



Vegan FAQ

*Demystifying Veganism
With 20 Simple Questions*



Gentle World

Vegan FAQ:
Demystifying Veganism with 20 Simple Questions
by Gentle World

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Welcome

*Making the vegan transition has never been easier than it is today.
Nevertheless, there's still a lot of confusion around what that means.*

Let's clear the air.

Introduction

Now that the year 2020 has come and gone, vegan is finally becoming a household word. The stigma against it continues to loosen its grip, as plant-based alternatives become increasingly available and enjoyable, and more medical professionals join their many colleagues in confirming that our bodies don't require animal foods.

Plant-food diets are gaining in popularity as athletes, celebrities, nutritionists, doctors, and patients are hopping on the 'vegan diet bandwagon' to lose weight, gain energy and clarity, improve athletic performance, and even to treat and prevent conditions such as heart disease and diabetes.

The past few years have also seen concern growing about the devastating impact of animal agriculture on the planet, resulting in a movement to reduce dependence on animal products to curb climate change and environmental degradation. And of course, in response to growing awareness about the facts of animal farming, many people are adopting vegan lifestyles out of concern for those who suffer in feedlots and on farms.

Veganism still means different things to different people, but we hope to revive its central message of nonviolence, personal responsibility, and justice for the other animals with whom we share our existence.

It was over 50 years ago that Gentle World's founders began to share with others what they had been discovering about veganism. Since then, the family of friends that started out in 1970 as an intentional community has evolved into a nonprofit educational organization with a 40-year history of public service.

Our all-volunteer team has shared countless hours of vegan education, as well as publishing hundreds of enticing vegan recipes, and establishing educational centers in both Hawaii and New Zealand.

We're grateful to have the chance to share with readers of this book our responses to some of the questions we hear most frequently, and we hope you'll be as pleased as we are that this book has made its way into your life.



1

What does ‘vegan’ really mean?

With the word and the concept becoming much more widely known, common usage of the word ‘vegan’ has gone through a number of shifts in the last couple of decades.

Contrary to popular belief, vegans do not only subscribe to a plant-based diet. Nor do we abstain from using animal products solely as a reaction to large-scale, industrialized animal farming. Vegans object to [the use of our fellow animals as resources](#), whether the individuals in question are in intensive confinement, or in small, backyard, family-farm situations.

This includes the use of other animals for clothing, for cosmetics, for research, and for entertainment, as well as for food.

It also extends to any situation where other animals are used for labor, such as horses drawing carriages, and all cases where our fellow animals are regarded as commodities, such as in the pet industry, where sentient beings become living inventory to be bought and sold as "companion animals."

* Although many vegans encourage adoption and rescue of animals previously used as pets, we do not support the pet trade by purchasing the individuals it sells.

Vegans don't use or wear animal skin in the form of [leather](#) or suede, body hair sold as [wool](#) or fur, feathers marketed as [down](#), or any other fabric that comes from animals, including the raw material of cocoons that is boiled out of living insects to become [silk](#).

Nor do we eat as food any ingredients that come from other animals' bodies, such as [milk](#), [honey](#), [eggs](#), [flesh](#), or anything else of animal origin, including "by-products," such as [gelatin](#) and [casein](#).

We abstain from using cosmetics and personal care products that are made using animal ingredients or animal testing, and we don't support or condone any form of "entertainment" or so-called "sport" that involves the use of living individuals, including circuses, rodeos, aquariums, racing, hunting, safaris and zoos.

As far as is reasonably possible, we seek alternatives to pharmaceutical products made using animal ingredients or testing.

Further Reading:

[Veganism Defined](#)

[The Importance of Being Vegan](#)



2

I love animals, and wouldn't ever want to hurt them. But why does that mean I should become vegan?

Much like the cats, dogs, rabbits, horses, birds, and other animals that many of us consider to be our friends or family members, each nonhuman being who is made to suffer and die for our pleasures is an individual with his or her own personality, purpose and emotional life.

All of the uses we have derived for our fellow animals are unnecessary, and they all involve at least some harm or suffering (much of it severe and lasting) whether that be physical, emotional, psychological, or (in most cases) all three.

With this one simple decision (to eliminate your support for anything that perpetuates exploitation of any sentient being) you will be acknowledging not only your concern for other species, but the obligation we all have to not cause them unnecessary harm, whether directly or indirectly.

