



# Making Money from Misery

*How social media giants  
profit from animal abuse*



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*some of the details in this report may be distressing*



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www.smaccoalition.com

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# INTRODUCTION

“...everything from drownings to purposely broken limbs, mothers being killed and their babies taken to animals pitted against one another in staged fights. ...owners purposely teasing, punishing or even torturing the animals in their care. It is truly a horror show. ”

# INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

Amid the age of mis- and disinformation in politics and beyond, social media has emerged as a primary source of misleading, hateful and often dangerous content. Sadly, animals have become voiceless victims of the scramble for clicks and advertising dollars as videos promoting, encouraging and profiting from their abuse run rampant.

This report documents 13 months of data collection by the AfA SMAC Coalition coordinators and a team of volunteer researchers, and further research provided by a number of NGOs. It examines the range and scope of the cruelty content problem on the largest social media platforms, and presents potential remedies.

The NGOs that have contributed to this project have historically approached different aspects of the online animal cruelty content problem separately, and approached the relevant social media platforms accordingly.

## WHO WE ARE

The **Asia for Animals (AfA) Coalition** network formed the **Social Media Animal Cruelty Coalition (SMACC)** in 2020 to help address the hundreds of enquiries its member organizations were receiving about animal cruelty online. Emails and calls have described appalling animal abuse, including live animal burials, the abuse of companion animals, setting animals alight and, recently fake rescue videos – all freely published on social media. Organizations are often unable to help the individual animals involved due to lack of information about precise time or place and the fact that the social media platforms themselves remain unresponsive to appeals for more detailed information. In addition, enormous resources – beyond the means of any single organization – would be needed to tackle the sheer volume of cruelty content available on these platforms.

SMACC was formed with the aim of bringing organizations together as a united voice to address the promotion and monetization of cruelty content on social media platforms. **Action for Primates, Animals Asia Foundation, Humane Society International, International Animal Rescue, Lady Freethinker, Pan African Sanctuary Alliance, PETA Asia, Wildlife Alliance,** and **World Animal Protection** are all core SMACC members and have been assisted by associate groups (see acknowledgements). A team of volunteer researchers has also contributed enormously to this project.



SMACC began by agreeing on how to define cruelty content and on the **four broad categories** and **common themes** into which cruelty content can be placed (see section on *ANIMAL CRUELTY CONTENT*). This information is available on our website alongside links to petitions, public advice and a public reporting page. Data held by the various SMACC organizations were pooled into a central database and a team of volunteer researchers began collecting further data on features such as theme, species, type of cruelty and where the content was created.

We have documented everything from drownings and purposely broken limbs, to mothers being killed and their babies taken, to animals pitted against one another in staged fights. We've seen well meaning people inadvertently torturing the pet animals they claim to love, and other owners purposely teasing, punishing or even torturing the animals in their care. It is truly a horror show.

## THE ISSUE

Attempts to address animal cruelty content online have been largely unsuccessful, and such content is rife – often lucrative – on some platforms. To date, animal welfare organizations have had very little success tackling this problem and social media giants such as YouTube, Facebook and TikTok continue to let it go largely unaddressed on their platforms.

Cruelty content takes many forms, from animal suffering caused unintentionally or in ignorance to intentional cruelty, created purposely to gain recognition in the form of likes, comments, shares or financial remuneration. SMACC member organization **Lady Freethinker** estimated that in videos logged over three months in 2020, YouTube earned up to \$12 million from the sharing of animal abuse videos, with the content creators themselves earning nearly \$15 million.<sup>1</sup>

## 5480 INDIVIDUAL VIDEOS DOCUMENTED OVER 13 MONTHS 3 MAIN PLATFORMS

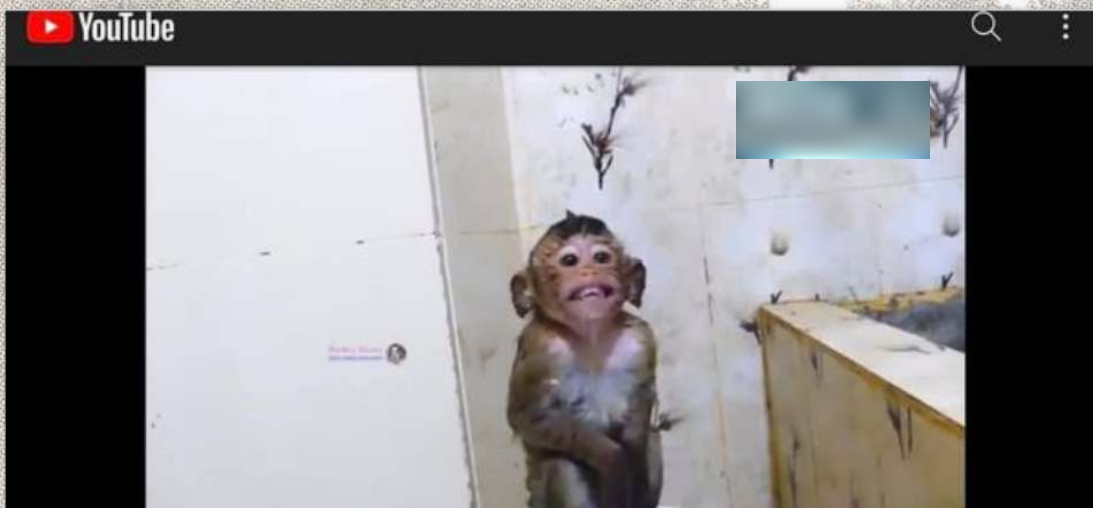


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## 5,347,809,262 VIEWS TOTAL

*five billion, three hundred and forty-seven million, eight hundred and nine thousand, two hundred and sixty two*

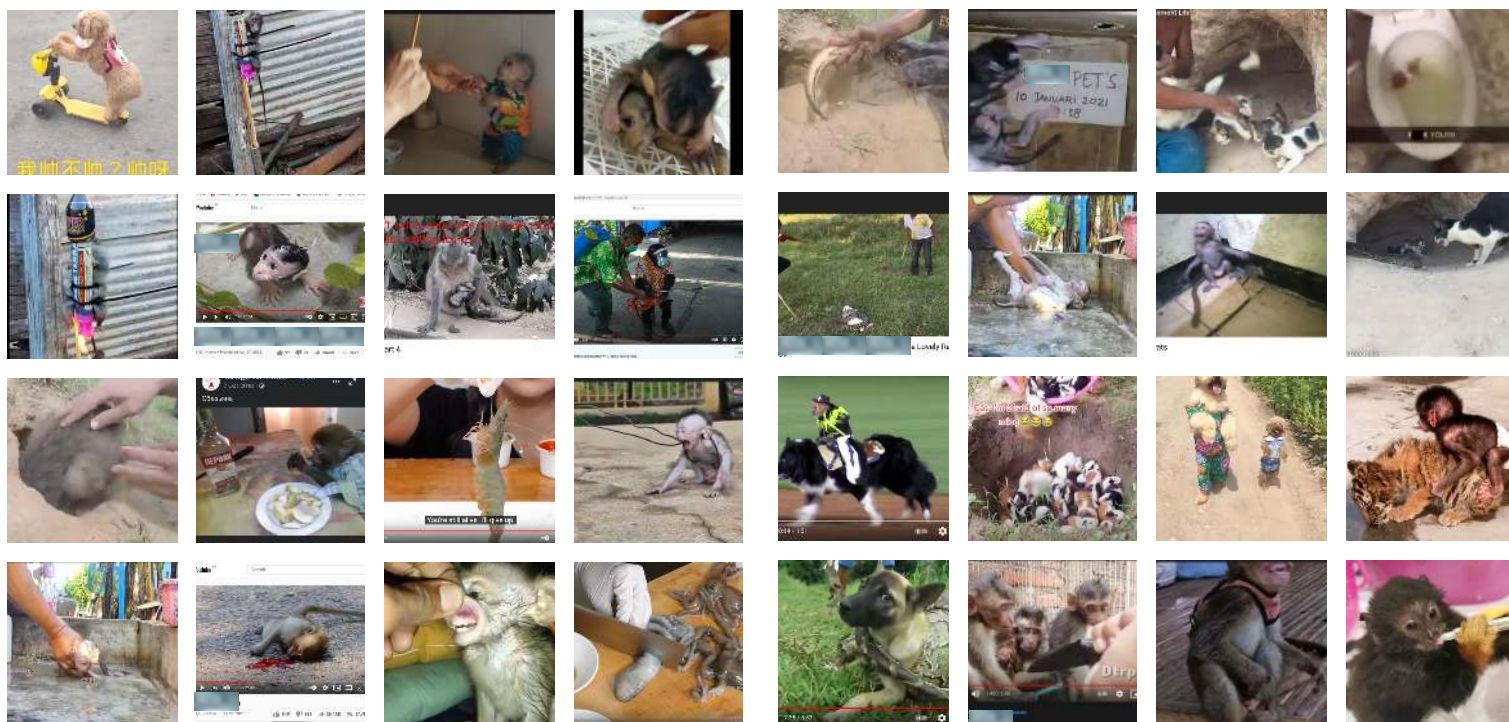


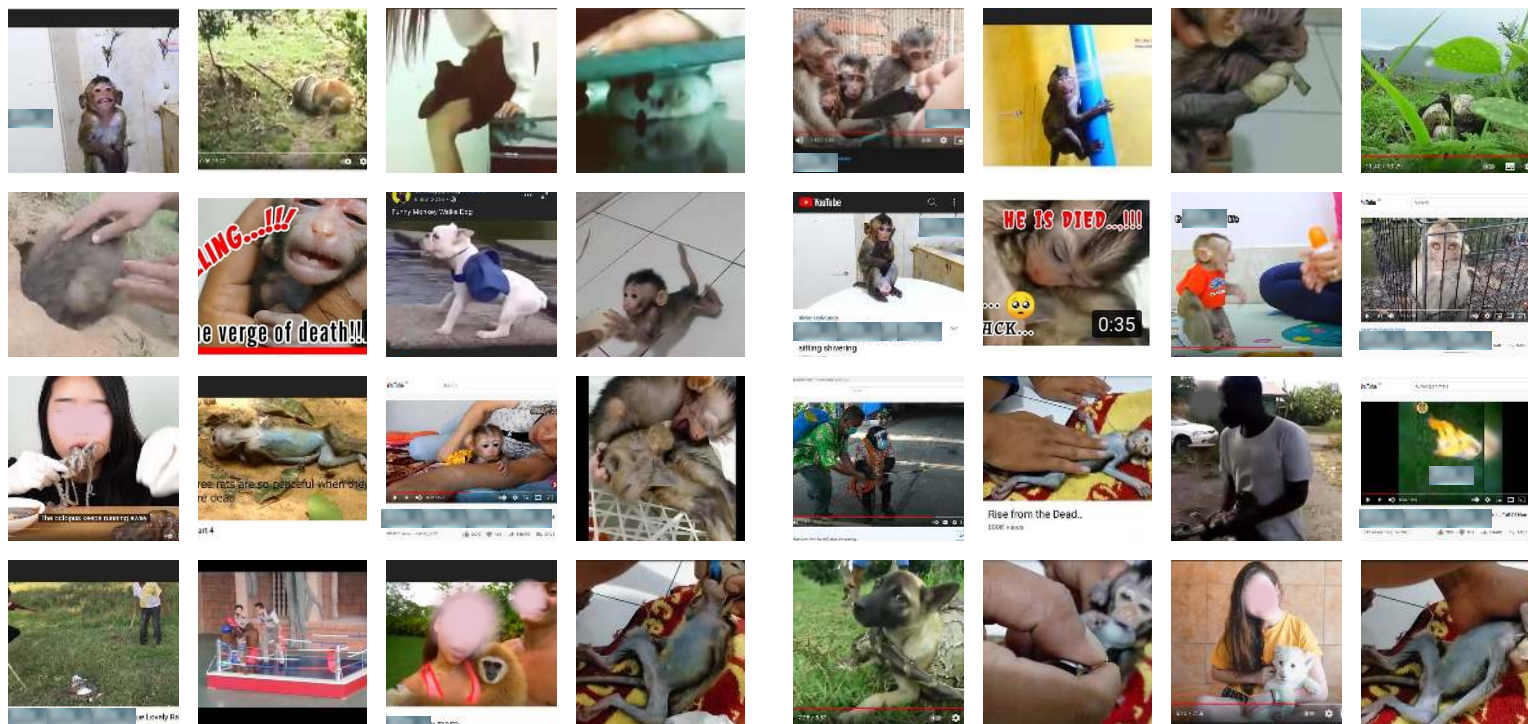
**We appeal to YouTube, Facebook and TikTok to lead by example and take firm action to remove cruelty content once and for all and instead share our vision of a responsible and kinder world where such atrocities do not feature on social media or in real life.**

**We appeal to these platforms to take action against animal cruelty content by:**

- adopting standardized definitions – across all social media platforms and in consultation with experts – of animal cruelty and cruelty content;
- ensuring that policies conform with these definitions, expressly prohibit cruelty content and are adhered to;
- immediately implementing robust monitoring systems to detect and remove cruelty content, cruelty content channels and cruelty content creators without reliance on user reports;
- improving reporting mechanisms for animal cruelty content and ensuring that content violating policies is removed;
- stop paying channel or video owners for animal cruelty content;
- ensuring that content depicting animal suffering used by animal welfare and environmental organizations for legitimate campaign or educational purposes is differentiated from cruelty content and not removed from their platforms on cruelty content grounds;
- working with SMACC and its member organizations as trusted partners with animal welfare expertise to help develop definitions and policies;
- ensuring that animal cruelty content creators do not upload content that violates the platforms' policies;
- ensuring that animal cruelty content creators are monitored to prevent them from moving content to new channels or pages within a platform.

SEE OUR PUBLIC PETITIONS: [www.smaccoalition.com/petitions](http://www.smaccoalition.com/petitions)





## WHAT OUR MEMBERS SAY

"As a veterinarian, I am shocked by the acts of cruelty and abuse inflicted on non-human primates and other non-human animals that are being filmed for broadcast on social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook and TikTok. **Deliberately and gratuitously causing pain, fear and distress to these animals is morally reprehensible. No video-sharing platform should tolerate animal cruelty for any reason.** By permitting such content on their platforms, these companies are not only promoting animal cruelty and abuse, they are effectively encouraging its continuation by not blocking perpetrators and reporting them to the relevant authorities for investigation."

Dr Nedim Buyukmihci, Emeritus Professor of Veterinary Medicine and Co-founder of Action for Primates



"Cruelty content is hurtling out of control as social media platforms allow egregious abuse of animals to be normalised in the eyes of the general public. Platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and TikTok have **a moral responsibility of care to promote kindness content and end suffering in whatever form it takes.**"

Jill Robinson MBE, Dr med vet hc, Hon LLD, Founder and CEO of Animals Asia Foundation.

"The devastating data revealed by this research only scratches the surface in exposing the shocking extent of animal cruelty being promoted on social media. Now more than ever, **it is time for social media platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Facebook to stop profiting from animal suffering and instead take action to end this devastating cruelty for clicks being broadcast on their platforms.** As proud members of the Asia for Animals coalition, HSI is very pleased to see leading animal groups from across the globe coming together to address this **deeply disturbing but largely overlooked** animal abuse issue and we hope to see platforms making meaningful pledges to swiftly shut down this abusive activity".

Adam Parascandola, Vice President of Global Animal Rescue and Response at Humane Society International



**HUMANE SOCIETY  
INTERNATIONAL**

"It is inexcusable for social media companies such as YouTube, Facebook and TikTok to turn a blind eye to the sickening scenes of animal abuse being posted on their platforms. It is their moral responsibility to crack down on content showing animals forced to suffer for the sake of entertainment and financial gain. **There's no doubt that these media corporations have the power to remove these vile videos and it's reprehensible that they haven't done so already.** They feed the basest instincts of a depraved minority and must be denied a platform and an audience in order to stamp them out."

Alan Knight OBE, Chief Executive, International Animal Rescue.



lady freethinker

**"With great digital power comes great responsibility, on behalf of humans and animals.** Platforms like YouTube, Facebook, and TikTok have a duty to crack down on animal cruelty content and a crucial opportunity to contribute to realizing a world in which animals are seen as the intelligent, social beings that they are. We demand that these media giants act quickly. Every minute we waste is another minute an animal suffers."

Nina Jackel, Founder and President of Lady Freethinker.

**"Online animal cruelty shows humanity at its worst,** normalizes a view that wild animals can be pets, and enables the illegal trade in many species, including Africa's endangered apes and monkeys. So PASA is proud to join with Asia for Animals and the many other organizations that contributed to this report to fight this scourge. Together, we will hold tech companies accountable for enabling this unconscionable cruelty and create new opportunities to protect wildlife across the globe."

Gregg Tully, Executive Director, Pan African Sanctuary Alliance (PASA).



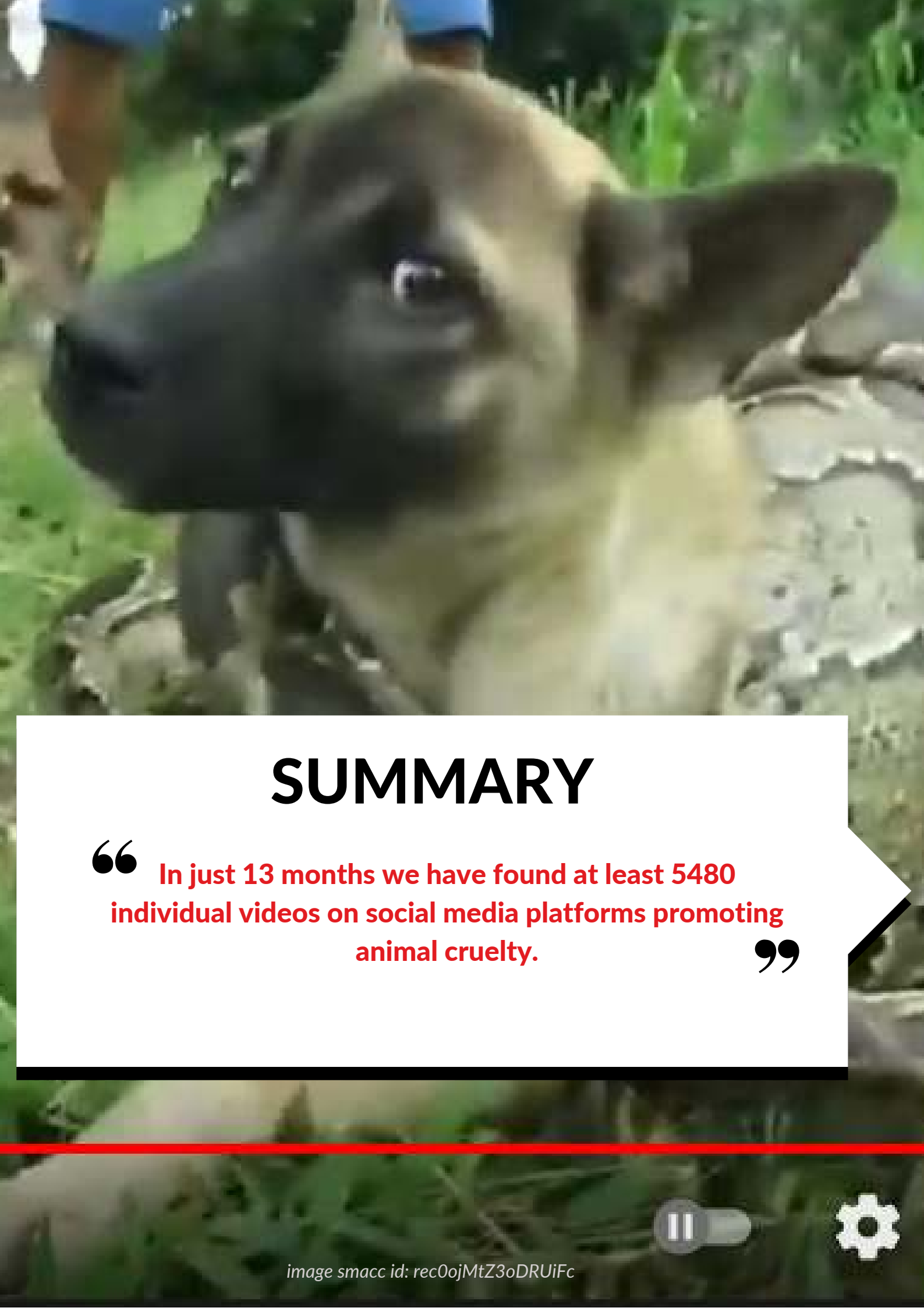
"Wild animals are not props, playthings or entertainers, they are sentient beings with a right to wild life. Our recent investigation has further exposed the shocking scale of fake animal rescue videos emerging on YouTube, showing animals placed in terrifying situations, visibly distressed and traumatised. **It's cruelty at its worst all set up for 'entertainment', misleading many viewers and causing untold suffering to animals.**

Social media giants, like YouTube, with billions of followers, have a clear responsibility to not give animal abuse an audience. They must take urgent action as well as long term and proactive steps to ensure any content on their platforms does not commodify, exploit and cause suffering to any animal.

Exploitation of wildlife is happening on a monumental scale, impacting the welfare of billions of individual animals. **We must call out companies that are complicit in this exploitation and urge them to take responsibility for finding a solution.** Our campaign to end the suffering of wild animals used in cruel forms of entertainment is working to protect wild animals and their habitats, to keep them in the wild, where they belong – social media companies have a key part to play in this."

Nick Stewart, Global Head of Wildlife Campaign, World Animal Protection.





# SUMMARY

“ In just 13 months we have found at least 5480 individual videos on social media platforms promoting animal cruelty. ”



# SUMMARY

## SUMMARY IN NUMBERS

Between July 2020 and August 2021, we examined and documented 5480 instances of animal cruelty content found on either YouTube, Facebook or TikTok. Of these, 89.2% were found on YouTube. This does not necessarily indicate that YouTube houses vastly more cruelty content than other platforms, but that it is easier to find there (see section *HOW THE PERPETRATORS OPERATE*). Our researchers were unable to record private pages or groups or encrypted conversations set up specifically to exchange animal cruelty content which we know, from confidential sources, exist.



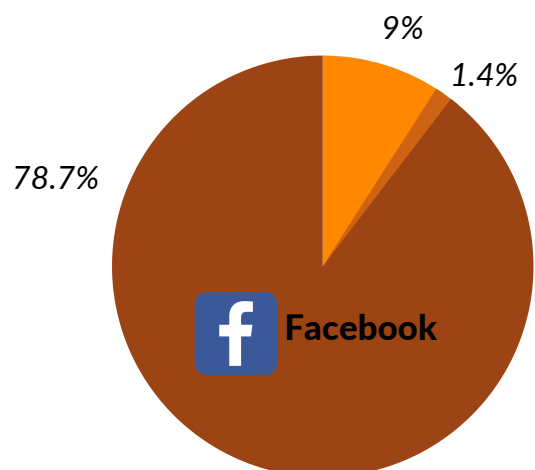
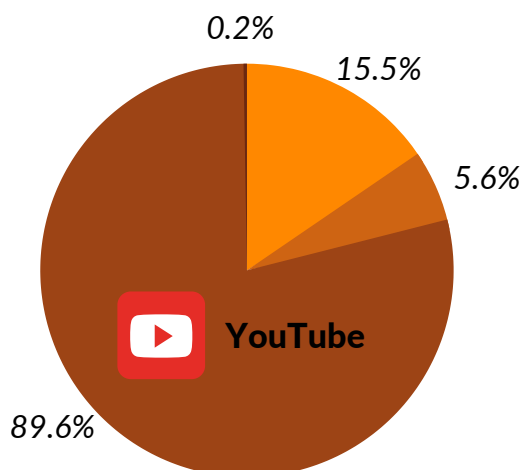
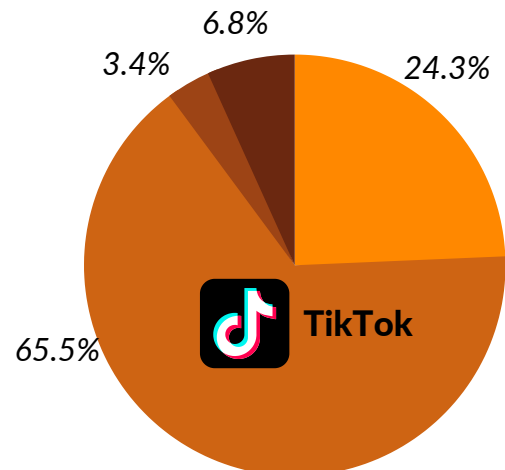
### animal cruelty videos by platform *\*see Appendix 1*

 *Ambiguous and Unintentional*

 *Ambiguous and Intentional*

 *Obvious and Intentional*

 *Obvious and Unintentional*



We documented shocking footage of individual wild animals kept as pets and repeatedly abused on camera, kittens and other young animals were set alight as the filmmakers laughed. Live burials, partial drownings, beatings and psychological torment were also documented.

