

## Why We Need To Stop Animal Gifting

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Sometimes good intentions don't have the best outcomes even when done in good faith. Animal gifting is one of those things. Especially during the holiday season, it's popular to send gift cards towards the purchase of live farmed animals as "presents" to people in low-income and developing countries to help stop hunger. Unfortunately, the true cost of this gift is often not realized by donors. But large companies selling them should know that gifting animals adds to the devastating domino effect that exacerbates the climate and ocean crisis and is cruel to the animals.

Some of the aid charities often use misleading advertising. They ask consumers to buy cows to provide families with 'nutritious' dairy products; state that gifting a tribe of goats is a purchase of sustainability; and that four-legged creatures can serve as a financial backbone for families. The true cost of animal gifting is not mentioned on their websites. Not only is dairy unhealthy and can lead to illness, but many people in the countries receiving animals for dairy consumption are lactose intolerant. Gifting animals is not sustainable and can actually increase poverty, not diminish it. But a shift away from animal gifting to plant-based alternatives can help save human lives, our beautiful earth, and animals. Keep reading to learn more!

### **Raising animals requires more food and water and does not equate to less hunger**

Farmed animals do not magically 'live off the land'. They need food and water and quite often these precious resources are already scarce. Having an animal to feed may actually add to the burden families are already facing. Many of the gifted animals end up suffering from malnutrition and dehydration as they don't have enough to sustain them. Furthermore, raising these gifted animals requires up to ten times more water than growing crops. It has been proven animal products have a bigger water footprint than crop products. When you give someone the gift of a cow, sheep, goat, pig or chicken it takes much more water to keep them alive than if this same family were to grow grains, pulses, vegetables and in some places, teff.

Teff is a fine ancient grain that grows in African countries like Ethiopia. Teff is the staple of their cuisines and can be ground into flour to make traditional flatbread called injera. It's known as a mighty nutritious superfood because it's high in protein, iron, minerals, fiber and calcium. Do you think it makes more sense to help farmers and families grow plants and grains that they can eat directly, or raise animals that eat the grains, take up land, and drink precious water?

The disconnect is that Ethiopia has over 50 million cattle, one of the largest herds in the world, but a large percentage of people in the country remain hungry or starving. [Dr. Richard Oppenlander](#), a sustainability consultant and researcher, has devoted his life to improving the health of our planet and believes our current choices of foods are causing global depletion. He refers to the loss of our land, water, air, food resources, energy supplies, and our health. In a 2012 article titled [The World Hunger-Food Choice Connection: A Summary](#) he writes; "Globally, even with climate change issues and weather extremes, we are producing enough grain to feed two times as many people as there are in the world."

*"As an example, in Ethiopia, over 60% of their population is considered hungry or starving, and yet they have 50 million cattle in that country (one of the largest herds in the world), unnecessarily consuming their food, land, and water. More than 2/3 of Ethiopia's topsoil has been lost due to raising cattle. Many countries elsewhere in Africa and in the Amazonian region that suffer from hunger raise cattle inefficiently at the expense of their soil, localized climate, and other resources while producing a fraction of the food they could if converting to plant based foods. This is because of their very powerful cultural factors to raise cattle as well as demand globally and by neighboring countries." – Dr. Richard Oppenlander*





### **Animal agriculture contaminates water, soil and pollutes the air**

Gifting animals contributes to the methane emergency and is accelerating global temperatures. These days information on how animal agriculture is bad for the earth and our planet is everywhere. Check out (and endorse!) the [Plant Based Treaty](#) to learn more.

*“There is a climate, ocean and biodiversity crisis. Fossil fuels and animal agriculture are the driving force behind runaway global warming as well as extensive biodiversity loss, large-scale deforestation, species extinction, water depletion, soil degradation and ocean dead zones.”*

*“The three main greenhouse gases – carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide are at devastatingly high levels and rapidly accelerating, increasing global overheating at an alarming rate.”* – Plant Based Treaty

Animal agriculture is responsible for compromised water sources. A huge amount of water is needed for crops to feed farmed animals and this causes massive environmental issues. Pollutants are carried to streams, lakes and even groundwater.

*“Runoff from factory farms and livestock grazing is one of the leading causes of pollution in our rivers and lakes. ...bacteria and viruses can be carried by the runoff and that groundwater can be contaminated. Factory farms frequently dodge water pollution limits by spraying liquid manure into the air, creating mists that are carried away by the wind. People who live nearby are forced to inhale the toxins and pathogens from the sprayed manure.”* – People For The Ethical Treatment of Animals

Animal waste like urine and manure causes harmful air pollution and emits around 400 harmful gasses into the atmosphere. By gifting seeds and other plant-based solutions instead of animals, you give resources so people can grow their own garden. This not only helps save the planet and animals, but helps families stay healthy.

### **Many gift recipients are lactose intolerant**

Humans are the only species that drinks the milk from another. There is nothing natural about drinking milk from cows, goats, or other creatures. It has been proven time and again by prominent medical studies and doctors around the world that consuming dairy can lead to sickness such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes and an increased risk of breast, ovarian and prostate cancers.

Animal-gifting programs advertise that if you buy a family a cow they will benefit from increased dairy production. But will dairy help them or make them sick? Studies suggest that as much as 75% of the world's human population is lactose intolerant.

Another animal gifting program states; "One cow gives up to 5,000 gallons--or 80,000 glasses of milk in its lifetime." What they don't mention is that it's highly possible the recipients of the cows cannot drink this milk without getting sick. (They also fail to mention how this family will pay for the cow's food and water.)

Increased dairy production from a cow is frequently marketed as a successful animal gifting program – but they purposefully fail to mention the extremely high levels of lactose intolerance, especially in the Asian and African populations that these dairy programs are targeting.

*"Infants and children produce enzymes that break down lactose, the sugar found in breast milk and cow's milk, but as we grow up, many of us lose this capacity. Lactose intolerance is common, affecting about 95 percent of Asian Americans, 74 percent of Native Americans, 70 percent of African Americans, 53 percent of Mexican Americans, and 15 percent of Caucasians. Symptoms include upset stomach, diarrhea, and gas." – Physicians Committee For Responsible Medicine*



### **Many gifted animals suffer**

Perhaps you have seen animal gifting websites misleading donors with bright glossy photos of children hugging and kissing healthy animals. Just like the dairy industry misleads consumers with photos of

happy cows, when in reality dairy cows suffer their entire lives, the organizations trying to convince people to gift animals are not showing accurate representations of what really happens. The sentient beings that are sent to these countries, especially the animals kept in confinement, often suffer from neglect, malnutrition, the long-distance transport to the recipients location, extreme weather conditions and the inhumane slaughter process.

This holiday season let's not fall for animal gifting scams. Animal Save Movement calls on Oxfam, World Vision, Heifer International, Christian Aid, Child Fund, Plan International, Lutheran World Relief, Feed the Children, Tearfund and others to end animal gifting programs and implement plant-based projects to alleviate poverty and create long term sustainable solutions for the climate. Help us get the message across by signing our [petition](#), sending an [email](#), and sharing this campaign on social media.