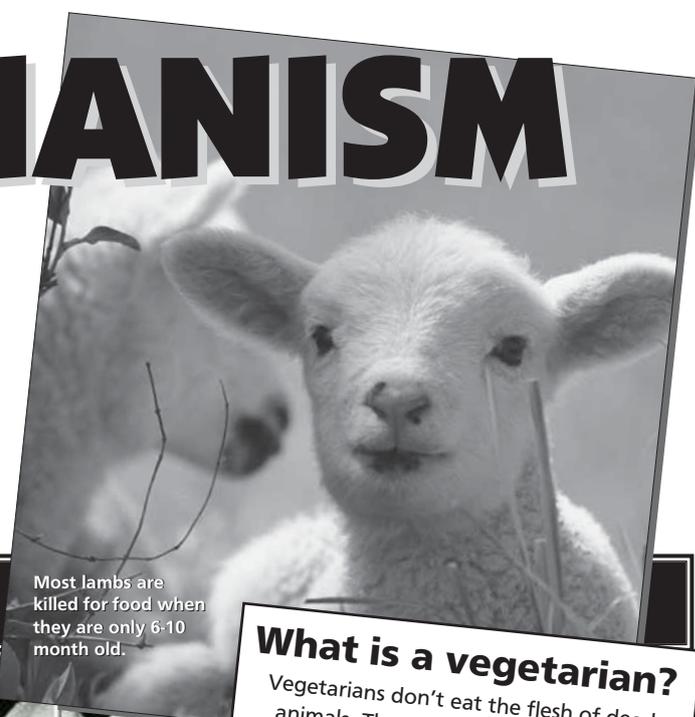


VEGETARIANISM

Vegetarianism is one of the fastest growing movements in Britain, with more and more people, especially teenagers, giving up meat. There are roughly 3 million vegetarians in this country and the number is increasing all the time. So why are so many people choosing to go veggie?



Most lambs are killed for food when they are only 6-10 month old.

Is eating meat cruel? . . .

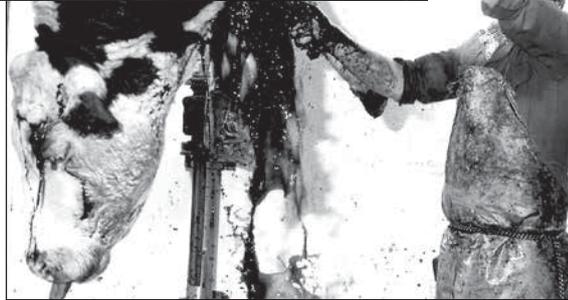
Most people give up eating meat because they are concerned about the suffering of animals.

In the UK, around 2.7 million cattle, chickens, turkeys, sheep and pigs are slaughtered every day to satisfy the demand for meat. Most of these animals spend their desperately short lives enclosed in dirty, crowded factory farms, where they are denied fresh air and proper exercise. Many die from diseases caused by the over-crowded, unhealthy conditions.

Most of these animals suffer more pain and distress when they are transported to and from the livestock market or slaughterhouse. Crammed into lorries so tightly that they can't turn around and transported for hundreds of miles without food or water, many animals do not survive the journey.



Left: Factory-farmed piglets
Below: A cow's life ends in a slaughterhouse



What is a vegetarian?

Vegetarians don't eat the flesh of dead animals. They avoid all forms of meat including poultry, fish and slaughter-house products like animal fats and gelatine, although they do eat eggs and dairy products such as milk, cheese and yogurt. People who also avoid eating eggs and dairy products are called vegans.

It is often claimed that food animals are killed humanely. But in reality there is no such thing as 'humane slaughter'.

According to the law, animals must be stunned so that they are unconscious when their throats are cut. In practice, however, stunning methods don't always work, and many animals are still conscious and feel pain when they are killed.

. . . necessary? . . .

Meat is not needed for a healthy balanced diet. All the things you need - proteins, carbohydrates, fats, minerals, vitamins and fibre - are easily provided by a balanced vegetarian diet. For example, there is more than enough protein in foods like pulses, nuts, and wholegrains, and vegetarians obtain minerals such as calcium and iron from leafy green vegetables, pulses and nuts. Many athletes choose to eat a vegetarian diet because it provides them with the energy they need. Many people who eat a lot of meat don't, in fact, eat a very healthy diet, because they eat insufficient vegetarian food such as fresh fruit and vegetables. Nutritionists are always advising people that for good health they should cut down on animal products and fats, and eat more fruit and vegetables.

Did you know?