## ADVERTISERS



Advertisements are usually embedded in cruelty content that has been monetised. Our researchers documented such advertising for numerous companies, and, surprisingly, for some animal welfare and conservation charities, some of which have since taken action.<sup>2</sup>

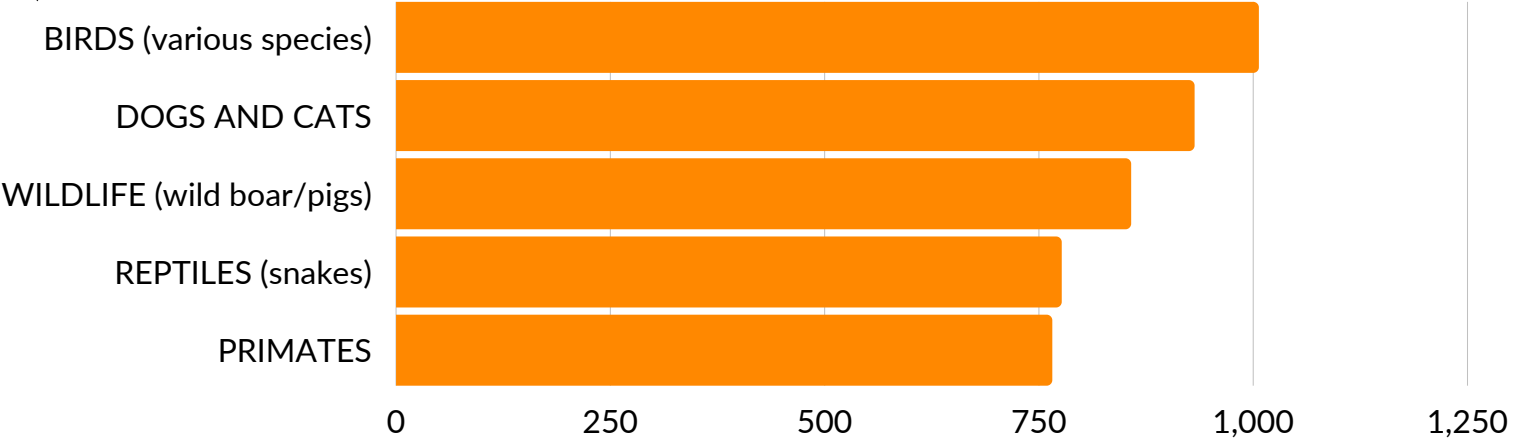
It should be noted that companies do not consent to the advertisement placement and are usually unaware their adverts feature in animal cruelty videos.

A VISUAL SUMMARY OF THE DATA

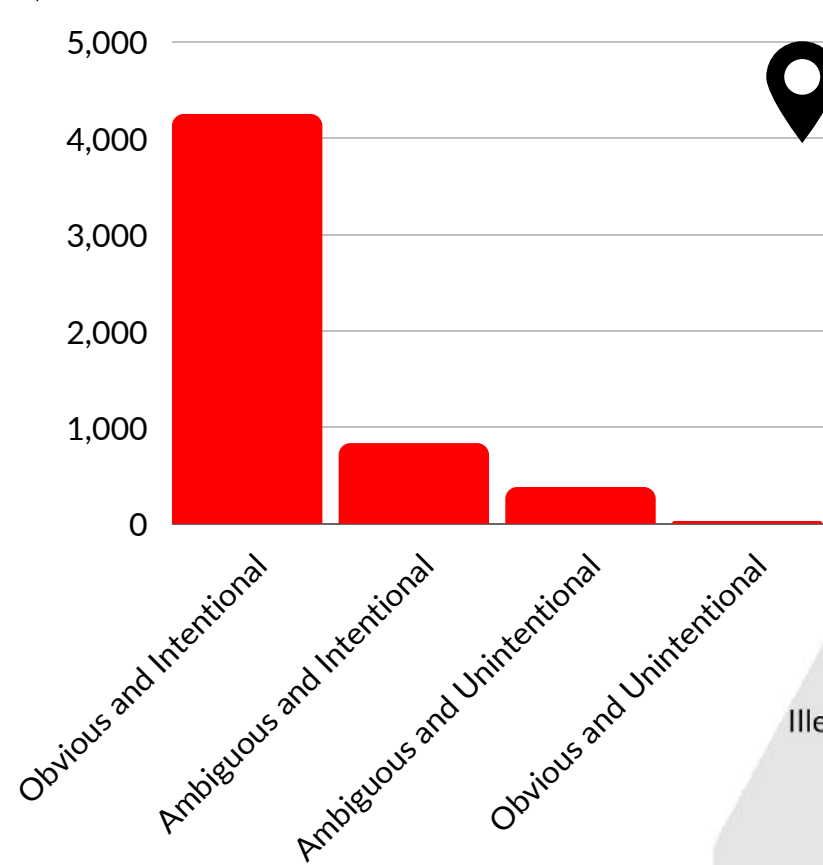
The top five most commonly featured animal types were **birds of various species, dogs and cats, wild boar and pigs, snakes and primates**. It should be noted that the theme of content influences the data summarised, for example, where there were batches of data input under theme 'hunting' which often included birds being hunted. Please refer to the section *THE ANIMALS* for further information and **Appendix 2** for the full list of animals recorded.

The majority of the cruelty content recorded was categorised as **Obvious and Intentional (77.5%)**, with the themes showing a disturbingly wide range of abuse.

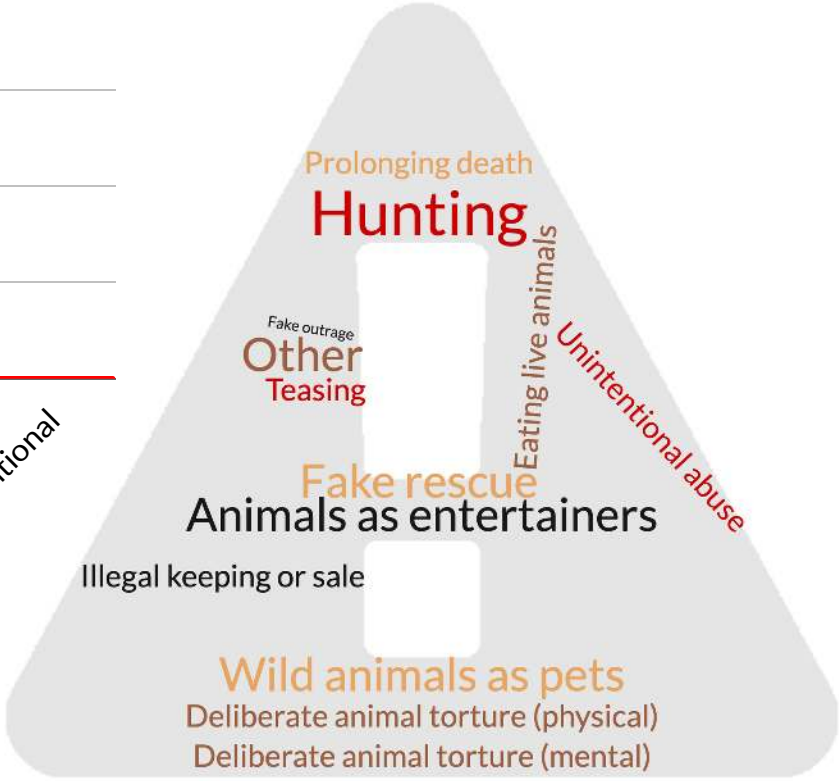
 **top 5 featured animal types** \*see also Appendix 2



 **categories of animal cruelty** \*see also Appendix 1



 **themes of animal cruelty** \*see also Appendix 3



## "clothed pet monkey in somebody's home given vodka to drink"

- Platform - Facebook
- Over 3100 views and 3100 followers at time of recording data (April 2021)
- Video uploaded in 2018
- Video made in Russia (speculative)
- CATEGORY: Ambiguous and Intentional
- THEMES: Wild animals as pets, Other
- SPECIFIC ABUSE TYPE: giving animal alcohol / drugs, inappropriate handling or environment



image smacc id: recCzHwVu7DRizxiG

## "kittens and mother cat endangered by python, python is roughly handled in a fake rescue and distressed cats also roughly handled"

- Platform - YouTube
- Over 196 views and 1400 followers at time of recording data (April 2021)
- Video uploaded in 2021
- Video made in Cambodia (speculative)
- CATEGORY: Obvious and Intentional
- THEMES: Fake rescue, Teasing
- SPECIFIC ABUSE TYPE: rough handling, scaring with another animal / predator



image smacc id: recCzHwVu7DRizxiG

## "puppy is getting rescued from the clutches of a python"

- Platform - YouTube
- Over 101 views and 3 followers at time of recording data (March 2021)
- Video uploaded in 2021
- Video made in Asia - unknown
- CATEGORY: Ambiguous and Intentional
- THEMES: Fake rescue
- SPECIFIC ABUSE TYPE: scaring with another animal / predator



image smacc id: rec0ojMtZ3oDRUiFc

## "baby macaque drinking milk from a bottle; screams of distress"

- Platform - YouTube
- Over 196 views and 1400 followers at time of recording data (April 2021)
- Video uploaded in 2021
- Video made in Asia - unknown
- CATEGORY: Ambiguous and Unintentional
- THEMES: Wild animals as pets
- SPECIFIC ABUSE TYPE: starving / making animal wait for food unnecessarily, inappropriate handling or environment



image smacc id: recBjBs3cEeD0vDDx

## "chimp dressed up spraying disinfectant"

- Platform - YouTube
- Over 12,439 views and 3.13million followers at time of recording data (April 2021)
- Video uploaded in 2020
- Video made in Thailand (speculative)
- CATEGORY: Ambiguous and Intentional
- THEMES: Animals as entertainers (not in circuses), Wild animals as pets
- SPECIFIC ABUSE TYPE: inappropriate handling or environment

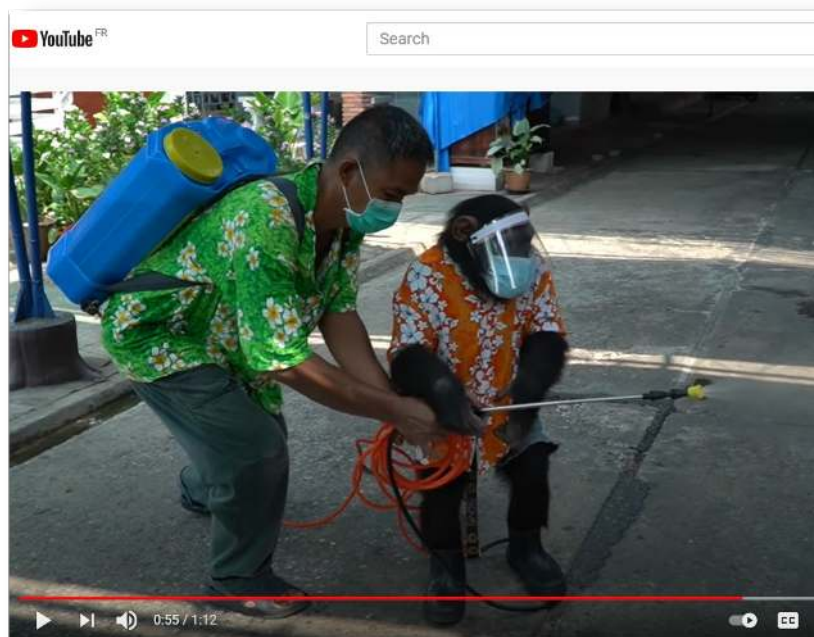


image smacc id: recCzHwVu7DRizxiG

## "pet macaque punished for breaking a bowl, forced to repeatedly stand up straight against wall"

- Platform - YouTube
- Over 551,882 views and 11,100 followers at time of recording data (April 2021)
- Video uploaded in 2020
- Video made in Vietnam
- CATEGORY: Obvious and Intentional
- THEMES: Deliberate animal torture (physical)
- SPECIFIC ABUSE TYPE: rough handling, inappropriate handling or environment



image smacc id: reclM4mve1aOg0A3j

## HOW CAN VIEWERS HELP

As a video's number of views increases, so does the popularity of that video or channel from the platform's perspective. Popular content appears first in user's feeds, resulting in more views and even greater popularity. The most popular content is likely to become monetised, by having advertisements placed upon it, and viewed by many thousands of social media users... and the cycle continues.

We acknowledge that many people who watch these videos may be angered or repulsed by the animal abuse they are witnessing. However, every click, view or comment increases that content's popularity. We advise seeking as much information as possible before deciding whether or not to press play. Examine the video still images, examine other videos uploaded by the user, read the title, description or the comments by other social media users - often this will tell you all you need to know.

Be wary of emerging trends like fake rescue videos. These videos may seem kind and caring, but in fact animals are purposely put into dangerous situations or even injured to create the illusion that the content creators are heroes, rescuing or helping the animals. Look for the users' other videos and if the same animal or type of animal appears repeatedly in 'rescue' scenarios, then do not watch, share or engage with the video. Report it immediately to the platform.

### Please follow SMACC's 'Five Steps to Stop Online Cruelty'



**1. Be aware:** Please visit our homepage and see the categories and the themes we have identified. Be aware of these when using social media. Sometimes animal cruelty is less than obvious, such as an elephant calf bathing in the sea with a trainer, or a slow loris being 'tickled' by a human. Both of these examples involve serious animal suffering behind the scenes.



**3. Do not watch them:** Do not intentionally watch these videos. The more views the videos receive, the more they grow in popularity - and potentially, profitability. Often, you can see what is contained in the video by the still images, the titles, descriptions, or comments, before pressing play.



**5. DO NOT SHARE:** Do not share the video on your own page, even if you are doing so to raise awareness of the cruelty or illegality. Sharing increases popularity and again, potentially also increases profitability. Instead, report them, and raise your concerns by sharing with others the things to look out for - or direct people to our SMACC website. [www.smaccoalition.com](http://www.smaccoalition.com)



**2. Report them:** Always report the video and encourage others to do the same. Each social media platform has its own report function. If there is no option for 'animal cruelty' then select the closest category which can be applied.



**4. Do not engage:** Do not comment, like or dislike, on the video. This may seem counterintuitive. However, engagement increases popularity. It is best not to add any reaction at all, and to report the video or channel immediately.



# RESEARCH METHODS

“ *[we collected]* **Between July 2020 and August 2021, data on cruelty content publicly available on three social media platforms (YouTube, Facebook and TikTok)** ”

## RESEARCH METHODS

Between July 2020 and August 2021, data on cruelty content publicly available on three social media platforms (YouTube, Facebook and TikTok) were collected and compiled by members of the AfA's Social Media Animal Cruelty Coalition (SMACC) and a team of volunteer researchers.

Videos containing cruelty content were identified and documented via the following methods:

- **Key word searches:** *<all key terms submitted to platforms individually but not available on the public report>*
- **Database merges:** SMACC members and other organisations pooled data from previous cruelty content research. Data were contributed by the following organisations: **ADM Capital Foundation, Lady Freethinker, International Animal Rescue, PETA Asia, Taiwan SPCA, World Animal Protection.**
- **Public reports:** Cruelty content via SMACC's public reporting tool.<sup>3</sup> Where complete information was missing, links were revisited and re-documented.
- **Snowball sampling**<sup>4</sup>

Data collected for each post are shown in **Appendix 4**

### Quality checks:

Before analysis, all data were spot-checked for quality and consistency.

### Duplicates:

Before analysis, the database was scanned for duplicates and these were removed.

### Reporting:

During the last week of volunteer data collection (2-8 August 2021), researchers were asked to report each animal cruelty content post they found using that platform's standard process. We followed up on each of these reports one week later (17 August) documenting whether each video was still available, "hidden", or had been removed from the platform, and whether the relevant channel or user was still active.

Please see the section on *SMACC REPORTING DATA* for more information and the results.





# ANIMAL CRUELTY CONTENT

“ The perpetrators of animal cruelty content often operate in plain sight, posting publicly on social media as the platforms’ policies are poorly enforced. ”

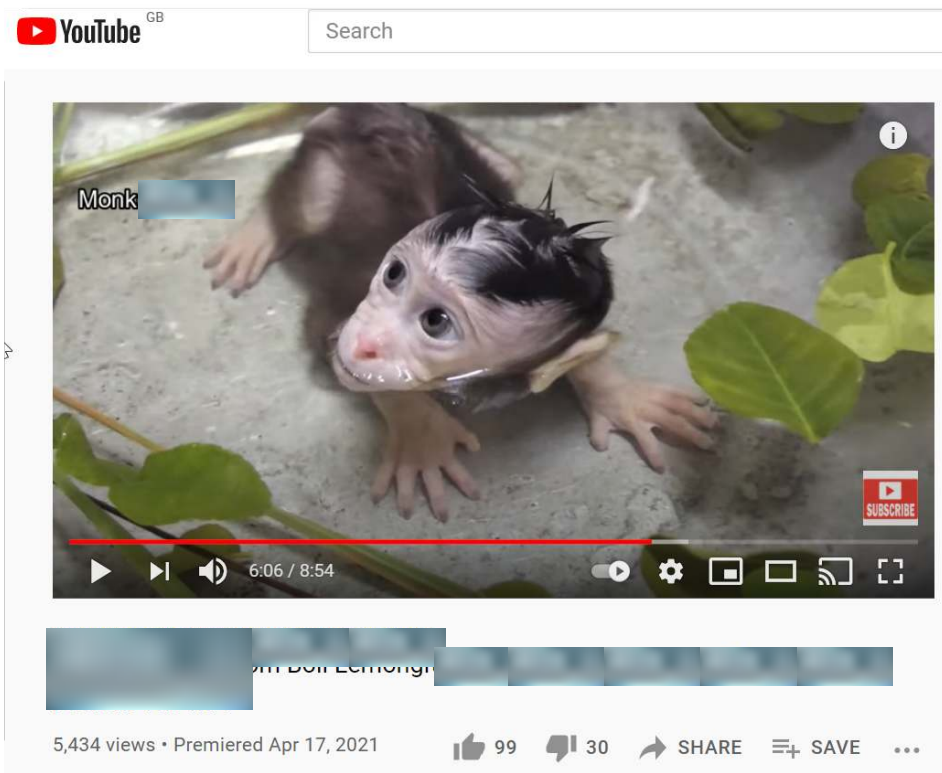
## DEFINITIONS OF ANIMAL CRUELTY

The **Humane Society of the United States** defines animal cruelty broadly and simply: **"...a range of behaviors harmful to animals, from neglect to malicious killing."**<sup>5</sup> They note that much of the cruelty they investigate is unintentional.

We feel that this is an important point: from the animal's point of view, it does not matter whether their suffering was caused intentionally or unintentionally, or whether or not it is recognised as suffering by the perpetrator. Cruelty can run the gamut from knowingly depriving an animal of food, water or shelter, to deliberate and malicious torture, to inappropriate or even well-meaning handling of an animal whose natural needs and behaviours are misunderstood or disregarded. **Thus, we define animal cruelty as a range of human behaviours, performed intentionally or unintentionally, that cause animals harm or suffering which may be immediate or long-term, physical, emotional or psychological.** We propose that since cruelty is not always obvious to the layman, input from specialists familiar with specific species, contexts or behaviours should be valued.

Animal cruelty content is anything that has been posted on a social media platform by an individual, organization, or business, that depicts animal cruelty or suffering for any reason. Valid welfare campaigning, journalistic or educational purposes should not be considered as cruelty content. While it is true that suffering is a part of life, cruelty content has no discernible meaningful purpose and we consider it to be a barbaric form of entertainment. For the purposes of this research SMACC has focused on video content.

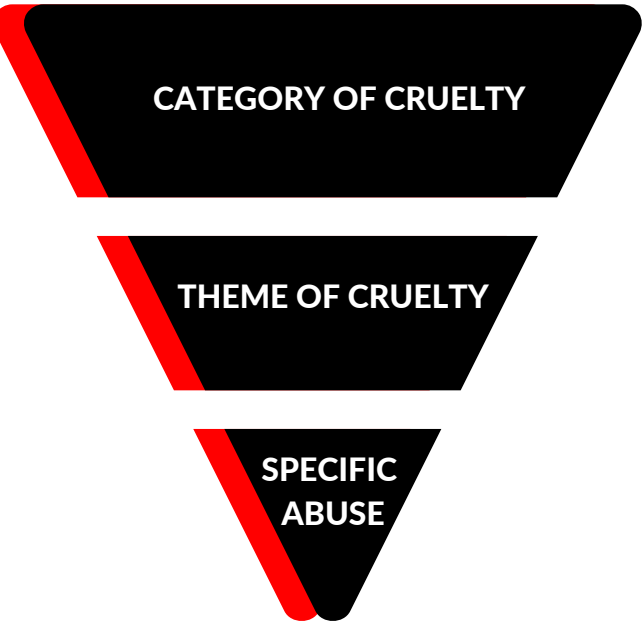
Cruelty content can be divided into four main categories. Our researchers placed each video into one of these categories and identified the primary theme of the content. We have also identified a number of specific, recurring abuse types. Hunting content contains a separately applied set of hunting subtypes.



***"...from the animal's point of view, it does not matter whether their suffering was caused intentionally or unintentionally, or whether or not it is recognised as suffering by the perpetrator."***

DEFINITIONS OF ANIMAL CRUELTY cont.

Recurring themes cover a wide range of animal abuse, and were easily defined by SMACC members based on many years of observation. The specific abuse subtypes were developed and updated over time with input from our research team as they discovered and refined the kinds of suffering the animals were experiencing.



We define all animal cruelty content by one of four categories which encapsulate all videos and clearly show the over-arching sentiment behind the video's production.

Recurring themes were easily defined as SMACC members have been aware of the recurrence of themes for many years. These cover a wide range of animal abuse.

The specific abuses subtypes were informed over time with input from our research team as they discovered and refined the kinds of suffering the animals were experiencing.

CATEGORIES

All cruelty falls broadly content under these four main categories:

| CATEGORIES                                                                                                                                                                | EXAMPLES                                                                                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>OBVIOUS AND INTENTIONAL CRUELTY</b><br>a clear-cut violation of platform's existing policies                                                                           | burying a live baby monkey;<br>intentionally setting dog on a live kitten;<br>burning or maiming live animals.                                                 |
| <b>AMBIGUOUS AND INTENTIONAL CRUELTY</b><br>a possible violation of platform's existing policies                                                                          | teasing a caged monkey;<br>filming a feral kitten being devoured by street dogs;<br>animal performances/wild animals as entertainers;<br>fake/staged rescues.  |
| <b>OBVIOUS AND UNINTENTIONAL CRUELTY</b><br>a possible violation of platform's existing policies                                                                          | making a macaque "smile" which may be a genuine misinterpretation of a fear/stress behaviour;<br>"tickling" a slow loris with arms raised (defence behaviour). |
| <b>AMBIGUOUS AND UNINTENTIONAL CRUELTY</b><br>not a violation of platform's existing policies - promotes cruel and illegal activity behind the scenes (pet trade/capture) | 'selfies'/tourist photos with wild animals;<br>keeping baby macaques as pets;<br>dressing animals in human clothing.                                           |

## CRUELTY THEMES

- Animals as entertainers
- Cruelty content used for legitimate campaigning or educational purposes
- Deliberate animal torture (mental)
- Deliberate animal torture (physical)
- Eating live animals
- Fake outrage
- Fake rescue
- Hunting
- Illegal keeping or sale
- Other
- Prolonging death
- Teasing
- Unintentional abuse
- Wild animals as pets

## SPECIFIC ABUSE

- beating to death / beating / kicking / punching
- burning / setting alight
- crushing with shoe / crushing
- dismembering / removing limbs / eyes / other
- dragging animal / behind a vehicle or otherwise
- drowning / partial drowning / threat of drowning
- electric shock
- false husbandry / conservation information
- feeding spicy food / inappropriate food
- fighting animals / encouraging fighting
- giving animal alcohol / drugs
- harmful chemicals ingested / sprayed on animal / animal made to use
- hunting / killing with knives
- hunting / trapping
- hunting other
- hunting with bows or spears
- hunting with dogs
- hunting with guns
- hunting with hawks or other raptors
- inappropriate handling or environment
- injury treatment either unqualified or after intentional wounding
- live burial / partial or full
- mutilating / maiming / cutting
- over breeding
- poor husbandry / dirt cage / own faeces
- rough handling
- scaring with another animal / predator
- scaring with masks / props
- separating infants / killing of parent(s)
- sexual abuse from human or on itself
- social isolation
- spraying with water / hose
- starving / making animal wait for food unnecessarily

## HOW THE PERPETRATORS OPERATE

Those who create and share animal cruelty content often operate in plain sight, posting publicly on social media as the platforms' policies are poorly enforced. All of the data collected by SMACC are from public posts. Those posting cruelty content relating to certain illegal activities, such as dog fighting, escape detection by using code words or ambiguous language, known to abuse content users, to describe their content and make it discoverable.

