

THEME

**WILL COVID-19 BE THE
PANDEMIC THAT MAKES
HUMANS BETTER PEOPLE?**

INTERVIEW

MEP Hilde Vautmans
(Renew Europe, Belgium)

**JOINING
FORCES**

To enshrine animal welfare in the
UN's Sustainable Development Goals

**MAKING A
DIFFERENCE**

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on animal welfare

4

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be the pandemic
that makes
humans better
people?

Andrew Skowron



6

INTERVIEW:
MEP Hilde
Vautmans
(Renew Europe,
Belgium)



10

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CONTENTS

3 EDITORIAL

4 **THEME**

6 INTERVIEW

8 ANIMALS IN THE
NEWS – COVID-19
SPECIAL

What happened in the past
three months

10 JOINING FORCES

14 MAKING A
DIFFERENCE

Follow our work on animal
welfare

17 GET TO KNOW US

18 OUR MEMBERS

19 SUPPORT US



EDITORIAL

As I write this, we are all grappling with the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, trying to make sense of what this means for ourselves and the future of our planet. Our team and myself have continued our fight for the animals from our home offices and quickly adapted to the new virtual advocacy reality. This new reality presents many new challenges but also opportunities to make sure the EU's recovery from this crisis will show more compassion for animals.

The first day after the lockdown in Belgium, I read a fascinating interview with Prof. Kuiken, a Dutch virologist who boldly stated that outbreaks of disease such as COVID-19 or SARS have increased in the last 30 years because of three factors: more animals being farmed, increased trade and transport of animals, and human movement into uninhabited regions. Over the past weeks, I have witnessed more and more renowned scientists as well as leading global institutes such as the WHO pointing to the critical risk for human health: our relationship with animals.

Scientists agree it is time to move from an anthropocentric to an ecocentric

worldview and embrace concepts as 'One Health' and 'One Welfare' as important drivers for change. The key question is: will politicians and other decision makers listen? Has the societal tsunami caused by the virus been a strong enough wake-up call to turn the tide?

Clearly we are not lacking ideas in terms of solutions. This is the time to follow the example of several European countries and introduce an EU Positive List to regulate the trade in wild animals and hence also lower the risks of zoonotic diseases. This is also the time to move away from intensive livestock farming and boost a transition towards cultured meat and high welfare, regenerative livestock farming practices. As you will read in our Magazine, there are plenty of regulatory opportunities to help us learn lessons from the crisis and create vital, resilient and compassionate societies.

We need you all to be part of this new movement for change. If there ever was a time to be bold, that moment is now.

Stay safe, dear readers, and I hope to be in touch again soon.

Reineke Hameleers
CEO, Eurogroup for Animals



Reineke Hameleers
Director, Eurogroup for Animals

EUROGROUP
FOR ANIMALS



THEME

WILL COVID-19 BE THE PANDEMIC THAT MAKES HUMANS BETTER PEOPLE?

It's taken something as drastic as global lockdown under COVID-19 to shine a much-needed spotlight on some of the cruellest things we do to animals. One is wildlife trafficking and the trade in illegal wildlife products, and the other is intensive animal farming.

Zoonoses are not new; wild and domestic animals have carried viruses and bacteria for millennia. What has changed is the way we humans interact with them. We disturb habitats, come into contact with new wildlife, and are internationally mobile at an unprecedented scale. There is also an utterly unbelievable number of us.

When COVID-19 was just starting to change the world as we know it, wet markets were the focus of the discussion – but the problem for wildlife is more far-reaching than that. Such markets are actually a fairly new phenomenon in China, and behind them lies the wildlife industry, whose cultural and economic importance is inflated by the Chinese industrial lobby. Such a trade cannot be improved or made cleaner; it is inhumane, and a threat to human health.

But it would be a mistake to focus on one particular country. There has been too much emphasis on China, given that wet markets are all over Asia and also Africa, where bushmeat consumption is actually on the rise.

It would be a mistake, too, to focus only on the wildlife trade. As [Macken Murphy](#), host of the Species podcast, has said, “*the primary cause of zoonotic diseases is not the consumption of wildlife – it's the consumption of animals, period.*”

Animals are farmed in unbelievable numbers, and this has become the norm within our own lifetimes. The world [now produces](#) more than four times the quantity of meat as it did fifty years ago. In 2018, an estimated 69 billion chickens, 1.5 billion pigs, 656 million turkeys, 574 million sheep, 479 million goats and 302 million cattle were killed for meat production. We also produce around 800 million tonnes of milk each year – more than double the amount fifty years ago.

Quite apart from the horrendous impact of intensive farming on the animals themselves, its potential as a hotbed for zoonoses is devastating. Pigs and poultry, the most widely farmed species worldwide, are reservoirs of influenza A viruses, which can infect humans and have caused pandemics in the past. Additionally, several bacteria hosted by farmed animals, such as *Campylobacter*, *Salmonella* and *E. coli*, can cause severe food-borne zoonotic illness in humans.

