

25 ways to stop cruelty to our fellow animals

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The suffering experienced by our fellow animals has hit unprecedented levels. An estimated [1.6 trillion free-living animals are killed by humans every year](#), either through hunting, illegal trafficking, or habitat destruction. Around [78.7 billion land animals](#) are killed for their flesh within the animal agriculture industry, while trillions of fish and shellfish are pillaged from the oceans to be eaten by humans.



In the US alone, around [7.6 million of the animals kept as pets](#) end up in shelters each year. Some figures suggest that [nearly one million of them are euthanised](#); other sources suggest the figure is nearer [2.7 million](#). The Kitten Coalition states that [80% of these individuals are healthy or have treatable conditions](#), but there simply aren't the resources to care for them.

In the UK, it's believed that [21 healthy dogs are euthanised every day](#) because the shelters are at capacity. [Rabbits live and die in tiny hutches](#); there was a [37% increase in abandoned guinea pigs](#) in 2023. Around [200 horses die on racetracks](#) in the UK every year. Animal Aid says that an unknown number are killed in training or because they do not make the 'grade' as a competitor. This is just one of several sports that harm our animal kin.

Other countries have similarly bleak statistics relating to animal cruelty.

The numbers above are so large that they're almost beyond comprehension, every single one representing a life cut short due to human behaviour.

How can we make a difference to prevent cruelty to our fellow animals?

The figures above barely scratch the surface of the suffering humans inflict on our animal kin around the world. It can be hard to know what we can do, both as individuals and collectively, to make a difference. Below, we have listed 25 suggestions for actions we can take to advocate for our fellow animals and begin to turn the tide on cruelty, neglect, and exploitation:

1. Educate yourself and others

The first step to creating change is education. We can only do better when we know better.

Stay informed about animal rights issues and share your knowledge with friends, family, and community members. You can play a vital role in raising awareness about the importance of treating animals with compassion.

2. Choose cruelty-free products

Look for cruelty-free labels on cosmetics, household products, and clothing. These products are not tested on other animals, are free from animal-derived ingredients, and do not contribute to their suffering.

You may need to do some research to ensure a brand is cruelty-free. Ask questions such as, are all their products cruelty free? Do they have a vegan and sustainable supply chain? Are any of the ingredients tested on animals in laboratories?

3. Support sanctuaries and rehabilitation centres

Donate your time, money, or resources to [animal shelters, sanctuaries, and advocacy groups](#) working to protect and care for animals. These organisations play a crucial role in rescuing and rehabilitating individual animals who have been let down by humans in some way.

4. Report animal abuse

If you witness or suspect animal cruelty or neglect, report it to the appropriate authorities. This will vary from country to country, but a quick Google search should give you the best starting point for your location.

Try to make a note of the date, time, and location of any incident you observe. You will need to give a description of the individual animal's environment and physical condition. If you know the name or address of the person(s) you suspect of carrying out the abuse, the authorities will need to know this too, as well as contact details for any witnesses who can support your concerns.

5. Choose plant-based foods

By removing animal flesh and secretions from your diet, you can help to decrease demand for farmed animals. The [growing increase in veganism](#) tells food producers that there is a clear need for plant-based foods that do not rely on animal agriculture.

6. Be mindful of free-living species

Respect habitats and refrain from activities that harm or disturb other animals in their natural environments. One way to do this on a local level is to avoid littering and dispose of waste properly.

7. Avoid supporting ‘animal entertainment’

Refrain from attending events or supporting businesses that [exploit our fellow animals for entertainment purposes](#), such as circuses, rodeos, or marine parks.

This also includes refusing to participate in or watch [sports such as horse or dog racing](#).

8. Practice responsible tourism

Choose [eco-friendly and animal-friendly tourist activities](#) that respect free-living animals in the region and their habitats. You should also avoid attractions that involve captive or exploited animals, such as elephant rides or swimming with dolphins.

If you find tour operators and accommodations with strong environmental and animal welfare policies, make sure to shout them from the rooftops and leave a heartfelt review.

9. Volunteer at animal shelters

Offer your time and skills to help care for animals at shelters or sanctuaries. Volunteer opportunities may include feeding, grooming, facilitating exercise and [enrichment](#), or providing companionship.

10. Encourage humane education

Explore ways to support programmes that teach children and adults about compassion for animals and the importance of treating all living beings with kindness.

If we can encourage schools to incorporate greater portions of humane education into the curriculum, we can help to raise future generations who understand what it means to be responsible stewards of life on planet Earth.

11. Support wildlife conservation efforts

Contribute to organisations and initiatives that work to protect endangered species and their habitats. This can include donating funds, participating in conservation projects, or advocating for wildlife-friendly policies.

12. Reduce single-use plastic consumption

Plastic pollution poses significant threats to life and ecosystems on the land and in the oceans. By reducing your use of single-use plastics and opting for reusable alternatives, you can help protect other animals from ingesting or becoming entangled in plastic debris.

13. Support habitat restoration projects

Volunteer with or donate to organisations that restore and preserve natural habitats for free-living animals. Participating in [rewilding](#), reforestation efforts, wetland restoration, or beach cleanups can help create healthier environments for *all* animals to thrive.

