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How We Frame the Problem Affects Public Support for Animal Freedom

Research Report

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Table of Contents

Executive summary.....	3
Abstract.....	3
Method.....	3
Results.....	3
Key takeaways for animal advocates.....	4
Method.....	5
Participants.....	5
Procedure.....	5
Farming abolition.....	5
Speciesism.....	5
Social progress.....	5
Negative impacts.....	6
Status quo.....	6
Results.....	7
Pre-post comparison.....	7
Post-test comparisons.....	9
Discussion.....	12
Which messages worked?.....	12
Take-home principles.....	15
Methodological considerations.....	15
References.....	17
Appendix One.....	18
Appendix Two.....	27

Executive summary

Abstract

This report examines 22 different ways of framing the issue of animal use and harm, testing which approaches most effectively increase public support for animal freedom. Drawing on data from over 2,000 participants, it analyses framings such as care, fairness, authority, and shared wellbeing, and their influence on attitudes towards abolishing animal farming. The results show that messages appealing to shared values and inviting reflection, rather than blame, are most effective. The findings provide practical guidance for advocates, highlighting which narratives foster support and which risk provoking defensiveness or backlash.

Method

This study tested the effectiveness of 22 different framings of animal freedom messages on public attitudes. A total of 2,290 participants were recruited online, with 2,117 included in the final analysis after excluding those who failed attention checks.

Participants first completed baseline measures of attitudes towards the abolition of farming animals, speciesism, viewing animal freedom as social progress, concern about the negative impacts of abolition, and their preference for keeping the status quo. They were then shown a short message, followed by questions about the message's clarity, persuasiveness, emotional tone, and impact. Afterwards, they completed the same attitude measures again, alongside questions assessing beliefs about animal use. Message impact was evaluated by comparing pre- and post-exposure scores and analysing post-message responses.

Results

Messages varied widely in their impact. Four framings were most effective in increasing support for abolishing the farming of animals:

- **Authority vs Subversion:** Challenges harmful traditions by appealing to our moral responsibility to question outdated norms.
- **Harmful Status Quo:** Highlights how normalised practices often contradict our shared values and cause widespread harm.
- **One Health:** Emphasises our interconnected wellbeing with other animals and the planet.
- **Care:** Appeals to our natural compassion and the disconnect between how we feel and how animals are treated.

We speculate that this is because these messages tended to reduce defensiveness and align with participants' existing values. While most framings had small effects, some led to meaningful positive shifts, including increased motivation and willingness to learn more.

In contrast, several messages backfired, especially those that framed the reader as morally complicit (e.g. direct comparisons between speciesism and racism or sexism). These often increased speciesism and reduced support for change. Overall, messages inviting reflection and appealing to shared values performed better than those provoking guilt or blame.

Key takeaways for animal advocates

- **Avoid triggering defensiveness:** Framing that positions people as morally at fault – especially through comparisons to racism or sexism – often backfires.
- **We're not to blame for the world we inherited, but we don't have to accept it:** Harmful norms are a product of our time, not personal failings. We can choose to live in line with our values and help shape a kinder, fairer future for all.
- **Affirm shared values:** Messages that appeal to compassion, fairness, and social responsibility are more persuasive than those that accuse or blame.
- **Speak to a 'bigger us':** Emphasising our connection with other animals and shared wellbeing helps reduce speciesism and foster support for change.

Method

Participants

2,290 participants were recruited through Prolific and paid for taking part in the study. Due to a coding error in the setup of the survey, it was not possible to link the demographic data from Prolific to the survey data, which was collected through SurveyMonkey. The data were collected in November, 2024.

Procedure

After reading an information sheet, participants first did pre/post measurement. Farming abolition, speciesism, perceptions of animal freedom as social progress, perceived negative impacts of abolition, and preference for maintaining the status quo. This scale was developed in one of our previous studies (Animal think tank, 2025). The order of the questions within the pre/post scale was randomised for each participant.

Below are some statements that people have made about granting animal rights and freedom. Please rate how much you agree (7) or disagree (1) with each statement.

Farming abolition

1. Humans should have the right to use animals for food, clothing, and other purposes. *
2. Animals should not be used for food, regardless of how well they are treated.
3. It would be better if society did eventually stop using animals for human benefit (e.g., food, entertainment, clothing) all together.
4. I would support a law which protected the rights of all animals in not being harmed, exploited or killed – even if it would mean that humans could no longer use animals for their meat, milk, eggs, or other body parts.

Speciesism

1. Increasing the status of animals through rights could decrease the perceived value of human life. *
2. Animals are fundamentally different from humans, and should not be given similar rights. *
3. Animals deserve legal protections similar to humans because they are sentient beings capable of joy and suffering.
4. Protecting animal freedom is as important as protecting human freedom.

Social progress

1. Improving animal rights reflects moral progress in our society.
2. The act of granting more rights to animals can help reduce violence and cruelty in society at large.
3. More rights for animals can enrich our culture by creating a deeper appreciation and respect for all life

Negative impacts

1. Increasing animal rights can negatively impact industries that rely on animal products. *
2. More rights for animals would be too disruptive to people's lifestyles. *
3. Policies that initially aim to stop animal cruelty could evolve into restrictive regulations that interfere with personal freedoms. *
4. Enhancing animal rights could threaten traditional practices and cultural heritage that involve animals. *

Status quo

1. There is nothing wrong with the way we currently treat other animals. *
2. There might be some problems with the way we currently treat some animals, but nothing needs to change fundamentally. *

They then saw one of 22 messages, followed by a request to describe the message they saw in their own words.

They were then asked to rate the message (clarity, agreement, emotionally manipulative, motivation, learn more, talk, and an attention check). Rate how strongly (7 point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree):

1. The message being conveyed is clear.
2. I agree with the message being conveyed.
3. The message is emotionally manipulative. *
4. I am motivated to support causes that would help solve this problem.
5. I would like to learn more about this issue.
6. I am likely to talk with others about this issue.

They were asked the same set of pre/post measures once again, followed by a set of questions assessing the 4 Ns (normal, natural, necessary nice).

Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

1. Animals are a necessary resource for human benefit. *
2. Killing animals for food is unnecessary. *
3. We should all try to reduce our meat consumption.
4. Many animal species possess intelligence levels similar to humans.
5. Many animals are capable of feeling emotions similar to humans.
6. Many animals have conscious experiences.
7. Different species have different levels of worth. *
8. Human life is more valuable than the life of other animals. *
9. It's acceptable to prioritise the needs of humans over those of other animals. *

The survey included two attention checks, where participants were asked to select a specific response, both of which occurred after seeing the message.

Results

Before analysis, 173 participants were removed for failing the two attention checks, giving a final sample size of 2,117.

Before analysis, scores were calculated by averaging responses to the scale items. Scale items marked with an asterisk in the methods section were reverse coded in the analysis so that a positive value represented a positive shift (e.g. reduced speciesism, or increased motivation).

Pre-post comparison

For each of the scores that were measured before and after seeing the message, we calculated a difference metric by subtracting the pre-test score from the post-test score. Positive values indicate a positive shift. Figure 1 plots the mean change score for each message with 90% confidence intervals, and Figure 2 plots the same information but with means converted to z-scores.

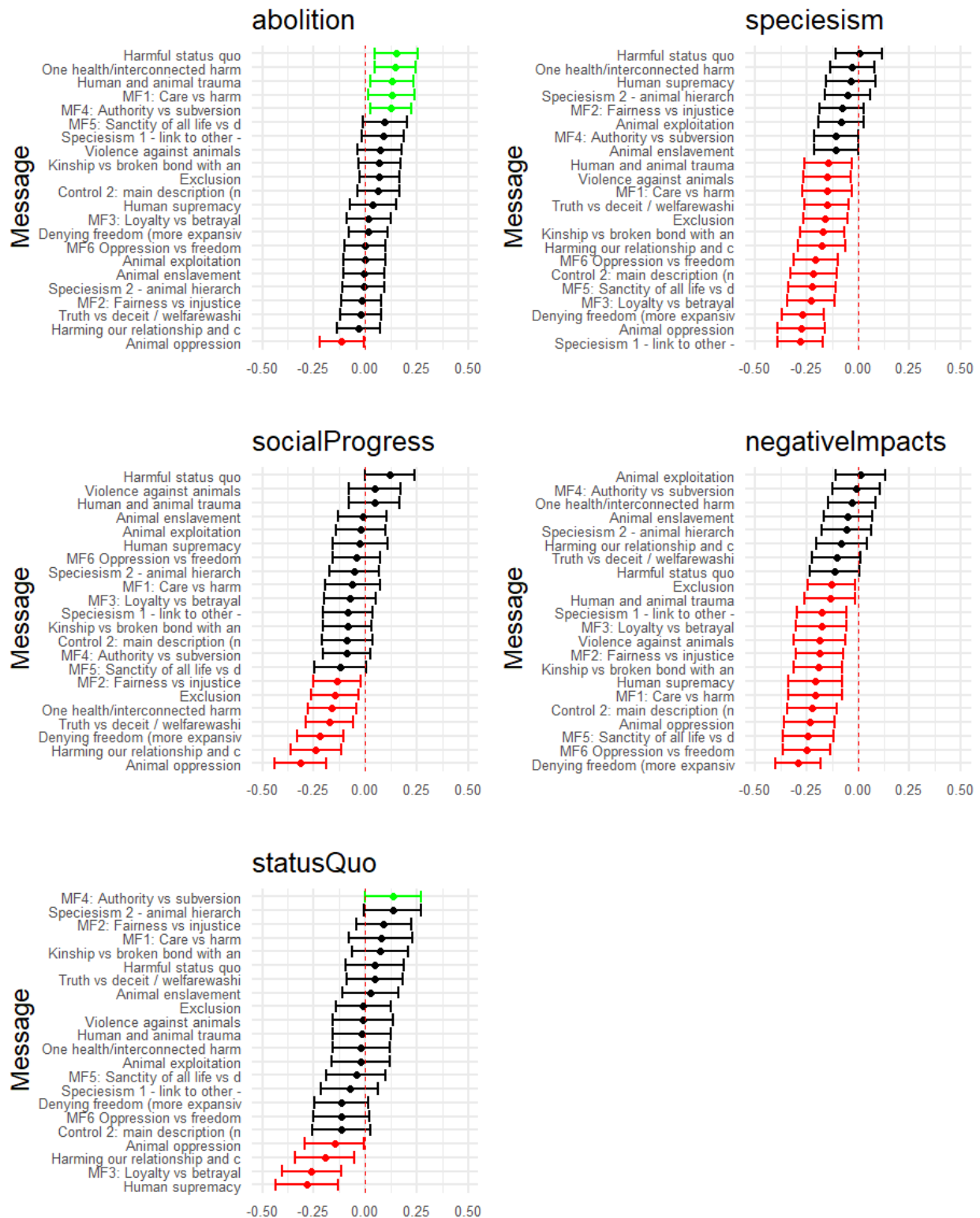


Figure 1. Mean change in responses after seeing each message (y-axis). Error bars are 90% confidence intervals. Red and green indicate means that were significantly different ($p = 0.1$) from 0 (Red = reduced score, green = increased score).

