

#CANCELANIMALAG

Stopping an existential threat to all life on Earth while we still can

ISSUES

Public Health

COVID-19, like SARS, the Spanish Flu, and many other outbreaks before it, is a [zoonotic pathogen](#) -- meaning it is transmitted between humans and animals.¹ Factory farms have been [described](#) by independent experts as “super-incubators for viruses,” due to intensive crowding and filthy conditions. The slaughterhouses where these animals are killed, moreover, are [hot spots for these pandemics](#) to spread to workers, who are often people of color and immigrants, forcing society’s most vulnerable to risk their lives in order to provide for their families.² The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [warns](#) that “...3 out of every 4 new or emerging infectious diseases in people come from animals.”³

Additionally, scientists agree that the use of [antibiotics in livestock](#) -- accounting for over 60% of the total antibiotic use in this country -- contributes significantly to [the problem of drug resistance](#).⁴⁵ This resistance, in turn, fuels the growth of antibiotic-resistant pathogens, a risk the World Health Organization says poses [one of the biggest threats to global health, food security, and development today](#), which could kill *10 million people every year* by 2050.⁶

Yet, there has been no coherent government response to the threats posed by animal agribusiness to public health. Not only are farms not required to disclose the diseases found on their farms, or the amount of antibiotic drugs they use, but federal inspectors have been barred from making spot checks on farms to determine the prevalence of disease -- something DxE investigators have seen [firsthand](#).⁷ This means there is virtually no oversight over industry practices that pose a major threat to global public health.

Animal Abuse

Animal agriculture kills over 10 billion land animals in the US every year. Over 99% of these animals are raised in factory farm settings, subjected to abuse which would lead to criminal prosecution if done to dogs or cats. These animals are routinely brutalized, including [intensive confinement](#) and untreated illnesses and injuries, which leads to starvation.⁸

¹ Coronavirus and the karmic interconnectedness of humans, animals, The Hill, <https://thehill.com/opinion/energy-environment/486398-coronavirus-and-the-karmic-interconnectedness-of-humans-animals>.

² Why Meatpacking Plants Have Become Covid-19 Hot Spots, WIRED, <https://www.wired.com/story/why-meatpacking-plants-have-become-covid-19-hot-spots/>

³ Zoonotic Diseases, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://www.cdc.gov/onehealth/basics/zoonotic-diseases.html>.

⁴ Stop using antibiotics in healthy animals to prevent the spread of antibiotic resistance, The World Health Organization, www.who.int/news-room/detail/07-11-2017-stop-using-antibiotics-in-healthy-animals-to-prevent-the-spread-of-antibiotic-resistance

⁵ U.N. Issues Urgent Warning on the Growing Peril of Drug-Resistant Infections, The New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/29/health/un-drug-resistance-antibiotics.html>.

⁶ Antibiotic resistance, The World Health Organization, www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/antibiotic-resistance.

⁷ Stealing Lauri, The New York Times, www.nytimes.com/2019/08/04/science/stealing-lauri.html.

⁸ Whole Foods Thanksgiving turkeys endure ‘horrific conditions’ at Calif. farm, activists say, Washington Post, www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2015/11/24/whole-foods-thanksgiving-turkeys-endure-horrific-conditions-at-calif-farm-animal-rights-activists-say/.

Climate Crisis

While the fossil fuel industry has been the focus of public policy to combat climate change, animal agriculture has also been cited as a [major contributor](#).⁹

Whistleblower Repression

When private citizens or whistleblowers report misconduct by agricultural enterprises, they almost universally result in no enforcement action by the government -- except to prosecute [the whistleblowers themselves](#).¹⁰ And these prosecutions have actually escalated; since 2018, over 100 people have been charged in California following nonviolent protests exposing factory farm abuses and providing aid to suffering animals.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Americans are increasingly concerned about the impacts of animal ag, with [half supporting a ban on factory farming](#).¹¹ Yet far from being taxed or meaningfully regulated for its catastrophic impacts, animal agriculture is the beneficiary of tens of billions of dollars in government subsidies annually. We call on public officials to end their support of animal agribusiness, and take immediate steps to ensure a safe, sustainable, and humane food system.

1. **Acknowledge the link between animal agriculture and pandemics.** The science is clear and the threat is existential.^{12 13} Follow in the footsteps of the [U.N.](#) by publicly acknowledging the link between animal agriculture and the risk of future pandemic disease.¹⁴
2. **Disavow the prosecutions of nonviolent factory farm whistleblowers.** Protect whistleblowers and Good Samaritans who rescue distressed animals and expose industry abuses from unconstitutional prosecutions by making a statement disavowing the prosecution of peaceful whistleblowers, and in support of the "[Right to Rescue](#)."¹⁵
3. **Make a plan to transition to a 100% plant-based food system.** Animal agricultural corporations hold immense influence over our political process; this violent, unsustainable and unnecessary industry receives tens of billions of dollars in subsidies every year.

⁹ Avoiding meat and dairy is 'single biggest way' to reduce your impact on Earth, The Guardian, www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/may/31/avoiding-meat-and-dairy-is-single-biggest-way-to-reduce-your-impact-on-earth.

¹⁰ Meet the Animal Rights Activists Facing Prison Time for Rescuing Ducks, Piglets from Factory Farms, Democracy Now!, www.democracynow.org/2019/6/6/direct_action_everywhere_dxe_duck_farm.

¹¹ Survey of US Attitudes Towards Animal Farming and Animal-Free Food October 2017, Sentience Institute, www.sentienceinstitute.org/animal-farming-attitudes-survey-2017.

¹² PROCLAMATION OF A STATE OF EMERGENCY, Executive Department of the State of California, www.gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/3.4.20-Coronavirus-SOE-Proclamation.pdf.

¹³ Proclamation on Declaring a National Emergency Concerning the Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Outbreak, WhiteHouse.gov, www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/proclamation-declaring-national-emergency-concerning-novel-coronavirus-disease-covid-19-outbreak/

¹⁴ U.N. Issues Urgent Warning on the Growing Peril of Drug-Resistant Infections, The New York Times, www.nytimes.com/2019/04/29/health/un-drug-resistance-antibiotics.html.

¹⁵ Support the Right to Rescue, Direct Action Everywhere, www.righttorescue.com.

The recent [boom in plant-based alternatives](#) -- which are superior in terms of public health, workplace safety, the environment and animal welfare -- means we have every reason to evolve beyond this catastrophic industry.¹⁶

We call on government officials to chart a braver, kinder and more sustainable path forward. We call for an end to animal ag subsidies, with those resources instead diverted to support individuals directly affected by the COVID-19 crisis, as well as farmers and other agricultural workers transitioning to a plant-based food system -- making both our society and our food system safer and more democratic. We call on government officials to introduce legislation to ban factory farms and slaughterhouses.

ABOUT DIRECT ACTION EVERYWHERE (DXE)

DxE is a global grassroots network of animal rights activists devoted to rescuing animals and exposing animal abuse across the world. DxE's investigatory work has been featured in [The Intercept](#), [Washington Post](#) and [The New York Times](#).

¹⁶ New Products, Growing Demand Fuel Growth Of Plant-Based Food Sales, Forbes, www.forbes.com/sites/janetforgrieve/2020/03/10/new-products-growing-demand-fuel-growth-of-plant-based-food-sales/#535128ab77cb