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Your ASI Monthly Newsletter Has Arrived

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ASI's Statement of Solidarity

These are historical times that have revealed the pain, turmoil, anguish, and divisiveness society still confronts when it comes to racism—a deep and abiding stain on society’s past that continues today. ASI envisions a compassionate world where animals flourish and that world embraces respect, dignity, and social justice for all humans. ASI stands with Black Lives Matter and opposes all forms of racism, injustice, and violence as antithetical to our vision of a compassionate world and we stand with our supporters who are committed to ending racism.

**We Need Your Help Today to Make a Difference
Tomorrow**

Dear ASI Friends,

People across the nation and around the world are reaching out, stepping up, and doing what they can to help humans and animals as we fight COVID-19. Here at ASI, we are curating reliable COVID-19 animal-related information—highlighting the positive and dispelling faulty information that has the potential to harm animals.



Now, as always, we want to ensure that both animals and people are staying safe. But I must tell you, right now our programs are in trouble. Donations are known to dwindle in times of uncertainty—and that is exactly what we are experiencing.

This COVID-19 donation downturn affects all of us concerned with advancing knowledge to improve animal lives and that's why we're turning to you for help.

Will you donate \$25 or more today to help us catch up on the fundraising we need to continue to make a difference for animals and people alike?

ASI provides information, tools, and hands-on assistance to people working on the full spectrum of human-animal relationships. Our meaningful work includes everything from treating people who abuse animals to translating research on human-animal interaction into practice and policy.

We don't receive government funding. We don't have endowments. We rely solely on individual donations from people just like you—people who care about animals and our relationships with them—to maintain our operations, retain our staff, and continue the good results our programs foster.

I realize this is a stressful and uncertain time for us all, and there is a tendency to want to wait until it's all over to act. Please know, the only way we can keep our programs thriving is with your help.

Your contribution today of \$25 or more will make a huge difference to ASI's operations and programs.

I've never before asked for your assistance with this sense of urgency. Please help us today so that we can continue to make a difference tomorrow.

Stay safe and healthy!



Executive Director



Intersections Between Race, Humans and Other Animals Industrialized Animal Agriculture Workers

A Reflection by Dr. Gala Argent, HAS Program Director



Industrialized animal agriculture workers

As last month, aspects of the COVID-19 virus continued this month to raise concern about both the “depopulation” of animals within the factory farming industry. According to information reported in an email from and

compiled by **Sentient Media** from *The New York Times*,
the Guardian and *Science*, at least 20 million farmed and lab animals have been exterminated because of the pandemic.

The situation has also worsened for the treatment of workers within industrialized animal agriculture. Although the statistics vary depending upon how the demographics are categorized and measured, it is clear that Black, Hispanic, and Asian workers **comprise a large percentage of meat industry workers**. It is also clear that food production workers are more likely to have household incomes 200% below the federal poverty level and, in particular, Black and Hispanic workers are also more likely to be uninsured compared to workers overall. **These findings show that many food production workers have**

limited ability to absorb income decreases, creating disincentives for them to miss work even if they feel ill or fear getting ill, and increasing the risk of them experiencing financial challenges if they do miss work.

Meat production rebounded this month after the factory farming industry lobbied the US administration to intervene and reverse plant closures mandated by local and state officials. Following the federal administration classifying these factories as “essential,” **COVID-19 cases have increased dramatically** at slaughter and packing plants. As of press time, **at least 32,049 workers have tested positive for Covid-19 and at least 109 workers have died**.

This creates a problem that ties the industry’s inhumane treatment of animals with social justice concerns for the humans involved, where economic instability and lack of insurance force workers into unsafe conditions. While **some plants have closed temporarily**, worker safety has been ignored by management in others, and instances of plants attempting to block the release of COVID-19 testing results have angered public health officials. In a North Carolina chicken plant, for instance, Tyson hired a private company to take over testing and ceased relaying the results of the testing. **Only after the state public health director warned Tyson that its testing company could face prosecution did the health department receive the information.** (Similar actions to downplay the pandemic’s death and infection rates of Indigenous peoples in Brazil have pressed the country’s indigenous federation’s executive director, Sônia Guajajara, to **assert that the administration’s institutional racism is leading to state-authorized genocide**, “The government wants to hide the real numbers in order to carry out its plan to exterminate the indigenous peoples.”)

In addition to trying to simply stay alive in these dangerous conditions and to care for their families under economic conditions that already make this difficult, these workers also face ethnic scapegoating. Rather than confront the problem for workers in these plants, some industry spokespeople, politicians, administration officials **sought to blame the workers themselves**. A Smithfield plant spokesperson cited the plant’s “large immigrant population,” in which “living circumstances in certain cultures are different than they are with your traditional American family”; Wisconsin Supreme Court Chief Justice Patience Roggensack **downplayed** a regional outbreak, declaring that it involved meatpacking workers and not “the regular folks” of the area; and U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar faulted **the "home and social" aspects of workers' lives** rather than the conditions inside the facilities for the illness spikes.

