

# Advocating For Our Friends The Cephalopods

From [Amber Barnes, The Open Sanctuary](#)

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*Cephalopods are often overlooked when humans consider farmed animal species. This is partly because they have not been farmed on a large scale, but that is unfortunately on the horizon. You can help raise awareness about the growing industry of cephalopod farming and the many lives it affects and will affect in the future each year.*



While cephalopods are undoubtedly not the first species you think of when considering farmed animals, octopus (and squid and cuttlefish) farming is becoming a reality. Although they are not currently farmed to the extent of many farmed species, the development of cephalopod farms is a growing concern. We know it is highly unlikely you will be asked to take in a cephalopod resident. However, our friends, the cephalopods, need our help. While direct rescue and care aren't generally possible, you and your sanctuary can bring awareness to the concerning "trend" of this exploitative practice. This brief resource is here to introduce you to the facts surrounding cephalopod farming and how you can use it to spread awareness among your community.

## Cephalopod Aquaculture

Cephalopods, namely octopuses and squids, have historically been **fished** by humans in increasing numbers over time, resulting in population decline. These species have also been farmed on a small scale in some places. Unfortunately, there is a looming threat on the horizon for cephalopods, industrialized farms that could result in millions of individuals being exploited for their flesh each year. Currently, a corporation is opening a large factory farm. **An intensive agricultural operation that prioritizes large volume animal product production using strict production methods, typically away from the public eye for octopuses in the Canary Islands and another for squids in Japan.** A farm in Mexico is also working to make large-scale cephalopod aquaculture a reality. Earlier this year, a small farm in Hawaii that claimed to be a conservation

center was closed when it came to light that zero research was being done. The octopuses were treated abysmally, resulting in **mental** and physical injury and even death.

Before now, cephalopods hadn't been farmed at such a larger scale, mainly due to a lack of a commercial diet and a high death rate, often due to cannibalism. Of course, that these individuals deserve a life free of **exploitation**. However, outside of a **nonhuman animal rights framework**, much of the scientific community is concerned about cephalopod farming. Here are some of those reasons:

- Cephalopods' carnivorous diets require capturing and exploiting other animals to feed them, which strains the already strained "fishing industry" they claim to protect.
- Most octopuses are generally solitary, and squids and octopuses will cannibalize each other when living in cramped, overly populated spaces.
- Cephalopods are sensitive to environmental changes, such as water quality.
- Cephalopods pose a risk to wild species' **health** and survival if **disease** spreads through shared water or waste or they escape, and octopuses are notorious for escaping confines in captivity.
- The waste and byproducts of the industry would negatively affect whole **ecosystems**.
- There is serious potential for public health concerns, such as cholera, which cephalopods can carry. The use of antibiotics to treat them for this could also result in antibiotic resistance.
- Cephalopods have highly complex minds and require **enriching environments** that aren't possible in industrialized aquaculture.
- There is no formal employee training on handling, transporting, or caring for cephalopods.
- Many experts agree that ensuring good welfare for cephalopods in an industrialized setting is impossible.

We know it can be overwhelming to think of yet another species in danger of exploitation when caring for so many others. While offering sanctuary to cephalopods is not a possibility for most sanctuaries, there are ways in which your sanctuary can advocate for cephalopods and [other nontraditionally farmed species](#). Advocacy for cephalopods can look a couple of ways for sanctuaries. Think [digital advocacy](#), educational opportunities, and encouraging dietary changes. Let's look a little further into these areas of advocacy:

### **Digital Advocacy**

While bringing cephalopods into your sanctuary isn't likely, you can still help raise awareness about cephalopods exploited through farming on your [social media](#) pages and [website](#).

Cephalopods are often overlooked when humans consider farmed animal species. This is partly because they have not been farmed on a large scale, but that is unfortunately on the horizon. You can help raise awareness about the growing industry of cephalopod farming and the many lives it affects and will affect in the future each year. Sending out a post, sharing a story, or having a section or page on your site dedicated to cephalopods can help humans learn about these amazing [individuals](#) and how they are yet another species being exploited. Share posts about their lives or even share our fun facts about cephalopods infographic for an upbeat post. This may not feel like a lot, but sharing [information](#) can lead to folks worldwide gaining awareness, which could create a powerful impact for humans regarding how they see and relate to cephalopods. It can help inspire change for the good. If you feel like this is a way your sanctuary could

participate in advocating for cephalopods, check out our resource on [social media for your animal sanctuary](#).

