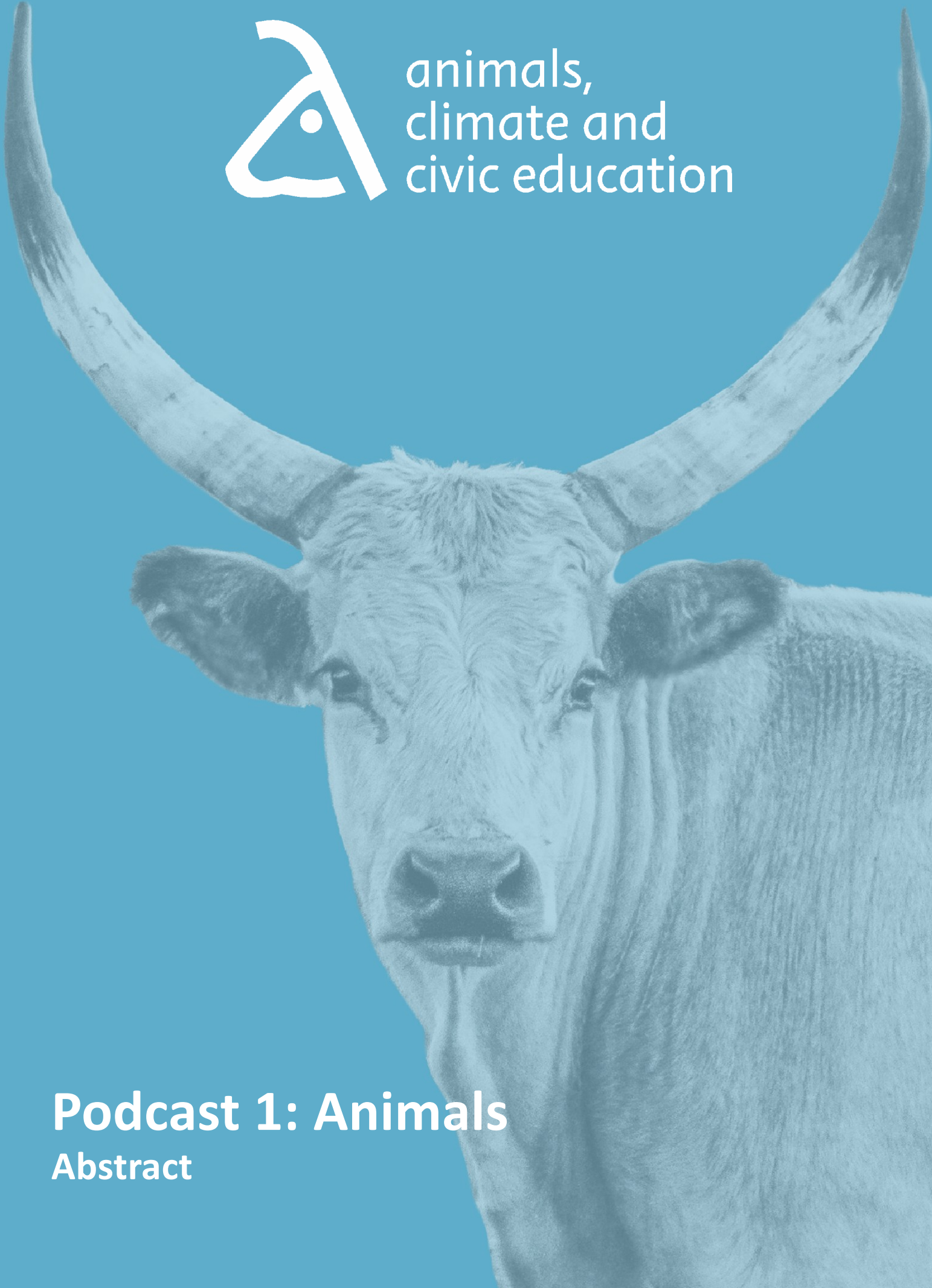




animals,  
climate and  
civic education

# Podcast 1: Animals

## Abstract



# Imprint

Author of original German text: Friederike Schmitz (Mensch Tier Bildung e.V.)

Editor of original German text: Ann-Marie Orf

Translation into English: Ania Fialkiewicz

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# Abstract of the animals podcast:

## Our relationship with animals

The setting: Kati and Kim are meeting to talk about the situation of animals, which is important to both of them. Kati is very critical of the way animals are kept in agriculture, is vegan and makes the case for animal rights. Kim is quite new to the topic, has been reading up in preparation for the conversation and holds more mainstream and animal welfare positions.

Here is a selection of key points from the conversation:

- The needs of animals used today to produce meat, milk and eggs are only met in a very limited way within the legally permitted systems for keeping “farm” animals. Secretly filmed videos from factory farms show how bad the situation is.
- In Germany, mother sows have to spend several weeks in small cages the size of their bodies, known as farrowing crates. This will be banned in the future, but remains legal until 2035 in Germany. Sows are able to suckle their piglets, but unable to care for them in other ways. Piglets that are too small or weak are often killed.
- In Germany pigs reared for meat are only entitled to 0.75 m<sup>2</sup> of space each. This means you can keep 15 pigs in the space needed to park one car. As a result the animals are not able to engage in important social behaviours.
- Chickens raised for meat are mostly kept in large sheds, often housing tens of thousands of animals. 3 – 4% of them die during the short fattening period; this rate of loss is factored in. In Germany, this means that more than 50,000 chickens a day die, often in agony.
- “Laying hens” are also forced to live together by the thousands, although they can only form fixed social structures in small groups. This leads to stress and mutual aggression. Studies show that four out of five “laying hens” break their breastbones at least once in their lives.
- In dairy farming, the calf is taken away from the cow immediately after birth. Many cows suffer from mastitis and lameness.
- The German Animal Welfare Act contains principles that should prevent such practices. However, the specific regulations serve to enable economically efficient production. Progress in animal welfare is very slow because this economic efficiency is not questioned.
- There is controversy around whether measures advertised as improving animal welfare result in actual meaningful improvements. Critics see a danger that small reforms will only reassure consumers and help stabilise the system.
- Alternative farming systems, such as organic farming, are sometimes seen as a model to which the entire animal agriculture sector should be converted, in order to reduce animal suffering. However, the differences between the two systems are smaller than many people think. For example, the statutory minimum amount of outside space that “organic” pigs should have access to is very small, cows on organic farms also have their calves taken away from them and “organic” animals are rarely less sick than animals on conventional farms.

- There is also the fundamental question of why it is legitimate to kill animals for food when there is no need to do so. Advocates of animal rights point to the similarities between humans and animals and promote a new perspective of animals as valued individuals.
- There are different strategies for achieving real improvements for animals. Rather than reforming the conditions in which animals are kept, some campaigners advocate a vegan lifestyle, a drastic reduction in the number of farmed animals and a societal shift in our diets. In any case, information and reflection play an important role in bringing about change.