

# Circles of Life and Death on a Homestead: Caring for Pigs in Wartime Ukraine

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**Abstract:** Russia's war against Ukraine has affected human but also more-than-human relations far beyond the frontlines. Developing around the ethnographic portrait of a homestead, this talk explores the war-time dynamics of multispecies care among small-scale pig farmers in Transcarpathia, Ukraine's westernmost region. Taking the example of the backyard-farmed pig, it illustrates how food, feeding and eating are vital modes of relating in times of crisis. As multispecies work, resources and rhythms constitute the homestead as a place of orchestrated metabolic entanglement, pigs take on the role of central eaters to be eaten, as care-receivers who, by becoming food, can convey care beyond the farm. Unlike harder-to-care-for cows, pigs have proven flexible and adaptable partners in Transcarpathian smallholder husbandry. Inviting a multiplicity of porcine bodies, socialities, and tastes that enables a multiplicity of smallholder existences and vice versa, small-scale pig rearing reflects but also responds to war-induced changes as much as to the dynamics of depopulation, migration and environmental change. Considering that coping with war and conflict always has a more-than-human side, this talk invites a discussion on how caring for animals-as-food not only poses burdens of care but can also provide opportunities and scope for action beyond achieving food security. Consequently, the talk contributes to debates on how animal metabolic, affective and social work is mobilized in times of war and crisis.

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