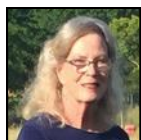




A WORLD IN TRANSITION

Technology holds the promise of a future where milk no longer means separating a cow from her calf, and eating meat no longer means killing animals...





Editorial

Louise van der Merwe

Managing Trustee | *The Humane Education Trust*
Editor | *Animal Voice* | Director | *Nature-Based Education*

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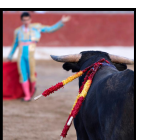
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A pioneering humane education project at Forest Heights Primary School in Eerste River, has earned a place in the world’s first international *Companion to Humane Education*.

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Altogether, 37 women were honoured for their dedication to protecting people, animals and the natural world. The ceremony was led by Master of Ceremonies **Chad Cupido**, founder of *Omni Wellness Media* and Executive Officer of *Beauty Without Cruelty*.



Celebrating women who protect life

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Among the 37 women honoured for their contribution to protecting life on National Women’s Day was animal rights educator Heather Howe.



Celebrating women who protect life

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Dr Elisa Galgut, Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Cape Town was honoured for her contribution to the protection of life through Animal Ethics, Scholarship and Public Advocacy.



We did not make history alone

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**Hitching a Ride****34**

Prof Richard and Theresa Fynn's chickens have built a bond with their friends, the sheep. They don't think twice about hitching a ride when it suits them.





A World in Transition

Whenever my daughter comes to visit, she almost always has a special treat in store for me: a collection of social-media posts saved on her phone showing enchanting glimpses of the intelligence of animals and the breathtakingly special relationships some people have forged with their nonhuman companions.

Most recently, she brought me videos of horses being ridden **bridleless**. No bridle. No bit in the mouth. Sometimes barely a movement of the hands. Yet horse and rider glide over jumps, turn, stop and perform intricate dressage movements together. What holds them in unison is something beautiful: Trust. Trust built patiently between two sentient beings who have learned to communicate across the species divide.

It sets me thinking about trust in a much wider sense. For trust is something our nonhuman fellow travelers in life have had precious little reason to place in us. For centuries, Western thinking was profoundly influenced by the Cartesian view of animals as fundamentally different from human beings – creatures without the rational minds and conscious inner lives we attribute to ourselves. It was a worldview that placed humanity above other animals and endorsed our assumed entitlement to use, control and dominate them – and, indeed, Nature itself.

How desperately wrong we have been, and how tragic the consequences, not only for animals, but for ourselves and the living world on which we all depend.

Yet this edition of **Animal Voice** is about a world in transition, and there are signs of that transition all around us. Science continues to reveal capacities in other animals that previous generations scarcely imagined. We are learning more and more about their intelligence, communication, emotions, cultures and complex social lives.

Our ethical thinking, too, is changing as we confront an increasingly difficult question: if other animals experience their lives from the inside, as we experience ours, what does that require of us?

Perhaps one of the greatest transitions now being asked of humankind is not technological at all. Perhaps it is a transition of consciousness: from dominion to coexistence; from control to relationship; from asking what animals can do for us to considering what we owe them.

When we relinquish our need to dominate and begin instead to listen, observe and earn their trust, we may discover that crossing the species divide brings rewards far richer than those offered by control. Those bridleless horses seem to me to be a beautiful symbol of that possibility. A human being and an animal moving together – not because one is forcing the other, but because communication and trust have made something else possible.

We are coming to a new understanding of our place in the world and of the just and rightful place we must afford the other sentient beings with whom we share it.

They have so much still to show us.

Ultimately, may we – and they – enjoy the ride.

Louise van der Merwe

Honorary Fellow | Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics
Managing Trustee | The Humane Education Trust
Editor | Animal Voice
Director | Nature-Based Education
Mobile | +27 82 457 9177
Emails | avoice@yebo.co.za
education@naturebased.online
Websites | www.animalvoice.org
www.naturebased.education



A Voice from a Changing Africa

Animal Voice Guest Contributor John Nyambane reflects on the childhood experiences that set him on a lifelong journey towards compassion — and on a new generation of young Africans beginning to ask different questions.



Growing up in rural Kenya, wealth manifested itself in livestock. A family with many animals was a family that mattered. Chickens, fish from the ponds, cows, goats, and sheep; none of them were simply food. They were status, social currency, and stored value. My community measured a celebration such as a wedding and Christmas, a worthy celebration by how generously animals were slaughtered and served at the table. The more animals, the better the host.

I understood that logic as a child. I participated in it. I never questioned it out loud. But something bothered me. When slaughter time came, it happened in the open. That is how most things in communal village life happened, without privacy. Adults went about it without hesitation. Some of the younger children would quietly drift toward corners. Cover their ears. I was one of them. Not because anyone told us to care, but because the sounds those animals made were unmistakable. Something was happening that their bodies knew, even if ours had been taught to look past it.

"I did not have a word for what I felt. I did not call it cruelty. I just knew the sounds stayed with me long after the celebration was over."

That feeling hardened into a question: ***Why do people treat other living beings this way?*** It is the kind of question that, once you start pulling at it, does not stop.

It sent me to study philosophy at university. Philosophy led me to ethics. Ethics led me to the effective altruism community and to a gradual

reckoning with everything I had been raised to accept. Today I am vegan.

I founded **Ethical Transformation Impact**, a registered charity in Kenya, and I work with university students across Africa to build a genuine culture of compassion toward animals, toward the environment, toward each other.

Our fellowship has reached young people in multiple African countries. Many of them are wrestling with the same tensions I once felt: the pull of tradition, the weight of community expectation, and a quiet internal voice asking whether this is really how things must be.

The world I grew up in has not disappeared. But something is shifting underneath it. A generation is asking different questions.

That is what ***"World in Transition"*** means to me. Not a sudden revolution. A slow, steady widening of the circle of moral concern. Animals are not products. They are not symbols of prosperity. They are beings with their own experience of the world, and their own version of those unmistakable sounds.

I heard those sounds as a child, hiding in a corner, unable to explain why they troubled me. I understand now. The kinder world is not a fantasy. Among young Africans who are asking harder questions than my generation dared to ask, it is already beginning.

<https://ethicaltransformationsimpact.org/>
www.linkedin.com/in/ibane
Email: joharimbane57@gmail.com

Could the milk of the future leave the calf with his mother?

A remarkable new technology could transform milk production – with profound implications for animals and the planet.



His umbilical cord still wet and dripping, this 4-hour old calf was trucked to the BKB auction near Paarl, Western Cape.

For most of us, milk begins with a carton on a supermarket shelf. But conventional cow's milk begins somewhere very different: **with a cow giving birth to a calf.**

In commercial dairy production, mother and newborn are generally separated so that the milk she produces can be collected for human consumption. For both cow and calf, this separation raises serious welfare concerns.

But what if we could produce the dairy proteins people want **without requiring a cow to produce them at all?** That possibility is moving increasingly from science fiction towards reality.

A technology known as **precision fermentation** uses specially programmed microorganisms to produce proteins – including the same kinds of dairy proteins traditionally obtained from cows. These proteins can then be incorporated into animal-free dairy alternatives. And the implications may extend far beyond animal welfare.

New research published in *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems* has examined what could happen if precision-fermentation milk replaced some of the cow's milk produced in the United Kingdom.

The researchers estimated that its land footprint could be **94–96% lower than that of conventional cow's milk.** Indeed, at the most ambitious level modelled, replacing all UK-produced cow's milk with precision-fermentation milk could release approximately **4.3 million hectares of land by 2050.** This land could become available for purposes including woodland creation, peatland restoration, agroforestry and other measures needed to help meet climate goals.

As encouraging as this may be on a global scale, researchers caution that their findings are specific to the UK and that further research is needed.

But the possibility it presents is a future in which producing milk no longer necessarily means separating a mother from her calf, and in which **vast areas of land could simultaneously be released for nature and climate restoration.**

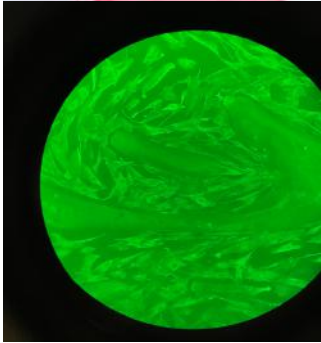
For a world in transition, this is surely a possibility worth watching.

