

Dr. Jane Goodall, Scientists & Interfaith Leaders Call on Charities To Stop Animal Gifting Programs

From [Lisa Levinson, IDA In Defense of Animals](#)

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LOS ANGELES (December 20, 2021) — Dr. Jane Goodall along with fellow scientists, religious leaders, and celebrities are urging world aid charities to end animal gifting. Animal gifting programs hurt gift recipients by burdening them with more mouths to feed in areas where food and water are often scarce. They also worsen the climate crisis, decrease food stability, undermine sustainable development, contribute to animal suffering, and cause health impacts by promoting unhealthy western diets.

[Video statement from Jane Goodall](#)

The **Animal Save Movement** and **In Defense of Animals' Interfaith Vegan Coalition** are urging charities to switch to plant-based aid programs which provide more food, and more stability by growing crops to eat directly instead of feeding them to animals. Plant-based projects can help alleviate poverty, reduce world hunger, and create sustainable practices for a healthy planet. [Thousands](#) of **In Defense of Animals** supporters and concerned citizens have already joined the campaign this holiday season.

Several well-meaning organizations promote sending live farmed animals as “gifts” intended to reduce hunger and poverty in low-income countries. The true cost of sending a goat, cow, chicken, or other farmed animal is environmental degradation, soil acidification, water contamination, air pollution, global deforestation, forest fires, extreme weather, flooding, zoonotic disease outbreaks, health problems such as diabetes, more community slaughterhouses, and even childhood trauma from watching beloved animals get brutally slaughtered.

Dr. Jane Goodall says in her video statement:

In the lead-up to Christmas, many people are feeling generous and want to help those less fortunate than themselves. There are a number of organizations that have launched campaigns, suggesting that one way to help those suffering poverty and hunger is to gift them an animal, such as a heifer. As a result, farm animals are purchased in great numbers by generous donors. Unfortunately, this can result in unintended consequences. The animals must be fed and they need a lot of water, and in so many places water is getting more and more scarce thanks to climate change. Veterinary care is often limited or totally lacking.

It will be ever so much better to help by supporting plant-based projects and sustainable irrigation methods, regenerative agriculture to improve the soil. Well this means charities must develop plans to create a gift package that will appeal to the generosity of those who want to help those less fortunate than themselves. Thank you.

Our Stop Animal Gifting campaign includes open letters from [scientists](#) and [interfaith leaders](#), action alerts, a petition and email letters calling on development charities, such as **Oxfam, World Vision, Heifer International and Cargill's "Hatching Hope" project, Christian Aid, Save the Children, Plan Canada, Lutheran World Relief, Feed the Children, Tearfund** and others to undertake [carbon disclosure](#) of their projects, stop animal gifting, and implement plant-based food system projects as a crucial step in addressing the escalating climate crisis.

Development charities can alleviate poverty and hunger by:

- Creating community seed hubs
- Rolling out water irrigation systems
- Providing training in permaculture and veganic farming techniques
- Reforesting lands and regenerating soils
- Planting trees to increase canopies to help improve the water cycle and restoring Savannah to rainforest and restoring key ecosystems

"We are so pleased Dr. Jane Goodall is supporting the Stop Animal Gifting campaign by urging shoppers to boycott animal gifting this Christmas in favour of plant-based projects. The campaign which launched in the run up to the holiday season aims to mitigate climate impacts, save water, alleviate poverty, improve human health and eliminate animal suffering," says Anita Krajnc, ED of **Animal Save Movement**.

"There has been increased demand for sustainable gifts this year — with shoppers willing to pay more for something that is sustainable. The Stop Animal Gifting campaign hopes to redirect well-meaning donations towards true, sustainable development comprising plant-based food projects," Krajnc added.

"Animal gifting does more harm than good. Gifting cows, goats, or chickens sucks resources from those who need them most, burdening those who can least afford it," said Fleur Dawes of **In Defense of Animals**. "We are proud to stand alongside Dr. Goodall as a beacon of wisdom, reason, and charity in the giving season. Gift sustainable plant-based aid to support long-term wellbeing for all people, animals and the planet."

Nicola Harris, communications director for **Animal Save Movement**, says, "Thousands of concerned members of the public have emailed Oxfam, World Vision, Heifer International and Christian Aid asking them to stop animal gifting and implement plant-based projects. All the charities declined requests to

meet with Animal Save Movement ahead of the campaign launch to discuss the roll out of plant-based projects. The damaging impact of these programs are huge, with Heifer International alone sending over 720,000 animals last year.”