Coronavirus outbreaks in meat processing facilities are not limited to the USA. Germany has recorded its largest local COVID-19 outbreak since it started reopening its economy in early May; out of 1000 tested, **more than 600 employees at a slaughterhouse were positive for coronavirus**. German officials are acting more responsibly, however. Local authorities **shut down the plant, and suspended all schools and daycare centers** in the region until June 29.

Meanwhile, as discussed last month, the United States has continued to export pork to China, showing that concerns over supply issues in the USA were overstated in order to reopen the plants because "**keeping the plants open would also protect their long-term investments in exporting to a country that is vital to their growth.**"

Sociologist Cory Wrenn recently **took a scholarly look at the problem**, challenging "Neo-colonial practices that serve to spread Western dietary practices, entrench developing regions in animal agriculture, and fan food insecurity." Echoing the point that addressing the environmental crisis and climate change must involve dismantling white supremacy, the director of strategic partnerships for the Sierra Club, Hap Hopkins, **connects today's environmental crises with racism** as "all a part of the same story.... Just as the settlers had to believe and tell stories to dehumanize the people they killed, plundered, and terrorized, today's systems... can only work by dehumanizing people."

And on a positive note, the coronavirus pandemic continues to push more consumers to buy meat alternatives—**over half of those polled in the United States now want meat-free options**—with **sales soaring 168.5% in the first week in June**, and meatless alternatives are becoming more readily available.



Human-Animal Studies

We are pleased to announce our new, public, **Human-Animal Studies Facebook group** has exceeded 1000 members in less than a month since its launch! The group is designed to fill the need for a network for sharing information and promoting research, accomplishments, jobs,

events and activities related to the multifaceted and complex relationships that

exist between human and other animals. Please **join us there**, share HAS-related information, and spread the word!

THE POLICY CORNER

U.S. and Canada Policy Update Bee Friedlander, ASI Board Member



Most of the country has begun to resume activities after the pandemic shutdowns of the past few months. In this country, Congress and state legislatures are beginning to consider bills unrelated to

the pandemic, so it's worth keeping a watchful eye for developments that impact animals.

Some activity we've been following recently:

US Department of the Interior: full steam ahead during the COVID-19 shutdown

The past few months have seen some concerning administrative actions from the Interior Department:

- **The Migratory Bird Treaty Act**: first passed in 1918 and a bedrock environmental law, is under attack. The administration has proposed a final rule that would re-interpret the law so it would not apply to "incidental takings" of birds. Some of the greatest threats that birds face come from habitat destruction and direct threats posed by industry. Under the final rule published by the administration earlier this year, industry can escape legal responsibility for birds' deaths (estimated to be 1+ billion per year) unless they *intended* to harm birds. This would eviscerate a law that was used, for example, to hold BP liable for damages to the Gulf of Mexico from the Deepwater Horizon spill in 2010. In early June, the **US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) issued**

a draft environmental impact statement; comments are open until July 20, 2020.

- National Wildlife Refuges: USFWS has issued a **proposed rule** increasing hunting and fishing on 89 wildlife refuges and opening 8 for the first time. This impacts 2.3 million acres of land in 44 states. Despite the scope of the proposal, the agency maintained that certain environmental and other reviews – which are time-consuming – were unnecessary. The comment period ended June 8, and USFWS will be reviewing and responding to the comments.
- Hunting practices on federal lands in Alaska:
 - Doughnuts soaked in bacon grease; spotlights to blind and shoot hibernating denning black bear mothers and their cubs; gunning down swimming caribou from motorboats; killing wolves and coyotes, including pups, during the season when mothers wean their young; using dogs to hunt bears. All these practices, supported by trophy hunting interests and in line with practices in the state of Alaska, will be legal beginning in July. A **National Park Service Final Rule** overturned a 2015 ban on these practices.
 - Meanwhile, USFWS issued a **proposed rule**, open for comment through August 10, that would again allow baiting of brown bears on two million acres of public lands in Alaska's Kenai National Wildlife Refuge. Wildlife officials have expressed concern about the decline of brown bear population in the state.

Recent Ag Gag Activity in US, Canada

- North Carolina's law was recently struck down as a violation of the 1st amendment. The 2015 law imposed civil (not criminal) penalties, and targeted whistleblowers and undercover investigations more broadly in industries other than industrial agriculture

- The Iowa legislature has passed, and the governor has signed, the state's 3rd attempt at ag-gag legislation, this one rushed through in the midst of a pandemic. The original law was struck down and the second iteration is on hold pending resolution of a lawsuit challenging its constitutionality. This version creates a crime of "food operation trespass," a misdemeanor for a first offense and a felony thereafter. Iowa has been involved in challenges to its various laws since the first one passed in 2012.
- Ontario passed the Bill 156, Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act, a controversial ag-gag bill that opponents noted was enacted at a time when more transparency in food production is necessary. The [**Ontario Federation of Agriculture's Submission**](#) in support of the bill stated that "We simply do not know if animals are capable of reasoning and cognitive thought, therefore we cannot attribute human qualities of reasoning and cognitive thought on animals as the activists would like" (page 9) and argued that animals are actually protected by their property status because it imposes legal obligations on the owner to provide When an animal is "owned", as under provincial legislation, there is a legal obligation for the owner or caregiver to provide for the standards of care to the animals. (page 10)

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