Read the research: [UK land use implications of replacing dairy farming with precision fermentation, Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems](#), February 2026.

See *Animal Voice's* videos [SAVING BABY UBUNTU](#) and [DISCARDED BOY CALVES](#). Nothing has changed since the making of this video more than a decade ago.

MEAT WITHOUT SLAUGHTER

For more than 10,000 years humanity has relied on raising and slaughtering animals for meat. Today, South African scientists are helping to pioneer a radically different future.



Hidden away in Gauteng is a biological treasure few South Africans know exists: a repository of more than 5,000 vials containing cell lines from cattle and other animals. These tiny collections of living cells may one day underpin a food revolution, providing the biological building blocks for cultivated meat and leather that many experts believe could appear on supermarket shelves within the next decade.

◀ *Muscle from a giraffe as it is grown in the WildBio lab. The colour comes from an antibody that detects muscle formation.*



Leading this work is [WildBio](#) CEO and Chief Scientific Officer **Jill Schriewer**, a specialist in cell and molecular biology. She worked closely with the late Dr Paul Bartels – wildlife veterinarian, biotechnology pioneer and Research Fellow in the Department of Animal Science at Stellenbosch University – who founded Mogale Meat in 2020 as one of South Africa's first cultivated meat companies. In 2023, the company was rebranded as **WildBio**.

◀ *WildBio CEO and Chief Scientific Officer Jill Schriewer specialises in cell and molecular biology.*

"Our focus," says Schriewer, "is the development of cell lines derived from both wild and farmed animals in South Africa to serve as the raw material for the emerging cultivated meat and cultivated leather industries, which we expect to expand significantly within the next decade."

Cell lines, she explains, are populations of cells descended from a single original cell that can be maintained and multiplied indefinitely under carefully controlled laboratory conditions.

"Cells are collected from living animals without harming them," she says. "They are then expanded in sterile laboratory incubators before being cryopreserved for future growth in bioreactors, where they can be used to produce cultivated meat, leather and other biological ingredients."

Schriewer believes the technology has particular significance for Africa.

"The expansion of cultivated meat across Africa could provide a sustainable source of protein for a growing population without further encroaching on wild habitats.

"Biodiversity is one of Africa's greatest assets, yet it is increasingly threatened by the expansion of industrial agriculture. Cellular agriculture has the potential to create high-quality jobs, stimulate economic growth and do so in a way that is far more climate-friendly."

She also points to other potential benefits.

"Cultivated meat could strengthen food security, use significantly less land and water than conventional livestock production and, because it is produced without routine antibiotic use, help reduce concerns about antibiotic residues in food."

Although enthusiasm surrounding cultivated meat has become more measured in recent years, Schriewer says this reflects the industry's focus on solving the engineering challenges of large-scale production rather than any loss of confidence in the technology itself.

"Much of the work has shifted towards scaling up the specialised bioreactor infrastructure needed to bring costs down," she explains.

"At WildBio we have made major advances in cell-line development. While there is still progress to be made with taste and texture, we are much further along than most people realise. I am confident that cultivated meat will become commercially available at scale within the next five to ten years. The expansion into cultivated leather is another exciting development."



International investors in cultivated meat include Richard Branson, Bill Gates and Whole Foods co-founder and former CEO John Mackey. African investors include Holocene VC and Anza Capital.

For Schriewer, however, the science is deeply personal. "My love for this work began in childhood. I grew up on a small farm plot in rural Missouri in the United States, spending countless hours exploring forests and streams.

"My fascination with science grew out of a simple curiosity about how living things worked.

"I was fortunate to attend university just as cell and molecular biology was entering an extraordinary period of discovery. I've been captivated by the science – and by what cells can teach us – ever since."

"I want to grow WildBio into a company that creates meaningful employment for South Africans while helping build a future where people and animals can thrive."

IMAGINE A WORLD WITHOUT SLAUGHTER...

Big Boys don't cry, do they?

Ever wondered how an abattoir worker copes with his day?

If you speak to the residents of Belhar, near Cape Town, some of them will tell you that a woman was brutally raped in the back of a meat truck recently by three abattoir workers. *Animal Voice* has been unable to substantiate this story but it does bring into sharp focus the question of what effect the daily dealing in blood, bleating and guts eventually has on the



who may not be named, said in her experience the psychosocial problems of abattoir workers were no greater nor any different from those experienced by workers at say, a water purification plant. "I have never had anyone approach me saying that they are finding the violence in the abattoir too much for them," she says. "I think they become desensitized. But then again, the workers are all men and they might feel it to be demeaning to approach me in this regard - the 'big boys don't cry'

experienced crippling 'repetitive motion' disorders.

In Britain, veterinary surgeon **Gabriele Meurer** wrote the following letter to the UK *Veterinary Times* recently: "What is happening right now in British slaughterhouses is a scandal... Sometimes, when these creatures are hanging on the line bleeding to death, you can see the unborn calves kicking inside their mother's wombs. I, as a vet, am not supposed to do anything about this. Unborn calves do not exist according to the regulations. I just had to watch, do nothing and keep quiet. It broke my heart. I felt like a criminal."

Read the full article from *Animal Voice* September - December 2000 [HERE](#)

KEEPING SHOPPERS IN THE DARK



The **Humane Education Trust** has added its voice to an [OPEN LETTER](#) to South Africa's **National Department of Agriculture** challenging a glaring omission in its proposed new **Methods of Production** standards.

What's been left out is the identification of eggs from cages as 'cage eggs'.

The Department of Agriculture's proposed standards cover sixteen animal production-method claims, including barn, free-range, organic, pasture-raised and grain-fed eggs. Yet, caged-egg production, the system used to produce 98.6% of South Africa's eggs, is absent from the framework.



Led by **Animal Law Reform South Africa**, a total of 31 organisations endorsed the letter which was submitted to the Department on 21 August 2026.

However, this appeal for labelling is not intended to legitimize the cage system or become an alternative to reform.

Battery cages are denounced world-wide for the severe restriction of movement they impose on laying hens. Without identification on the egg carton, a shopper who might care deeply for animal welfare, would have no indication that cages were involved in the production of the chosen carton of eggs. This omission cannot be reconciled with the Department of Agriculture's own stated purpose for the new regulatory framework, namely to ensure **"transparent and fair-trade practices, as well as consumer protection"**.

LOOK DOWN AT YOUR FEET...

The space your shoes occupy represents the space-allowance, for life, of hens confined in battery cages. Hens are vigorous, foraging animals.

Such confinement is a relentless torture to their very essence.

It is also a violation of the **Animals Protection Act** which stipulates that no animal may be given **inadequate space** or caused **unnecessary suffering**.

DON'T BUY EGGS FROM CAGED HENS

The signatories to the Open Letter specifically call for disclosure to form part of a pathway towards the phasing-out of battery cages, and the formulation of baseline welfare requirements for hens who remain confined in them in the meantime. At stake are both animal welfare and the right of consumers to make an informed choice.



SPAIN'S LONG-STANDING CULTURAL ENTERTAINMENT OF BULL-FIGHTING MAY SOON BE A THING OF THE PAST.



According to a Press Release issued by **SpeciesUnite**, Spain's Ministry of Youth and Childhood has introduced a proposal that would prohibit children and adolescents from participating in events involving violence against animals, including bullfights. The proposal is in alignment with the United Nations' clarification of the **Charter on the Rights of the Child** whereby children must be protected from all forms of physical and psychological violence, whether in their home, or in society, and from exposure to violence, such as domestic violence or violence inflicted in animals.

[See GC25 Paragraph 35.](#) **SpeciesUnite** notes:

"Spain now has an opportunity to go further by ending bullfighting altogether."

Read the article here:

<https://www.speciesunite.com/petition-updates/spain-moves-to-bar-children-from-bullfights>

Please support *The Humane Education Trust* in its endeavour to have humane education given priority in everyday learning as part of Life Skills and Life Orientation in the national curriculum.

WE THANK YOU.



A WORLD IN TRANSITION

Johannesburg attorney Amy P. Wilson is co-founder and executive director of [Animal Law Reform South Africa](#). Her pivotal role in bringing animal law into sharp focus, is recognised internationally.



