

International celebs help World Animal Day reach over 100 million people on October 4!

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The global day for the recognition and celebration of animals hit an unprecedented high this year, with over 100,275,000 people reached online on World Animal Day. In response to social distancing restrictions in many regions, animal lovers around the world flooded the internet with social media posts, blogs, videos and articles.

Their message was overwhelmingly clear – *all animals* should be respected and treated with kindness, not only on October 4, but all year round.

Hollywood tough guy, **Jean Claude Van Demme**, said: "Happy World Animal Day! Today, October 4, is a very special day to me as the world unites to show love and care to all other species. Be good to animals and life will become good to you."

British actor and star of Downton Abbey, **Peter Egan**, said: "It is our responsibility to care for every animal with whom we share our wonderful planet. They all have their contribution to make. Don't eat them, don't wear them, don't abuse them for entertainment. Care for them. Be vegan."

In a video statement, **the Dalai Lama** also encouraged a meat-free diet, urging the kitchens of Buddhist monasteries and Tibetan schools to use more vegetables in their menus.

Musicians **Christopher Cross** and **Elli Kokkinou** used their voices for animals on social media, while international actors **Salma Hayek**, **Leonor Varela**, **Alexandra Roach** and **Dominic Purcell** all shared photos with their dogs on Instagram. Numerous Bollywood stars, such as **Keerthy Suresh**, **Amy Jackson** and **Sidharth Malhotra**, asked the world to be kind to animals.

Sports players also knocked it out of the park on October 4. The **Mumbai Indians** cricket team shared photos of their pets, including World Animal Day regular, **Rohit Sharma**.

Neville Southall, ex-Everton and Wales goalkeeper, praised the working animal charity, SPANA, by saying: "...we're highlighting how many animals across the world have no access to vital vet care. A severe shortage of vet services in developing countries means animals are suffering. But SPANA vets are providing a lifeline to working animals".

Bengaluru Football Club were a little late, adding their motivational tweet on October 5. They said: "We've let #WorldAnimalDay pass us by, but our belated post should tell you that it's never too late to make a wrong right. Be kind to all living beings. Period."

In the UK, businesswoman and Dragons' Den investor, **Deborah Meaden**, said that World Animal Day is "[a] day to appreciate the creatures we share our planet with and those who work so hard to protect them".

British TV vets, **Noel Fitzpatrick** and **Marc Abraham** also spoke up for animals. Abraham used October 4 to thank his audience for supporting his anti-puppy farming campaigns.

Since the first World Animal Day was organised in 1925, participation has grown every year. Usually, hundreds of events are organised, by individuals or groups, to raise awareness of animal welfare issues – or vital funds for their favourite organisations. This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many events took place online.

Caroline Ruane, Coordinator at World Animal Day, said: "This year has been a time of disruption, uncertainty and, for many, sadness. Despite this, animals have not been forgotten. Compassionate people around the world have ensured that they are fed, watered, healed and protected as much as possible. However, there are still millions of animals *without any help or protection*. World Animal Day is an opportunity to speak up for those animals – the ones who are at risk of suffering and neglect."

"We're delighted that World Animal Day was such a success this year." Ruane said. "Advocates around the globe really came through for animals, despite the current challenges. We reached around 1.29% of the world's population on October 4. Next year, we want to make *even more* people aware of how they can be a voice for defenceless animals."

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To find out more, please visit worldanimalday.org.uk.

(World Animal Day is coordinated by Naturewatch Foundation, a registered animal welfare charity in the UK. For more information on their work, visit naturewatch.org.)

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