# Factory farming in Yorkshire intensifies health and environmental crises, say experts



Yorkshire is renowned for its scenic beauty, with picturesque countryside, stunning national parks, and charming coastal towns. However, an escalating threat looms over this idyllic landscape as the proliferation of factory farms continues unabated. In regions like Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, there are already over 300 mega farms, notorious for their intensive practices. This has led to a staggering increase in the number of livestock, positioning these counties among the highest in the UK for intensely farmed animals.

As climate change wreaks havoc worldwide, simultaneously affecting human health, the detrimental impact of factory farming is too often overlooked. In England, respiratory diseases represent a significant cause of mortality— a crisis which is likely exacerbated by intensive farming practices that pollute the environment. The need for local councillors and town planning committees to curb the expansion of these mega farms has never been more urgent; proactive steps could help preserve the countryside and protect wildlife.

Factory farming's contribution to environmental degradation is profound. Water pollution is one critical issue, notably affecting the River Ouse in Yorkshire, which is at risk from agricultural runoff and manure pollution. The UK livestock sector generates an estimated 33,450 tonnes of manure daily. Recent victories, such as Fish Legal's case against the government for failing to address pollution in Costa Beck, underscore the ongoing struggles to protect these vital waterways. The contamination poses risks not only to aquatic life but also to wildlife that relies on these ecosystems for drinking water.

Adding to the problem is the escalating threat of antibiotic resistance, a concern echoed by health authorities and compounded by the overuse of antibiotics in intensive farming. The World Health Organization has identified antibiotic resistance as one of the most severe global health threats, predicting that by 2050, 10 million lives could be lost each year due to infections that are resistant to treatment. The routine use of antibiotics to prevent disease in overcrowded conditions fosters a breeding ground for resistant bacteria, which can subsequently infect humans through various channels, including environmental exposure and foodborne illness.

Moreover, there is a growing acknowledgment of the role factory farming plays in the spread of zoonotic diseases— infections that jump from animals to humans. An increasing number of experts advocate for stricter regulations prohibiting the routine administration of antibiotics in farm conditions. Compounding this issue, the environmental ramifications of factory farming extend beyond immediate health concerns. Intensive farming significantly contributes to climate change through the release of greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide and methane, and exacerbates habitat destruction, leading to alarming declines in global wildlife populations.

Air pollution is another dire consequence of factory farming. Past studies from Dutch scientists have linked high concentrations of ammonia in the air—often found near livestock-dense areas—with acute respiratory issues among adults and children with asthma. The prevalence of asthma in the UK has grown considerably, with 7.2 million people currently afflicted. The noxious substances emitted from factory farms, such as nitrous oxide and hydrogen sulphide, not only pose risks to human health but also to the welfare of the animals themselves, confined in environments replete with harmful air pollution.

While this discussion scratches the surface of the multifaceted problems presented by factory farming, it is crucial to ignite further dialogue on necessary reforms. Addressing these systemic issues requires a concerted effort from both policymakers and the public. Individuals are encouraged to contact their MPs and advocate for a reduction in factory farming practices, thereby fostering a healthier environment and future for all.

