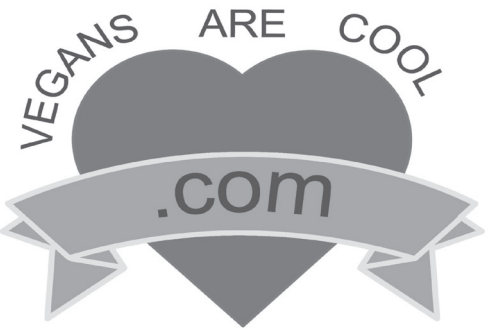
Vegans Are Cool

A delicious collection of essays, interviews and articles by cool vegans from around the planet



Compiled by Kathy Divine

Vegans Are Cool is a series of papers submitted by, and interviews conducted with, vegans from throughout the world.

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Please consult the appropriate well-informed health professional if you are contemplating making a lifestyle or dietary change.

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To all the beautiful people who contributed to the book,
and to our precious animal co-inhabitants.
May all animals live in peace and freedom very soon.

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A huge thank you to everyone who shares and continues to share our website <www.vegansarecool.com>. The aim of the site is to highlight the talents, commitment and compassion that vegans worldwide possess and to inspire other people to adopt the cruelty-free lifestyle so all beings can live in peace and freedom.

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Foreword

I was deeply honored when Kathy invited me to write the foreword to this book. It is a pleasure to be able to contribute to a book that is devoted to the vegan lifestyle, which is a subject close to my heart.

I admire Kathy's passion and enthusiasm in her approach to teaching others how to embrace and maintain a vegan lifestyle. She has carefully researched the material in the book to provide the reader with a wealth of information including nutritional advice, healthy tips for kids and teens, benefits for athletes, how to lose weight naturally, mouth-watering recipes, and a whole lot more.

In sharing her incredible knowledge and expertise about vegan living, Kathy removes the challenges and myths that surround veganism and are sometimes portrayed in the media. The book will appeal to anyone who wants to make a difference.

Are you ready for a lifestyle makeover? The solution lies in the way we nourish our mind, body and spirit. When we eat complete, plant-based foods, this brings compassion, healing and harmony within ourselves,

while saving the lives of animals and benefiting the planet all at the same time.

When you read this book, you will discover the truth for yourself and the very essence of living a cruelty-free lifestyle, and you will find that the contributors reinforce that yes, vegans are cool.

I have been a vegan since 1994. I am an actor, a writer and a producer and creator of the multi-award winning US sketch-comedy web series Vegan 101. I am the founder and CEO of Vegan Vision Productions, a new media-production company inspiring compassion and entertainment, and the author of the children's book *Tommy Tofu Saves The Day*.

Enjoy the journey!

Joanne Rose

<www.veganvision.net>
<www.vegan101series.com>
<www.joannerose.com>

Introduction

I started <www.vegansarecool.com> in mid-2009 having become aware of a bizarre misconception among some segments of the general population that vegans are weak, pale, hippie-type creatures. I had a large network of vegan friends in many countries, so I knew that this was certainly a fallacy and that the truth is in fact quite the opposite. So, the idea of doing an interview-based blog was born, and my aim was to showcase the amazingly talented, beautiful, healthy and strong vegan individuals I knew, in order to reverse this ridiculous stereotype.

Two years on, I really believe things are changing. Now, more than ever before, people are exploring and making a dedicated switch to a plant-based diet. Thanks mostly to the Internet, people are able to research extensively and make their own informed decisions about the type of lifestyle they wish to pursue.

Thankfully, for the sake of the animals, the planet, people's own health and the health of their families, many of us are coming to realise that not only is the vegan diet super-healthy; it's the most eco-conscious way to eat, having the lightest eco-footprint.

Fashionistas are also realising you don't need to make an animal suffer to look chic. The beauty industry has also had a major facelift — corny pun intended! — as more people demand an end to products tested on animals.

The main aim of the book was to bring together vegans from all parts of the world to share their knowledge with people who are interested in making the switch to the vegan lifestyle. It's also intended for vegans who want to learn more to fill in their knowledge gaps and expand their recipe repertoire. I also wanted to help vegan businesses connect with people who are looking to buy cruelty-free products. The book is a 'global vegan community' project — nobody was paid for his or her submission, and nobody paid us to be included.

For all reasons, including the practical survival of humanity, the future of the planet has to be strongly grounded in the vegan lifestyle. I hope that after reading the book you will truly see that vegans are indeed 'cool' and, more importantly, the pioneers of a new age — creating a compassionate, sustainable, loving planet for all to cherish and enjoy.

Kathy Divine

1 What does being 'vegan' actually mean?

Long-time New Zealand vegan M. Butterflies Katz answers one of the big ones

Almost 33 years ago, I decided to go vegan after reading a copy of the magazine of the American Vegan Society. Specifically, I made the stand to be vegan while reading about the horrific treatment of cows used for dairy products. I rid my closet of leather items and purchased only cosmetics and toiletries that neither contained animal ingredients nor had been tested on animals — much more difficult to find back then.

Although I became vegan as far as my food, clothing and other products are concerned, I was working at a restaurant at which fish were served. I realised I could no longer profit from or participate in animal exploitation. Incidentally, I'd been a vegetarian since age 12, which was when my brother told me that 'meat' was a dead animal, and it was then I decided never to eat any animal flesh again. In those days — pre-Internet, and in Cleveland, Ohio, in the US — vegetarianism and veganism were unheard of, so I was a pioneer.

The word 'vegan' was originally coined in 1944, in the United Kingdom. In summer 2011, I conducted an online poll and more than 900 vegans (many of them activists) responded to it. They came up with this up-to-date definition: Veganism is recognition of the right of all sentient animals to be treated with respect and justice. Vegans do not consume, wear or use animals or take part in activities to do with exploitation of animals.

In making the decision not to continue contributing to animal utilisation, vegans neither use nor support the following products and practices:

- Consumption of animal flesh, including fish, and animal products: dairy products, including milk, yoghurt, cheese and butter; eggs; honey; and animal-derived by-products: casein, whey, gelatin and milk solids
- Use of leather, wool, silk, down, fur or animal skins
- Cosmetics, toiletries and household cleaners that contain animal ingredients and/or are tested on animals, vivisection, school dissection of animals
- Pet shops; puppy mills; and breeding, buying and selling fellow sentient beings
- Fishing, hunting, rodeos, dog fights and cock fights

- Circuses, zoos, marine parks, animal acts; sea-and land-animal imprisonment
- Dog and horse racing, dog shows and horse-drawn carriages

Vegans neither support practices nor consume products whereby people ask an animal to breed, work, entertain, suffer or die for them. There's a difference between being a vegan and eating a plant-based diet. We can boycott animal agriculture and eat a strictly vegan diet, and thereby greatly aid the environment and our own health — and help animals, to an extent — but this stance is not to be confused with veganism, which encompasses more than diet. Being a 'dietary vegan' is certainly a step in the right direction, however.

Being vegan isn't some great feat; it's just exercising basic decency in how we treat other animals. Having the epiphany that we have no right to exploit and oppress sentient animals is what it takes for someone to stay vegan forever. It's not a diet you can 'cheat on', and it's not a matter of convenience for the person; it's a matter of justice for animals.

Historically, when faced with evidence that differed from a widely held belief at the time, humans underwent a massive change in their perceptions. I'm not asking

people to do anything different from what I had to do; I'm just asking them to climb out of their state of misguidance and indoctrination, question all the propaganda put out by the people who work in the animal-exploiting industries and who profit from animal abuse, and embrace the simple concept of doing animals no harm. The rewards — personal and planetary health and inter-species friendships — are wonderful, but you have to 'get it' for the right reason.

Just as it has become "politically correct" to rise above our racism and sexism, we must rise above our speciesism. The term 'speciesism' was coined by British psychologist and philosopher; Richard D. Ryder, to denote assigning different values or rights to beings on the basis of their species membership. To quote him, "I use the word 'speciesism' to describe the widespread discrimination that is practiced by man against other species." Ryder (1975)

Becoming vegan is humanity's next evolutionary step. We can never become a civilised society while we're enslaving, exploiting, harming and killing our other beings who can suffer. We now know that animals are sentient — anyone who has a dog friend can tell us so. The members of all animal species are sentient: rats, cats, dogs, cows, horses, chickens, pigs and humans, for example. Other animals have feelings, too, and this world is their world too. All animals are endowed with

inalienable rights: the right not to be considered the property of humans, the right not to have their life turned into a commodity, the right to live their allotted portion of time on earth enjoying the light of the sun and seeking pleasure, the right to maintain bodily integrity, and the right not to be harmed by humans.

To find out more about M. Butterflies Katz's vegan philosophy and thoughts, please visit <http://thevegantruth.blogspot.com> and <http://veganpoet.com>

2 Let's chat about health: yes, the vegan diet *is* healthy!

How To Get To Vegan: The Journey from Omnivore/Carnivore to Herbivore

By Eve Nguyen — Vegan Cooking Coach, BHSc ND

So, you have this healthy and compassionate goal to become a vegan. Sounds like an excellent idea — but how will you achieve this goal?

We have all tried to change habits and behaviours before. Sometimes it has been smooth sailing and at other times it has been a real struggle. Hopefully going vegan will be smooth sailing for you. Here are some ways to make your vegan journey a lot more comfortable, easy and fun!

Ensure That You Eat Enough Food!

When I was studying nutrition at university, my class had to choose a diet and stick to it for about a month while keeping a diary about the challenges we encountered. I remember that no matter what diet any of us chose to follow, we all skipped meals because we quite simply didn't know what to eat! You can overcome this problem

by being prepared. Stock your pantry with vegan foods, know what snack foods to carry with you, and discover your local vegan or vegan-friendly restaurants and eateries.

On a vegan diet, some people initially comment that they still feel hungry after eating a meal. This is partly because vegan food digests quite easily compared with meat, which can sit in the stomach for hours and also decompose while transitioning through our long, herbivorous intestines. One way to overcome this feeling is to eat larger portions of healthy food and eat your meal until you feel satisfied. The portion can be larger. That's okay. Numerous studies demonstrate that vegans tend to have a lower BMI than omnivores (those who eat a combination of meat and plant-based food).

Another reason people report they still feel hungry after eating a vegan meal is that they tend to fill up on carbohydrates without including some protein in a meal. Many people, especially when they're starting out on the vegan diet, can consume healthy plant protein to assist them in feeling gastronomically satisfied. So instead of eating white rice and vegetables for example, a more filling meal would consist of brown rice (which is higher in nutrients and protein), organic tofu (a dense form of protein) and vegetables. Instead of having a sandwich with white bread and salad, a more filling

and nutrient-dense meal would be to have brown bread or pumpernickel bread with a lentil patty and salad. This will leave you feeling much more content and will ensure a more steady supply of energy after eating.

So What Should I Eat?

When adopting a vegan diet, many people find it helpful to start 'vegan-ising' the dishes they already love to eat. Some examples of ways to vegan-ise dishes might be to have pasta with red-lentil bolognaise instead of pasta with beef bolognaise; nachos with red kidney beans and avocado guacamole instead of nachos with minced meat, sour cream and cheese; chilli con carne with veggie sausages rather than meat-filled sausages; and vegan schnitzel with baked vegetables instead of meat schnitzel. It is during this stage that many people find mock meats to be a helpful transition food, if they are not allergic to those foods which often contain gluten.

So try to adapt dishes you already like to eat. They will taste a little bit different at first, but our taste buds quickly adapt to new tastes and start to crave and enjoy these flavours rather than the old ones. For gluten-intolerant people, there is an abundance of vegan foods to enjoy. For cheese lovers, there is a growing choice of vegan cheeses ranging from vegan mozzarella to vegan feta. For delicious smoothies and breakfast cereals, there is

a range of vegan milks to try such as almond milk, rice milk, protein-enriched rice milk, oat milk, hazelnut milk and soy milk. The soy milk comes in various flavours — even flavours designed to taste like dairy milk. They also come in small Tetra packs which is convenient for school lunches or a handy snack.

It is very helpful to browse on-line vegan stores, visit vegan shops and attend vegan festivals and expos in order to discover the huge choice of vegan foods available. Vegan Society websites often include a list of many vegan products ranging from food to body products. A substantial portion of vegan foods are also organic and therefore much healthier for the environment, humans and the animals — and many of the products are fair-trade, which leaves your conscience feeling even more uplifted.

But it's not only vegan-specialty places that stock these foods. It would be great to set some time aside to go on a vegan discovery tour of your local grocery store! And you don't have to go alone. If you know any vegans, ask to go with them when they next do their grocery shopping or to come with you when you next shop. Vegans tend to be very enthusiastic about this lifestyle choice and will jump at the chance to share some of their favourite foods and brands with you.

It's a good idea to fill up your pantry and fruit baskets with fruits, veggies and vegan food so that when you are hungry, you will have ample food to fill you up. If you arrive home after a long day at work, your stomach groaning with hunger and you open the fridge door to find eggs, meat and seafood, chances are that this is what you will eat for dinner in this hypoglycaemic state despite all your best intentions to eat vegan.

Many people have said to me, 'But what should I eat? Can you tell me exactly what to eat?' If you fall into this category, there are various ways to organise yourself meal by meal. There are vegan cookbooks that include weekly shopping lists and a daily meal plan. They can be useful.

Another way to organise yourself is to make your own vegan weekly menu. You can have a section for breakfast, morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea, dinner and dessert, if you wish. If you are making a recipe from a book, under the name of the meal you can write which book it came from and the page number, for example; 'Dinner: chickpea curry, page 58; Book: *Become Vegan*', or 'Dinner — chickpea curry; ingredients: curry powder, chickpeas, coconut powder, mixed veggies'. If you list the ingredients underneath the meal then this will also serve as an already-made shopping list for you. Very handy!

Be Clear On Vegan Benefits and Meet Other Vegans

I chose to stop eating meat when I was 15 years old. As an Australian teenager, I remember seeing an image of the Australian outback in drought: dry and barren. On the TV was an image of a stick-thin goat behind a barbed-wire fence. The goat's ribs were sticking out, and he/she was emaciated. Despite the fence, the poor goat was cutting his/her neck on the wire in a desperate effort to reach a blade of green grass on the other side. On seeing this image, I had a light bulb moment when I realised that we had cut down the trees to make this grazing land. I realised that this must have affected the weather, and that this had led to the animals on that land suffering in such a degrading and unnecessary way. I read more and more about animal cruelty and where our food comes from, but it was only years later that I learnt about the hydrological cycle of trees and the environmental devastation that is created world-wide by ripping down, poisoning or burning trees for grazing land and food for livestock animals.

I read more about the health benefits of the vegan diet. I read more about the way that a vegan diet can feed the world's population with millions of kilos of excess food. Quite simply, by reading more about the benefits of a

vegan diet I motivated myself and sparked a passion in me that couldn't be quenched.

And I see this passion and spark in other vegans, too. The more they learn about the vegan diet, the more they grow and change. This information is empowering, it can mean the difference between following the vegan diet or not. For vegetarians, in particular, learning more about the health disadvantages, animal suffering and environmental devastation from the dairy and egg industries can be a turning point in evolving their diet even further.

It is also rewarding to meet other vegans! From personal experience there will always be people that seem to have a particular uplifting affect with their amazing stories of animal rescue, or a tasty vegan cake they have just baked or an excellent vegan cafe that they have visited. It is nice to know that there are others in the world who have chosen the same diet as you have and often for the same reasons.

Vegans are part of an amazing social movement in which they organise and collaborate and achieve remarkable things. For these reasons you may find it to be an enjoyable and rewarding experience to take part in volunteering at a vegan expo, entering a vegan bake sale, taking part in animal rescue or even writing letters to media about the benefits of the vegan diet.

Learn More About Vegan Nutrition & Choose Your Health Professionals Discerningly

I would also recommend you read more about vegan nutrition from global experts such as Dr McDougall, Dr T. Colin Campbell, Dr Caldwell B. Esselstyn Jr, Dr Neal Barnard (all from the USA), Australian naturopath Robyn Chuter and Canadian vegan athlete Brandon Brazier. It is a good idea to learn about whole foods, organic foods versus non-organic foods, sources of protein and sources of other nutrients such as iron and calcium. A lot of misinformation and meat and dairy propaganda are put out as fact by the media and other vested interests.

Sadly, the meat and dairy industries have the means to promote fiction as fact and to fund biased or flawed studies to support their industries. It is not uncommon for study conclusions to end on an entirely different note from that of the study content so that time-strapped media staff can rely on cleverly manipulated press releases to convey the desired message to the public. What we read in the papers isn't always so!

Learning about nutrition is helpful on a daily basis. You will feel the rewards from eating a healthier diet yourself and feeding your family a healthy diet. It is also good knowledge to have because as a vegan you will be grilled

constantly by genuinely naive people. If we vegans had a dollar for each time we have been asked 'where do you get your protein?' then we'd all be rich — very rich!

Sadly, many health professionals don't understand the basics of nutrition, and many of them might not want to. I often hear stories of former vegetarians or vegans who 'got sick', went to their general practitioner and were told that they needed to eat meat and/or seafood in order to get healthy again. This is without any evaluation of the patient's diet and without a foundation of nutrition knowledge to draw from.

It's important to understand that the medical industry (especially general practitioners/family doctors) are given minimal nutrition information both during and after their degree studies. Most naturopaths I know rely on nutrition information from supplement companies after their graduation.