At the express invitation of the Constitutional Court of Colombia, Amy P. Wilson delivered a lecture on the '*Rights of Animals and Nature*' to an international audience of judges and academics at the **World Congress of Constitutional Law** held in Bogota, Colombia, in July 2026.



Speaking on the honour of the occasion on her LinkedIn profile, she noted: "It was encouraging to see that questions once considered peripheral and now finding their place at the very heart of constitutional discourse."

She added: "As we confront the interconnected challenges of biodiversity loss, climate change and pollution, we, and our legal systems, are increasingly being asked to reconsider what, and for whom, our constitutions exist to protect. The constitutional recognition of animals and Nature, and the recognition of their rights in law, is no longer simply a theoretical discussion. It is becoming an increasingly important global conversation about justice, governance and the future of our shared communities."

Amy added: "It was particularly meaningful to speak in Colombia, a country whose Constitutional Court has been at the forefront of some of the world's most influential jurisprudence concerning Nature, ecosystems and the evolving relationship between humans and the more-than-human world."

"I am deeply grateful to the President of the Constitutional Court for this extraordinary invitation, and to the Court and its staff for their incredible hospitality and organisation."

Amy P. Wilson added that the occasion was a reminder of how far the animal rights movement had come in just a decade. "Expanding our constitutional communities to include animals

and Nature is, I believe, one of the defining legal challenges, and opportunities, of the twenty-first century. I feel incredibly fortunate to be part of the global movement working to make that a reality."

Colombia moves to protect children from violence against animals

Colombia has become the latest country to ban bullfighting, as part of a cultural shift away from violence.



Colombian President Gustavo Petro announced the ban as a victory for both children and animals: "Death will no longer be a show", he said.

<https://historica.world/colombias-ban-on-bullfighting-a-shift-in-cultural-tradition-and-ethical-priorities/>
<https://worldanimalnews.com/colombia-makes-history-by-banning-bullfighting-a-triumph-for-animal-welfare/>



Member of Colombia's House of Representatives, Alexandra Vasques tweeted: "It is a great step to end torture disguised as culture."

Member of Colombia's House of Representatives, Alejandro Garcia Rios said: "the world is undergoing a cultural transformation, according to dignity for all living beings."



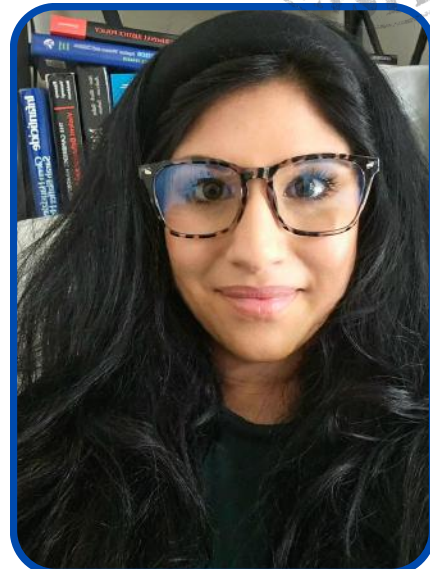
[Extract from Animal Voice Issue 88](#)

FOR GENERATIONS, HUMAN WELFARE AND ANIMAL WELFARE HAVE BEEN TREATED AS SEPARATE CONCERNS.

TODAY, THAT ASSUMPTION IS BEING CHALLENGED BY A GROWING BODY OF INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH.



Dr Roshni Ladny, a criminologist in the Department of Justice Studies at Gulf Coast University, USA, is internationally respected for research that helped pave the way for the historic inclusion in 2023 of animal welfare within the UN Child Rights domain. She believes this marks an important evolutionary awakening: one in which the wellbeing of people and animals can no longer be understood in isolation. Dr Ladny has specialised in childhood trauma and the psychological impact of exposure to violence, including violence against animals. **Animal Voice** asked her to explain why this emerging field of research matters.



Like many researchers, my journey was shaped by lived experience. As a child, I was frequently exposed to intimate partner violence. I remember the intense fear, helplessness and uncertainty that accompanied witnessing violence against those I loved, while having no one to turn to for help. Often, it was animals who provided the unconditional comfort and support I needed.

Those experiences never left me. Rather than defining me, however, they inspired me to understand how exposure to violence shapes children's development and why some childhood experiences remain with us throughout our lives.

My career has included clinical mental health counselling with juveniles – both victims and offenders of violence – community outreach, child trauma research, and hands-on animal rescue work. Throughout this journey I found myself asking a question that, surprisingly, had received relatively little scientific attention: if witnessing violence between people can profoundly affect children, what happens when children repeatedly witness violence against

animals with whom they have formed deep emotional bonds?

That question became the foundation of my research.

Over time, studies from around the world consistently demonstrated that exposure to violence against animals is associated with many of the same psychological processes observed following other forms of violence exposure, including fear, grief, emotional distress, and changes in empathy and wellbeing. Research has also consistently shown that individuals who commit violence against other people are far more likely to have witnessed animal cruelty during childhood than non-violent individuals.

At the same time, we see the harmful impact that repeated exposure to suffering has on first responders, including police officers and others whose professions require them to respond to violence and trauma.

Witnessing suffering inevitably takes its toll.



Like many who work in these fields, I have experienced the vicarious trauma that comes from encountering the extreme suffering of children, animals and adults, day after day.

My personal experiences and professional observations prompted the questions, but science shaped the answers. That distinction has always been important to me because meaningful public policy must be grounded in both compassion and evidence.

Research has also confirmed that witnessing severe and chronic violence during childhood can alter neurodevelopmental processes in brain regions responsible for cognitive functioning, emotional regulation and impulse control, including the prefrontal cortex, amygdala, hippocampus and anterior cingulate cortex.

It is equally important to recognise that every child responds differently. For some children – particularly those who form strong emotional bonds with animals – repeated exposure to violence contributes to anxiety, suicidal thoughts, sleep disturbances and feelings of hopelessness, with consequences that can extend throughout life.

Not all children, however, respond in the same way. Children with lower levels of affective empathy, or those repeatedly exposed to animal suffering in environments where such suffering is normalised, may follow a different developmental pathway. Rather than experiencing obvious distress, they may gradually become desensitised and learn to suppress their natural empathic responses. Over time, this erosion of empathy increases the risk of accepting – or eventually engaging in – violence towards both animals and people.

This distinction matters because both pathways carry profound consequences for individuals, families and society. One leads to emotional harm through overwhelming distress; the other risks the normalisation of suffering itself.

Our goal should never be to teach children either to ignore suffering or to become overwhelmed by it. Rather, we should help them develop healthy empathy while providing environments that consistently model compassion, respect and care for all living beings.

**Children become tomorrow's parents,
teachers, doctors, veterinarians, judges,
police officers, policymakers and
community leaders.**

**The way they learn to interpret
suffering during childhood
inevitably helps shape the society
they create as adults.**

Whether we speak of One Health, One Welfare, Planetary Health or Environmental Justice, the underlying message remains remarkably consistent: our futures are inseparably connected. Progress will require continued scientific research, thoughtful dialogue, humane education, inter-disciplinary collaboration and evidence-informed public policy.

Caring for animals does not diminish our concern for people, just as caring for the environment does not diminish our concern for communities. Each strengthens the other.

Ultimately, I remain optimistic.

Caring for animals does not diminish our concern for people, just as caring for the environment does not diminish our concern for communities. Each strengthens the other.

WILL CHAD SET THE PACE FOR AN END TO ONE OF THE CRUELEST PRACTICES ON EARTH... LONG-DISTANCE TRANSPORT TO SLAUGHTER?

When a country exports animals alive for slaughter overseas, is it exporting jobs and economic value along with them?



The Central African nation of Chad is planning a radical change to its livestock trade. From 1 January 2028, the Chadian government plans to prohibit the export of live cattle and move instead towards exporting processed meat. The reason is not being presented solely as an animal-welfare issue. It is also profoundly economic.



Chadian authorities have estimated that the export of live animals is costing the country more than **400 billion CFA francs – approximately R11 billion – in potential value each year.**

Rather than allowing that value to be captured elsewhere, Chad intends to develop its own meat-processing capacity and associated infrastructure. This is because the income derived from processing the animal from farm to fork is being exported along with the animal into the coffers of the importing country, creating businesses, employment and income.

