

Guide to Getting Active for Animals



Would you like to get more active on an individual level, to become a local contact for Animal Aid, or start a local group?

Our nationwide network of local groups and contacts plays a vital role in showcasing our campaigns to members of the public across the country. The aim of this guide is to give you some ideas for how you can get involved on a local level, whether by yourself or with others. By the end of it, we hope you will be inspired and raring to get active! Campaigning can be as easy as writing to your local newspaper's letters page, or as elaborate as organising a cruelty-free fayre. We appreciate that people have to meet the demands of working and family life, so it's completely up to you how much time you choose to set aside.

As a local contact, you will receive regular updates on our campaigns as well as new

reports and resources that we produce. We'll let you know when we are co-ordinating days or weeks of action and other fun initiatives, such as our Great Vegan Challenge, in the hope you'll be able to support them. To show our appreciation for the hard work and commitment that our local contacts put in, we offer a 15 per cent discount on all Animal Aid merchandise.

Here are some ideas to get you started.....

Individual Campaigning

Outreach

1. Write letters to editors

A letter in a local paper can get the cruelty-free message to tens of thousands of people at once. The best time to submit one is in response to something that has just appeared in the paper. If the article appears to support something cruel, write in speaking up for the animals involved. If the article is positive, express gratitude or encouragement. You can

also write to publicise a specific occasion or event, such as Horse Racing Awareness Week or Great Vegan Challenge.

Start it with Dear Sir, Madam or Letters Editor. Be rational, concise and polite. Ranting won't get you anywhere! You don't have to include lots of facts and figures – a simple argument or even an emotional response is just as valid. Keep your letter to a maximum of 200 words so it stands less chance of being edited. Making one strong point is better than trying to get lots in. Give the Animal Aid website so that people can ask us for more information.

Details of where to send your letter will be listed in the paper concerned. Address it to the Letters Editor, marked 'for publication'. You need to supply your name and address, but you can ask for your details not to be published. Papers want to print responses while the topic is newsworthy. For daily papers, you really need to email your letter before mid-afternoon on the day that the feature to which you are responding was printed.

Newspapers receive lots of letters each day, and can't print them all. If yours isn't selected for publication, keep trying, and try different papers, too.

2. Distribute leaflets

Leaflets are simple but effective. They can be given out in your local town centre or

dropped through letterboxes. Local shops, vets, libraries and veggie cafés may also be willing to have some on display.

3. Put info on notice boards

Pin up some leaflets or a small poster on communal notice-boards, such as can be found at work, school, college, university, the local community centre, church hall, youth club or library, health food shop and supermarket.

4. Set up a library display

Pick a topic and use leaflets, posters, and photographs to make an eye-catching display. You'll often find display boards in your local library, hospital, university, college or civic building. Aim to get people's attention with colourful graphics, large photos and easy to read information. If possible, leave a pile of leaflets out as well. If the display is for a specific period or event – e.g. Veggie Month or the Grand National – book a slot in advance. Be sensitive with regards to images (graphic photos of animal cruelty may not be permitted).

Fundraising

1. Get sponsored

Being sponsored for something that requires time, effort, bravery or 'sacrifice' is a popular and proven way of raising money. There are the usual activities such as an impressive walk, run, cycle ride, swim or dance-a-thon,



and more adventurous activities, such as a skydive or climbing a mountain. You can also raise money by stopping smoking, doing a fast, cutting off your hair or growing a beard. In fact, there are countless ways, so get creative!

2. Organise a benefit night in a local veggie restaurant

If there is a veggie café or restaurant in your local area, ask them if they would host a benefit night. They could provide a set menu and allow customers to purchase tickets in advance, with a donation being made to Animal Aid. A raffle with nice prizes such as gift tokens, dairy-free chocolates*, vegan wine*, etc, helps to raise extra money. Work with the venue to publicise the event to existing customers and in the local media.

*If the evening is benefitting Animal Aid, we may be able to provide a raffle prize and promote it to our supporters.



3. Host a benefit dinner at home

If you've got skills in the vegan cookery department, a dinner party is a great way to show people how delicious meat-free eating can be, and it can be used as an opportunity to raise money for Animal Aid at the same time. Plan a menu – it could be themed, such as Mexican or Thai, or tied in with an occasion such as Valentine's Day or Halloween; invite friends over and explain you are collecting donations on behalf of Animal Aid. On the night, set the scene with decorations and music to create a fun ambience.