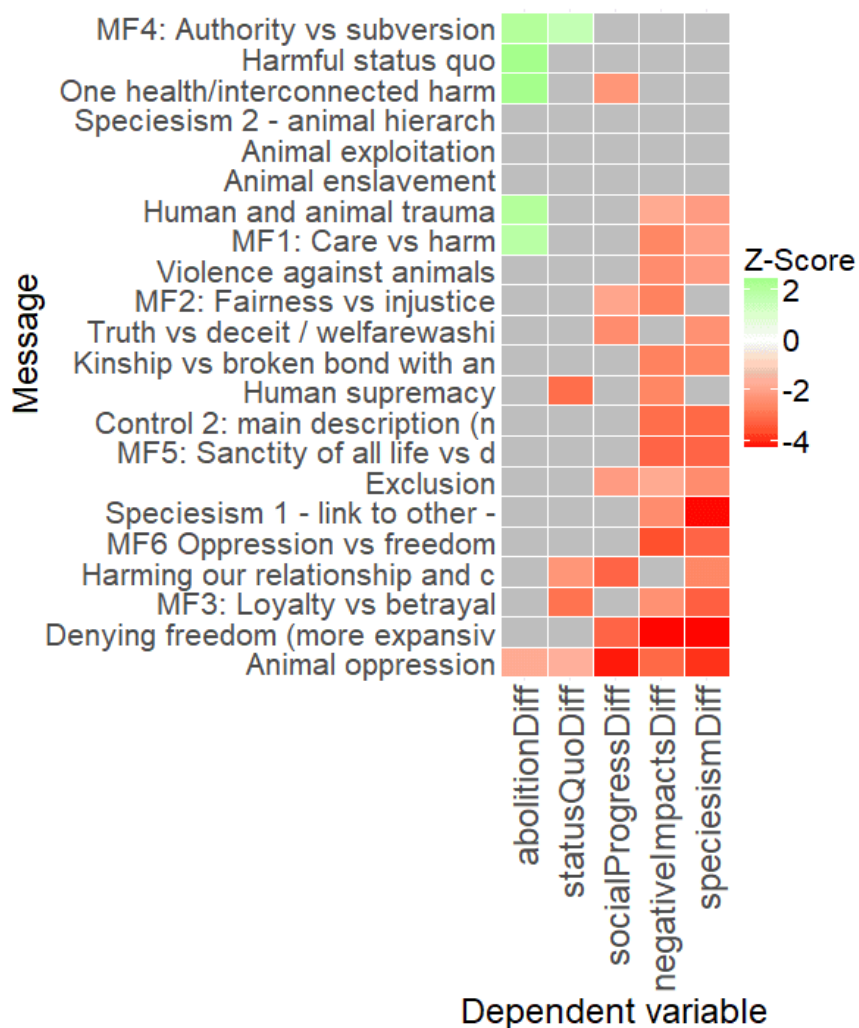


Figure 2. Z-scores of the mean change in responses after seeing each message (y-axis) (post-test responses minus pre-test responses). Non-significant values ($p > 0.1$) are suppressed (grey).

Post-test comparisons

Some dependent variables were only measured after the message was shown, with no pre-test baseline. We then measured the effect of the message on all dependent variables assessed post-message, including those also measured at pre-test. We also ran a one-dimensional factor analysis on all dependent variables to calculate a general factor score. We fitted a linear model to each dependent variable, including the general factor, with message as the predictor. Figure 3 shows the estimated mean factor score by message condition.

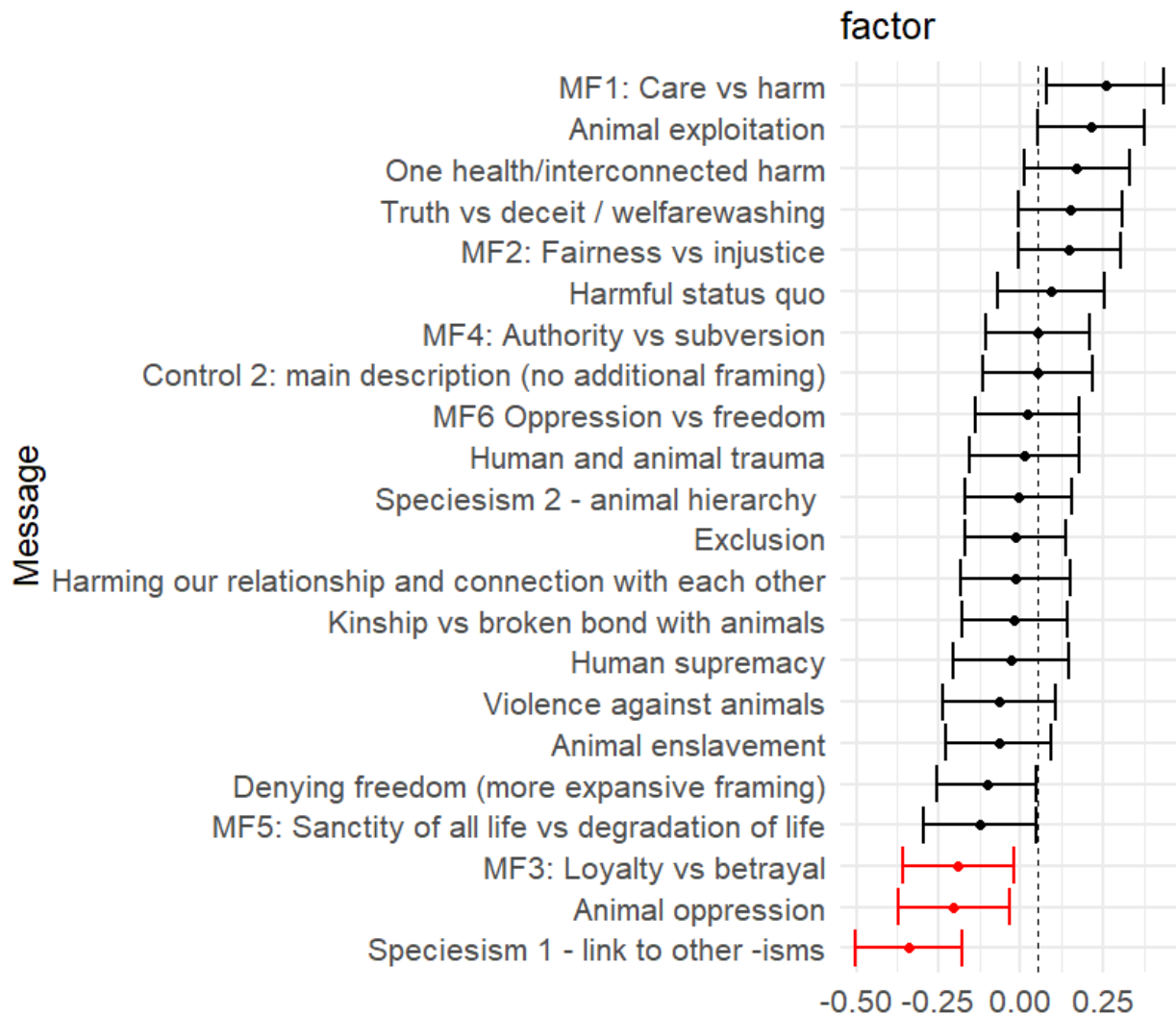


Figure 3. *Estimated marginal means for the general factor score. Error bars represent 90% confidence intervals. The vertical line represents the referent value – the estimated mean of responses in the control condition. Red values were significantly different ($p=0.1$) from the control condition. For similar plots for each dependent variable individually, see Appendix two.*

We ran ANOVAs on each of the fitted models and found significant effects for ratings of clarity, agreement, motivation, interest in learning more, likelihood of talking about, perceived negative impacts, and factor scores (all p 's $< .05$). The variables with no significant effects were support for abolition, speciesism, perceived social progress, preference for the status quo, necessity justifications, animal abilities, and anthropocentrism. Figure 4 is a heat-map of the statistically significant z-score transformed estimated marginal means.