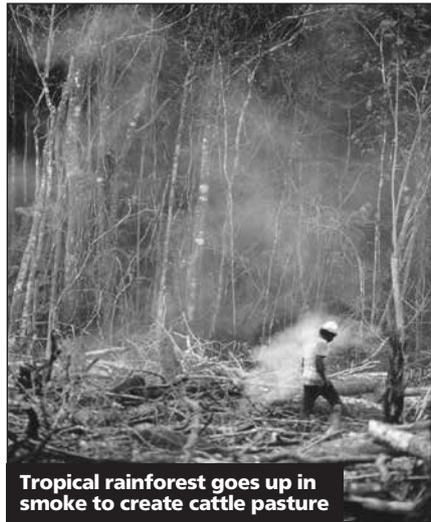
In their lifetime, the average British meat eater will eat 18 pigs, 23 sheep, 4 cattle, 1,000 chickens, 39 turkeys, 28 ducks and more than 6,000 fish!

. . . healthy? . . .

Far from being essential for a healthy diet, it has been shown that eating a lot of meat is bad for you because it contains a great deal of saturated fat (which is harmful) and no fibre (which your body needs). Many people have become vegetarian for health reasons. A good vegetarian diet is naturally low in fat, and high in vitamins and fibre. Saturated animal fat found in meat and dairy products not only makes you fat, but increases your risk of heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes and other health problems. Studies show that vegetarians have lower rates of obesity and heart disease, and have a longer life expectancy than meat-eaters. Many people also go vegetarian because of concerns about diseases like Mad Cow Disease and Foot and Mouth Disease.

Is eating meat damaging the environment? . . .

Animal farming is a major source of pollution and environmental destruction. Animal farming is responsible for 14.5% of all greenhouse gas emissions - that's more than the entire transport sector. In this country, intensive factory farming is one of the main causes of water pollution. Globally, farm animals reared to satisfy people's appetite for meat consume increasing quantities of water, land and food. Cattle ranching is also one of the main causes of tropical rainforest destruction. Fast-shrinking rainforests are often cut down for cattle pasture or to grow crops for animal feed.



Tropical rainforest goes up in smoke to create cattle pasture



Rearing animals in order to eat them is a very wasteful way of producing food for people. Animals use most of the value of the crops that they are fed in the day-to-day workings of their bodies. In fact, we can feed between four and ten times as many people on a vegetarian diet by growing crops directly for human consumption. Almost half the world's grain harvest is fed to farmed animals. In some countries of the world, crops are exported to feed cattle in rich countries for meat, while people in the exporting country starve!

Albatross caught on fishing line



Many of the world's fish species have been decimated because of over-fishing, and a lot of sea bird populations are now threatened because there are not enough fish for them to survive. Dolphins, whales, turtles and other sea birds are killed when they get caught up in discarded fishing tackle and drift nets.

© Graham Robertson/Australian Antarctic Division

Going veggie - the first steps

- Find out more! See the **Go Veggie** section of our website www.animalaid.org.uk/youth for more info. Phone or email us at Animal Aid if you have any queries or need advice.
- You don't have to go veggie overnight. You can do it gradually. Try cutting down on the amount of meat you eat over several weeks or months, or try going veggie one day a week. You could try doing a sponsored veggie week (you can download the sponsor form from our website, contact us for a copy).
- If the rest of your family eats meat, and you're not a great cook, don't worry. There's a fantastic range of prepared convenience veggie foods in the supermarkets these days - veggie burgers, sausages, pizzas, lasagna and pies, which you can heat up and have instead of the meat.
- If you feel like cooking, try adapting your favourite meals into veggie versions. Pasta, curry, shepherd's pie, chilli, Chinese stir-fry, hot dogs, pasties and burgers can all be done as veggie meals.
- Look on the Animal Aid website or contact us for some simple recipes. Try experimenting with different foods and recipes to see what you like.
- Once you start cooking and adapting your own veggie meals, you'll realise there's a whole new exciting world of food out there just waiting to be discovered.

Silly things people say . . .

Here are a few hints to help you deal with some of the daft things people often say to vegetarians.

Some silly things friends might say . . .

It's perfectly natural for humans to eat meat.

Answer: *There's nothing natural about the way meat is produced. Besides humans are omnivores, not carnivores, so we can choose whether or not to eat flesh (and cause animals to be killed for our plate).*

Won't you get bored just eating veggie food?

Answer: *There's a whole world of vegetarian food: Chinese stir-fry, Indian and Thai curry, Mexican chilli, Italian pasta and pizza, as well as loads of veggie burgers and sausages. It's meat that is dead boring!*

Some silly things parents might say . . .

But you need to eat meat to stay fit and healthy.

Answer: *By being vegetarian I won't lack anything. In fact by eating a balanced vegetarian diet I will be healthier.*

I don't have time to cook two separate meals. Besides, I don't know what to cook.

Answer: *You don't have to cook two separate meals. I can have the same vegetables but with veggie burgers, sausages, pies, pasties or pizzas. It isn't hard to make two versions of the same meal, especially if I help.*