

UK urged to share Covid jabs with rest of world after vulnerable are vaccinated

The World Health Organisation has urged the UK and other countries to pause Covid jabs once health workers and vulnerable groups have been vaccinated as it is the 'morally right thing to do'.



Spokeswoman Margaret Harris has argued that **rollout 'needs to be fair' across the globe** after AstraZeneca production issues spurred a bitter row between Brussels and the UK. Speaking on BBC Breakfast this morning, **she appealed directly to the British public, telling them: 'You can wait'**. When asked to clarify whether, once the UK has vaccinated its top nine priority groups, it should help efforts elsewhere, Ms Harris replied: **'We're asking all countries in those circumstances to do that: hang on, wait for those other groups.'**

WHO spokeswoman Margaret Harris said Covid vaccine rollout 'needs to be fair' (Picture: Reuters/BBC/PA)

'We'll also appeal to all the people of the UK – you can wait.' She continued: **'We're asking countries, once you've got those groups, please ensure that the supply you've got access to is provided for others. 'While that is morally clearly the right thing to do, it's also economically the right thing to do. 'There have been a number of very interesting analyses showing that just vaccinating your own country and then sitting there and saying 'we're fine' will not work economically.'**



A healthcare worker administers a dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccine to a person at the Newcastle Racecourse vaccination centre, in Newcastle upon Tyne (Picture: REUTERS)

'That phrase 'no man is an island' applies economically as well. 'We in the world, we're so connected and unless we get all societies working effectively once again, every society will be effected.' A total of 7,891,184 people have now been vaccinated in the UK, while 478,254 people have had their second dose. Meanwhile, **countries on the continent have been struggling to vaccinate their populations as quickly, while many poorer countries are yet to start any immunisations.**



Prime Minister Boris Johnson holds a vial of the Oxford AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine, during a visit to Barnet FC's ground at the Hive, which is being used as a coronavirus vaccination centre, in London (Picture: AP)

Brussels was left fuming after vaccine maker AstraZeneca warned there would be a 60% shortfall of supplies, leaving the bloc around 75 million doses short. **The EU has now rowed back on plans to trigger an article of the Brexit deal which would stop the flow of vaccines through Northern Ireland to the rest of the UK.** However, fury has been spurred by the threat with Northern Ireland's First Minister saying it was an 'absolutely incredible act of hostility towards those of us in Northern Ireland'. Former Northern Ireland secretary Julian Smith has accused Brussels of an 'almost Trumpian act', while Boris Johnson had expressed 'grave concerns' over the move.

Oceanic sharks and rays have declined by over

70%

The number of oceanic sharks and rays worldwide has fallen by 71% since 1970, according to a report by a team of scientists from around the world.

Their study finds that more than three-quarters of these oceanic species are now threatened with extinction



and over the past 50 years fishing pressure has doubled and shark and ray catches have tripled.

Sharks are targeted by small and large fishing operations, for meat and other products, including shark fins.

The team assessed the risk of extinction for all 31 species of ocean shark and rays. **Of the 31 oceanic species, 24 are now threatened with extinction** and three shark species (the oceanic whitetip shark, and the scalloped and great hammerhead sharks) have declined so sharply that they **are now classified as critically endangered**.

Why are sharks and rays being overfished?



Researchers discovered that the risk of extinction to marine species is primarily caused by **overfishing**.

Sharks and rays are especially overfished because they **tend to grow slowly and produce few young**.

They are caught for meat, fins, liver oil, gill plates, and recreation such as fishing and diving.

What impact does this have?

Overfishing of oceanic sharks and rays threatens "the health of entire ocean ecosystems as well as food security for some of the world's poorest countries".

Immediate action is needed to prevent species from becoming extinct. Governments need to introduce fishing limits to help species recover & to protect threatened species by addressing insufficient progress toward global sustainability goals".