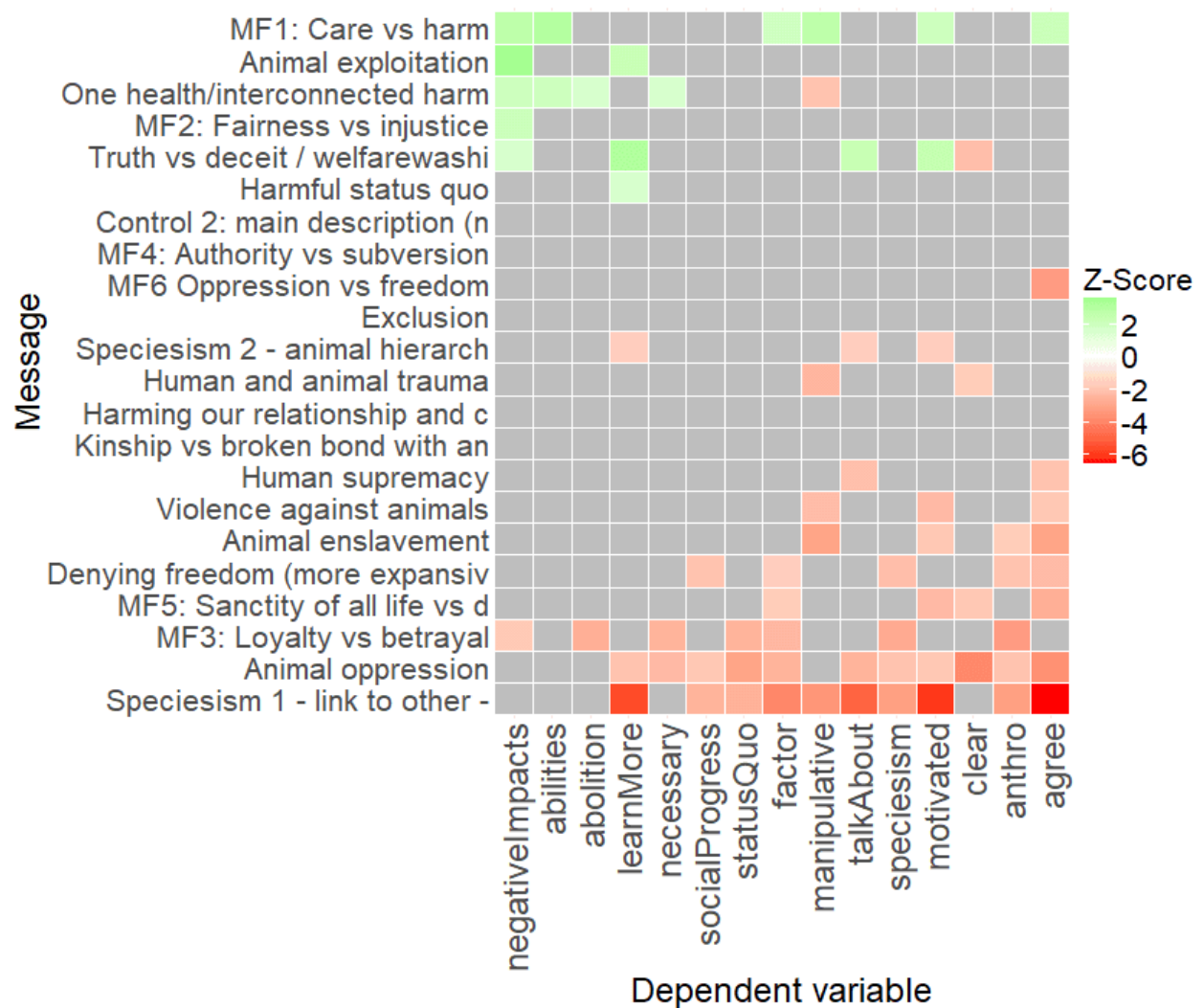


Figure 4. Z-transformed estimated marginal means. Non-significant values ($p > 0.1$) are suppressed (grey).

Discussion

Which messages worked?

Among the message frames tested, four showed particular promise in increasing support for abolishing the farming of animals: Authority vs Subversion, Harmful Status Quo, One Health, and Care.

Authority vs Subversion increased support for abolition and reduced perceived preference for maintaining the status quo.

Authority vs Subversion (quote sample): "Respect for our traditions and values guide us as a society, steering our moral compass and shaping our culture. Yet when traditions and practices cause harm and suffering, it's our moral duty to question and redefine them. "

The 'harmful Status Quo' message increased support for abolition as well as increased participants' willingness to learn more about the issue. The Harmful Status Quo message performed best overall on measures of reduced speciesism and increased perception of animal freedom as a form of social progress, though these differences were not statistically significant.

Harmful status quo (quote sample): "It is considered normal and natural to use, 'trade' and kill animals, and is seen as a 'necessary' part of human life. However, much of our relationship with animals is harmful and not aligned with our values as a society."

One Health, which emphasises the interconnected wellbeing of humans, animals and the planet, increased support for abolition and also led to higher perceptions of abolition as positive social progress, greater interest in learning more, and increased recognition of animals' cognitive and emotional capacities. Participants exposed to this message were also less concerned about the negative impacts of abolition, although the message was rated as slightly more manipulative.

One Health (quote sample): "Humans and animals share the same home, and our planet is a life-support system to all of us. Therefore, what happens to some of us indirectly impacts all of us. The mistreatment of animals is not just a moral failing of our societies, it's a direct threat to all of our shared wellbeing and the health of our planet... Harming animals also harms humans and the planet, creating a cycle of suffering that affects us all."

Care had the highest scores in post-test measures of agreement with the message, motivation, reduced concern about the status quo, enhanced perceptions of animal abilities, and reduced concern about negative impacts of abolition. However, post-test scores for speciesism and concern about negative impacts were slightly higher than pre-test, suggesting a potential backfire effect – though absolute post-test values for concern about negative impacts remained lower overall compared to other messages.