Many people look to natural therapists such as nutritionists, naturopaths or even dieticians with the assumption that they must have a good working knowledge of the vegan diet. Sadly, it has been my experience that most naturopaths and nutritionists still don't understand even the simple basics of protein. The education of many naturopaths will have been skewed towards certain myths such as 'people need omega 3 from

fish' or 'protein from meat'. For this reason, I think it wise to visit a vegan or vegetarian doctor, naturopath or nutritionist in order to get the best guidance, information and support you can, even if this means having a distance consultation. It is worth it.

When visiting a 'non-veg' health professional, I encourage you to have a firm understanding of nutrition because you will often be challenged in relation to it, especially if you are the parent of a vegan child or toddler.

Have Fun and Be Kind!

Being a vegan can also be emotionally challenging. On the one hand, it is liberating and rewarding, but on the other, it can be difficult to see family, friends and colleagues suffering from medical ailments that could quickly be turned around by adopting a healthy vegan diet. It can be difficult to view climate change information and climate change refugees on television while knowing that meat eating is the largest contributor to global warming and that the vegan diet has been reported by scientists to be the fastest and most economic way to halt climate change. It can be difficult to think of the sad and abused animals in slaughterhouses, on factory farms and aboard live export ships. It can be difficult to view images of starving people when the vegan diet provides enough food for more than all the world's inhabitants.

So, try to be kind. Be kind to yourself. Take time out for yourself, look after yourself, and have some fun when you need it! And be as kind as possible to the people who are not vegan because most of them are ignorant of the facts, or they might not have the courage (for whatever reason) to change their habits or look into the devastation that animal-derived foods cause on so many levels. Being vegan and offering patience to non-vegans is also carrying the vegan spirit. Being kind and patient may foster a readiness in non-vegans to switch to the vegan diet themselves and experience the immense benefits of the diet. You never know!

<www.renewvitality.com.au>

Understanding Protein

By Heidi Merika BHSc-Nat.

Proteins are made from chains of twenty two amino acids that connect together in varying sequences, in much the same way a set of Lego blocks can be used to assemble a variety of shapes. Plants and microbes (bacteria that live in soil) can synthesise all the individual amino acids by absorbing nitrogen from the atmosphere and converting it into amino acids that are used to build proteins. Animals do not have this capacity, and must rely on plants to meet their protein requirements. Of the twenty two amino acids eight (ten for children) are considered to be essential, in that they must be obtained from the diet. The body can synthesise the other fourteen amino acids if the essential eight are provided in the diet.

Like Lego blocks amino acids can be assembled and dismantled and then reassembled according to the demands of their environment.

Originally assembled by plants into plant cells and structures, after we eat the plant, stomach acids and intestinal enzymes digest the proteins, breaking them back down into individual amino acids. These components are then absorbed through the intestinal wall and into the bloodstream in which they interact with

cellular structures and are reassembled back into proteins to be used in the human body. So, the statement 'You are what you eat' is actually quite literal!

Proteins serve several functions. Structural proteins maintain cellular structure, enzymatic proteins catalyse biochemical reactions, and hormones are proteins that signal messages between cells.

Interestingly, it is the fact that plants also use amino acids to create cellular structure, enzymes and hormones, that is the reason they are such good sources of proteins. In fact, they are such good sources of protein they can meet the protein needs of the earth's largest animals.

When it came to protein, Mother Nature didn't leave anything to chance. In her infinite wisdom, she sprinkled it liberally throughout the plant world so that animals everywhere had all they needed to grow into healthy, powerful beings who are capable of reproducing and ensuring the survival of their species. The world's largest, strongest animals have always thrived on a plant-based diet. Elephants, buffalo, cows, horses and even many dinosaurs were vegan. So it makes sense that plants can easily meet the needs of smaller, weaker species such as human beings.

It is important to note that every plant food has its own unique amino acid profile, whereby some amino acids

exist in greater quantities and others in lesser amounts. All plants contain all the amino acids and can thus technically be called a 'complete' protein. However, each plant has a limited amount of a particular amino acid compared to other plants. This amino acid is sometimes called the 'limiting amino acid'. As we will see, this fact has caused a great deal of confusion and misinformation among members of the medical, social and economic community.

When we eat a variety of foods the amino acids, which have been broken down, can be stored in intercellular fluid and in the intestine. This reserve can be drawn on when needed to build muscle, replace damaged cells, create enzymes and meet any other protein requirements. It is not necessary that protein foods be eaten in the same meal or even on the same day for this to occur. Basically, if you are eating enough food and you have a healthy Body Mass Index (BMI), you can be confident you have enough protein.

It is ironic that the nutrient that is the easiest to obtain is also the one that evokes the most concern. By understanding some simple facts and myths about protein it is easy to navigate the minefield of controversial information and misinformation.

Five predominant protein myths appear in nutritional information and literature everywhere:

1. Animal foods contain more protein than plant foods and are therefore a better source of protein.
2. Plant proteins are incomplete and need to be combined in order to create complete proteins we can compare to animal protein.
3. Soybeans are the only plant based 'complete' protein.
4. Athletes require animal protein for muscle building and endurance.
5. A vegan diet contains insufficient protein for children and pregnant or breastfeeding women.

Some powerful examples of these myths can be found in John McDougall's Newsletter, in an article called 'When Friends Ask: "Where Do You Get Your Protein?"'. He gives examples of well respected health professionals who have publicised erroneous information about protein. They include:

The Nutrition Committee of the American Heart Association, scientists from the Human Nutrition Research Center and the Medical School at Tufts University and registered dietitians, research nutritionists and physicians of Northwestern University and the Harvard School of Public Health.[1]

Some of this misinformation is simple misunderstanding. Other misinformation is deliberate propaganda from those with vested interests in keeping the public on an animal based diet.

This explains why vegetarianism and particularly veganism is still seen as a diet requiring special attention in order to compensate for its perceived inadequacies.

Michele Simon, in an article called 'The Politics of Meat and Dairy', explains how The United States Department of Agriculture has influenced the food choices of Americans:

> Originally created to support and promote farmers' interests, the USDA has also taken on the role of advocating consumer interests, through food assistance programs and by setting nutrition standards. This dual mandate creates an inherent conflict of interest that explains why the meat and dairy industries continue to wield tremendous influence over government policies, and why Americans are not told the whole truth about their food choices.[2]

This brings us to our first myth about protein.

Myth 1: Animal foods contain more protein than plant foods and are therefore a better source of protein

Protein is present in all unprocessed plant foods. In fact 10-40 percent of calories in most plant foods comes from protein.[3] It is widely accepted that beans, legumes, nuts and seeds are good protein sources.[4]

While animal protein does tend to be a more concentrated form of protein and rates higher in protein evaluations, animal protein sources do not always contain more protein than plant foods. For example, ground beef contains 8.0 grams of protein per 100 calories whereas firm tofu contains 10.9 grams per 100 calories.[5]

Also, there are many ways to evaluate the 'amount of protein' in foods, and numerical comparisons are only a rough guide. To start with, charts of 'protein content' of foods vary from source to source in what they are actually comparing. Some are looking at grams of protein per 100 grams; others look at protein grams per 100 calories; others look at random serving sizes that may not correlate from food to food; some look at protein content compared to other nutrients in that particular food; and some look at Net Protein Utilization (NPU), or the percentage of usable protein, based on the amino acid profile of that particular food in relation to the amount required by an individual.

Earlier in the 20th century, protein was assessed using the Protein Efficiency Ratio (PER), which was determined by the ability of a food to create weight gain in rats. We eventually discovered that rats have very different amino acid requirements than humans so we switched to the Protein Digestibility Corrected Amino Acid Score (PDCAAS), which is the method now used by the World Health Organization and the Food and Drug Administration. The PDCAAS measures the amounts of essential amino acids in one gram of a food, corrected for digestibility, and compared to the amount of amino acids per gram required for good health and growth of a person older than two years.[6] From this, you begin to get an idea of the complications involved in accurate protein assessment.

Simply looking at numerical values fails to account for factors impacting protein metabolism, such as the health of the individual, the integrity of the protein in the food (many proteins are denatured by food preparation and processing), other co-nutrients in the food, ratios of good and bad fats, and toxins in the food.

In short evaluating proteins by their amino acid profile or grams of protein per 100 grams is a simplistic measure with many limitations. United Nations scientists Vernon Young and Peter Pellet, in Nutritional Evaluation of Protein Foods, state:

> The concept of a single pattern of amino acids that may be used as a yardstick in comparing the nutritive value of food and diets is subject to the same limitations and qualifications as is the concept of 'protein quality.'
>
> The relative proportions in which the essential amino acids are needed almost certainly depend upon the species, its physiological state, and interrelationships and interactions among the amino acids themselves. The pattern of amino acids required for maintenance may be quite different from the optimal pattern to support maximum growth. In addition, the limited accuracy of amino determinations in food and the problem of biological availability of the amino acids present further complications. However, the advantage of a method of dietary assessment in terms of amino acids is considerable, and is, in many circumstances, the only practical approach.[7]

The idea that animal foods contain 'more' protein and are therefore superior has also lead to the massive over-consumption of protein in both Western and subsequently Eastern societies with disastrous consequences for health, social welfare and the environment. This situation has been well documented by Dr .T. Colin Campbell in his book *The China Study*.

Myth 2: Plant proteins are incomplete and need to be combined in order to create complete proteins that compare to animal protein.

The theory of protein combining was initially promoted in Frances Moore Lappé's 1971 bestseller, *Diet for a Small Planet*. The National Research Council and the American Dietetic Association (ADA) soon picked it up, and cautioned vegetarians to be sure to combine their proteins.[8] Doctors, nutritionists and policy makers the world over repeated the misinformation until it was accepted as fact.

It is ironic that one of the pioneers of the vegetarian movement unintentionally created both a desire to be vegetarian, in order to benefit human and planetary health, while simultaneously creating the idea that to do so involved a nutritional risk that required constant vigilance and compensation.

Realising what she had inadvertently done, in the 1981 edition of *Diet for a Small Planet*, she wrote:

> In 1971 I stressed protein complementarity because I assumed that the only way to get enough protein … was to create a protein as usable by the body as animal protein. In combating the myth that meat is the only way to get high-quality protein, I reinforced another myth. I gave the impression that in order to get enough protein without meat, considerable care was needed in choosing foods. Actually, it is much easier than I thought.[9]

Again following Lappé's lead, the American Dietetic Association reversed its position in its 1988 position paper on vegetarianism. The main author of the paper, Suzanne Havala, recalls the research process:

> There was no basis for [protein combining] that I could see … I began calling around and talking to people and asking them what the justification was for saying that you had to complement proteins, and there was none. And what I got instead was some interesting insight from people who were knowledgeable and actually felt that there was probably no need to complement proteins. So we went ahead and made that change in the paper.[10]

This paper was approved by peer review and by a delegation vote before becoming official.

Following the reversal of the protein complementing myth by Frances Moore Lappé and the ADA, the truth is slowly spreading into the mainstream medical community and is now widely posted on vegan and vegetarian websites. However, dissemination of this

information has been slowed by the political and economic clout of those with a vested interest in keeping the myth alive.

Jennifer Raymond, a nutritionist, an author and a chef who tried for several years to get soy protein approved by the USDA for school lunches, gives an example of what vegetarians are up against. In 1996, she met with the USDA and was told in no uncertain terms who was calling the nutritional shots in the United States. The USDA asked her,

> 'Have you met with the cattlemen? You know you need to do your homework and meet with them, because unless they approve this, we can't.' [She say's] I was blown away! I mean, we all know who's really in charge, but to have him come right out and say it was mind-boggling![11]

Myth 3: Soybeans are the only plant based 'complete' protein

As already discussed, each food and each individual has a unique amino acid profile, and even that is subject to variability and influence. So, to talk of any food as being complete or incomplete is to have succumbed to myth two.

It used to be taught that soy was the only plant based 'complete' protein. Then quinoa, amaranth and spirulina got added to the list. Now it is becoming more widely recognized that all plant proteins are complete, albeit that they contain a limiting amino acid, and what we are now realising is that even limiting amino acids are of little nutritional consequence as long as an adequate food supply is available.

While it is true that some foods contain higher concentrations of protein, to think of the protein value of a food as being synonymous with its nutritional value is to have succumbed to myth one.

As all animals rely on plant life for their nutrition, Mother Nature has lovingly provided protein, carbohydrate and fat together in most plant foods. The fact that we are concerned about breaking foods down into single nutrients and then obsessing over whether they are adequately provided is symptomatic of our mechanistic, dualistic culture and misses the beauty, grace, abundance and holism of nature.

Myth 4: Athletes require animal protein for muscle building and endurance

Even during the most intense periods of training, athletes only require up to 0.7 of a gram more protein per kilo of bodyweight than normal. According to the Australian Institute of Sport, only adolescent athletes, endurance athletes in heavy training and strength athletes in the early stages of very intensive resistance exercise require any increase in protein. Once strength athletes' muscles have adapted to the stress of resistance exercise, their protein requirements are only slightly greater than those of any active person.[12]

According to Jon Hinds, a personal fitness trainer and the founder of Monkey Bar Gymnasiums in the US:

> All my MBG trainers, members and athletes follow a vegan based diet and take in about 1g per kilo of bodyweight, yet they gain muscle just as fast as the animal based athlete diets, they cut fat just as fast and have far more energy and overall health.[13]

The Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine also maintains that athletes, even those who strength train, have only a slightly increased need for protein, which they easily meet by eating the larger servings required for higher caloric intake.[14]

Myth 5: A vegan diet contains insufficient protein for children and pregnant or breastfeeding women

The American Dietetic Association, the world's largest organization of food and nutrition professionals, published the following statement in 2003:

> 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. An evidence-based review showed that vegetarian diets can be nutritionally adequate in pregnancy and result in positive maternal and infant health outcomes.[15]

The largest study to date of pregnant vegans was by Cater et al. in 1987, at The Farm, in Tennessee, USA. The Farm is famous for its exceptional midwifery and birth outcomes and is home to Spiritual Midwifery author Ina May Gaskin. In the study, 775 vegan women were examined and the following important findings were observed.

- The vegan diet did not affect infant birth weight.

- The incidence of pre-eclampsia was drastically reduced from 5 — 10 percent in the general population to 0.1 percent of the vegan mothers in the study.

There have been other studies, such as Thomas and Ellis' 1977 study which also showed that infant birth weight was not adversely affected by a maternal vegan diet.[16]

While it is true that pregnant women do require an increase in overall nutrition, as in the case of vegan athletes, it is easily met by an increase in overall caloric intake. It is not true that you need to eat for two but it is important to maintain a healthy Body Mass Index. Overall caloric intake need only increase very gradually in the first and second trimester reaching approximately 200 calories a day above pre-pregnancy intake, to roughly 2150 -2300 calories a day, by the third trimester.[17]

During pregnancy extra care should be taken in relation to the quality of food choices. Choosing a wide variety of organic, plant foods, maximizes your chances of meeting additional nutritional requirements across the board.

As well as being endorsed in the position paper by the ADA, The Physicians Committee for Responsible

Medicine also advocates a plant-based diet for children, stating,

> Eating habits are set in early childhood. Vegetarian diets give your child the chance to learn to enjoy a variety of wonderful, nutritious foods. They provide excellent nutrition for all stages of childhood, from birth through adolescence.[18]

While I do find it comforting that scientists, doctors and nutritionists are beginning to acknowledge the safety of plant protein in all stages of life, for me the greatest confirmation comes from watching my beautiful, vegan girls grow from bumps in my belly into beautiful, vibrant, healthy young girls on nothing but the plant foods provided for them by our great and loving mother Gaia.

While this article in no way attempts to address all the complex issues associated with protein consumption, I hope it addresses some of the concerns and controversy vegans must navigate on a daily basis. We are only just beginning to understand the complex role of proteins and the full extent of their synthesis, metabolism, utilization and in particular, their inter-relationships. I personally think it's going to get a lot more interesting yet as we discover the full potential of these amazing molecules.

Heidi is a naturopath and medical herbalist with over 10 years experience in private practice. She is a member of The Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine and the National Herbalist Association of Australia. She has lectured in nutrition at RMIT University, run workshops on herbal medicine preparation, spoken at conferences and seminars, and been involved in research into the effects of herbal medicine on breast milk.

Heidi founded Conscious Nutrition in 2010, offering classes and consultations that combine her passion for vegan food with her knowledge of natural health to create an opportunity to reconnect with food as it relates to nutrition, medicine, spiritual growth, environmentalism, creativity and the joy of living.

For more information please visit <www.consciousnutrition.com.au>

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Vegan Nutrition: separating fact from fiction

Amanda Benham, Accredited Practising Dietitian and Nutritionist

From the time I first went vegan, in 1983, I found that people liked to challenge my vegan eating choice with questions like 'But where do you get your protein?' Being trained in science, I did not like to give an answer unless I felt confident that it was correct. I wanted to help convince people that being vegan was a sound decision and not detrimental to their health, and felt it would be unethical to do so without being absolutely sure that this was correct. Also I copped some 'flak' from total strangers as a pregnant vegan, with one woman screaming at me that my child would be born with brain damage due to vitamin B12 deficiency. So, I decided to study nutrition to find out the answers for myself.

