PEOPLE FOR
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Mr Colin McIntosh
Chief Editor, Cambridge Dictionary

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Dear Mr McIntosh:

Hello from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). After learning that Cambridge Dictionary had chosen “human” as its Word of the Year, defined as "being, relating to, or belonging to a person or to people as opposed to animals", we’re writing to request that you please correct this definition to read “*other* animals” – human beings are by definition animals too.

Humans are just one species of animal, similar to others in all the ways that matter. Like us, mother pigs hum lullabies to soothe their babies as they nurse. Pufferfish make art to woo their crush, as we might make a mixtape (or, nowadays, a meme). Chickens experience REM sleep and dream in colour. Sheep can remember 50 different sheep faces for years. Clever camels share knowledge – such as where to find a good watering hole – across generations (as we might suggest a pub to a fellow traveller).

Though it might be convenient for humans to imagine other animals as vastly different from us to justify the way they are exploited for their flesh, skins, wool, and milk, our ignorance of their unique personhood does not negate that violence. It also doesn’t make other animals closer to the machines your word-of-the-year choice seeks to distance humans from.

A mother cow isn’t a milk machine.

A goat is not a wool machine.

And none of the billions of animals killed for their flesh every year in the UK is a vending machine dispensing wings and ribs.

Our legacy of cruelty toward our fellow animals is enough to warrant inventing a new word to replace the misnomer “humane”. Until then, please fix your definition of “human” to end with “*other* animals”. It’s not only correct but may also encourage humans to stop “othering” those with whom we have so much in common.

I appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mimi Bekhechi
Senior Vice President

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