Care (quote sample): "Humans' natural kindness and compassion is often in contradiction to how our societies treat animals. The pain and harm animals endure in industries like farming and experimentation is not just about their suffering, it's a reflection of our society's failure to truly care about others who are different from ourselves."

The messages that performed more effectively tended to invite reflection rather than provoke defensiveness. They did this by appealing to values that people already believe in—such as compassion, fairness, care, and moral responsibility—and encouraging readers to align their actions with these values. Rather than blaming the individual, these messages framed harmful attitudes and practices as part of a broader social inheritance, something we've all grown up with but can choose to question. This made space for reflection without threatening the reader's self-image.

Many of the strongest messages focused on the idea that we can hold onto our values while challenging harmful traditions. For example, one message acknowledged the importance of respecting tradition, but suggested that when traditions cause harm, it is our moral duty to rethink them. Another pointed out that while it may seem 'normal' to use and kill animals, this often contradicts the values we hold as a society. In both cases, the reader is not positioned as the problem, but as someone with the moral agency to help make things right.

Other messages used inclusive, relational language to reduce the distance between human and animal lives. The One Health message, for example, reminded readers that we share our home and wellbeing with other animals, and that harming them ultimately harms us too. Similarly, the care message emphasised that the suffering animals endure reflects a failure of our society to fully care for others who are different from ourselves. In this way, the messages encouraged a sense of connection and shared responsibility.

Crucially, these messages also left room for hope. They didn't shy away from naming harm, but they did so while pointing toward the possibility of change. By framing action as a way to live more fully in line with our values, and by suggesting that care and compassion are already part of who we are, they opened a path forward. This likely helped reduce reactance and made it easier for people to engage with the message.

In contrast to the four effective messages, many of the other messages we tested had a backfire effect. Several framings of the problem led to worse attitude scores after participants saw the message than before. In some cases, positive shifts in one area came at the expense of negative shifts in others. For example, participants who read the Welfare-washing message showed increased motivation, greater interest in learning more, and a higher likelihood of discussing the issue, but also showed reduced support for social change and increased speciesism. Most messages increased speciesism and heightened concern about the potential negative impacts of ending animal farming. Several also led to reduced support for abolition, increased support for maintaining the status quo, and a diminished sense that animal freedom represents social progress.

A likely explanation is that many of the backfiring messages triggered reactance as a response to cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) arises when people are confronted with information that conflicts with their existing beliefs, values, or sense of identity, creating psychological discomfort. Rather than adjusting their beliefs, people often resolve this discomfort by rejecting or resisting the message. In this case, several messages positioned the reader or their social group—humans as the in-group, other animals as the out-group—as responsible for harm. This framing may have clashed with readers' self-concept as good, fair, or kind individuals, leading to defensiveness and resistance rather than reflection. For example, some of the messages that backfired included themes of exclusion, denying freedom, animal oppression, trauma, violence, and human supremacy. While these themes accurately describe the conditions many animals face, framing them in a way that appears to morally indict the reader can provoke reactance and undermine the message's effectiveness.

As an example of this, the worst performing message by far attempted to raise awareness of speciesism by linking it to other '-isms' like racism:

Speciesism 1 (quote sample): "Humans are one species among millions of others on this planet, yet we consider ourselves the most important. This is known as speciesism – the belief that we can treat some animals worse than others based solely on their species. Speciesism mirrors the mechanics of other social discriminations, such as racism or sexism, where certain groups are elevated at the expense of others.

Speciesism exists in every part of our society, prioritising human interests at the expense of animals' interests... Just like racism tries to convince us that white people matter more than people of colour, and sexism tries to convince us that men matter more than women, speciesism tries to convince us that humans matter more than animals. And this harmful belief holds us back from becoming a kinder, fairer and more equal society."

This message is a clear example of how reactance can arise when cognitive dissonance is triggered. By drawing direct parallels between speciesism and forms of discrimination like racism and sexism, it risks positioning the reader as morally equivalent to a bigot—someone complicit in serious injustice. This framing can clash sharply with how people see themselves: as fair, kind, and morally decent. While many may accept that society treats some animals worse than others, they are far less likely to engage with a message that suggests this reflects their own moral failings. As a result, the message may provoke defensiveness rather than open the door to reflection.

In contrast, another speciesism message we tested avoided linking speciesism to other forms of bigotry and placed responsibility on 'society' rather than directly on the reader. While this message also did not improve attitudes overall, it generated much less reactance. It offered concrete examples, such as the different ways we treat dogs and cats compared to pigs and cows, and used more balanced framing. Rather than presenting speciesism solely as a moral failing, it acknowledged that it also shapes who we cherish and care for. While this message did not improve

attitudes overall, it generated much less reactance. By removing personal blame and using a more reflective tone, it may have appeared less threatening to readers' self-concept and was less likely to provoke a defensive response.

Speciesism 2 (quote sample): "Speciesism is the idea that we treat some animals better than others based solely on their species. For example, our society cares deeply about dogs and cats, but eats cows and pigs – even though farmed animals are comparable in intelligence, emotion and their ability to feel pain as animal companions. Speciesism also teaches us to cherish some animals, like hedgehogs and otters, and view others as 'pests', like rats or mice.."

Take-home principles

If you're writing messages to inspire others to support animal freedom, there are some key principles that can make your message more effective and less likely to backfire.

Start by creating a sense of a 'bigger us'. Remind people that humans are part of a wider animal family and that our lives are deeply connected with the lives of other animals. When we see ourselves as part of a larger community of beings, it becomes easier to care, to empathise, and to act.

Frame animal freedom as something that aligns with the values we already share as a society. Values like kindness, fairness and compassion are not new ideas. They are part of who we already believe ourselves to be. The most powerful messages do not ask people to become someone different. They remind us of who we are at our best.

Help people see that the current way of treating animals is not inevitable. It is the result of history, habit and inherited norms, not something we consciously chose. And because we did not choose it, we can choose something better.

Encourage reflection and agency. Instead of blaming or accusing, offer people an invitation to live more fully in line with their values. Speak to our ability to grow, to change, and to shape the future together.

