

Stopping Animal Abuse will Prevent Future Pandemics, says Leading Scientist

“By creating distressed and sick animals, we are harming ourselves,” claims Dr Aysha Akhtar, a neurologist and public health specialist.

OXFORD, UK, March 23, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- “By creating distressed and sick animals, we are harming ourselves,” claims Dr Aysha Akhtar, a neurologist and public health specialist and a Commander in the US Public Health Service.

“Three-fourths of emerging human infectious diseases come from animals. But it’s not the animals’ fault. If we want to prevent these diseases and save millions of people from untold suffering we have to face the inevitable and uncomfortable truth: the real culprit is how we choose to relate with and treat animals.”

“Although it’s too late to prevent the current pandemic, perhaps we can prevent another one if we take a moment to look at how most new infectious diseases arrive on our doorstep in the first place.”

Dr Akhtar is a Fellow of the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics (OCAE), and author of [Our Symphony with Animals](#) and [Animals and Public Health](#). She insists that there is a direct link between human welfare and animal welfare:

“Just as humans are more likely to succumb to disease when we are stressed, weakened or wounded, these same factors also suppress the immune systems in animals, leaving them extremely vulnerable to catching new infections. As a result, the worldwide animal trade creates very sick animals and ideal conditions for pathogens to multiply and jump from animal to animal, and ultimately to humans.”



Dr Aysha Akhtar

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“To prevent the next pandemic, we need to look beyond the wet markets or illegal trade in China. The entire, global trade in animals needs to stop. A virus doesn't care if it's being transmitted through the illegal or legal trade. The wildlife trade as a whole is detrimental to ecosystems, cruel to animals, and poses a strong risk of emergence of new viruses. We need to take a hard look at how we relate with all animals.”

Centre Director, the Revd Professor Andrew Linzey, commented: “A world in which cruelty to animals goes unchecked is bound to be a morally unsafe world for

human beings. We have always known this in theory, but now it is increasingly confirmed by science.”

“Too many people still think of sentient beings as just commodities or resources without any intrinsic value. But thinking this way is spiritually impoverished and leads to a morally regressive view of animals. Now is the optimum time for a fundamental rethink.”

ENDS

Notes for editors

1. Dr Akhtar, MD, MPH, is author of *Our Symphony with Animals: On Health, Empathy, and Our Shared Destinies and Animals and Public Health*.
2. Dr Akhtar is speaking in a personal capacity, not as a representative of the Public Health Service.
3. The Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics is an independent centre devoted to pioneering ethical perspectives on animals through research, teaching, and publication. See www.oxfordanimaethics.com/home.
4. In addition to being Director of the OCAE, Professor Linzey is editor of [The Link Between Animal Abuse and Human Violence](#).

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