Escape. In A. Matsuoka & J. Sorenson (Eds.), *Critical animal studies: Towards trans-species social justice* (pp. 21-44). London: Rowman & Littlefield International.

Coulter, K. (2016). *Animals, work, and the promise of interspecies solidarity*. New York: Palgrave macmillan.

Coulter, K. (2022). From interesting to influential: Looking forward with multispecies organization studies. In L. Tallberg & L. Hamilton (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of animal organization studies* (pp. 18–27). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Christien, L. (2023). Why write about animals? Organization and the Daily Occurrences of London Zoo. *Culture and Organization*, 29(4), 356-373.

Dashper, K. (2019). Moving beyond anthropocentrism in leisure research: multispecies perspectives. *Annals of Leisure Research*, 22(2): 133-139.

Fennell, D. (2022). Animal-informed consent: Sled dog tours as asymmetric agential events. *Tourism Management*, 93.

Fennell, D., B. Thompsen, & S. Fennell (2021). Animals as dark tourism attractions: A prototype. E*uropeNow*, 45.

Foley, M. & J. Lennon (1996). JFK and Dark tourism: A fascination with assassination. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 2(4): 198-211.

Frater, J. M. (1983). Farm Tourism in England: Planning, funding, promotion and some lessons from Europe. *Tourism Management*, 4(3): 167- 179.

Freeman, C. P. (2009). This little piggy went to press: The American news media's construction of animals in agriculture. *The Communication Review*, 12(1): 78–103.

Fudge, E. (2008). *Pets*. New York: Routledge.

García-Rosell, J. C. & P. Hancock (2022). Animals and Business Ethics. In N. Thomas (Eds.), *Animals and Business Ethics* (pp. 91-110). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Giampiccoli, A., O. Mtapuri, & S. Jugmohan (2020). Community-based tourism and animals: Theorising the relationship. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 6(1): 1-11.

Gunderson, R. (2014). The first-generation Frankfurt School on the animal question: Foundations for a normative sociological animal studies. *Sociological Perspectives*, 57(3): 285-300.

Haanpää, M., T. Salmela, J. C. García-Rosell, & M. Äijälä (2021). The disruptive 'other'? Exploring human-animal relations in tourism through videography. *Tourism Geographies*, 23(1-2), 97-117.

Hamilton, L. & D. McCabe (2016). 'It's just a job': Understanding emotion work, de-animalization and the compartmentalization of organized animal slaughter. *Organization*, 23(3), 330-350.

Hancock, P. (2008). Embodied generosity and an ethics of organization. *Organization Studies*, 29(10), 1357-1373.

Irvine, L. (2008). Animals and Sociology. *Sociology Compass*, 2(6), 1954-1971.

Kline, C. (2018) (Ed.). *Tourism experiences and animal consumption*. London: Routledge.

LaVeck, J. (2006) Compassion for sale? Doublethink meets doublefeel as happy meat comes of age. *Satya*, September. Available at, http://www.satyamag.com/sept06/laveck.html.

Light, D. (2017). Progress in dark tourism and thanatourism research: An uneasy relationship with heritage tourism. *Tourism Management,* 61, 276-300.

López-López, A. & G. J. Quintero Venegas (2021). Animal dark tourism: Bulls performing their own slaughter. In J. M. Rickly & C. Kline (Eds.), *Exploring non-human work in tourism: From beasts of burden to animal ambassador*s (pp. 69–82). Berlin: De Gruyter.

Markwell, K. (Ed.) (2015). *Animals and tourism*. Bristol: Channel View Publications.

Martini, A. & D. Buda (2020). Dark tourism and affect: Framing places of death and disaster. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 23(6), 679-692.

Matsuoka, A. & J. Sorenson (2018) (Eds.) *Critical animal studies: Towards trans-species social justice*. London: Rowman & Littlefield International.

Mayfield, L. E., R. Bennett, R. Tranter, & M. J. Wooldridge (2007). Consumption of welfare friendly food products in Great Britain, Italy and Sweden, and how it may be influenced by consumer attitudes to, and behaviour towards, animal welfare attributes. *International Journal of Sociology of Food and Agriculture*, 15(3), 59-73.

Mkono, M. & A. Holder (2019). The future of animals in tourism recreation: Social media as spaces of collective moral reflexivity. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 29, 1-8.

Molz, G. J. (2007). Eating difference. The cosmopolitan mobilities of culinary tourism. *Space and Culture*, 10(1), 77-93.

Nickerson, N. P., R. J. Black, & S. F. McCool (2001). Agritourism: Motivations behind Farm/Ranch Business Diversification. *Journal of Travel Research,* 40(1), 19-26

Nilsson, P. Å. (2002). Staying on Farms: An ideological background. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 29(1), 7-24.