Livestock farming is also responsible for the use of antibiotics, often preventatively, on a massive scale, which is one of the root causes of antimicrobial resistance (AMR). According to the World Health Organisation, AMR represents “one of the biggest threats to global health, food security, and development today”. AMR persists and is even increasing in the EU, in spite of regulations on the use of veterinary medicines in animal agriculture and an ongoing strategy to reduce their use.

A meeting of the Intergroup on the Welfare and Conservation of Animals devoted to zoonoses in late April saw academics and MEPs alike being open about the real problem – the sheer anthropocentrism of our species. The discussion boiled down to one glaring conclusion: that as with climate change, human activity is the root cause of our current situation – and that an entire, planet-wide transformative change in attitude is needed.

As Prof. Thijs Kuiken of the Erasmus University Medical Center puts it, “*we need people to think again about their basic values, and realise that they are an integral part of nature, and that animals deserve an equal amount of concern.*”

“*We can no longer consider the health of humans separately from the health of the planet,*” was Youth Delegate of the WHO Netherlands Philip Elders’ succinct way of summing up the issue. He also expressed disappointment that humanity had done nothing to prevent the COVID-19 crisis before it happened, despite ample warning.

We did indeed have ample warning: in 1918, 1957, 1968, and even more recently, with MERS and SARS. In 2004, David Byrne, then European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection, said: “*With three flu pandemics in the last century, we could be on the eve of a 21st century calamity. In the agricultural sector, greater account needs to be taken of the implications of intensive animal husbandry practices.*”

The European Green Deal’s Farm-to-Fork and 2030 Biodiversity strategies offer an opportunity to take action towards such a transformative change in attitude. With Farm-to-Fork, the EU needs to provide a new model of animal farming – and eating – and set the world on a brand new course. Our decision makers need to recognize

“*We need to give more value to the produce that farmers make and for their stewardship of the cultural and natural landscape. A new type of farming is possible. Fewer animals does not mean fewer farms or farmers.*”



Prof Thijs Kuiken,
Erasmus University Medical
Center (@thijskuiken)

“*Our assumption is that we can encroach willy-nilly on habitats of other species and trade in or eat any species we desire, and our unbelievable numbers have led to our supposed need for intensive farms, not to mention our huge and irreversible destruction of vast swathes of our planet. But there is one question that I think is paramount now: how can we get people to listen?*”



Reineke Hameleers,
CEO, Eurogroup for Animals

the multiple benefits of reducing the number of farmed animals, support measures to change this, and remove perverse incentives that maintain the status quo.

Similarly, the 2030 Biodiversity Strategy must be the tool to make the change needed to reverse biodiversity loss, now that unsustainable intensification of agriculture and fisheries have left only 23% of protected species and 16% of protected habitats in good conservation.

Ultimately, though, these are just steps in the right direction. What we really need is that humans need to undergo an entire change of attitude, becoming less anthropocentric and more ecocentric, on a planetary scale. We need to get people, finally, to question the myth of human supremacy.



INTERVIEW

MEP HILDE VAUTMANS

(RENEW EUROPE, BELGIUM)

“A horse doesn’t care how much you know until he knows how much you care.” In the current COVID-19 situation, though, we must both know and care. For a long time, MEP Hilde Vautmans has been dedicated to horses, and is Chair of the MEP Horse Group and a member of the Intergroup on the Welfare and Conservation of Animals. With her knowledge of equines and genuine care for their welfare, we asked her what EU policy makers can do to protect equines around Europe, particularly given the present state of play.

Eurogroup for Animals: EU-wide surveys have shown that citizens would like more to be done at European level to better protect farmed, companion and other animals such as equines. What is your vision for delivering on this expectation during this term?

Hilde Vautmans: Unfortunately, we still see too many neglected, abused and abandoned horses, so horse welfare and responsible care is one of my core priorities. More responsibility and a minimum of knowledge among horse owners is crucial, and people really need to be more aware of the costs, obligations and time that a horse entails. I will encourage the distribution of best practices and guidance, for example through brochures, websites and information moments. More identification and traceability on the European level is necessary, and this is certainly a point I will put forward. Due to the support of Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, a passionate horse-lover herself who attended our first meeting, I am convinced that we will be able to really make a difference for horses during this legislature.

One of our key campaigns since Eurogroup for Animals’ foundation has been to reduce live animal transport, including the transport of equines for slaughter. Sadly, after four decades, this trade is only growing, and significantly compromising animal welfare. What would be your message to all those citizens who are seriously concerned about the ongoing situation?