Unfortunately, secret groups and private chats enable further abuse and illegal activity, and are completely untraceable. This is not limited to animal cruelty content; both scholars and alliances such as the Coalition to End Wildlife Trafficking Online (Coalition EWTO) and the Alliance to Counter Crime Online (ACCO) have found social media to be a major contemporary driver of illegal wildlife trade.<sup>6</sup>

It should be noted that while our findings indicate a major problem, they do not show the immense scale of the problem. A recent report by Lady Freethinker and Action for Primates exposed torturous secret groups operating solely for the purpose of inflicting the most suffering possible to macaques in Indonesia. These groups primarily operate out of the public domain. Similarly SMACC has been made aware that other groups, such as dog fighting rings, largely operate in encrypted Facebook groups, freely buying and selling dogs for fighting and sharing videos online.<sup>7,8</sup> The encryption of Facebook exchanges became a controversial topic in 2019 with world leaders asking Facebook not to proceed:

*Addressed to Facebook's CEO, Mark Zuckerberg, the letter requests that Facebook not proceed with its end-to-end encryption plan without ensuring there will be no reduction in the safety of Facebook users and others, and without providing law enforcement court-authorized access to the content of communications to protect the public, particularly child users.*

It goes on to say:

*Use of end-to-end encryption, which allows messages to be decrypted only by end users, leaves service providers unable to produce readable content in response to wiretap orders and search warrants. This barrier allows criminals to avoid apprehension by law enforcement by limiting access to crucial evidence in the form of encrypted digital communications. The use of end-to-end encryption and other highly sophisticated encryption technologies significantly hinders, or entirely prevents serious criminal and national security investigations.<sup>9</sup>*

However, Facebook proceeded with their plans, with apparently grave consequences for vulnerable people, and also for animals.

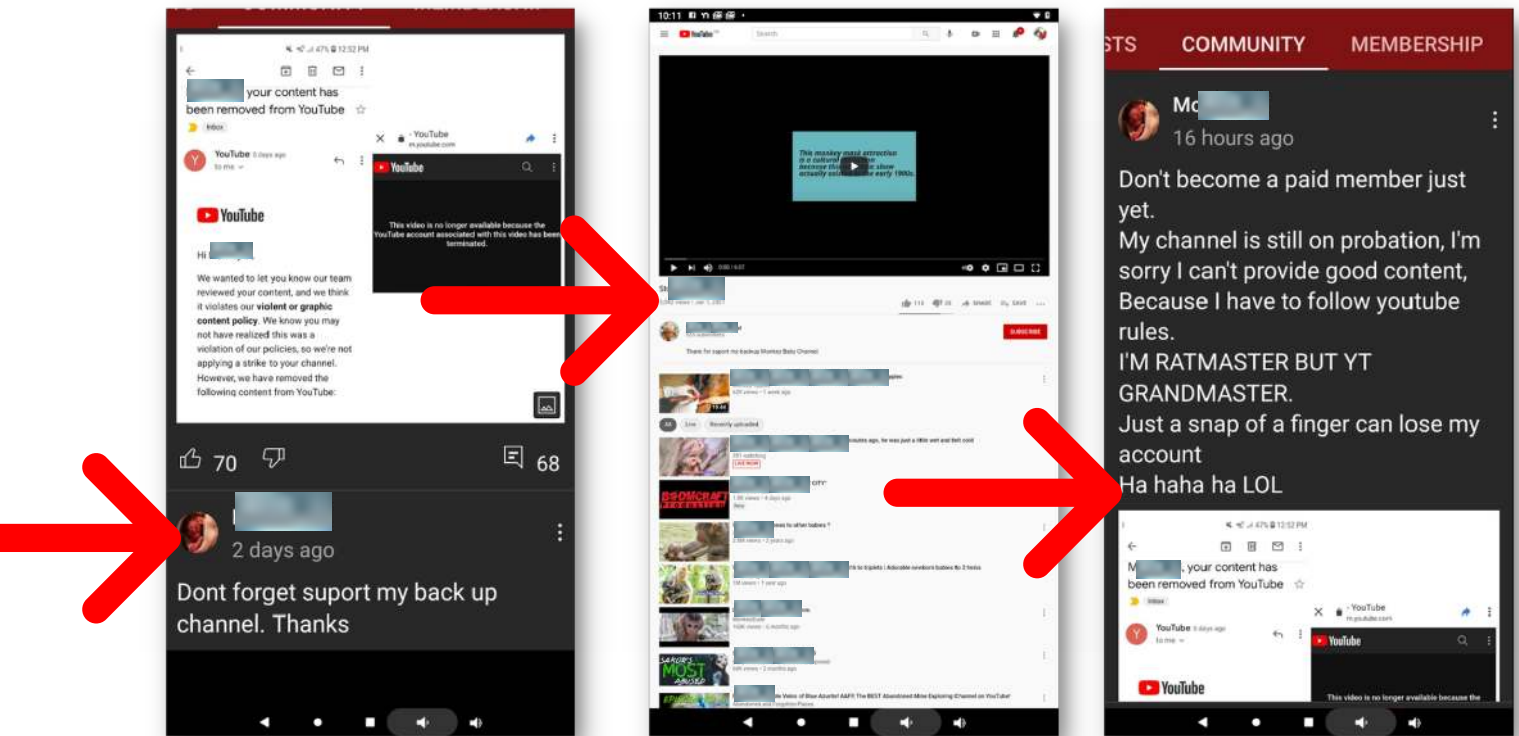
## PLATFORM HOPPING

Users of social media usually have channels or accounts on more than one platform. If cruelty content is removed from one platform or channel it often remains (or becomes) available on other channels or platforms. One Indonesian producer of baby macaque torture videos blatantly encourages his subscribers to follow him to a different platform, where he continues to share cruelty content. We regularly see the owners of channels dedicated to cruelty content elevated to celebrity-like status, **with 'fans' happy to follow them to whatever platform allows them to continue posting cruelty content.**

1.

2.

3.



1. Channel is told by YouTube that it is in violation of the violent or graphic content policy and they are removing the content. Channel owner comments in response to advise his followers to support his backup channel
2. Here we can see the backup channel
3. This image shows the content creator's blatant disregard for YouTube's punishment in laughing and calling his content 'good.'

## MISLEADING REGIONAL INFORMATION

Channels are regularly listed as originating in one region while content is clearly produced in another. Some examples noted by our team were:

- "Youtube 'about' section names Thailand as location, but account's comments and descriptions indicate Cambodia"
- "Youtube page states Thailand as location, Cambodia is given as location on Facebook. Details in pictures, language and contacts on Facebook seem to suggest Cambodia is correct."
- "Channel location given as Singapore but footage appears to be from Cambodia"

We surmise that this misleading information is provided by the channel owners in order to circumvent YouTube's **Partner Program** rules which state that only channels in certain countries are eligible for monetization.<sup>10</sup>

## SALE OF ANIMALS (LIVE, DEAD, BODY PARTS)

Section by Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA)

In addition to animal cruelty online, wildlife (live, dead, parts and derivatives), is advertised for sale and traded online, including from species on Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), in which international trade is prohibited. Online wildlife trade takes place through a variety of digital platforms including e-commerce sites (such as ebay and Taobao) and social media apps where wildlife is variously advertised for sale openly or via closed groups (such as Facebook, WeChat and Zalo). Some platforms and apps also provide a mechanism for financial transactions, increasing the ease of purchasing.<sup>11</sup>

The full scale of illegal wildlife trade online is unknown, in part because limited resources have restricted the scope of studies resulting in an emphasis on particular species and derivatives, on particular applications and platforms, or to particular countries / language searches. Nonetheless, dozens of snapshot studies documenting hundreds of thousands of online adverts indicate it is vast, and the continued ease with which online illegal wildlife trade offers can be found should be of serious concern to policy makers, the private sector and law enforcement. Whilst online trade offers can include scams, the use of imagery pulled from seizure incident reports and the circulation of the same images by multiple traders, online adverts for illegal wildlife are an indication of demand and of the impunity with which traders operate online. Persistent easy accessibility to illegal wildlife also risks removing any stigma associated with trade in endangered species.<sup>12</sup>

Online trade and cyber-enabled wildlife crime are not new phenomena with studies<sup>13,14,15</sup> dating back to 2004, but the problem has grown, not surprisingly with the increase of social media apps that provide a platform for trade, but also with COVID-19 travel restrictions; illegal wildlife traders have been more prepared to do business online in the absence of face-to-face negotiations.<sup>16,17</sup>

Thirty-four tech giants have partnered with IFAW, TRAFFIC and WWF under a Coalition to End Wildlife Trafficking Online, with the private sector committing to strengthening policies and practices to remove posts offering illegal wildlife.<sup>18</sup>



Some have policies that go beyond commitments to address illegal wildlife trade. Experts believe that there is still much more that the private sector can do.<sup>19,20</sup> Globally, online wildlife trade is on the CITES agenda with recommendations for Parties to strengthen legislation to facilitate investigation and enforcement measures and to encourage harmonisation of legislation to improve international cooperation. CITES has a dedicated page of resources to guide Parties.<sup>21</sup>

There remain considerable challenges for enforcement linked to inadequate legislation, complexities of jurisdiction, investigation powers and prosecution.<sup>22</sup> While there are successful enforcement operations using online trade adverts as a starting point for investigations,<sup>23,24</sup> it is not straightforward - some traders are brokers and may make money from connecting suppliers to buyers, without handling stock themselves. Even where enforcement is legally able and willing to act, they may be under-resourced.<sup>25</sup>



## THE DATA

“ Perhaps the most jaw-dropping revelation is that collectively, the 5480 individual videos that we have documented had been viewed 5,347,809,262 times at the time of writing. This staggering number has come at extreme cost to the animals involved - and the platforms hosting such content have profited. ”

## THE DATA

Our data solidly confirm that online animal cruelty content is a large-scale, global problem. Cruelty content has been shared on channels that have up to 45 million followers each.

Perhaps the most jaw-dropping revelation is that collectively, the 5480 individual videos that we have documented had been **viewed 5,347,809,262 times** at the time of writing. This staggering number has come at extreme cost to the animals involved - and the platforms hosting such content have profit, and continue to profit.

These numbers are astronomical when we consider that followers are only those who have actively chosen to follow that channel. Followers automatically see posts from their chosen channels or pages, meaning that a single cruelty content post could potentially be seen by every one of its followers, in addition to many other users!

### CHANNELS THAT HOUSE CRUELTY CONTENT



our research found that:

- **2 of the most popular channels documented had between 30 million and 45 million followers each**
- **15 channels have followers between 1 million and 5 million**
- **24 channels have followers between 500,000 - 999,999**
- **75 channels have followers of between 100,000 - 499,999**
- **77 channels have followers of between 50,000 - 99,999**
- **305 channels have followers of between 1,000 - 49,999**

**over 77  
channels:  
# followers  
50,000 -  
99,999**

**over 75  
channels:  
# followers  
100,000 -  
499,999**

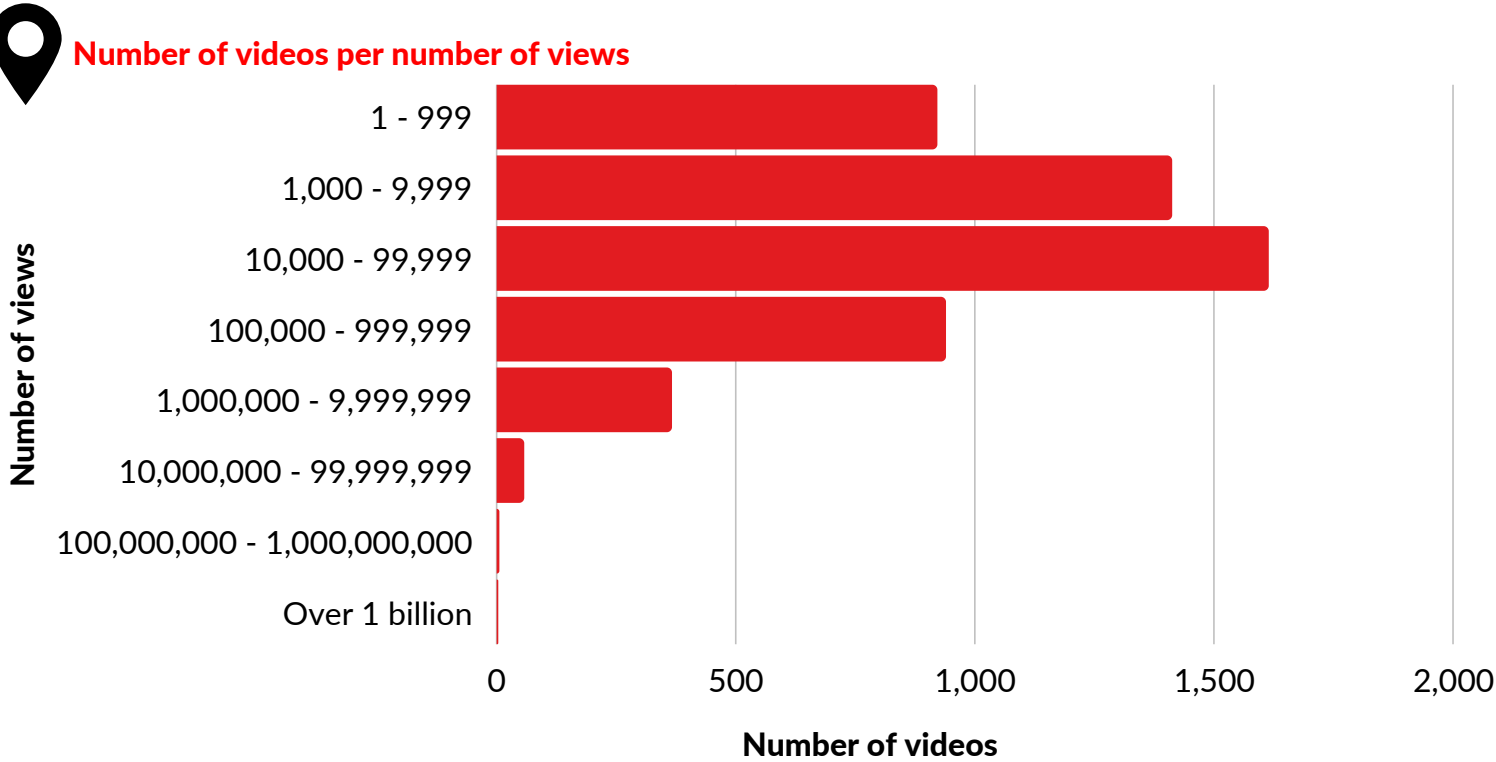
**over 24  
channels:  
# followers  
500,000 -  
999,000**

**over 15  
channels:  
# followers  
1 million -  
5 million**

**2 channels:  
# followers 30  
million and 45  
million**

VIEWS OF ANIMAL CRUELTY CONTENT

One of our most shocking findings is the vast number of times that the animal cruelty content we documented had been viewed. These numbers are so huge that we have written them in words below to highlight the sheer enormity of the situation. Please also refer to **Appendix 5** for further breakdown of numbers. We recorded a staggering **five billion, three hundred forty seven million, eight hundred and nine thousand, two hundred and sixty-two (5,347,809,262) views** for the 5480 videos we documented.



The total number of views recorded reached a staggering **5,347,809,262** for the 5480 videos recorded.

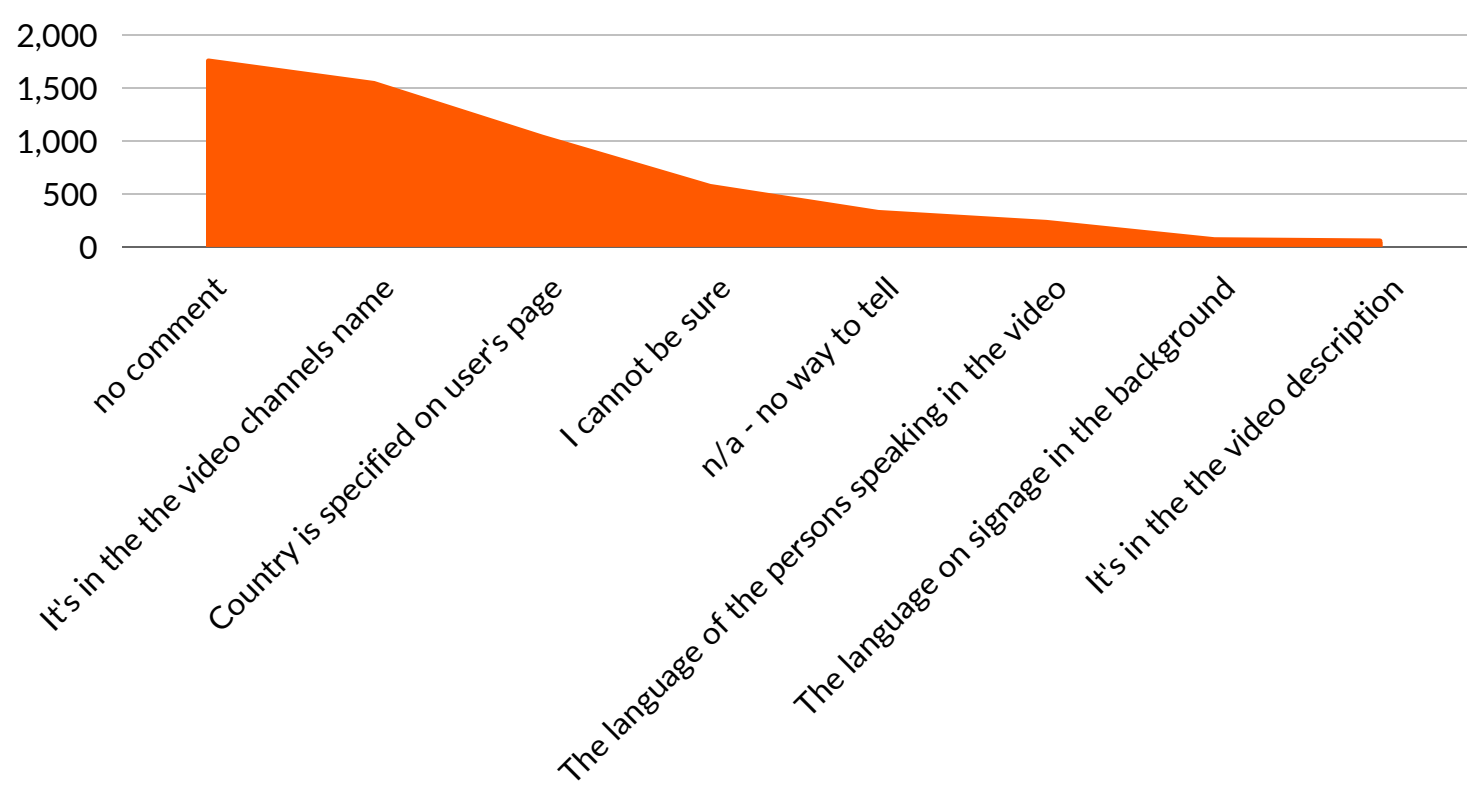
|                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 individual video had been viewed <b>Over 1 billion times</b>                                               | 4 individual videos had been viewed between 100,000,000 - 1,000,000,000 <b>(one hundred million to one billion)</b> | 56 individual videos had been viewed between 10,000,000 - 99,999,999 <b>(ten million to one hundred million)</b> | 365 individual videos had been viewed between 1,000,000 - 9,999,999 <b>(one million to ten million)</b> |
| 938 individual videos had been viewed between 100,000 - 999,999 <b>(one hundred thousand to one million)</b> | 1613 individual videos had been viewed between 10,000 - 99,999 <b>(ten thousand to one hundred thousand)</b>        | 1411 individual videos had been viewed between 1,000 - 9,999 <b>(one thousand to ten thousand)</b>               | 920 individual videos had been viewed between 1 - 999 <b>(zero to a thousand)</b>                       |

THE AREAS WHERE CRUELTY CONTENT IS MADE

**NOTE:** Of the 5480 videos we documented, 1683 videos were not listed with a country or region and 731 videos were listed as 'no way to tell'. These have been excluded from the chart below. We must also stress that our data were collected via snowball sampling and only with content available in the public domain. Please also consider that 'location' is often incorrectly stated by users. Please refer to **Appendix 6** for more information.



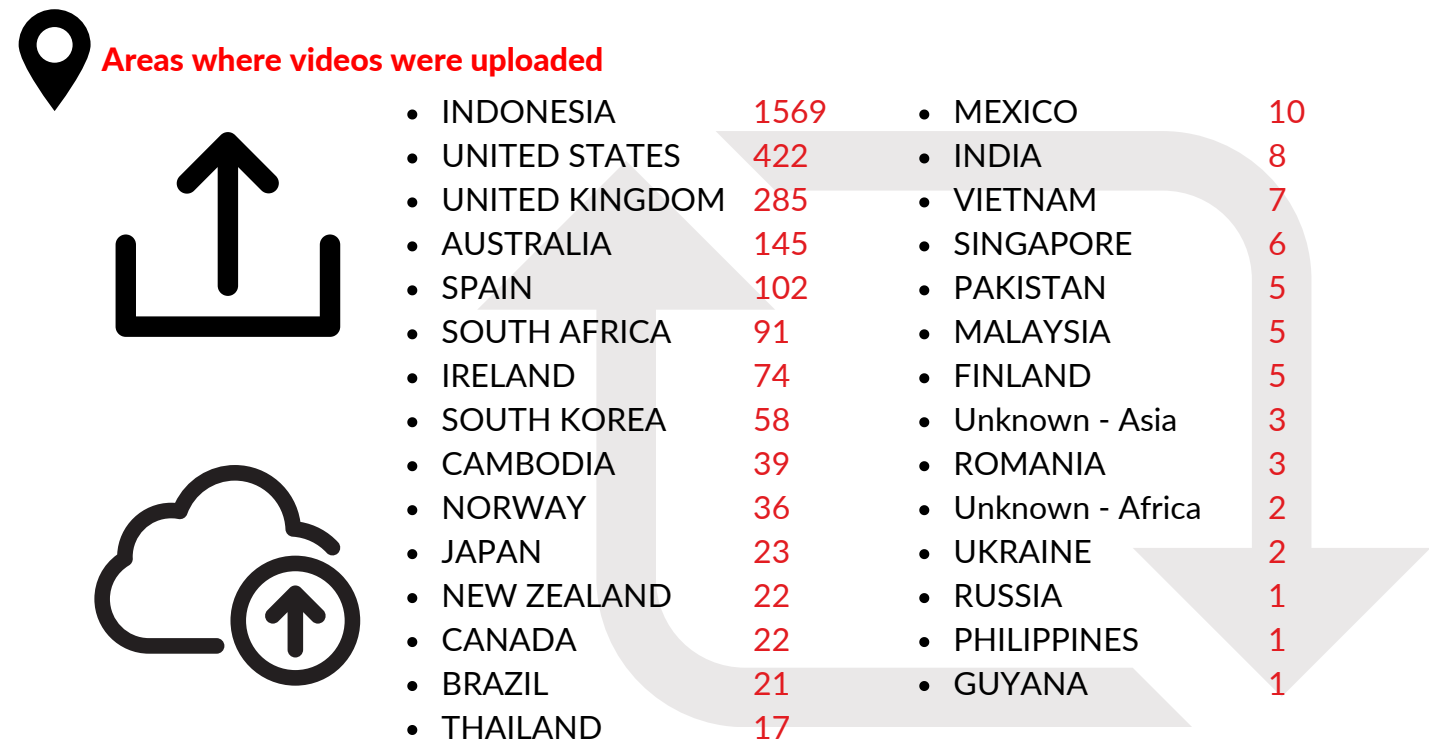
Here are the options selected by our researchers when stating where the content was created:



## THE AREAS WHERE CRUELTY CONTENT IS UPLOADED

**NOTE:** Of the 5480 videos we documented, 2232 videos were not listed with a country or region of upload and 263 videos were listed as 'no way to tell'. These have been excluded from the chart below. We must also stress that our data were collected via snowball sampling and only with content available in the public domain. Please also consider that 'location' is often incorrectly stated by users.

**Animal cruelty content is a global problem regardless of where it is being created, uploaded or shared, and social media has very few boundaries.**



## THE ANIMALS

Social media cruelty content features an enormous range of species - domesticated animals such as cats, dogs and rabbits; wild animals like monkeys, pythons, pangolins and bears and animals often considered to be working animals, such as horses and camels. Some species have become obvious targets for animal abusers; in particular macaques, often infants, due to their human-like behavior and the ease of obtaining and training them. Other targets include stray animals who are often easy to catch due to their habituation to humans and familiarity with urban areas.

Stray animals are regularly considered 'pests'. Predatory snakes and lizards as well as raptor birds are commonly seen in fake rescue videos, representing the 'attackers' from which the 'prey' must be rescued. Hunting videos regularly feature foxes, hundreds of bird species, and wild pigs. Beetles, spiders, scorpions, and various crustaceans are often filmed in staged fights, as are other animals commonly used for fights such as dogs and cockerels.