14. Advocate for legal protections

Currently, [most laws see other animals as property rather than as sentient beings](#) deserving of [respect and consideration in their own right](#).

You can help to shift this view by supporting legislation and policies that strengthen animal rights laws and penalties for animal cruelty. Write to elected officials, sign petitions, and participate in advocacy efforts to promote positive change for our animal kin.

15. Advocate for animal-friendly policies

Following on from point 14 above, you can use your voice to support policies that protect animals from exploitation and cruelty. This may include advocating for bans on cruel practices like fur farming, [hunting](#), or live animal exports.

16. Practice compassionate ‘pest’ control

We humans currently categorise other animals along the lines of ‘friend’, ‘food’, or ‘foe’ (you can [learn more about speciesism here](#)). Among our ‘foe’ are the species that society views as ‘pests’.

Instead of using lethal methods to control so-called pests, opt for humane alternatives such as catch-and-release traps or natural repellents. Encourage others to use non-lethal methods as well.

There are a growing number of businesses that offer a vegan, ethical, and environmentally-friendly alternative to traditional ‘pest’ control services, several of which are [listed in the Ethical Globe Directory under Animal Kin Services](#).

17. Reduce your carbon footprint

Climate change poses significant threats to all animals and their habitats. Take steps to reduce your carbon footprint by conserving energy, using public transportation, and supporting renewable energy initiatives.

18. Support animal-free research

Advocate for and fund research initiatives that use [alternative methods to animal testing](#), such as in vitro testing, computer modelling, or human-based studies. These methods are more ethical and often more accurate than testing on animals.

[You can find nine ways to help stop animal experimentation by following this link.](#)

19. Participate in citizen science

Throughout the world, there are a growing number of [citizen science projects](#) where members of the public help scientists collect important research data. These can often be done from the comfort of your own home or garden, with some even being online (like the [Walrus from Space](#) project).

Look for citizen science projects that focus on monitoring and protecting free-living animal populations. By contributing your observations and data, you can help scientists better understand and conserve specific animal species.

20. Adopt, don't shop

In our article, [Problems with Domestication](#), we explored the in-between existence of those animals who are kept as companions in our human homes.

Given that millions of healthy animals are euthanised every year, simply because there aren't enough homes for them, and that individual animals can experience a wildly different quality of life depending on the home they end up living in, it's hard to justify keeping animals as "pets".

That being said, we have a reality where millions more would perish without human intervention, so we have a moral responsibility to take care of those individuals and give them as much agency as possible while safely navigating the human-dominated world.

If you're considering adding a member of our animal kin to your family, opt to adopt from a shelter or rescue organisation rather than purchasing from a breeder, pet store, or online advert. It's vital that we refuse to pay into a system that brings more animals into the world while we're killing others due to a lack of resources.

If you are a guardian to an animal kept as a 'pet', please treat them with kindness and respect as members of your family. This involves more than providing adequate food, water, and shelter. Learn about their natural behaviours and give them plenty of opportunities to express their individual preferences.

21. Foster compassion for insects and small animal species

Encourage empathy towards all living beings, including insects and small animals who are often overlooked in discussions about animal rights. Teach others about the importance of coexisting peacefully with these beings and avoiding unnecessary harm.

22. Combat wildlife trafficking

Raise awareness about the illegal trade in wildlife and support efforts to combat wildlife trafficking. This can include supporting anti-poaching initiatives, advocating for stronger enforcement of wildlife protection laws, and avoiding the purchase of animal-derived products.

23. Combat online animal cruelty

The Internet has facilitated a worldwide network for animal abuse. You can make a difference by raising awareness about the prevalence of online animal cruelty, including issues such as illegal wildlife trading, animal fighting, and the sale of animals in unregulated online marketplaces.

Encourage reporting of abusive content and support efforts to shut down illegal operations.

In addition, there is a concerning trend of people pushing their animal companions into unnatural situations or using harsh handling methods to bring about behavioural changes, all to generate social media content. If you see this sort of content online, report it, challenge it, and call it out publicly.

24. Support animal-friendly businesses

There are some amazing brands and businesses dedicated to ending cruelty to other animals. If you find a business that uses cruelty-free ingredients, supports animal causes, or implements animal-friendly policies in its operations, make sure you support it.

25. Share the stories of individual animals

The human brain is hardwired to love stories. They help us to make sense of things, to understand cause and effect, to share experiences and emotions.

What most rescue centres and sanctuaries find is that people become supporters after hearing the story of an individual animal in their care – typically a story of triumph over adversity.

Similarly, stories of [animal resistance](#) help us to connect with expressions of agency and free will from our animal kin, inviting us to step into the individual's situation and imagine how we would feel. By sharing their individual stories, you can help create a more compassionate and equitable world toward our fellow animals.

When you see a [pig like Charlotte who lived out her life with Dogs4Rescue](#) wagging her tail and frolicking with her friends or [cows in a sanctuary prancing through the long grass](#), it's harder to ignore the [cruelty of farrowing crates](#) or the [plight of cows used by the dairy industry](#). Challenging the speciesism of how and why we sort animals into friends, foe, or food has the potential to be a powerful disrupter.

Individual actions add up to collective change

We hope the above points have given you some ideas about how you can help our animal kin live more freely, away from harm and exploitation by humans. If you have other ideas, we'd love to hear from you.