Animal Voice has long put the spotlight on the enormity of suffering involved in South Africa's long-distance export of living animals to slaughter in Mauritius and the Middle East. *Animal Voice* has argued that South Africa should export meat on the hook, not animals on the hoof. Chad's decision raises another questions to which South Africans deserve answers.

According to international trade data, South Africa exported 12,819 live cattle to Mauritius in 2024, with a recorded export value of approximately R233,63 million. Mauritius was by far the largest recorded destination for South African cattle in that trade category that year. South Africa already has a substantial export trade in processed beef. In 2024, exports of fresh or chilled boneless beef alone were valued at approximately R1,75 billion, with major markets including the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Kuwait and Qatar.

So the question is plainly not whether South Africa can process beef domestically and export it to international markets. It already does.

The question is whether retaining the slaughtering, processing and associated value chain in South Africa could produce greater economic benefit than sending cattle overseas alive.

To find out, *Animal Voice* believes some straightforward questions need answers:

- How many cattle leave South Africa by sea for slaughter each year?
- What is the total export value of those animals?
- What is the total cost of exporting these animals?
- How much additional value is created once those cattle are slaughtered and processed in the importing country?

For South Africa, replacing long-distance sea journeys by living animals with the export of locally processed chilled or frozen meat could potentially present that rarest of policy opportunities: improved animal welfare alongside greater domestic economic activity and employment.

The figures now need to be established. Chad has set the pace. Can South Africa keep up?

PLEASE SEE FOR MORE INFO:



HUMANE EDUCATION IS NOT A PRIVILEGE FOR THE FEW...

An understanding of
living responsibly and compassionately
in a world shared with other living beings
is surely the right of every child



The case for *Animal Sentience* Education in schools

[MODULE ON ANIMAL SENTIENCE](#)



A recent survey among first year
Sociology students at the
University of the Western Cape
revealed **100% consensus** that
animal sentience
should be taught in schools.

74% of participants reported
having matriculated with
no knowledge of the concept of
animal sentience.

[SURVEY ANALYTICS](#)



THE MOST VALUABLE RESOURCE WE FORGET TO INCLUDE IN MAIN STREAM EDUCATION

**We teach children to read, write and calculate.
But what about one of the abilities upon which
peaceful societies may depend most of all?**

Professor **Simon Baron-Cohen**, the Cambridge psychologist renowned for his research into autism and empathy, has described empathy as **"the most valuable social resource in our world."** Yet he believes we have profoundly underestimated its importance. In his book *Zero Degrees of Empathy: A New Theory of Human Cruelty*, Baron-Cohen asks us to imagine empathy as a **dimmer switch**.

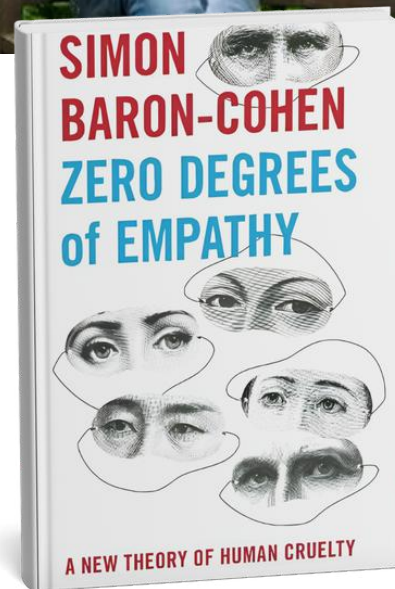
At one end, empathy is high. We are able to step outside ourselves, recognise another individual's feelings and perspective, and respond to their experience.

But turn the dimmer down and something changes.

Our attention increasingly becomes confined to our own needs and interests. The other individual begins to disappear from consideration. In Baron-Cohen's words, when we are solely in the **"I" mode, our empathy is switched off**. And that matters far beyond individual relationships.

Empathy, he argues, is connected to the health of communities, from families to entire nations. Without it, relationships can break down, conflict can flourish and we become capable of causing suffering to others. **With** empathy comes a valuable human resource for resolving conflict, strengthening communities and responding to another's pain.

But, he says, the critical role of empathy in society has been overlooked. For generations, schools have devoted enormous attention to teaching literacy, numeracy and academic



knowledge. Empathy, by comparison, has largely been taken for granted. We simply assume it will develop. Baron-Cohen questions that assumption.

If empathy is so fundamental to the way human beings treat one another, why do we invest so little deliberate time and effort in nurturing it? And perhaps there is another question we should add.

If we want children to learn empathy, why should its boundaries stop at our own species?

A child who learns to notice when a dog is frightened, to imagine what confinement might feel like to a hen, to recognise that a fish can suffer, or to consider life from the perspective of another sentient being is practising something much bigger than kindness to animals.

That child is practising the habit of looking **beyond the self**.

Humane education, he says, gives children opportunities to exercise precisely that capacity: to notice another's experience, to ask **"How might this feel to them?"** and to understand that vulnerability deserves consideration rather than exploitation.

Baron-Cohen believes empathy should not be regarded as a fortunate character trait that some children acquire along the way, but rather something we should **actively cultivate, exercise and strengthen.**

He calls empathy a "universal solvent": immerse a problem in empathy, he suggests, and possibilities for resolving it begin to emerge.

Note from Ed:

For those seeking a kinder and less violent world, that leaves us with a compelling thought:

If empathy is one of humanity's most valuable social resources, surely teaching children to extend it to all sentient life is not an optional extra in education. Rather, it is an investment in the kind of society we hope they will create.

the Humane Education Trust urges the South African Department of Education to give humane education the political will it needs.

SOBERING POLICE STATISTICS ON VIOLENCE ARE REVEALED IN PARLIAMENT

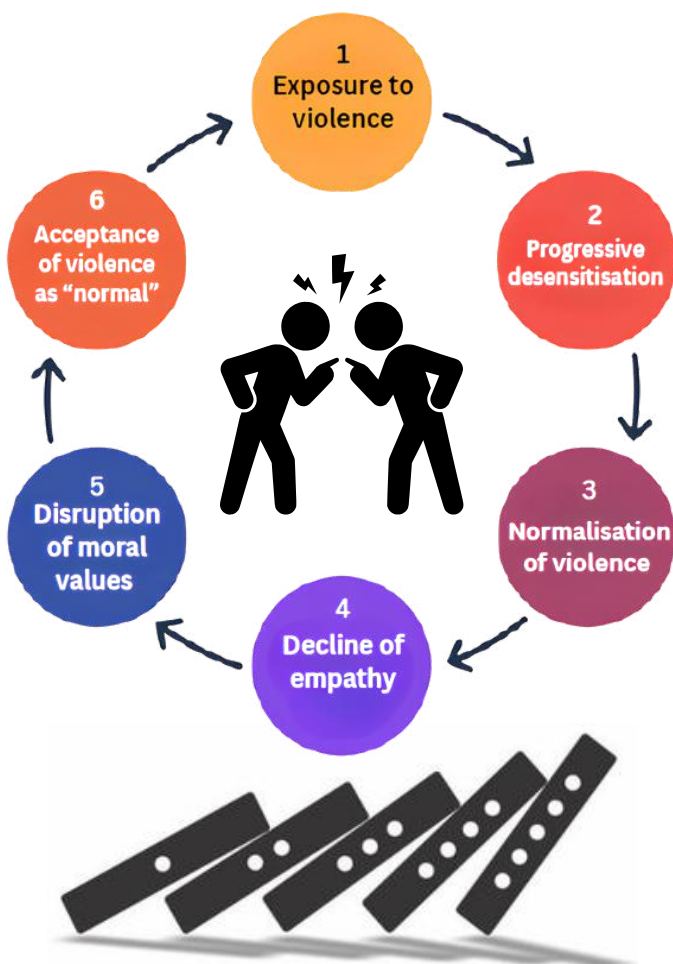
— Cape Times 25 August 2026

Sobering police statistics released by South Africa's Acting Police Minister Professor Firoz Cachalia reveal that 50 511 gender-based violence and femicide cases were registered with SAPS for the 2025/26 financial year. This comes in the wake of President Cyril Ramaphosa declaring GBVF a national crisis.