Having already studied subjects such as Physiology and Biochemistry as an undergraduate I was fortunate in being able to commence my nutrition studies at postgraduate level. My nutrition studies began by completing a Graduate Diploma in Human Nutrition from Deakin University in Victoria. I did this as an external student as I lived in WA and my first child

was a baby at the time. This course gave me a basic understanding of nutrition but I did not feel it qualified me to provide nutrition advice, which seemed to be the direction I was heading in. So, I did a Graduate Diploma in Nutrition and Dietetics at Queensland University of Technology, and followed this soon after with a Master's degree in Health Science, majoring in Nutrition and Dietetics.

Very little was taught specifically about vegan nutrition in these courses, but they gave me the tools to research the subject. My Master's thesis was on the nutritional adequacy and health aspects of vegetarian and vegan diets. Following this I spent a couple of years developing a food guide for vegetarians and vegans and published a paper on this in the Australian Journal of Nutrition and Dietetics in 1999.[1] Since then I have done my best to keep up with the latest developments in nutrition, and read every article related to vegan and vegetarian nutrition published in scientific journals that I can find.

Unfortunately not all nutrition information is of high quality and over the years I have heard and read many statements about nutrition which I know to be inaccurate, misleading or just plain ridiculous. Unfortunately, these sometimes come from the mouths of vegans. This is particularly disturbing when the statements could

actually harm the health of vegans or deter others from becoming vegan. With so much conflicting information out there about nutrition — on the internet, in books, in magazines, in brochures and in presentations — it is clear that without a method for discerning who or what to believe many people will not only get totally confused but could also be guilty of spreading misinformation by repeating inaccurate information.

I urge all vegans and vegans-to-be to adopt a critical approach to nutrition information and to never assume that something is true just because it is in writing or because the speaker sounds convincing. I suggest the following be questions to be asked to help determine the quality of any nutrition information:

1. Who is providing the information? What is their expertise and experience in the subject? Are they qualified to provide the information? Do they have relevant formal qualifications from an established and accredited institution, such as a university?

For example, general practitioners and other doctors sometimes give nutrition advice but most are ill-qualified to do so. While medical students learn a lot about diagnosing disease and providing treatment (generally in the form of prescription drugs) they learn very little, if anything about nutrition. (The same applies to herbalists,

homeopaths, nurses, dentists and hypnotherapists. I would suggest a university degree in nutrition as the minimum qualification to look for if seeking nutrition advice.)

2. What is the motivation of the person providing the information? What are their likely biases? Do they have a hidden or subconscious agenda? Who funded the collection or publication of the information? Is there a conflict of interest, and if so, is it openly disclosed? For example, information funded by an industry (such as cattle farmers) is likely to be biased towards promoting that industry or its products. Sources of funding are not always openly disclosed, especially on the internet.

3. Where was the information published? Was it published in a reputable scientific journal, where the editors are experts in the field and the article is subjected to the scrutiny of other experts in the subject? Or is the information actually an advertorial, which the publishers have agreed to publish on condition that a paid advertisement is placed in the publication? (This is common practice in magazines, and the articles are rarely scrutinised for factual accuracy.)

4. What is the source of the information? Where did it originate? Is this the original source of the information? i.e. Did the writer do the research that resulted in the origination of the information, or are they just passing on second/third hand information? (Remember the game of Chinese whispers? The further a piece of information is from the original source the more likely it is to be distorted.) If the author is not the original source of the information, is it properly referenced, providing full details of the original source for every statement of fact that is not universally accepted? If not, why not? (Note that I wrote "original source". Too often references are quoted which are secondary rather than primary sources of information, such as quoting a magazine or book — which is in fact simply a collation of pieces of information, not an original source.)

5. Is the information based on sound scientific research or is it merely a theory based on anecdotal evidence or personal experience that has not been subjected to scientific scrutiny? Was the scientific method properly applied in the collection and evaluation of the information? Was the research well-designed?

For example, in testing a drug a "double blind crossover" method is commonly used. This means that neither the subjects nor people administering the drug are aware of whether what is being given is the drug or an inactive placebo. The subjects are divided into two 'matched' (e.g. for age, disease state etc) groups and each group is administered either the drug or the placebo for a certain amount of time, and results recorded. Then after a 'washout' period of not treatment the groups swap 'treatments' and the results are once again recorded. This is considered a valid method because it is designed to eliminate the biases (such as belief in whether the treatment will be effective) of both the subjects and the researchers.

With dietary studies it is generally much more difficult to eliminate the biases of the subjects and the researchers as dietary differences are difficult to disguise. Also, whenever a particular food is added to an eating pattern, less of another food or foods will be consumed, either consciously or unconsciously. So results need to be carefully analysed in order to discover whether they are attributed to the addition of one food or the subtraction of another or a combination of the two.

For example, are the health benefits of a vegan diet attributable to the absence of animal products (or a particular animal product) or to the inclusion of

additional servings of plant foods (or a particular plant food), or a combination of these factors? (Or perhaps even to some other, unrelated attribute of vegans?)

6. How readily measurable and objective were the results? For example, laboratory tests such as blood tests are clearly more readily measurable and objective than statements about energy levels or degree of pain.

7. What is the strength of the evidence for the information? Is it based on a large sample size (such as number of subjects in a scientific study) and are the results statistically significant? Does the information correlate with other sound sources of information on the subject?

For example, there is a large body of evidence to suggest that vitamin B12 is an essential nutrient that needs to be provided by diet or supplementation, and that failure to do so can result in deficiency and other adverse health outcomes. Claims that vegans can 'manufacture their own vitamin B12' and do not need to supplement have not been substantiated and are not in line with established scientific evidence to the contrary.

8. Are the conclusions made justifiable based on the information presented? Or are there errors in logic, leading to invalid conclusions?

For example, it is true that animal products are rich in protein and that we all need to consume protein in our daily diet. It is also true that vegan diets tend to be lower in protein than non-vegan diets. But to conclude that vegans are at risk of protein deficiency is as silly as concluding that vegans are at risk of starvation simply because vegan diets tend to be lower in calories than non-vegan diets. The reality is that Western diets are generally so high in protein and calories that replacing animal products with vegan alternatives still provides more than enough protein and calories.

Another common form of erroneous conclusion is to link practices and outcomes and conclude that one causes the other without proper evidence of causation.

For example, I have heard vegans say that the incidence of osteoporosis is higher in countries where dairy products are consumed and that therefore dairy products cause osteoporosis. (Perhaps what they meant to say is that this suggests that the consumption of dairy products does not appear to protect populations from osteoporosis.) But, without further evidence to support it, the original statement suggesting a cause-and-effect

relationship is a faulty conclusion. It makes just as much sense to say that the incidence of osteoporosis is higher in countries where mobile phones are used and therefore mobile phones cause osteoporosis.

9. Is the information up-to-date? Nutrition is an emerging science, with more information constantly being added to the collective information pool. Consequently, older information can sometimes become out-of-date and be superseded by newer information.

For example, it was once thought that it was necessary to combine different sources of protein (such as beans and rice) at the same meal in order to provide high quality protein for the body. This has been found to be unnecessary, due to the constant turnover of amino acids within the body — the protein-combining information is well and truly out-of-date.

Another example is that it was once thought that most fermented foods — such as tempeh, miso, sauerkraut and even beer and cider — were sources of vitamin B12. Spirulina was also once considered a viable source of vitamin B12. Back in the 1980's many vegans I knew relied on these foods as sources of vitamin B12 and unfortunately some of us suffered from vitamin B12 deficiency. What has since been found is that these foods

tend not to contain biologically active B12, but instead contain inactive analogues of vitamin B12 which are not only of no use to the human body, but could in fact contribute to a vitamin B12 deficiency by competing with "true" (biologically active) vitamin B12 for absorption. The older information is out-of-date and we now know that eating foods fortified with vitamin B12 or taking supplements is a more reliable method of preventing vitamin B12 deficiency.

10. Does the information align with what I wish to believe to be true?

If this is so, be extra careful. We are all susceptible to being less critical of information which conforms to our belief system. (Could this be why people who like eating meat tend to believe the myths about meat being needed for protein and iron?)

By doing our best to be unbiased and objective in our critical evaluation of information we increase our chances of separating nutrition fact from fiction and becoming well-informed and healthy vegans.

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Amanda has been an Accredited Practising Dietitian and Nutritionist specialising in vegan nutrition since 1992. She has been a vegan since 1983 and her two grown-up children are lifelong vegans. She can be contacted via <www.humanherbivore.com> or amanda@humanherbivore.com.

Vegan Veterinarians, Andrew Knight and Randall Cannon

Interview with Andrew Knight BSc., BVMS, PhD, CertAW, MRCVS, FOCAE

Australian bioethicist Andrew Knight is a ridiculously busy bloke. He is a Fellow of the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics, which is dedicated to advancing the ethical status of animals through academic research, teaching and publication; the Director of Animal Consultants International, which provides multidisciplinary expertise for animal issues; and a Spokesperson for Animals Count, a British political party for people and animals. Andrew also practises veterinary medicine in London.

Not all Andrew's ventures have been successful, however. Whilst attempting to relax he founded the Extreme Vegan Sporting Association to showcase vegan fitness. Unfortunately, this resulted in risks to life and limb from which he has yet to fully recover.

Andrew has produced over 50 scientific publications on animal issues. His key publications can be found at <www.AndrewKnight.info> and include a major series examining the contributions to human health-care of

animal experiments. These have attracted several awards at international scientific conferences, and formed the basis for his 2010 PhD. They also provided the foundations for his 2011 book *The Costs and Benefits of Animal Experiments*.

Andrew's other publications have examined the contributions of the livestock sector to climate change, vegan companion animal diets, the animal welfare standards of veterinarians, and the latest evidence about animal cognitive and related abilities and the resultant moral implications. His informational websites include <www.AnimalExperiments.info>, <www.HumaneLearning.info> and <www.VegePets.info>.

Andrew has also authored more than 30 popular publications. The most interesting concern the medicine and husbandry of supposedly mythical animals. As the world's most published veterinarian in this esoteric field, he is well on the way to becoming the first registered specialist in Veterinary Cryptozoology (Dip. Crypt.), specialising in the medicine and surgery of animals considered extinct or otherwise non-existent by (regrettably closed-minded) mainstream biologists.

To date, Andrew's studies have taken him to Loch Ness, remote alpine summits, Ireland and even London's eminent College of Psychic Studies. The

outstanding success of most of these trips has been only marginally diminished by the unfortunate absence to date of any of the creatures he has actually sought. Nevertheless, he remains determined to bring the benefits of modern medicine to the rarest and most wonderful of the world's creatures, no matter how many mountains he must climb, snowfields he must ski or tropical islands he must search, and no matter how much time he must — with the deepest of regrets — take off work. Andrew's travel adventures have been extensively chronicled in British veterinary journals, and his photos and stories are available via <www.AndrewsAdventures.info>.

Andrew why did you first become an animal advocate?

When I was eight, my parents gave me a book about baby animals. I looked at the pictures of baby deer and other animals, and announced I was going vegetarian. My parents smiled. It would only last a week, they thought.

A decade later, I was still vegetarian — but I didn't trouble myself to learn or think too deeply about the issues until my early twenties. I was appalled at what was being done to people and animals around the world and rapidly became first a human-rights and then an animal-rights activist.

When I was 23, I started dating a veterinary nurse. We both went vegan in an attempt to impress each other with our ethics. Unfortunately, I also had to ditch the non-vegan sweet collection I'd been building up for years, which by then occupied a substantial portion of my kitchen. The demands of romance can be merciless.

Tell us about your pathway since.

For the next several years, I alternated between studying, working, travelling and campaigning about animal rights and other issues. I'd always thought it was who you were and what you did that were important, not what job you held. Nevertheless, it began to frustrate me when I was repeatedly asked in radio interviews what I did for a living. Once I realised that people judge the merits of your arguments by things such as your appearance and qualifications, I began to seriously wonder if I should try to get into a profession.

I considered a number of professions, but becoming a veterinarian seemed likely to enable me to advocate most effectively for animals. I was also attracted to a job that would enable me to do a great deal of good in my day to day work, and that would enable me to travel and to financially support myself and my campaigns.

And so I returned to school, studied hard and made it into Western Australia's Murdoch University veterinary course. I had the vague idea that parts of my training might involve doing nasty things to animals, as well as a vague idea that humane alternatives probably existed elsewhere, but I was ignorant of the details of either.

Soon enough, I found myself drawn into a titanic struggle to win the right for students to 'conscientiously object' to harmful animal use and for implementation of humane teaching methods. By the end of my course, in 2001, Murdoch had become the first Australian university to formally allow student conscientious objection. Almost all of our invasive animal-physiology laboratories had been terminated and we'd established our first humane veterinary surgical training program.

I continued to support students across Australasia and abroad, and by 2005, several other universities had implemented humane teaching methods and conscientious-objection policies, and the first students had graduated from every Australian veterinary school without killing animals during their surgical training.

After graduation, I worked briefly for several US animal-protection organisations. Some commissioned me to conduct studies to examine the human clinical or toxicological efficacy of invasive animal research.

I continued that research for about a decade, until the present time. It has resulted in a large number of published scientific studies and conference presentations, my 2010 PhD, and my book on animal experiments.

Tell us more about your book on animal experiments.

The Costs and Benefits of Animal Experiments was published in 2011 by Palgrave Macmillan as part of an advanced series of at least 15 texts on animal ethics being produced by the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics. It combines more than a decade of research, analysis and experience in order to provide evidence-based answers to the key question: is animal experimentation ethically justifiable?

The book expands on my PhD, which critically assessed the human clinical and toxicological utility of animal experimentation. It includes over 500 scientific references, and relies on large-scale systematic reviews as its primary form of evidence. Within the medical and scientific worlds these are considered to provide 'gold-standard' evidence about clinical or research questions, because they pool a large amount of data and aim to minimise sources of bias. The book also comprehensively reviews alternative research, testing and educational strategies.

When considering costs and benefits overall, and particularly, the published studies examining the human clinical or toxicological utility of animal research, one cannot reasonably conclude that the benefits accruing to human patients or consumers, or to those motivated by scientific curiosity or profit, exceed the costs incurred by animals subjected to scientific procedures. On the contrary, the evidence indicates that actual human benefit is rarely — if ever — sufficient to justify such costs.

I very much hope my book will be widely consulted by students, scientists and policy-makers concerned with animal research and alternatives. One of my deepest hopes is it will be included in university libraries wherever life and health sciences or philosophy courses are offered. The book can be ordered via <www.Palgrave.com>.

You're a Spokesperson for Animals Count, a UK political party for animals. What are the party's aims?

Whilst broad concern for animals is certainly a mainstream priority, unfortunately this is poorly reflected in the policies of most political parties in the UK and elsewhere. Animal protection often ends up near the bottom of the political agenda. Meanwhile, millions of animals continue to suffer in unacceptable conditions.

Animals Count is a UK political party for people and animals, established in 2006. We branched off from the Dutch Party for the Animals, which was the world's first party to achieve electoral success. As of 2011, they had 23 politicians elected at national, provincial and local levels. Animals Count has received thousands of votes in British elections but has not had any candidates elected yet, a fact that's partly attributable to the UK political system, which discriminates against minor parties.

However, we aim to encourage or pressure other political parties — some of whom do have real power — to incorporate more animal-friendly policies within their own manifestos. We seek to engage them in dialogue, and we also contest seats, particularly in constituencies in which a small number of votes can determine the outcome. Losing votes to Animals Count helps other parties understand the need to better represent animal interests.

Similar parties for the animals exist in Germany, Austria, France, Spain, Portugal, Israel, Canada, and Australia (the Animal Justice Party). Some other parties and leaders — particularly the Greens — also have good policies for animals. Unfortunately however, this is far from uniform. While inconsistencies remain, dedicated political parties such as Animals Count will continue to represent the interests of animals within the political realm.

Why do you advocate vegan diets for companion animals?

Many people have become vegan for the sake of the animals, the environment, or their health. This has done an enormous amount of good. However, most of these caring people still continue to feed their companion animals meat-based diets, which achieves opposite effects. They do this out of fear of adverse health consequences of vegan diets, and ignorance of how these might be avoided. Accordingly, I created www.VegePets.info, which reviews in detail the health and nutritional aspects of vegan and commercial meat-based diets for companion animals.

The health hazards for dogs and cats (and, of course, for 'food' animals) inherent within commercial meat-based companion animal diets are numerous and difficult to avoid. Such diets provide an industrial dumping ground for abattoir waste products, meat considered unfit for human consumption, such as that obtained from animals who arrive dead, dying, diseased or disabled (4-D animals) at the abattoir; old or spoiled supermarket meat; large numbers of rendered dogs and cats euthanized in animal shelters in countries such as the US; old restaurant grease, complete with high concentrations of dangerous free radicals and trans fatty acids; and damaged or spoiled fish, complete with dangerous levels of mercury, PCBs and other toxins.

These diets may contain pathogenic bacteria, protozoa, fungi, viruses and even prions, and their associated endotoxins and mycotoxins — and particularly when manufactured in countries like the US, they may contain hormone and antibiotic residues and hazardous preservatives.

Diseases described in the scientific literature as more common following long-term maintenance of cats and dogs on meat-based diets include kidney, liver, heart, neurologic, visual, neuromuscular and skin diseases; bleeding disorders; birth defects; immuno-compromisation; and infectious diseases (e.g., DiBartola et al. 1993, Dow et al. 1989, Freytag et al. 2003 and Strieker et al. 1996 — see www.VegePets.info).