From [BeFairBeVegan](#):



When we begin to see both the extent of our tyranny over other animals, and their suffering at our hands, the only rational response is to withdraw our support, as far as is practicable, from every aspect of animal use and — by embracing a vegan philosophy — to commit to the practice of respect for the rights and interests of all, regardless of species.

Further Reading:

[Animal Cruelty: Who is to Blame?](#)
[The Importance of Being Vegan](#)
[A Call to Vegetarians](#)



3

Is it possible to really be vegan, when animal ingredients are everywhere?

With animal ingredients in car tires, plastic bags, some currency, and even drywall, some may wonder whether being vegan is a realistic goal.

While it's true that it's impossible to avoid all non-vegan items or ingredients in today's world, it's also true that avoiding most of them is much easier than you might think.

And while we can't control certain animal products entering our lives, there's no reason why we shouldn't do our best to replace the ingredients that we can control with nonviolent, plant-based alternatives.

The rising number of vegans each year has created such a demand for vegan products that there is now a growing number of quality replacements not only for every type of food, but also for clothing, toiletries, cleaning products, household items, and anything else we need to maintain a high standard of living while staying true to our vegan commitment.

Some may discount veganism as an unreachable goal of personal purity. Although many of us believe that it's perfectly reasonable to strive for purity from substances that come from the animal industry, being consistent about our veganism is also about acknowledging the extent to which our daily actions contribute to animal slavery, and doing the best we can to diminish our part in their exploitation.

Certainly, there are times when we might experience a 'slip' due to not being aware of a hidden ingredient, but the more we inform ourselves about what these ingredients are and how to identify them, the more empowered we will be to make choices that are in alignment with our values.

Further Reading:

[Is It Possible to Really Be Vegan?](#)

[Why Vegans Read Labels](#)

4

Doesn't the human diet require some animal products for health reasons?

For those who are concerned about meeting all their nutritional requirements with plant foods, rest assured that even the mainstream and conservative Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (described by eatright.org as “the world’s largest organization of food and nutrition professionals”) confirms that you do not need to eat animal products to maintain your health.

“It is the position of the American Dietetic Association that appropriately planned vegetarian diets, including total vegetarian or vegan diets, are healthful, nutritionally adequate and may provide health benefits in the prevention and treatment of certain diseases. Well-planned vegetarian diets are appropriate for individuals during all stages of the life-cycle including pregnancy, lactation, infancy, childhood and adolescence and for athletes.”

Vegans do get certain nutrients from different sources than non-vegans, and it’s a good idea to be aware of those differences, to avoid deficiencies caused by not being properly informed. We recommend that everyone new to veganism familiarize themselves with how to [optimize nutrition as a vegan](#).

Finally, unlike diet fads like Atkins, Paleo, or Keto, veganism is neither a fad nor a diet, but a stand against injustice and commitment to non-violence that impacts one’s eating choices because of ethical considerations. Nevertheless, the growing number of strong, active vegans is a testament to the fact that one doesn’t have to sacrifice one’s physical health to embrace a more peaceful way of life.

Further Reading:

[Do Our Bodies Need Animal Products?](#)
[Protein Packed Plants](#)



5

I'm already a vegetarian, and I avoid products that involve extreme cruelty, such as veal and foie gras. Isn't that enough?

Many vegetarians use leather, wool, and silk, along with dairy, eggs, honey, and other items from the animal industry. All of these cause unnecessary harm, and their production ultimately leads to the deaths of those being exploited. Veganism resolves this inconsistency by removing the consumer's demand for everything that comes from the animal trade.

Milk and other Dairy Products

Dairy production requires female cows to be repeatedly impregnated, so that lactation will occur. But mothers and babies cannot be allowed to stay together, or there will be no milk to take. The female calves born from this breeding cycle follow their mothers into a lifetime of repeated forced insemination, resulting in annual mourning for their stolen infants. While they are milked dry by mechanized systems, their male sons and brothers are sold for their tender flesh (known as veal) with a few kept aside to be used for the same artificial insemination endured by their sisters and mothers.

Eggs

As only female chicks are capable of laying eggs, those identified as male are considered a 'waste product' that must be disposed of using the most cost-effective methods available. What this often means is that 50% of all chicks born in hatcheries are ground alive or thrown into trashcans and smothered. Many chicks end up incorrectly sexed, meaning that males are sold as females and end up filling farm sanctuaries when their owners discover that they are actually roosters. The hens that make it out alive are subjected to extremely painful mutilations such as de-beaking.

