

PEOPLE FOR  
THE ETHICAL  
TREATMENT  
OF ANIMALS

March 25, 2020

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General  
World Health Organization  
20 Avenue Appia, 1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland

Dear Dr. Ghebreyesus,

We're writing to you urgently because, while the trajectory of the COVID-19 pandemic remains unpredictable, one thing is certain: Live-animal meat markets will continue to put the planet's human population at enormous risk. On behalf of PETA and more than our 6.5 million members and supporters worldwide, we respectfully ask that you call for the immediate and permanent closure of these markets, in which dangerous viruses and other pathogens flourish.

Deadly outbreaks of mad cow disease, avian flu, swine flu, SARS, HIV, hoof-and-mouth disease, and others have stemmed from capturing or farming animals for food. Live-animal markets are perfect breeding grounds for diseases, which can jump from various other species to humans, since stressed, injured, and sickly animals are commonly caged in public areas—sometimes even on sidewalks—where feces, blood, and offal can contaminate buyers and sellers and be tracked into restaurants or homes.

While some live-animal markets in China have closed, perhaps only temporarily, many continue to operate throughout Asia, including Bangkok's Chatuchak Weekend Market, which the *Bangkok Post* called a "Wuhan in the making." Wet markets also operate in Africa, Europe, and the U.S. More than 80 live-animal markets and slaughterhouses operate on the crowded streets of New York City alone.

If we're to prevent future pandemics, we must heed the warning of top coronavirus researchers like Dr. Danielle Anderson, scientific director of the Duke-NUS Medical School, and cut them off at the source. We urge the WHO to call for the closure of all live-animal meat markets worldwide to prevent the next outbreak.

Yours truly,

Ingrid E. Newkirk  
President

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