My veterinary experience over many years leads me to believe that so-called degenerative diseases such as cancer, kidney, liver and heart disease are probably much more common than would occur naturally — and I think some cases are probably exacerbated, if not directly caused by, the hazardous ingredients in many meat-based diets.

Vegan diets aim to meet all the nutritional needs of cats or dogs using only plant, mineral and synthetically-based ingredients. There is absolutely no scientific reason

why such diets cannot be formulated to meet all of the palatability, nutritional and bioavailability (which primarily refers to digestibility) needs of cats, dogs, humans, or virtually any species. Crucially, vegan diets also avoid most of the hazards found in meat-based diets.

However, use of a complete and balanced nutritional supplement with a home-made diet, or a nutritionally complete commercial vegan diet, is essential to safeguard health. Supplements and diets may be obtained from the suppliers listed at www.VegePets.info.

Regular urine pH monitoring is also important in order to detect the urinary alkalinisation, with its consequent potential for urinary stones and life-threatening blockages, that may result from a vegan diet in a small minority of cases (most commonly among male cats). Advice on monitoring and correcting alkalinisation using dietary additives is available at <www.VegePets.info>.

Finally, some animals maintained on certain meat-based diets long-term may be very resistant to change. The most important factors for transitioning difficult pets are very gradual change and persistence. Additional guidance is available at <www.vegepets.info>.

What's the purpose of the Extreme Vegan Sporting Association?

Veganism helps animals and the environment, and enables more efficient use of global food and water resources, thereby saving human lives too. However, many people resist these logical arguments for cultural reasons. Veganism is culturally alien to them. Some seem to imagine that vegans must endure grim and joyless lives of self-denial: no meat pies, leather jackets or animal-tested lipstick? Surely, we must dream of little more than our own untimely deaths, as we feebly stagger through our days, made pale and weak by lack of essential animal proteins? What kind of folk would subject themselves to such extremes?

I created the Extreme Vegan Sporting Association to demonstrate just how fun and fit vegans can really be. Growing numbers of athletes, as well as otherwise normal folk, have discovered some very important truths: by exercising basic consideration for the lives of those they would otherwise eat, and the people and animals who share our environment, vegans almost always become healthier and fitter! Karma, perhaps? Whatever the reason, being vegan can be seriously fun!

All who subscribe to our fun and life-affirming sporting ideals may consider themselves members of the Extreme Vegan Sporting Association. They can showcase their

exploits on www.ExtremeVeganSports.org. We currently include pictures or videos of vegan body builders, bungy jumpers, cyclists, dune tumblers, hikers, mountaineers, martial artists, runners, sky divers and yodellers. I encourage your readers to send in pictures of their own exploits via the website. All sports will be considered, but participants must be vegan!

What advice would you give to others interested in an animal advocacy career?

Large-scale advocacy — as distinct from hands-on animal welfare work — is aimed at achieving social change. To have any chance of success, it is essential that advocates present cases that will be seen by their target audiences as reasonable and rational. They should also present messages that are as close as possible to mainstream culture, rather than alienated from it, as sometimes occurs with more militant activism. If direct action tactics are used, then they should be ones that generate mainstream support for a campaign, rather than opposition. There are some outstanding examples from Australia and elsewhere that have very effectively used humour, for example.

It's also fundamentally important that advocates are realistic. We need to be realistic about human psychology — particularly, the psychology of behavioural and social

change, in order to determine the most effective strategy and tactics. We must also recognise that in many cases, relatively small, incremental changes are the best that may be achieved, and that inappropriate tactics can jeopardise even these. Advocates should focus on perhaps one or two issues likely to result in the greatest positive change, rather than picking too many issues, or those less winnable. Our time and resources are very limited. We must combine reason with a realistic world view to ensure we achieve the maximum impact possible, both for the sake of the animals, and perhaps, ourselves.

If the possibility exists, then it may also be worth pursuing a career that will maximise one's ability to advocate for animals. Excellent choices include medicine, veterinary medicine, law, dietetics and environmental science. The movement also needs support skills such as IT, graphic design, photography and videography, management, marketing and fundraising.

Randall Cannon is a veterinarian who lives in Orlando, Florida, in the USA.

What inspired you to become a vegan?

My inspiration for becoming vegan was, without a doubt, the animals. Any health and environmental benefits are a bonus. I was raised in a family that hunted, and I

myself hunted until I was 20. Like most people, I looked at animals as a source of personal enjoyment, whether for taste or sport. When I entered veterinary school, I cared for animals, but in a very selfish way, looking at them more as a possession than a soul — I loved animals more for what joy they brought me.

I was trained in the livestock industry and had full knowledge of the horrors involved in bringing animal products to the dinner table. I was able to keep my blinders on and continued to eat meat and dairy for about 11 years into my career. Somewhere along the way, my patients showed me, time and time again, that they were as special, if not more special, than humans; they certainly have purer souls. I began to look at animals as true beings who deserve all the dignity and rights we afford humans.

Before becoming vegan, I enjoyed steak immensely — filet mignon was my favourite. After a 'good meal', I was haunted by the vision of a cow's eye — the eye of a beautiful, trusting, innocent cow. The hypocrisy of working all day to save a dog or cat and crying when I couldn't but then coming home and eating a steak began to gnaw at me. I gave up meats about nine years ago but continued to eat dairy and fish until about a year ago, when I finally admitted to the horrors of the dairy and fishing industries as well. I now realise I have no right to use animals for

taste, fashion, convenience or entertainment; nor can I sit idly by while we humans abuse animals.

In your opinion, as a doctor, do you consider the vegan diet to be healthy?

As someone who has had a medical education, albeit veterinary, I wholeheartedly believe a vegan diet is the healthiest choice for humans. I made the switch to being vegan not for my health but for ethical reasons. The bonus, for me, has been much improved health. I'm 46, and I no longer require any cholesterol medications, I'm at my 'college' weight, and I'm in good shape.

When I consumed animal products, I suffered from severe indigestion and frequently awoke in the middle of the night to take an antacid, but since being vegan, I've solved that problem as well. I encourage people to read Dr T. Colin Campbell's book *The China Study* to get an understanding of how bad animal products are for us. I look at my vegan friends and am always amazed at how young they look compared with the general population.

I find it very strange that there aren't more vegan veterinarians around. Is my assumption incorrect that vets love animals and would therefore not want to see them suffer as a result of animal-agriculture processes?

I find this strange too. As with most people, veterinarians are able to wear blinders and ignore what they know goes on in the livestock industry. I have a 'continuing education' meeting every month, and it's held at a steak restaurant. I'm the only veterinarian who orders a vegan meal. I sit at the table with rapidly ageing, overweight veterinarians who ask for their steak rare — one even said he wanted it 'mooing' when it hit his plate.

I don't mince words when I'm at that table. I don't accuse my dining companions of being bad people, but I do point out the hypocrisy of specieism — that we work all day to treat dogs and cats but couldn't care less about the livestock, whales and dolphins at Sea World or about circus animals and other victims of abuse by humans. I almost always get asked the same stupid questions about things such as protein deficiency and plants' feelings, but I bite my tongue and try to appeal to the person's heart.

I hope there'll come a day when veterinarians take the lead in animal rights rather than defend the very institutions in which we were indoctrinated into the notion that it's our right to use animals.

Can animals such as our companion cats and dogs be vegan? If so, what's the best diet for them?

As for vegan veterinary diets, I think it's safe to feed dogs a good vegan diet. For cats, being true carnivores who require animal proteins, it's a different story. I have no personal experience with vegan cat foods, but I'll be looking into it.

In addition to your vet work, you're involved in the animal-rights movement. Can you tell us a bit about what kinds of projects you get involved in and what you're doing at present?

Once I was able to remove the blinders and acknowledge the horrors of the livestock industry, eating a vegan diet just wasn't enough. I can't sit idly by while animals are born into a life of hell and then slaughtered for our tastes, convenience, fashion and entertainment. I actively try to show people the reality of their choices and show them the hypocrisy of loving a pet while participating in cruel industries. I'm sure I offend many people, but I always think to myself I'd rather offend them than not stand up for the animals, who have no voice. I really don't care if I offend someone who really doesn't care whether he or she offends helpless, innocent animals in the worst of ways — get over it, and face reality.

I'm also actively involved in the local animal-rights group ARFF, and I frequently participate in protests at puppy stores, circuses, Sea World and the greyhound

track. I actively adopt out animals from my clinic, and I hand out vegan literature. It's just not enough to care; you have to act!

Do you have any tips for us about how we can better protect our companion animals' health?

Seek out a vegan veterinarian – he or she will always have the animal's best interests at heart. Give your companion animal plenty of love, exercise and fresh foods. Learn about his or her diseases and problems. Well-educated carers have healthier companions.

If you had a message for the world on behalf of animals, what would it be?

That's a hard one to answer because I have so many messages. I think the animals would want us to know they're much more intelligent and aware than we give them credit for — that they feel emotional pain at the same guttural level as we do. When we strip a calf away from her mother, we hurt her as deeply as we would a baby we stripped from a human mother. When we herd cattle down the slaughter chute, we cause in them the same trembling and fear that humans felt in concentration camps when being led to the 'showers.'

It's not about superiority and who's more intelligent; it's about acknowledging that a sentient being can

experience both suffering and pain. I've witnessed first hand the suffering that goes on in the livestock industry — it's real, and it's horrific. Any veterinarian who tells you otherwise either is a liar or has a distorted view of suffering and killing.

Anything else you'd like to add?

I haven't met a vegan yet who went vegan because he or she didn't like the taste of meat and dairy. It really boils down to whether you value your tastes, convenience, fashion and enjoyment more than the suffering and lives of those animals; it really is that simple. As hard as I work as a veterinarian to save animals' lives every day, the truth is you can save more lives than I ever can by just going vegan — no degree required! The irony in all this — humans killing animals — is that ultimately our consumption of them is what's killing us: karma.

This interview was taken from www.vegansarecool.com. You can check out the website for photos of Dr Cannon and to ask questions and give your feedback.

The lowdown on all the good stuff

Long-time Australian vegan Liz Dealey gives us the lowdown on the health benefits of being vegan and how she stays looking and feeling young.

Please share with us the benefits you've derived from living the vegan lifestyle. How long have you been vegan?

I went vegetarian in 1984 and then vegan in late 1986, so 24 years a vegan. Living as a vegan is much easier now than at any time in the past.

There's no excuse for buying into cruelty, because there's an alternative for everything you ever ate or used 'before'. I don't get tired quickly, I sleep well and I don't get struck down with the flu or multiple colds. The health benefits of a vegan lifestyle are a bonus, but the main benefits for me are living without harm and showing other people how easy it is to live a meaningful life by making choices based on kindness.

Do you think that in following a vegan diet you find it easier to stay youthful both on the inside and on the outside? In your opinion, does a meat and dairy diet cause people to age faster?

Yes, I believe that when we eat a plant-based diet, we help our body to slow the ageing process. We're not constantly overworking our body as we are when

we ask it to digest flesh, milk and eggs. Also, all the hormones added to animal products these days can only have a detrimental effect on the human body. I look at a lot of meat eaters and see that their skin is grey, and I find many of them to be either unhappy or cranky, always complaining about one ailment or another.

Also, I think I've been spared any chronic menopause symptoms, because although I do get the 'hot flushes' occasionally, that's the only symptom I have. It's probably because I've been eating soy products for so long.

And in the midst of all the sadness I feel for all the atrocities committed against animals, I always try to stay upbeat and happy, because I don't want to portray being a vegan as all doom and gloom.

Compared with the health of your meat-eating contemporaries, is your health in better shape?

I have to say a definite yes to this one! Many of the meat eaters I'm surrounded by are overweight and have a multitude of health issues. Some of them have diseases such as diabetes, and yet I see them guzzling sugary drinks and shoving awful food into their mouth. I often wonder whether they have some weird death wish!

I'm often asked why I'm always eating but I don't put on weight. I say, 'Look at what I'm eating, and look at what you eat!' I'll be eating a handful of sunflower seeds as opposed to chips or chocolate.

However, there's a lot of vegan junk food out there these days, so it can be hard to stay totally healthy. I'm trying to add more raw food to my diet now, such as by having a raw, green smoothie for breakfast, but I have a really sweet tooth, and there's so much vegan sweet stuff available, it can be tempting.

Can you please share with us your favourite recipe?

Okay: this is my 'secret seven herbs and spices', oven-baked, 'chicken' tofu recipe. In sharing it, I'm confident I will win over even the non-believers who dislike tofu.

Ingredients

A slab of organic tofu
A Nice 'n' Tasty Chicken Yeeros shake — it's completely vegan, which is even stated on the container
Braggs Amino Liquid — it's like soy sauce, only better
Savoury yeast flakes
Olive oil

Method

- Pour some of the olive oil into a metal roasting tray.
- Cut the tofu into slices 1 centimetre thick and place

them in the tray. Cover each slice with a thin layer of the oil.
- Pour the Braggs over the slices so that it pools in the oil.
- Sprinkle Yeeros shake all over the slices.
- Cover the whole lot with a good layer of savoury yeast flakes, and drizzle more oil over each slice.
- Bake the slices for 20 minutes in a pre-heated oven at 180°C.
- Turn the slices over and repeat the process. Go lightly on the shake and Braggs on this side, otherwise the slices will be too salty. Bake them for 15 more minutes.
- Drain the oil from the pan straight away, and don't let the slices sit in the oil. Leave them in the pan to cool for a bit before eating.
- Refrigerate any leftovers in an airtight container for several days. The slices are just as good served cold. My dogs love them too!

Other than diet, are there any factors you can attribute your youthful appearance to?

First, I'm not sure I actually look 'youthful' — maybe from a distance! Ha-ha! That's a hard thing to achieve at 54. I just hope I look a few years younger than my actually age.

I think attitude has a lot to do with it too. I've got a youthful outlook on life, and I'm not your average 54-year-old. My partner and I never had 'skin kids', as opposed to 'fur kids', so haven't had the stress of raising human children!

I love a good joke.

I also think that it's helpful to surround myself with younger people; some of my closest friends are 16 or 20 years younger.

And in living a cruelty-free life, I'm able to feel positive, that my life is meaningful and that I'm making a difference to the beings who are less fortunate: all the animals who are suffering in the world.

Any last pieces of inspiration you'd like to share with us?

Try to be a healthy vegan.

Drink lots of water.

I'm not perfect, by any means: I sometimes eat junk food, I don't get enough exercise, I drink alcohol, I swear a lot, and I'm getting a bit thick around the middle, but I'm happy because I know that my life isn't causing suffering and misery to any animals.

I think once you've found out the truth behind the awful way animals are treated in the food industry, you have to start making kind choices in what you eat. Ignorance isn't bliss.

People who are just starting on this journey are lucky that they are coming in at a time when things are slowly starting to change for animals. Hopefully for future generations, eating animals will be a horrible, distant, barbaric practice that people can only read about in history books.

And remember: you'll never find peace in this world while your body remains a graveyard. Try to live a meaningful life, and be proud of what you achieve for animals, no matter how small a victory it might be. Speak out, and make your voice heard — you are a voice for the animals.

I recently spent my 54th birthday at Edgar's Mission's World Animal Day extravaganza, and I felt so lucky to be able to spend the day surrounded by such happy animals and all the wonderful people who are working so hard to make this world a better place for animals.

This interview was taken from <www.vegansarecool.com>. You can check out the website for photos of Liz Dealey and join in the conversation.

60 seconds with Lisa Blundell, HH Dip(VNC)

What's your favourite vegan cookbook, and would you recommend it?

My favourite vegan cookbook is *Now Vegan!* by Lynda Stoner. I recommend it because it has amazing recipes, great quotes throughout and excellent information about vegan nutrition at the beginning of the book.

What's your favourite vegan website?

My favourite vegan website is The World Peace Diet: <www.worldpeacediet.com>.

If people ask you a question about health and the vegan diet, which website do you recommend they check out?

If someone asks me a question about health and the vegan diet, I recommend he or she check out <www.veganhealth.org> it's an excellent website.

Who's your vegan inspiration?

My vegan inspiration is Supreme Master Ching Hai: she exudes compassion, empathy and love — and towards humanity as well as animals.

Lisa is a consultant in vegetarian and vegan nutrition.

60 seconds with Adrian from Austin, Texas, USA

What are the benefits of being vegan?

Had I remained a meat eater, I would have continued to have a guilty and stained consciousness, even if just at a subconscious level. But because I make a deliberate attempt to not harm anyone, including non-speaking fellow beings, I'll continue to feel inculpable — even if I'm facing a firing squad!

Can men be healthy and strong as vegans?

Some of the most feared and barbaric warrior tribes of Europe, such as the Getae (Goth)–Dacians, the ancestors of the present-day Romanians, Celts and Germans, are known to have been vegetarian. Because of their strong belief in immortality, they were more barbaric than the barbarians. I'm wondering where this sense of immortality came from! Who would dare say that those men were not healthy and strong? And all men can be just as healthy and strong on a vegan diet — I'm living testimony.

What's your favourite vegan website?

Above all else, I like to learn what my vegan brothers and sisters think and feel.

The best website for that is <www.vegansarecool.com.>

Do you have a favourite book about veganism?

The Food Revolutions by John Robbins is said to be the bible of all vegans. I'd say it's a very good book!

Do you think vegans are cool?

Not only are vegans cool; they are powerful beings who seem to have come from a much advanced human civilisation, one in which humans are neither harmed nor taken to war and in which they don't consume animals for food, furniture or clothing.

