

What Is Climate Change?

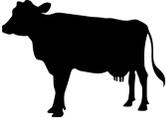


Climate change (or global warming), is the **process of our planet heating up**. The Earth has warmed by an average of 1°C in the last century, and although that might not sound like much, it means big things for people and wildlife around the globe.

However, rising temperatures don't mean that we'll get nicer weather. The warming climate will instead make our weather more extreme and hard to predict.

As temperatures rise, some areas will get wetter and lots of animals (and humans!) will find it hard to adapt to the quickly changing world..

What are the causes of climate change?

Burning fossil fuels	Farming	Deforestation
<p>Over the past 150 years, many countries have been burning large amounts of fossil fuels such as oil and gas. The gases released into the atmosphere during this process act like an invisible 'blanket', trapping heat from the sun and warming the Earth. This is known as the "Greenhouse Effect".</p> 	<p>Humans eat a lot of meat - including beef, meaning a lot of cows are farmed. When cows eat, methane gas builds up in their digestive system and is released in the form of... a fart! When you imagine that there are almost 1.5 billion cows releasing all that gas into the atmosphere, it makes a lot of gas...</p> 	<p>Forests absorb huge amounts of carbon dioxide from the air, and release oxygen back into it. The Amazon rainforest is so large and efficient at doing this that it is often called 'the lungs of the Earth'. Sadly, many rainforests are being cut down to make wood, palm oil and to clear the way for farmland, roads, oil mines, and dams.</p> 

How will climate change affect the planet?

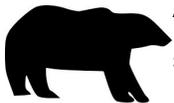


The Earth has had many tropical climates and ice ages over the billions of years that it's been in existence, so why is now so different? Well, this is because for the last 150 years human activity has meant we're releasing a huge amount of harmful gases into the Earth's atmosphere, and records show that the global temperatures are rising more rapidly since this time.

A warmer climate could affect our planet in a number of ways: **more rainfall, changing seasons, shrinking sea ice, and rising sea levels.**

How will climate change affect wildlife?

Climate change is already affecting wildlife all over the world, but certain species are suffering more than others. Polar animals – whose icy natural habitat is melting in the warmer temperatures – are particularly at risk. In fact, experts believe that the



Arctic sea ice is melting at a shocking rate – 9% every 10 years!

Polar bears need sea ice to be able to hunt, raise their young and as places to rest after long periods of swimming. Certain seal species, like ringed seals make caves in the snow and ice to raise their pups, feed and mate.

It's not just polar animals who are in trouble. Apes like orangutans, which live in the rainforests of Indonesia, are under threat as their habitat is cut down, and more droughts cause more bushfires.

How will climate change affect humans?

Climate change won't just affect animals, it's already having an impact on people, too. Most affected are some of the people who grow the food we eat every day. Farming communities, especially in developing countries, are facing higher temperatures, increased rain, floods and droughts.

We probably take for granted just how much work goes into growing our food. Climate change means often there will be droughts followed by huge amounts of rain, which makes it very difficult to grow food.



Farmers might then resort to using cheap chemicals to improve their crop to earn more money, even when long-term use of these chemicals can destroy their soil.

Information adapted from sources including National Geographic Kids,