Räsänen T. & T. Syrjämaa (2017). *Shared lives of humans and animals: Animal agency in the global north*. London and New York: Routledge.

Renton, A. (2007). 'Happy Meat'. *The Guardian*, October 19th. Available at, https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/wordofmouth/2007/oct/19/happymeat.

Rickly, J. M. & C. Kline (Eds.) (2021). *Exploring non-human work in tourism: From beasts of burden to animal ambassadors*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Sayre, R. & K. Henderson (2018). Farm animal and tourist interactions on Long Island's North Fork. In Kline, C. (Ed.). *Animals, Food, and Tourism* (pp. 82-95). London and New York: Routledge.

Schneeberger, D. (2022). How can we reduce speciesism? A psychological approach to a social problem. In L. Tallberg & L. Hamilton (Eds). *The Oxford handbook of organization studies* (pp. 241-257). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sharma, N. (2020). Dark tourism and moral disengagement in liminal spaces. *Tourism Geographies*, 22(2), 273-297.

Sharpley, R. & A. Vass (2006). Tourism, farming and diversification: An attitudinal study. *Tourism Management*, 27(5), 1040-1052.

Stone, P. (2013). Dark tourism scholarship: A critical review. *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 7(3), 307-318.

Stone, P. R. (2009). Dark tourism: Morality and new moral spaces. In R. Sharpley & P. R. Stone (Eds). *The darker side of travel: The theory and practice of dark tourism* (pp. 56-72). Bristol: Channel View Publications.

Patterson, R. (2022). Heading for the farm: Why more and more people are taking working holidays. *Country Life*, August 20th. Available at, https://www.countrylife.co.uk/travel/heading-for-the-farm-why-more-and-more-people-are-taking-working-holidays-246392.

Pedersen, H. (2011). Release the moths: Critical animal studies and the posthumanist impulse. Culture, Theory and Critique, 52(1), 65-81.

Pedersen, H. (2022). Organizing a real that is yet to come: A critical inquiry of education in animal organization studies. In L. Tallberg & L. Hamilton (Eds). *The Oxford handbook of organization studies* (pp. 73-84). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Phelan, C. & R. Sharpley (2011). Exploring agritourism entrepreneurship in the UK. *Tourism Planning & Development*, 8(2), 121-136.

Pullen, A. & C. Rhodes (2015). Corporeal ethics and the politics of resistance in organizations. *Organization*, 21(6), 782-796.

Tallberg, L., J. C. García-Rosell, & M. Haanpää (2022). Human–Animal Relations in Business and Society: Advancing the Feminist Interpretation of Stakeholder Theory. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 180(1), 1-16.

Tallberg, L. & P. J. Jordan (2022). Killing them 'softly' (!): Exploring work experiences in care-based animal dirty work. *Work, Employment and Society*, 36(5), 858-874.

Tallberg, L. & L, Hamilton (2022) (Eds.) *The Oxford handbook of organization studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tarlow, P. (2005). Dark tourism: The appealing 'dark' side of tourism and more. In M. Novelli (Ed). *Niche tourism: Contemporary issues, trends and cases* (pp. 47-57). Oxford: Elsevier.

Taylor, N. & R. Twine (2014) (Eds.) *The rise of critical animal studies*. London: Routledge.

Thomas, N. (Ed.) (2022). *Animals and Business Ethics*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Tully, P. A. G. & N. Carr (2021). Farm animals' participation in tourism experiences: A time for proper respect. In J. M. Rickly & C. Kline (Eds.), *Exploring non-human work in tourism: From beasts of burden to animal ambassadors* (pp. 83–100). Berlin: De Gruyter.

Vinding, M. (2014). *Why "Happy Meat" is always wrong*. Scotts Valley: CreateSpace.Weitzenfeld, A. & M. Joy (2014). 'An overview of anthropocentrism, humanism, and speciesism in critical animal theory. In A. J. Nocella III, J. Sorenson, K. Socha, & A. Matsuka (Eds), *Defining critical animal studies: An intersectional social justice approach for liberation* (pp. 3- 27). New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing.

[i] The names of these farms have been changed in order to ensure anonymity.

[ii] https://www.farmattractions.net/about-the-national-farm-attraction-network/farm-attraction-tourism-industry/

[iii] Across all the farm's publicity terms such as sustainability, conservation and carbon neutrality all feature prominently as key descriptors of the owner's values and priorities.

[iv] https://www.hollowtrees.co.uk/meet-the-animals/

[v] Nuzzle and scratch alludes to a British children's television series that featured two puppet alpacas who work for a job agency. It is a comic show in which these two personable characters frequently get into trouble due to their regular incompetence - https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00d9g0h.