Leigh-Chantelle's top 10 tips for optimal health on a vegan diet

1. Eat a well-balanced, low-fat, healthful, varied, whole-grain, plant-based diet that includes as much organic produce as you can afford, to ensure you're getting the proper balance of vitamins, minerals and nutrients.

2. Make sure you exercise regularly and include weight-bearing exercises such as walking, dancing or hiking.

3. Go out into nature as much as you can — whether you hike, swim or just feel the grass underneath your feet.

4. Drink enough water. If you add fresh lemon to it, you'll absorb water better, detoxify and stimulate your metabolism.

5. Ensure you get adequate rest, and listen to your body: if you're tired, go to sleep.

6. Don't become addicted to fast foods, deep-fried foods, fats, sugars, refined products, caffeine, tobacco, drugs or alcohol, any and all of which cause leeching out of essential vitamins and minerals from your diet and lead to ageing.

7. Don't get involved in dramas or hang around with negative people. Surround yourself with true friends and positive people who are on the same life path as yours. Spend time with people whose company you actually like, and don't hang around with people who stress you out or complain every time you see them.

8. Appreciate and be thankful for everything you have in your life: your family, your friends, your health and the planet. Everything that exists around you, you have created. See the wonder in everything.

9. Respect yourself and other people.

10. Lead by example to be the best person you can possibly be.

For more information about Leigh-Chantelle and her vegan initiatives, please visit <www.leigh-chantelle.com>, <www.vivalavegan.net> and <www.greenearthday.net>.

Spotlight on a vegan business

Loren Lembke from Bounty Burgers

Can you please tell us a bit about why you decided to start Bounty Burgers?

I've been hypoglycaemic most of my life, so even when I was a meat eater, protein was a very important part of my diet. That's how I know that if I can end up as a long-term vegan, anyone can.

After eight years being vegetarian and then 16-plus years as a vegan, I really wanted to have a product that was delicious yet healthy and convenient. So many of the available products weren't healthy enough or didn't have the taste and texture I desired. I believe that vegans are the best and therefore deserve the best — I'd had enough of going to so many food outlets and being treated as a second-class citizen who didn't matter. I also wanted a product that crossed the great divide so that meat eaters could actually enjoy an all-vegan product.

What is a Bounty Burger, and what are the main ingredients?

Bounty Burgers are high protein — they have as much protein as meat has — so soy protein and soy flour are the main ingredients. There's also some gluten, but

little enough for those who might be gluten intolerant; however, they're not suitable for coeliacs.

How have people been reacting when trying the burger, and in particular, how are meat eaters reacting to tasting a Bounty?

Honestly, I wish we had a camera on at all times to see the changing expression of a meat eater from doubtful to pleasantly surprised — amazed, even. Some people don't even wait to hear the rave; they just ask, 'Where can I find them?'

What are the health benefits of eating a Bounty Burger compared with eating a beef burger?

When you eat meat and dairy, your body becomes acidic, and the acidity can lead to disease, whereas plant-based protein doesn't have that effect.

Bounty Burgers have as much protein as meat has and yet they're high in fibre, low in salt, low in fat, low in carbohydrates and cholesterol free; each 90-gram burger has only 95 calories. Because they're high in protein and fibre, they're filling and satisfying — you won't feel hungry an hour later. They're also being promoted by Sean Kirsten, a vegan dietitian, to help his clients lose weight and drop their cholesterol level.

At our in-store tastings, we get many people looking for a healthy alternative because they have a condition such as diabetes or high cholesterol.

Compared with a meat burger, is a Bounty Burger better for the environment, and if so, why?

Because Bounty Burgers are vegan, no methane is produced and the waterways aren't being polluted from run-off from farms and abattoirs. Because they are pre-cooked, consumers spend only a few minutes cooking them up at home, so they are easy on the electricity bills.

<www.bountyburgers.com.au>

Spotlight on a vegan business

Chantel Tu from Just Green

Why did you decide to start a vegan business?

I was inspired to start the vegan business because of my spiritual practice I've developed in the past years.

I'd been a vegetarian for 16 years, and it was just recently that I made the transition to the vegan diet. I started the business because being vegan myself, I knew how difficult it was to find vegan food. I wanted

to make it easier for people to get these products at an affordable price. I did some research into where I could find these vegan foods and managed to find some local suppliers. I also travelled overseas to meet with some vegan food suppliers.

I started my vegan business because I thought it was necessary to deliver the vegan message to my community as a whole.

So, the business all started from an intention to pass on the message of vegan living and the benefits for our health, our environment and our animals friends. After meeting a few great vegan suppliers and sampling the array of tasty vegan food and seeing how easy it was to cook, I knew it was possible for people to follow the same path — and as the saying goes, the rest is history. My vegan journey had begun.

Can you please tell us a bit about what you sell?

At Just Green, we sell a vast array of ready-to-eat and prepared foods for the full vegan diet. We also sell frozen products such as vegan ham, mushroom-steak burger, vegan chicken nuggets, vegan fish sauce, soya sauce, mushroom sauces, veg-chicken seasoning, veg-beef seasoning … and the list goes on. I believe that being vegan doesn't mean we have to cut back on taste, variety

and quality. The intention of Just Green is to make vegan living simple and very affordable. Popular products include mock meats, which lend themselves to variety and creativity for most cooking styles.

If you enjoy spaghetti, pizza, stir fries or even veg fried chicken, you can enjoy them all without causing any suffering or death of our precious animal friends.

Is vegetarian mock meat healthier than animal meat?

Of course mock meat is healthier than animal meat, animals are fed lots of antibiotics, and mock meats are made from gluten or soy products.

A lot of research has been undertaken in which it's been found that animal meat carries a lot of unknown germs and bacteria that have caused illness and diseases in humans, such as E. coli, bird flu, mad-cow disease and swine flu.

What is true is that the energy the animal carries, whether it be an illness, depression or living in poor conditions, will be passed on to us if we eat that animal. We are what we eat!

Our mock meat is made out of natural products such as soybean protein, gluten, beans and vegetables. Mock meat is a good substitute for animal meat, and it's very tasty.

Excessive meat consumption has been linked to cancer, heart disease and a higher risk of stroke. Although meat does carry nutrition for the body, it doesn't necessarily mean that individual will have sustainable health if they're a meat eater.

It's known that vegan foods including mock meats are much healthier alternatives that don't involve sacrificing of nutritional elements such as essential fats and proteins.

The way you are and the health you carry is generally obvious from the radiance of your skin. Most vegans have a glowing skin tone, which reflects their health and wellbeing and they look younger than other people in their age group.

What has the feedback been from your customers?

We often receive good feedback from our customers. Most of our customers have become regular because they can taste the high quality of our food. Our customers usually ask for more variety in our products, which is why we continue to source a wide array of vegan products locally and internationally.

The best feedback we have received from our customers is that vegan food is very tasty. Initially, some people thought vegan cooking was complicated and time

consuming. However, once they know about the vegan products that are out there, they soon realise the choices are just as good.

Has anyone become vegan after trying your products?

Some customers are serious about becoming vegan even before they try our product, due to a health condition or their beliefs. Once they realise how easy it is to become a vegan, they find the transition smooth. As for other people, there are some I call part-time vegans: people who are starting to become aware of the physical and spiritual benefits of vegan living. They generally buy vegan products to balance their meat diet.

However, most of my customers are now full-time vegans. It is great to know that our products are making a difference in people's decision making when they're placing food on their plates. We're changing the world, one meal at a time!

<www.justgreenfood.com.au>

3 Cruelty-free fashion: because animals don't have to suffer for you to look chic

Amanda Rootsey is Australia's first eco-model and the co-founder of Vegan Era, an online portal for all things vegan. She lives a simple life in a solar-powered caravan on top of a mountain, with her boyfriend and their gorgeous staffy Trudi. In this chapter, she shares her insights into vegan fashion essentials.

As a fashion model, I've worn some beautiful, crazy, incredible things and been to some amazing places all over the world. But as I was parading around in these fabulous outfits, I never stopped to think about where they had come from, how they had been made, who had made them or how many animals had had to suffer or die in the process.

At the start of 2009, for about a month, I remember working for a very well known and exclusive label in Italy. I was doing all the showings for the next season's collection, at the company's head office in Florence. While I was putting on another fur coat worth thousands of dollars, I knew in my heart it wasn't right — but, as most

of us are so good at doing, I started pushing the thought out of my mind as quick as a flash, and went on with my work.

It wasn't until a little while later, when I was diagnosed with Hodgkin's lymphoma, that I really started to consider how fragile life is. Hearing you have cancer is a shock, to say the least, but once I got over the initial reaction, I started researching the best ways to heal my body. I was surprised to find that animal products, particularly meat and dairy, were linked over and over again with detrimental health — so I went vegan straight away.

I changed my life in more ways than one by switching to a vegan diet, and it wasn't long before I ditched my leather shoes, woollen jumpers, and silk tops and dresses. The more I looked into how fashion is a contributing factor in the burden we place on our planet and in harming our beautiful animal friends, the more ashamed I was to have been a part of the industry.

Needless to say, I assumed my modelling days were over! Who would want to hire a model who wouldn't wear fur, leather, wool or silk and was picky about which hair and make-up brands were used?

The truth, however, is that more and more people are becoming aware of the real price of fashion and are

demanding higher standards. Terms such as 'fair trade', 'eco-friendly', 'organic' and 'cruelty free' are everywhere. It's such an exciting time for the fashion industry, and vegans certainly aren't limited in their choices. The time of all vegans being labelled as 'hippies' is over — not that there's anything wrong with being a hippy!

To be clear about what non-vegan fabrics and apparel are, here's a list:

- Fur
- Leather
- Wool
- Silk

Let me tell you why vegans avoid clothes, shoes and accessories made from these animal-derived sources:

Why no fur?

Fur is probably the most obvious item to avoid. Many people these days, vegan or not, will refuse to wear it because the cruel ways of obtaining the fur of any creature are now widely known. Unfortunately, more than 50 million animals still suffer and die as a result of the international fur trade.

Vegan substitutes
Synthetic, faux fur, which isn't only cruelty free; it's cheaper!

Why no leather?

Leather is used in so many products these days, particularly shoes and accessories. It can seem quite a challenge to completely rid your wardrobe of it, but rest assured, it can be done! And it needs to be done.

Although many people believe that leather products are simply a by-product of the livestock industry, that's not necessarily the case. Millions of cows, pigs, sheep, kangaroos and goats are slaughtered for their skin each year. After being kept in captivity and often treated poorly, they are trucked to slaughter, bled to death and skinned.

Vegan substitutes
Leather substitutes are everywhere and are often a fraction of the price of leather products. Check the labels of shoes, belts and bags, in particular, for words and expressions such as 'man-made leather', 'all man-made materials', 'pleather' and 'synthetic'. If it's real leather, the label will say so!

Why no wool?

While the animals that provide fur and leather are killed, often the sheep who so generously provide their wool are not. However, whereas years ago, sheep were probably well looked after and were sheered only when they 'needed a haircut', this is certainly not the case any more. As with everything else, supply must keep up with demand, so factory farming is also found in the fashion industry.

Most of the world's wool comes from Australia where millions of sheep are raised for wool. To prevent something called fly strike from affecting the sheep, whereby eggs that blow flies lay on the sheep's skin hatch into larvae and feed on the animal's tissue, more than 20 million merino-breed lambs are mulesed each year.

Mulesing is a gruesome procedure in which shears are used to cut dinner plate–size chunks of skin and flesh from the lamb's backside — often without an anesthetic.

After a lifetime of having their woollen coat removed for humans to wear in the form of a woollen garment, many sheep are then shipped to the Middle East or North Africa for slaughter. These animals are placed on extremely crowded, disease-ridden ships and have little or no access to food or water for weeks at a time. During the journey, many fall ill when they become stuck in faeces

and are unable to move, and many others are smothered or trampled to death by other sheep. It's not a nice life for a poor ol' sheep!

Vegan substitutes
There are plenty of warm, snuggly alternatives to wool that don't contribute to cruelty. They include synthetic fabrics such as polyester fleece, acrylic and cotton flannel. As a bonus, they are washed easily, they keep their bright colours and they cost less!

Also stay clear of materials such as pashmina, angora, cashmere, shearling, camel hair, and mohair, because they are also sourced from an animal.

Why no silk?

Most people have no clue where silk comes from. Don't feel bad, though: I had no idea either, and the thought never occurred to me. Let me enlighten you, then. Silk is a fibre created by silk worms. Silk worms live out their life, and when it comes time for them to transform into a moth, they spin a cocoon. That's when the silk farmer or manufacturer comes along, scoops up the cocoons and steams or gases the silk worms alive.

Why don't they just let the silk worm emerge and then collect the cocoon? If the worms are allowed to live out

their full term in the cocoon, they'll secrete an alkaline fluid that causes a hole in the cocoon so they can fly away, causing the single strand to break into many strands and a slight colour change to the fibres.

To make one pound — about half a kilogram — of the finest silk, 2600 silk worms must die.

There are some farmers who do allow the silk worm to emerge first, and that silk has been given the name Ahimsa Silk, or Peace Silk. The silk worms are allowed to live out their full life cycle and emerge from their cocoon as a moth. The silk is then de-gummed and spun, like any other fibre. The resulting yarn is soft and fluffy, like a cloud. This method, however, still isn't vegan, because the silk is still technically sourced from an animal, and in most cases, the worms are still kept in captivity.

Vegan substitutes
Humane alternatives to silk include polyester, nylon, rayon, tussah, milkweed seed-pod fibres, silk-cotton tree and ceiba tree filaments.

Choosing cruelty-free items

There's a substitute for every item and everyone's budget. Once you start taking notice of labels and keeping an eye

out for vegan alternatives, you'll see them everywhere. Going online can also be very useful because there are now many websites that specialize in vegan and eco-friendly fashion.

The decision to lead a compassionate lifestyle is a very personal one, and there's no 'right' way to do things. It's up to you to decide how you make the transition and what you feel comfortable with.

10 tips for veganising your wardrobe

1. Ditch the leather, wool, fur and silk. Work out what you own that isn't vegan, and if you can afford to, give it to a local charity store. If you can't afford to get rid of everything at once, simply make the decision to purchase only vegan items from then on.

2. Get to know your fashion labels. As with grocery shopping, it's important to read the label on each item, because it's difficult to know when something is real leather or faux leather.

3. Do your research. Find out which labels offer vegan fashion that you like, and get to know where you can find those items.

4. Shop smart. Many of the cheaper stores and labels have synthetic alternatives, so you can always find a vegan option. However, if you plan your shopping trips and invest in quality pieces that'll last longer, you'll be able to build a beautiful wardrobe rather than simply having a pile of clothes that won't last more than two washes.

5. Be creative when choosing your shopping destinations. Going into your local mall may not be as fun as it used to be once you've learnt where most of the clothing comes from and the damage its manufacture is causing to our beautiful planet — so get creative. You might have to go a little off the beaten track to find what you want, but the results will be worth the extra effort!

6. Go vintage shopping.

7. Find some local markets. Check out some of your local markets for local and individual labels. You could even chat to the stall holders about customizing some items for you.

8. Learn to sew — create your own masterpiece!

9. Find vegan friends to go shopping with! If you can't find any 'real' ones, then meet online ones. There

are many vegan blogs and forums that are always chatting about the latest vegan find.

10. And last but not least, spread the word. If shop owners and designers know you want vegan items, they'll provide them! The more people who request cruelty free fashion, the more the suppliers will listen.

Here's an alphabetical listing of some websites through which you can purchase or be kept up to date with vegan fashion and accessories:

<AlternativeOutfitters.com>

<Bboheme.com>

<Beyondskin.co.uk>

<Chicvegan.com>

<Cri-de-coeur.com>

<Ecofashionworld.com>

<Ecolissa.com>

<Ecorazzi.com>

<Ecouterre.com>

<Ethicalwares.com>

<Faux.uk.com>

<Girliegirlarmy.com>

<Mattandnat.com>

<Melissaaustralia.com.au>

<OlsenHaus.com>

<StellaMcCartney.com>

<Susannichole.com>

<Thediscerningbrute.com>

<Thekindlife.com>

<Vautecouture.com>

<Veganatheart.com>

<Veganera.com>

<Veganwares.com.au>

<Vegetarianshoes.com>

Sources for this article were <http://www.peta.org/> and <http://www.animalsaustralia.org>.

To connect with Amanda, please check out <www.amandarootsey.com.au> and <www.veganera.com>.

Fashion chat with Jack Styles

How old are you?

I am 16 years old.

How long have you been vegan for and why did you decide to go vegan?

I went vegan at the age of 13 after getting involved with Animal Liberation Victoria. I decided to become a vegetarian at the age of 11 and after I learnt about the horrors involved in the dairy and egg industries, I felt I had to go vegan to stop all animal suffering.

Are your parents vegan and if not, did they have any issues when you went vegan?

No, my parents eat meat, and at first there were some issues when I went vegan — they were completely supportive of my vegetarianism — but they quickly adjusted and became fine with it, and are still supportive of my activism and diet.

Can you tell us what 'cruelty-free fashion' is? What types of cruelty towards animals exist in the fashion industry?

