

Animals are the Key to our Global Challenges

We are working for a society that cares for the wellbeing of its animals like never before. We need to. As humans, we are facing global challenges in physical, mental and environmental health.

I believe in a world where healthier animals are the key to helping us unlock today's most critical global challenges. Healthier animals can help us solve problems like malnourishment, anxiety and resource scarcity.

You might wonder how animals are related to global issues. It sounds abstract at first, but when breaking down universal concerns, we find that at their core they are related to physical health, mental health and environmental health.

These issues affect every single one of us in some way. They cut across every aspect of our life. Let us look at some stats, so I can clarify what I mean.

First on physical health. The most basic form of physical health – the food we eat – is still a chronic, global problem. Despite abundance in some parts of the world, according to the United Nations, one in every nine people are going hungry.¹ At the same time, an estimated two billion people worldwide do not have access to the *right* food, resulting in 'hidden hunger'² – a lack of important micronutrients.

Secondly, despite the wealth of communication channels we have at our fingertips, social isolation and anxiety are at an all-time high. For instance, in America, one in five millennials are lonely or say they have no friends, despite being the most internet-connected generation.³ We are more connected than ever, but we are not connecting.

And thirdly, we are more aware of climate change than ever before, but we are using resources nearly twice as fast as we can replenish them. We may not agree how, but we can all agree that we have to make a change. We must take care of the planet to safeguard the world for future generations.

Research in the US, UK and Ireland found that this is the first generation expected to live a shorter life than their parents are. That is a generation with fewer years to make a positive impact on our world.

It is a no-brainer; the world is demanding a transformation. However, this seems incredibly challenging. We lack the belief and conviction to make that change. We need a spark, an idea – and a groundswell of belief behind it.

I believe animals are the X-factor that the world has been looking for. Animals are the unexpected, game-changing variable that we believe will unlock solutions to these seemingly disconnected issues of physical, mental and environmental health.

It is a surprising idea – that cats and cows hold the key to our future.

Healthier animals can make an immediate impact. You interact with them every day. Whether it is the emotional connection we have with our dog, or the critical protein we get through milk, meat, fish and eggs, animals are central to our existence.

You may not think of it every day, but animals are part of the framework of our existence. They are worth our time and consideration. And my belief in this idea of healthy animals will require all of us making important choices when it comes to animals.

Let me further explain what I am talking about.

I already touched on some of the physical health challenges facing our world today: 13% of the global population is obese.⁴ More than 10% suffer from malnourishment, and one in four are getting the wrong food. We have so much information about nutrition readily available, but it has never been more confusing. How many diet trends have we had in the last decade? With several of them even classed as 'contradictory'.

In addition, as many as two billion people who are getting enough food are suffering from shortages of essential vitamins and minerals. The crux of the obesity and malnourishment problem is the lack of availability or access to healthy food.

Over the past 40 years, in the US we have seen a decrease in calories from animal proteins like dairy, eggs and meat, as our plant-based calories have gone up. Nevertheless, in that time, we have seen obesity and diabetes increase. Surely, many factors contribute to obesity and diabetes; however, there certainly is a link between health and the intake of dairy, meat and eggs.

Let's look at what animal protein does for our children's diets. A protein-rich diet is essential to accelerate the height of a kid; it repairs the tissues and develops lean muscles. Let me illustrate this with some examples.

In China, as meat consumption has skyrocketed, the average height of a nine-year-old boy grew nine centimetres in the last 25 years. In Kenya, the addition of animal protein in children's diets resulted in a 15% increase in IQ scores. And in the UK, overweight children who made subtle changes to increase protein and reduce carbohydrates in their diet saw "remarkable" impact in weight loss and health risks.

Livestock, through milk, meat and eggs, provide us with nutrient-dense foods and critical sources of protein, vital for our health. If we can increase accessibility to these animal products to those who need it most, we can help reduce incidences of disease and improve our health through more nutritious, balanced diets.

Our biggest dilemma is how we are going to cope as our population grows to an estimated 10bn by 2050.⁵

Right now, one in five animals are being lost to disease.⁶ If we can increase animal health and wellbeing, we can



farm more efficiently, better conserve global resources and feed more people the nutritious food they need. Take, for example, a disease called coccidiosis in chickens. When coccidiosis is properly controlled, the flock's carbon footprint falls by as much as five per cent, while healthy livestock means greater access to food.