The European Parliament is very aware of the situation and is frequently pushing for better and more harmonised implementation and enforcement of the Regulation on the protection of animals during transport. I can assure you that I will keep fighting for improved conditions, and I think we have a very important ally in Commissioner Wojciechowski, who made animal welfare one of his main priorities and who was responsible for a major report on animal welfare written by the European Court of Auditors.

Working equids improve the livelihoods of women around the globe, contributing to achieving sustainable development goals. In your view, how could the EU Strategy with Africa support these women and their animals?

It is of crucial importance to empower young girls and women in Africa, who are the key drivers of sustainable growth, development and peace. Giving support to women who own working equids to provide daily support is crucial for improving women’s and families’ livelihoods, but it must be accompanied by giving young girls and women access to knowledge, skills, microcredit and finance for entrepreneurship. In this sense, the EU Comprehensive Strategy with Africa could prove very helpful.



The current crisis situation with COVID-19 puts equines around Europe at risk, with the expected impact on their welfare as bad as the post-2008 financial crisis or worse, depending on the country. What is your recommendation for policy makers and horse owners, and what can the European Institutions and governments do to help?

During economic downturns or crises, we observe more animals or horses with serious welfare problems. To prevent this as much as possible I would like to remind horse owners of their responsibilities and to ask them to continue to guarantee the essential care of their horses. Governments must provide the legal framework and support to do this, for example by allowing horses their daily exercise, which is very important for a horse's well-being, or by making arrangements to guarantee the welfare and health of animals.

Eurogroup for Animals was founded in 1980 by six animal welfare organisations and is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year. Today the organisation brings together a growing movement of 70 member societies, with 22 of them working hard on equine welfare, and is the leading voice for animals at EU level. What is your view about social justice movements and what would be your message to the members of Eurogroup?

As politicians it is very important to have as many inputs as possible from 'the field'. Organisations like Eurogroup for Animals, who bring together 70 member societies, therefore are of big value to us to point us in the right direction.

Could you tell us a bit about your personal relationship with animals?

I have a passion for politics, but my passion for politics is peanuts compared to my passion for horses. As a child, our neighbours had horses and I was only five years old when I rode for the first time on their Shetland pony. It was love at first sight, and from then on, horses have played a very important role in my life. What I love about horses is that they can 'read' people. When I am stressed, the only thing that can calm me down is horseback riding. That's why I try to make time to ride at least once a week in the riding school or together with my daughter and husband.

ANIMAL WELFARE INTERGROUP ACTIVITIES DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS



Andreas Erler,
Senior Political Adviser

With the coronavirus pandemic spreading across the world, the European Parliament entered in remote working mode in early March, adapting itself to this new reality.

Over the last weeks, the EP has slowed down most of its activities, and the timelines for many dossiers have been changed and adapted to the new situation. Nevertheless, MEPs, assistants and EP officials continue to be engaged in their Parliamentary tasks. This is also the case for the Animal Welfare Intergroup, which only had to cancel its session in March. Until the EP summer recess in mid-July, it will hold its monthly meetings via video conference.

The first Intergroup meeting to be held remotely was on Thursday 23rd April, and focused on the COVID-19 pandemic and zoonotic diseases originating from intensive livestock farming, wildlife trade and consumption (see pages 4-5). Renowned experts in the field gave presentations on these issues and took part in the debate. The video conference also allowed the audience to intervene to ask questions or make comments.

The topics of discussion of the Intergroup webinars on 20th May and 16th June are not yet confirmed, but they will be chosen primarily according to their relevance at the time. This could be again an animal welfare issue linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, an important EP dossier for animal welfare and species conservation, or an address by the Commissioner for Agriculture, Janusz Wojciechowski. The date of the Animal Welfare Intergroup session in July is not yet confirmed.

Besides the organisation of the monthly sessions, the Intergroup will continue to promote animal welfare related concerns in all relevant EP dossiers. Its different working groups will carry out their activities according to the specific needs and opportunities of the moment.



ANIMALS IN THE NEWS

COVID-19 SPECIAL

#Act4Pets

DOGS RECLASSIFIED AS COMPANION ANIMALS IN CHINA



China has drawn up new guidelines to reclassify dogs as pets rather than livestock in response to the coronavirus outbreak.

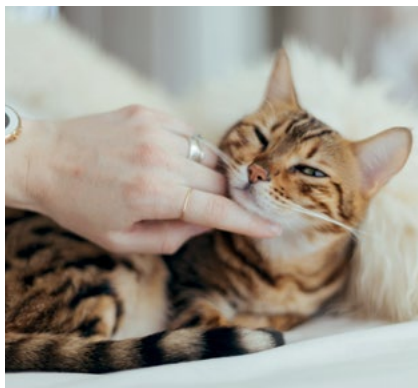
Though dog meat remains a delicacy in many regions, the Ministry of Agriculture said in a notice published in April that dogs would no longer be considered as livestock, a designation used for animals that can be bred to provide food, milk, fur, fibre and medicine, or to serve the needs of sports or the military.