Cruelty-free fashion is hard to describe, because everyone classes cruelty as different things, but the fashion industry has to be one of the biggest users of

animals. Everyone knows about the old fur and leather, but luxury designers are becoming more cunning in the animal products they use. Many new classes of fur and wool are not viewed as being cruel by the general public or consumers. Animals killed for fur are often bred in torturous conditions and killed by genital or anal electrocution, poisoning or skinning alive. Dog and cat fur also frequently and consistently ends up on the world's catwalks, unknown to the designers, and fur from China is often mislabeled. I will discuss the cruelty behind the new trend of lamb's fur later on. Vegans do not wear fur, leather, wool or silk.

Who is your favourite 'cruelty-free fashion' designer, and why?

It is very hard to find a cruelty-free designer in this day and age, unfortunately, but I think the closest the luxury world gets is Stella McCartney, an avid PETA supporter who uses no leather or fur in her collections. She does, however, use wool. One fantastic thing about Stella McCartney is that she is not seen as a 'vegetarian' designer. Many celebrities and fashion identities love her clothing, bags and shoes regardless of the fact that they are completely synthetic — something they would certainly not do if she advertised her company as being vegan. From a fashion point of view, Stella McCartney is also a fantastic designer purely for the fact she creates

beautiful, wearable clothes for everyone. She is probably best known in Australia for her basic line produced for Target Australia over the past few years.

Are there any trends you are seeing among designers in relation to the use of animal products? Have any designers recently stopped using fur, for example?

A good example of the cunning use of animal products by luxury designers is the newest 'fabric' trend in the luxury world: astrakhan. For that fabric, lambs are killed within days of birth because of the softness of their fur. Broadtail is the fur of unborn lambs and is much more desirable in the industry, where by animals are killed while in the womb and the mother is killed at the same time. Broadtail is often also known as embryonic wool or lamb fur.

Many clothing label designers worldwide are reducing their use of fur, even though fur is becoming an even bigger trend each winter season. Luxury label designers who use real fur are beginning to incorporate faux fur into their collections for small products such as bags and gloves. Australian designers use of fur is dwindling, largely due to high pressure from animal activists in the country, with designers such as Allanah Hill and Arabella Ramsey recently going fur free after pressure from lobby groups such as PETA.

Chanel used all faux fur in their past winter collection, and their head designer the world renowned Karl Lagerfeld, stated that there is no need for real fur with current technology.

What campaigns are you involved with at the moment?

I am always involved in a large number of campaigns. I have been involved in the Coalition for the Protection of Racehorses (Ban Jumps Racing) for over 3 years now, and I am a PETA Australia activist, so I frequently work on whatever PETA campaigns seem to pop up; lately they have all been related to the fashion industry. I have been involved in Animals Australia for a number of years, also.

Jack Styles is commencing a two year Fashion Design degree in 2012. His largest campaign passion is animals used for clothing.

Biljana Josevska, Bsc. (USyd)

Vegan make-up artist

How long have you been vegan and why did you go vegan?

I became vegan 17 years ago. I never really liked meat when I was a child anyway, and I would constantly pick at it, finding veins and pieces of bone, tendon or fat in any random serving of meat I was given. It grossed me out. I

then started feeling even more uneasy about how animals were actually killed to provide that meat! It's not as if there wasn't enough food to go around — why did I have to be part of a living, feeling being getting killed just for me? None of that really made any sense to me.

To add to this soon-to-be-vegan cocktail, an actor I liked died: River Phoenix. I bought magazines (this was pre-internet days) and found out more about him.

I looked into the name that existed for the direction I was going in and felt that yes, 'vegan' was something well-suited to me. This was because I came to feel, in my mid-teens, that a chicken's ovarian egg, which had come out of her private parts, was not only 'gross', but was potentially half of a brand new chicken! I could not be part of promoting the taking away of this egg. And I imagined myself suckling from a lactating cow — yuck! Also, that milk wasn't meant for me, it's a baby cow's food and drink — not mine.

Are a lot of animal ingredients used in beauty and make-up products? Can you tell us about some commonly used ingredients we could find in popular products and brands?

Yes, there are. There are so many! Some examples are: lanolin, beeswax, and even placenta!

Lanolin can be equated to human hair sebum. Imagine putting on some random other person's hair oils on your lips for moisture, or as part of your hand cream — oh, so tempting, not! Not to mention that if you buy and use lanolin, then you are promoting the cruel act of sheep mulesing.

Beeswax is taken from bees at a detrimental cost to the bees (and yes, bees do suffer). It's also a known and common allergen and comedogenic (pore-clogging) ingredient. There are many vegan alternatives.

Carmine comes from dead bugs. Placenta is actual animal placenta — again, using the role-reversal imagination technique I alluded to when describing lanolin — how lovely would it be to use a baby's bloody placenta, which has just come out of his or her mother, on any part of your body for your skin's beauty (sarcasm)!

Are animals used in testing of beauty and make-up products?

Yes, they are. It's a dreadful practice that is inhumane, cruel and completely irrelevant to the outcome. As a cosmetic chemist, I know that the data obtained from testing chemicals for beauty-enhancement purposes, or otherwise, on animals is not directly transferable onto humans. This is now common knowledge and is why

many countries are banning products that have come about from any form of testing on animals, and thankfully, the change is possibly also due to the new empathetic understanding that we should not, as a species, inflict pain on members of other species that are at our mercy.

<bilmakeupart@y7mail.com>

60 seconds with Julia Harger, designer, animal lover and all-round cool vegan

Brazil

What are the benefits for you of following a vegan diet?

I strongly believe that eating animals and all their by-products isn't good for us, isn't natural and doesn't provide the nutrients we need — and is completely gross. But besides all the health issues, I'd say that I live better now I act according to my values, as an animal lover. Since becoming vegan I've found it feels really good to look at an animal and not feel embarrassed about being human any more. Knowing that I don't finance any type of mistreatment is simply the best feeling.

Also I've become much more aware of what I'm eating. I read food labels, and I always get to know exactly what's in a specific product. As consumers, I believe we

all shouldn't be alienated, and that we should instead question what exactly we are buying and financing … Oh and I almost forgot: we all become good cooks, as we get creative! I don't know even one, single vegan who doesn't cook.

How long have you been vegan?

I can't tell exactly as it was a slow process. I have been vegetarian for about 10 years and since then, I've been reading and believing in the cause. I then started to cut out animal ingredients step by step. When I moved to Australia, I got to know many vegans here, went to vegan expos, and finally, with nutritional assistance from my lovable personal trainer Fawn Porter, managed to completely eliminate animal products from my diet.

Would you recommend the vegan diet to others?

Definitely. I would recommend people become better informed. For the animal-agriculture industry, the less that consumers know about what's happening before the meat hits the plate, the better. I prefer to believe in kindness and that if everyone knew all we vegans know, they probably would join us too.

Do you have any tips for people considering making the switch to a vegan diet?

I would recommend doing it as a slow process. Cutting things one by one. That makes it easier. Also, read about it and get informed. Get to know about the animal agriculture industry, get to know about health issues, nutrition and recipes. Try doing a vegan version of your favourite recipes. Love and respect the animals; love your body; eat right. If you have any cravings, know that as soon as you think about the cause, you'll find it gets easier — believe me.

Please tell us a bit about your work as a designer.

I am a design graduate, and I previously worked as a designer in Brazil. I then moved to Australia to do my Masters degree. Now, in Australia, I work as a marketing officer and have been doing freelance design work now and then. I have plans for the future, but nothing for now, in relation to my design career.

What is it like being vegan in Brazil?

I don't know, exactly, because I became 100 percent vegan here in Australia, but I can tell you that being a vegetarian used to be pretty tough in Brazil. People questioned me a lot; they couldn't believe why; they didn't understand my motivations. The cuisine in Brazil is strongly based on animal ingredients, and meat specifically. One of the most typical dishes in Brazil would be beans with pork

leftovers — tail, ears, etc. I cannot understand how people can eat it (I never ate pork).

Anyway, lately, I've been reading a lot about how people are getting conscious about animal issues over there. I read that vegan restaurants are opening, and that vegan products and brands are appearing. Big cosmetic brands are switching to a test-free policy, and so on. Also, Brazil is the biggest chinchilla killer for the fur trade, and I've been reading about the many protests happening against fur there. Even a huge Brazilian shoe brand removed all their products that had fur trim on them after a huge protest that occurred over the internet … evolution, finally!!

Anything else you would like to add?

Just like I said before, people need to get informed. I know so many kind people, and I don't understand how they can 'turn a blind eye' to this cause. I really do believe that people don't know what is really occurring because the animal-agriculture industry does its best to hide everything. There's an abundance of good, yummy food we can eat without having to finance all these mistreatments. You know you care, so act according to your values. You don't need this guilt in order to live well.

Julia Harger designed the Vegans Are Cool cover.

Spotlight on a vegan business

Chiara is a vegan fashion designer from Italy.

How long have you been vegan, and why did you decide to become vegan?

I became vegan just a couple of years ago. I was vegetarian before that, and then I found out that being vegetarian wasn't enough.

What's the best thing about being vegan?

Saving animals.

Tell us something about Chiaralascura: what does the word mean, and what are you selling?

Chiaralascura is a contradiction; it means 'light' and 'dark' at the same time. My friends used to call me that when I was a 'dark' teenager — it was just about clothing; I was a silly person, as I am now. I sell eco-friendly, organic and fair-trade apparel that features my designs, vegan messages and funny creatures.

Your designs are unique — and so lovely! What inspired you to start a fashion business?

I wanted to spread the vegan message without being violent or too serious, because I think irony is the greatest revolutionary language we have.

What's been the reaction to your vegan-slogan T-shirts?

Vegan people like them, and when you wear them, people stop you in the streets, ask you questions, start a conversation or just stare at you.

What's it like being vegan in Italy?

It was harder before, but now, something is going on. I think Milan, Rome and Florence are the most vegan cities, but activism and events are taking place everywhere, new restaurants and clubs are opening, and there are more and more vegans.

What are your plans for the business?

I want to produce more items: dresses, aprons, mugs, stationery, baby clothes. I want to travel the world, taking my brand to vegan festivals everywhere — I've just been to the London Vegan Festival, and I'm going to Paris Vegan Day — and I want to open a vegan store that has clothes, cosmetics, food, and a little café and bakery.

Anything else you'd like to add?

In following through with this idea, I saved my life: I had a terrible job before, and I was falling into a big depression, so I'm really happy now.

<http://chiaralascura.it>

Spotlight on a vegan business

Alicia Lai from Bourgeois Boheme

Please tell us something about Bourgeois Boheme: what do you sell, and what's your style?

Since its inception in 2005, Bourgeois Boheme has become a leader in ethical fashion for affordable, stylish, high-quality footwear and accessories.

We launched Bourgeois Boheme's inaugural collection in 2007, and it exuded classic style and comfort, which remain at our core. With each season, we inject new ideas into our products so we keep on creating innovative and exciting ranges.

We spend an extensive amount of time researching the market to find top-quality materials and partners to produce our ranges. A 'think tank' philosophy fosters Bourgeois Boheme's creative platform.

We create our collections using the finest faux leather and natural materials.

Ethical sourcing is pivotal to Bourgeois Boheme. We extend this philosophy to minimising our impact on the environment and collaborating with manufacturers who endorse ethical working conditions.

In 2012, Bourgeois Boheme is set to launch an exclusive, luxury, 'Made in Britain' range of footwear. Handcrafted in the United Kingdom using the finest materials and applying traditional craftsmanship, Bourgeois Boheme's range will be for people who have distinguished tastes, and it will be a luxury alternative.

Bourgeois Boheme will continue to evolve, we'll continue to distinguish it by being creatively aware and confident and keeping it stylish. We'll be delivering new solutions to a wider range of consumers.

More people are adopting a vegan lifestyle, so are you seeing increasing interest in your products?

Yes, there is: customers are demanding much more now in relation to product range and quality.

What's been the feedback from customers about your products?

They've said we provide good-quality products that are the most stylish among the vegan footwear that's available. It's very hard to differentiate our footwear from leather footwear.

What are your plans for the business, and do you have any exciting new products coming soon?

We aim to expand our own brand range of footwear and accessories, to have a more co-ordinated range and to look at creating a 'Made in Britain' range.

Anything else you'd like to add?

I just wish we could get our products into more retailers worldwide, because our customers are global and are demanding our items! It's great to run a business based on our ethics and beliefs and to know we're making a difference.

<www.bboheme.com>

Spotlight on a vegan business

Jackie Horrick from Alternative Outfitters

Please tell us something about Alternative Outfitters. What do you sell?

Alternative Outfitters is a vegan boutique located online and in person in Pasadena, California. We specialize in fashionable leather alternatives and cruelty-free products for both women and men. We have an amazing collection of stylish non-leather shoes, handbags, wool-free outerwear, accessories and more. We also offer cruelty-free cosmetics and personal care items.

We ship all over the world and offer free shipping on orders over $100 for US based customer. Check us out at AlternativeOutfitters.com

As more people are adopting a vegan lifestyle, are you seeing increasing interest in your products?

Yes, there are many more vegan brands out there as well since we started 7 years ago. We used to have to beg vendors to offer leather-free alternatives and now they have entire vegan lines. It's great! Many people also prefer cruelty-free alternatives now as well, even if they aren't vegan.

What has been the feedback from customers about your products?

For the most part, we get a lot of positive feedback from our customers. They love that we offer fashionable items that anyone would want to wear whether they were vegan or not. They are also very impressed at how far vegan leathers have come. They are mostly no longer made out of PVC. They tend to use PU (polyurethane), which is softer and more breathable than vinyl. It's also better for the environment. It's even more proof that leather doesn't need to exist.

In addition to your range of vegan shoes and boots, you also sell a recycled range of products. How important do you think sustainability is in business these days?

We know that vegan products are already more environmentally conscious since they are not made using animal materials. Animal agriculture is the largest contributor to global warming in the world; even more so than automobiles. So we like to think that all of our products are more environmentally conscious than the alternative. The best thing about our products though is that no animals were harmed to make any of them. We are first and foremost a vegan store, so we like to offer as many vegan products as we can and if they can be made out of recycled vegan materials, then that's even better!

What are the future plans for the business? Any exciting new products coming soon?

We do what we can to always grow the business. We are constantly getting new products in. We are just starting the fall season here in the US, so we just got some adorable new faux wool coats in and really cute boots.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

We are located near Los Angeles, California, but we ship worldwide. We ship to most countries and you can view the countries we ship to on our website at www.AlternativeOutfitters.com or feel free to send us an email if you have any questions regarding international shipping.

<www.alternativeoutfitters.com>

Spotlight on a vegan business

The Celestial Shop

The Celestial Shop is an online store selling the creative designs of Supreme Master Ching Hai. Products include jewellery, vegan fashion for men and women, paintings and lamps. The website also has a section for companion animals. The Lively Doggie brand of vegan pet food is available there, as well as some adorable clothes for your canine friend.

There is a special section for faux-fur fashion, including hats, vests and jackets.

In the jewellery section, you will find unique designs that have deep spiritual significance and symbolism. These collections will inspire and amaze. From watches to pendants, rings and tie pins, there is so much to choose from. This is definitely my favourite part of the shop. If I had to choose my favourite design, I'd find it

too difficult, so I won't! Some of my favourites include, but are not limited to, the harp pendant from Series VII and the Paramhansa (IV), a pink ruby ring from Series XII. Enjoy browsing!

<www.thecelestialshop.com>

Reviewed by Kathy Divine

4 Raising children on a vegan diet: yes, it's healthy! Vegan parents and kids have their say

Q & A with Robyn Chuter BHSc, ND, GDCouns., vegan naturopath and mother to Mitch and Imogen Dawes

In your opinion as a naturopath, is it okay or even desirable to raise children as vegans? Is there anything special we need to be aware of?

The more we learn about the dangers of eating animal products at any age, the more it seems to me that it is unwise, not to mention unethical, not to raise children on a high-nutrient vegan diet. Junk vegan diets are just as bad as junk omnivorous diets, on the other hand, and no one should delude themselves into thinking that a diet of vegan hot dogs, marshmallows and chocolate bars will give children the start in life they deserve.

The same components of animal foods that cause disease in adults, either cause those diseases in children, or lay the groundwork for them in their adult lives. For example, a high intake of animal fats causes children's

arteries to develop early atherosclerotic lesions. During the long-running Bogalusa Heart Study, researchers found anatomical changes in the blood vessels of children as young as five, who were eating the typical American diet of animal products and refined carbohydrates. Consumption of naturally-occurring growth hormones in dairy products and meat is associated with rapid growth in childhood, early puberty, elevated blood pressure, and a heightened risk of breast and prostate cancer in later life.

Like vegan adults, children being raised on a vegan diet need a regular, reliable source of vitamin B12, either from supplements or fortified foods. Parents should also make sure their iodine intake is adequate, either by regularly including seaweeds such as nori, wakame and dulse in their diet or by giving them iodine supplements.

Do vegans need to supplement for B12? Are there any foods in the plant kingdom that have B12 in them?

I think any vegan who isn't supplementing with vitamin B12 is crazy — and as a matter of fact, vitamin B12 deficiency can literally make you crazy, with depression, mania, psychosis and dementia among the well-recognised psychological symptoms. The consequences of prolonged B12 deficiency are devastating, and potentially life-threatening. Small amounts of vitamin B12 are contained

in nutritional yeast (not torula, brewers or bakers yeast); some seaweeds including purple laver; and on the surface of mushrooms. However, in my opinion it's safer to both take a B12 supplement and include these foods in your diet. The best B12 supplements are the oral sprays or sublingual lozenges that contain methylcobalamin (not cyanocobalamin). Spirulina contains mostly corrinoid, an inactive vitamin B12 analogue, and should not be used as a food source of vitamin B12.