Leather

Leather production shares a common misconception with dairy: that it is incidental to the meat industry. In other words, it is often assumed that leather is a mere byproduct of meat and that purchasing and wearing leather does not contribute to a brutal industry and a profoundly immoral institution. This is a false assumption. Not only is leather highly profitable for the meat industry, much of the leather sold worldwide comes from animals killed primarily for their skins. Unlike fur, which has become highly controversial thanks to the now widespread awareness about the cruelty involved in its production, the use of leather (which is also the skin of an animal) continues to be overlooked, even by those who would never consider buying or wearing fur.

From gentleworld.org:



To an industry that sees sentient beings as economic units or money-making machines, violence is an unavoidable means to the end of extracting from their bodies products that turn a profit. It is consumers around the world who create the demand for this, even though the majority of them would never dream of participating in such violence themselves.

Honey

To make one pound of honey, a colony must visit over two million flowers, flying over 55,000 miles, at up to 15 miles per hour. A single bee will only make approximately one twelfth of a teaspoon of honey in a lifetime, which is essential to the hive for times when nectar is scarce, such as during winter. At times there may be an excess in the hive, but this amount is difficult to determine and beekeepers often remove all or most of it and replace it with a sugar or corn syrup substitute. Many bees are killed or maimed during the extraction of honey. But even prior to this, they are forced to live in unnatural and unhealthy hive structures so that we can take their winter reserve of food. They are also shipped around the country to pollinate crops (crowding out native pollinators in the process.)

Further Reading:

[A Call to Vegetarians](#)

[Mother's Milk](#)

[Why Vegans Don't Eat Eggs](#)

[What's Wrong With Leather?](#)

[Three Reasons Not to Eat Honey](#)

[Vegan Alternatives to Honey](#)

6

Don't you use wool, feathers, and silk?

Fabrics that come from the bodies of animals are not harmless to the individuals involved, even when their production does not technically require the death of the animal.

Common practices for obtaining down, wool and silk are cruel and cost the life of both animal and insect. Even if these fabrics could be obtained without obvious harm, those whose bodies produce these fibers are still kept as commodities and unnaturally bred. There are already a number of natural alternatives, and more being discovered every year that allow us to avoid participating in this cycle of abuse.

In addition to the fact that some of the practices involved with farming and handling these animals are unimaginably brutal, virtually every animal is killed and replaced with a younger, more “productive” victim once their level of production declines. Sheep, for instance, are often sent to slaughter when their wool quality lessens or their fertility decreases, usually at a fraction of their natural lifespan.

Like all animals used for our purposes, those used for fiber are viewed as economic units: production machines permitted to stay alive

only as long as they can profitably overproduce whatever it is we want to extract from them — be it wool, skin, fiber, eggs, milk, flesh, or babies. Once their living bodies can no longer pay their way, they are sent to the slaughterhouse, where the overwhelming majority of animals used for human purposes end their lives. For many of the victims of wool production, the unspeakable horror of slaughter is preceded by weeks of misery on “livestock” ships to the Middle East.

Silk

Just prior to their metamorphosis into moths, *Bombyx mori* pupae spin silk fibers to weave their cocoons. In nature, the moth chews his or her way out of the cocoon once the transformation is complete. But in the fabric industry, silk is mass produced through the breeding and domestication of silkworms on what are essentially moth factory farms. When the caterpillars enter the pupa stage of their development, their cocoons are plunged into boiling water.

Down

Ducks and geese are the primary animals used for down production, but they are not generally raised solely for their feathers. They tend to be raised and used for eggs, meat or foie gras (fatty liver from force-fed ducks and geese). Much like the relationship between veal production and the dairy industry, there is a strong link between foie gras and down.

During live plucking, a goose or duck is held down by the neck or wings as feathers are torn from their skin. When the skin rips during this process it is sewn up without analgesic or sterilization, and the bird is left to recover before the next “harvest of feathers.” This process is repeated every 6-7 weeks before the bird’s eventual slaughter (or death from the trauma of the plucking process itself).

Whether “gathered” or plucked from live birds, or stripped from dead ones used for eggs or foie gras, all down production leads to the eventual death of the birds involved.



“It takes the down from approximately 75 + birds to make an average comforter.”

