



HOW TO PREVENT THE NEXT PANDEMIC?

FOUR PAWS publishes a Future Study „COVID-19 and the interconnection between human wellbeing, animal welfare, nature and pandemics“ prior to the World Health Summit





WHY IS THE WORLD HEALTH SUMMIT IMPORTANT?

The COVID-19 pandemic is the most urgent global health crisis at the moment. This is why the World Health Summit (24th to 27th October 2021), as one of the world's leading strategic forums for global health with leaders from politics, science and medicine, seeks to find solutions on how to deal with and prevent future pandemics. The outcome of the World Health Summit will influence decisions for the upcoming WHO Special Session, which will decide about a historic Pandemic Treaty.

WHY DOES THAT MATTER ?

COVID-19 is a dangerous symptom of an unjust and cruel relationship with animals. While the link between animal welfare and increasing pandemic risk is well established scientifically, the political will to tackle the root causes is still absent. FOUR PAWS wants to make sure that international institutions and national governments recognise animal welfare improvements as a crucial part of the COVID-19 response and of the prevention of future pandemics, especially in light of the upcoming debate on the Pandemic Treaty. Therefore, FOUR PAWS publishes a Future Study with 29 international experts to create a better understanding of how our relationship with animals and nature must change and to support decision-makers in leading the way to prevent the next pandemic.



HOW ARE PANDEMICS LINKED TO ANIMAL WELFARE IN THE SECTORS OF FARM ANIMALS, WILD ANIMALS AND COMPANION ANIMALS?

As highlighted in the July 2020 UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the International Livestock Research Institute's (ILRI) new report, **Preventing the Next Pandemic**, "*Pandemics such as the COVID-19 outbreak are a predictable and predicted outcome of how people source and grow food, trade and consume animals, and alter environments.*" The report goes on to state that: "*Most emerging infectious diseases - whether in wildlife, domestic animals, plants or people are driven by human activities such as agricultural intensification, wildlife use and misuse, and human-induced landscape changes, interacting in unpredictable ways that can have negative outcomes.*"

Zoonoses are diseases transmitted from animals to humans. They account for 75% of all **emerging infectious diseases**¹ and cause **2.7 million human deaths each year**.² COVID-19, with over 219 million illness cases, caused 4.55 million deaths by now. Two out of three of the pandemics in history had an animal origin.

In intensive farms, the **overcrowding, genetic proximity and suffering** of animals amplify the risk of **pathogens mutating and spreading**. Accounting for **80% of the global use of antibiotics**, these farms are also incubators for **antimicrobial resistance**. Intensive farming disrupts the natural processes that protect humans from emerging diseases. It is the **leading cause of deforestation, biodiversity loss, habitat loss and fragmentation** – all of which **accelerate** the emergence and transmission of **infectious diseases from wild animals to humans**.

In the COVID-19 pandemic, fur farms were again reservoirs of zoonotic diseases. In 2020, **SARS-CoV-2 infected mink on fur farms**, where the virus mutated in the animals and **new variants were transmitted back to humans**, potentially reducing the efficiency of existing treatments.³

In animal markets, the **trade of wildlife**⁴ and **cat and dog meat**⁵ skyrockets the risk of **new infectious diseases emerging and jumping to humans**. All forms of commercial and illegal wildlife trade pose grave risks to human health and biodiversity, while the cat and dog meat trade is also thwarting global efforts to eradicate rabies, a disease that kills one person every nine minutes.⁶

¹ United Nations Environment Programme. [2020]. Preventing the Next Pandemic - zoonotic diseases and how to break the chain of transmission. Retrieved from <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/preventing-future-zoonotic-disease-outbreaks-protecting-environment-animals-and>

² Grace D. M. F. [2012]. Mapping of poverty and likely zoonoses hotspots. Report to the UK Department for International Development. Nairobi, Kenya. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/10568/21161>

³ FAO, OIE, WHO [2021]. GLEWS+ Tripartite risk assessment for emerging threats at the animal, human, ecosystem interface. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/igo/>

⁴ Lin, B., Dietrich, M. L., Senior, R. A., Wilcove, D. S. [2021]. A better classification of wet markets is key to safeguarding human health and biodiversity. The Lancet Planetary Health, Volume 5, Issue 6, 2021. Pages e386-e394. ISSN 2542-5196. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196\(21\)00112-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196(21)00112-1)

⁵ Cats and dogs, unlike other domesticated animals, are carnivores, and carnivores have elevated zoonotic potential. "While ungulates were previously thought to share the most pathogens with humans [13], we find that carnivore hosts nearly tie with the rodents to harbor more unique zoonoses than other terrestrial mammal clades. Approximately 49% (139/285) of all carnivore species – the highest proportion of any mammal order – carry one or more of 83 unique zoonotic pathogens." [Han et al. 2016]. Han, B. A., Kramer, A. M., & Drake, J. M. [2016]. Global Patterns of Zoonotic Disease in Mammals. Trends in parasitology, 32(7), 565-577. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pt.2016.04.007>

⁶ <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/spotlight/rabies/#:~:text=Rabies%20is%20a%20deadly%20virus,one%20death%20every%209%20minutes>

If we make animal welfare a central component of pandemic prevention plans, it will lower the risk of the next pandemic.