“As far as dogs are concerned, along with the progress of human civilisation and the public concern and love for animal protection, dogs have been ‘specialised’ to become companion animals, and internationally are not considered to be livestock, and they will not be regulated as livestock in China,” it said.

China has also temporarily banned the breeding, trading and consumption of wildlife, and revoked all existing licenses. It has also promised to revise legislation to make the ban permanent.

#Act4Pets

PETS ‘NO RISK TO OWNERS’, STRESS VETS



Veterinary scientists have recommended cat owners keep their pets indoors to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus among animals. But the British Veterinary Association stressed “owners should not worry” about risk of infection from pets.

“There isn’t a single case of a pet dog or cat infecting a human with COVID-19,” says Dr Angel Almendros from City University in Hong Kong, though research has shown cats may be able to catch the virus from other cats.

Dr Almendros added that it would be sensible to keep cats indoors – where it is safe and possible to do so – during the outbreak. The British Veterinary Association has since clarified that its recommendation to concerned pet-owners is to take the precaution of keeping cats indoors only if someone in their own household showed symptoms. “An animal’s fur could carry the virus for a time if a pet were to have come into contact with someone who was sick.”

#Act4Wildlife

NGOS ASK GOVERNMENTS TO SHUT DOWN WILDLIFE MARKETS AND WORK TO REDUCE DEMAND

Following the coronavirus outbreak, an open letter to the World Health Organization, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the UN Environment Programme called on these bodies to work closely with governments across the world in order to end the exploitation of wild animals for trade.

The letter – co-signed by Eurogroup for Animals and several of its members – specifically encouraged governments to shut down wildlife markets and to reduce the demand for wild animals and wildlife products, in order to mitigate risks for human health, while also helping to reduce threats to biodiversity and animal welfare.

Alongside this, organisations such as GAIA have started campaigns pushing for the closure of wet markets around the world, backed up by voices such as Jane Goodall’s. In mid-April, Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, the acting executive secretary of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, agreed that countries should take this action to prevent future pandemics, but cautioned against ‘unintended consequences’.

China has issued a temporary ban on wildlife markets, and scientists have urged Beijing to make it permanent.



#Act4FarmAnimals

HOLIDAY HELL ONCE AGAIN FOR LAMBS

The transport of lambs and sheep over thousands of kilometres to Italy at Easter took place again this year as key animal welfare requirements of the EU Transport Regulation are systematically ignored.

This year the problem was made worse by the COVID-19 crisis. On top of the risk of contamination related with the trade in live animals, livestock vehicles were getting caught up in long queues at borders between EU Member States or at exit points. While the Commission activated fast-track lanes across borders for delivering supplies, including livestock consignments, there's also the fear that temporary measures brought in to cope with the crisis may result in softer or less professional checks on consignments of animals.

In 2019 alone, a total of 918,745 lambs were exported to Italy from different Member States. The distances travelled are between 1,200 and 2,200 kilometres, and animals stay in the truck up to 29 hours without food, despite the fact that, by law, unweaned lambs should be given liquid after nine hours, and older lambs after 14 hours. For many years, organisations including Essere Animali (whose image from a 2019 investigation is shown below) and Animal Welfare Foundation have denounced the cruelty behind this trade, but neither the EU Commission nor Member States have taken significant steps to tackle the lack of compliance.



#Act4LabAnimals

COULD COVID-19 ADD AMMUNITION TO THE ARGUMENT AGAINST ANIMAL TESTING?

In the urgent hunt for an effective vaccine against COVID-19, a drug has been permitted to enter Phase I of clinical trials – testing on humans, in other words – without results of preclinical testing based on cell culture tests or animal studies.

Grace Lin, writing on the *Medium* platform, reports that US company Moderna implemented a vaccine – mRNA-1273 – which was approved by the FDA for phase I study with 45 human participants. The first injection was carried out on 16 March. Testing on lab mice was performed, showing an immune response sufficient to protect them from the infection – but this only took place at the same time as the clinical trials.

In this case, the unusual global situation meant that the usual extensive preclinical studies on animals were skipped due to time pressure, but the question remains: how reliable are tests on animals, really, and how much do they reveal about the safety of drugs?



Animal experiments are often poorly designed, conducted and analysed. The difference of metabolism rate of the commonly used animals for preclinical testing leads to major differences regarding the pharmacokinetics of drugs. Just last year researchers tried to summarize the translational success from animals to humans by comparing the preclinical outcome to the success rate of the first phases of clinical trials of 121 studies. A 0–100% translational success rate was reported, with some studies showing no translational success at all.