Wool

Wool often tends to be overlooked by many animal advocates because its cultivation does not necessitate the death of the animal, unlike meat production or leather, for example. However, the cultivation of wool is far from the pastoral idyll one might imagine.

Wool production is an industry. Like any other branch of animal agriculture, it thrives by commodifying animals and objectifying them as resources for human consumption. It converts sentient beings into units of production, consigning them to brief lives of neglect, abuse, and captivity, in the service of increased profits.

Moreover, just as the dairy industry implicitly supports the meat industry by supplying it with veal calves and female cows whose milk production levels have dropped, wool funnels sheep who are no longer producing profitable levels of wool into the meat industry, often through live export (which entails its own unique set of abhorrent practices.) Ultimately, every shorn sheep will be brought to slaughter.

Further Reading:

[What’s Wrong with Wool?](#)

[Why Vegans Don’t Use Silk](#)

[The Birds of the Down Industry](#)



7

Don't most countries have laws that prevent cruelty in the animal industry?

Animal welfare is based on the premise that inflicting harm is unacceptable only when it goes beyond what is considered reasonable, so that any harm considered necessary for an established use (e.g. food, clothing, research, etc.) is perfectly legal.

Welfare standards generally allow for any well-established industry practice that helps producers to exploit animals in an economically optimal manner, no matter how cruel, harmful, or painful.

That is, cruelty is legal when it promotes economic efficiency (such as branding, castration, forced insemination, dehorning, detoeing, debeaking, mulesing, tail docking, teeth clipping, forced molting, and more.)

In other words, while kicking or beating animals out of anger or frustration is illegal, it is perfectly legal to mutilate them (without anesthetic) in order to make them easier to manage, or to inflict agony and misery on tens of millions of sentient beings every year in the name of research.

It's difficult to find any large corporation using animals or selling animal products that doesn't boast of either their own high standards of animal welfare, or the high expectations they have of their suppliers.

The definition of animal welfare standards explained here reveals how the industry can make such ludicrous claims in the face of cruelty so severe that most of us refuse to even hear about it, let alone look at it.

Welfare laws help to create a false sense of security that it's possible for sentient beings to be treated well during captivity, exploitation, and slaughter. This mistaken (but prevailing) belief has led to increased consumer confidence in animal products, while diverting discussion from the main issue, which is that all animal products are inherently harmful and unnecessary.

Further Reading:

[Legal Slavery in the 21st Century](#)

[Making a Killing With Animal Welfare Reform](#)

8

Don't ethical animal products exist?

Using free-range, cage-free, grass-fed, local, or “humanely raised” animal products may seem like a more responsible alternative. But these terms have been developed by marketing professionals to put a positive spin on an industry whose primary purpose is unethical, regardless of the scale or specific practices of “production.”

Not only are the terms themselves highly misleading, they are irrelevant to the fundamental issue of the right of sentient beings not to be exploited. No matter the relative “quality of life” an animal is given while in captivity, they are still imprisoned unnecessarily and ultimately killed, while being terrified and harmed in between.

As explained on [BeFairBeVegan.com](https://www.befairbevegan.com), the following are standard practices allowed in all purportedly “humane” operations:

- routine mutilations
- forced impregnation
- the forceful separation of mother and child
- The mass killing of infants, youngsters, and “spent” females

More and more people are speaking out about the abhorrent abuses that occur as part of the daily operations of different branches of the animal industry: intensive confinement, forced insemination, separation of mother and child, castration, dehorning, tail docking, debeaking, mulesing, de-toeing, live scalding, and many more.

But even if all these atrocities were abolished, it would still be immoral to enslave, exploit, and kill sentient beings, and to use them as though they were mere inanimate objects rather than individuals with the ability to suffer from physical and psychological torment.

Further Reading:

[The Truth About Free Range Turkeys](#)
[A New Perspective on Happy Cows](#)
[Humane? Ask the Animals](#)
[What's Wrong with Backyard Eggs?](#)
[A Hen's Relationship with her Eggs](#)
[Cage-Free? Not Free Enough](#)
[Bill & Lou](#)

9

I like the idea of being vegan, but isn't it difficult?

Living as a vegan is much, much easier than it is commonly perceived to be, and as the demand for vegan alternatives grows, it's only going to get even easier.

As we wrote almost ten years ago:

“During the past few years, the call to reduce our consumption of animal products has grown tremendously... Vegan recipe blogs have proliferated into the hundreds, if not thousands. Both the number and the variety of vegan items available in stores and online are increasing annually. New vegan businesses are opening and thriving more than ever, including cafes, bakeries, restaurants, grocery stores, clothing stores, and even retreat centers and B&Bs...

