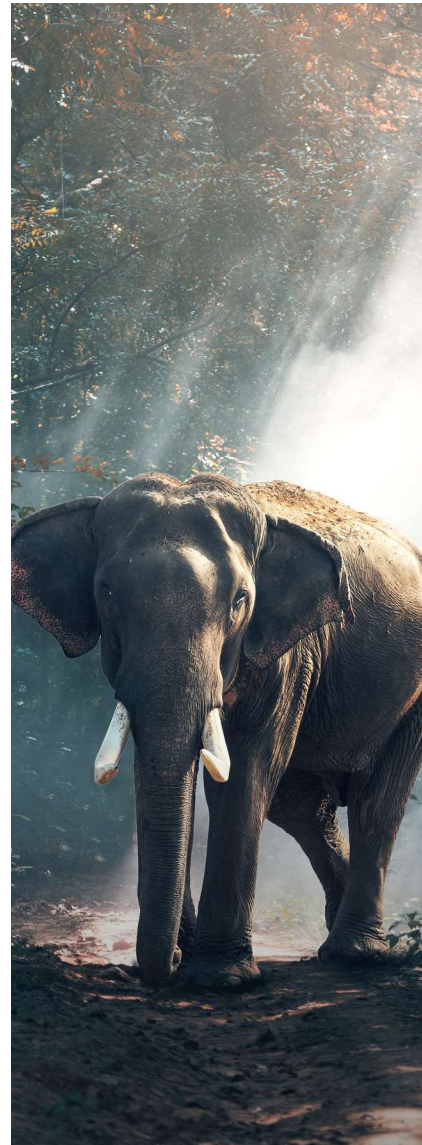
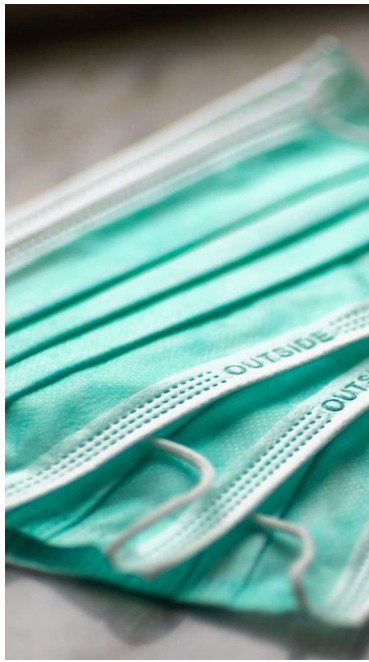


The Animals' Manifesto

Preventing COVID-X



A call to "Build Forward" to create a more
sustainable, equitable, and humane
world, and *prevent the next pandemic.*

A Message from Dr. Jane Goodall, DBE

When I returned from my first field research in Gombe, Tanzania, my mentor, Dr Louis S B Leakey, had secured me a place at Cambridge University to work for a PhD in ethology. But when I arrived, I was dismayed to be told that I had done the study all wrong. I could not attribute individuality, mind or emotion to non-human animals! These attributes were unique to humans! I should have numbered the chimpanzees. It was inappropriate to give them names.

Fortunately, I had had a wonderful teacher when I was a child from whom I had learned that, in this respect, these learned professors were absolutely wrong. My dog, Rusty, and anyone who loves their dog will know what I mean.

In my life since, I have witnessed the proliferation of animal welfare/animal rights organizations in so many countries, and of legislation offering protection to an increasing number of animal species. More and more scientific studies provide clear proof of animal sentience, intelligence and emotional behaviour. And that they feel pain. But, unfortunately, knowledge of sentience is not enough to eliminate human cruelty - think of the horrendous way we often treat each other. Passing legislation is only the first step. Enforcing it and punishing violators must follow. And when it comes to animal welfare and environmental protection, well-meaning and humane legislation is so often disregarded.

As I write this, the COVID-19 pandemic is still affecting almost all countries of the world. And it has caused much suffering. Many people have died. Many who seemed to recover are suffering horrible long-term effects. People have lost family members. Most of us have lost friends. Thousands of people have lost their jobs and livelihoods. Suicide rates have soared. And economies are in chaos everywhere.

How shocking to realize that we brought this on ourselves! Through our disrespect of the natural world, and our disrespect of animals.

When habitats are destroyed, wild animals, deprived of their homes, are often forced into closer contact with not only each other but with humans. In their struggle to survive, they may turn to raiding human crops or searching for food in city streets.

Hunters make use of new roads to move ever deeper into the forest. Wild animals are shot, snared, killed and eaten, or captured, live, for export. Some of this is traditional subsistence hunting, but, increasingly, animals are hunted for pure profit.

