



## Australia's home-grown pandemic risks

The Editor, Dear Editor, Prime Minister Morrison has criticised the World Health Organisation for supporting the reopening of China's wet markets, one of which is widely considered to have been the source of the COVID-19 pandemic. It's not just China that permits these vile places to exist: PETA Asia has just released footage of wet markets in Indonesia and Thailand. The footage shows blood and rotting flesh covering the floors and countertops, dogs lying dead with flies buzzing around them, and chickens and cats awaiting slaughter in cramped cages. Mr Morrison is right to criticise these filthy torture galleries as potential breeding grounds for the next pandemic virus. The US Centers for Disease Control has stated that 75 percent of new or emerging infectious diseases in people come from other animals. But the PM is wrong to think that Australian industries do not pose a similar risk. Millions of gentle kangaroos are shot every year for their flesh or skins. Many, including mothers carrying joeys in their pouches, are wounded but escape, only to suffer and die slowly. Incapacitated adults and orphaned joeys are decapitated or have their heads smashed in. Others are simply left in the field to die of starvation, predation, or exposure. Kangaroos are often butchered in the field and transported on unrefrigerated open trucks. An investigation found that many of the carcasses stored by the kangaroo-meat industry were contaminated by dangerous bacteria, including E coli, streptococcus, and staphylococcus. Russia has banned kangaroo-meat imports several times because of pathogenic contamination. A study by Belgian spatial epidemiologist Marius Gilbert found that Australia had generated more instances of historical 'conversion events' (when a non-toxic avian flu strain suddenly becomes dangerous to humans) than China. It is becoming ever clearer that the exploitation of animals, anywhere, invites human disease. Desmond Bellamy Special Projects Coordinator PETA Australia PO Box 2352 Byron Bay NSW 2481 0411 577 416 [desmondb@peta.org.au](mailto:desmondb@peta.org.au)

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