Activists warn, however, that these figures only scratch the surface of a deepening crisis.

Cookie Edwards, executive Director for the KZN Network on **Violence against Women** commented that efforts to combat GBVF must go beyond *Women's Month* and *16 Days of Activism*. She called for continuous, year-round awareness campaigns across all media platforms.

"More needs to be done in the community, more partnerships, more programmes, more projects, more funding to community-based organisations because they are the ones who are working."



See [European Link Coalition](#)

See [National Link Coalition](#)

See [Teesside University Research](#)

WHEN TWO GOLDFISH BECAME SOMEONE, NOT SOMETHING

Two small goldfish in Buenos Aires have helped make a very big point about animal sentience. Their names are Fede and Magui.



Until recently, the two goldfish were kept in a small vertical aquarium in the window of a sushi restaurant in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Following a complaint by an animal-protection organisation, an investigation was launched – and what investigators found became about much more than the size of a fish tank.

A veterinary report described Fede and Magui as **sentient beings** and found that the conditions in which they were being kept were inappropriate and caused them suffering.

Their tank was too small and its vertical design severely restricted the horizontal swimming natural to their species. Sunlight through the restaurant window caused changes in water temperature and reduced oxygenation. Constant vibrations affected the fishes' sensory wellbeing, while their exposure to activity outside the window caused additional stress.

The fish were removed and placed in the care of the organisation that had reported the case.

The restaurant owner was subsequently placed on probation for eight months under an agreement approved by a Buenos Aires court. Among the conditions, he was required to relinquish any rights over Fede and Magui, keep no animals at the restaurant, and complete a course in environmental and animal law.

It is a significant outcome for two sentient beings whose suffering might once have attracted little notice at all.

Writing about the case, Michael Corthell observes that fish have traditionally received far less consideration than many other animals. Perhaps, he suggests, this is partly because they live in a world so different from ours: we do not hear their distress as we might hear that of other animals, nor do we read their faces as easily.

Yet science has increasingly challenged the idea that an animal must express pain and distress in ways familiar to humans before those experiences matter.

And that is what makes the story of Fede and Magui so important for humane education.

Sentience does not depend upon size, shape, fur, feathers – or whether an animal lives on land or beneath the water.

Corthell puts the significance of these two little fish particularly beautifully. Fede and Magui, he writes, have helped move the legal line between **something** and **someone**.

Perhaps they can help move that line in children's minds, too.

Read Michael Corthell's full article:

[When Two Goldfish Became Someone, Not Something](#)



To celebrate this recognition of the sentience and welfare needs of Fede and Magui, *The Humane Education Trust* invites South African Grade 4 and 5 teachers to [ENTER HERE](#) for the chance to **win** a classroom set of our short read, **Changing the World of Finnegan Fish**.

Because sometimes changing the world begins with learning to see even its smallest inhabitants differently.

FROM A CAPE TOWN CLASSROOM TO AN ACCLAIMED INTERNATIONAL RESOURCE

A pioneering humane education project at Forest Heights Primary School in Eerste River, has earned a place in the world's first international ***Companion to Humane Education***.

The Humane Education Trust's pilot project began in a classroom at **Forest Heights Primary School**, Cape Town, where young children were being encouraged to do something deceptively simple: **to think about how life might feel for someone other than themselves**.

Now the remarkable outcomes of this pioneering humane education project have earned a place in ***The Palgrave Companion to Humane Education***, the first international Companion volume devoted to the field, to be published in the Palgrave MacMillan Animal Ethics Series on 12 October 2026.

Bringing together contributors from South Africa, Singapore, Israel, Croatia, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada and the United States, the volume explores the theory and practice of humane education and the cultivation of compassion, respect and understanding for all living beings and the environment.

The Companion is a project of the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics, an independent academic centre pioneering ethical perspectives on animals through research, teaching and publication.

For The Humane Education Trust, inclusion of our work in this landmark international volume is a deeply appreciated honour.



The Companion itself has also been dedicated to HET founder Louise van der Merwe in recognition of her contribution to humane education.

But the story that travelled from a Cape Town classroom onto these international pages could never have happened without one remarkable teacher...

THE TEACHER WHO OPENED THE CLASSROOM DOOR...

Vivienne Rutgers, then Head of Department for the Foundation Phase at *Forest Heights Primary School*, didn't merely allow humane education into her classroom. She embraced it.

Now retired after a lifetime in education, she remembers how the journey began:

"I became interested in the link between animal abuse and human violence back in 2001, when I picked up a book by Louise van der Merwe about the SPCA's Awards for Bravery at the City of Cape Town's Youth Environment Programme, held at the Chrysalis Academy.

"I subsequently invited Louise, along with many others, to speak at an environmental day at Forest Heights Primary. She was the only one who responded!"

Continued overleaf...

"I still laugh when I remember offering her chicken pieces for lunch after her talk. She very politely declined, and I subsequently discovered that chicken was not something she would relish!

"But a friendship was forged, and over the 25 years since then we have taken every opportunity we could to develop and promote humane education together."

At a time when humane education was still a little-known concept, Vivienne's commitment took her well beyond her own classroom.

In 2005, with permission from the Western Cape Education Department, she attended a Pioneer Training course in Italy as one of 12 international participants interested in advancing animal welfare.

In the years that followed, she was twice invited to speak in London about the value of humane education and was also invited to address the United Nations Forum on Sustainable Development in New York.

But perhaps some of the most persuasive evidence of all was waiting back home — in the behaviour of the children themselves.

The Humane Education Trust's two-year pilot programme at Forest Heights was designed to explore the impact humane education could have on learner behaviour.

What happened sometimes took even the educators by surprise.

Vivienne recalls:

"It was truly a triumph to witness how the children changed. The fascinating development of empathy in action among two nine-year-old boys on the playground during break



one day is included in our chapter in the Palgrave Companion, as is the response of 46 learners to a small bird that had accidentally become trapped in their classroom over-night.

"These were no longer simply children who could talk about kindness when a teacher asked them to. They were beginning to practise it when no lesson was taking place.

"The influence of our pilot project began to spread beyond the children directly involved in the pilot.

"For example, some of the bigger boys found a duck on the sports field. By then, word about humane education had spread around the school. They carefully caught the duck and brought it to me.

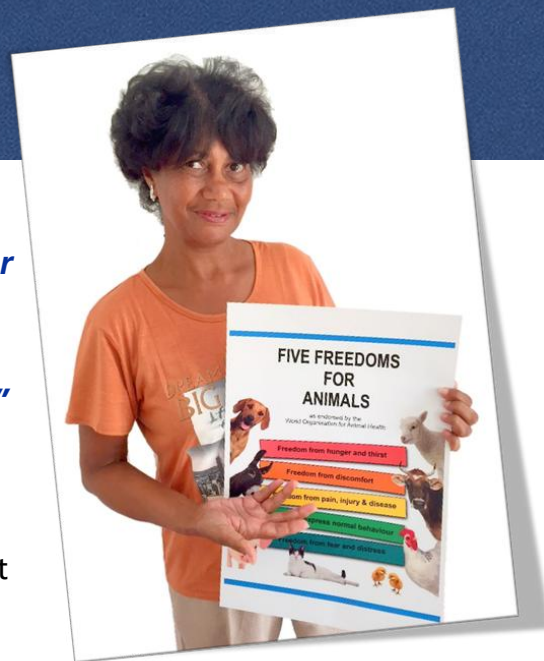
"Before our project had made ripples around the school, I believe they might instead have pelted that duck with stones."

AND THE TEACHING GOES ON...

Vivienne adds:

"If we are going to fight violence effectively and uplift our communities for a sustainable future, we are going to have to reach into the hearts of learners and develop those vital qualities of empathy, compassion and respect."

Vivienne has now retired from formal classroom teaching, but not from teaching kindness. An active member of her church, she continues to find opportunities to help children think about compassion, respect and non-violence. [[LINK: See Vivienne's Sunday School children spreading the message for the International Day of Non-Violence.](#)]



Khethani Hlongwa is Acting Chief Director in the Office of the Rights of the Child and Research Director at the Department of Social Development. Here he is pictured with Vivienne and Louise, shortly after the United Nations' inclusion of [GC26 in the Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) on 18th September 2023



THE PALGRAVE COMPANION TO HUMANE EDUCATION

Edited by **Clair Linzey** and **Andrew Linzey** and published by **Palgrave Macmillan**, the Companion brings together international scholarship and practice in humane education and asks what role the deliberate cultivation of empathy, compassion and respect might play in creating a less violent world.

