

## Holding the powerful to account: What is the role of professional responsibility and influence?

### The case of animal welfare and meat consumption

Veterinarians hold significant influence over food systems, animal welfare policy and farming practices. Their expertise shapes and legitimises government regulation, welfare standards, and public understanding of how animals should be treated.

Tensions can arise when professional institutions become closely aligned with the industries they serve.

**Dr Steven McCulloch**, (Research Fellow in Veterinary Policy at the Jeremy Collier Centre for Animal Sentience and the Global School of Sustainability), calls for far greater scrutiny to protect animals, people and the planet.

Institutional support for intensive farming, severe confinement systems and widespread tail docking continues to shape veterinary policy and practice in the UK and USA.

If the policies of national veterinary institutions contradict scientific evidence or ethical responsibilities, those within the profession and outside of it should be willing and empowered to challenge them.

Globally, over **80 billion land animals** are slaughtered each year, including around **1.5 billion pigs**.



Pork is the most widely consumed meat in the world.

“

I promise and solemnly declare that I will pursue the work of my profession with integrity and accept my responsibilities to the public, my clients, the profession and the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, and that, above all, my constant endeavour will be to ensure the health and welfare of animals committed to my care.”

Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS)  
Declaration on admission to the profession

### Veterinary power

Chief Veterinary Officers and government advisers

Advisory committees and expert panel

International bodies

National veterinary associations

Watch 'The hidden truth behind pig farming and meat production' as part of the LSE Future Proof series:



Photo: © Jo-Anne McArthur, Djurrattsalliansen, We Animals



# Reducing meat consumption

Veterinarians also have influence over our food systems – their duties extend beyond animal welfare to protecting public health and the environment.

Intensive animal farming is a major driver of emissions, deforestation, antimicrobial resistance, zoonotic pandemics and animal suffering. **No national veterinary association across the world has adopted quantified meat-reduction targets.**

The EAT – Lancet Commission recommends:

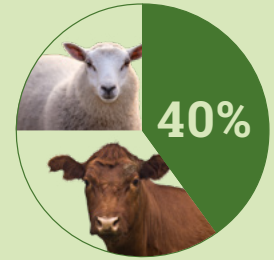


50% reduction in global red and processed meat consumption by 2050 in order to safeguard human and planetary health.

Climate Change Committee (UK) recommendations by 2050

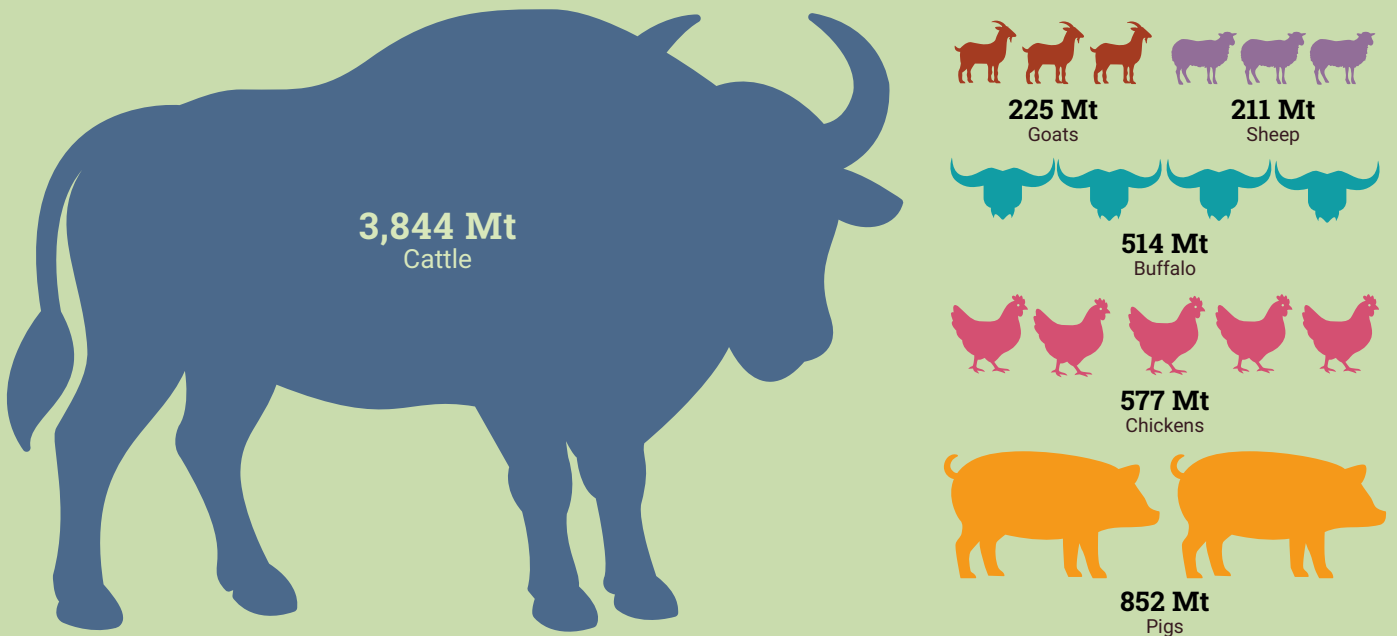


35% reduction in total meat consumption



40% reduction in beef and lamb

## Global greenhouse gas emissions from livestock (megatonnes CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent)



## Agriculture is responsible for ...

14-15%  
of global emissions



>70%  
of antimicrobials in  
food-producing animals



60-80%  
of tropical deforestation



the top threat for 86%  
of species at risk of extinction