Worryingly, we also documented cruelty content featuring wildlife classed as **threatened by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN)**, such as pangolins, siamangs and tigers.

## WILDLIFE

A wide range of wild animals are cruelly set up as prey and predator in fake rescue videos where they are clearly subject to intense suffering. Frequently featured predators include raptors (for example, changeable hawk eagles, *Nisaetus cirrhatus* and short-toed snake eagles, *Circaetus gallicus*) and reptiles (like Bengal monitor lizards, *Varanus bengalensis*, Burmese pythons, *Python molurus bivittatus*, and Chinese rat snakes, *Ptyas korros*). A wide diversity of wild animals are featured as prey in these videos. Species we identified include Lar gibbons, *Hylobates lar*; Wild boar, *Sus* spp; owls and raptors (including buffy fish owls, *Ketupa ketupu*; collared scops owls, *Otus lettia*; changeable hawk eagles; and short-toed snake eagles); and reptiles (such as Bengal monitors, Elongated tortoises, *Indotestudo elongata*, and Siamese crocodiles). Some of the species targeted are threatened with extinction according to the IUCN, meaning that their use, even in small numbers, could have damaging impacts on the survival of remaining wild populations. Such species include Siamese crocodiles and elongated tortoises (both Critically Endangered), Lar gibbons (Endangered), and Burmese pythons (Vulnerable).

## WILDLIFE TRADE

As the world ground to a halt in the wake of the pandemic the trade in wildlife on social media platforms flourished. (see also section on *SALE OF ANIMALS (live, dead, body parts)*)



Collaborators ADM Capital Foundation told SMACC:

*Whilst some social media groups have made efforts to curb wildlife trade on their platforms, the reality is that as they have clamped down on the most overt elements of the trade, they have simultaneously provided operators with alternative, private channels - private groups and group chats. Traders have consequently cultivated their businesses, without oversight or fear of detection, expanding their customer bases and supply chains within secretive groups.*

*Over the last five years, we have observed hundreds of species being advertised by wildlife traders on social media. Pangolins in Nairobi, timber in Ghana, tigers in Mexico, tortoises in Spain, geckos in Taiwan, chimpanzees in Egypt, agarwood in the Philippines, ivory in Cambodia, sloths in Malaysia, sharks in Morocco, rhino horn in Vietnam - the scale of trade online is vast and remains largely unregulated. **Whether it's in personal profiles, business Pages, in private Groups, Marketplace, Messenger, WhatsApp or Instagram, wildlife trade is flourishing and social media has played a pivotal role.***

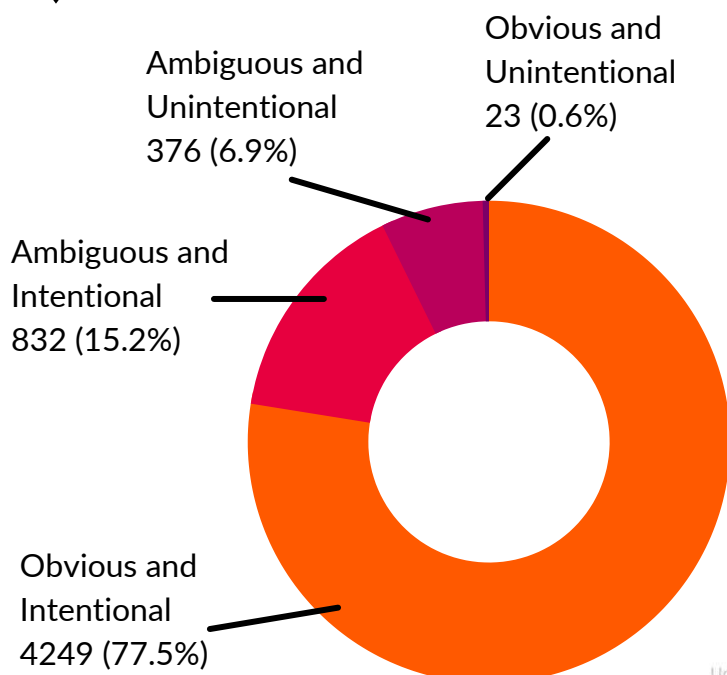
***"...as they have clamped down on the most overt elements of the trade, they have simultaneously provided operators with alternative, private channels - private groups and group chats."***

## ANIMAL CRUELTY VIDEOS

Our data show a wide range of animals suffering across a vast geographical range.



## categories of animal cruelty



## themes of animal cruelty



## specific abuses



## CRUELTY CONTENT FOLLOWERS

Perhaps as concerning as the production of animal cruelty content is the scale of appetite and support for cruelty content. Comments like "hit it harder"; "next time make it suffer more"; "thrilling" or "exciting!" were regularly noted.



We recorded **961,867 comments** (not including likes/dislike/shares) in total, indicating that viewers, in one way or another, are interacting with online cruelty content in huge numbers, often propelling the content creator into social media stardom.



image smacc id: recJmAF1NxrnpGmVh



SMACC member organization **World Animal Protection** (WAP) has an ongoing investigation analysing the sentiments behind these cruelty content and its supporters.

Consumers (in this case, viewers) are not always aware of, or able to detect, the potential negative impacts of animal cruelty videos due to lack of expertise, cognitive bias (e.g. mammals in poor welfare states may be easier for most non-experts to recognise than reptiles), impacts that occur behind the scenes, and/or deliberately deceptive material.<sup>26</sup> Studies of other (real-life/hands-on) types of wildlife-related activities (e.g. non-consumptive wildlife tourist attractions (WTAs)<sup>27</sup>) suggest that consumers may simply not respond to even quite obvious negative impacts. In addition, viewers' perspectives on the appropriate treatment of animals may vary between countries and cultures, and so the collective response to a particular video may be inconsistent or unclear, depending on the particular subset of viewers.

### World Animal Protection's Case study 1 - Otter videos risk encouraging exotic pet ownership

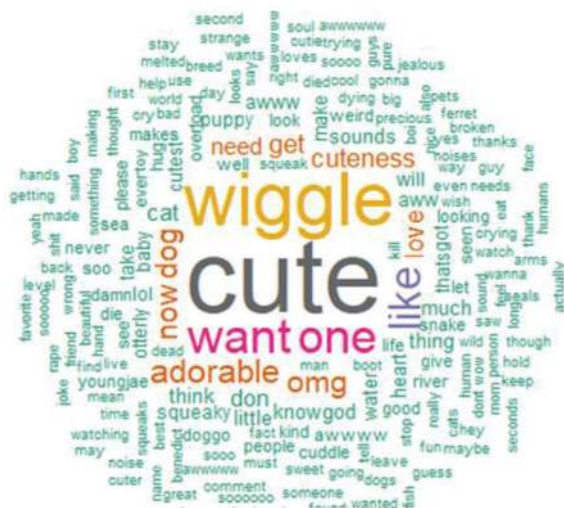
Prior to the uplisting of Southeast Asian otter species [small-clawed and smooth-coated otters (*Aonyx cinereus* and *Lutrogale perspicillata*, respectively)] onto CITES Appendix I in 2019, a number of reports and studies highlighted an apparent increase in the use and trade of otters as 'exotic pets'.<sup>28</sup> At the same time (between 2016 and 2018), there was a significant increase in the number of YouTube videos posted depicting pet otters, and also an increase in both their popularity and engagement.<sup>29</sup>

The effect was particularly pronounced for videos published under Indonesian (a native range country from where otters were potentially sourced) and Japanese (a country where otters as private exotic pets and in 'otter cafes' were extremely popular) search terms. The frequent appearance of words and phrases associated with an apparent desire to purchase a pet otter in the comments of these videos (such as 'I want one') suggest that some highly popular videos might incite desire to own these animals as exotic pets and may be contributing to driving demand.<sup>30</sup> This is a concern because otters have complex habitat and dietary requirements (including the need for sufficient water for free swimming), can inflict serious bites on their human handlers, and are not a suitable companion animal.

In addition, in South East Asia, wild otter populations face a number of serious potentially interacting and compounding threats associated with increasing human populations and their activities (habitat loss and degradation, overfishing, and aquatic pollution) as well as poaching for their pelts in parts of their range, so any additional, or increasing pressure on their numbers (i.e. taking young otters for the pet market) may have a significant negative impact.



World Animal Protection's analysis of YouTube videos portraying otters as pets show an increase in social media activity that may not only be driving the apparent increase in popularity, but also amplifying awareness of the availability of these animals as pets, as well as creating and perpetuating the (erroneous) perception of otters as a suitable companion animal. The figures above and below show an example screenshot and a wordcloud from one of the most popular videos depicting the nature of viewer comments in response to the video.



***"The appearance of phrases such as "I want one" in the comments section of the English-language videos, although not necessarily a statement of actual intent, suggests that these videos may be driving demand amongst their viewers and followers."*** <sup>31</sup>

## World Animal Protection's Case study 2 - Fake animal rescues which may encourage poaching from the wild

A World Animal Protection investigation<sup>32</sup> into fake “animal rescues” (see also report by Lady Freethinker<sup>33</sup> and Maron.<sup>34</sup>) has revealed that this disturbing new type of animal abuse (involving both domesticated animals and wild species including birds, mammals, and reptiles) is far more prevalent on social media platforms than previously thought. In total, World Animal Protection found 181 different fake “animal rescue” videos published on YouTube between October 2018 and May 2021 using two search terms alone. At the time of review, the most viewed fake “animal rescue” videos had reached audiences of up to 100 million viewers. World Animal Protection are currently undertaking an in depth attitudinal analysis<sup>35</sup> of the response of viewers to these videos. Initial analysis suggests that at least some viewers recognise these videos as ‘fake’ and express concern regarding animal cruelty. However, responses appear inconsistent, and **a substantial proportion of the sentiments expressed using emojis and text appear to be positive, indicating enjoyment of the video (which is perceived as entertaining or exciting).** In addition to the animal cruelty depicted, the investigation also confirms that species considered to be threatened by extinction are being targeted, including the Critically Endangered Siamese crocodile (*Crocodylus siamensis*) and elongated tortoise (*Indotestudo elongata*), the Endangered Lar gibbon (*Hylobates lar*), and the Vulnerable Burmese python (*Python molurus bivittatus*)



These videos clearly show a staged scene in which domestic or wild animals are subject to approach, and often captured, by predators before being rescued by the human. The docile responses of the predators to the human suggest that they are kept in captivity and habituated to the response of the human (or are unable to escape, e.g. birds with clipped wings). Some viewers clearly recognise these features of the videos (indicated by the prominence of words like ‘fake’ in the comments), and some go so far as to say that they have reported the video or that it should be reported. However, many other viewers express positive sentiments that reflect enjoyment of the video, raising a number of concerns including the risk of repetitive behaviour (involving poaching animals from the wild for similar videos) and normalisation of manipulative/abusive interactions with wild animals, and highlighting that viewers are not able to provide appropriate ethical assessments of online videos posted for entertainment purposes.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT AND SENTIMENT ANALYSIS

There were an estimated 3.6 billion social media users worldwide in 2020 representing approximately half of the world's population,<sup>36</sup> meaning that the power of social media to influence public attitudes, consumer behaviour and lifestyle choices is great. However, because much social media activity takes place in the public domain, posts and the responses to posts also provide a readily available data source reflecting the activities and views of (potentially) very large numbers of particular groups of people. Analysis of social media data can therefore be used by researchers to assess current interests and influences, and to detect possible emerging markets (e.g. interest in particular exotic pets) and activities (e.g. staged predator-prey interactions, and rescues by humans) that may be associated with threats to the welfare or conservation status of the animals involved. As such, observations of social media activity provide unique and valuable insight into not only the activities of those that post on social media, but also the response of their audiences (followers, subscribers, etc.) – in particular, the (potential) desire to carry out the behaviours (e.g. purchasing, or otherwise obtaining, an exotic pet) shown in the post, or the likelihood that viewers recognise the harmful nature of the video.

World Animal Protection's work thus far suggests that viewers of otter pet videos are more likely to express a desire (that may or may not be borne out in behaviour) to have their own pet otter, than to question the suitability or legality of otters being kept as pets in domestic settings. Similarly, content analysis of the most frequently occurring words suggests that at least some viewers of fake animal rescues identify the video as fake (the word 'fake' was prominent in the comments of videos, and the words 'scripted', 'staged' and 'acting' also appear), and some recognise the cruelty inflicted on the animals involved (e.g. the word 'cruelty' appears in the comments, as well as acknowledgement that the bird's wings are clipped – 'wings', 'fly', 'clipped', and that the bird might be 'injured'), but also suggest that other viewers (who may or may not be aware of the fact that the video is most likely a fake, or that the animals involved are subject to cruelty) express positive words and phrases ('wow', 'nice', 'like', 'love', 'super', 'excellent', 'amazing', 'happy') indicating that viewers simply enjoyed the video and were unaware of any potential negative impacts on the animals involved.<sup>37</sup>



**"...positive words and phrases ('wow', 'nice', 'like', 'love', 'super', 'excellent', 'amazing', 'happy') indicating that viewers simply enjoyed the video and were unaware of any potential negative impacts on the animals involved."**



# PLATFORMS

“ Regularly users simply hop to a different platform with most blatantly encouraging their subscribers/followers of their channels to follow them!

”

## PLATFORMS

For the purposes of this report, we focused on **YouTube**, **Facebook** and **TikTok**. However, we found that many posts contained links to other platforms; for example, links to YouTube videos were often posted to Facebook, and Facebook videos were posted on Instagram. Other platforms like LinkedIn, Vimeo, Snapchat were also noted.



Producers of cruelty content regularly share their content on multiple platforms, enabling them to continue unabated if one of the platforms removes their content. This makes it particularly difficult to stop them.

Despite clear statements prohibiting animal cruelty across the social media platforms' community guidelines and policies, cruelty content remains live and available and is very much flourishing online.

## MONETIZATION

A 2020 report by SMACC member **Lady Freethinker** found that YouTube was profiting from animal cruelty content. Hundreds of videos with over 100,000 views each displayed advertisements; one monetized video had more than 54 million views. With YouTube's pay-per-view monetization model, these videos can be very lucrative. Lady Freethinker estimated that the cruelty content they documented could have earned up to \$15 million for its creators and up to \$12 million for YouTube itself.<sup>38</sup>



**"potentially  
\$12 MILLION  
in earnings!"**



**YouTube's Partner Programme** encourages content creators to monetize their channels, providing they comply with the YouTube policies. Unfortunately, channels that feature animal cruelty appear to escape identification by YouTube's Standard Review Process and remain available on the platform while earning significant income. The terms state:

*Make sure your channel follows our policies and guidelines. When you apply, you'll go through a standard review process to check whether your channel meets our policies and guidelines. Channels that meet our policies and guidelines will be accepted into the program. We also constantly check channels in the program to make sure they continue to meet our policies and guidelines.*<sup>39</sup>

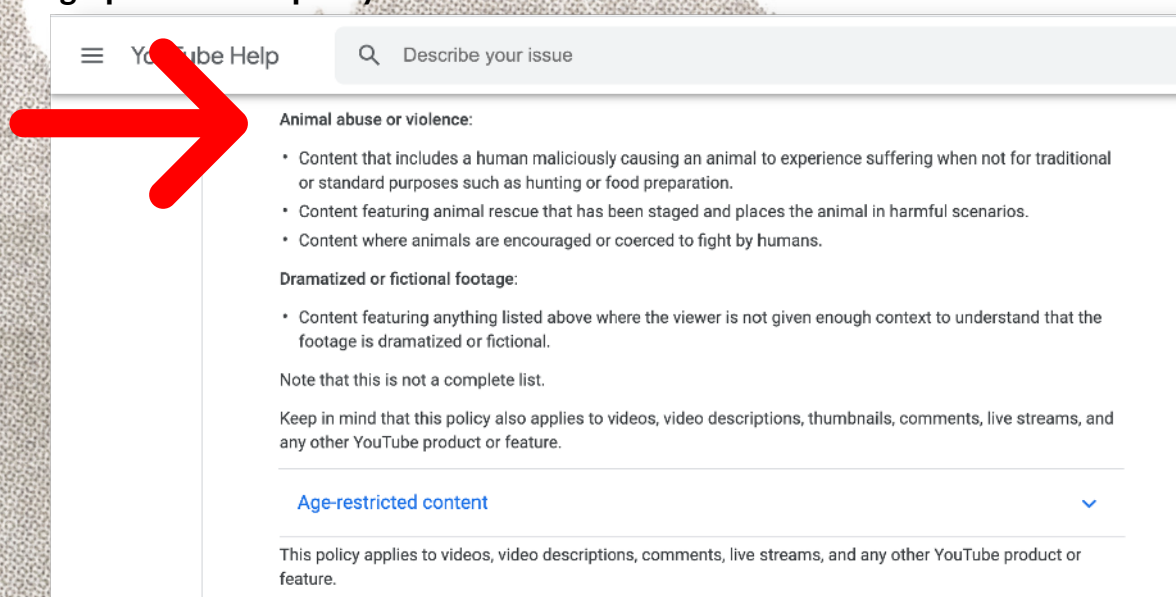
## PLATFORM POLICIES

YouTube, Facebook and TikTok each have publicly available policies on animal abuse that vary in specificity and ease of access. These policies are regularly updated, but, as we have seen, are often unenforced. Facebook and TikTok's policies focus primarily on extreme physical harm and gore, but do not appear to acknowledge other forms of cruelty. YouTube's guidelines are more broad and open to interpretation, and include specific mention of "staged rescues". The information below was correct at the time of writing.

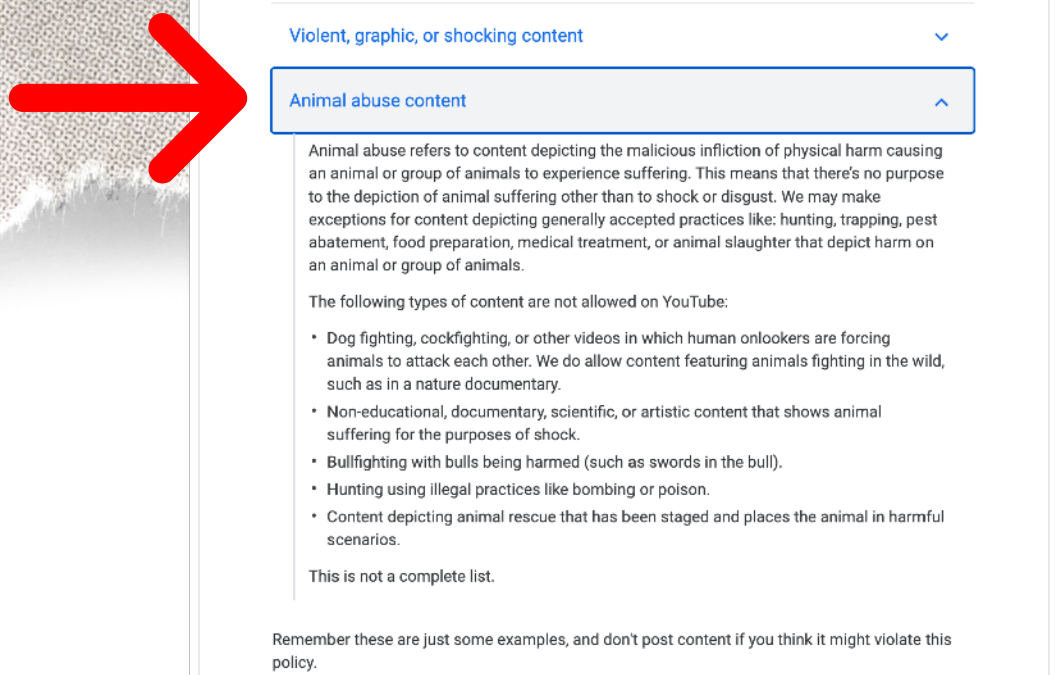
### PLATFORM POLICIES - YOUTUBE

YouTube's community guidelines state: **"Our Community Guidelines define what we allow and don't allow on YouTube. They exist so that we can protect the community from things such as harmful content, harassment and spam"** <sup>40</sup>

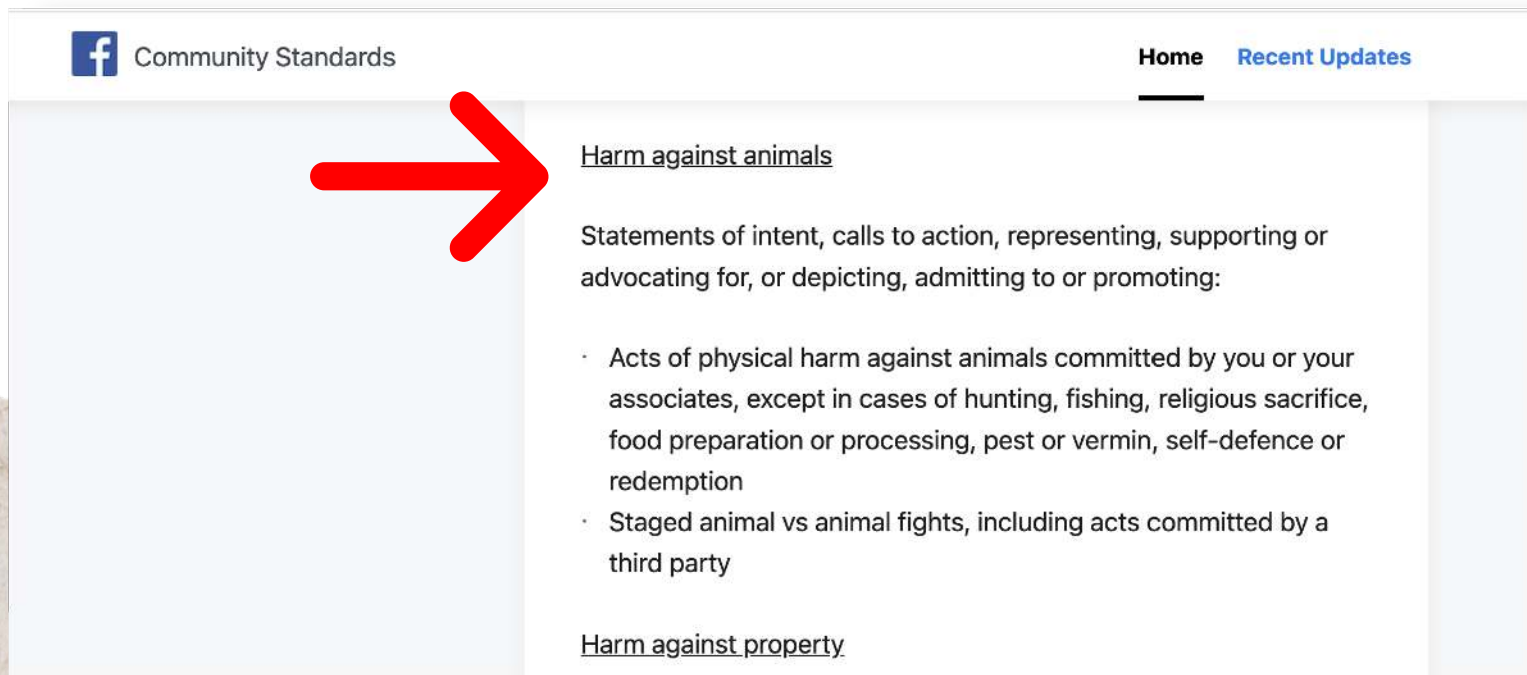
The **community guidelines** <sup>41</sup> do not categorise animal cruelty in its own right, but animal cruelty is covered under YouTube's **violent or graphic content policy**: <sup>42</sup>



This section provides examples of animal cruelty that are prohibited on the platform:



Section 3 of Facebook's community standards (Coordinating harm and publicising crime) states:<sup>43</sup>



The screenshot shows the Facebook Community Standards page. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Facebook logo and the text 'Community Standards'. On the right side of the navigation bar, there are two links: 'Home' and 'Recent Updates'. The 'Home' link is underlined. Below the navigation bar, there is a large red arrow pointing to the 'Harm against animals' section. The 'Harm against animals' section is titled 'Harm against animals' and contains the following text: 'Statements of intent, calls to action, representing, supporting or advocating for, or depicting, admitting to or promoting:'. Below this text, there is a list of two items: 'Acts of physical harm against animals committed by you or your associates, except in cases of hunting, fishing, religious sacrifice, food preparation or processing, pest or vermin, self-defence or redemption' and 'Staged animal vs animal fights, including acts committed by a third party'. Below the list, there is a link to 'Harm against property'.