Publication: 12 October 2026



[You can order your copy here](#)

HELP US KEEP TEACHING KINDNESS...

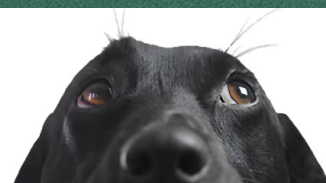


Please support The Humane Education Trust.

Every donation helps us take humane education further — giving children opportunities to learn empathy, compassion and respect for all life.

Because a kinder world has to be taught.

WE THANK YOU.



Celebrating Women Who Protect Life

A celebration of some of South Africa's lesser-known change-makers took place at the Masque Theatre in Muizenberg on National Women's Day in August 2026.

To learn more about this special day of recognition, visit [Dr Phil-Afel Foundation](#) and [Beauty Without Cruelty South Africa](#).

Celebrating Women Who Protect Life was hosted by Omni Wellness Media in conjunction with Beauty Without Cruelty and Gauteng Animal Rights Defenders. Altogether, 37 women were honoured for their dedication to protecting people, animals and the natural world. The ceremony was led by Master of Ceremonies **Chad Cupido**, founder of Omni Wellness Media and Executive Officer of Beauty Without Cruelty.

Animal Voice editor **Louise van der Merwe** was honoured to be among the women recognised.



Celebrating Women Who Protect Life

Among the 37 women honoured for their contribution to protecting life on **National Women's Day** was animal rights educator **Heather Howe**.

Once a month, every month, youngsters in Hanover Park, Cape Town, watch out for the arrival of Heather Howe from Beauty Without Cruelty. They know that, for this day at least, the relentless challenges of poverty, unemployment, gang violence, food insecurity and limited access to green spaces will give way to the excitement of discovering what she has in store for them.

A member of BWC's Board, and decades-long volunteer with Beauty Without Cruelty, Heather's mission is to awaken a sense of wonder, curiosity and duty of care among the 7- to 15-year-olds who make up her **Troopers Group**.

"Our Troopers are introduced to concepts they may never have thought about before, such as animal sentience and the Five Freedoms for Animals," Heather explains.

Outings that have focussed on hands-on, experiential learning, have included visits to the Franschhoek Animal Farm Sanctuary, the Dog Museum, Drakenstein Lion Sanctuary, Zandvlei Nature Reserve and SANCCOB, while workshops have explored subjects ranging from *Living with Baboons* and *Battling the Plastic Monster* to *Zandvlei Insects and Biodiversity* and the important role of owls in the environment.

"The Troopers," says Heather, **"are introduced to animals as personalities with names, subjectivity, sentience, interests and personhood. We encourage them to ask their own questions and express their opinions in a safe, non-judgemental environment."**

For Heather, perhaps the greatest reward comes in seeing how these experiences begin to shape the Troopers' own thinking.



"Their comments are heart-warming. For example, after our trip to the Dog Museum, one of the Troopers remarked: *'Dogs are so important they have their own Museum'*. And after our visit to the Tom Ro Haven for Rescue Horses, many Troopers shared their thoughts about how they had once been afraid of horses *'but now we learnt how to come near horses properly and learnt everything about them. We're not scared of horses anymore. We like them.'*"

The Humane Education Trust applauds Heather Howe for bringing humane education so vividly to life. We are particularly touched to know how useful she finds our readers, *Caring Kids*, *Goosie's Story*, *I'm a very special modern-day dinosaur!*, and *The Great Escape*.

Between Caring Kids and Heather's own ***Five Freedoms and the Magic Mini Bus***, these young Troopers are being given something that all children should be receiving: **the opportunity to discover that kindness, curiosity and respect for other living beings can help shape the way they see – and one day influence – the world around them.**



Celebrating Women Who Protect Life

Dr Elisa Galgut, Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Cape Town was honoured for her contribution to the protection of life through Animal Ethics, Scholarship and Public Advocacy. Here, Dr Galgut gives us her thoughts on the on-going human conflict with the baboon troops that live on the Cape Peninsula.



We Must Do Better... For All Our Sakes

"Baboon-human conflict on the Cape Peninsula has impacted extremely negatively on the baboons; almost 100 have been killed to date by the authorities, and close to double that number have died from traffic accidents or human aggression.

The authorities are now contemplating moving some of the troops to a sanctuary, although whether they will be allowed to live natural lives, free from human interference, is at this stage unclear.

This is all happening despite that fact that the very mitigating strategies identified by these same authorities - waste management, traffic calming, education, to name a few - have not been implemented, either in whole or in part.

To my mind, this illustrates a lack of concern for the welfare of the baboons, who have in the past been classified as 'vermin' and who have no rights under the law. Their moral status is also not recognised. These factors have spelled disaster for these clever, quirky primates.

The dire fate of the baboons mirrors that of many other wild species: as humans encroach on their territory, their prospects deteriorate. Unless we recognise the moral status of other sentient beings, their future looks bleak. This should concern us, because our own future is intertwined with theirs. The health of the planet depends to a great extent on the preservation of wild spaces and the protection of other species. With every human-induced wild-animal death, the cuts on the branch on which we all sit widen and deepen. We must do better - for all our sakes."



Driven from her habitat, struck on the face by a paintball; tormented by an outrageously big collar, shot 7 times with a pellet gun, this young baboon died of her wounds. Pictures courtesy Jenni Trethowan: Baboon Matters.

WE DID NOT MAKE HISTORY ALONE

For centuries, history has been written as the story of humankind. Two important books remind us that we were never its only participants.



Human history is filled with kings and conquerors, explorers and inventors, wars and revolutions but there are other lives woven through virtually every chapter of our story. Animals carried us, fed us, clothed us, worked beside us, fought in our wars, transformed our landscapes and helped make human civilisation possible. Yet their place in history has too often been treated as little more than a footnote. Two books invite us to look again and to recognise that the story of humanity cannot properly be told without the animals who shared it.

AFRICA'S PAST – WITH THE ANIMALS PUT BACK IN

In *'The Lion's Historian: Africa's Animal Past'* South African historian **Professor Sandra Swart** turns the traditional historical lens around, bringing animals out of the background and into sharp focus. Described as a book that breaks down boundaries between human and animal history, it explores Africa's past through the lives of creatures ranging from lions and elephants to horses, cattle and other animals whose histories have been inseparable from our own.

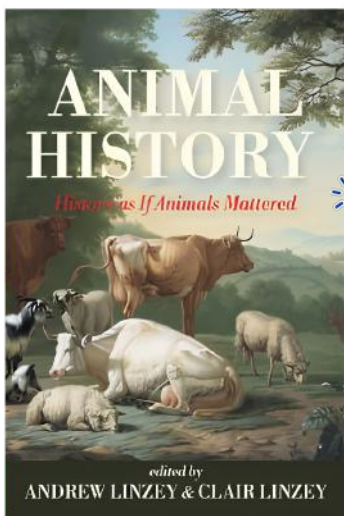


Swart reminds us that animals are not merely relics of our past. They have travelled with us into the modern world, adapting and surviving amid extraordinary change.

With reference to baboons, she writes: **"Like us, and unlike most other primate species, they are survivors of modernity – perhaps even of climate change."**



JUST AS COMPELLING IS THE RECENTLY PUBLISHED VOLUME THAT ASKS THE QUESTION: WHAT IF HISTORY WERE WRITTEN AS THOUGH ANIMALS MATTERED?



Animal History: History as If Animals Mattered, edited by **Reverend Professor Andrew Linzey** and **Dr Clair Linzey**, challenges the deeply human-centred way in which history has traditionally been recorded and understood.

Its contributors explore changing relationships between humans and animals and recover voices and ideas that conventional histories have mostly overlooked. For example, at a time when Western philosophy regarded animals as unthinking machines, *Margaret Cavendish (1623–1673)* argued that they possessed rational intelligence, sentience and emotions.

She advocated for their intrinsic value and sharply criticised human arrogance.