Scientists

Marc Bekoff, professor emeritus of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the **University of Colorado**, Boulder, a Fellow of the Animal Behavior Society, and a past Guggenheim Fellow, signed the scientists’ open letter to Stop Animal Gifting. Dr. Beckoff states, “We must act on the science and act now. Animal agriculture is a leading cause of greenhouse gas emissions, biodiversity loss, and ecosystem destruction. Globally, we need far more plant-based meal plans to create long-lasting, sustainable change — for everyone.”

“Well-intentioned or not, gifting animals to poor communities is an ill-conceived form of charity. As a major contributor to climate change, pandemics, biodiversity loss, and animal suffering, animal agriculture has no place in forward-thinking policy and action. We must invest in the empowerment of communities to thrive on eco-friendly plant-based agriculture,” said Jonathan Balcombe, PhD, biologist and author.

“Animal agriculture is not a sustainable solution to the problem of hunger. We need an answer to the world's problems that depends upon the development of long term change that does not sacrifice the health of the planet,” said Lori Marino, PhD, neuroscientist.

"Gifting animals is the same as gifting environmental destruction. It makes no sense when the earth's climate is spiraling out of control," said Dr. Sailesh Rao, of **Climate Healers**.

Interfaith leaders

"Animal gifting expands animal agriculture to impoverished communities instead of planting true and literal seeds of peace via sustainable plant based agriculture," said Lisa Levinson of **In Defense of Animals** and co-founder of the **Interfaith Vegan Coalition**. "Our Interfaith Vegan Coalition urges religious leaders to denounce animal gifting in favor of gifts that invest in plant-based systems to support the wellbeing of people and the entire ecosystem where they reside. We represent thousands of people of diverse faiths who agree that animal agriculture is polluting our planet and support a transition to a plant-based economy."

“Heifer International and other animal gifting charities are doing more harm than good,” said Judy Carman, co-founder of **Circle of Compassion** and the **Interfaith Vegan Coalition** and author of *Homo Ahimsa: Who We Really Are and How We’re Going to Save the World*.

“Impoverished people do not need more mouths to feed, vet bills, or more trips to carry water to animals. The harm to the animals who are transported in cruel ways to homes where they may not be able to care for them is also a serious issue. As we ponder how each one of us can bring more love to the world and how we can end the violence and suffering around us, let us give where our gifts will help and certainly do no harm.”

“Animals are not a ‘gift.’ In Jewish understanding, God has given animals both a life and a soul. In the Torah, animals are called ‘baalei chayim,’ owners of life. They own their own lives. We don’t own them, and therefore we can’t give them or receive them as gifts. We can only be blessed by their companionship,” said Jeffrey Spitz Cohan, Executive Director of **Jewish Veg**.

“There is a critical need for aid development charities to move their donors and organizations away from what was considered "acceptable" in the past concerning the gifting of creatures. This is a model of "help" that needs to be retired immediately,” said Tams Nicholson, Executive Director, **All-creatures.org**. “It is humanity's responsibility as good stewards of the earth to truly help one another up and shift to plant-based food projects that will address systemic roots of poverty, starvation, and avert a climate catastrophe. The implementation of such projects is where and when the real charity begins. Plant based food projects, not gifting animals, will create a compassionate, healthier, and more sustainable world for all of us. The sooner this happens, the better for those of us on earth today and the generations to come.”

“Animal Gifting is the unconscious manifestation of slavery disguised as altruism,” said Jacque Salomon of **Seeds to Inspire Foundation**. “The idea that gifting an enslaved being to uplift those most affected by colonialism is further evidence of white supremacy. Aph Ko states in her book *Racism As Zoological Witchcraft: A Guide to Getting Out*, ‘Not only does white supremacy attempt to manipulate natural spaces, lands, and bodies in order to naturalize its superiority, it also tries to manipulate the natural senses of the oppressed. White Supremacy attempts to convince minoritized subjects that the universe is its domain just as it attempts to get *inside* and reside within our consciousness.’”

“Animal gifting is the result of unconscious bias. The attitude is 'If it doesn't look like me, I can deny it rights and enslave it.' This is no different from racism,” said Virginia Bell of **Catholic Action for Animals**.

For the full list of quotes, please visit the open letters from [scientists](#) and [interfaith leaders](#).

In Defense of Animals started the [Interfaith Vegan Coalition](#) to help animal activists and spiritual leaders bring vegan values to spiritual, ethical, and religious communities. The coalition provides [faith-based tools](#) to help all faith and secular wisdom traditions practice the ideals of nonviolence, lovingkindness, and harmlessness toward all animals. The coalition is composed of 34 [member organizations](#), 2 allied organizations, and one partner organization [Animal Interfaith Alliance](#) comprising 17 organizations, all working in harmony for a common cause.