Clearly there's a need for more suitable models to predict outcomes for humans. *"We should re-think the settings of preclinical studies, not just to ensure the safety of volunteers for clinical trials, but also to improve animal welfare by reducing their value in this process,"* concludes Grace Lin.

#Act4Pets

PETS ARE HAPPIER UNDER CONFINEMENT, STUDY SAYS

Invoxia, a leader in GPS trackers, developed the Pet Tracker, a device which cats or dogs wear on their collar. With it, they've conducted a European study on the impact of confinement on the life of cats and dogs.

"While confinement is seen as a burden by the majority of people, cats and dogs are enjoying a much happier time!" Invoxia says. "The amount of petting has increased considerably, while the physical presence of owners

has generated a significant drop in barking."

Cats, though disturbed in their daily routines by humans trying to work, have increased their activity by 33%, with interactions with people through petting skyrocketing by 58%. But cats are still cats, so the sleeping patterns of our felines remain the same during confinement.

Dogs fare even better, with their walking time seeing a staggering growth of 40%, though petting increased by only 43%. But now they've got our undivided attention, their barking has dropped by 15%.



In 2015, the United Nations adopted 17 'Sustainable Development Goals' to act as a blueprint to achieving a better and more sustainable future for all. Even though animal welfare is not explicitly included in these goals, it is an intrinsic part of sustainable development, and improving animal welfare would contribute to achieving several of them.





JOINING FORCES

TO ENSHRINE ANIMAL WELFARE IN THE UN'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Adopted in 2015, the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have become a crucial political tool. By providing 169 clear targets for sustainable development – such as eradicating extreme poverty, ending hunger or achieving universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water – the SDGs make the concept of sustainable development more concrete.

Even though animal welfare is not explicitly included in the SDGs, it is an intrinsic part of sustainable development. In fact, improving animal welfare standards would actually contribute to achieving several of the SDGs – and it is even safe to say that many of the targets set out in the SDGs cannot be achieved if the welfare of animals is not improved.

An obvious example of the interconnection between animal welfare and sustainable development is the spread of intensive farming. Highly industrialized animal production systems have devastating effects on both the welfare of the animals exploited and on the environment, as they lead to water and ground pollution, deforestation, and usually an increase in greenhouse gas emissions. Production systems with the potential to provide higher animal welfare conditions are also more likely to have less of an impact on the environment, the climate and livelihoods.

Another example is the impact that improving the welfare of working animals could have on the SDGs relating to

livelihood, gender and education. There are also obvious connections between the SDG on health, the development of antimicrobial resistance and the need to reduce the use of antibiotics in animal-sourced food production, notably by improving animal welfare standards.

The animal movement has fully understood this interconnectivity between animal welfare and the SDGs, and have devoted themselves, since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, to actions to help enshrine animal welfare in the SDG discourse. In 2017, the Animal Issues Thematic Cluster (AITC), an international group of wildlife conservation, animal welfare and other stakeholders was formed to ensure that the care, protection and conservation of animals is included in the UN's 2030 Global Agenda for Sustainable Development and in the implementation of the SDGs. Several of Eurogroup for Animals' member organizations are part of the AITC: World Animal Net, Four Paws, Compassion in World Farming and The Donkey Sanctuary. Thanks to their efforts, the 2019 [Global Sustainable Development Report](#), which is published by the UN every four years, lists animal welfare as an item missing from the SDGs.

Also in 2019, the first academic paper was published on the link between animal welfare and SDGs. The empirical study, led by Linda Keeling, supports the narrative already defended by Eurogroup for Animals and its Member Organisations. It presents a positive correlation between animal welfare and all 17 SDGs.



That same year Eurogroup for Animals, with the help of its Members, published a report looking into how the connections between animal welfare and SDGs can be reflected in EU bilateral trade policy, as well as exploring the detrimental impact of industrial animal agriculture on several SDGs. Entitled [‘Animal Welfare, Trade and Sustainable Development Goals’](#), the report was made possible by extensive contributions from Compassion in World Farming, World Animal Net, RSPCA, Four Paws, World Horse Welfare and the Donkey Sanctuary.

It includes a specific section on working equids, and how healthy and well-treated working animals better contribute to achieving the SDGs. Similarly, a section on disaster relief examines how keeping farm animals healthy will help financial recovery after a disaster, while companion animals help their owners to cope once they are able to return home. A further section explores the link between fish welfare and the SDGs. Fish is increasingly promoted as the sustainable meat of the future – but if no attention is brought to fish welfare, this expansion might hinder numerous SDGs. Higher welfare standards in aquaculture are the basis by which production can be more natural and involve the use of fewer or no chemicals and medications.

Although addressing animal welfare in trade policy is crucial to achieve the SDGs, the member states of the World Trade Organization – 81% of the countries in the world – tend to be reluctant to discuss the impact of trade policy on animals, preferring to leave the topic at each country’s discretion. However, if a country feels it cannot impose animal welfare standards on imported products, it will be reluctant to improve these standards, fearing that their own producers will be undermined by lower welfare imports.

For its part, Eurogroup for Animals has been calling on the EU to use trade policy to promote higher animal welfare standards with partner countries in an attempt to also book progress on several SDGs. To do this, we’ve been able to take advantage of the fact that at EU level, SDGs

have become key tools to assess the success of policies. Former Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom included a reference to them in her ‘Trade for All’ strategy in 2015; and under European Commission President Von der Leyen, all portfolios, including trade policy, must contribute to the achievement of the SDGs.

In recent months the urgency has become all the more evident, as the connections are demonstrated between outbreaks such as COVID-19 and the trade in wild animals, as well as the intensification of animal farming. The EU’s Biodiversity Strategy to 2030, presently under preparation, offers the perfect opportunity to effectively regulate the trade on live wild animals, thereby protecting the health of consumers as well as the welfare of animals and global biodiversity. Similarly, the Farm-to-Fork strategy should promote and support a shift away from industrial animal agriculture and towards healthier and more plant-based diets and farming systems.

If there ever was a time to put all hands on deck to achieve the SDGs, it’s now.

“ Outbreaks of diseases such as COVID-19 are driven by anthropogenic changes such as deforestation, intensification of livestock production and increased trading of wildlife. We need evidence-based solutions to prevent future outbreaks and to reduce climate change and biodiversity loss, as well as to improve the welfare of domestic and wild animals, using the SDGs as a way forward.”



Philip Elders,
Youth Delegate of the World
Health Organisation for the
Netherlands



MAKING A DIFFERENCE

**FOLLOW OUR
WORK ON ANIMAL
WELFARE**



THE NEW EU BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY TO 2030 OFFERS THE CHANCE TO RESPOND TO CITIZENS' CONCERNS

Ilaria Di Silvestre, Wildlife Programme Leader

Just before the COVID-19 crisis struck we were all set to present the results of two opinion polls: one on EU citizens' attitudes to the trading and keeping of exotic animals as pets, and the second on their concerns for the protection of wolves.

Both offered invaluable data to influence the ongoing preparation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030, which we hope will include specific actions to regulate the exotic pet trade in the EU, as well as investing in new tools to prevent conflict with large carnivores.

Conducted by Savanta ComRes for Eurogroup for Animals and its member organisation AAP Animal Advocacy and Protection, the exotic pets poll indicates very strong support for better regulation of the trade and keeping of exotic animals as pets within the EU. Most exotic animal species have extremely complex needs which make them unsuitable as pets – and they could threaten European biodiversity if they escape or are released. Not only that, but the risks of the global wildlife trade, including animals destined for the booming European exotic pet market, became painfully clear with the worldwide outbreak of COVID-19.

Similarly, the 6,137 EU citizens who responded to the wolves poll showed a high level of support for wolf protection and opposed the killing of wolves in any circumstances, despite the hunters' community and some Member States consistently calling for more flexibility in managing their wolf populations.

With COVID-19 taking over the headlines, in the end we thought it best to present the polls' findings in a letter to the EU Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, Virginijus Sinkevičius, and asked him to consider including our recommendations in the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030. Specifically, we want an EU-wide 'Positive List', stating which animal species are suitable and safe to be kept as pets, and we'd also like to see the strategy include measures to ensure that populations of protected species are maintained at, or restored to, a Favourable Conservation Status throughout their natural range within the EU.



COVID-19'S IMPACT ON COMPANION ANIMALS

Iwona Mertin, Companion Animals Programme Leader

Eurogroup for Animals has put together some information to help governments and the public consider COVID-19's impact on companion animals.

Governments need to make the message clear that the spread of COVID-19 is a result of human to human transmission. To date, there is no evidence that companion animals can spread the disease. While there are canine and feline coronaviruses that can make dogs or cats unwell, these are not the one causing the current pandemic, and they do not cause COVID-19. The pandemic is no justification for euthanising pets or culling stray animals.

Governments must also define pet food and critical veterinary care as 'essential' goods and services during confinement. Shelter staff and volunteers must also be defined as 'essential workers' so that they can take care of animals and run feeding programmes for strays. In short, governments, communities and the public should consider the needs of companion animals during the pandemic and provide the necessary support during these difficult times.

Animal shelters are under particular pressure. There has already been an increase in intake of animals whose owners have become ill or died, and shelters are also expecting a rise in the number of animals abandoned or relinquished through misguided concerns over the transmission of COVID-19. Rehoming may also decrease, as visits to adoption centres are forbidden and cross border adoption is put on hold.

