

Inky's Great Escape, Eating Octopuses Alive, and More

Inky the octopus made headlines recently for his bold escape from the National Aquarium in New Zealand. However, we treat highly intelligent and sentient animals like Inky as mere objects to buy and sell for consumption – sometimes even eating them alive. In this video, we explore these issues related to octopuses as well as the broader implications of using and consuming nonhuman animals generally.

- Transcript
- Sources
- Credits

Hi, I'm Dr. Sofia Pineda Ochoa with Meat Your Future. Inky the octopus made headlines recently for his bold escape from the National Aquarium in New Zealand.

He waited until it was dark and staff had gone home. Then, in the middle of the night, he managed to get out of his glass tank enclosure, quietly slithered across the floor, squeezed himself through a small drain hole, and finally down a 50 meter long pipe to freedom in the Pacific Ocean – leaving nothing but a trail of slime for the aquarium staff to recreate his amazing escape.

The aquarium manager, Rob Yarrall, said Inky “managed to make his way to one of the drain holes that go back to the ocean, and off he went...” He “[d]idn't even leave us a message.”

Mr. Yarrall added that Inky was very friendly, and would frequently grab you with his tentacles or squirt water

playfully when being fed, and that he figured out how to unscrew a jar.

The communication manager for the city council commented on the escape, noting that many nonhumans are indeed very smart, and that Inky thought out his escape, so good for him.

However, for biologists who are more familiar with these animals, the intelligence and dexterity displayed in the escape is really not surprising. They're smart, and they're resourceful. You can see them here, for example, carrying coconut shells to build underwater shelters.

But we treat these clearly sentient and intelligent animals as mere objects, to buy and sell for consumption. Many people don't give it a second's thought, even as these animals make every effort to stay away from our mouths – as we can see here.

People describe eating these animals as rubbery in texture and flavorless. Really, on all levels, I find it hard to understand why anyone would want to eat these creatures. Let's see what one octopus-eater has to say:

Octopus Eater: "So we have these live octopuses here, and we're going to eat them. Ugh...ahh. It doesn't want to leave...it's like. Let go. Frick'n. Ugh. Come back, come back, come back. Okay, stop. That's it. Ahh..done."

Other Person: "How was it? Describe your experience."

Octopus Eater: "The moment I put it in my mouth, I just had to commit to it. But otherwise, just touching it and everything, it's slimy, it's starting to stick everywhere, it's legs are going all over the place."

Dr. Jennifer Mather, a cephalopod expert and professor at the University of Lethbridge in Alberta, Canada, has studied octopuses and their close relatives since 1978 and has

extensive field research. She commented on the practice of cooking and eating octopuses alive.

She says, "There is absolutely no doubt that they feel pain. They have a nervous system which is much more distributed than ours... [T]he octopus, which you've been chopping to pieces, is feeling pain every time you do it. It's just as painful as if it were a hog, a fish, or a rabbit, if you chopped a rabbit's leg off piece by piece. So it's a barbaric thing to do to the animal."

Eating an animal alive is not only revolting for many people, in my medical opinion, it could also be unsafe if the animal squirms and moves while in the process of being swallowed.

But it's also important to remember that other species that are similarly used for food, even though they are usually not eaten alive – like chickens, pigs, cows and fish – do not "donate" their flesh either.

When we turn any living, breathing, complex individual into "edibles", it necessarily involves inflicting harm on that individual, and almost always accompanied by terror, fear and needless suffering as well. From the perspective of the animals, we take his or her one and only life away, and turn their existence into a real-life horror movie, one in which they fight with futility until the very end as they try to stay alive.

Here are just a few seconds of footage that we recently filmed ourselves at a slaughterhouse.

We kill approximately 65 billion land animals, and up to 2.7 trillion marine animals every year for food. This scene is literally happening again and again to other animals right now, and it's happening literally every single minute of every single hour of every single day, all year long, year-after-year. What an unnecessary horror show for foods we do not even need.