Community Standards

Home Recent Updates

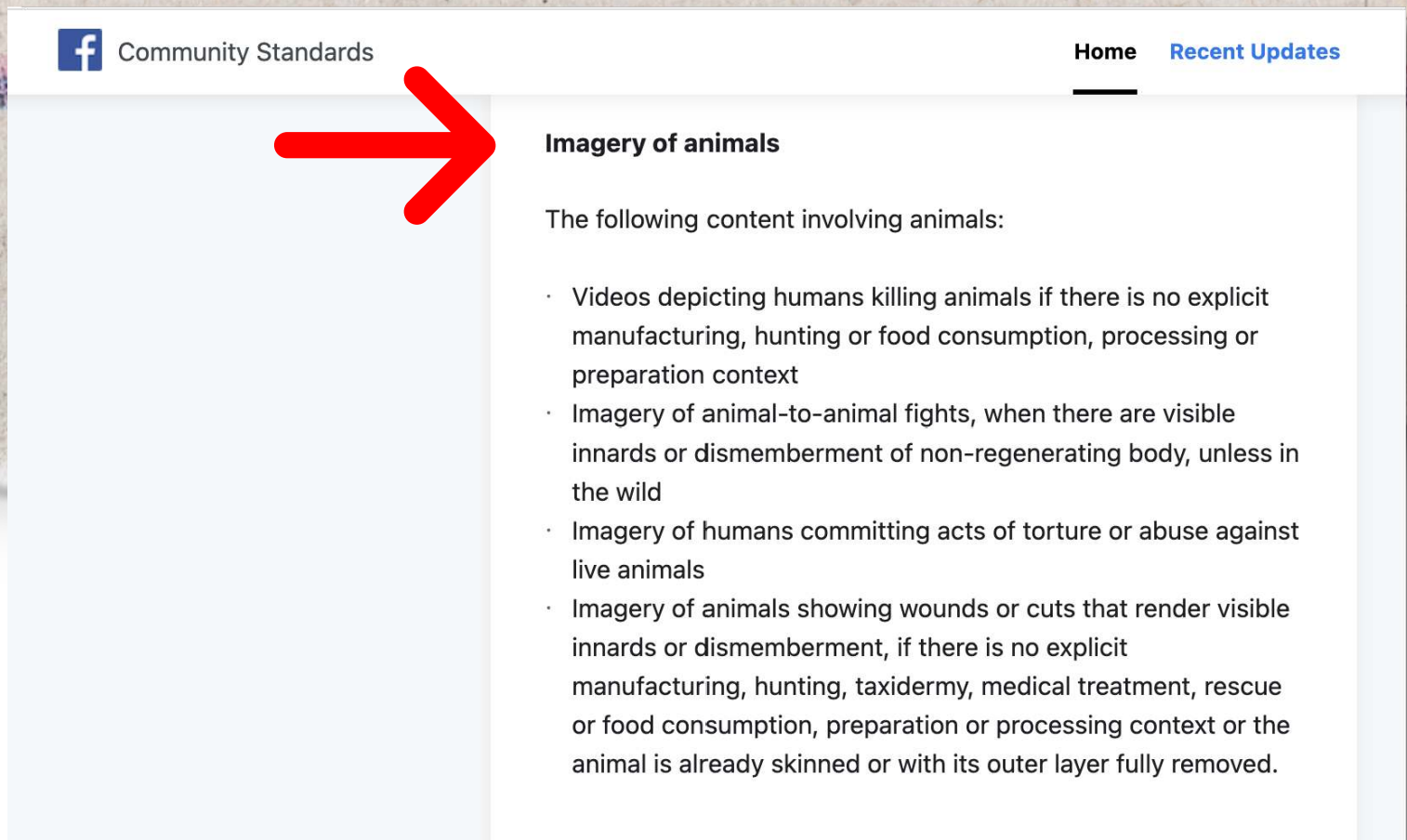
Harm against animals

Statements of intent, calls to action, representing, supporting or advocating for, or depicting, admitting to or promoting:

- Acts of physical harm against animals committed by you or your associates, except in cases of hunting, fishing, religious sacrifice, food preparation or processing, pest or vermin, self-defence or redemption
- Staged animal vs animal fights, including acts committed by a third party

Harm against property

Section 3.13 (**Objectionable content - Violent and graphic content**) describes prohibited cruelty content:<sup>44</sup>



The screenshot shows the Facebook Community Standards page. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Facebook logo and the text 'Community Standards'. On the right side of the navigation bar, there are two links: 'Home' and 'Recent Updates'. The 'Home' link is underlined. Below the navigation bar, there is a large red arrow pointing to the 'Imagery of animals' section. The 'Imagery of animals' section is titled 'Imagery of animals' and contains the following text: 'The following content involving animals:'. Below this text, there is a list of four items: 'Videos depicting humans killing animals if there is no explicit manufacturing, hunting or food consumption, processing or preparation context', 'Imagery of animal-to-animal fights, when there are visible innards or dismemberment of non-regenerating body, unless in the wild', 'Imagery of humans committing acts of torture or abuse against live animals', and 'Imagery of animals showing wounds or cuts that render visible innards or dismemberment, if there is no explicit manufacturing, hunting, taxidermy, medical treatment, rescue or food consumption, preparation or processing context or the animal is already skinned or with its outer layer fully removed'.

Community Standards

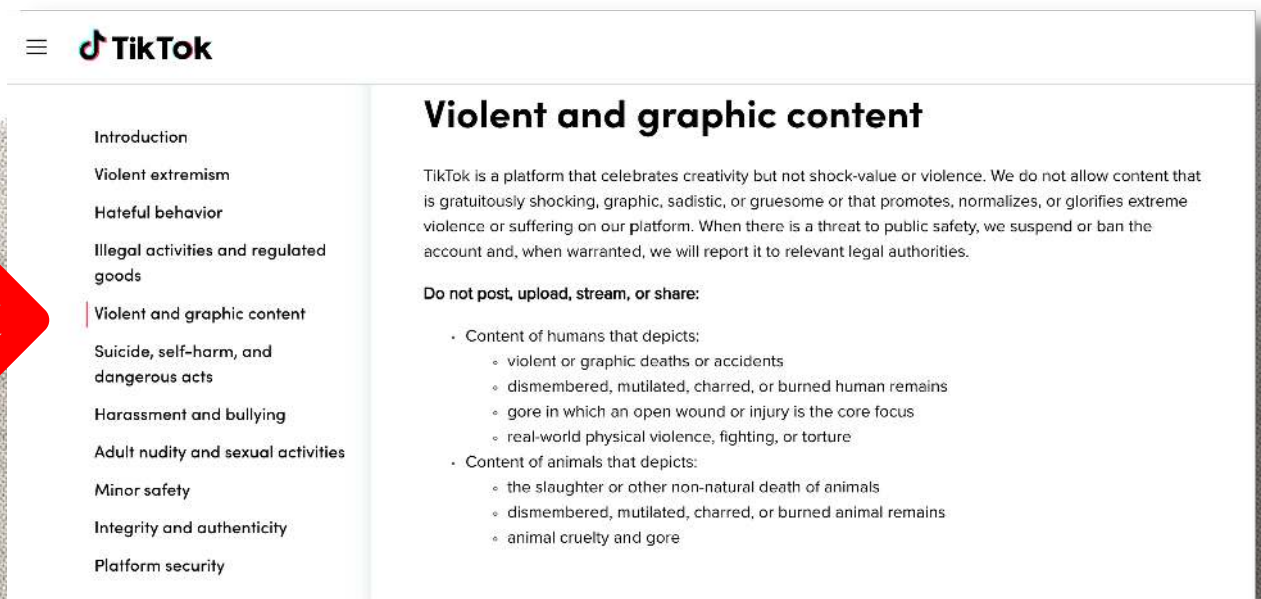
Home Recent Updates

**Imagery of animals**

The following content involving animals:

- Videos depicting humans killing animals if there is no explicit manufacturing, hunting or food consumption, processing or preparation context
- Imagery of animal-to-animal fights, when there are visible innards or dismemberment of non-regenerating body, unless in the wild
- Imagery of humans committing acts of torture or abuse against live animals
- Imagery of animals showing wounds or cuts that render visible innards or dismemberment, if there is no explicit manufacturing, hunting, taxidermy, medical treatment, rescue or food consumption, preparation or processing context or the animal is already skinned or with its outer layer fully removed.

TikTok's community guidelines section for violent and graphic content states the following:<sup>45</sup>



## INACTION BY THE PLATFORMS

The Asia for Animals Coalition and the SMAC Coalition have written to YouTube about cruelty content on a number of occasions, but neither have received any satisfactory response.<sup>46,47,48</sup>

YouTube's monitoring is predominantly undertaken by machines and artificial intelligence. The platform's community guidelines section entitled 'How does YouTube identify content that violates the Community Guidelines?' states that they use:

*a combination of people and machine learning to detect problematic content at scale. Machine learning is well suited to detect patterns, which helps us to find content that is similar to other content that we've already removed, even before it's viewed.*

*We also recognise that the best way to quickly remove content is to anticipate problems before they emerge. Our Intelligence Desk monitors the news, social media and user reports to detect new trends surrounding inappropriate content, and works to make sure that our teams are prepared to address them before they can become a larger issue.*<sup>49</sup>

YouTube's section on enforcing policies' states that "Channels that are dedicated to violating our policies or that have a single case of severe abuse of the platform will bypass our strikes system and be terminated."<sup>50</sup>

Our research indicates that this is not always the case; we have reported **obvious and intentional** cruelty on multiple occasions and no action was taken by the platform. Lady Freethinker reported ten fake rescue videos in May, 2021 using YouTube's online reporting system. More than a month later, all were still live.<sup>51</sup> See SMACC's REPORTING DATA section.

YOUTUBE:

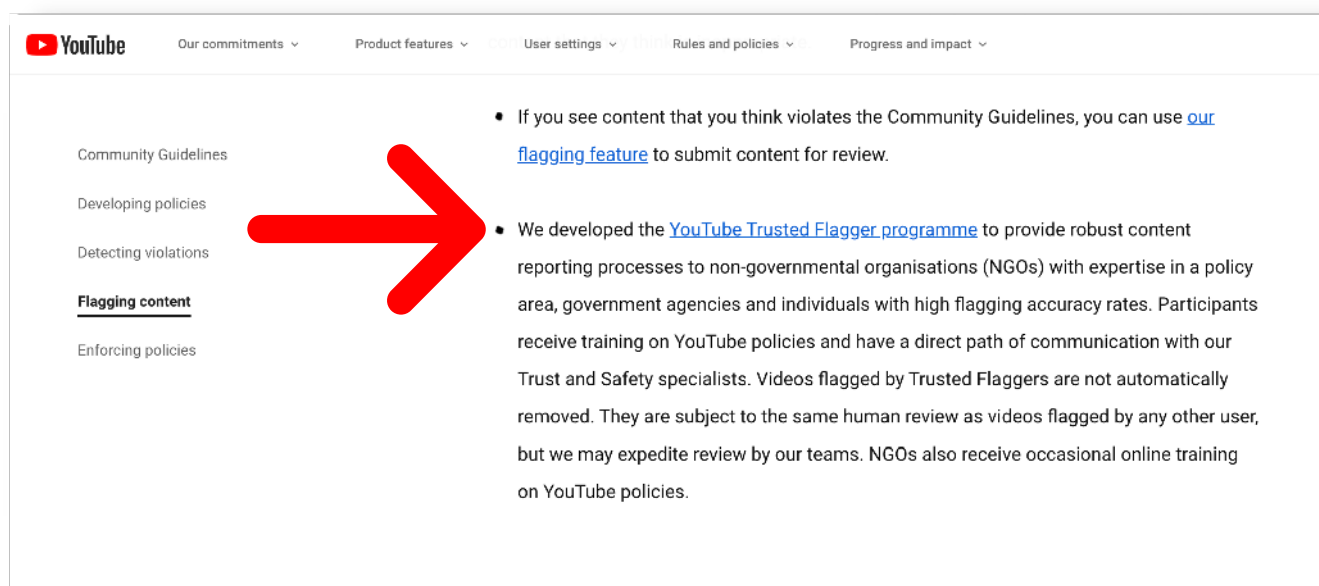
***"Channels that...have a single case of severe abuse of the platform will bypass our strikes system and be terminated."***

## REPORTING MECHANISMS

Where artificial intelligence fails, social media platforms appear to rely largely on user reports for the detection of content that violates their policies. The mechanisms for reporting animal cruelty content are, however often difficult to navigate, and action resulting from user reporting appears to be rare.

YouTube's 'flagging content' section states: *"If you see content that you think violates the Community Guidelines, you can use our flagging feature to submit content for review."*<sup>52</sup> Flagging procedures appear to be updated regularly; towards the beginning of our research period it was difficult to report animal cruelty specifically; at the time of writing, all three of our focus platforms offer animal cruelty options. YouTube even offers the opportunity to describe why you think that a post contains animal abuse. Despite this, most reported posts remained live and freely available a week after having been reported (see SMACC's REPORTING DATA section).

YouTube runs a **'Trusted Flagger programme,'** developed *"to help provide robust tools for individuals, government agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that are particularly effective at notifying YouTube of content that violates our Community Guidelines."*<sup>53</sup> However, when one of the SMAC coalition member organizations applied to join, they were rejected on the grounds that YouTube was *"not actively onboarding flaggers with expertise in the policy areas most relevant to your organization at this time."*



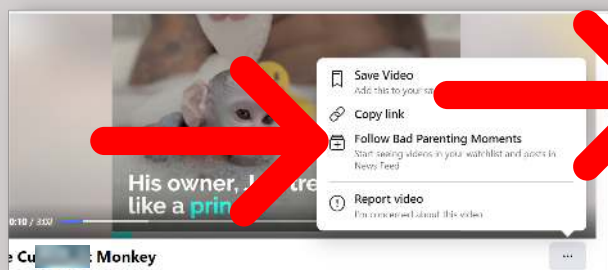
***"Unfortunately, they are not actively onboarding flaggers with expertise in the policy areas most relevant to your organisation at this time."***

## SMACC'S REPORTING DATA

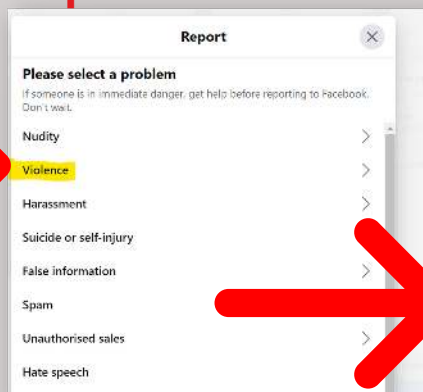
Primarily between 2 and 8 August 2021, we reported 60 individual videos for animal cruelty content. Our team of researchers was given specific directions on how to report animal cruelty to each of the platforms. 41 videos were reported to YouTube as either "Violent or repulsive content - animal abuse" or "Hateful or abusive content - abusing vulnerable individuals"; 11 to TikTok as "Animal abuse" and eight to Facebook as "Violence - animal abuse".

## Reporting to Facebook:

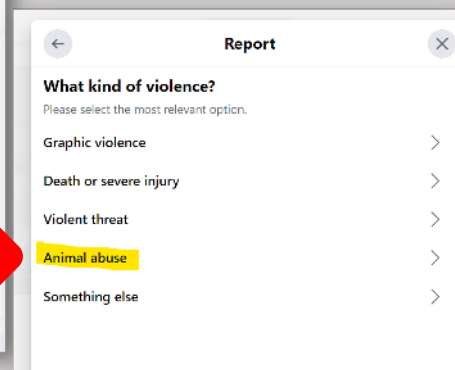
### step 1:



### step 2:

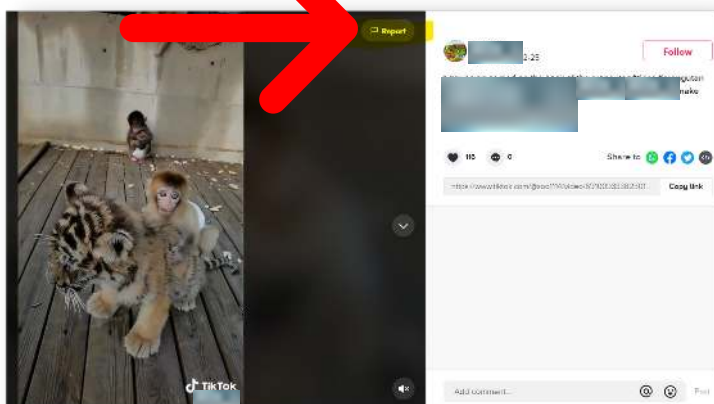


### step 3:

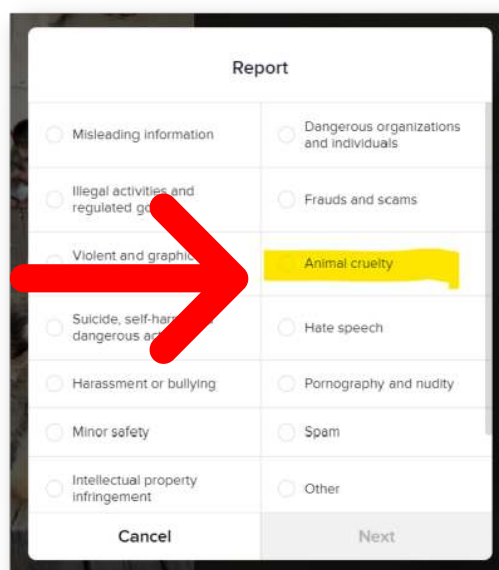


## Reporting to Tik Tok:

### step 1:



### step 2:

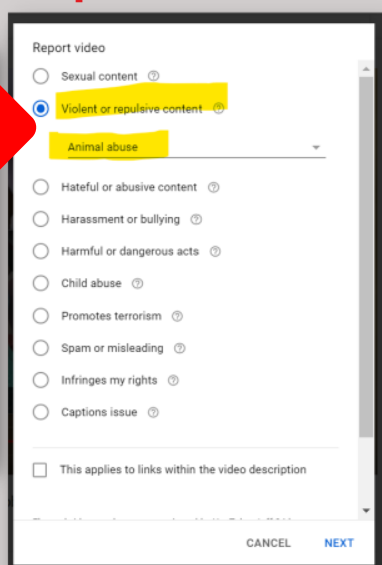


## Reporting to YouTube:

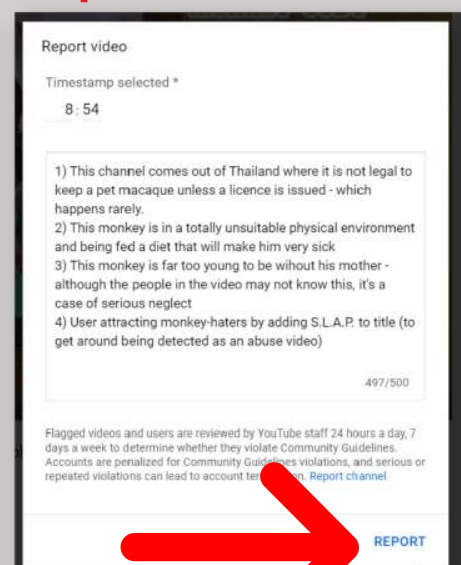
### step 1:



### step 2:



### step 3:



Alternatively, our team were advised they could report the animal cruelty content to YouTube as **Hateful or abusive content (Abusing vulnerable individuals)**. 40/41 selected the first option and reported **Violent or repulsive content (Animal Abuse)**.

CONTINUED...

The reported videos were **categorised** by our researchers as;

- Ambiguous & Intentional - 30 videos
- Obvious & Intentional - 25 videos
- Ambiguous & Unintentional - 4 videos
- Obvious & Unintentional - 1 video

Reported videos were **themed** as follows:

- Deliberate Animal Torture (physical and mental)
- Eating Live Animal; Fake Rescue; Hunting
- Teasing
- Wild Animals as Pets
- Fake Outrage
- Animals as Entertainers;
- Other

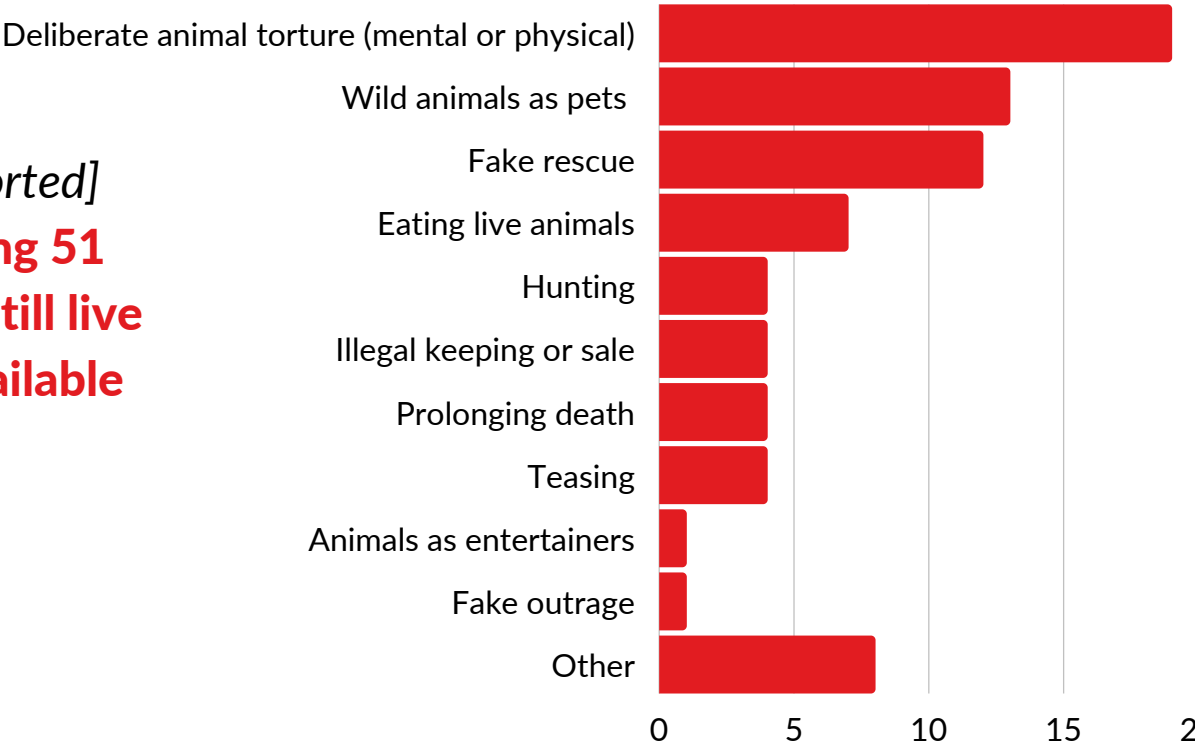
**Specific abuses** included Fighting Animals/Encouraging Fighting; Giving Animal Alcohol/Drugs; Sexual Abuse; Inappropriate Handling/Environment; and Scaring with Another Animal/Predator.

On 17 August, we checked each of the video links to determine whether any action had been taken following the cruelty reports. **Of the 60 reported videos, only two had been removed;** one by YouTube for violating its policy on violent or graphic content, and the other presumably removed by TikTok on similar grounds (although we cannot verify this). Warnings about graphic content had been placed on six YouTube videos and one Facebook video. **The remaining 51 videos were still live and freely available to view.** These videos include fake rescues, the hunting and killing of legally protected wildlife, dogs physically threatened, monkeys being fed and bathed in alcohol, animals being eaten alive, and a drugged kitten who has had dried beans glued all over their body. None of the channels, users or pages involved appear to have been limited in any way.



Reported videos - themes

[of the 60 reported]  
...the remaining 51  
videos were still live  
and freely available  
to view.

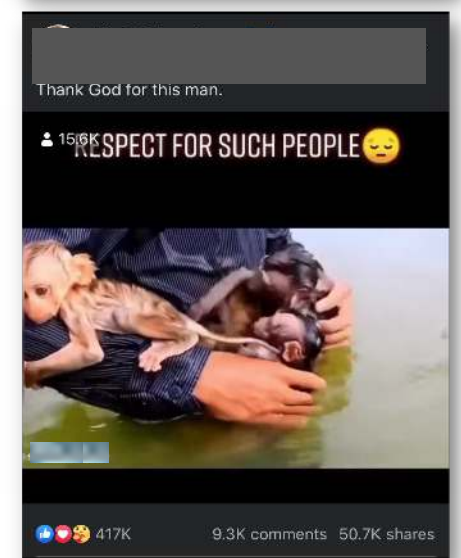
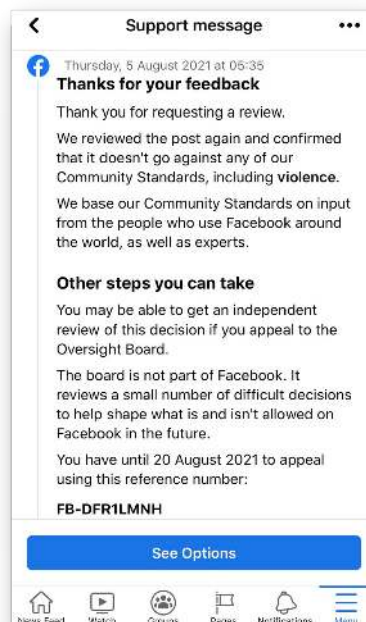
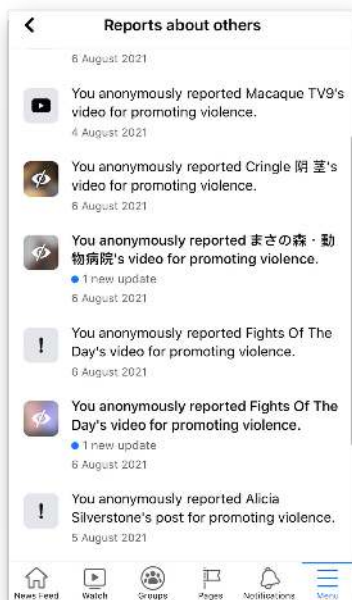


## FACEBOOK'S REFUSAL TO REMOVE FAKE RESCUE VIDEO

Recently a well-known social media user shared animal cruelty content on their social media joining the hundreds of thousands of people who are unaware of the Fake Rescue theme spreading across the internet. See also section on *FAKE RESCUES*.

