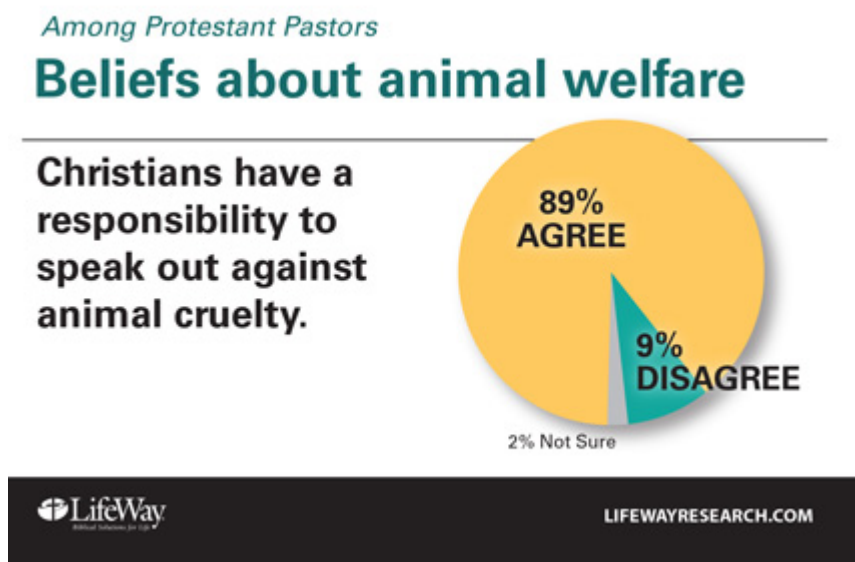


Protestant pastors support animal welfare but rarely preach about it

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NASHVILLE, Tenn.—Protestant pastors overwhelmingly agree humanity has a God-given duty to care for animals. They just don't mention it much from the pulpit.

In a survey of 1,000 Protestant pastors, sponsored by [Every Living Thing](#), a national campaign for the Evangelical Statement on Responsible Care for Animals, [LifeWay Research](#) finds a distance between pastors' beliefs about animal welfare and their church activities.



Two-thirds of pastors never preach about the treatment of animals or haven't brought it up for more than a year. More than four in five say their churches aren't involved in animal welfare issues in the community.

Nevertheless, 89 percent of Protestant pastors say Christians have a responsibility to speak out against animal cruelty.

"The disparity between pastors' beliefs and church sermons and actions is

worth exploring. There's a noteworthy gap," said Scott McConnell, vice president of LifeWay Research.

Responsible care for animals is rooted in the Bible, 94 percent of Protestant pastors say. Ninety-five percent believe God's command for humans to steward all living creatures still applies today.

Few see God as indifferent

Only 12 percent think God is indifferent to people's behavior toward animals.

Some pastors are not certain there's a connection between caring for animals and caring about human beings. Nearly three-quarters—73 percent—see a link, but 24 percent disagree.

Tension also emerges around how the church should respond. Eighty-eight percent of pastors say Christians need to work for protection of animals without neglecting vital human concerns, but only 16 percent say their church personally tackles local animal welfare issues.

Nearly four in 10 pastors—39 percent—say they never have addressed the treatment of animals in a sermon.

"Pastors have not said their congregations are disrespectful of animals, but there is little advocacy regarding the mistreatment of animals," McConnell said.

Mainline Protestant pastors are more involved with animal welfare issues than evangelical pastors, the survey shows.

Mainline pastors (79 percent) are more likely than evangelical pastors (70 percent) to believe the way people treat animals reflects their care for human beings. Accordingly, mainline pastors more often report their local church is involved with animal welfare issues (22 percent) than do

evangelical pastors (13 percent).

Differences by education level

LifeWay Research also found differences by education level.

Pastors with master's degrees or doctoral degrees are more likely than those with bachelor's degrees to believe Christians have a duty to speak out about animal cruelty and to work to protect animals. They are also more likely to agree with the statement: "The way we treat animals is an indicator of our care for other human beings."

Researchers conducted the phone survey of Protestant pastors Sept. 8-21. The calling list was a stratified random sample drawn from a list of all Protestant churches in America. Each interview was conducted with the senior pastor, minister or priest of the church called.

Analysts weighted responses by region to reflect the population more accurately. The completed sample is 1,000 surveys, which provides 95 percent confidence the sampling error does not exceed plus or minus 3.2 percent. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups.