



The Hon Gladys Berejiklian
Premier of New South Wales
GPO Box 5341
Sydney NSW 2001

6 January 2021

Dear Premier,

Greetings from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). I hope this letter finds you well. As New South Wales battles a surge in COVID-19 cases and you have mandated mask-wearing, we wanted to present you with the enclosed mask, both to provide protection from the virus and to remind you (and others) that humankind's abhorrent treatment of our fellow animals has led to the outbreak of this zoonotic disease and numerous others. It's vital that leaders proactively oppose animal use and not merely react to its catastrophic outcomes.

To say that 2020 was "difficult" would be an understatement. The ongoing pandemic, which is believed to have originated in a wildlife market, has claimed the lives of more than 900 Australians and decimated the global economy – but zoonotic disease outbreaks are not new. As far back as 2016, the UN Environment Programme warned that the "Livestock Revolution" has increased the likelihood of disease transmission, and experts are deeply concerned about future outbreaks of swine and bird flu.

In 2009, the Department of Health recorded 191 deaths from 37,537 confirmed cases of H1N1 – swine flu – and in July and August 2020, six Victorian farms reported three different strains of avian influenza, proving that Australia is at risk. In fact, according to a paper published in 2018 by Belgian spatial epidemiologist Marius Gilbert, Australia has generated more instances of historical "conversion events" (that is, when a not-very-pathogenic avian flu strain suddenly becomes dangerous to humans) than China.

Of course, human consumption of animal flesh also increases the risk of developing illnesses such as heart disease and colorectal cancer and contributes considerably to anthropogenic climate change. In addition, there's the horrific toll on animals. Annually, some half a million living, feeling beings are callously slaughtered in Australia to meet the demand for their flesh. Each was an individual, just like the cats and dogs with whom we share our homes. Sadly, unlike our animal companions, those bred for meat endure miserable lives in captivity before being killed.

The world faces a slew of problems because of the breeding, confinement, and slaughter of our fellow animals, and we urge leaders like you to champion an end to animal use and help shape a healthier, more sustainable future.

Yours faithfully,

Aleesha Naxakis

PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS

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