Finally, avoid framing an audience as morally at fault. Messages that suggest people are being cruel, oppressive or complicit in denying freedom often provoke defensiveness and shut-down engagement. When people feel attacked, they are less likely to reflect and more likely to resist. Speak instead to our shared hopes and the possibility of becoming a society that truly reflects the values we hold dear.

Methodological considerations

Further testing is needed to refine these findings. Messages can vary in a multitude of ways, and each message tested here represents just a single sample within a much larger message space. Future studies may benefit from focusing on one type of frame at a time, testing multiple messages within that frame to better understand what elements contribute to effectiveness.

Another consideration is that the effects observed in this study were very small. Even the largest average changes were only around a quarter of a point on a 7-point scale. This is unsurprising given the minimal nature of the intervention. Participants read only a single short paragraph. For such a light-touch approach, large shifts in attitudes are unlikely.

To improve future research and strengthen the reliability of findings, there are several approaches that could be taken. One option is to increase sample sizes, which would help improve statistical power and make it easier to detect small but meaningful effects. If larger samples are not feasible, it would be useful to measure control variables that are likely to influence participants' responses, such as age, gender or political orientation. Including these variables in mixed effects models could help reduce noise in the data and clarify the impact of different message frames. Another possibility is to explore more substantial interventions. While this might reduce our ability to isolate which specific message elements are driving change, it could provide a more realistic understanding of how messaging works in the real world. Finally, future studies could test the effects of repeated or sustained exposure to messages. A single paragraph may have limited impact, but hearing consistent messages over time may lead to more lasting attitude change.

References

Festinger, L. (1957). A theory of cognitive dissonance. Stanford University Press

Testing Grand Narratives About Animal Freedom, Animal Think Tank, 2025
(<https://animalthinktank.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Grand-narratives.pdf>)

Appendix One

Control 2: main description (no additional framing)

Whether it's the newborn calves who are taken from their mothers in the dairy industry, the animals who are experimented on in laboratories, the animals who are confined in farms, zoos and aquariums, or the animals whose lives are cut short in the slaughterhouse, animals are being denied the freedom to live their lives as they choose.

MF1: Care vs Harm

Humans' natural kindness and compassion is often in contradiction to how our societies treat animals. The pain and harm animals endure in industries like farming and experimentation is not just about their suffering, it's a reflection of our society's failure to truly care about others who are different from ourselves.

Whether it's the newborn calves who are taken from their mothers in the dairy industry, the animals who are experimented on in laboratories, the animals who are confined in farms, zoos and aquariums, or the animals whose lives are cut short in the slaughterhouse, animals are being harmed and denied the freedom to live their lives as they choose.

This neglect goes against the core values that define humanity, such as care, compassion and kindness. When we see an individual animal in distress, our first instinct is to help, to comfort, to alleviate their suffering. Yet harmful industries often force us to turn a blind eye to the widespread suffering inflicted on billions of animals. And this is holding us back from becoming a kinder, fairer and more equal society.

MF2: Fairness vs injustice

Fairness is a value that's important to most of us, as is the desire to live in a society that's fair and treats everyone with respect and compassion. Yet the way our society is structured is not inclusive and fair to everyone, least of all the animals with whom we share this planet.

Whether it's the newborn calves who are taken from their mothers in the dairy industry, the animals who are experimented on in laboratories, the animals who are confined in farms, zoos and aquariums, or the animals whose lives are cut short in the slaughterhouse, animals are not being treated fairly and are denied the freedom to live their lives as they choose.

This failure to treat animals in the same way that we'd wish to be treated ourselves prevents our societies from becoming kinder, fairer and more equal places for everyone.

MF3: Loyalty vs betrayal

While most of us love dogs and cats and feel great loyalty towards them, humans' relationship with and treatment of many other animals can often feel like a betrayal of their trust, vulnerability and openness to humans.

Whether it's the newborn calves who are taken from their mothers in the dairy industry, the animals who are experimented on in laboratories, the animals who are confined in farms, zoos and aquariums, or the animals whose lives are cut short in the slaughterhouse, animals are being betrayed and denied the freedom to live their lives as they choose.

This betrayal not only inflicts suffering upon animals, it also undermines the fundamental loyalty that should connect us all, and limits our ability to become a kinder, fairer and more equal society.

MF4: Authority vs subversion

Respect for our traditions and values guide us as a society, steering our moral compass and shaping our culture. Yet when traditions and practices cause harm and suffering, it's our moral duty to question and redefine them. The harmful treatment of animals, often hidden behind closed doors and justified by outdated norms, calls for a bold re-evaluation of the practices that our society will accept.

Whether it's the newborn calves who are taken from their mothers in the dairy industry, the animals who are experimented on in laboratories, the animals who are confined in farms, zoos and aquariums, or the animals whose lives are cut short in the slaughterhouse, animals are being denied the freedom to live their lives as they choose.

This disregard of animals' emotions and experiences, as well as their desire to live a good life, prevents us from becoming a kinder, fairer and more equal society. The true measure of a compassionate society lies in its willingness to live in line with its values, question its treatment of others, and protect those who need it most.

MF5: Sanctity of all life vs degradation of life

Many of us feel that all individuals should be respected, and that every being matters and deserves to live life as they choose, regardless of what they look like or what language they speak. Yet society objectifies and devalues many animals because they are different from humans, treating them as resources or property, rather than thinking, feeling individuals with needs and interests.

Whether it's the newborn calves who are taken from their mothers in the dairy industry, the animals who are experimented on in laboratories, the animals who are confined in farms, zoos and aquariums, or the animals whose lives are cut short in the slaughterhouse, animals are being denied the freedom to live their lives as they choose.

This disregard of animals' emotions and experiences, as well as their desire to live a good life, not only prevents us from becoming a kinder, fairer and more equal society, it devalues life itself.

MF6: Oppression vs freedom (without naming 'oppression')

We all want the freedom to be ourselves and be seen as someone who matters. Yet some humans are seen as more important than others: that men matter more than women, that white people matter more than people of colour, that straight people matter more than LGBT+ people. This kind of thinking also affects the animals we share this planet with, who, because they are not human, are considered inferior, and are often seen as resources or property rather than individuals with their own personalities and desires.

Whether it's the newborn calves who are taken from their mothers in the dairy industry, the animals who are experimented on in laboratories, the animals who are confined in farms, zoos and aquariums, or the animals whose lives are cut short in the slaughterhouse, animals are denied the freedom to live their lives as they choose.