**HUMAN CIVILISATION DID NOT TRAVEL THROUGH THE CENTURIES ALONE.
OUR HISTORY IS THEIR HISTORY TOO.**

SHOULD FEEDLOT BEEF CARRY A HEALTH WARNING?

Research emerging from various universities is casting fresh light on one of the most important health challenges of our time: chronic inflammation – a condition increasingly associated with diseases such as cancer, cardiovascular disease, Type 2 diabetes and a range of autoimmune disorders. Even Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) – now renamed as Polyendocrine Metabolic Ovarian Syndrome – which can lead to infertility, is now thought to be triggered by low-grade inflammation.

Here, Professor Richard Fynn, a Rangeland Ecologist at the Okavango Research Institute, University of Botswana, argues that the health of people, animals, and ecosystems is far more closely connected than is commonly recognised. In this interview with *Animal Voice*, he explains why the way we produce beef may have serious implications for human health.



Animal Voice:

Professor Fynn, you argue that feedlot beef constitutes a health risk and should be labelled with a health warning.

Professor Fynn:

Yes. These feedlots incorporate unacceptable animal welfare violations, environmental hazards and, not least of all, consequences for human health.

We need to start pressuring government to label all meat as to whether it is derived from rangeland or from a feedlot. And if it is derived from a feedlot, the product should carry a health warning.

This applies equally to restaurants that serve beef. One needs these labels so that the health conscious consumer can be confident that the beef that they are buying in a store or ordering at a restaurant is range-fed and not feedlot derived.

Governments can't have double standards. If health warnings apply to cigarettes, and to MSG, then they apply equally to feedlot beef. It's a no-brainer.

Animal Voice:

For the sake of clarity, please define the difference between rangeland beef and feedlot beef.

Professor Fynn:

Rangeland-fed refers to animals that forage on natural rangeland where there is a high diversity of plants including grasses, forbs, shrubs and trees, with each plant species containing its own unique combination of phytochemicals, many of which have important medicinal roles for the animals who eat them. By contrast, animals in feedlots eat only maize and get literally zero phytochemical diversity in their diets.



Feedlot beef contains inflammatory compounds which give the human body an inflammatory response every time it's eaten.



Historically, meat was not considered a source of phytochemicals. But we know now that this is not so. Research confirms that phytochemicals and secondary metabolites in rangeland meat occur in amounts akin to those in plant foods and carry significant anti-inflammatory, anti-carcinogenic, and cardioprotective properties.

So, while a feedlot diet of maize results in rapid growth in ruminants, it is devoid of phytochemical properties and lacks the anti-inflammatories and antioxidants of range-fed beef. Feedlot beef contains inflammatory compounds which give the human body an inflammatory response every time it's eaten.

In addition, the animals themselves require high use of veterinary drugs – anti-parasite and antibiotics – which is a health risk for people. The high levels of inflammatory compounds in feedlot beef cause illness in the long term. Unlike short-term inflammation that helps the body heal after injury, chronic inflammation persists over months or years, quietly damaging tissues and organs and increasing the risk of the diseases afflicting humans in our modern world.

Animal Voice:

One of the leading researchers on phytochemical diversity in animal diets, is Professor Frederick Provanza, an emeritus professor at Utah State University.

He puts it this way: "People will have to learn we are members of nature's communities. What we do to them, we do to ourselves. Only by nurturing them can we nurture ourselves."

Professor Fynn:

Yes, that statement captures the essence of our research. The issue extends beyond human health. Feedlot systems also raise significant concerns relating to animal welfare and environmental sustainability. Healthy grazing systems depend upon diverse plant communities and well-managed herbivores. Together they help build healthy soils, support biodiversity and sustain ecosystem function. When we interfere with these natural systems, we can expect consequences that ripple through the environment and, ultimately, back to ourselves.

Animal Voice:

Where to from here? Most people do not know that the diversity of plants eaten by animals ultimately influences the health of people. Your research findings are vitally important for people to know.

Professor Fynn:

The first step is transparency and traceability of beef production. The public have the right to know if their beef came from a feedlot with its terrible animal welfare violations and unhealthy meat, or from a regenerative ranch using excellent grazing management and improving soils, biodiversity and ecosystem function, while giving the cattle a healthy natural life.

Essentially, our research is about relationships: the relationship between soil, plants, animals and people. This is powerful information on a global level and helps us, as individuals, determine our well-being. We need action at both industry and Government level.

Professor Fynn (continued):

Cheap food comes at a price – the price is our health and the immense cost of dietary supplements in an effort to ward off potential disease, as well as the terrible cost of animal suffering in feedlots or chicken houses.

For anyone who knows the price of supplements – a multi-billion dollar industry in itself – to be able to skip that by paying more for food rich in phytochemicals, would be a huge bargain. It is time for people to have a responsible attitude to what they will support in food production systems.

They should ask three key questions:

1. does the food compromise human health,
2. does the production of this food have animal welfare violations and
3. does the production of this food benefit or harm the environment?

Next time we pay more for rangeland meat, it is worth bearing this in mind.

Animal Voice:

Thank you Prof Fynn for your very valued eye-opening research.



Photo Courtesy SA Grain

Links to the research on which this article is based.

[Health-Promoting Phytonutrients Are Higher in Grass-Fed Meat and Milk](#)

[Is Grassfed Meat and Dairy Better for Human and Environmental Health?](#)

[A metabolomics comparison of plant-based meat and grass-fed meat indicates large nutritional differences despite comparable Nutrition Facts panels](#)



[Regenerative Farmer Angus McIntosh is the recipient of Animal Voice's Award for Excellence in Farming.](#)

More from Professor Fynn...

BOTSWANA-BASED SCIENTIST POINTS TOWARDS AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT FUTURE FOR AFRICA



See [FARMER'S WEEKLY 6 May 2026](#) >



In the wake of the recent horror exposed on broiler chicken farms in Mpumalanga, South Africa – where the [NSPCA was forced to cull more than 350 000 starving and crippled chickens](#) amid a financial collapse at a state-owned poultry operation, Botswana-based scientist, **Prof. Richard Fynn**, points towards an entirely different future for Africa.

Ironically, he says the pathway out of poverty may lie in something as simple and as revolutionary as giving chickens back their natural lives.

Professor Fynn, a specialist in grassland science and rangeland management, believes Africa has an unprecedented opportunity to avoid repeating the mistakes of the industrialised West.



In much of the Western world, virtually all meat products now come from animals raised in confinement systems that prevent them ever experiencing natural rangeland. They are fed predominantly grain-based diets – mainly maize – designed for rapid growth and mass production.

Even many so-called “free-range” systems rely heavily on grain feeding. The modern food system is focused almost entirely on producing large quantities of cheap meat. Very little attention is paid to the biological quality of that meat, or to the long-term consequences for human health.

And that comes at a tremendous cost – both to the animals themselves and to the people consuming them. One of the greatest problems with industrial farming is the absence of phytochemical diversity in the animals’ diets.

On natural rangeland, herbivores and chickens are exposed to extraordinary plant diversity – grasses, shrubs, legumes and forbs – sometimes 60 to 100 plant species, each with its own unique chemical profile and medicinal properties.

Animals instinctively select what they need. That diversity strengthens immunity and profoundly influences the nutritional quality of the meat.

Research increasingly shows that animals raised in healthy natural systems contain far higher levels of beneficial anti-inflammatory and anti-oxidant compounds. Those benefits are then transferred to us through the food we eat.

By contrast, meat from feedlots and intensive confinement systems is associated with inflammatory compounds that contribute over time to chronic illnesses such as heart disease, cancers and metabolic disorders.

When animals are subjected to fear and distress, powerful stress hormones and inflammatory responses are triggered throughout the body.

We cannot separate the emotional and physical condition of an animal from the food ultimately placed on our plates.

In depriving animals of the natural grasses, shrubs and forbs that sustain their health, we are also depriving ourselves.

Professor Richard Fynn

Africa still has an extraordinary opportunity because many rural communities already raise cattle, goats and sheep on natural veld systems rich in phytochemical diversity.

What we should now be doing is integrating chickens into those systems. For example, grazing animals disturb insects in the grasslands and chickens naturally follow behind feeding on them. The systems complement one another ecologically.

