



The Hon Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

2 April 2020

Dear Prime Minister,

I'm writing from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). Following the recent address in which you mentioned that jigsaw puzzles will be essential activities for your family during the COVID-19 lockdown, we wanted to send you one that not only promises hours of fun but also serves as an important reminder: **from swine flu and Ebola to bird flu and coronaviruses, the public health risks associated with our cruel consumption of animals are growing – and enough is enough.**

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that **75% of recently emerged infectious diseases in humans began in animals**. SARS, which originated in bats, claimed 774 lives. Swine flu, or H1N1 – which originated in pigs – killed as many as 575,400 people. And at the time of writing, the COVID-19 death toll is set to surpass 50,000 in the coming days.

Zoonotic diseases aren't limited to a single country or to wet markets – wherever animals are bred, intensively confined, and slaughtered, humans run the risk of creating another pandemic. In fact, in a paper published in 2018, Belgian spatial epidemiologist Marius Gilbert found that more “conversion events” for bird flu – in which a not-very-pathogenic strain of the virus becomes more dangerous – had occurred in Australia than in China.

The Australian government often claims that animal agriculture is vital to employment and the wider economy. Yet the economic defence for slaughtering over half a billion defenceless animals for human consumption each year now holds even less weight when you consider that an estimated 1 million Australian jobs are likely to be lost because of the COVID-19 pandemic and that the crisis may strip US\$2.7 trillion from the global economy.

The COVID-19 outbreak proves once again that animal agriculture is a risky business. It's likely that somewhere among the multitude of species that humans exploit, the next – potentially worse – pandemic is incubating right now.

As the world faces unprecedented losses of many kinds because of COVID-19, we remind you that how to make the world a kinder, greener, healthier place is a puzzle that's easily solved. We hope leaders like you will put the pieces together and see the big picture: our fetish for flesh is killing us, and a world without animal exploitation must become the new normal.

Yours sincerely,

Emily Rice
Outreach and Partnerships Manager

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