

Interview with Czechoslovakian Animal Liberation Activist and Photographer Lukas Vincour

From [We Animals Media](#)

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We Animals Media Contributor, Lukas Vincour. Photo credit: Michaela Vincourova

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We Animals Media contributor Lukas Vincour is an animal liberation activist and a documentary photographer from the Czech Republic. He is co-founder of the vegan organization [Zvirata Nejime](#) (We Don't Eat Animals) and one of the co-authors and directors of a documentary film about animal abuse in the Czech Republic, [Svedectvi](#) (Testimony). Through his work he is trying to draw attention to the suffering of innocent beings.

We spoke with Lukas to learn more about his thought-provoking work.



We Animals Media contributor, Lukas Vincour in the field documenting conditions on a factory farm in the Czech Republic.

We Animals Media (WAM): Which came first for you: animals or photography? Can you tell us a little about your path to where you are today, and why you document what you do?

Lukas Vincour (LV): Animals came first and then photography. I went to protests, we visited animal farms, and there wasn't really anyone to document it. That's why I took a camera in my hand and recorded everything. Since then, investigating and documenting animals has made tremendous sense to me. The camera is my non-violent weapon to help liberate animals.



A female goat stands inside one of a row of individual stalls on a dairy farm in Czechia. In order to milk them, each goat is locked inside a stall by a restraint around her neck. Czechia, 2020. Lukas Vincour / Zvířata Nejíme / We Animals Media



A calf with blood running down their face stands inside an individual enclosure on a farm in Czechia. This young animal has recently undergone a painful dehorning procedure. Czechia, 2021. Lukas Vincour / Zvířata Nejsme / We Animals Media

WAM: What do you enjoy most about your work? What do you find most challenging?

LV: Photography is my passion, but documenting abused animals is always traumatic for me. It hurts my heart to see the horrific conditions they are forced to live and die in. But I always return home, to safety, and leave those hundreds, thousands of individuals behind closed doors. It's hard to live with that feeling, but I believe that their recorded fates will help make a difference. And that's the biggest challenge: getting into the places that the animal industry guards so closely and showing the reality that would have otherwise remained hidden.

WAM: Is there any particular photograph that you think represents your work and what you'd like to communicate to the world particularly well? Tell us why.

LV: It's hard to pick one particular photo, but I often think of a goat imprisoned in an insemination station. He was fixed there by the head, and the employees were inserting an electroejaculator into his anus and collecting semen. He was looking at me, trembling terribly, and there was so much fear and helplessness in his eyes. The look on his face said it all.

WAM: What's happening in photojournalism in the Czech Republic?

LV: There are relatively few people in the Czech Republic who are involved in animal photojournalism. It is more about individuals. But there are quite a few young people who follow animals and share their stories on social media. A lot of skilled documentary photographers in our country are more focused on social issues, protests, nature etc.



A male goat used for semen collection stands restrained by the neck inside a semen collection station at a goat farm. Czechia, 2020. Lukas Vincour / Zvířata Nejíme / We Animals Media



The bodies of several dead pheasants lie in a heap on the bottom of a trash bin at a pheasant farm in Czechia. These discarded individuals were raised on this farm for the purposes of meat production. Czechia, 2020. Lukas Vincour / Zvířata Nejíme / We Animals Media



The remains of a common pheasant dangle from a wire fence at a pheasantry in Czechia. Pheasantries commonly raise these birds for the purpose of being hunted as game. Czechia, 2021. Lukas Vincour / Zviřata Nejime / We Animals Media

WAM: How much creativity can you as a photographer bring to a scene? You're reporting as a journalist, but how much are you also trying to include your perspective as an eye-witness, as well as your own creative expression?

LV: As a documentary photographer, I don't interfere in the scene and mostly try to shoot from the animals' point of view. There is often little time and a lot of stress involved in the photography, but I compose in such a way that the atmosphere of the place or the victim is transferred to the viewer and the emotions are felt. Even if I am a mere observer, I work with the angle of the shot, the light and the situation to make the viewer feel that they are in the place with me.

WAM: Who inspires your work? Do you have any top photography influences?

LV: A great inspiration in animal photojournalism for me is definitely Jo-Anne McArthur, whose work I have followed since the beginning of my efforts to document the lives of animals. I would also like to mention [Andrew Skowron](#) and Human Cruelties from Poland and Aitor Garmendia from Spain.

WAM: When preparing for a field assignment, what's your go-to camera bag kit?

LV: In my backpack I mostly have a wide angle lens, one portrait lens, a telephoto lens and an led light.



A calf gazes out through the window of their small hutch on a dairy farm in Czechia. This young animal, and others like them on the farm, are each housed alone in individual calf hutches with a minimal amount of exterior space. Czechia, 2021. Lukas Vincour / Zvířata Nejsme / We Animals Media



A large group of sheep housed in crowded and dimly lit indoor pens on a sheep dairy farm. Czechia, 2019. Lukas Vincour / Zvířata Nejsme / We Animals Media



Dual rows of female sheep stand inside the stalls of a milking parlour on a sheep dairy farm in Czechia. The sheep have dirty looking coats that are painted in red with identifying numbers and other markings. Czechia, 2019. Lukas Vincour / Zvířata Nejíme / We Animals Media

WAM: If you could issue an invitation to other photographers to take up animal photojournalism, what would you say? If you could issue an invitation to the media to include the work of animal photojournalists, what would you say?

LV: The places where animals are imprisoned are absolutely non-transparent, in fact it is one of the most hidden industries ever. The owners of these farms have no interest in making what goes on inside public. That's why journalists and the media should focus on this cruel reality. To show that behind the misleading advertising of animal products there is a lot of pain and suffering of innocent beings.

WAM: What's next for you in your work?

LV: We are currently working on a new documentary, *Teenage Activists: Life in a Non-Vegan World*. This will give a glimpse into the world of teenagers who have a level of compassion so high that they choose to expose themselves to the bullying and misunderstanding of mainstream society. The aim of the documentary is to break down preconceived notions about vegan diets in children and empower a generation of young people to push for a better world. I am also working on getting more photographs and would like to publish a book of my work soon.



A curious calf vocalizes from within their small pen on a dairy farm in Czechia. This young animal, and others like them on the farm, are each housed alone in individual calf hutches with a minimal amount of exterior space. Czechia, 2021. Lukas Vincour / Zvířata Nejsme / We Animals Media



A row of goats with their udders connected to milking machines on a dairy farm in Czechia. In order to milk them, each goat is locked inside a stall by a restraint around her neck. Czechia, 2020. Lukas Vincour / Zvířata Nejsme / We Animals Media



We Animals Media contributor Lukas Vincour with Elvira, a pig rescued from a breeding farm. She now lives a happy life at Farma Nadeje sanctuary in the Czech Republic. Photo credit: Michaela Vincourova