However, the impact of healthy animals on our physical health goes beyond animal protein. Let us talk about pets.

Pets enhance both our mental and physical health. The companionship they provide can help ease loneliness, providing real-life connections in an increasingly virtual world. And numerous studies have proven the physical benefits of pets. Pets encourage a healthy lifestyle. They force us to go outside, get moving, stay active.

This is especially true for older generations who often need the companionship of a dog or cat. It's proven that for people living alone, owning a dog can improve cardiovascular health and decrease your risk of death by 33 per cent.

That human-animal bond is powerful. And it impacts our physical wellbeing in powerful ways.

Now let's talk about mental health. More than one in three people say they experience a lot of worry or stress. At least one

in five experience sadness or anger, and one in five millennials in America say they are lonely and have no friends.

Our social communities are also shrinking by as much as a third. Despite advancements in technology, communication and transportation making it easier than ever to be connected, we are more isolated than ever before.

Think about a situation in which you are waiting – for the bus for instance – how often do you talk to other people? Or do you spend your time waiting by scrolling on your phone? Do you know, if you spend more than two hours a day on social media, you are twice as likely to feel socially isolated?

Loneliness affects your health in very real ways. Research shows it is comparable to smoking fifteen cigarettes a day.⁷ And it's more predictive of an early death than the effects of air pollution or physical inactivity.

So what do we do? We rediscover life beyond our devices. And healthy animals can help us do that. A pet's ability to improve mental and social health is powerful.

Studies have shown that pet ownership is associated with higher levels of social capital – or connection to your community. Our pets help us meet people, force us to venture outside, encourage us to be playful.

Around 40 per cent of pet owners studied said they have received some type of support – such as emotional or informational – from people they met through their pet.

Outside of their ability to help us form new bonds with those around us, our pets also form meaningful bonds *with us* that can significantly influence our overall wellbeing.

Imagine the impact of a society that feels supported and connected. Imagine what a decrease in depression could do for our communities, our workforce, and our families. It would have a ripple effect beyond just this generation.

Finally, I would like to show you how improving the health of our animals can move us toward a more sustainable planet while addressing physical and mental health challenges.

Globally, protecting the environment is the number one cause that people care about, ahead of healthcare and poverty. We have made better strides to protect our environment – fuel-efficient cars, alternative energy, and widespread corporate sustainability practices. These innovations have had a significant impact. And we have to keep innovating.

But the reality is, we are using our resources faster than ever before. Last year, we used resources 1.75 times faster than the global ecosystem could replenish them. As we need to meet the increasing demand for milk, meat and eggs, somehow we need to use fewer resources to do so. Right now, we are experiencing more than a 20 per cent loss of animals due to disease.

The good news is that we can make an immediate impact on that amount of waste, and take a massive step to obtain more meat, milk and eggs with fewer resources. It is more than just medicines – it is working with our farmers and veterinarians, increasing knowledge, training and tools they need to help their livestock thrive – as farmers and veterinarians are dedicated to continually improving the care and wellbeing of animals.

And there's more. Animals are the original recyclers – in fact, 86 per cent of the feed livestock eat is made of materials that humans do not or cannot consume. Cattle eat by-products, such as distillers' grain, and convert them into healthy milk and meat.

Furthermore, about two-thirds of our agricultural land is not suitable for planting fruits and vegetables, but it is suitable for grazing animals. And, let's not forget that livestock animals provide nutrient-rich manure as fertiliser to the food production process, representing recycling in its purest form.

I would like to add a clear example of why talking about healthy animals is so imperative. As much as 50% of China's hogs have been lost to African Swine Fever, creating a huge impact on China's pork market. The impact is so severe that there is no combination of imports or production of other animal protein that can fill the gap. This will directly affect the ability of the world's largest population to access animal protein, and it will influence global health and environmental outcomes.

It is time to strengthen and improve our world's resources by improving animal health.

It is simple. But it's powerful. And it's right in front of us. If our pets live longer, healthier lives – so will we. It is time to rediscover how animals give us happier, more connected people and communities.

Healthy animals are not a "nice-to-have" for our world. They are a must-have.

This concept that animals are the X-Factor – it is not a marketing tool for us. It is the realisation of decades of dedicating our work to the health and wellbeing of animals. We know first-hand how powerful, and how *critical* animals are to our world.

And we can make a difference. By eliminating a pest, by reducing animal losses, by using less feed to generate more servings, and most of all by helping animals live healthier lives.

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