### **Onsite Educational Opportunities**

You can educate others about cephalopods at your sanctuary in many ways, even if you don't provide sanctuary for them. Hosting a workshop, film screening, or [kids'](#) camp are just a few ways your sanctuary can actively advocate for cephalopods onsite. If you provide sanctuary [tours](#), include a blurb about cephalopods to help raise awareness. To learn more about providing tours, check out our resource "[Fundamentals Of An Effective Animal Sanctuary Tour Program](#)"!

Whether you have a consistent tour program or just receive the occasional community member, having [educational materials](#) available can go a long way. Brochures, fun facts handouts, and educational posters are all excellent options. Some sanctuaries have educational tools promoting a plant-based diet and include examples of tasty, easily [accessible](#) (and delicious) plant-based fare. This can assist humans who are interested in moving to a plant-based diet.

If you have an education program or would like to learn more about educational programming for your sanctuary, visit these resources:

- [In-Person Sanctuary Educational Programming: What Are Your Options?](#)
- [Virtual Sanctuary Educational Programming: What Are Your Options?](#)
- [Fostering Empathy Towards Farmed Animals](#)
- [Communicating With Youth About Animal Exploitation](#)

### **Supporting Existing Efforts**

While you may not be able to play a largely active part in starting and driving campaigns to protect cephalopods, you can support the good work others are doing in the field. This may look like sharing their content via digital advocacy or signing and sharing petitions. It might also look like supporting legislative initiatives, showing up for and sharing community events they put on, and asking them how you can help in the capacity you have. We are all on the same side here, and joining together and supporting the work we are all doing is essential.

### **Summary Of How You Can Help**

Still not sure where this can fit into your sanctuary's work? There is something for everyone on this list! Remember, you don't have to do it all to make a difference!

- Share relevant content on your social media platforms
- Include our cephalopod friends in talks given during [tours](#)
- Provide informational material at your sanctuary
- Host a documentary showing
- Host an expert and hold a community event
- Host a cooking class on plant-based alternatives to cephalopod consumption
- Provide activities and [lesson packets](#) for teachers and humane educators
- Sign petitions
- Show up for and share events hosted by those driving legislative or other campaign initiatives in the community

- Ask organizations fighting for cephalopod protection how you can support them

### **Fun Facts About Cephalopods Infographic!**

[Fun Cephalopod Facts!](#) by Amber D Barnes

**FUN FACTS ABOUT CEPHALOPODS!**

From squids and octopuses to nautilus and cuttlefishes, cephalopods are amazing!

**DID YOU KNOW ?**

Some octopuses will use shells to hide in or as cover as they move along the ocean floor as a means of protection?

Humbolt Squids communicate with each other by brightening the color of their skin in different areas of their body!

Cuttlefishes have great episodic memories but, unlike humans, this ability to recall, for example where and when they had a tasty meal, gets better as they age!

Scientist observed a deep sea octopus, named "Octomom", guard her clutch of eggs for 4.5 years, protecting them from predators!!

**learn more @ [opensanctuary.org](https://opensanctuary.org)**

There you have it! We hope this resource has given you some ideas on how you and your sanctuary and community can unite to support cephalopods and fight against their exploitation. Cephalopods, while not traditionally considered farmed species, deserve our attention and assistance too. Remember, every little bit helps!

## SOURCES

**FYI Non-Compassionate Source?** If a source includes the (*Non-Compassionate Source*) tag, it means that we do not endorse that particular source's views about animals, even if some of their insights are valuable from a care perspective. [See a more detailed explanation here.](#)

[What Really Happened at That Controversial Octopus Farm in Hawaii | Sentient Media](#)

[One Million Octopuses To Be Farmed Annually If Spanish Farm Gets Approval | IFL Science \(\*Non-Compassionate Source\*\)](#)

[Why Cephalopod Farming Must Be Rejected Before It Starts | The Aquatic Life Institute \(\*Non-Compassionate Source\*\)](#)

[What Lies Behind Mexico's Octopus Farm Research Facade? | The Aquatic Life Institute \(\*Non-Compassionate Source\*\)](#)

[Review Of The Evidence Of Sentience In Cephalopod Molluscs And Decapod Crustaceans | The London School Of Economics And Political Science \(\*Non-Compassionate Source\*\)](#)

[Deep-Sea 'Octomom' Guards Eggs for Record 4.5 Years | LiveScience \(\*Non-Compassionate Source\*\)](#)

[Like Humans, Cuttlefish Can Form Complex Memories | Science Focus\(\*Non-Compassionate Source\*\)](#)