Young animals who are part of the puppy/kitten trade or in pet shops may face euthanasia during lockdown, so there should be clear guidance to breeders and pet shops not to euthanise animals and to relinquish them to shelters if necessary – but this also adds extra pressure for the shelters, of course. Breeders and shops should expect to have to also provide adequate donations to cover costs when relinquishing animals.

We ask the public to consider supporting their local animal shelter with financial or in-kind donations or through fostering, adopting or, if possible, volunteering – following all safety measures – during these difficult times. Dog and cat owners should also be sure to make provisions for continuous care for their animals during both illness and lockdown, to avoid that their animals end up in a shelter too.



URGENT ACTION NEEDED TO AVOID ANIMAL WELFARE CRISIS DURING THE TRANSPORT OF LIVE ANIMALS

Francesca Porta, Farm Animals Programme Officer

As if the live transport of animals wasn't already bad enough, the COVID-19 crisis is making it worse.

In March vehicles started getting caught up in long queues at borders between EU Member States and the exit points. Anyone who wanted to cross the Polish border had to fill out forms and have the temperature measured, resulting in horror queues up to 40km long. As one driver said, luckily temperatures were not above thirty degrees, otherwise all the animals would have been dead.

The Commission's response to the crisis were so-called 'green lanes' – fast-track lanes across borders for delivering supplies, including livestock consignments – and Implementing Regulation (EU) 2020/466, which laid down 'temporary measures to contain risks to human, animal and plant health and animal welfare'. However, we fear that these measures may actually result in less stringent or inappropriate checks on animals being transported, as they allow such checks to be carried out by non-vets, and authorise that electronic copies of certificates and attestations can be presented instead of original paper versions.

This crisis time should also prompt decision-makers to consider structural solutions for the risks posed by live transport by putting forward an EU strategy to favour a meat and carcasses-only trade. Indeed, such a trade would allow the transportation of a larger amount of food with fewer operators, thus guaranteeing the well-functioning of the food-supply chain with full respect of the animals and the people working in this sector.

In the meantime, we call on Member States to suspend all long-distance livestock transport, when compliance with the EU transport regulation cannot be guaranteed.

While aligning strategies and coordinating efforts to tackle the immediate risks, we will also continue working to achieve the goals set in our transport strategy, including the revision of the Transport Regulation.



MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD IN THE CALL FOR LEGISLATIVE CHANGE INSTEAD OF A NEW ANIMAL WELFARE STRATEGY

Joe Moran, Senior Political Advisor

The European Commission has called on citizens and organisations to take part in an online consultation to gather information and views on the EU Animal Welfare Strategy 2012-2015.

The consultation goes hand-in-hand with the Commission's evaluation on the strategy, which will assess the extent to which it delivered on its objectives, and whether they are relevant and consistent today. It will also look at efficiency and whether the strategy usefully complements national efforts in this field. This has to be done before any new actions are brought forward.

This evaluation of the Animal Welfare Strategy will inform the actions that come after, so it's vital that the animal movement contributes its opinion to the consultation with a unified voice, even though we may want to stress different aspects of policy or different priorities.

However, we can all agree on some things. The Animal Welfare Strategy resulted in no demonstrable overall improvement for the welfare of animals. Instead of meaningful progress for animals on the ground, we are left with no 'foundation' on which to build, and eight years have passed by in the meantime.

The one clear benefit of a strategy is that it sets aside a budget for actions, but strategies in themselves don't lead to anything. We need actions, not words, and we hope that this new Commission will deliver real improvements to the lives of animals through the revision of existing legislation as well as the introduction of new law to adequately protect all species.

You can participate in the consultation [online](#) at the European Commission's website. To help you formulate your responses, Eurogroup for Animals has put together some detailed information at www.eurogroupforanimals.org/public-consultation to help us all come across with a unified voice and call for legislative changes instead of a new strategy.

We trust that the Commission's evaluation – and the accompanying consultation – will lead to concrete actions focussed on the improvement of existing legislation, as well as the introduction of new laws to adequately protect other species.

GET TO KNOW US

THE EUROGROUP TEAM AND THEIR NON-HUMAN 'COLLEAGUES'

From our home offices, kitchens, living rooms, balconies and gardens, the team at Eurogroup for Animals is continuing to push forward the EU agenda for animals.

One advantage to the lockdown that most of us are now suffering is that we're getting to spend more time with our pets – and they're seeing more of us.