Wildlife trafficking of live animals or their body parts, much of it illegal, is an industry now worth billions of dollars a year. Some of these animals are destined for the wildlife markets of Asia and Latin America where they are sold as pets, for food, their skins, their fur or for medicines. Conditions in these markets are horrifyingly cruel and usually very unhygienic; animals are forced into tiny cages often after long journeys with no food or water. Different species, sometimes from different places, along with their pathogens, are stacked together any old how. They are stressed and often sick. The ones sold as pets then take their pathogens right into human homes.

Just as cruel, and often just as unhygienic, are the conditions created by the intensive farming of billions of domestic animals around the globe. When cows, pigs, poultry and so on are confined to cramped quarters, where they, too, are typically stressed, they are often kept alive only by the routine administration of antibiotics fed to them. This causes more and more bacterial resistance to more and more antibiotics, and leads to the creation of the 'super bugs' now invading our hospitals.

We have created situations that make it relatively easy for a virus, or other pathogen, to spill straight from one species over to another and create a new disease. Over 70% of the new diseases emerging in humans are these so-called zoonotic diseases. When contagious, they can lead to epidemics or even pandemics. HIV-AIDS 1 and 2 spilled over from butchered chimpanzees in two parts of central Africa. COVID-19, like SARS, most likely originated in a wildlife market in China.

Having discussed the negative implications for humans of our disrespect for animals let us consider the implications for the disrespected animals. Each of them is an individual with his or her own personality. A sentient being, able to suffer physically and psychologically. Individuals, now deprived of the right of freedom of choice and condemned instead to a life of depredation, stress, fear and pain.

One terribly sad outcome of the frantic search for cures and vaccines that follows the emergence of new diseases is the number of animals that are used for laboratory testing. Literally millions of sentient beings, ranging from chimpanzees and other primates, to dogs, pigs, guinea pigs, rats and mice, are kept in conditions that are at best sterile prisons, and at worst torture chambers.

The same disrespect of the natural world that has resulted in the proliferation of zoonotic diseases has also led to even greater threats to our future – climate change and the loss of biodiversity. It is unfortunate that some people seem to think that we can live apart from the natural world when that is a fallacy! We are a part of it, and depend on it for our very existence.

We must reduce our unsustainable lifestyles. We must phase out intensive industrial agriculture, factory farms, monocultures and the use of chemical pesticides and herbicides. We are poisoning the soil, causing sickness and death in nature, animals and humans alike.

We must move towards a plant-based diet: our current rate of meat and dairy consumption is not only inflicting pain and suffering on billions of animals, but is having a devastating effect on human health and the environment. It is highly dependent on fossil fuels, greatly increasing emissions of the main greenhouse gas, CO₂, and the animals themselves produce huge quantities of methane during digestion, another powerful greenhouse gas. Large amounts of water, a shrinking resource in many places, are being used up to transform vegetable to animal protein. Land is cleared to grow grain to feed livestock rather than to feed the poor. Yet, so many alternatives to animal products are now readily available and they often taste so like the 'real thing' that I, as someone who benefits from a plant-based diet, cannot stomach them!

If we don't strive hard to alleviate poverty, rural people struggling to survive will cut down the last trees, hunt the last wild animals and fish the last fish. In urban areas poorer people will buy the cheapest food to feed their families as they cannot afford, like the rest of us, to make ethical choices in what they buy.

We must support programmes to provide environmental education and information about animals and biodiversity in schools everywhere, especially for children living close to animal habitats.

Today we stand at a crossroads. Will we continue with 'business as usual' in the mistaken notion that there can be unlimited economic development on a planet with finite natural resources and growing populations of humans and their livestock? Burning fossil fuel, allowing industrial farming, polluting the air, water and land? Exploiting and abusing animals and their habitats? If we do, there will be even more extreme weather patterns, worse and more frequent hurricanes and typhoons, floods and draughts and bushfires. There will be more extinctions and loss of biodiversity. There will be ever more, new, zoonotic diseases. There will be more suffering of humans and other animals alike. And, in the end, there will be an end to life as we know it, on Planet Earth, including our own. Is this the path we shall continue to tread?

Or, shall we choose to get together and develop a new relationship with the natural world? A new relationship with other animals? A new and more equitable and sustainable, 'greener' economy? It will not be easy but I truly hope we do.

The Animals' Manifesto is a manifesto that does not conveniently ignore the central role that improvements in animal well-being and a fundamental change in our relationship with non-human living beings has in COVID-19 recovery and financing efforts. If we care about our children, grandchildren and onwards we MUST somehow tackle these problems. The main difference between us and other animals is the explosive development of our intellect – let us use it now to find a way out of the disastrous mess that we have inflicted on the planet. Before it is too late.



Credit: Vincent Calmel

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