This is part of what we are exploring at the Research Institute. If enough small-scale farmers each raised even two seasonal batches of 1 000 chickens under healthy rangeland conditions – and if retailers such as Woolworths or Food Lover's Market supported and marketed these products – we could create a premium ethical food system that uplifts rural communities while dramatically improving animal welfare and human health.



See Professor Fynn's rangeland chickens here:



Feed the Future. Heal the Planet.



John Nyambane
Founder and Executive Director at Ethical Transformation Impact
<https://ethicaltransformationsimpact.org/>
Email: joharimbane57@gmail.com

John Nyambane is the Founder and Executive Director at the Kenya-based organization **Ethical Transformation Impact**. His focus is on sustainable agriculture, animal welfare, and agroecological research. He kindly agreed to chat to *Animal Voice* about his vision for the continent's future.

He says: *"I envision a future where people, animals, and the planet coexist in harmony. A universe where our food systems nourish both humanity and the planet. Where animals are valued as sentient beings rather than production units. Where prosperity is measured not only by economic growth but also by the well-being of people, animals, and our environment. A future free from factory farming and built on ethical, sustainable, and resilient agriculture."*

Animal Voice:

Please tell us about the conference you have organized for mid-July this year. It seems to be receiving a lot of interest on social media.

John Nyambane:

The conference is the **Animal and Vegan Summit Ghana 2026**, which will be held in Accra from 16–19 July. It aims to bring together animal advocates, researchers, funders, policymakers, and movement leaders from across Africa to strengthen the continent's growing farmed animal movement.

The summit focuses on evidence-based advocacy, coalition-building, access to funding, and developing African-led strategies that create lasting systems change for animals.

Animal Voice:

We understand you will be facilitating a specialist workshop?

John Nyambane:

Yes, it will be my privilege to facilitate a workshop titled **"Building Effective African Community-Centred Animal and Vegan Advocacy: Practical Strategies for Working with Youth, Local Communities, and Women."** In this

interactive workshop, I will share practical lessons from our work and explore how animal and vegan advocacy can be rooted in African communities by connecting with local priorities such as livelihoods, food security, sustainable agriculture, public health, and climate resilience. Participants will engage in hands-on exercises, case studies, and group discussions to develop practical, culturally responsive advocacy strategies that they can apply in their own communities.

Animal Voice:

We understand you're studying for a doctoral thesis.

John Nyambane:

I am currently pursuing a PhD in Sociology at the University of Nairobi. My research focuses on the nexus between technology-driven aquaculture and fish welfare. This research complements my work with Ethical Seafood Research, where I am implementing a WTS funded project aimed at improving tilapia farming practices in Kenya through the use of a digital fish welfare assessment application.

My goal is to generate evidence that supports both sustainable aquaculture and better welfare outcomes for millions of farmed fish in Africa.

John Nyambane

Animal Voice:

When did your interest in Ethical Transformation begin? Were you influenced as a child?

John Nyambane:

Looking back, I believe my journey began during childhood. Growing up in Kenya, I witnessed firsthand how recurring drought devastated farming families. I saw crops fail, livestock perish, and households trapped in cycles of poverty and food insecurity. Those experiences deeply shaped how I viewed agriculture and justice.

Over time, my work expanded from community development into ethical food systems and animal advocacy.

Today, I believe that Africa has a unique opportunity to build food systems that avoid the impact of industrial factory farming while promoting compassion, innovation, sustainability, and prosperity.

Ultimately, my vision is to help create a future where people and animals live in harmony, where no sentient being experiences unnecessary suffering, and where ethical food systems replace factory farming.

I believe Africa can become a global leader in demonstrating that agricultural growth, animal welfare, environmental sustainability, and economic development can advance together.

John Nyambane: Founder and Executive Director at Ethical Transformation Impact
<https://ethicaltransformationsimpact.org/> Email: joharimbane57@gmail.com



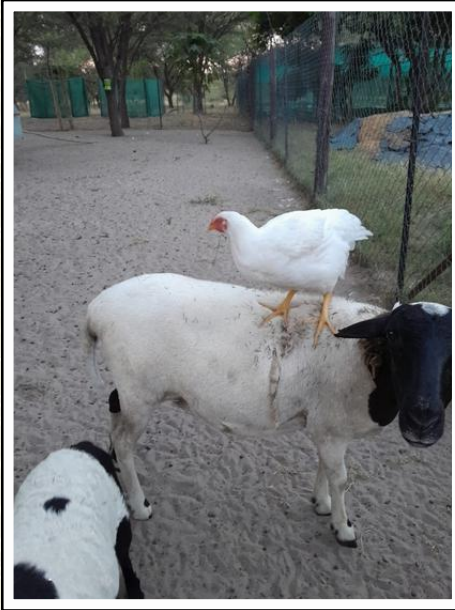
The Africa we have...
Industrialised Agriculture
A continent of confinement: animals treated as units of production.

OR



The Africa we could build...
Regenerative Agriculture
A continent of renewal: healthy soils, thriving animals, resilient farming.

HITCHING A RIDE



Prof Richard and Theresa Fynn's chickens have built a bond with their friends, the sheep.

They don't think twice about hitching a ride when it suits them.

It must be said that these broiler chickens are lucky to be on the Fynn's five-hectare farm north of Maun in Botswana because virtually all of the 70 billion broiler chickens (the ones that have become the staple food of humans internationally) spend their lives in abject misery, packed like sardines on a chicken house floor that becomes saturated with ammonia from their droppings.

Selectively-bred for fast growth and meatiness, the skeletons of broiler chickens have not kept pace, resulting in a significant portion of them living in chronic pain. Scientists estimate that up to 90% of the broiler flock experience leg weakness and pain. However, today, we are talking about the lucky few.

Theresa explains: "We went to the feed store and heard a lot of cheeping coming from boxes on the floor. I asked if the chicks were for sale and the shop-keeper said that they had not been collected, so we decided to buy a box of 50 chicks with two extra included for free."

Professor Fynn believes local farmers should get back to farming animals that are indigenous to an area, and where foraging is on a wide diversity of rangeland grasses, forbs and shrubs that offer optimal nutrition and medicinal resources, thus obviating the need for expensive feed, mineral licks and veterinary interventions.

Tswana chickens, for example, he says, are incredibly resilient and that can't be said for these broiler chickens who've bonded with the sheep.

"However, because they eat a wide diversity of plants and insects, they have gained a natural protection from disease, further assisted by being outside all day and, therefore, not standing in their own muck 24/7."

Professor Fynn adds:

"One key insight these photos show is that because the broiler chickens walk around in the veld all day, they are fit and strong enough to manage to flap up onto a sheep's backs."

Hitching a Ride

"You can be sure that if they had been raised in a crowded chicken house environment they would not have managed to do so because of leg and general weakness! We're talking here about the difference between couch-potato-chicken-house-raised chickens and fit-athletic-veld-raised chickens!"

Theresa Fynn says: "They need a lot of extra care and are too vulnerable to go out on range with the sheep until they are old enough to withstand the mongoose and other predators."

Before they are old enough we put them out on the range in mobile 2 x 2m cages which we move every hour to fresh grass. But making friends with the sheep has been part of a heart-warming journey."

She adds: "Our beautiful animals come out of the barn at 6am and forage on range all day long until they are called for a bed-time meal at 6pm. The chickens sometimes flap up and hitch a ride. The sheep don't mind at all. In fact, they have come to fully expect their 'passengers' to come aboard. The chickens frequently take a rest on their backs during the day as well."

Tragically, the unlucky billions spend their lives like this...



[ANIMAL VOICE June 2015 >](#)



Theresa Fynn with a happy, healthy, veld-raised chicken

**The saying goes that
'you are what you eat!'**

If you agree, would you rather eat a
couch-potato-house-raised chicken
or a
fit-athletic-veld-raised chicken?



*"For me, humane education is a great and joyful programme.
It's made me into a better person." – Elton, Grade 10*

"In what other subject do you learn to love, care and protect?" – Hewston, Grade 10

*"Humane education has given me a new pair of eyes.
Everything I look at now, I see differently." – Brendan, Grade 10*

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Louise van der Merwe is honoured to have been appointed an Honorary Fellow of the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics

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