And, moreover, there is now broad consensus that the production of animal foods is also an environmental disaster of immense and global proportions. Just to briefly touch on this, according to the United Nations FAO, raising animals for food is responsible for more human-caused greenhouse gas emissions than the entire global transportation sector combined. And, “the livestock sector may well be the leading player in the reduction of biodiversity, since it is the major driver of deforestation, as well as one of the leading drivers of land degradation, pollution, climate change, overfishing” among other serious global environmental issues.

As for our marine ecosystems, upon which octopuses and other aquatic animals depend, loss of ocean biodiversity has been accelerating at an unprecedented and alarming rate. We now have the technology to extract nearly every fish in the ocean; in fact, we have enough fishing capacity to cover at least four Earth-like planets. We are literally eating the oceans dry. An extensive four-year study from Dalhousie University found, if our current fishing trends continue, we will face a global marine ecosystem collapse and essentially have fish-free oceans by 2048.

And from a health and nutritional perspective, plant-based protein is far better for us than animal protein. For one, it does not come with any cholesterol, which cannot be said for even so-called “lean” meats like chicken and turkey.

Animal protein, in general, also results in our increased production of the hormone IGF-1, which is consistently associated with increased cancer risk.

There are many other problematic aspects related to animal foods as well, which is probably why Dr. Walter Willett, the chair of Harvard’s Department of Nutrition, recommends that you “[p]ick the best protein packages by emphasizing plant sources of protein [over] animal sources”.

And why the president of the American College of Cardiology, Dr. Kim Williams, both recommends a vegan diet and is a long-time vegan himself.

And why Kaiser Permanente, one of the largest HMOs in the country, is looking for ways “to make plant-based diets the new normal for [its] patients and employees.”

The fact that we do not biologically need to eat any animal foods is not controversial. So, why continue to eat these foods if it's unnecessary and causes so many global environmental problems, not to mention so much suffering for so many sentient animals?

If you're not doing so already, I invite you to leave animal foods off of your plates forever and go vegan – for your health, for the environment, and for the animals. Thank you very much.

This transcript is an approximation of the audio in above video. To hear the audio and see the accompanying visuals, please play the video.

- D Bilefsky. Inky the Octopus Escapes From a New Zealand Aquarium? *The New York Times*. 2016 Apr. 13. Available here (accessed May 30, 2016).
- N Perry. So Long Suckers! Inky the Octopus Makes an Amazing Escape. *Associated Press*; posted on *KSL.com*. 2019 Apr 17. Available here (accessed May 30, 2016).
- H Pollack. How an Octopus Feels When its Eaten Alive. *Munchies*. 2015 Nov. 7. Available here (accessed May 30, 2016).
- “Globally, the number of land animals killed each year for food has exceeded 65 billion, according to conservative U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization figures.” Number of Animals Killed In US Increases in 2010. *Farm Animal Rights Movement (FARM)*. Available here (accessed May 30, 2016).