Just as denying the freedom of women, people of colour and LGBT+ people contributes to unequal societies, denying the freedom of animals also prevents our societies from becoming kinder, fairer and more equal.

Animal oppression

Oppression is when an individual experiences direct or indirect harm due to their perceived social standing. Oppression is reinforced by the idea that some categories of humans matter more than others – that men matter more than women, that white people matter more than people of colour, that straight people matter more than LGBT+ people. Oppression also affects the animals we share this planet with, who, because they are not human, are often seen as resources or property rather than individuals with their own personalities and needs.

Whether it's the newborn calves who are taken from their mothers in the dairy industry, the animals who are experimented on in laboratories, the animals who are confined in farms, zoos and aquariums, or the animals whose lives are cut short in the slaughterhouse, animals are being oppressed and denied the freedom to live their lives as they choose.

Just like the oppression of women, people of colour and LGBT+ people contributes to unequal societies, the oppression of animals also prevents our societies from becoming kinder, fairer and more equal.

Animal exploitation

Viewed primarily as resources, property or entertainment, many animals are

exploited for human benefit. And many individuals, businesses and industries profit from the exploitation and killing of animals.

Whether it's the newborn calves who are taken from their mothers in the dairy industry, the animals who are experimented on in laboratories, the animals who are confined in farms, zoos and aquariums, or the animals whose lives are cut short in the slaughterhouse, animals are being exploited and denied the freedom to live their lives as they choose.

Treating animals as commodities to exploit – rather than thinking, feeling individuals with their own personalities and needs – devalues their lives and prevents our societies from becoming kinder, fairer and more equal.

Animal enslavement

The first enslavement of any group of individuals was the enslavement of animals when humans began to confine, farm and slaughter them. This harmful legacy continues to affect trillions of animals worldwide. From birth to death, many animals are controlled entirely by human interests – bred, genetically manipulated, impregnated, used and killed.

Whether it's the newborn calves who are taken from their mothers in the dairy industry, the animals who are experimented on in laboratories, the animals who are confined in farms, zoos and aquariums, or the animals whose lives are cut short in the slaughterhouse, animals are being denied the freedom to live their lives as they choose.

This total domination of animals' bodies and lives reflects a form of slavery that is normalised in society, and is often overlooked because it involves individuals who are considered inferior to humans, rather than seen as thinking, feeling individuals with their own personalities and needs. This widespread enslavement of animals prevents our societies from becoming kinder, fairer and more equal.

Human supremacy

Human supremacy is the belief that human beings are superior to other beings, justifying the exploitation and mistreatment of animals. This mindset places human interests above all else, often leading to immense suffering for animals.

Whether it's the newborn calves who are taken from their mothers in the dairy industry, the animals who are experimented on in laboratories, the animals who are confined in farms, zoos and aquariums, or the animals whose lives are cut short in the slaughterhouse, animals are being denied the freedom to live their lives as they choose.

Challenging human supremacy means recognising that all individuals matter and deserve to live meaningful lives free from harm and exploitation. By rejecting this outdated notion of human superiority, we can build a society that respects and

protects the lives of every being, regardless of species. A society that is kinder, fairer and more equal for everyone.

Speciesism 1 – link to other -isms

Humans are one species among millions of others on this planet, yet we consider ourselves the most important. This is known as speciesism – the belief that we can treat some animals worse than others based solely on their species. Speciesism mirrors the mechanics of other social discriminations, such as racism or sexism, where certain groups are elevated at the expense of others. Speciesism exists in every part of our society, prioritising human interests at the expense of animals' interests.

Whether it's the newborn calves who are taken from their mothers in the dairy industry, the animals who are experimented on in laboratories, the animals who are confined in farms, zoos and aquariums, or the animals whose lives are cut short in the slaughterhouse, animals are being denied the freedom to live their lives as they choose.

Just like racism tries to convince us that white people matter more than people of colour, and sexism tries to convince us that men matter more than women, speciesism tries to convince us that humans matter more than animals. And this harmful belief holds us back from becoming a kinder, fairer and more equal society.

Speciesism 2 – animal hierarchy

Speciesism is the idea that we treat some animals better than others based solely on their species. For example, our society cares deeply about dogs and cats, but eats cows and pigs – even though farmed animals are comparable in intelligence, emotion and their ability to feel pain as animal companions. Speciesism also teaches us to cherish some animals, like hedgehogs and otters, and view others as 'pests', like rats or mice.

Whether it's the newborn calves who are taken from their mothers in the dairy industry, the animals who are experimented on in laboratories, the animals who are confined in farms, zoos and aquariums, or the animals whose lives are cut short in the slaughterhouse, many animals are being denied the freedom to live their lives as they choose.

For too long, speciesism has taught us that the worth of an animal is measured by their 'cuteness', similarity to humans, physical and mental abilities, or their usefulness to humans. This disregards who animals are as individuals, and harms our ability to become a kinder, fairer and more equal society.

Violence against animals

We live in a world where violence against animals has been normalised. Billions of animals are killed every year in slaughterhouses and trillions are killed by fishing.

Millions of animals are tortured and killed in laboratories, and millions more are killed by the zoo, racing and 'pet' industries for being 'worthless'. This extreme violence against thinking, feeling individuals is hidden from the public for a reason, and these industries tell us that these violent practices are 'harmless' and even 'beneficial'.

Whether it's the newborn calves who are taken from their mothers in the dairy industry, the animals who are experimented on in laboratories, the animals who are confined in farms, zoos and aquariums, or the animals whose lives are cut short in the slaughterhouse, animals are forced to endure extreme violence and are being denied the freedom to live their lives as they choose.

Our own freedom to live in line with our values is also denied due to our forced and often unconscious support of practices that cause immense harm. This normalised violence against animals harms who we are as a society, preventing us from becoming a kinder, fairer and more equal society.

Harmful status quo

The belief that animals are inferior to humans, and therefore they can be kept as property and used as resources, is so embedded in everyday life that it goes unquestioned by most of society. It is considered normal and natural to use, 'trade' and kill animals, and is seen as a 'necessary' part of human life. However, much of our relationship with animals is harmful and not aligned with our values as a society.

Whether it's the newborn calves who are taken from their mothers in the dairy industry, the animals who are experimented on in laboratories, the animals who are confined in farms, zoos and aquariums, or the animals whose lives are cut short in the slaughterhouse, animals are being denied the freedom to live their lives as they choose.