MAIN FINDINGS OF THE FUTURE STUDY

The study, which will be published on October 21st by FOUR PAWS, shows the way into a sustainable future that benefits humans, animals and nature. 29 renowned international experts from several disciplines show how real prevention should be done:

The concept of health should be thought of in a more holistic and interdisciplinary way and include aspects such as climate protection and animal welfare (One Health towards One Welfare). Health policy should be aligned with this and developed from a disease management policy towards an interdisciplinary prevention policy.

The majority of experts say: Scenario 1 (symptom control) and Scenario 2 (Preparedness and Response) are most likely (but not effective to prevent future pandemics), whereas Scenario 3 (prevention, animal welfare is implemented) would be most effective to prevent the next pandemic.

A higher level of animal welfare would have positive effects on various areas of life, such as human health, animal health, the economy, climate, agriculture and nature conservation.

The study confirms: If we make animal welfare a central component of pandemic prevention plans, it will lower the risk of the next pandemic.

Animal Welfare.
Worldwide.



POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE FUTURE STUDY

Why politics should act now and make animal welfare a central component of pandemic prevention plans?

Global decision-makers are slowly starting to acknowledge the human-animal-nature interconnections and are discussing several approaches, such as further exploring the **"One Health"** concept as supported by the OIE, FAO, WHO and UNEP. But as shown in the Future Study, it is crucial to accomplish **the concept of health by welfare**, wellbeing, and conservation aspects as done in the **"One Welfare"** concept. This is an essential element that must be addressed in all pandemic prevention strategies.

Solutions for dealing with the crisis have also underlined the importance of multilateral efforts, such as the potential creation of an **international Pandemic Treaty on pandemic prevention**, which will be discussed at a **WHO Special Session** in November. While the general direction is favourable, we see the risk of a gap: Current deliberations fail to better address **the root causes and transmission of zoonoses**, such as **poor animal welfare**, and how to minimise the risk of further devastating outbreaks.

The political implications of the Future Study are:

We need governments and decision-makers worldwide to **make animal welfare a priority so that we can prevent future pandemics**. The **"One Welfare"** Framework must be incorporated into policymaking to not only recognise the interconnections between humans, animals, and environmental health, but also to encompass welfare, wellbeing, and conservation aspects. These are crucial elements that must be addressed in all pandemic prevention strategies and laws.

The political response to prevent future pandemics must focus on **making our farming and agricultural systems more resilient and banning practices that increase the risk of zoonotic disease emergence and spread**, like the commercial wildlife trade, the dog and cat meat trade and fur farming.

HOW WAS THE STUDY CONDUCTED? WHICH EXPERTS CONTRIBUTED IN THE STUDY?

Along with an established Research Institute, FOUR PAWS conducted a **study with in-depth interviews on the future of human-animal coexistence after COVID-19, with 29 renowned international experts from several disciplines**, such as virology, human health, veterinary medicine, agriculture, climate, economics, law and philosophy. Among the experts are **Syra Madad**, Helga Kromp-Kolb, Renzo Guinto, Mia MacDonald, Rebeca Garcia Pinillos. The experts gave their insights and the implications on their field of expertise based on **three scenarios of future human-animal-nature relationship**.

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ABOUT FOUR PAWS

FOUR PAWS is the global animal welfare organisation for animals under direct human influence, which reveals suffering, rescues animals in need and protects them. Founded in 1988 in Vienna by Heli Dungler and friends, the organisation advocates for a world where humans treat animals with respect, empathy and understanding. The sustainable campaigns and projects of **FOUR PAWS** focus on companion animals including stray dogs and cats, farm animals and wild animals – such as bears, big cats and orangutans – kept in inappropriate conditions as well as in disaster and conflict zones. With offices in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Kosovo, the Netherlands, Switzerland, South Africa, Thailand, Ukraine, the UK, the USA and Vietnam as well as sanctuaries for rescued animals in eleven countries, **FOUR PAWS** provides rapid help and long-term solutions.



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