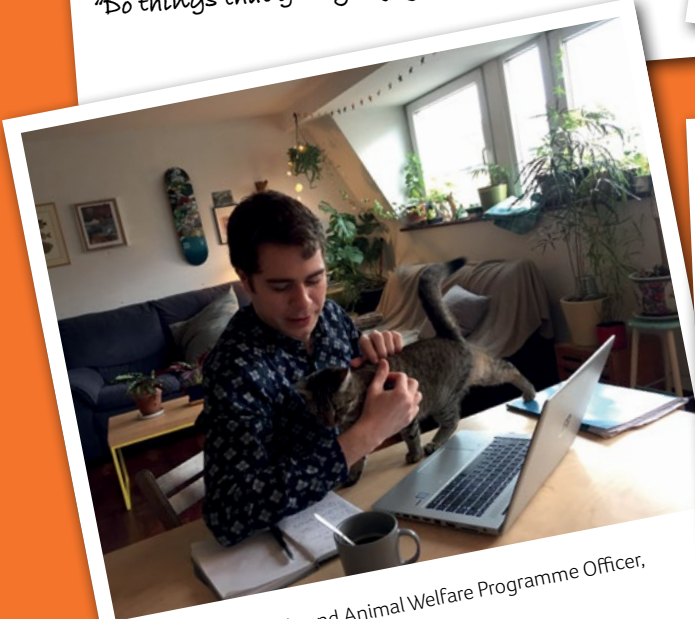
Research has shown that dog and cat owners make fewer annual visits to the doctor and are less likely to be on medication for heart problems and sleeping difficulties than non-owners. And as every cat lover knows, cat ownership decreases the risk of dying from heart attack or stroke – and even the sound of your cat's purr can calm your nerves and lower your blood pressure.



Elena Nalon, Senior Veterinary Advisor, and **Olivia**
"Do things that give you joy when not working."



Ilaria Di Silvestre, Wildlife Programme Leader, and **Clementine**
"If you can, start the day with a long, regenerating walk. At the end of every working day, make a clear plan of the things to do the next day."



Morgan Reille, Trade and Animal Welfare Programme Officer, and **Nénette**
"Do sport during lunch break or in the afternoon just after finishing work."



Andreas Erler, Senior Political Adviser, and **Elfie**
"I take short breaks every two hours for a coffee, and after lunch, I take Elfie to the park. All this helps to structure the day and make it more enjoyable."

OUR MEMBERS

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

RESCUE CENTRES NEED HELP MORE THAN EVER

The spread of COVID-19 is a threat to the survival of thousands of animals in European rescue centres and sanctuaries. It has only added to an already difficult situation in which housing for seized, confiscated or surrendered wild animals is severely limited, and rescue centres suffer from a chronic lack of consideration and funding.

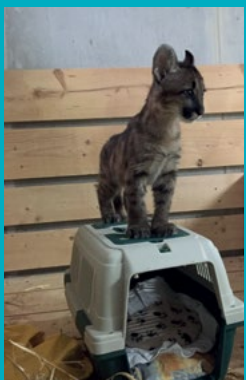
“COVID-19 is representing a real challenge for all rescue centres, but we are doing our best to ensure an optimal management of the animals we host,” says Andrea Casini from Eurogroup for Animals’ member organisation LAV, which manages the Semproniano CRASE (Centro Recupero Animali Selvatici ed Esotici) in Tuscany. *“There’s always a funding issue encountered by rescue centres in Italy, not just now, but because of a major shortage of public financial support from the government. During the COVID-19 crisis, the government, authorities and society seem committed only to helping circuses and zoos – those who exploit and profit from animals.”*

Eurogroup for Animals and its Member Organisations that carry out rescue activities are joining forces with EARS, the European Alliance of Rescue Centres and Sanctuaries, to call on the support of citizens.



Calogero, a Barbary Macaque hosted in LAV’s rescue centre. He was seized in Sicily in July, and after a lot of work by the keepers, now he is really included in the group.

*Rescue centre workers at AAP
Animal Advocacy and Protection*



Animals such as Tikam, rescued from a private apartment and rehomed at FOUR PAWS’ protection centre ‘Tierart’, are able to grow up in a species-appropriate environment.

At www.eurogroupforanimals.org/rescue-centres-need-your-help you’ll find a list of organisations or rescue centres in your country that you can contact to see how you can help.

SUPPORT US

EUROGROUP FOR ANIMALS IS A STRONG VOICE FOR ANIMALS IN EUROPE. OUR STRENGTH COMES FROM OUR MEMBERS, FRIENDS AND PARTNERS WITH WHOM WE RELENTLESSLY ADVOCATE TO IMPROVE THE WELFARE OF THE MILLIONS OF ANIMALS LIVING BY OUR SIDES.

But this is an uphill battle. This is why we constantly strive to attract new supporters to join our movement and why we also need your help. Animal suffering is a reality, but there is an alternative. So come and join your forces to ours to fight for a better future for all animals.

There are many ways to help: visit our website, sign our latest petition, follow us on social media, share our posts or contact us to become a member or make a donation.



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