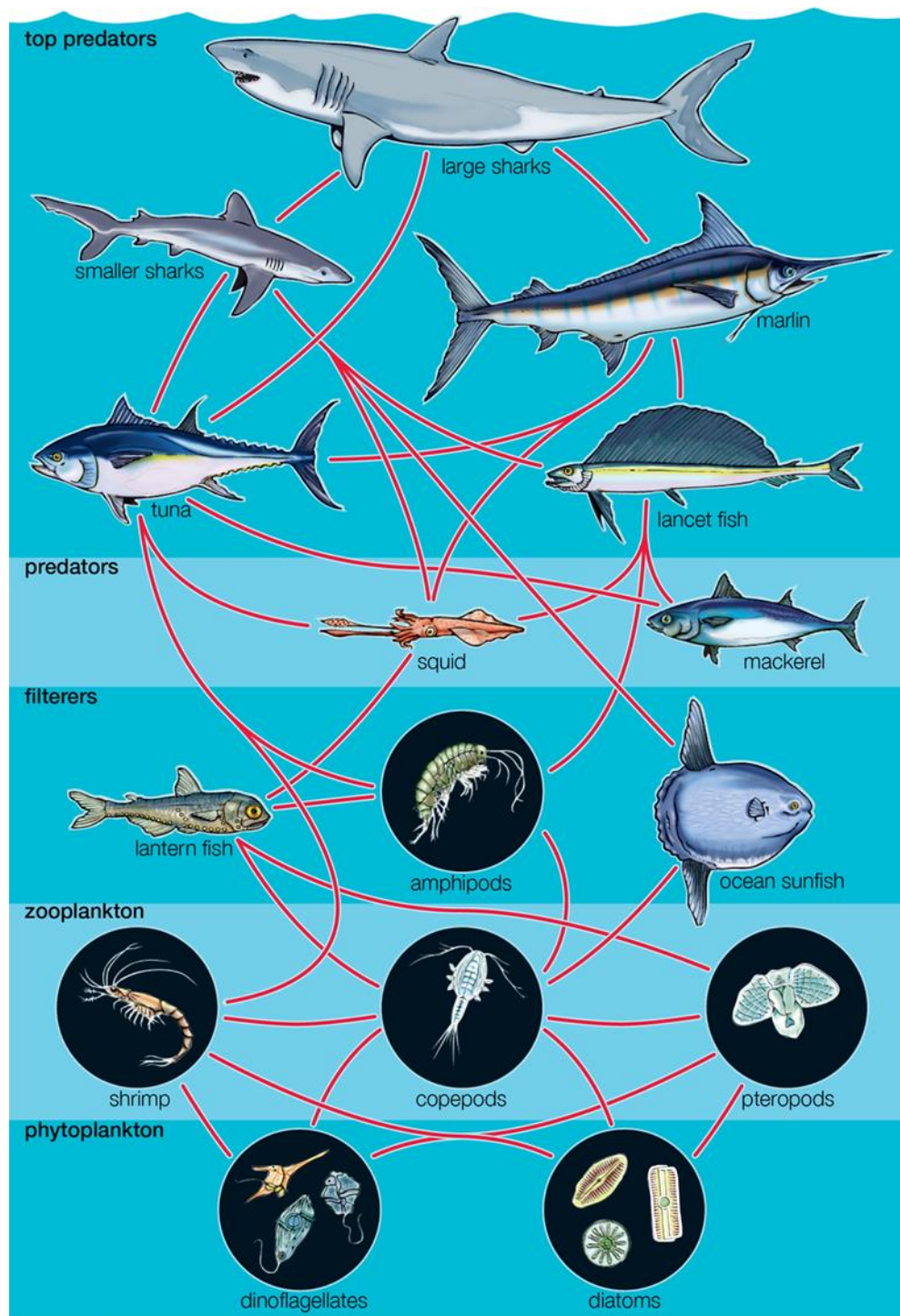
Why are sharks so important? This is a question many people ask.

The importance of sharks and the roles they play in the ocean are often unknown by the general public and therefore attitudes towards sharks and protecting them are quite negative.

- Sharks keep populations balanced

Sharks are what scientists call a 'keystone species'. This basically means that **they are responsible for keeping the intricate ocean ecosystem in balance**. As apex predators sharks keep everything below them in harmony. They do this by keeping the predatory species that they prey on at a healthy but balanced number. This in turn keeps the species below their prey balanced and so on. This balance flows down the food chain even effecting oxygen levels (remember every 2nd breath we take comes from the ocean!).

When you think about it like this it makes you realise how out of balance our marine ecosystem would become by removing sharks.



- Sharks are the doctors of our oceans

As well as keeping the ocean food web in balance, **sharks also play a pivotal role in keeping populations that they prey on genetically healthy** as well as removing disease and sickness from the ocean (**hence the term doctors**).

Sharks keep populations genetically healthy **by removing the weaker individuals**. Therefore any weak/mutated gene will not get passed on. Only the strongest survive!

Sharks remove sickness and disease from being passed on by preying and or scavenging on those sick or already dead individuals. **This is not only efficient for the sharks (as they exert less energy to feed) it also provides an extremely valuable function in keeping the ecosystem healthy.**

Sharks have been on this planet for 450 million years! To put that in to context they pre-date trees and were on this planet 200 million years before the first dinosaurs!! They have survived 5 mass extinctions however are struggling to survive the pressures we are putting on them through overfishing, targeted fishing for their fins and pollution.