Starting a Local Group

There may already be an active grassroots group close to you, but if there isn't, we can support you in starting one. It really is the best way of promoting animal rights in your area. Here's how to go about it:

1. Find like-minded people:

- Ask us to contact Animal Aid supporters who live in your area letting them know your plans and encouraging people to join you.
- Write to your local newspaper telling readers about your plans for a group and what you will be campaigning on.
- Put up posters in your local library, community centre, health food shop, vet, university etc letting people know that you are interested in setting up a local group. Include a name and contact number.

2. Once you've received some interest, organise a first meeting:

- Find a suitable venue. It is a good idea for a first meeting to be held in a public place. New people are often happier to go to meetings on neutral ground such as a local hall, community centre or pub. Find out if there is a TV & DVD player you can use, or if you can bring them in.
- Order campaign resources, such as leaflets, guidebooks, recipe books and DVDs ready to share with people who come along.
- Decide on a definite start time and limit the first meeting to two hours to discuss which campaigns you'd like to support or start.
- Use the first meeting to get to know each other. Find out what skills, resources and contacts your group has e.g. letter-writing ability, time available to do stalls, and access to a photocopier, car, etc.
- Don't insist that those attending the meeting must be vegan, vegetarian or even vivisection abolitionists. Be inclusive – the animals need as many people as possible on their side and we all have to start somewhere. Attending a meeting is a first step into the animal rights movement for most people so it is vital that they are made to feel welcome.

3. Moving ahead

- Agree a regular date and time for subsequent meetings.
- Delegate responsibilities such as updating social media, being the media contact, storing stall supplies (leaflets, table, etc).
- Set up a Facebook page, Twitter account and, if someone in your group knows how, a website. Make sure you keep them regularly updated as you don't want the group to look defunct or inactive when people find it online.
- Start an email list so you can contact your group members.
- You might want to have a mobile number that can be used as a media contact and given to other members.
- Do make everyone in the group feel valued, no matter how little time they are able to contribute, and remember that a positive attitude goes a long way towards encouraging and inspiring others. If you are 'group leader', don't be afraid to ask for support from us, should you feel you need it. When it comes to challenging traditions, the establishment, and what most people regard as 'normal', it can take time before you see any results. The important thing to remember is that every action, no matter how small, plays its part in the ultimate goal of a cruelty-free future.

Screenings and Speakers

In order to keep people motivated and interested, and, of course, to attract new members, organise screenings and speakers from national animal organisations, local animal-friendly businesses and sanctuaries. A lot of great animal rights/pro-vegan documentaries have been made in recent years, including: *Blackfish*, *Forks Over Knives*, *Vegucated*, *Cowspiracy*, *The Ghosts In Our Machine* and *Maximum Tolerated Dose*.

Peaceable Kingdom, although a little older, is a lovely film, and of course there is *Earthlings*, although this is very difficult for many people to watch due to the harrowing footage it contains. Animal Aid also has short DVDs on vivisection and other topics.

Street Stalls

Stalls do not have to be confined to the streets – you just need to pick somewhere with a lot of passers-by, and preferably, some shelter. Approach the organisers of local events to see if they will allow you to set up a stall.

Pedestrianised streets are a good location as you are less likely to cause an obstruction. Standing outside businesses that are closed (e.g. banks on Saturday afternoons) is a good way of avoiding complaints.

If the stall is on private property, such as a shopping centre, you will need to contact the manager for permission. Generally speaking, no permission is needed to set up an information stall on a public highway, as long as you do not obstruct the flow of people and traffic, or collect money. To avoid being asked to pack up or move on, you can check with the Licensing or Environmental Health department at your local council.



What you'll need:

- a pasting table or similar
- a table-cloth or banner to cover the table and hide boxes underneath
- lots of leaflets (secured by rubber bands so that they don't fly away)
- email sign-up sheets on clipboards, with pens attached by string
- posters
- friendly, confident and enthusiastic people to staff the stall (it's not easy, or particularly fun, doing a stall on your own: apart from being a bit lonely, it makes things tricky if you want to buy a drink or go to the toilet).

Talking to the Public

Nothing beats talking to the public on a one-to-one basis in terms of getting a message across and promoting kindness to animals. Don't assume that all people are inherently cruel or uncaring. Most of the time, they just don't realise what is going on, or they have been brought up to believe things are normal, acceptable and even necessary. You might be the very first person to present the other side of the argument. The key is to be passionate but polite and approachable rather than argumentative.