There certainly is an initial learning period, during which new habits are established, and the vegan newbie might be surprised or even shocked to learn where certain animal products find their way into our lives.

But the longer we are vegan, the more comfortable we feel with our veganism, until eventually, the old way of being becomes not only undesirable, but unthinkable, and maintaining our commitment becomes an imperative that directs our decisions, eliminating any need for willpower or determination.

And each time we pass up a non-vegan item in favor of a vegan alternative (or even in favor of no alternative, as many of us have done many a time) we can feel strengthened by our knowledge that we have not sacrificed our covenant with the animals for something as trivial as taste, habit, comfort, or convenience.

Further Reading:

[Vegan: Easier Than You Think
Being Vegan in a Speciesist World
Opposition Confirms my Purpose
Traveling as a Vegan](#)

10

What's wrong with live shows, and other types of animal entertainment?

Rodeos, horse racing, dog shows, marine parks, circuses (and all other forms of 'entertainment' that exploit animals) reinforce the idea that animals are here for us to use for anything that provides us with enjoyment, regardless of the physical, mental and emotional harm that is always the result of any form of exploitation.

Animals used for entertainment are confined in unnatural environments, where they endure severe rights violations and often suffer psychological and physical agony that would be considered torture if imposed on humans.

They experience a short life of stress, hunger, extreme boredom from long periods of confinement, and physical distress from extreme heat or cold.

These innocent victims are forced to "perform" to their owners' standards, often with beatings, intimidation, and torture, and always under the threat of death for poor performance.



11

Other animals prey on one another, so why shouldn't we? Isn't it a natural part of life?

Unfortunately we do live in a world where some animals prey on others. While these animals don't have a choice (they must either kill or starve to death), we can be grateful that we're in control over whether to participate in these acts of violence; acts which are, for us, entirely unnecessary.

While other animals can't be expected to uphold ethical standards, that's not true for us. Since animal products are both unnecessary for us and harmful to our fellow animals, and since there is widespread agreement that inflicting harm is wrong when there is no valid justification for it, we are ethically obligated to be vegan.

Another answer is that we're not designed physiologically to eat other animals. Amongst other differences, carnivores have sharp teeth that can bite through hide and strong muscles to slaughter their prey and eat their bodies entrails and all. Fresh blood and raw flesh make them salivate. When we contemplate things such as fresh blood, raw

flesh and entrails, there is a sickening guttural reaction.

Imagine catching a deer without weapons (no guns, arrows, spears, knives, or similar items – just your flat teeth, dull nails, and hands) and then eating this animal whole, fresh and raw. Does that sound or feel natural to you?

Thankfully, unlike true carnivores, we have the choice to reject the role of predator in favor of a more enlightened way of nourishing ourselves, one which is more in alignment with our true nature as animals who prefer peace over violence, and restraint over aggression.

Further Reading:

[Could You Kill an Animal?](#)

[How Could His Eyes Endure the Slaughter?](#)

12

What about the plants killed or harmed by vegans?

Most people find genuine pleasure in the experience of harvesting fruit and vegetables, and would even be happy to invite their children to join in. Few would find it enjoyable to watch or participate in the killing of an animal. If you don't share this perspective, try watching any one of the myriad of videos exposing the reality of animal slaughter.

From a purely scientific perspective, animals (including humans) process information with neural networks. Plants, on the other hand, process information hormonally, which is orders of magnitude slower than neural network processing. Given the extraordinarily slow information processing that occurs in plants (hundreds of billions of times slower than in animals), it is unreasonable to believe that plants are capable of actually experiencing pain, which is an evolutionary adaptation intended to provide animals with cues to escape danger, something plants are incapable of doing.

That said, we should be concerned with the essential role plants play with regard to the

ecosystem and the environment. Vegan choices actually do more to protect plant life than eating an animal based diet, which wastes vast quantities of plant food and other natural resources such as fresh water.

Animals are net consumers, not producers. This means that every animal raised for his/her flesh, eggs, milk, hair, skin or anything else, consumes more food and resources than he or she produces. For example, it can take up to 16 pounds of grain (or other plant material) along with 2500 gallons of water to produce 1 pound of beef.

