



**EMS
FOUNDATION**

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Dear Honourable Ministers

RESEARCH REAFFIRMS ZONOTIC SPILLOVER FROM WILDLIFE TRADE AND CONSUMPTION

The EMS Foundation remains deeply concerned about the devastating effects of COVID-19 and the growing risk of new pandemics scientifically linked to the trade in, and consumption of, wild animals.

Recent research findings strengthen the evidence that wildlife trade (legal and illegal) and zoonotic disease risks are strongly associated and that the trade in wild animals is a significant factor in the global spread of zoonotic and emerging infectious disease. The study¹ found that:

1. One-quarter (26.5%) of the mammals in wildlife trade harbour 75% of known zoonotic viruses;
2. Primates, ungulates², carnivores, and bats represent significant zoonotic disease risks - 58% of known zoonotic viruses in present wildlife trade;
3. Mitigation measures must be prioritized;
4. Wildlife trade, sales and consumption must be restricted.

Overall, these findings confirm that the wildlife trade is associated with the risk of zoonotic disease. There should be no wildlife trade involving species with the highest risk of carrying zoonotic viruses. These species include, but are not limited to: horses, donkeys, giraffes, rhinoceroses, bovines, pigs, zebra, camels, sheep, hippopotamuses, all antelopes, whales, dolphins, porpoises, lions, wolves, leopards, hyenas, bears, cheetah, tigers, all Felidae, all primates, bats, rodents and marsupials.

The growing scientific evidence, and the associated concerns that the trade and breeding of wild animals leads to zoonotic spillover, brings into sharp focus the serious risks associated with South Africa's commercial wildlife breeding industry and its agriculturalization of wild animals, particularly in relation to the amendments to the Animal Improvement Act and the Meat Safety Act and the Draft Animal Welfare Bill.

Yours sincerely

Michele Pickover
Executive Director

¹ <https://www.cell.com/current-biology/fulltext/S0960-9822%2821%2900801-0>

² Large mammals with hooves