If you are asked a question and are not sure of the answer, say so! You are entitled to be opposed to the use and abuse of animals on entirely ethical grounds without having the detailed knowledge of, for example, a scientist, jockey or farmer.

From time to time you may come across people who are deliberately awkward or confrontational. Disengage from the conversation as quickly as you can; there's no point in arguing and it will take up time that you could dedicate to speaking to someone who is genuinely interested.

Local Campaigning

You might live somewhere where there is a greyhound track, a racecourse, a restaurant that sells foie gras or a university that does animal experiments. Focusing attention on a local establishment is a good way

to get local media coverage for the issue concerned. Also, crucially, it gives residents an opportunity to withdraw financial support from something cruel, which can sway businesses into changing their practices.

If you do start a local campaign, please keep us informed. We like to feature local group activities in our magazine, *Outrage*, so let us know dates for our diary and send us photographs and reports of what your group has been doing.

Local Media

Local newspaper and radio coverage will prove invaluable for getting the animal rights message across to your community. The aim is to develop a two-way relationship, whereby you get publicity and they get interesting articles, photographs and interviews. Often, you will find journalists who are sympathetic to the cause, so develop a working relationship by giving them ideas for stories and notifying them of upcoming events and photo opportunities.

Try to avoid getting on the wrong side of the media, even though some of what they print and broadcast might disappoint you. Falling out with journalists will do nothing to help animals.

We can provide you with a comprehensive list of your local media contacts. We can also offer advice on writing press releases and conducting TV and radio interviews.



Speaking / Writing as an Animal Aid Representative

As an Animal Aid local media contact, we welcome your representation but we must stress the importance of being tactful, non-inflammatory and non-accusatory. There is also no need to exaggerate, speculate or embellish - the facts alone are compelling and upsetting enough. Extreme caution must be exercised when it comes to naming specific individuals or companies. In fact, we would advise you not to do it.

If you are signing a letter or sending out a press release referring to yourself as an Animal Aid contact, we would ask that we see it ahead of circulation. If you can email it to the office, you will get a rapid response.

Libel and Slander

In recent years – undoubtedly due to the impact it was having - the animal rights movement has found itself under threat of different types of legal proceedings.

If an individual or company considers that they have been defamed by an Animal Aid contact then it is both that contact and Animal Aid (if the plaintiff can successfully argue that the contact was speaking in an official Animal Aid capacity) who will have to defend the suit, and face possible damages and costs. For all our sakes, we must be careful. Animal Aid doesn't want to hand over its – or for you to have to hand over your – assets to an animal abuser.

In simple terms, a libel is a 'published' statement that a court rules is damaging to the reputation and/or business of another. A slander is a damaging statement that is spoken in the hearing of others rather than being published. Campaign leaflets, magazines and letters to editors count as publishing, as do statements made on television, radio and in newspapers.

Personal attacks should always be avoided. Although we might be convinced a vivisector has no compassion, and is interested only in money and career advancement, it would be impossible to demonstrate clearly before a jury that those statements were true and fair. You can state a hundred provable facts with strong supporting comments but you

only have to get one fact wrong and it is that error that will get you into trouble. A statement such as 'Mr X clearly has a poor record of animal husbandry and should not be permitted any contact with animals' is acceptable if there are documented facts to support it whereas 'Mr X is cruel and heartless and responsible for causing extreme suffering' is not. Criticising industries and practices in general, such as animal experiments and the dairy industry, is the safest option.

Vegan Outreach

Each year in the UK alone, around 1000 million animals are killed for food. Encouraging people to go vegan is the simplest way to save the most animals' lives. People who have realised it's not ethical to eat animals often open their hearts and minds to other issues and go on to live a more compassionate lifestyle in general.

Thanks to the vast array of animal-free products now available in supermarkets, health food shops and online – and with the range growing all the time – there's lots to feel excited about!

1. Veggie/vegan meet-ups

'Meet-up' groups have boomed in popularity in recent years so if there isn't a local veggie/vegan group in your town or city, why not start one? Monthly get-togethers in a local pub, café or restaurant are a fun, laid-back way to welcome 'newbie' veggies and vegans, and they provide a sense of community for anyone who feels like they're the odd one out amongst friends and family. They also encourage local businesses to pay attention to the rise of veganism – if nothing suitable is on the menu already, eateries can often be persuaded to prepare special dishes or menus if a group with special requirements wants to make a booking. When talking to managers or chefs, it's good to remind them that more and more people are cutting out meat and dairy for health as well as ethical reasons, and it's no longer a niche market. Furthermore, anyone – carnivores and herbivores alike - can eat delicious vegan food, so they've got nothing to lose by adding vegan options to the menu.