The following is a direct account from one of our SMACC team members between the 5 and 6 August, 2021.

*"On the evening of the fifth of August I came across a [fake] rescue video on Facebook. The video has been made by someone adding a caption to a short clip from an [redacted] video, a known animal cruelty content channel. Naturally, I reported the video as animal abuse to Facebook, through the 'violence' reporting function."*



**Within a few hours Facebook responded, saying they did not deem the video to contravene their community standards.**

*When I checked the page the following day the content had been removed from the person's page however the initial video is still live following Facebook's disregard of its content.*

*This is an indicative experience of how easy it is for fake rescue videos to be created and be perceived as people doing good things when in all reality there is solid evidence that these videos are generated by those endangering and abusing animals to generate lies, follows and ultimately money."*



# THEMES and SPECIFIC ABUSES - a closer look

“ The accident itself was replayed, backwards and forwards and in slow motion, and later the dead baby’s face, covered in flies, is filmed and captioned “flies gotta eat too”. ”

## FAKE RESCUES

Fake rescue scenarios (or “staged rescue” according to YouTube’s community guidelines) are a particularly popular form of cruelty content at present. In these videos, animals are deliberately put into harmful, often deadly situations and are then filmed while a human ‘rescues’ them. Fake rescue content can involve the intentional placement of predator and prey animals together; the placement of animals in traps or gutters or buried in holes in the ground; animals intentionally injured or made sick; animals glued to various surfaces, or animals intentionally put into any other harmful or dangerous situation or state. In all cases, the animal or animals are filmed in such a situation, and then are “saved” by a human. Often, the same human “hero” appears repeatedly; in some cases the same animal appears repeatedly. Some fake rescue videos are very obviously staged; others less so.

The producers of these videos easily avoid detection by using key words such as ‘rescue’ or ‘saviour,’ and while some commenters appear to enjoy the cruelty depicted, others are duped into believing that the rescue scenarios are legitimate, and comment, like and share accordingly. Fake rescue videos can cause extreme physical and psychological harm to all of the animals involved.

In order to detect fake rescues we advise viewers to look out for channels that have multiple similar videos, either featuring the same people or same animals repeatedly, or with the same themes (i.e. videos that feature a person ‘rescuing’ animals from predators).

## FAKE OUTRAGE

Similar in sentiment to ‘Fake rescue’ videos, ‘Fake outrage’ videos feature claims of shock and outrage at the cruelty content that is being produced or shared. However, on closer inspection it is evident that the content is created and shared for likes, shares, and profit. Worryingly, creators of fake outrage cruelty content claim to ‘speak for animals’ which naturally attracts the animal lovers, some of whom watch, and share the videos. One such channel called [REDACTED] describes its content:

*“For mature Audiences Only - Viewer Discretion is advised. Since animals do not have a voice, [REDACTED] is about exposing the people who exploit primates on social media.”*

The channel provides contacts for some legitimate campaigning organizations, but also features multiple monkey cruelty videos and directs viewers towards an online shop (see [MONKEY HATRED](#)).

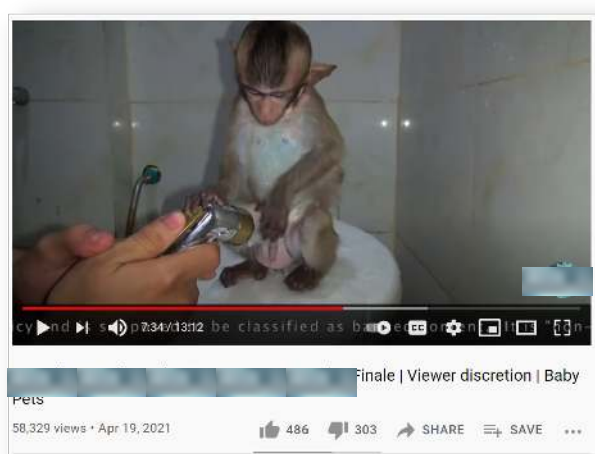
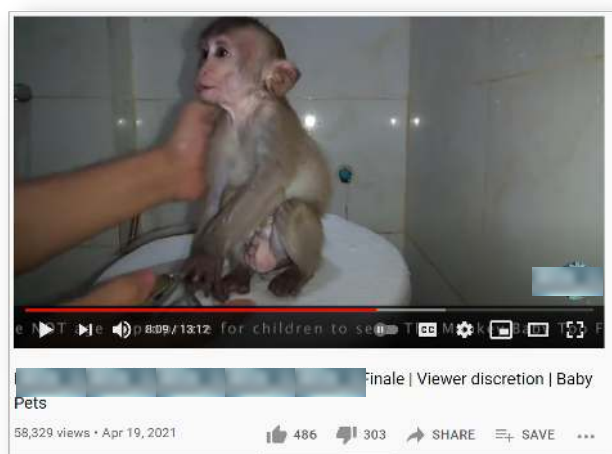


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## FAKE RESCUES EXAMPLES



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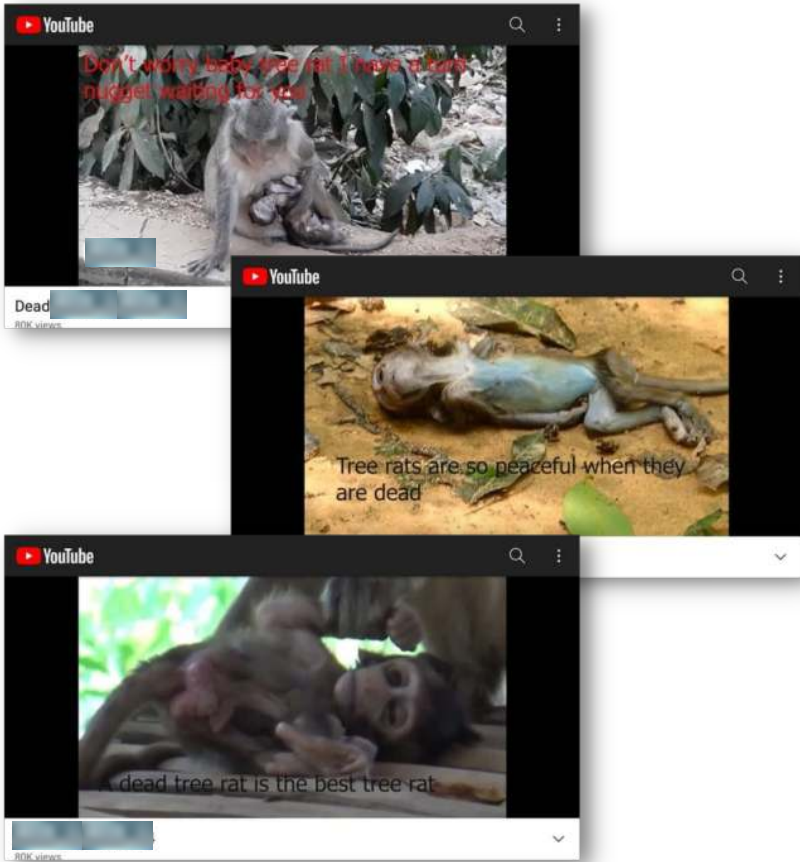
recWAP 45Advert, recWAP 26Advert, recWAP 45Clip3,  
recWAP 12Clip1, recWAP 12Clip2, recWAP 15Clip1,  
recWAP 32Clip1, recWAP 32Advert, recWAP 32Clip2,  
recWAP 41Clip6, recWAP 41Clip6, recWAP 41Clip5\_B  
recWAP 41Advert, recWAP 41Clip2, recWAP 41Clip3\_B

MONKEY HATRED

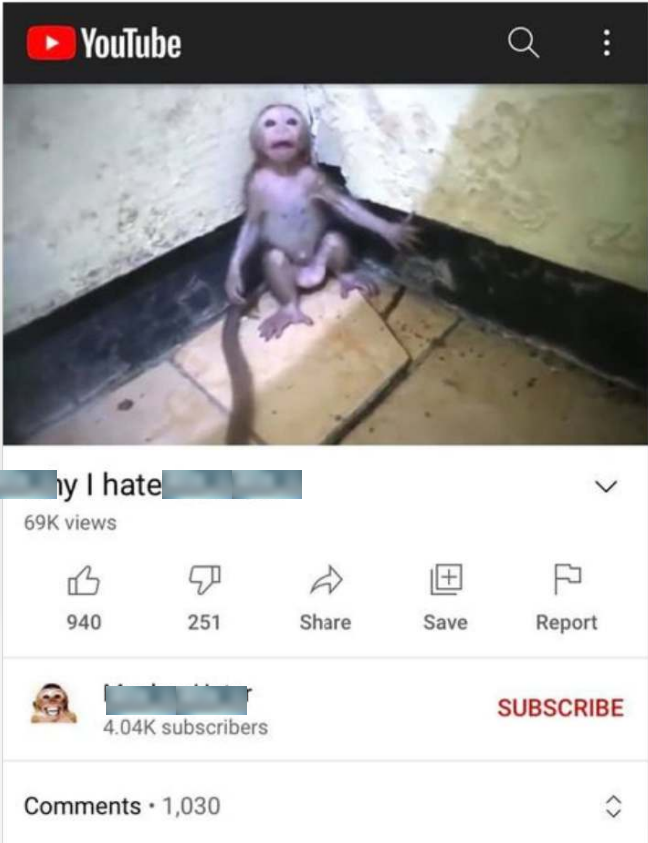
Monkey hatred is a recurring sentiment in online cruelty content. We have documented monkey hatred under a wide range of themes and specific abuses; for example, ‘Deliberate animal torture (both mental and physical), ‘Animals as entertainers’ and ‘Fake rescue’ (see section on ANIMAL CRUELTY CONTENT).

Monkey hatred, usually with a particular focus on baby monkeys, has been circulating for years on social media. Of the 5,480 videos we documented, 703 featured primates. The majority of these were macaques. Many of the channels that housed these videos were entirely dedicated to monkey hatred, some containing hundreds of videos. We were unable to document all of these videos individually due to limited time and resources. Much monkey hatred cruelty content is aimed at the long-tailed macaque, a species indigenous to Southeast Asia. Interactions between people and free-living macaques have increased in several countries because of human encroachment on monkey habitat. One consequence is that the long-tailed macaque is often condemned as a ‘pest’ and does not have adequate legal protection.<sup>54</sup> Monkey hatred videos are most often filmed in Indonesia, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Thailand, but the audience for such content is global.

**Creators of monkey hatred cruelty content have realised the monetary value of tormenting the infants in their care, deliberately placing the monkeys in fearful and stressful situations to film their reactions.** The abuse is recorded and posted for the enjoyment of viewers and may include requests for donations to facilitate the creation of more monkey hatred cruelty content. Viewers post comments on the ‘quality’ of the abuse shown, indicating their level of satisfaction and requesting other specific acts of abuse.



**SMACC researcher description:**  
Monkey hate video shows compilation of footage from other channels featuring dead baby macaque corpses, most held by their mothers, with captions that glorify death and suffering of monkeys.



**SMACC researcher description:**  
Video compilation of footage showing macaques (mostly babies, some abused "pets") drinking urine, bowel movements and touching faeces, "pet" baby macaque squealing in fear.

Monkey hatred channels most often feature baby macaques who have been removed from their mothers - a cruelty in itself. In some cases, the monkeys are kept as pets in poor conditions and frequently “punished”, bathed, handled roughly, or subjected to other stressful situations or treatments. Food is offered and withheld. Monkeys are slapped, their arms tied behind their backs, fed noxious substances and frightened with fireworks. These infants are frequently filmed screaming and cowering and in clear distress. An anxious infant monkey, for example, was filmed being attacked by a cockerel without intervention. Another was held tightly while a shower head was aimed at his penis for an extended period of time, while he struggled to get free.



image smacc id: recEhlxCkfGCPiZzb 1,3,4

**SMACC researcher description:**

*Baby monkey warned and hit for "misbehaving" by human "mother".*

Other monkey hatred videos feature even harsher physical and psychological abuse; a very sick monkey is buried, live, up to their neck by a person exaggeratedly screaming and “crying”; two infants are trapped in a small cage which is progressively submerged in water while they huddle at the top of the cage; other infant macaques are brought into deep water and watched as they struggle to stay afloat. In some cases, the featured monkeys are not held captive, but are those who live in urban or rural areas alongside people. One video repeatedly replayed the moment that a free-ranging baby macaque was hit by a car (see *ANIMALS AS ENTERTAINERS*).



**SMACC researcher description:** *image smacc id: recfTxrDYeDdlcaSN 4,1,3*

*A man with 3 pet macaques is taking them into a body of deep water, repeatedly putting them on a branch where small babies cling desperately to a larger macaque trying to keep their heads above water, but often sinking below.*

YouTube and other social media platforms have provided an open door of communication and an easy way for people who enjoy watching monkey suffering and torture to connect. An investigation by SMACC members Lady Freethinker and Action for Primates has revealed ever more shocking cruelty, violence and abuse towards monkeys.<sup>55,56,57</sup> They found that members of the US-based ‘Monkey Haters’ private group on social media platform Telegram pay to have baby monkeys in Indonesia tortured and killed on camera. Limbs are severed, and monkeys are set on fire. Members of this group met via YouTube’s monkey hatred channels.

Once formed, “Monkey Haters” actively started recruiting new members by reaching out to those on YouTube who expressed their enjoyment of monkey torture in the comments section of videos posted there. By allowing monkey hatred channels to operate for months or even years, YouTube, Facebook and other platforms have been enabling animal cruelty fetishists to connect and escalate their perverted and vile activities to sickening levels, for profit.



**SMACC researcher description:**  
*Video shows a very young baby macaque tangled in cable rope and some scenes of clinging to a statue, at times frantically crying, at other times succumbing to helpless despondency and exhaustion.*



image smacc id: recalGnCXiKbJSiu0 1-2



**SMACC researcher description:**  
*The sound of rain can be heard as baby macaque sits alone, cold, crying and self-soothing on a porch of a building restrained by a short chain attached to a harness he is wearing.*

image smacc id: rec4k36WBxEouDMhC 1-2



**SMACC researcher description:**  
*Baby primate made to hold milk maid type contraption as "punishment".*



**SMACC researcher description:**  
*Baby monkey hit and threatened to be hit.*



**SMACC researcher description:**  
*Baby monkey being held around the neck.*

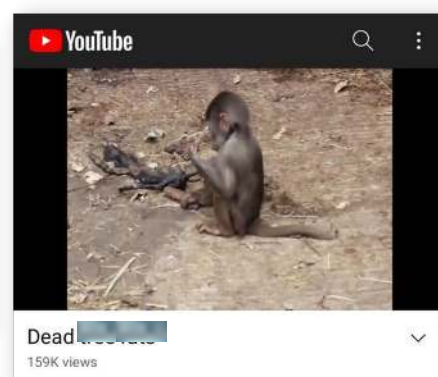
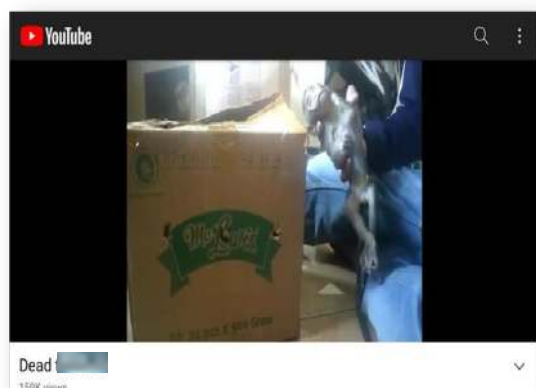


image smacc id: (L-R) recVhl65pTJcH824E 1-3

### SMACC researcher description:

"Monkey hate" video compilation from various sources of dead monkeys- corpses being held/dragged by other monkeys, predator attacks, and an "unboxing" video of a dead baby macaque (originally from "[redacted]" channel) where the purchaser strokes, interacts with the corpse, lays a live baby monkey against the corpse, bathes the corpse.



image smacc id: (L-R) recYpsugG4Li5EMUB 2,3,4

### SMACC researcher description:

Short clip shows young baby macaque reacting with distress while a man (owner/trader) tries to pry them away from desperately clinging to another monkeys dead body.

In apparent contrast to the blatantly cruel videos described above, there are a vast number of videos available of young monkeys dressed in clothing. This in itself may not be perceived as cruel by the majority of viewers. However, in order to be clothed, whether in a diaper or in a dress, an infant must be removed from their mother and kept as a pet, or in pet-like circumstances. Maternal deprivation is known to be fundamentally damaging to all primates. Beyond this, images of clothed primates are in themselves indirectly damaging to primate welfare and conservation (see following sections).



image smacc id: recLCyxoPbuTppsEd

image smacc id: recxkRoajvAABTMcs

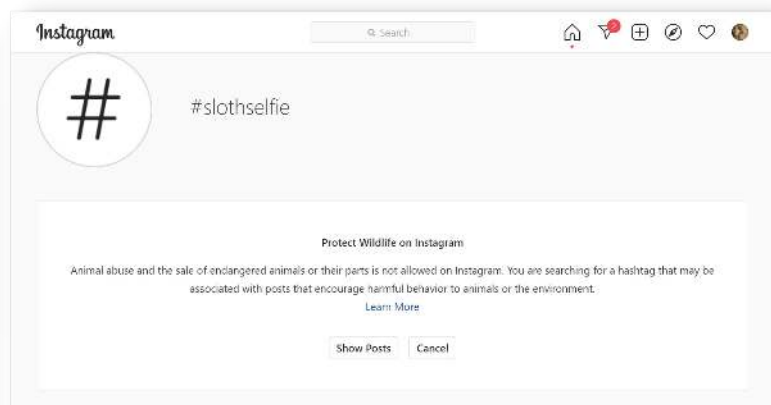
## ANIMALS AS ENTERTAINERS

Animals have been used as entertainers by many cultures throughout history, and this remains true today. They are used in circuses, as street entertainers, or at tourist attractions, and exploited when kept as pets. Both domestic and wild animals are forced into unnatural situations or forced to fight for human entertainment. Horrifically, some cruelty is simply footage of sick, injured or distressed animals, compiled for no purpose other than the viewers' enjoyment, often overlaid with silly sounding music or words. **Of the cruelty content we documented 14.3% (781) was themed as 'Animals as entertainers.'** These videos covered a wide range of specific abuses.

While the use of animals as circus performers is legal in some jurisdictions, it is known by animal welfare professionals to be cruel and problematic, unacceptably compromising the welfare of the animals involved by denying them appropriate physical and social environments and often requiring them to strike and hold unnatural, damaging physical positions.<sup>58</sup> Most of the links we documented featuring circus-like performances did not actually appear under the big top; some were legal, though brutal - for example, an Asiatic black bear being visibly forced to dance; some illegal but common practice - such as footage of the dancing monkeys of Indonesia (topeng monyet), who are, as youngsters having been captured in the wild and separated from their mothers, trained using brutal methods and forced to perform on crowded streets.

We also documented footage of tourists posing for photographs with performing and other captive wild animals. There is a growing body of research demonstrating the harms caused by wildlife "selfies".<sup>59,60</sup>

In 2017, Instagram publicly acknowledged that their platform was helping to fuel the wildlife trade by providing a platform for wildlife selfies, promising to take action,<sup>61</sup> but as of July 2021, the problem persists - viewers are simply required to click through a warning label in order to view images labelled with certain hashtags.



Some of the cruelty content that we documented featuring animals as entertainers did not involve trained animals, but instead celebrated the suffering of injured or distressed animals. For example, a YouTube user named [REDACTED] (formerly [REDACTED]) filmed a baby monkey being hit by a car, suffering, and dying, while being carried around by their distressed mother. **The accident itself was replayed, backwards and forwards and in slow motion, and later the dead baby's face, covered in flies, is filmed and captioned "flies gotta eat too".**



Cruelty content featuring animals fighting appears regularly on social media. SMACC documented over 500 such videos, mostly on YouTube (though this probably reflects the relative ease of locating cruelty content on YouTube rather than its rarity on other platforms). Animals involved range from insects, scorpions and spiders, to snakes, roosters, dogs, monkeys, and apes. Fights range from those staged or caused intentionally (orangutan boxing, dog or cockfighting), to those occurring during hunting (dogs fighting and killing a leopard) to those caught spontaneously and framed as “funny”. In one example, a clothed infant macaque kept as a pet is attacked by a rooster. The attack is shown in slow motion and the infant’s subsequent serious distress is filmed. The fight is not stopped by the human viewer, nor is the monkey checked over for injuries or comforted (see *MONKEY HATRED*).



image smacc id: recHdMtENyOiep83W



image smacc id: recMWVwoHmCIWjTrI



image smacc id: recUwdX1z84TQvuB9 4, 3, 1 (L-R)

## HUNTING

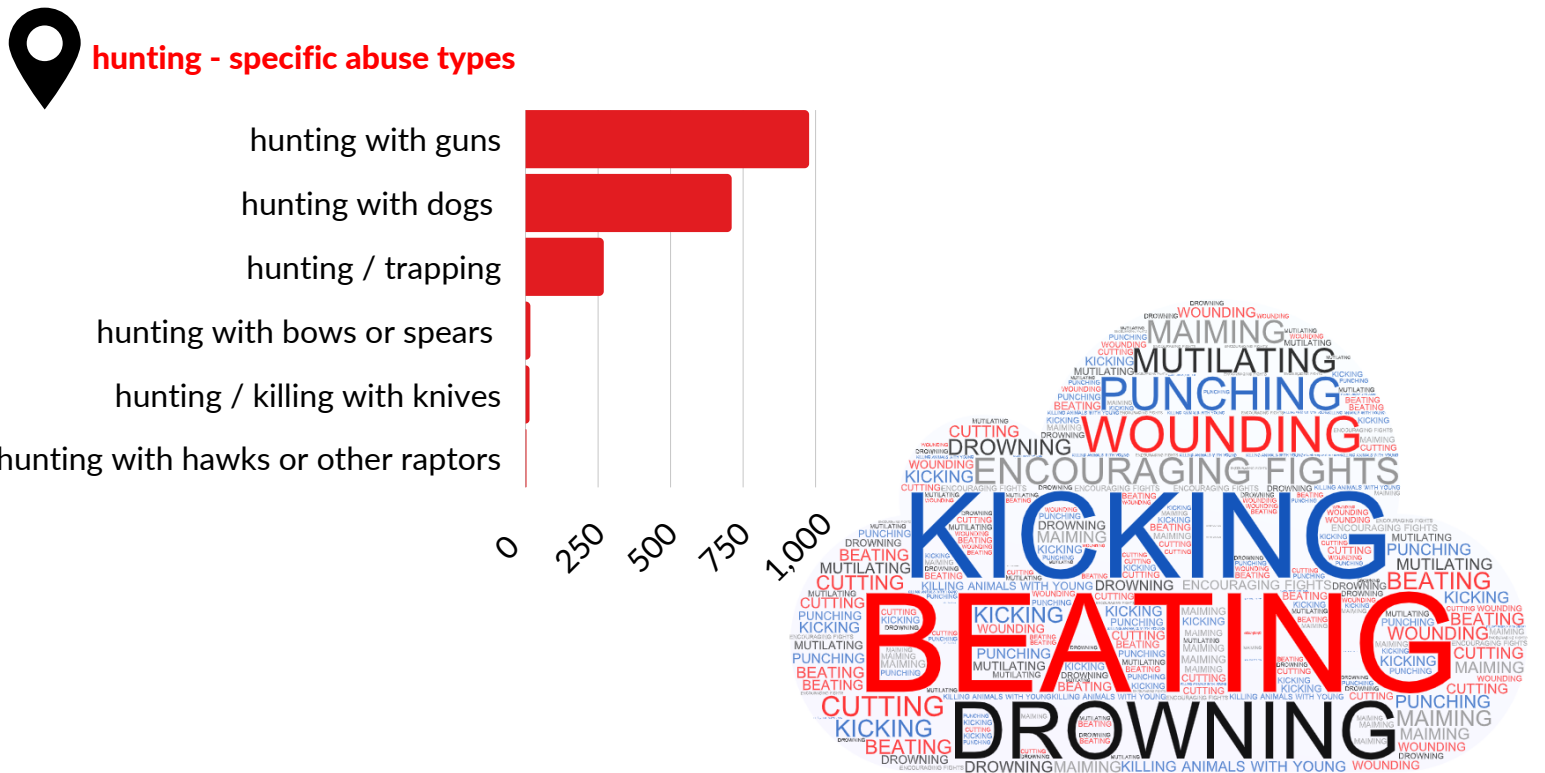
Of the 5,480 videos recorded by our researchers, 2,634 were themed as 'Hunting' and further broken down into the specific abuses:

- hunting / killing with knives
- hunting / trapping
- hunting other
- hunting with bows or spears
- hunting with dogs
- hunting with guns
- hunting with hawks or other raptors

We documented hunting content depicting methods like hunting animals with other animals; using excessive, graphic violence; trophy hunting; or hunting via non-traditional methods such as using machine guns from helicopters. Fishing and deer hunting were excluded.