Is the vegan diet lacking protein?

Absolutely not! After all, plants synthesise the amino acids from which we assemble the proteins that make up our bodies. Every animal in nature has to either eat plants, or eat animals that have eaten plants, to get protein. Green leafy vegetables, legumes, whole grains, nuts and seeds are all rich sources of protein. There's no need to take protein powder to get enough protein. And despite the advice given in even some recently-published books on vegan diets, and a lot of websites, there is absolutely no need to combine different plant foods in the same meal, in order to compensate for the alleged 'deficiency' of plant foods in certain amino acids. The body maintains an amino acid pool in the bloodstream, which remains remarkably consistent in composition, no matter what we eat.

Will the vegan diet make a male weak and unable to do physical work?

My husband, who has been vegetarian for 14 years and vegan for 5, finds this notion quite amusing. He's fitter and stronger now, at 57, than he was in his meat-eating twenties and thirties. Just look around the world at the people whose lives involve the most toil and exertion: most of them eat plant-based diets. The Tarahumara Indians, who are renowned world-wide as 'the running Indians', live on a diet primarily composed of corns, beans, squash and chia seeds and eat meat only on special occasions. These people are legendary for their stamina; it's not unusual for them to run up to 190 kilometres in a two-day session, over rough terrain. Vegan athletes such as runner Carl Lewis and triathletes Dave Scott and Ruth Heidrich, prove beyond doubt that a vegan diet supports intense physical exercise.

What tips would you give a woman who is planning to have a vegan pregnancy?

I would recommend that she see a nutritionist who is knowledgable about plant-based diets before she starts to try for a baby, so that she is well-stocked with nutrients that are important for fertility and a healthy pregnancy. She should pay particular attention to her folate, vitamin B12, iodine, zinc and omega-3 intake, both before and during pregnancy. I recommend avoiding folic acid supplements,

because of the evidence suggesting they may increase the risk of breast and colon cancer. Folate is the naturally-occurring form of this B vitamin, and it occurs abundantly in vegetables (especially 'green leafies'), fruits, whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds, which are the staples of a healthy vegan diet.

Overweight women should make every effort to reach a healthy weight (by eating a nutritious plant-based diet) before getting pregnant, because babies born to overweight women suffer a range of adverse effects, some with lifelong consequences, such as neural tube defects and foetal obesity.

I recommend regular intake of seaweed (except kelp, which contains excessive iodine) or iodine supplements; vitamin B-12 supplements; algal-derived DHA/EPA supplements such as Opti3 or V-Pure as well as chia, flaxseed and pepitas for omega 3 fatty acids; and zinc-rich foods such as seeds, cashews and pine nuts.

Pregnant women should avoid iron supplements unless they are genuinely anaemic (remembering it's normal for a woman's haemoglobin level to drop during pregnancy) and iron-depleted (ferritin less than 13 mcg/L). Iron supplementation during pregnancy increases the risk of low birth weight and premature birth, as well as high blood pressure in the mother.

We know the mother's diet during pregnancy profoundly affects the baby's taste preferences, so it's vital for expecting mothers to cultivate their own taste for healthy, minimally processed plant foods. My kids happily eat their greens, including salad, because I ate them every day during both my pregnancies, and they still feature heavily in our daily meals.

What about iron? Can we get what we need from a plant based diet?

Iron occurs abundantly in many plant foods, especially green, leafy vegetables. Vegans generally have lower iron stores than omnivores, but since high iron stores are associated with an increased risk of heart disease and, possibly, cancer, having lower-than-average stores is probably a good thing. Importantly, haemoglobin levels in vegans are no lower on average than in omnivores (disproving the myth of the anaemic vegan) and rates of iron depletion (excessively low ferritin, or iron stores) are no different between those eating plant-based vs omnivorous diets.

Anything else you would like to add?

As a health practitioner specialising in hard-to-treat conditions such as auto-immune disease, CFS/fibromyalgia, migraine and high blood pressure, I have seen the most

remarkable results from adoption of a nutrient-dense, plant-based diet. I have been privileged to help many clients completely recover from Crohn's disease and rheumatoid arthritis, become migraine-free after years of suffering, lower their blood pressure to the point where they could go off medications they'd been taking for years, lose weight that had stubbornly clung to them since they were teenagers, and achieve many other exciting and gratifying outcomes. Healthy, plant-based diets offer so many benefits for people of both sexes, all ages and all states of health — and, as the recipes on my website and blog demonstrate, this way of eating is highly pleasurable too!

<www.empowertotalhealth.com.au>

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Meet Robin Fetter

Robin Fetter, an American mother talks about vegan pregnancy and raising vegan children.

How long have you been vegan, and if you were vegetarian before that, how long were you vegetarian?

I've been vegan since August 2008, and ever since I was 13, I considered myself a 'lazy vegetarian', so that'd be 14 years, give or take.

Please tell us about your experience of having a vegan pregnancy. Did you need to take any special supplements?

Nothing except for pre-natal vitamins. The only thing special I had to do was order my supplements online because my doctor had only non-vegan versions.

Was your baby born healthy?

She was born at 7 pounds, 14 ounces and was 22 inches long. She was born very healthy and very tall!

Please share with us your experience of raising a child vegan. What kind of food do you give your daughter each day?

My daughter is only eight months old, so she eats pureed fruits and vegetables, pureed whole grains, infant cereal (all vegan, of course!), and soy yoghurt (Whole Soy & Co. make a great yoghurt that's not only vegan; it has no refined sugars!).

Are there any special issues that parents need to take care of when raising a vegan child?

Nothing at the moment, because I'm the one doing the label reading (for food and clothes), but at some point, I'll need to educate not only my child but the people around her about our vegan lifestyle in order to prevent any unintentional 'slip-ups'.

Can you share any other tips for raising vegan children?

Get support! I was fortunate to know a couple of vegan moms locally, but I know that not many people have that luxury. Plenty of online groups are available now. Also, have your OB and paediatrician on board with your

choice. Without proper support, it's easy to rationalise not raising your child vegan but regretting your decision later on. Having a vegan pregnancy and raising a vegan child are possible; people are out there doing so every day, and they would love to share their experiences with you!

How are your child's weight and height compared with those of any non-vegan babies you know about?

My child is within normal limits; she's on the 50th percentile for weight and the 98th for height. She seems to pass the infant milestones on time, if not slightly sooner.

Robin blogs at <http://therealveganhousewife.blogspot.com/>.

Kamina Wüst on Growing Up Vegan

More than once, my mum has asked me whether I'm glad she raised me vegan from birth. Even after 23 years, maybe she has a niggling insecurity that I resent her for restricting my food choices. Maybe she's genuinely curious to know how I felt and feel about it. Maybe she just wants to hear me affirm it, and share a smile. I love being a vegan. I am deeply thankful I was raised this way. So, my parents can put that worry to rest.

My mum became a vegan in 1983, five years before I was born. In those days, the word 'vegan' was practically unheard of. Mum tells me her local supermarket didn't even have soy milk until she asked them to get it in for her. Back then it came in strange, long-life cardboard pyramids from Japan, and it curdled in coffee. There was no expectation of the selection we have today — low-fat, no-fat, gluten-free, organic, calcium-added, soy milk for kids, soy milk for women over 40, soy milk that tastes like dairy milk, rice milk, oat milk, almond milk, quinoa milk! When people say to me that it must be hard to be vegan I have to smother a smile — compared with what we knew twenty years ago, I can't believe how easy it is to be a vegan now.

I grew up with a genuine love and affinity for animals, so it made perfect sense to my small-child logic that my family didn't eat them, or products that were taken from them. I had more difficulty understanding why the rest of the world did. With childish simplicity I deduced that we must love animals more than everybody else we knew, and was cheerful about living a vegan lifestyle. I have heard countless stories of children struggling with the paradox taught to them by their parents: 'we love animals, and it's wrong to mistreat them, but it's okay to kill and eat them.' When kids work out what meat is, they are often deeply confused, and cope by suppressing their aversion to animal suffering — usually for the rest of their

lives. My parents freed me from this traumatic double-think by teaching me to live in a way that was consistent with our respect for animal life. They never expected me to arbitrarily comply with rules about eating vegan, but explained to me where different foods came from and helped me to understand the choices we made.

My parents made an effort to meet other vegan families with children, and I think my brother and I did appreciate knowing there were other vegan kids in the world. In fact, one of the girls from those early days is still a close friend of mine — and twenty years later, she is the only member of her family who is still vegan!

However, I never felt a need to mix with other vegan kids particularly; I was perfectly happy befriending all kinds of people, even if my diet made sleeping over at friends' houses a bit of a hassle. My parents always managed to minimise the fuss by making sure I went over after dinner or by sending me along with a packet of vegan sausages. I was well informed about how to work out whether something was vegan and mum and dad taught me how to politely refuse things that weren't. In social situations like parties, I always took a plate of vegan treats along (again with a minimum of fuss: mum negated any self-consciousness I might have felt by simply bringing me up with the rule that it's rude to go to a party empty handed). The other kids never noticed or cared that I

only ate from my special vegan plate. If I got stuck in a situation where I really couldn't eat anything, my parents usually compensated by giving me a treat later.

In our house, it went without saying that we'd learn to cook properly, and us kids were often involved in preparing meals. Knowing how to cook great vegan food made my life a whole lot easier, and as a teenager, it meant I never felt I was missing out on special food because — unlike most of my peers — I was perfectly capable of going home and cooking a knockout meal, to make it up to myself. As an adult, I have the confidence to entertain people and spread the message — it's pretty hard for people to 'diss' veganism when they have a mouthful of vegan 'mocha-truffle gateau'.

I never experienced what I would term 'peer pressure' to eat non-vegan food, but I did get a little tired of other kids constantly drawing attention to my food and asking why it was different to what everybody else was eating. As a child, I didn't really care and would happily — sometimes aggressively — spout off about veganism, but as a teenager I found it harder to cope with not conforming. I went through a period of being a bit apathetic about veganism, occasionally accepting my friends' offers of non-vegan junk food like lollies — things that didn't have an obvious 'gross-out' factor, just hidden animal ingredients.

It was when I was about 14 or so that I decided I really did want to commit to veganism, properly, not just because of my upbringing. I made a firm decision to be careful about what I ate from then on, and to say 'no' to non-vegan food. I realised I wasn't obliged to make a big thing of being vegan if people were going to make a fuss about it, and that sometimes it's fine to just say, 'no thank you' — but that you should always be prepared with an answer if somebody asks you about what you eat. Being a vegan is nothing to be ashamed of, and the ability to politely and confidently respond to people's curiosity — or even accusations — puts veganism in the best possible light. If I ever feel put on the spot, I always remind myself that nobody has the right to make fun of my food, and that I shouldn't be shaken by their rudeness!

I've spoken to many vegan parents who feel guilty about the possibility of their child suffering at the hands of other kids because they're vegan. I have two things to say to reassure these parents: first of all, your child is probably going to experience teasing and peer pressure regardless of whether they are vegan. That may not sound reassuring, but it's important to realise you can't eliminate the possibility that your kids will be teased at school by giving them a mainstream diet — so you might as well raise them vegan and prepare them to handle themselves in the face of any bullying they might experience, whether it's because they're vegan or because of some other arbitrary

thing other kids have decided to pick on. Secondly, don't let anybody make you feel like you don't have a right to bring your kids up vegan. This is like saying you don't have a right to teach your children the spiritual or religious beliefs you hold, or to expect them to conform to your ideas about what's morally right and wrong. I was excluded by the 'cool kids' at school because my parents taught me not to smoke or go shoplifting; that didn't make them wrong for teaching me values that put me on the outer with some groups. If you are vegan because you believe it enhances your life, the lives of others or the health of our planet in some way, then there is no reason to bring your kids up eating differently to yourself. Your lack of integrity will only confuse them.

I know a handful of people around my age who were brought up vegan and I think we all grew up knowing that we could make an independent decision about veganism when we were older. Most of us are still vegan. One or two are keen meat-eaters. I don't think any of us are mindlessly following the vegan pattern because our parents brought us up this way; you can give us a little more credit than that. I'm twenty-three now, happily married to a vegan man, guardian of a vegan cat and running a vegan business. People who've known me for a long time can see now that I really am a vegan on my own terms, not because I was 'brainwashed' by my parents.

I'm not just 'glad' that I was brought up vegan. Glad isn't the word for it. I am relieved, overjoyed, deeply thankful and fiercely proud. I can't believe my luck at being brought up with a lifestyle that honours my planet, optimises my health and relieves me from the burden of contributing to animal suffering. I adore good food and now I make a living out of feeding it to people and teaching them to create it for themselves and others, which brings more and more people to veganism. I am more than glad. I am grateful.

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@KaminaTheVegan

Kamina Wüst is Amanda Benham's daugher.

Meet Mitch and Imogen Dawes

How old are you?

Imogen: 6
Mitchell: 10

How long have you been vegan? Were you vegetarian before that and if so, how long?

Imogen: since I was less than one.

Mitch: since I was 4½. Our family had been vegetarian before that. My mum went vegetarian when she was a teenager, and Dad became a vegetarian after he met Mum.

What are the benefits of being vegan for you?

Mitch and Imogen: We're healthier than other kids we know, and we have lots more energy. We hardly ever get sick, and when we do, we get better much faster than the other kids in our classes. Neither of us have had to have a day off school because of sickness for a couple of years. We like it that because of the way we eat, we don't harm animals and we're not supporting factory farms that treat animals cruelly.

What do other kids at school think about your choice to be vegan?

Imogen: Some of my friends tell me they would like to be vegan but their parents make them eat meat because they think they need it to be healthy. One of my friends said if you don't eat meat you can't be strong and healthy, but I'm stronger and healthier than her!

Mitch: Some of my friends think what I bring to school for lunch is pretty weird, but they don't give me a hard time about it. Sometimes kids ask why I don't eat meat, and they try to tell me it tastes really nice — but I don't think death could ever taste nice.

Why do you think it is important to be vegan?

Imogen: Because being vegan means you don't think you're better than animals and that you're allowed to hurt them and kill them and eat them. We're animals too!

Mitch: Because we're saving animals' lives and it's better for our health and for the environment. If you eat plants rather than feed plants to animals and eat the animals, you don't need as much land to grow food. Then trees don't have to be cut down and endangered animals' habitats can be saved so they won't go extinct.

What are your favourite vegan foods?

Imogen: My mum makes yummy, healthy vegan cakes that have fruits and vegetables in them. I love strawberries, mango and broccoli.

Mitch: I love Lebanese and Thai food — anything spicy! I also like goji berries, Pink Lady apples, raspberries, mangoes, kale in cashew sauce, broccoli and Brussels sprouts — really! My mum makes chocolate pudding that has beetroot, spinach and blueberries in it. It's really yummy!

Do you have a message for other kids your age about being vegan?

Mitch & Imogen: Being vegan is good for you because you live longer, you're healthier and you don't get sick very often. It's good for the animals because you save farmed animals from being killed and eaten and you protect endangered animals from going extinct. And it's good for the environment because it reduces forest clearing, toxic runoff from factory farms and greenhouse gases like methane and nitrous oxide.

Meet 12-year-old Vinnie Tran

How long have you been vegan?

I've been vegan for five years now.

What are the benefits of being vegan?

The benefits of being vegan are saving the world and making it a peaceful place.

What do kids at school think about your choice to be vegan?

People at school think being vegan is bad because you don't grow, and they say you get sick of eating veggies every day.

Why do you think it's important to be vegan?

Being vegan is important because it's very healthy.

What are your favourite vegan foods?

My favourite food is noodles.

Your mum is the owner of a Loving Hut vegan restaurant, so you must get to sample lots of delicious stuff — what's your favourite item on the menu?

My favourite food at Loving Hut is Vietnamese Pho.

Do you have a message for other kids your age about being vegan?

To all those kids who aren't vegan: you should try it because it's healthy, and don't you feel sorry for those animals getting killed? That meat you're eating might have diseases. And one more thing: be veg, go green to save the planet!

60 seconds with Renata Halpin, children's entertainer and green educator

Australia

How long have you been vegan?

I kicked dairy products three years ago, but haven't eaten eggs or any meats for 10 years.

What are the benefits of being vegan?

Oh where to start!! I have too much energy, I don't seem to catch whatever bug is going around, have a calm digestive system and feel extremely happy about food!

What inspired you to create the "Go Green With Renata" DVD?

I have had a lot of practice communicating with young children for the past 20 years through music, drama and storytelling, and I am concerned for our planet and our animals that we breed in huge numbers only to kill and eat! I am concerned when I walk around and see rubbish dumped everywhere. I am concerned when I see all that we consume and waste and that people on the other side of the world are starving. So one of my songs is 'What Can I Do With My Own 2 Hands' — so I am just simply using my own two hands to attempt to help our next generation.

Please tell us a bit about the contents of the DVD.

The DVD 'Go Green with Renata' complements a show I tour around schools and kindergartens called 'Go Green and Keep it Clean.' The dvd covers things in humorous ways, lots of falling over, funny noises but with serious messages in between. There is a puppet river story where Penny the Pengiun talks about the start of the river and its pollutants. Clarence the Cow joins in to talk about the effects of farming as she continues to break wind, apologising with 'When I eat the grain, I fart methane!' Timmy the Turtle then comes and talks about bycatch, but all in a funny 'kiddy' way!

