

BREAKING: Campaigners take the world's first legal case against factory farming to Europe's highest court

Humane Being For immediate release: 26/07/2022

Factory farming is deadly — fuelling future pandemics and the climate crisis. This morning, Humane Being, a non-profit running the “Scrap Factory Farming” campaign, filed a new case appealing to the European Court of Human Rights to hold the UK Government accountable for failing to protect people from the life-threatening risks posed by factory farms.

The group claims that the Government's support of factory farming is risking millions of deaths from the climate crisis, future pandemics and antibiotic resistance. The campaign's legal team, headed by renowned human rights lawyer Michael Mansfield QC, says that the Government is well aware of these risks and is failing to both inform and protect the public.

Lorna Hackett, Head of Legal Practice at Hackett & Dabbs, which is bringing the challenge, says:

This world-first case joins a growing list of cases before the ECHR seeking to address the climate crisis, but is unique in also addressing pandemic and antibiotic resistance risks. Unlike cases already before the court from France, Switzerland and Portugal, our challenge to the UK Government specifically identifies the climate risks posed by runaway agricultural methane emissions and deforestation. Factory farming at current levels is simply not compatible with the Government's emission reduction commitments, including the Global Methane Pledge.

Speaking to the risks of a future pandemic posed by factory farming, **Dr. Alice Brough**, a UK pig veterinarian and co-claimant to the legal challenge, said:

Intensive farms create the perfect breeding ground for disease, including those with human pandemic potential, with thousands of stressed animals crammed into filthy environments. Due to the conditions and common practices, antibiotics are often required in excess on these farms, furthering the risk to humans. Only recently scientists found superbugs in UK meat.

Since October 2021 there have been 116 UK outbreaks of avian influenza, an historically and currently pertinent zoonosis — almost a 400% increase on the 2020-21 season.

The vast feed requirements for intensively farmed animals lead to devastating deforestation in other parts of the world, such as South America, and contribute significantly to the climate crisis. Every part of this practice is a ticking time bomb for our species.

Dr. Shireen Kassam, a medical consultant supporting the campaign, added:

We are at risk of a pandemic far worse than Covid-19. The Government has plans for dealing with 750,000 deaths from a flu pandemic which history and science show is most likely to come from a commercial animal farm.

Farm use of antibiotics contributes to antimicrobial resistance which is already killing 1.27 million people globally each year. In 2020 the UK Government was reporting 178 new antibiotic resistant infections every day in England alone.

Heat related deaths in the UK currently number 4000 and will only get worse due to climate change, as we see more extreme weather like the heatwave last week.

The campaign's lawyers have asked for their application to be given priority assessment by the court.

Press contact: For more information, contact Dr Alice Brough, 07904 671823, Jane Tredgett (Founder of Humane Being) 07710 317422, David Finney (instigator of the idea of the legal challenge) 07521 991645, Robert Gordon (Humane Being spokesperson) 07422 651776 or Lorna Hackett, Barrister 07515359234.

Note to editors / references

[Photos of the group](#) joining the demonstration when the case went to an oral hearing in the UK Jan 2022.

References

1. [Global Methane Pledge](#)
2. Superbug in UK meat ([The Guardian](#))
3. UK avian flu data collated from Government data
[23 May 2022](#) - Updated Outbreak Assessment #26 (outbreaks 1 to 112, 66 of which in "commercial premises" with turkeys, hens, broiler chickens, ducks = 59%)
[20 Jun 2022](#) - Updated Outbreak Assessment #28 (outbreaks 79 to 116)
4. 1.27 million deaths per year from antibiotic resistance ([The Lancet](#))
5. 178 new antibiotic infections per day in England ([The UK Government](#))
6. [4000 heat wave deaths](#) – HM Government. “UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 2017”. January 2017. pp. 12-13
[Met Office](#) says “The chances of seeing 40°C days in the UK could be as much as 10 times more likely in the current climate than under a natural climate unaffected by human influence”

Most of the science is summarised in our research booklet <https://78460747.flowpaper.com/FactoryFarmingisharminganimalspeopleandtheplanet/>

- For information on the connection of antibiotic resistance to factory farming see pages 117 – 137
- For information on deforestation / factory farm feed see pages 153- 157, 166 and 167
- For information on Government predictions re an influenza pandemic see pages 17 – 23
- For pandemics in history see pages 28 -36
- For a study on the origins of avian flu outbreaks (56% from commercial farms) see page 38

Scrap Factory Farming / Humane Being

For more information about Humane Being and to follow us, please visit

- W: www.humanebeing.org.uk www.scrapfactoryfarming.org
- F : www.facebook.com/HumaneBeing2019 <https://www.facebook.com/ScrapFactoryFarming>
- T: www.twitter.com/ScrapFactFarm I: www.instagram.com/scrapfactoryfarming

This team of volunteers are raising funds for their legal fees - contributions can be made at <https://www.crowdjustice.com/case/scrapfactoryfarming/> or at <https://www.scrapfactoryfarming.org/donate/>

Other info

- 80 celebrities, scientists and experts from the UK, Australia, the USA, Sweden, Germany, Brussels, Northern Ireland, New Zealand, Hong Kong and Canada are amongst those who have also supported the legal challenge

Other relevant legal cases

- [Danish Crown case](#) for greenwashing their products
- [Major Livestock company in legal battle over price fixing](#)
- [Legal battle over advertising claims of US livestock company Hormel Foods](#)
- [Tesco threatened with Legal Action over poultry pollution in the River Wye](#)
- [Chicken farmers taking class action against Major poultry processor for poor working conditions](#)
- [Food campaigners taking legal action against the government for failing to support a transition to reduce meat and dairy consumption](#)