As you can see, while vegans may directly eat more plants than the average non-vegan, the harm to plant life caused by eating vegan is far, far less than that caused by the consumption and use of animal products.

It's impossible to live on this earth without doing some damage, but becoming vegan is the first step towards significantly lightening one's footprint.

13

If we all became vegan, wouldn't farmed animals overrun the planet?

If the world's entire human population goes vegan, it will likely be a gradual process, beginning with the reduction of farmed animal populations as a result of our ceasing to breed them into existence.

As it is though, farmed animals are already overrunning the planet, as a direct result of our dependence on them. We intentionally breed over 50 billion animals each year, and at any given time, there are over 20 billion farmed animals in the world; almost three times the human population. These animals are displacing natural species, emitting tremendous amounts of waste, using huge quantities of natural resources, and polluting waterways and the atmosphere.

In order to provide affluent countries with meat, dairy and eggs (not to mention leather, wool, fur and feathers), we have destroyed major portions of the world's wild lands, seriously altered the levels of gases in the atmosphere, and decimated many free-living animal populations beyond recovery.

As a result, we currently run the risk of driving into collapse the essential life-preserving systems of the planet itself. Even the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization has confirmed that "livestock production is one of the major causes of the world's most pressing environmental problems, including global warming, land degradation, air and water pollution, and loss of biodiversity."

The only chance we have of finding a solution to this problem is for each one of us to replace our non-vegan habits with vegan ones. This alone will make it possible for us to phase out the forced breeding of animals and ultimately free the planet from this unnatural burden.

Further Reading:

[The Myth of Eco-friendly Animal Products](#)
[Another Chance](#)
[Fecal Matters](#)

14

How can we grow enough for everyone to be vegan when so many people are already starving?

According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, the number of people facing chronic food deprivation increased to around 800 million in 2020.

That means there are enough hungry people to fill almost two continents, and starvation takes the life of one child every five seconds.

There is already enough food to feed the world many times over. The reason so many people are starving has to do with political injustice and instability, access to resources, and other factors that include the amount of food that is fed to farmed animals.

Millions of tons of grain are fed to animals used for food, instead of feeding the people who grow it. The same developing nations where people are starving grow the grain that is exported to wealthier nations to be fed to the animals we use.

As explained above, the animals we eat are poor converters when it comes to turning food into energy and muscle. As a result,

even though there are enough plant foods grown to feed the entire human population, the majority of crops (including those grown in countries where people are starving) are fed to “livestock” for affluent nations. Since the amount of food produced by the animal industry is much less than the amount of plant food put into it, there is a “diminished return on investment,” and people end up going hungry.

With hundreds of millions of people around the globe suffering from the devastating effects of hunger, it’s clear that eating animal products is not only an abhorrent abuse of our position of power over our fellow animals, but also an unconscionable affront to the rights of our human brothers and sisters in impoverished nations.

Further Reading:

[Could Veganism End World Hunger?](#)



15

Fruits and vegetables are expensive. Isn't being vegan a privileged position?

Having access to fresh produce and other whole foods should be the right of everyone, but it's true that it can be a challenge for some. While it's completely possible to be vegan even on a tight budget, the food inequality that is prevalent in our country and across the globe is worth noting.

It's a sad fact that some fruits and vegetables are exorbitantly priced, while some animal products are cheaply priced, due largely to the fact that the animal industry (and the vast monoculture crops that feed it such as GMO corn, alfalfa and soy) are supported by tens of billions of dollars in farm subsidies.

If government assistance for farmers were in line with what we know about nutrition, we would see a reversal in this shameful trend, and the cost of plant foods would become much more reasonable for us all, including struggling individuals and working families.

By becoming vegan we become part of the growing movement not only for animal rights, but also for food equality.

Meanwhile, it's also true that plant-based diets are the default way of eating for the most underprivileged people around our planet, as animal products are an unaffordable luxury in most of the world.

In the Western world, however, the myth of vegan eating as being unavoidably expensive is exacerbated by the fact that many people equate a vegan diet with specialty items such as meat alternatives, dairy substitutes, and other convenience foods. Thankfully, these are also the foods we should be eating less of, and using only as occasional indulgences.

While many people assume that a vegan diet is more pricy, it doesn't have to be. There is no single 'plant-based diet', and there are plenty of ways to eat vegan on a tight budget.

Further Reading:

[Eating Vegan on a Budget](#)

[Is A Vegan Diet Expensive?](#)

[Taxpayers Fund Animal Cruelty](#)

16

Won't other people think of me as a bit extreme?