The widespread attitude that animals exist for human use and entertainment, rather than being individuals with their own lives and interests, perpetuates a cycle of cruelty and indifference. This reflects an aspect of our society that is morally and ethically outdated, and it's holding us back from becoming a kinder, fairer and more equal society.

Kinship vs broken bond with animals

Many people cherish the relationships they have with animals. This natural bond humans share with animals is rooted in recognition of our many similarities, plus the fact that we are all thinking, feeling beings who share the same planet. Yet this deep bond is often ignored and even broken by harmful practices that treat animals as property or resources, rather than beings with their own unique personalities, needs and desires.

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the slaughterhouse, animals are being denied the freedom to live their lives as they choose.

These harmful practices fracture the natural connection between humans and animals, where animals are seen as resources and property to be used and sold, rather than thinking, feeling individuals. And it is holding us back from healing our relationship with animals and creating a kinder, fairer and more equal society.

Harming our relationship and connection with each other

The way our society treats animals affects all of our relationships with each other. By regarding animals as inferior and neglecting their well-being, we foster a culture of indifference and disconnection, eroding our natural empathy for others. When we see some individuals as 'property' or 'resources' to be used for the benefit of others, our society becomes led by greed and control, rather than care and connection.

Whether it's the newborn calves who are taken from their mothers in the dairy industry, the animals who are experimented on in laboratories, the animals who are confined in farms, zoos and aquariums, or the animals whose lives are cut short in the slaughterhouse, animals are being denied the freedom to live their lives as they choose.

The harmful practices of these industries erode our society's empathy and diminishes our ability to connect with other individuals who may be different from us. And it holds us back from becoming a kinder, fairer and more equal society.

Truth vs deceit / welfarewashing

Many false myths are pushed by industries that profit from animal use to intentionally conceal the true reality of animals' lives and avoid public scrutiny. Misleading and untrue claims of ethical treatment — also known as welfare washing — serve to hide the immense suffering caused by these industries.

Whether it's the newborn calves who are taken from their mothers in the dairy industry, the animals who are experimented on in laboratories, the animals who are confined in farms, zoos and aquariums, or the animals whose lives are cut short in the slaughterhouse, animals are being denied the freedom to live their lives as they choose.

Welfare washing not only conceals animal cruelty, it intentionally deceives the public about how animals are really treated, and encourages people to act in ways that conflict with their own values. These harmful lies are holding us back from becoming a kinder, fairer and more equal society.

Denying freedom (more expansive framing)

No matter who we are, we all value our freedom — the freedom to live our lives as we want, and the freedom to be ourselves. Yet many animals are denied the most basic

of freedoms — the freedom to play, to form relationships, to explore, to live a truly good life, as well as the freedom to be themselves and express their unique personalities.

Whether it's the newborn calves who are taken from their mothers in the dairy industry, the animals who are experimented on in laboratories, the animals who are confined in farms, zoos and aquariums, or the animals whose lives are cut short in the slaughterhouse, animals are being denied the freedom to live their lives as they choose.

Freedom is not a privilege reserved for human beings but a birthright that belongs to all of us. When we deny the freedom of any of us, regardless of our species, it prevents us from becoming a fairer, kinder and more equal society.

Exclusion

Humans share this planet with a huge variety of different animals. Yet many animals are prevented from living a meaningful life, treated as outsiders in a world dominated by human interests. Instead of being allowed to thrive and express their needs, wants and personalities, they are confined, controlled and excluded.

Whether it's the newborn calves who are taken from their mothers in the dairy industry, the animals who are experimented on in laboratories, the animals who are confined in farms, zoos and aquariums, or the animals whose lives are cut short in the slaughterhouse, animals are being denied the freedom to live their lives as they choose.

By excluding animals from living a truly good life, and denying them dignity and respect, we not only harm them, we also diminish our own humanity and delay our progress in becoming a kinder, fairer and more equal society.

Human and animal trauma

Our society is becoming more informed about trauma. Yet we often overlook the trauma experienced by animals. Many animals are forced to endure separation from their family, confinement, neglect and cruelty, causing immense physical and psychological suffering. And our society often overlooks the trauma experienced by people who work in industries that exploit and kill animals, such as slaughterhouses and laboratories.

Whether it's the newborn calves who are taken from their mothers in the dairy industry, the animals who are experimented on in laboratories, the animals who are confined in farms, zoos and aquariums, or the animals whose lives are cut short in the slaughterhouse, animals are enduring immense trauma and being denied the freedom to live their lives as they choose. And many humans who work in these industries become traumatised.

This shared trauma between animals and humans creates a cycle of suffering that

harms who we are as a society. Addressing the trauma inflicted on animals is a step toward healing our collective trauma. By ending the harm and mistreatment of animals, we can break these cycles of suffering and begin to build a kinder, fairer and more equal society.

One health/interconnected harm

Humans and animals share the same home, and our planet is a life-support system to all of us. Therefore, what happens to some of us indirectly impacts all of us. The mistreatment of animals is not just a moral failing of our societies, it's a direct threat to all of our shared wellbeing and the health of our planet. Keeping animals confined in cramped, unnatural conditions is not just cruel, it greatly increases the risk of deadly diseases that can jump from animals to humans, posing serious public health threats, such as pandemics. Eating animals also increases the risk of chronic human disease, while the farming of trillions of animals impacts the health of our shared home, compromising its ability to sustain life. Farming also involves feeding huge quantities of grains to animals while millions of humans are dying from starvation.

Whether it's the newborn calves who are taken from their mothers in the dairy industry, the animals who are experimented on in laboratories, the animals who are confined in farms, zoos and aquariums, or the animals whose lives are cut short in the slaughterhouse, animals are being denied the freedom to live their lives as they choose.

Harming animals also harms humans and the planet, creating a cycle of suffering that affects us all. By ending the harm and mistreatment of animals, we can break this cycle of suffering and begin to build a kinder, fairer and more equal society.

Appendix Two

The plots below show the modelled means and 90% confidence intervals for each dependent variable measured after participants saw the message. Each row corresponds to a different message. Data points in black are not statistically significant ($p > 0.1$); red indicates a statistically significant negative effect compared to the reference message, green a significant positive effect.