Whilst hunting animals is widely accepted as a normal activity around the globe, these hunting videos are often specifically made for the purpose of gaining likes and shares and generate profit based on animal suffering. These videos often show prolonged deaths, extreme suffering and both legal and illegal methods of trapping and killing animals - sometimes those who are threatened with extinction and/or legally protected.

The availability of thousands of hunting videos on social media platforms actively promotes and normalises this cruelty while selling the activity as ‘fun and exciting,’ at extreme cost to the animals.



*Of the 2147 hunting-themed videos we documented, 1976 were assigned a hunting sub-theme. The majority of these were “hunting with guns” and “hunting with dogs”. Other types of abuse (shown above), were also documented in hunting-themed videos - for example, a dog fighting a leopard to the death in the process of a hunt.*

## EATING ANIMALS ON CAMERA

Videos of people eating live animals or animal parts are abundant on social media. We documented 88 live animal eating videos, although there are many more available; many of these videos came from channels that were dedicated to such content, and we were unable to record every individual video. One video showing a woman eating a live octopus as it flailed frantically gained some 3,445,713 views, highlighting the sinister scale of this issue. Another video shows a woman eating a bear paw in Vietnam, where it is illegal to do so. Social media platforms contribute to this problem not only by hosting such content, but by refusing to prohibit much of it, promoting these acts as socially acceptable and appropriate.



*image smacc id: recigqJYNd7ZIDhUI, recCZGcZU9IW2qbtF, rec0VLmvdBn8CMMbB*



*image smacc id: recbMOn7z56VmuMJd 1-3*

## CRUSH VIDEOS

Among the most shocking acts of Obvious and Intentional cruelty we documented are animal crushing videos where animals are crushed to death by a human with their shoe or an object such as a book with a person sitting on top. In these acts of utterly unthinkable cruelty animals suffer to an extreme level in terror and excruciating, often prolonged, pain.

Crush videos have been known in the past to be made specifically for people who have a sexual fetish.

Watching footage of people crushing small animals, however, we have found that these videos are also appealing to people who seek thrill from extreme, abusive or violent cruel footage.



*image smacc id: recf4DUCsLOGX5kav 1*



*image smacc id: recf4DUCsLOGX5kav 5*



*image smacc id: recf4DUCsLOGX5kav 2*



*image smacc id: recf4DUCsLOGX5kav 3*

WILD ANIMAL PETS

We documented 517 videos depicting wild animal pets. Such content is not usually an *explicit* violation of a platform's policies, but often shows people keeping wildlife in violation of local legislation and in extremely poor and unsuitable conditions.

Of the wild animal pets we documented, the majority were primates - mostly macaques. This is likely to be a result of our research methods, and the crossover with other themes (for example, *MONKEY HATRED*). One TikTok video shows an Endangered ring-tailed lemur in a crowded bar or cafe, surrounded by people and eating a lollipop. Another shows a very young chimpanzee (approximately 12-18 months old) dressed in clothing and crossing a river with a frightened puppy. Chimpanzees are also Endangered, and a chimpanzee of this age should not be apart from their mother. There are hundreds of videos of infant macaques, vervets, and other monkeys - also inappropriately separated from their mothers - dressed in diapers or in human clothing, often being fed diets that are not just unhealthy, but will almost certainly make the monkeys sick. They are sometimes offered for sale, often in small dirty cages, but many videos also show “loving” owners - people who probably do not understand that they are profoundly harming the animals in their care by keeping them in environments that can never satisfy their basic biological needs.



image smacc id: ecd5ndN34WbZMYbr

Other animals documented included tigers, and owls. Frightened foxes in a private zoo cower as a man approaches them. A man strokes a white lion in his living room. Bears are bottle-fed on lush lawns next to luxury cars. Every one of these videos normalises the idea that wild animals and humans should have regular close contact, and that they are safe, and can thrive, in our company.



image smacc id: recIK2dJQhVGDGwxr 1-2

Animal welfare experts agree that wild animals do not make good pets.<sup>62,63,64</sup> Whether legal or not, it is not in their best interest or ours that they live in our homes. The risk of injury and disease goes both ways, and not even the most well-intentioned of owners are able to provide wild animals with the social or physical environments that each species is so well-adapted to. Images of wild animals in close proximity to people give people the wrong idea - that these animals are safe, they are happy, they are not endangered in the wild. Such imagery perpetuates the trade in wild animal pets - both legal and illegal - around the world.<sup>65,66,67</sup>





## THE LEGALITIES

“...tech firms that they know this subject is a can of worms, and they don't want to look too closely, because addressing this problem adequately will create a huge amount of work and cost.”

The octopus keeps running away.

## LEGALITY AND ENFORCEMENT

The legalities behind animal cruelty on social media platforms is problematic given that it is a global problem. Abusing animals is not illegal in all areas and where it is, enforcement can be ineffective or absent. Social media platforms not only enable the spread of animal cruelty content but encourage it by making it profitable. An emphasis on user privacy and freedom of expression make it difficult to identify, investigate or prosecute perpetrators in cases where their filmed actions may be illegal.



**Gretchen Peters, the Founder of the Alliance to Counter Crime Online (ACCO)** has told SMACC:

*alliance to counter crime online*

*In our experience, social media platforms will claim they want to remove animal abuse and wildlife crime content from their platforms - and will tell us they really care about the problem - but then will do the bare minimum. It's our conclusion after years of engaging tech firms that they know this subject is a can of worms, and they don't want to look too closely, because addressing this problem adequately will create a huge amount of work and cost.*



**David Thomas from UK law firm Advocates for Animals writes:**

*There are a number of challenges with using the law to stop animal abuse videos. First, online distribution is global in nature, and different countries where videos are filmed, uploaded and watched/shared may have different laws for these activities. Second, the abuse may not be illegal in the country where it took place (and watching/sharing it may not be illegal in that country). Third, social media companies are keen to argue that they are mere platforms and are not responsible for content - although this principle is under attack in some places including, importantly, the US.*

However, there is still much that can be gained from full use of the law. David Thomas continues:

*The key is a willingness to look outside animal protection law, and even internet law, for solutions. The approach needs to be different in each country/trading bloc such as the European Union but there are likely to be at least partial solutions in most.*

*There are some specific laws already in place or in the offing. For example, the US has legislation, albeit less extensive than its previous law which was struck down by the Supreme Court some years ago. The EU is currently considering a Digital Services Act which would strengthen the accountability of online platforms hosting illegal content, and the UK has recently published a draft Online Safety Act to similar effect. Both measures need to be amended to bring animal abuse videos squarely within their ambit.*

*Animal abuse videos are a terrible blight on humanity. To get rid of them requires sophisticated short-, medium- and long-term strategies, across a range of disciplines. The law is a key discipline because ultimately what is needed is tightly drawn, properly enforced, universally applicable legislation. In the meantime, a range of legal techniques will often be available to apply maximum pressure on perpetrators of the cruelty, on those who watch the videos and, importantly, on online platforms.*

continued...

### Example Legislation

YouTube has guidelines about animal abuse videos. They are not perfect but they catch many abuse videos. As with all its guidelines, the company claims to enforce them both proactively and reactively. Proactive enforcement involves both an automated system and human review. Reactive enforcement involves responding to complaints.

There is overwhelming evidence, some of it captured in recent reports by Lady Freethinker (LFT) and World Animal Protection (the latter on fake rescues), that both types of enforcement by YouTube are wholly inadequate. Animal abuse videos are routinely allowed to remain on the platform for a long time. The company operates its three strikes policy with inflexibility not required by the policy. It has refused LFT's request to be a 'Trusted Flagger', despite the organisation's obvious expertise in the area.

In the UK, it is an offence under the Serious Crime Act 2007 to encourage or assist in the commission of other offences. Advocates for Animals has recently written to YouTube on behalf of LFT and Action for Primates maintaining that the company's failure to enforce its guidelines properly means that it is encouraging or at least assisting people watching these videos to commit criminal offences under obscene publications and extreme pornography legislation.

Under the Obscene Publications Act 1959, for example, it is an offence in a range of circumstances to publish or possess material which tends to deprave and corrupt. The statutory definitions are wide enough to catch people downloading and sharing animal abuse videos.

All that is required under the 2007 Act is that YouTube is encouraging or assisting something which in fact constitutes an offence under that legislation – the platform need not intend that someone should commit an offence. Importantly, a failure to act is sufficient – here, the failure to enforce its guidelines. An analogy would be where a security guard looks the other way and thereby allows a burglary to take place.

The message is that, if YouTube does not up its game and proactively take offending videos down, as well as responding swiftly and decisively to legitimate complaints, it risks prosecution.

## WHEN CRUELTY IS LEGAL

Unnecessary practices that indisputably cause animal suffering may or may not be illegal. For example, Wildlife Friends Foundation Thailand (WFFT) reports that a growing number of Neotropical monkeys (capuchins, marmosets and others) are imported legally into Thailand and are sold as pets.<sup>68</sup> It is widely acknowledged that the conditions in which pet monkeys are normally kept are severely detrimental to their well-being, as is their capture, separation from their social groups, and transport. Yet videos like this, showing a distressed marmoset nipped at by a dog, handled roughly by an infant macaque and restrained by a human handler, are allowed and do not appear to fall foul of any community standards.





# SOCIAL IMPACTS

“ In order for social media giants to change the hearts and minds of the public using these mediums they must lead by example. ”



image smacc id: (L-R) recEvg9PK9arLaXVv, recJ4n7INVlg3KVWA, recVPRNw3w5n3U2Hq, recVPRNw3w5n3U2Hq, recIK2dJQhvGDGwxr 2

## SOCIAL IMPACTS

In order for social media giants to change the hearts and minds of the public they must lead by example.

### THE IMPACT ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS

Children and young adults are as likely as anyone else to take advantage of the opportunity to make money by creating animal cruelty content for social media. For example, according to animal advocates in Nepal, in Kathmandu local children were performing and filming acts of cruelty to stray dogs and cats for the express purpose of uploading the content to social media.<sup>69</sup> Because these animals are not legally regarded as human property, they are not afforded legal protection and so are vulnerable to such abuse. Social media is helping children learn early that abusing vulnerable individuals can be both acceptable and profitable.

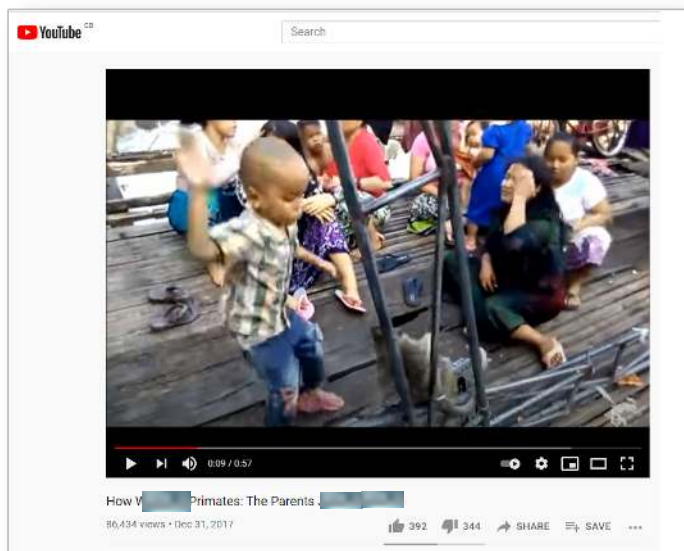
The potential impact on children who view animal cruelty contents online is of great concern. A survey commissioned by the RSPCA revealed that 23 percent of ten to 18 year olds had seen animal cruelty on social media sites.<sup>70</sup> Another survey asked 10,000 nine to 16 year olds in Europe what bothered them most about what they see online. The authors concluded that *“what particularly upsets children are images that portray vulnerable victims – animals, disabled people and victims like themselves, i.e. children.”*<sup>71</sup>

Witnessing violence, including cruelty to animals, affects the development and behavior of children. Dr. Mary Lou Randour, a psychologist and Senior Advisor for Animal Cruelty Programs at the Animal Welfare Institute has said that:

**“Witnessing violence of any type, particularly animal abuse, is a traumatic event for a child, as it changes how the brain develops. Exposure to violence at a young age can alter neurons, the building blocks of the brain, negatively affecting capacity for emotional regulation, physical health, cognitive capacity, and behavior control.”**

For this reason, there should be particular concern about the easy accessibility of cruelty content on social media sites.

This video of a child repeatedly hitting a monkey, entitled 'How we treat primates: the parents just don't care' had over 86,434 views at the time of reporting and the channel where it belonged, over 22,500 followers.



As social media cruelty content continues to go unchecked, these behaviours towards non-human animals become normalised in the minds of our young people. Animals will be increasingly threatened with violence and destruction. Quite naturally, such behaviour could elicit defensive responses from the animals themselves, endangering your people and creating an escalating cycle of violence. Social media platforms play a significant role in shaping global society. If social media channels step up to prioritise compassion and kindness over profit, far more peaceful and co-operative outcomes can be expected.

## FREE SPEECH AND CULTURE

The quest for unhindered freedom of speech and expression presents a significant complication when dealing with issues involving social media and the internet. Platforms have often been reticent to censor content or even, at times, to cooperate with law enforcement or other authorities. Many countries place constitutional emphasis on such freedoms. The laws surrounding some issues, like child pornography, are often clear. But the discussion around animal cruelty is not as clear. There are legitimate organizations fighting to end animal cruelty who in the course of their work and educating the public display images of animal cruelty.

A precedent-setting case from the United States involved Public Law No: 106-152, which was a federal criminal statute that prohibited the knowing creation, sale, or possession of depictions of cruelty to animals with the intention of placing the depiction in interstate or foreign commerce for commercial gain. The law had been enacted in 1999, primarily to target "crush videos," which depicted people crushing small animals to gratify a sexual fetish. (Please also see section on *CRUSH VIDEOS*) In an attempt to preserve free speech it excluded from prosecution *"any depiction that has serious religious, political, scientific, educational, journalistic, historical, or artistic value."*

In 2004 Robert Steven was prosecuted under this law for producing three videos. Two of the videos depicted dog fighting and the third depicted a dog attacking a domestic pig as a part of training the dog to hunt. Engaging in dog fighting was illegal in all 50 states at this time and so the activity depicted was clearly illegal, but the case did not show that Stevens engaged in this illegal activity, only that he was selling videos depicting it.



**Stevens was convicted in 2005 and appealed his conviction as a violation of his right to free speech. He claimed that due to his narration of the videos and accompanying text, he was providing the videos for educational purposes. The court ultimately ruled that the law itself was unconstitutional because it would create a new category of speech that was not protected by the free speech and the Supreme Court affirmed that the law was unconstitutional.**

A revised version of the law with more specific language and narrower scope was later introduced and passed. But this decision by the Supreme Court exemplifies the difficulty in crafting laws that seek to limit the proliferation and profit off of animal cruelty from individuals who may not have partaken in the activity themselves. The act is still illegal but questions remain about where should the limit be on the ability to profit and be entertained by it.

## STRESS FOR VIEWERS

Compassion fatigue and related stresses are a predominately ignored health issue when it comes to animal welfare, however people can suffer from the same stress and trauma experienced by human to human carers. Witnessing animal cruelty content, with no control or actionable steps available to stop the suffering, can cause extreme, sometimes long-standing health concerns and distress for viewers of any age. In an age where social media users are subject to constant exposure of images and information they may or may not have requested, it is the social media platforms who should stand responsible for the output targeted to its users.



According to **Jessica Dolce, MS, Certified Compassion Fatigue Educator;**

*Research shows that helping professionals can reduce their risk of compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma by reducing their overall exposure to trauma. Bearing witness to trauma is an unavoidable part of our professional work with animals. Therefore we must carefully consider how often we are exposed to traumatic and disturbing media content outside of work. Repeated exposure to trauma of any kind engages the body's biological alarm systems, resulting in a negative impact on our personal and professional wellbeing.*

***While we can request that the public refrain from posting media of animals suffering, ultimately we do not have direct control over what other people post or the policies of various social media platforms.***

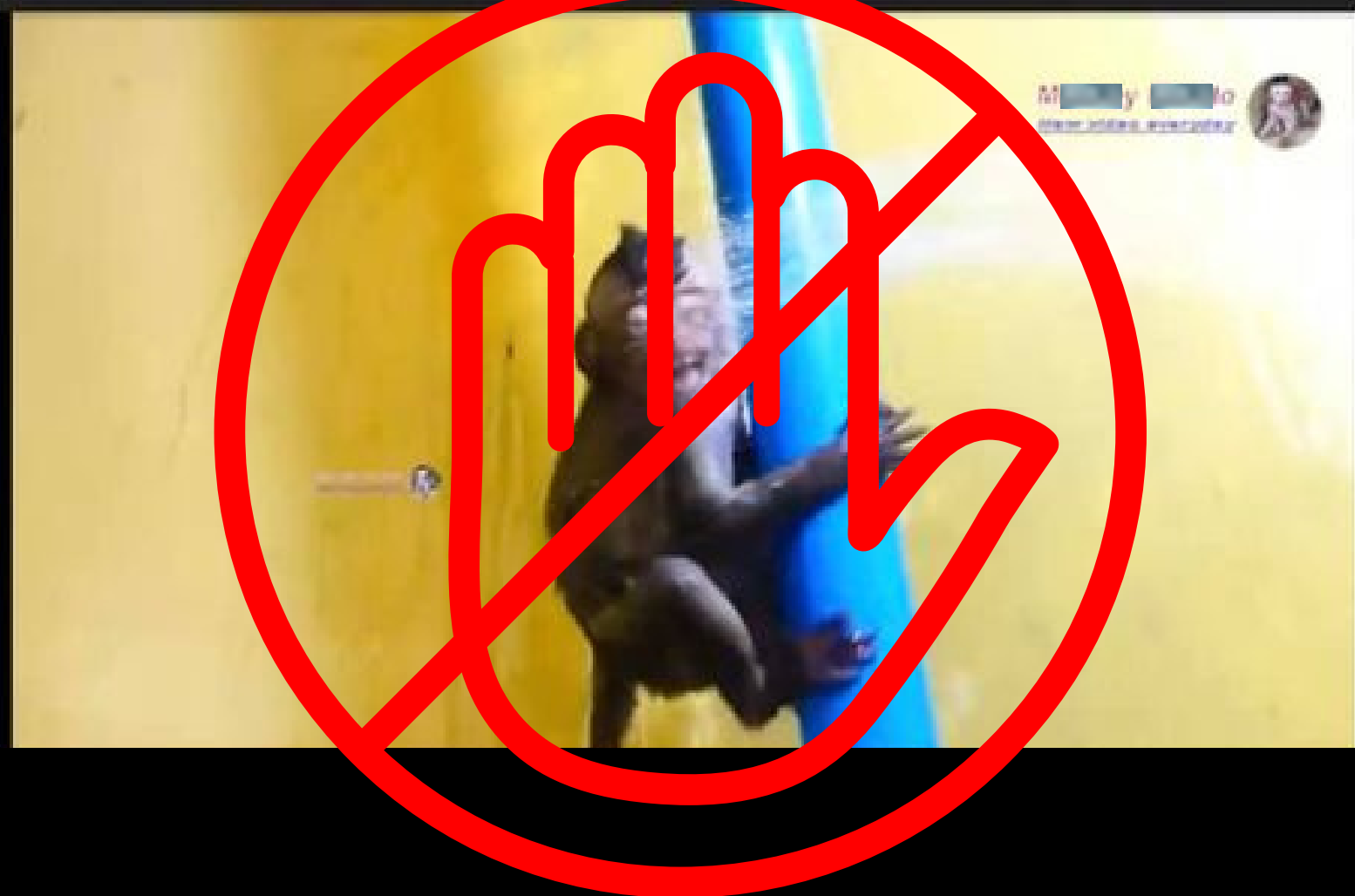


*Therefore, as we work to make changes in those areas, we must simultaneously take steps to protect ourselves by focusing on what is within our control: our own media consumption.*

*In order to stay healthy and reduce the risk of overwhelm and injury, we need to be mindful of our exposure to traumatic imagery every day and build in strategic distance and limits, so we don't "overexpose" ourselves to harmful content.*

*This might look like muting or blocking specific accounts that post traumatic content, taking a break from social media, or assessing the types of media watched in your free time (i.e. graphic violence in films). Setting these limits are acts of personal and professional self-care, allowing professionals to stay well and sustain their careers in order to make lasting changes for animals.*

**For guidance on viewing traumatic materials as part of workplace duties, please see the Dart Center's recommendations for handling traumatic imagery on the job.<sup>72</sup>**



# HOW SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS CAN DO BETTER

“

We want social media platforms to lead by example and take a hard line against animal cruelty content circulating the internet.

”

## HOW SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS CAN DO BETTER

Social media platforms like YouTube, Facebook and TikTok have a social and ethical responsibility to prevent the proliferation of animal cruelty content on their platforms. In a world where social media has become the norm and an essential part of daily life, cruelty content can reach millions of people, impacting not only the viewers but coming at an extreme cost to animals, whether directly or indirectly. **We implore social media platforms to lead by example and take a hard line against animal cruelty content in all of its forms.**

## UNDERSTAND ANIMAL CRUELTY CONTENT

The SMAC Coalition quickly identified the need for clear definitions of animal cruelty. In order to design and implement robust mechanisms to identify, prevent, or remove cruelty content, platforms must first identify what the cruelty is. We, the SMAC Coalition, would be delighted to work with the platforms in order to achieve this.

## KEY MESSAGES

- Animal cruelty content takes many forms, including much that is indisputable and clearly intentional.
- Social media platforms are hosting and profiting from a huge array of animal cruelty content which has been viewed billions of times.
- These platforms have a social and ethical responsibility to do better

## KEY ASKS

Take action against animal cruelty content by:

- adopting standardized definitions – across all social media platforms and in consultation with experts – of animal cruelty and cruelty content;
- ensuring that policies conform with these definitions, expressly prohibit cruelty content and are adhered to;
- immediately implementing robust monitoring systems to detect and remove cruelty content, cruelty content channels and cruelty content creators without reliance on user reports;
- improving reporting mechanisms for animal cruelty content and ensuring that content violating policies is removed;
- stop paying channel or video owners for animal cruelty content;
- ensuring that content depicting animal suffering used by animal welfare and environmental organizations for legitimate campaign or educational purposes is differentiated from cruelty content and not removed from their platforms on cruelty content grounds;
- working with SMACC and its member organizations as trusted partners with animal welfare expertise to help develop definitions and policies;
- ensuring that animal cruelty content owners are not allowed to upload content that violates the platforms' own policies;
- ensuring that animal cruelty content creators are monitored to prevent them from moving content to new channels or pages within a platform.