As awareness expands regarding the adverse impacts of factory farming on health and the planet, the time is ripe for action. If you’re inspired by this information, consider exploring further and engaging others in conversations on sustainable agricultural practices. Together, we can work towards a future where the health of our communities and the well-being of our planet are prioritised.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://yorkshirebylines.co.uk/news/environment/is-intensive-farming-a-danger-to-our-health-and-our-planet/), [[5]](https://commentcentral.co.uk/unveiling-the-true-cost-of-factory-farming-in-the-uk)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://yorkshirebylines.co.uk/news/environment/is-intensive-farming-a-danger-to-our-health-and-our-planet/), [[2]](https://www.worldanimalprotection.org.uk/our-work/farming/protect-humanity-factory-farming/), [[3]](https://www.ciwf.org.uk/factory-farming/environmental-damage//)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.worldanimalprotection.org.uk/our-work/farming/protect-humanity-factory-farming/), [[4]](https://www.rspca.org.uk/whatwedo/latest/essays/battlefortheplanet), [[6]](https://www.worldanimalprotection.org.uk/latest/blogs/zoonosis-and-antimicrobial-resistance/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[5]](https://commentcentral.co.uk/unveiling-the-true-cost-of-factory-farming-in-the-uk), [[6]](https://www.worldanimalprotection.org.uk/latest/blogs/zoonosis-and-antimicrobial-resistance/), [[7]](https://www.sustainweb.org/news/nov22-superbugs-rivers-factory-farms/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[3]](https://www.ciwf.org.uk/factory-farming/environmental-damage//), [[4]](https://www.rspca.org.uk/whatwedo/latest/essays/battlefortheplanet)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://yorkshirebylines.co.uk/news/environment/is-intensive-farming-a-danger-to-our-health-and-our-planet/), [[3]](https://www.ciwf.org.uk/factory-farming/environmental-damage//)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://yorkshirebylines.co.uk/news/environment/is-intensive-farming-a-danger-to-our-health-and-our-planet/), [[5]](https://commentcentral.co.uk/unveiling-the-true-cost-of-factory-farming-in-the-uk)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://yorkshirebylines.co.uk/news/environment/is-intensive-farming-a-danger-to-our-health-and-our-planet/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.worldanimalprotection.org.uk/our-work/farming/protect-humanity-factory-farming/> - World Animal Protection UK highlights the severe health risks associated with factory farming, including the development of antibiotic-resistant superbugs due to the overuse of antibiotics in animals. They also discuss the emergence of zoonotic diseases from intensive farming conditions and the negative impact on human diets and nutrition. The article emphasizes the urgent need for action to mitigate these health threats and advocates for the banning of routine antibiotic use in factory farms to reduce the risk of deadly superbugs.
3. <https://www.ciwf.org.uk/factory-farming/environmental-damage//> - Compassion in World Farming discusses the environmental damage caused by factory farming, particularly its contribution to climate change through the release of greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide and methane. The article explains how deforestation for animal feed production and the energy-intensive nature of factory farming exacerbate environmental degradation. It also highlights the need for significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions to combat climate change and the role of factory farming in this issue.
4. <https://www.rspca.org.uk/whatwedo/latest/essays/battlefortheplanet> - The RSPCA addresses the environmental impact of factory farming, noting that the widespread adoption of such practices has led to a significant decline in wildlife populations, with 68% of the world's wild mammals, fish, birds, reptiles, and amphibians lost in the past 50 years. The article links this decline to the extensive use of arable land for growing animal feed, which contributes to habitat destruction and biodiversity loss, and calls for a more sustainable approach to agriculture.
5. <https://commentcentral.co.uk/unveiling-the-true-cost-of-factory-farming-in-the-uk> - This article examines the hidden costs of factory farming in the UK, estimating that the annual cost of increased respiratory deaths attributable to living near large factory farms is £92 million. It also discusses the public health risks associated with antibiotic-resistant bacteria resulting from intensive farming practices. Additionally, the piece highlights the economic impact of factory farming, noting the loss of 14,000 farming jobs over two decades and the associated financial implications.
6. <https://www.worldanimalprotection.org.uk/latest/blogs/zoonosis-and-antimicrobial-resistance/> - World Animal Protection UK explores how industrial farming practices increase human disease risks, focusing on the spread of zoonotic diseases and antimicrobial resistance. The article explains that the overuse of antibiotics in farming leads to the development of resistant bacteria, which can contaminate the environment and pose significant health risks to humans. It also discusses the impact of antimicrobial resistance on healthcare, emphasizing the potential challenges in treating infections and performing medical procedures in the future.
7. <https://www.sustainweb.org/news/nov22-superbugs-rivers-factory-farms/> - Sustain reports on the presence of antibiotic-resistant bacteria in rivers near UK factory farms. The study found that rivers adjacent to pig and chicken factory farms contained antibiotic-resistant strains of E. coli and S. aureus, as well as antibiotic resistance genes. The article highlights the environmental and public health risks associated with these findings and calls for greater reductions in antibiotic use in farming to mitigate the spread of superbugs.