It's easy to start a group, all you need to do is:

Set up a Facebook page and/or a group on meetup.com

- Put up posters in health food shops, supermarkets, vet surgeries, colleges, etc, advertising the group and the first get-together.
- Give us the info (where, when and how often you'll meet) so we can tell Animal Aid supporters in your area.
- Contact your local newspaper, radio station and online forum.

2. Vegan food street stalls

Street stalls offer a great opportunity to reach consumers while they are out shopping. Make your stall eye-catching with vibrant, colourful posters showing delicious vegan food. Display some empty vegan food and drink packets so people know what to look out for in the supermarket.

We can send you posters as well as leaflets and booklets to hand out containing recipes, shopping tips and nutritional info.

If there is somewhere you can cook or prepare some samples and keep them hot or cold as needs be, offering tasters of veggie sausages, pizza bites or dairy-free cheese and crackers is a good way to attract people over. Vegan food manufacturers may donate these. If you can't guarantee keeping things hot or cold enough to be appetising, dairy-free chocolate always goes down well.

3. Cruelty-free fayres

Cruelty-free/vegan food fayres are a great way to introduce veganism to your community. The aim is to hold a fun, upbeat event that focuses on the positive things people CAN do and eat, instead of cruelty and suffering. You'll want to showcase animal-free products, local eateries that offer vegan options, and any vegan caterers or cake-makers who live locally. You could also invite local campaign groups, animal sanctuaries and rescues to have a stall, as well as national organisations. The best way to attract the most people is to keep your event free to enter. A cake sale is a good way to raise money to cover costs, as are raffles and tombolas. These events are very



rewarding and productive but they do entail a lot of planning and preparation.

What do I need to do?

In advance

- Invite groups, businesses, sanctuaries and organisations to participate.
- Book a room, preferably with a kitchen and tables and chairs you can use. The location is vital – if it's out of town or hard to find, people won't come. Make it convenient for people to get there.
- Produce an eye-catching, brightly-coloured upbeat poster and leaflet.
- A couple of weeks before the event, put up posters in libraries, sports centres, community centres, local retailers, health food shops, colleges and universities.
- Door-drop the leaflet in neighbourhoods in the location of the event.
- Ask national organisations if they will send news of the event to their supporters.
- Write a press release and about two weeks beforehand, send it to local radio stations and newspapers. Send it out again a few days before the event and follow up with a phone call the day before.
- Write a letter advertising the fayre to your local newspapers' letters pages.
- If you are offering hot food, the cooking logistics will need to be carefully worked out. It is a good idea to have some home-made items as well as shop-bought. Vegan food



and drinks companies as well as local health food shops may donate but do contact them at least a few weeks in advance to ask.

- If you are going to do a screening, find out whether the venue has a TV and DVD player, and if not, source ones that you can use for the day.
- Order a copy of the DVD to show and extra copies to sell.
- Ensure that your caterers and stall-holders have given you a full list of what they need and that the venue can satisfy their requirements.
- Find out if the venue has cutlery and plates that you can use. If not, and if you are going to be organising more fayres, consider buying some cheap cutlery and plates, which is more environmentally-friendly than using disposable ones each time.
- Produce an evaluation form that you can hand to people as they enter the event. This way you will be able to see how successful it was and incorporate feedback into your next one. Ask questions such as what is their current diet, will they change their diet after the event, etc.

- Ask campaign groups, local businesses, health food shops and veggie cafés and restaurants for raffle/tombola prizes.

On the day

- Put up advertising boards outside the room and nearby.
- Put up arrows showing the way to the fayre.
- Have people outside leafleting.
- Put up posters (not gory ones as the fayre should be a positive event).
- Set up a welcome table at the entrance and have someone handing out and collecting back evaluation forms.
- Have a donation tin on the table, and on food stalls if you are giving away free food.
- List ingredients of food on sale so that people know what they're eating.
- Have hot and cold drinks available.
- Make sure volunteers know what their specific roles are (e.g. on the door, in the kitchen, etc.) and have them wear a t-shirt, label or sash so that members of the public know who to talk to.
- Take your own photos to send to national organisations (and the local media in the event they are unable to send a reporter and photographer).