We live in a world where the vast majority of people still consider it acceptable to kill nonhuman animals for food, clothing, and other purposes for which there are perfectly adequate alternatives.

Not only is this extreme violence against our fellow animals sanctioned by the legal structure of society and accepted almost without question by most people, it is actually encouraged and even celebrated in the form of neighborhood barbecues, family fishing trips, and even office parties where animal foods are served and shared with a sense of fun, festivity, and laughter.

When we reject this violence, we do so, ironically, at the risk of being criticized, insulted, and perhaps even accused of committing some sort of offense against the expectations of others that we fall in line and accept what is. But as information about the cause becomes more widespread, many vegans are finding that their friends and family are much more supportive and accepting than they used to be.

As with other social justice issues, the more outspoken you are about veganism or animal exploitation, the more pushback you'll generally receive. There are many vegans who refuse to debate the issue, preferring to simply disarm questions or comments with a polite statement that they care about the feelings of other animals.

If you are outspoken, some people may see you as extreme and some friendships may fade, but true friends will respect your desire to better yourself and the world. You can also make use of the myriad of vegan meet-up groups, social networking sites and support groups online to connect to others who have the same core ethic as you.

If you're concerned about the possibility of feeling isolated, you might want to ask yourself which is more important to you: living according to your values, or being accepted by a wider social group that professes to embrace the same values, while violating them left and right?

17

Don't vegans believe we shouldn't even keep animals as pets?

While buying any animal perpetuates the belief that they are commodities, giving sanctuary to an animal in need is completely supported by the vegan ethic.

The pet industry regards our fellow animals as economic commodities to be mass-produced, warehoused, transported and sold like inanimate merchandise. Animals sold as pets end up with a 70% chance of being abandoned two years down the line, and every year, millions are killed in shelters.

Even in unusual cases where breeders take adequate care of both parents and offspring, the buyer off the street will dictate whether the individual purchased is treated well or is tortured, neglected, killed, or somewhere in between. Although rescue and adoption organizations (as well as some breeders) are more selective in rehoming than are pet stores, even many adopted animals will end up living a life of misery and neglect.

Regardless of who buys or adopts them, their human owner will control every aspect of their lives, including when and how often

they eat, drink water, get exercise, eliminate waste, whether they live indoors or out, or whether their environment is clean, filthy, foul, or disease-ridden. This inevitable reality, along with the fact that millions of innocent animals are killed in shelters annually, means that there is no such thing as “responsible breeding” regardless of how caring the breeder is toward the animals they control.

With millions of animals annually up for adoption, rescuing or adopting is the only responsible route for those who are able to provide a safe and appropriate home. In increasing numbers, animals bred to become our pets end up being sent to death only because most people think nothing of buying a ‘new’ puppy, or a ‘new’ kitten.

And thankfully for those of us who love them, there is more and more information becoming available to help cats and dogs enjoy a healthy vegan diet alongside you. Rabbits, guinea pigs, gerbils and hamsters are naturally vegan animals, and there are many of them in shelters as well.

18

What do I do with all the non-vegan items already in my possession?

If you found out that the leather items you own were made from human skin (like those that were made from the bodies of holocaust victims) would you still want to use them until they wore out?

There's a good deal of debate over what to do with non-vegan clothing, bedding, etc. after becoming vegan. Often people go with the easiest and most socially acceptable option, rather than the choice that respects the lives of the animals that were taken or harmed.

To those who believe that it's wrong to use other animals for our own means, regardless of whether those beings are already dead, it is impossible to justify the use of animal based items simply because they are already here, and we already paid for them.

To keep any of these items in our lives requires us to perpetuate our own denial of what they truly are – part of another animal's dead body.

For many of us, the final decision we make is to actually lay these items to rest, in a burial.

Isn't that a wasteful thing to do?

The idea of laying body parts to rest can only appear wasteful when we think of those bodies as resources for use or consumption. When we imagine that we're talking about a human individual, or a much-loved family dog or cat, it's easy to understand why the imperative of treating someone's body with respect (and not desecrating their remains) is universal throughout the world's cultures.

Further Reading:

[Burying the Past](#)

[What's Wrong with Leather?](#)

[What's Wrong with Wool?](#)

[Why Vegans Don't Use Silk](#)

[The Birds of the Down Industry](#)

19

But... How can I ever give up cheese?