Can conservation provide hope?

Sonja Fordham, President of Shark Advocates International, said "there is hope to be found in a few shark conservation success stories."

Sonja and her team have documented "rebuilding for several Northwest Atlantic species, including Great White Sharks and Hammerheads, achieved through science-based fishing limits."

"Relatively simple safeguards can help to save sharks and rays, but time is running out. We urgently need conservation action across the globe to prevent...negative consequences and secure a brighter future for these extraordinary, irreplaceable animals", she added.



Pet dogs 'originated from wolves in ice age Siberia'

Have you ever wondered when dogs and humans first buddied up to live and work together?



Well, scientists tracking the relationship between humans and dogs back through time think **our pets may have originated from wolves in ice age Siberia.**

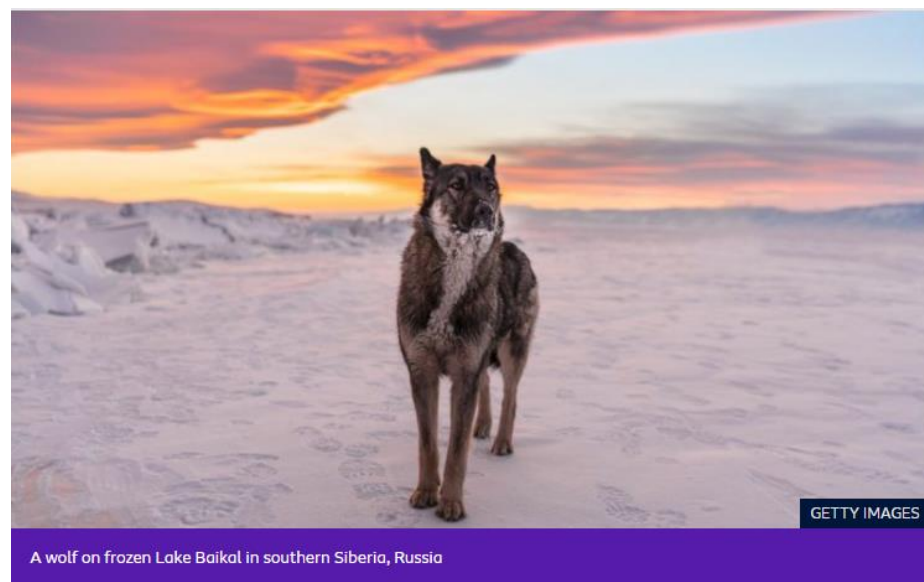
Until now, scientists only knew that dogs had evolved out of a wolf population somewhere in Asia or Europe - but new research has now pinpointed **the specific region where that occurred** and **even the approximate date that the transformation took place.**

A combination of DNA and archaeological evidence has revealed that **every spaniel, Alsatian, sausage dog and Labrador (and every other type of dog in the world!) originated as grey wolves in eastern Siberia** - what's now

Russia - in around 21,000 BC.

And, the authors think that their initial relationships with humans grew entirely due to natural causes.

How climate change played a part



A wolf on frozen Lake Baikal in southern Siberia, Russia

The research - using archaeological DNA studies - has just been published in a special scientific journal called the US Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS).

The new investigation suggests that **the relationship between humans and dogs was at first due to climate change.**

During the last ice age (around 21,000 to 17,000 BC), temperatures dropped so much in Siberia that **the numbers of the wolf's prey (animals like reindeer and bison) dropped dramatically.**

So wolves began to scavenge around human camps - looking for leftover food, and **so the relationship began.**

Once the wolves found this food source they would have instinctively begun keeping other wolves and predators away. As the process continued the wolves gradually lost their hunting skills and became increasingly dependent on humans for their food.

DNA changes

The report claims that after many generations, their DNA begins to show a difference to other groups of wolves with other different skills - as **these Siberian grey wolves descendants gradually evolved into the first dogs.**

"Dog domestication, occurring in Siberia, answers many of the questions we've always had about the origins of the human-dog relationship," said Durham University archaeologist Dr Angela Perri.

Team work



When humans and dogs worked together they could cover large distances

By 13,000 BC dogs were going with humans wherever they migrated - archaeologists have found that **the first people to come to the Americas, more than 15,000 years ago** from north-east Asia, **were accompanied by their dogs** to help them explore the new land around them.

In fact it's possible that first relationship with dogs allowed humans to train them to pull sleds, which may have allowed humanity's fast expansion in North America at around that time.



The dogs that accompanied them as they entered this completely new world may have been as much a part of their cultural repertoire as the stone tools they carried

David Meltzer, Southern Methodist University in Dallas