



THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

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I love English. It's a rich, poetic language, it lets you connect with people from all over the world, and let's face it, swearing in English just feels much more satisfying.

However, there's one thing that bothers me and it's that the English language is quite hostile towards our animal friends. I'm talking specifically about animal imagery in *idioms*, that word we've all learned in English class and that I've always associated with the word *idiot*. Take the expression *to eat a frog*. It means that you identify one challenging task (the frog) and complete it first thing in the morning (that's the 'eating' part) so you don't lose your productivity over it. Isn't that disturbing though, linking something motivational to a gruesome image of animal consumption? Or consider an even more violent one: *to kill two birds with one stone*, meaning to solve two tasks at the same time or in a single action. It's used in a positive context because who doesn't love being efficient? So why associate that great feeling of satisfaction with a violent image basically promoting animal cruelty?

I could go on and on: *going on a wild goose chase*, *having bigger fish to fry* or *letting the cat out of the bag*: why would you put a cat in a bag in the first place? Another one that the English love using because complaining about the weather is literally in their DNA: *it's raining cats and dogs*. Innocent enough you think, but let's sit with that image for a bit. Imagine cute little cats and dogs falling like fluffy raindrops from the sky... and literally dropping dead on the ground! Or even worse, when talking about how competitive an environment can be: *it's a dog-eat-dog kind of place*. I don't know about you, but I feel very upset about my sweet little pet being framed as a potential cannibal. Fish don't escape judgement either. When something suspicious is going on, it suddenly smells *fishy*. But it's not the fault of fish that they smell absolutely horrible when killed.





Now I know people will say: what's the harm? They'll argue that people have used these expressions for ages without taking offense and, most obviously, that idioms are not meant to be taken literally. But still. These days we spend so much time thinking about how we can make our language more inclusive and less offensive, from using more gender-neutral phrases to banning terms that are considered insensitive. Let's also include those without a voice in the conversation, those who can only bark in disapproval. Animal cruelty has no place in today's world and we can perfectly do without these expressions. So let's grab the bull by the horns and ban those idioms from our beloved language immediately. Oh wait...