If you've ever found yourself thinking you could never give up cheese, you're not alone. Vegan advocates have devoted pages and pages of writing to addressing this one simple statement. For many on the threshold of welcoming the vegan shift, cheese is the final dietary challenge to overcome. But most people don't yet realize that it's an addictive substance being deliberately pushed by those who profit from keeping the population hooked on it.

Milk contains casomorphines that act like mild opiates to calm the nursing infant and help mother and child to bond. As the liquid from milk evaporates, these casomorphines are concentrated, making cheese a literal "comfort food." But if you give yourself a month away from cheese, your opinion may begin to change. After several years of being vegan, cheese becomes repulsive to many.

Just think about what cheese really is! Another animal's breast milk, inoculated with enzymes from the stomach lining of their dead calves (the same calves who were deprived of their mother's milk so that we could make it into cheese.) There's nothing natural or healthful about that. But what should you do during that three-

week withdrawal from a chemical that not only calms and sedates, but also has pain-reducing qualities? There's a simple solution: Learn everything you can about why cheese doesn't belong on our plates, and before you know it, you'll be repulsed by the very idea.

In the meantime, there are a myriad of plant-based cheeses on the market, and the number is only growing. And for those with a little culinary flair, there are a number of alternatives that can be made at home. From soft, spreadable cheeses to those that melt on a pizza or a grilled sandwich, there's a vegan cheese for every purpose.

Further Reading:

[Kicking the Cheese Habit](#)

[Finding the Right Vegan Cheese](#)

[A New Perspective on Happy Cows](#)

[A Call to Vegetarians](#)

[Mother's Milk](#)

[Rennet](#)

[Casein](#)



20

Why should I care so much about animal suffering when there are so many other important issues?

So much injustice is out of our control. But the misery of the animals exploited and killed for our convenience is something each individual has complete control over.

More and more people are embracing veganism not only as the practice of respect and protection that we owe the vulnerable, but also as the solution to the many problems we face as a society – from our growing health crisis, to the environmental emergency, to the issue of escalating violence – all of which have us living in some degree of fear for the future.

Our collective willingness to overlook the most basic rights and needs of others in order to fulfill our own desires has driven us to invent a way of life that treats the world around us as though it is simply a collection of expendable resources, from the planet's natural eco-systems, and its populations of free-living and domesticated animals, to our fellow people; those in developing nations and those right here in our own.

Every animal, both human and non-human, has the inherent right to freedom from unnecessary harm. Right at this moment you may not have the power to stop a woman from being stoned to death or a child from being forced into slavery, but you are empowered to stop your own participation in the harm caused by the production of things that aren't vegan.

The vegan ideal is at the core of the shift from predation to protection and from prejudice to justice; an essential step into a future built by people who can empathize with another's situation, and who care about the wellbeing of others.


Further Reading:

[Let Your Conscience Be Your God](#)

[A Call to Feminists](#)

[A Call to Environmentalists](#)

[An Irrefutable Truth](#)



For those who are not 100% confident about their commitment to vegan living, and those who are concerned that being vegan is not going to be easy, our advice is to do everything you can to educate yourself about why making this change is as necessary as justice. Read and learn about the facts of the situation, and keep reading and learning until you reach the point where the products of animal slavery simply no longer appeal to you.

This is the key to making it easy. When we lack clarity, it's easy to second-guess the decision and remain confused and conflicted as a result. But once we really understand the reasons for being vegan, there is no challenge that can make us question our resolve, and no degree of social pressure can tempt us to break this critical commitment to working toward a future that we can feel proud to be a part of building.

Learn more at
www.GentleWorld.org

Gentle World

Who we are

If you've spent any time on our website or with a Gentle World volunteer, you know that our not-so-secret mission is to awaken the vegan in every human being.

Gentle World is a vegan intentional community, and a 501(c)(3) educational organization whose core purpose is to help build a more peaceful society, by educating the public about the reasons for being vegan, the benefits of vegan living, and how to go about making such a transition.

Toward that end, Gentle World has served as a clearinghouse of information for over 50 years, helping people from all walks of life embrace a way of living that is in alignment with their values.

How we support the vegan in everyone

Over the years, our member-volunteers have offered educational services free of charge to countless people, including online outreach, video and audio content, film screenings and seminars, cooking and gardening classes and workshops, private consultations, and incredibly delicious vegan meals.