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## APPENDIX 1 - animal cruelty content CATEGORY by platform

**TOTALS VIDEOS PER CATEGORY:**

|                             |             |
|-----------------------------|-------------|
| Ambiguous and Intentional   | <b>832</b>  |
| Ambiguous and Unintentional | <b>376</b>  |
| Obvious and Intentional     | <b>4249</b> |
| Obvious and Unintentional   | <b>23</b>   |
| Grand Total                 | 5480        |

**TIKTOK****Categories:**

|                             |           |
|-----------------------------|-----------|
| Ambiguous and Intentional   | <b>36</b> |
| Ambiguous and Unintentional | <b>97</b> |
| Obvious and Intentional     | <b>5</b>  |
| Obvious and Unintentional   | <b>10</b> |
| Grand Total                 | 148       |

**YOUTUBE****Categories:**

|                             |             |
|-----------------------------|-------------|
| Ambiguous and Intentional   | <b>756</b>  |
| Ambiguous and Unintentional | <b>273</b>  |
| Obvious and Intentional     | <b>3848</b> |
| Obvious and Unintentional   | <b>13</b>   |
| Grand Total                 | 4890        |

**FACEBOOK****Categories:**

|                             |            |
|-----------------------------|------------|
| Ambiguous and Intentional   | <b>40</b>  |
| Ambiguous and Unintentional | <b>6</b>   |
| Obvious and Intentional     | <b>396</b> |
| Obvious and Unintentional   | <b>0</b>   |
| Grand Total                 | 442        |

## APPENDIX 2 - featured animals

| ANIMALS                                    | COUNT FEATURED IN A VIDEO | ANIMALS                                                                    | COUNT FEATURED IN A VIDEO |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| ALL ANIMALS/various                        | 186                       | MARINE LIFE - All/general or unspecified                                   | 6                         |
| animals not listed                         | 313                       | MARINE LIFE - Cephalopods (octopus/etc)                                    | 59                        |
| BEARS - general or unspecified             | 13                        | MARINE LIFE - Crustaceans (crabs/lobster/shrimp)                           | 145                       |
| BEARS - Asiatic black bears                | 4                         | MARINE LIFE - Fish                                                         | 62                        |
| BEARS - Brown bears                        | 1                         | MARINE LIFE - Shellfish                                                    | 3                         |
| BIRDS - general or unspecified             | 205                       | PRIMATES - All/general or unspecified                                      | 175                       |
| BIRDS - Cormorant                          | 4                         | PRIMATES - Baboons (Papio spp)                                             | 27                        |
| BIRDS - Cranes                             | 1                         | PRIMATES - Bonobos                                                         | 1                         |
| BIRDS - Ducks                              | 50                        | PRIMATES - Capuchins (Cebus and Sapajus spp.)                              | 28                        |
| BIRDS - Egret                              | 1                         | PRIMATES - Chimpanzees                                                     | 40                        |
| BIRDS - Emu                                | 1                         | PRIMATES - Galagos/Bush babies                                             | 11                        |
| BIRDS - Geese                              | 29                        | PRIMATES - Gibbons (all or unspecified)                                    | 8                         |
| BIRDS - Grouse                             | 72                        | PRIMATES - Guenons (deBrazza's Monkey)                                     | 1                         |
| BIRDS - Jungle fowl                        | 2                         | PRIMATES - Howler monkey                                                   | 1                         |
| BIRDS - Ostriches                          | 1                         | PRIMATES - Langur (unspecified)                                            | 15                        |
| BIRDS - Parrots                            | 5                         | PRIMATES - Lemurs                                                          | 5                         |
| BIRDS - Partridges                         | 13                        | PRIMATES - Lorises                                                         | 1                         |
| BIRDS - Pigeons and doves                  | 118                       | PRIMATES - Macaques (unspecified)                                          | 239                       |
| BIRDS - Raptors                            | 83                        | PRIMATES - Macaques (Japanese macaque)                                     | 3                         |
| BIRDS - Storks                             | 2                         | PRIMATES - Macaques (Long-tailed macaque)                                  | 77                        |
| BIRDS - turtledoves                        | 211                       | PRIMATES - Macaques (Northern pig-tailed macaque)                          | 52                        |
| BIRDS - Watercock                          | 1                         | PRIMATES - Macaques (Rhesus macaque)                                       | 8                         |
| COMPANION ANIMALS - general or unspecified | 1                         | PRIMATES - Macaques (Southern pig-tailed macaque)                          | 5                         |
| COMPANION ANIMALS - Rabbits                | 7                         | PRIMATES - Macaques (Stump-tailed macaque)                                 | 3                         |
| COMPANION ANIMALS - Rodents                | 90                        | PRIMATES - Mandrills                                                       | 1                         |
| DOGS & CATS - unspecified                  | 3                         | PRIMATES - Marmosets                                                       | 3                         |
| DOGS & CATS - Cats                         | 107                       | PRIMATES - Orangutans                                                      | 14                        |
| DOGS & CATS - Dogs                         | 817                       | PRIMATES - Siamang                                                         | 3                         |
| DOGS & CATS - Meat trade                   | 1                         | PRIMATES - Slow lorises                                                    | 6                         |
| DOGS & CATS - Street/feral                 | 2                         | PRIMATES - Snub-nosed monkeys (Rhinopithecus spp.)                         | 5                         |
| ELEPHANTS - unspecified                    | 7                         | PRIMATES - Spider monkeys                                                  | 11                        |
| ELEPHANTS - African                        | 4                         | PRIMATES - Squirrel monkeys                                                | 1                         |
| ELEPHANTS - Asian                          | 3                         | PRIMATES - Tamarins                                                        | 2                         |
| EQUIDS - Horses                            | 4                         | PRIMATES - Vervets                                                         | 1                         |
| EQUIDS - Zebras                            | 10                        | PRIMATES - Vervets/grivets/green or<br>tantalus monkeys (Chlorocebus spp.) | 12                        |
| FARMED ANIMALS - Alpacas                   | 2                         | REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS - (unspecified)                                      | 5                         |
| FARMED ANIMALS - Birds (chickens/hens)     | 203                       | REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS - Alligators                                         | 3                         |
| FARMED ANIMALS - Birds (turkeys)           | 4                         | REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS - Crocodiles                                         | 93                        |
| FARMED ANIMALS - Cattle                    | 4                         | REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS - Frogs/toads (unspecified)                          | 8                         |
| FARMED ANIMALS - Goats                     | 8                         | REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS - Iguanas                                            | 65                        |
| FARMED ANIMALS - Pigs                      | 28                        | REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS - Lizards (unspecified)                              | 187                       |
| FARMED ANIMALS - Sheep                     | 4                         | REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS - Snakes (unspecified)                               | 452                       |
| FUR ANIMALS - Mink                         | 23                        | REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS - Snakes (pythons)                                   | 324                       |
| LABORATORY ANIMALS - Primates              | 6                         | REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS - Turtles (unspecified)                              | 47                        |
| LABORATORY ANIMALS - Rodents               | 26                        |                                                                            |                           |

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 2 - featured animals (cont.)

| ANIMALS                               | COUNT FEATURED IN A VIDEO | ANIMALS                                            | COUNT FEATURED IN A VIDEO |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| SPIDERS/SCORPIONS & INSECTS           | 426                       | WILDLIFE (other) - Deer                            | 72                        |
| WILD CANIDS - Coyotes                 | 9                         | WILDLIFE (other) - Gazelles                        | 13                        |
| WILD CANIDS - Fox (unspecified)       | 125                       | WILDLIFE (other) - Giraffes                        | 6                         |
| WILD CANIDS - Jackals                 | 2                         | WILDLIFE (other) - Hares                           | 15                        |
| WILD CANIDS - Raccoon dogs            | 1                         | WILDLIFE (other) - Hippopotamus                    | 8                         |
| WILD CANIDS - Wolves (unspecified)    | 2                         | WILDLIFE (other) - Hyenas                          | 3                         |
| WILD FELIDS - general or unspecified  | 5                         | WILDLIFE (other) - Kangaroos & wallabies           | 4                         |
| WILD FELIDS - Cheetahs                | 4                         | WILDLIFE (other) - Kudus                           | 1                         |
| WILD FELIDS - Leopards                | 6                         | WILDLIFE (other) - Meerkats                        | 6                         |
| WILD FELIDS - Lions                   | 14                        | WILDLIFE (other) - Mongoose                        | 19                        |
| WILD FELIDS - Puma                    | 9                         | WILDLIFE (other) - Muskrats                        | 11                        |
| WILD FELIDS - Tigers                  | 26                        | WILDLIFE (other) - Otters                          | 4                         |
| WILD FELIDS - White tigers            | 4                         | WILDLIFE (other) - Pangolins                       | 102                       |
| WILDLIFE - All/general or unspecified | 94                        | WILDLIFE (other) - Porcupines                      | 7                         |
| WILDLIFE - Ferrets                    | 12                        | WILDLIFE (other) - Raccoons                        | 5                         |
| WILDLIFE (other) - Armadillos         | 1                         | WILDLIFE (other) - Rhinos                          | 3                         |
| WILDLIFE (other) - Bats               | 11                        | WILDLIFE (other) - Sable                           | 5                         |
| WILDLIFE (other) - Binturong          | 1                         | WILDLIFE (other) - Squirrel                        | 91                        |
| WILDLIFE (other) - Boar               | 857                       | WILDLIFE (other) - unspecified safari game animals | 10                        |
| WILDLIFE (other) - Buffalo            | 4                         | WILDLIFE (other) - Warthog                         | 2                         |
| WILDLIFE (other) - Camel              | 1                         | WILDLIFE (other) - Weasel                          | 19                        |
| WILDLIFE (other) - Civet cats         | 6                         | WILDLIFE (other) - Wildebeest                      | 15                        |
| WILDLIFE (other) - Coatimundis        | 1                         | <b>TOTAL:</b>                                      | <b>6940</b>               |

### APPENDIX 3 - themes of animal cruelty content

| THEMES                                                                  | COUNT OF THEMES FEATURE IN A VIDEO |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Hunting                                                                 | 2530                               |
| Fake rescue                                                             | 1106                               |
| Animals as entertainers                                                 | 781                                |
| Wild animals as pets                                                    | 517                                |
| Other                                                                   | 192                                |
| not specified                                                           | 131                                |
| Eating live animals                                                     | 88                                 |
| Deliberate animal torture (physical)                                    | 63                                 |
| Unintentional abuse                                                     | 62                                 |
| Teasing                                                                 | 50                                 |
| Deliberate animal torture (mental)                                      | 50                                 |
| Illegal keeping or sale                                                 | 32                                 |
| Prolonging death                                                        | 10                                 |
| Cruelty content used for legitimate campaigning or educational purposes | 5                                  |
| Fake outrage                                                            | 1                                  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                                            | <b>5618</b>                        |

## APPENDIX 4 - research methods

| Feature documented                                                  | Details                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Channel or user name                                                | Free-text box - exactly as written by user                                                                                                                                                                  |
| User's handle                                                       | Free-text box - if applicable                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Video title                                                         | Free-text box - exactly as written by user                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Featured animal(s)                                                  | Drop-down list of choices varying in taxonomical detail                                                                                                                                                     |
| Channel or individual link                                          | Report is based on individual links only                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Platform                                                            | Youtube, Tiktok or Facebook                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Date recorded                                                       | Calendar                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Category                                                            | Drop-down list of choices: obvious and intentional; ambiguous and intentional; obvious and unintentional; ambiguous and unintentional. For definitions of each category see section ANIMAL CRUELTY CONTENT. |
| Theme                                                               | Drop-down list of choices. See section ANIMAL CRUELTY CONTENT.                                                                                                                                              |
| Description                                                         | Free-text box for relevant details.                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Specific abuse if applicable                                        | Drop-down list of choices. See section ANIMAL CRUELTY CONTENT.                                                                                                                                              |
| Hunting type if applicable                                          | Drop-down list of choices. See Appendix 2.                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Detail on species                                                   | Free-text box for relevant details or in case animal not listed in featured animal/s section.                                                                                                               |
| Notes / additional comments                                         | Free-text box for relevant details.                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Countries where video(s) are made                                   | Drop-down list of choices.                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Where the video(s) filmed - evidence                                | Drop-down list of choices: language spoken in video; language on signage in video; I cannot be sure; n/a - no way to tell; country specified on user's page; video description; channel name.               |
| Country of upload                                                   | Drop-down list of choices                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Year content uploaded                                               | Drop-down list of choices: 2005-2021                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Screenshots                                                         | Optional                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Link                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Number of followers (user or channel) at time of research           |                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Number of views (channel or video) at time of research              |                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Number of comments (channel or video) at time of research           |                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Advertising present?                                                | Yes or no                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Name of advertiser/s                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <i>Additionally, for videos documented between 2-8 August 2021:</i> |                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Reported?                                                           | tick box indicating that the content was reported using that platform's current procedure                                                                                                                   |
| Report date                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Report type                                                         | e.g. what type of report did the platform allow you to make?                                                                                                                                                |
| 1 week post-report status                                           | Post still available/hidden/removed                                                                                                                                                                         |

## APPENDIX 5 - views of animal cruelty content

| NUMBER OF VIEWS OF INDIVIDUAL VIDEO | NUMBER OF VIDEOS WITH THIS NUMBER OF VIEWS |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| 1 - 999                             | 920                                        |
| 1,000 - 9,999                       | 1411                                       |
| 10,000 - 99,999                     | 1613                                       |
| 100,000 - 999,999                   | 938                                        |
| 1,000,000 - 9,999,999               | 365                                        |
| 10,000,000 - 99,999,999             | 56                                         |
| 100,000,000 - 1,000,000,000         | 4                                          |
| Over 1 billion                      | 1                                          |

## APPENDIX 6 - areas where animal cruelty content is MADE

| AREAS                        | NUMBER OF TIME AREA WAS SELECTED |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| INDONESIA                    | 1626                             |
| UNITED STATES                | 296                              |
| Unknown - Asia               | 249                              |
| AUSTRALIA                    | 135                              |
| Unknown - Europe             | 112                              |
| CAMBODIA                     | 83                               |
| IRELAND                      | 74                               |
| SOUTH AFRICA                 | 64                               |
| SOUTH KOREA                  | 53                               |
| THAILAND                     | 45                               |
| Unknown - Africa             | 42                               |
| NORWAY                       | 35                               |
| JAPAN                        | 35                               |
| UNITED KINGDOM               | 29                               |
| VIETNAM                      | 27                               |
| SOUTH EAST ASIA              | 22                               |
| NEW ZEALAND                  | 22                               |
| BRAZIL                       | 21                               |
| RUSSIA                       | 18                               |
| SINGAPORE                    | 12                               |
| MEXICO                       | 10                               |
| CANADA                       | 10                               |
| CHINA (PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF) | 9                                |
| MALAYSIA                     | 7                                |
| INDIA                        | 7                                |
| PHILIPPINES                  | 6                                |
| PAKISTAN                     | 5                                |
| FINLAND                      | 5                                |
| NIGERIA                      | 2                                |
| UKRAINE                      | 1                                |
| HUNGARY                      | 1                                |
| GUYANA                       | 1                                |
| BULGARIA                     | 1                                |

## NUMBER OF TIMES THIS REASON WAS SELECTED

|                                                   |      |
|---------------------------------------------------|------|
| no comment                                        | 1751 |
| It's in the the video channels name               | 1538 |
| Country is specified on user's page               | 1031 |
| I cannot be sure                                  | 564  |
| n/a - no way to tell                              | 318  |
| The language of the persons speaking in the video | 224  |
| The language on signage in the background         | 60   |
| It's in the the video description                 | 48   |

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On behalf of the undersigned organisations around the globe and the many millions of members and animals they represent;

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- Animal People Forum
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- Animals Asia Foundation
- Big Cat Rescue
- Blue Cross of India
- Born Free Foundation
- Change for Animals Foundation
- Federation of Indian Animal Protection Organisations
- FOUR PAWS International
- Humane Society International
- International Animal Rescue
- Jane Goodall Institute - Nepal
- Philippines Animal Welfare Society
- RSPCA UK
- Sarawak Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
- Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Hong Kong
- VShine Animal Protection Association
- World Animal Protection



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3. Action for Primates (AfP)
4. Advocating Wild
5. Alliance for Animal Rights (AFAR)
6. Alliance for Earth, Life, Liberty & Advocacy (AELLA)
7. Andhra Pradesh Goshala Federation
8. Animal Aid Unlimited (AAU)
9. Animal Care Trust / 社團法人台灣愛克特動物重生救援協會 (ACT)
10. Animal Friendly Alliance (AFA)
11. Animal Friends Croatia (AFC)
12. Animal Friends Jogja (AFJ)
13. Animal Kingdom Foundation (AKF)
14. Animal Nepal
15. Animal Projects & Environmental Education (APE Malaysia)
16. Animal Protection and Environmental Sanctuary (APES)
17. Animal Rescue Cambodia
18. Animal Rescue Organization Pakistan (ARO)
19. Animal Rights Center Japan (ARC)
20. Animal Sanctuary Trust Indonesia (ASTI)
21. Animal Welfare And Anti Harassment Society
22. AnimalConcepts
23. Animals Lebanon
24. AWARE: Animal Welfare Awareness, Research and Education (AWARE)
25. Bali Animal Welfare Association (BAWA)
26. Bali Monkey Aid Network (MAIN)
27. Bali Street Dog Fund Australia
28. Ban Animal Trading
29. Bikoshito Bangladesh Foundation (BBF)
30. Blue Cross Odisha (BCO)
31. British Hen Welfare Trust (BHWT)
32. Captured in Africa Foundation (CIAF)
33. CATCA Environmental and Wildlife Society
34. Catholic Concern for Animals (CCA)
35. Cattitude Trust - Chennai
36. China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation (CBCGDF)
37. Collective Fashion Justice (CFJ)
38. Community Dog Welfare Kopan
39. Compassion Unlimited Plus Action
40. Compassion Works International (CWI)
41. Corbett Foundation
42. CPR Environmental Education Centre (CPREEC)
43. Darjeeling Animal Shelter (DAS)
44. Djurrättsalliansen (The Animal Rights Alliance)
45. Djurskyddet Sverige (Animal Welfare Sweden)
46. Dobro Surtse
47. Dogstop
48. Dzīvnieku brīvība
49. Earth Crusaders Organisation (ECO)
50. Elephanatics
51. Elephants in Japan (EIJ)
52. Elephation
53. Environment Films
54. Fish Welfare Initiative (FWI)
55. FLIGHT
56. For Tigers
57. Forgotten Animals
58. Franciscan Order - Hong Kong
59. Fraternité pour le respect animal (FRA)
60. Friends of the Orangutans Malaysia
61. Fundación para el Asesoramiento y Acción en Defensa de los Animales (FAADA)
62. Future 4 Wildlife





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63. Future for Elephants (FFE)
64. Global Animal Welfare
65. Global March for Elephants and Rhinos
66. Global Sanctuary for Elephants
67. Greyhound Compassion
68. Help Animals
69. Help Animals India
70. Himalayan Animal Rescue Trust (HART)
71. Hollow Paws
72. Humane Animal Society (HAS)
73. Humane League Japan (THL Japan)
74. In Defence of Animals USA
75. In Defence of Animals, India (IDA)
76. International Otter Survival Fund (IOSF)
77. International Primate Protection League (IPPL)
78. International Tlmezz
79. IQRA Foundation
80. Jakarta Animal Aid Network (JAAN)
81. Jane Goodall Institute International
82. Japan Anti-Vivisection Association (JAVA)
83. JBF Trust India
84. Join Hands
85. Karuna Society for Animals & Nature
86. Kathmandu Animal Treatment Centre (KAT)
87. Kazakhstan Animal Protection Association (INUCOBO KAPA)
88. Kazakhstan Animal Rescue and Education (KARE)
89. Kerulos Center for Nonviolence
90. Korea Animal Rights Advocates (KARA)
91. Kurdistan Organization for Animal Rights Protection (KOARP)
92. Laboratoire d'écologie et environnement - Université de Bejaia - Algeria
93. Lady Freethinker (LFT)
94. Landmark Foundation (LMF)
95. Lawrence Anthony Earth Organization (LAEO)
96. Let's Adopt Indonesia (LAI)
97. Liberia Chimpanzee Rescue & Protection (LCRP)
98. Lifelong Animal Protection (LAP)
99. Melbourn Dolphin
100. moonbears.org
101. Moving Animals
102. Neotropical Primate Conservation (NPC)
103. Nepal Animal Welfare and Research Center (NAWRC)
104. Nepal Street Animal Rescue (NSAR)
105. Noahs Ark Ipoh, Malaysia (Ipoh Animal Welfare Society)
106. Nowzad
107. One Voice
108. One World Actors Animal Rescues (OWAP)
109. ONG Sante Animale Afrique (SAA)
110. Orangutan Aid
111. Orca Rescues Foundation (ORF)
112. Pan African Sanctuary Alliance (PASA)
113. PAWS Bangkok (PAWS)
114. People for Animal Care and Kindness (PACK)
115. People for Animals, Odisha (PFA)
116. Performing Animal Welfare Society (PAWS)
117. PETA Asia 亚洲善待动物组织 (PETA Asia)
118. Plants and Animals Welfare Society (PAWS Asia)
119. Plataforma ALTO
120. Proyecto ALA Animales Latino América (Proyecto ALA)
121. PSS Educational Development Society (PSSEDS)
122. PupAid
123. Put an End to Animal Cruelty and Exploitation (PEACE)
124. RAKSHA
125. reEarth
126. Rhino & Elephant Defenders (RED)



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128. Sanctuary for Health & Reconnection to Animals & Nature (SHARAN)
129. Save Animals Initiative Sanctuary Trust (SAI)
130. Save Animals Value Environment Jammu and Kashmir (SAVE)
131. Save The Asian Elephants (STAE)
132. Scorpion Foundation Indonesia (SCORPION)
133. Sea First Foundation (SF)
134. SEY Animal Welfare Finland (SEY)
135. Shark Conservation Australia (SCA)
136. Sheldrick Wildlife Trust (SWT)
137. Showing Animals Respect and Kindness (SHARK)
138. Shree Karuna Foundation Trust - Animal Helpline Rajkot
139. Sinergia Animal
140. Society for Animal Welfare and Management (SAWM)
141. Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Penang (SPCA Penang)
142. Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Selangor (SPCA Selangor)
143. Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Singapore (SPCA Singapore)
144. Society for the Protection of Animals, Ljubimci (SPAL)
145. Society for Travelers Respecting Animal Welfare (STRAW)
146. Soi Dog Foundation
147. Sống Thuần Chay (STC)
148. Southern African Fight For Rhinos (SAFFR)
149. Stray Relief and Animal Welfare (STRAW India)
150. Stripes and Green Earth Foundation (SAGE Foundation)
151. Sun Bear Centre - Kalimantan (KWPLH)
152. Taiwan Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals 台灣防止虐待動物協會
153. Thai Animal Guardians Association (Thai AGA)
154. Tree of Compassion
155. Udruga Pobjede
156. Unexpected Wildlife Refuge
157. Vegan-It
158. Vervet Monkey Foundation
159. Voice for Dogs Abroad (VFDA)
160. Voice for Zoo Animals
161. Voice of Animal Nepal (VOAN)
162. Voice4Lions
163. We Animals Media
164. Wild & Free - Rehabilitation & Release (W&F)
165. Wild Futures
166. Wild Welfare
167. WildAid Hong Kong
168. Wildlife Alliance
169. Wildlife Friends Foundation Thailand (WFFT)
170. Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre (WRRC)
171. Winsome Constance Kindness Trust (WCKT)
172. Working for Animals (WFA)
173. World Cetacean Alliance (WCA)
174. World For All Animal Care And Adoptions
175. Yangon Animal Shelter
176. Zimbabwe National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ZNSPCA)
177. Zoocheck Inc.



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### SMACC MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

Action for Primates, Animals Asia Foundation, Humane Society of the United States, International Animal Rescue, Lady Freethinker, Pan African Sanctuary Alliance, PETA Asia, Wildlife Alliance, and World Animal Protection



### SMACC COLLABORATORS AND ASSOCIATES

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### OUR DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS RESEARCHERS

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We wish to take this opportunity to acknowledge the trauma that can be felt by those witnessing this cruelty in order to help this work and to acknowledge that without our researchers this team effort would not have been possible. Thank you, you make the world a better place.



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## A note from the Asia for Animals Coordinator

We live in a world where it seems we have little control over what we consume online as the advertisers and algorithms decide for us what we should be viewing. As such, animal cruelty content has spread like a virus through social media with everyday users subject to misleading information in the form of 'fake rescues' and 'happy' wild animal pets, and those who actively seek out the 'thrill' of watching an animal suffer given free reign to watch and share the content.



To the readers of this report I would say this: Although it will be shocking, and the details of the animal cruelty and the numbers almost incomprehensible, please bear in mind what this report represents.

**It represents only a short period of time** ~ just over one year researching videos whose viewer numbers grow exponentially as every like, share and watch perpetuates the problem.

**It represents a minuscule number of videos available online** ~ with some of our researchers discovering channels each with thousands of videos within them.

**It represents just three of the most popular social media giants** ~ ignoring the many other platforms which collectively have billions of users.

**It represents only what is available in the public domain** ~ leaving the thousands of encrypted pages and private groups to freely share animal cruelty content without detection.

**It represents a small selection of the regions of our world** where animal cruelty is taking place purely to be filmed and put on social media ~ This is however a global problem... and it must stop.

**But this is not an insurmountable issue that we cannot change.**

Ask yourself, is there animal cruelty behind the videos you are watching? If so, take action. Report the videos and do not engage in any way. Speak up for the animals in these videos and join us in ending their suffering.

*Sarah Grant, Asia for Animals Coalition coordinator*

**[www.smaccoalition.com/public-advice](http://www.smaccoalition.com/public-advice)**



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