- The “total estimated fish numbers for average annual capture in 1999-2007 [is] between 0.97 and 2.74 trillion fish” based on capture tonnage statistics published by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO). A Mood and P Brooke. Estimating the Number of Fish Caught in Global Fishing Each Year. *Fishcount.org*. 2010 Jul. Available here (accessed May 30, 2016).
- H Steinfeld, P Gerber, T Wassenaar, V Castel, M Rosales and C. de Haan. Livestock’s Long Shadow – Environmental Issues and Options. *United Nations, Food and Agriculture Organization*. 2006 Nov. Available here (accessed May 30, 2016).
- “Worldwide, fishing fleets are two to three times as large as needed to take present day catches of fish and other marine species and what our oceans can sustainably support. On a global scale we have enough fishing capacity to cover at least four Earth-like planets.” D Pauly, V Christensen, J Dalsgaard, R Froese, and F Torres Jr. Fishing Down Marine Food Webs. *Science*. 1998 Feb. 6; 279(5352): 860-3. Available here (accessed May 30, 2016).
- B Worm, EB Barbier, N Beaumont, JE Duffy, C Folke, BS Halpern, JB Jackson, HK Lotze, F Micheli, SR Palumbi, E Sala, KA Selkoe, JJ Stachowicz and R Watson. Impacts of Biodiversity Loss on Ocean Ecosystem Services. *Science*. 2006 Nov 3; 314(5800): 787-90. Available here (accessed May 30, 2016).
- For sources on the associations between animal protein, IGF-1 production, and increased cancer risk, see our video summary “Animal Protein and Cancer” and accompanying sources.
- PJ Skerrett and WC Willett. Essentials of healthy eating: a guide. *J Midwifery Womens Health*. 2010 Nov-Dec; 55(6): 492-501. Available here (accessed May 30, 2016).
- American College of Cardiology website: Latest in Cardiology – ACC Presidential Year in Review: Kim Allan Williams Sr., MD, FACC. Available here (accessed May 17, 2016).

- VL Baker. President-elect of American College of Cardiologists [sic] is Vegan. Daily Kos. 2014 Aug. Available here (accessed May 30, 2016).

- PJ Tusso, MH Ismail, BP Ha and C Bartolotto. Nutritional Update for Physicians: Plant-Based Diets. *Perm J*. 2013 Spring; 17(2): 61-66. Available here (accessed May 30, 2016).

This video was written and narrated by Sofia Pineda Ochoa, MD, and edited by Bob Rapfogel.

This presentation may contain copyrighted material whose use has not been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. Meat Your Future is using such material in its efforts to advance the public's understanding of the implications of animal consumption on health, the environment and ethics. We believe that this not-for-profit, non-commercial and educational use constitutes a fair use of the copyrighted material (as provided for in 17 U.S. Code §107). If you wish to use this material for purposes of your own that go beyond "fair use," you must obtain permission from the copyright owner.

Without limiting the foregoing, this presentation also includes the following (in order of appearance in the video):

- Photographs of (1) Inky the Octopus courtesy National Aquarium of New Zealand; (2) the pig and cow awaiting slaughter by Bob Rapfogel, and (3) the layer hen by Jo-Anne McArthur (creator of We Animals and featured photographer in *The Ghosts in Our Machine*).
- Footage of (1) octopus grabbing man from Monterey Bay Aquarium, *Why We're Suckers for the Giant Pacific Octopus*; (2) octopus opening jar from *Wild Captures, Octopus Can Open Jar*; (3) octopus building shelter from *People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, Is This Octopus Using Tools*; (4) octopuses being eaten alive from "r3n7u5", *eating live octopus in Korea: San Nakji*

and from Sciencebunny, Eating a Whole Live Octopus in Korea; (5) octopus being cooked alive from Liveleak / Best Video Ever, Eating Live Octopus–Cooking Live Octopus in Korea--Would You Eat a Live Octopus?; (6) farmed chickens from Compassion USA, Chicken Factory Farmer Speaks Out; (7) farmed pigs from Animals Australia, What is Factory Farming – PIGS; (8) cattle auction from Sheri Macho, Columbus Cattle Auction Sept 2015; (9) fishing trawler from “dty2dty2”, Hoki Trawlers; (9) cow and pig inside a slaughterhouse by Bob Rapfogel; and (10) rotating Earth from NASA Earth Observatory, Rotating Blue Marble.

- Screenshots and text from the following other websites: (1) Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health website, “Walter Willett – Fredrick John Stare Professor of Epidemiology and Nutrition, Chair, Department of Nutrition”, available here (accessed May 17, 2016); (2) American College of Cardiology Website: “Latest in Cardiology – ACC Presidential Year in Review: Kim Allan Williams Sr., MD, FACC”, available here (accessed May 17, 2016); and (3) Daily Kos website: “President-elect of American College of Cardiologists [sic] is Vegan”, available here (accessed May 17, 2016).