We have cool guests — Billy the Bodybuilder shows us a healthy eco-breakfast; Seashell the Mermaid visits to talk about our oceans; Roushini the Green Guru Genius tells us to just meditate, be happy and not eat meat and Little Green Thumbs shows us how to plant our own veggie garden.

Songs include 'I Love Animals', 'Go Green Rap', '2 Fruits 5 Veggies', 'Green Birthday Party' and 'What Can I Do With My Own 2 Hands'. The songs are my favourite part!

Any final messages?

Just be vegan, it's the best thing you can do for your health and the planet!

<www.lovelifeandlittlepeople.com.au>

5 Vegan teens: leading the charge towards a more compassionate planet

Meet 13-year-old Genevieve Doyle

How long have you been vegan?

From birth up to 11 years of age, I was vegetarian. I became vegan in April 2010. I've been vegan from then on, and I've just turned 13 (in August 2011). I'll never regret making the decision to cut out all animal products.

Have you found any health benefits associated with switching to a vegan diet?

Yes, a lot. I've been feeling more energetic and confident, and I haven't had nearly as many colds or days off school as I had when I ate dairy products and other animal products. Mentally, I can concentrate much more easily, and I'm enjoying life as a pure vegan.

What's your favourite food?

I have a lot of favourite foods. Some of them are hommus and pesto dips with carrot and celery sticks,

vegan Thai food, fruit salad with raw muesli, and coconut and a soy-yoghurt topping, and I also love Oreo Classic biscuits (yes, they're vegan!).

What's it like being vegan in Australia?

It can be difficult at times, because Australia is known for its love of meat. At school, when people discover I'm a vegan, they usually ask, 'What's that?', and when I tell them what a vegan is and what I don't eat, they often say, 'Oh, so you eat, like, vegetables for breakfast?' or 'But how can you live without chicken?' I tell them it's really easy and that I don't just live on raw vegetables and fruit (even though that would be a good idea).

Where I live, people aren't very diverse in their way of thinking, and most people even question what the word 'vegetarian' means, so being vegan can be a struggle sometimes, when I'm with other omnivores. But the great thing is that there are new alternatives to animal products for people who are making the transition, and even in cafes and restaurants, which are being built all the time nowadays, so being a vegan is that much easier. I'd definitely recommend it to everyone.

Why did you decide to go vegan?

I decided to go vegan because at the time, I wasn't eating meat, but I was eating dairy products and eggs. I didn't

suddenly turn vegan in one day, but over a few weeks, I learnt about the very short, miserable lives of dairy cows and how dairy farming is just as cruel as farming animals for meat, if not worse.

I also learnt about the dreadful fate of egg-laying chickens, and also the cruelty that goes on in circuses, at zoos, on fur farms, on reptile farms, in the horse-and greyhound-racing industry, and even at apiaries (honey-production bee factories). I asked myself, 'Why support all these shockingly cruel industries and still eat dairy?' It didn't make sense, so I then stopped taking part in all that cruelty, and I've been a proud vegan since. I'd never regret making that choice, because I know that each individual vegan is making a huge difference, just by not eating animal products, not wearing their body parts, and not participating in any form of cruelty to other sentient beings.

Two other reasons I became vegan are as follows:

1. Animal products are such a big killer in Australia and the world, because they're high in fat and cholesterol, and they clog arteries, causing obesity, irritable-bowel syndrome and many other horrible sicknesses.

2. Animal farming, both free range and intensive, is polluting the world. Cows alone produce more methane

than all the world's forms of transport combined. The amount of grain that goes to fatten up farmed animals for slaughter is enough to feed the world's starving population. Fishing is destroying the oceans' sea life in large quantities and is causing or has already caused extinction of many endangered fish and other aquatic animals.

These are all reasons I decided to become vegan.

What advice would you give someone reading this who's thinking about making the switch to a vegan diet?

Good on you for thinking about giving it a go. All I can say is that being vegan is much easier than it seems, and there's nothing to worry about. If you think you'd find it hard to give something up, have a look at the food section of the Cruelty Free Shop website. There are so many delicious vegan alternatives to nearly everything, and whatever you order is delivered to your door.

In an article in *Vegan Voice* (the wonderful Australian vegan magazine that's now unfortunately finished), I learnt that every vegan saves the lives of about 100 animals, at the very least, every year, so by becoming vegan, you're not only being kind to animals; you're being kind to yourself.

Meet 16-year-old Nami Gohil

When did you decide to go vegan, and if you were vegetarian first, when did you start being vegetarian?

I've been a vegetarian since birth, but after learning about the shocking treatment of cows in the dairy industry, I decided to try the vegan diet about a year ago.

What are the benefits of the vegan diet?

The vegan diet is so beneficial, to our body, to the animals and to the environment. I can eat delicious food without feeling guilty about where it was derived from, and I feel so much more healthy!

Would you recommend that people go vegan, and if so, why?

I think every person should at least go vegetarian, if not vegan. People need to be aware of how horrific all animals in the meat and dairy industry are being treated. It's not right that such barbaric practices even exist! There are so many options for a cruelty-free diet, so there's no reason people should be consuming animal products.

Do you think animals have intelligence and can feel pain?

How can they not feel pain and have intelligence?! When you see a mother affectionately cradling her

baby, you can't doubt she has emotions. Animals in slaughterhouses are always trying to escape, and you see the pain in their eyes.

Are you involved in any animal-advocacy groups, and if so, could you share with us any of your activities in that area?

I'm a member of PETA and Animals Australia, and I write and send articles to various organisations when needed. I'm also the ambassador for native animals at ATAAC (Australian Teens Against Animal Cruelty) and the youth spokesperson for The Vegan Society NSW. This mainly involves speaking out about various animal-rights issues and helping out at events.

Do you think vegans are cool, and if so, why?

Of course we are! Our bodies are healthier, we're saving lovely animals, and we're keeping the environment natural.

Anything else you'd like to add?

I'd just like to make people aware of the misconceptions they have about the vegan diet. There are plenty of healthy and delicious alternatives to meat and dairy. Addiction Food have the most amazing desserts I've ever tasted; they're based in Sydney,

Australia. (<addictionfood.com.au>). Peace Harmony restaurants, two appetising Thai restaurants in Sydney's CBD, attract many people — be sure to check them out too!

Spotlight on a vegan business

Chau Quach from Loving Hut, Canley Heights, NSW, Australia

Why did you decide to start a vegan restaurant?

To encourage people to eat compassionately and sustainably.

Would you encourage other people to go into the vegan restaurant business?

Yes because it can be very rewarding, especially when people say that switching to a plant based diet will be easy when there is great food available. People often say they didn't know vegan food could be so tasty.

Has anyone gone vegan since eating at your restaurant? What is the feedback from customers?

We have received lots of positive feedback since opening. They often thank us for providing them with a nutritious and clean place to eat. There have been numerous cases in which they came back and told us they were now vegetarian or vegan, and those comments

always make our day. We try to provide information and useful tips in order to make switching easy. Our purpose is to create awareness of how harmful the meat diet is on our body, mind and spirit and also to our planet.

Do you have any tips for people who are considering starting a vegan business?

I would encourage anyone to open a vegan restaurant. I had no experience in operating a business, but the journey has been truly wonderful so far. Meeting new people and being able to share what I have learnt, and what I am learning every day makes all the hard work worthwhile.

Anything else you would like to add?

I wish everyone would try the plant based diet; they'd never feel happier or healthier. If we are all vegan, we will have peace on this beautiful planet of ours. It's time for humans to evolve and to foster love for all beings. Peace truly begins on our plate!

Chau can be contacted via www.facebook.com/lovinghutcanleyheights.

To locate a Loving Hut near you, please visit <www.lovinghut.com>

Spotlight on a vegan business

Samantha Payne from Bakingbird

How long have you been vegan and why did you decide to make the switch?

I've been vegan since 1 January 2009, and was a vegetarian for over 25 years before that. I've always loved animals, and at an early age, felt a real sense of responsibility for their wellbeing. Growing up, I was inspired by the early campaigns of Anita Roddick and PETA, and made a vow to do all I could to help animals. The connection to veganism came much later for me, and was triggered by the journey of self-discovery I went on after completing yoga teacher training and taking redundancy from a high powered job.

Deep down, I always knew that being vegetarian alone wasn't enough. At some level, I knew that there was still suffering going on, but didn't allow myself to fully explore it. A mixture of fear, ignorance and denial allowed me to box up the concerns I had and bury them deeply. At that point I simply wasn't ready or brave enough to open Pandora's box. During 2008, as I began my yoga teaching journey, I began questioning all the deeply held values in my life. It prompted me to start reading more widely about vegetarianism and animal welfare. I was shocked to my core to discover the atrocities of factory farming and live export. It was a disturbing time for me, as I was

on a quest for knowledge but felt powerless to act myself and doubted my ability to commit to full-time veganism. I went through a good six months of inner turmoil, and tried a few times to adopt a vegan diet, but each time ended up caving in.

My turning point came whilst upside down in a yoga class. The teacher encouraged us, when we were faced with resistance, to start where we are. After that, I let go of the notion of committing to veganism full-time and decided to do what I could, when I could, all whilst planting the seed of becoming a real vegan. On New Years Day 2009, I finally felt ready to fully embrace veganism, and took the leap. I gave myself a year to become fully vegan, but in reality within a few months I was 100 percent vegan. It was the best decision I ever made.

What is the best thing about being vegan for you?

It is a real privilege to be a vegan and I feel blessed to have found this path. Simply put, you get to make a difference to the world with every meal you eat. Being vegan for me is a simple but profound life choice. I no longer have guilt or inner struggles with my conscience, and I know that I am living my life in a way that causes minimum harm to the environment. I feel deeply connected with the sentient beings on this planet and can look animals in the eye knowing I am doing the best

for them — and on a less serious note, discovering vegan food and learning to cook was an amazing journey.

What inspired you to start your own baking business?

One of the main things I initially missed when I went vegan was sweet treats. The vegan cakes and biscuits I tried were heavy, dry and tasteless and I was always left disappointed. One day out of sheer exasperation at available options, I decided to try and make some vegan cupcakes and was really surprised at how good they tasted. Each weekend I tried making a new cake or biscuit, initially using recipes from books and the internet, but gradually customising and inventing my own. At that stage, it was just for fun, but my friends and partner wouldn't take no for an answer and really kept encouraging me to turn it into a business venture. I also undertook an amazing short course on running a food business with acclaimed 'foodie' Lorri Loca, who really helped me to believe in my talents and products, and that I had to get them out there to the wider public. So the idea for Bakingbird was born, and I've never really looked back. My mission was simple: to make divine, delicious and exceptionally tasty baked goods, that tasted as good as they looked.

Lots of people tell me they can't believe that cakes can be made without eggs and dairy. Is that really the case? How hard is it to make a vegan cake?

Before starting Bakingbird, I found making a packet cake mix hard! I had disaster after disaster in the kitchen, but making vegan cakes is not as hard as people think. The physical process of making them is fairly easy, the hardest part for me was developing recipes that really worked. I tried a lot of recipes that produced average results, but for me this was not acceptable. I strive for perfection in all that I do, and wanted to produce exceptional cakes that tasted superior to conventional cakes. Most people have a pre-set notion of how a vegan cake will taste, so you have to go the extra mile to 'wow' them. So, I spent a lot of time experimenting with different ingredients and cooking methods, and tried to approach baking as a scientist. If you take something out, you need to add something back in. Fortunately now there are a lot of vegan resources around for budding bakers, so I'd encourage everyone to give it a go. A couple of great books I would recommend are *Vegan Cupcakes Take Over The World* by Moskowitz and Remero, and *Now Vegan* by Lynda Stoner. You don't need a lot of fancy equipment to get started, and whipping up a batch of biscuits or cupcakes is quite inexpensive. It's just a case of practice, practice, practice!

What has been the response to Bakingbird? Would you encourage other people who are thinking of starting a vegan business to give it a try?

I have been overwhelmed by the positive response to Bakingbird, and the business is going really well. It's a dream come true for me, and I am really enjoying my new life as a cake artist. It's a far cry from my old life as an Audit Director and really lets me tap into my creative side. I love making and designing beautiful cakes for people and it still gives me a kick knowing that every cake I make is kind to the planet and changes people's perception of veganism. About 50 percent of my customers are non-vegans and I never tire of hearing 'Is this really vegan?' or this is 'The best cake I've ever tasted'. Starting your own business is a real roller coaster ride; it's certainly a lot of hard work, involving long hours, late nights and at times is completely overwhelming. However, I'd encourage anyone who is really passionate about their idea to give it a go. It is really rewarding working for yourself and living out your values. Operating a vegan business is not always an easy option, but if you have lots of drive, ambition, passion and dedication then I believe truly anything is possible.

In addition to being a vegan cake genius you were also the events manager for the recent Sydney Vegan Expo. Are you seeing any trends in terms of more people developing an interest in adopting the vegan diet?

Organising the 2011 Sydney Vegan Expo was an amazing experience, and I really wanted to make the event accessible to non-vegans and vegans alike. Unfortunately, the word 'vegan' still conjures up a lot of negativity with people, so it was important for me to showcase how much fun living a vegan life can be and bring together all the best aspects of the vegan community. We had a great day with record attendance, and we received brilliant feedback from attendees. I've seen more and more individuals interested in understanding what constitutes a vegan diet, and awareness is now really growing about the environmental benefits. Also, thanks to folks like Lyn White, there is growing media coverage on topical issues such as live export and factory farming. However, I believe there is still a huge disconnect between individuals (and the diet they follow) and global environmental and animal welfare issues. People are still yet to connect the dots between how what they eat affects the overall planet. Food is such a deeply personal issue and there is still a huge amount of education that needs to be done about what 'veganism' really is. At the moment 'vegan' still remains a dirty word.

What would you say to someone who was thinking of going vegan but was hesitating because they think they might miss out on something by switching?

My best friend once sent me an email asking 'If not now, when?'

Take the leap and start today. Don't put it off until tomorrow. You'll never look back. Becoming a vegan is a wonderfully empowering journey and it will change your life forever. You don't need to be brave or have will power or have an agenda. You just need to be open minded and willing to give it a try. Since becoming a vegan, a lot of people around me have also become vegetarian or vegan, and every one of them thought that they wouldn't be able to do it. My mum, my best friend and my partner have all embraced vegetarianism and my sister, who is in the army, has become a vegan. They are all inspirations to me. And if soldiers in Afghanistan can start doing meat free Monday, you can too. Start where you are, and grow the seed of where you want to be.

Also give yourself time to make the transition. Rome wasn't built in a day. Take the pressure off yourself and give yourself permission to screw up occasionally. I'm not advocating that you go out and eat a chicken sandwich every day, but if you are really craving a steak and really can't get it out of your mind, then have a steak. But buy the best possible organic pasture fed steak you can and take a moment to thank the cow that gave up her life for you before eating it. Then, at the next meal, start again where you are. Each day is a new beginning. It's better to try and be vegan 80 percent of the time, than never try at all.

I promise you in time, you won't miss anything at all. The rewards you will gain will amaze you.

Is there anything further you would like to add?

Shortly before my sister's wedding, my mum gave me a little card with the words of John Wesley that have stuck with me:

Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as ever you can.

I try to live by this every day.

<www.bakingbird.com.au>

6 Can athletes thrive on a vegan diet? Yes, they can!

Meet Crystal Silmi

Crystal is a vegan belly dancer from California in the United States of America.

When people hear the word 'vegan', they often imagine a person who is very thin and malnourished. I'm honestly not certain why that image is associated with veganism. I recently received an e-mail from someone who had been in the audience at one of my shows, and he said he was surprised to find out I was vegan because I was so strong. Yes, vegans can be strong and healthy and athletic, and can have even more energy than a weighed-down meat eater.

I've been a vegetarian since I was a pre-teen, and vegan now for several years. I have a lot of energy and stamina for my dancing. Do I spend a lot of time calculating my nutritional intake? No. I know many healthy, active vegans who do eat very well balanced meals and enjoy the process of deciding which foods are the highest in vitamins and minerals, but I'll be honest: I'm a modern woman; I'm busy. I like a delicious meal to share with friends, but in truth, my daily diet is quite simple.

I find that as I get older — yes, I'm 29 again — my body feels most comfortable with fresh fruits and vegetables. I remember, as a young vegetarian, hearing people talk about eating 'raw vegan' and thinking, Get over yourself: what difference does it make whether your food's cooked or not?! But now that I'm well into my — um — '29s', I find that the more simple, fresh and organic my diet is, the better I feel.

I recently bought a juicer and have found that raw living is quite easy whenever I use the juicer. I throw in various fruits and vegetables — carrots, apples, pears and ginger, for example — and voila! I have a delicious result and an uplifting burst of energy so I can go about my daily activities.

I'll tell you another personal secret: I'm lazy when it comes to food. I don't want to spend an hour on 'prep', five minutes on eating and an hour on cleaning. If I want something warm, I make brown rice and throw some sesame seeds on top — or if I'm feeling extra-fancy, I throw in garbanzo beans and tomato sauce.

Fuel for the body is important, and I'm a dancer, so having the 'right' fuel is even more important. 'Unleaded' versus 'diesel': I like a clean engine that can run many kilometres and leave the smallest possible carbon footprint. That, for me, means a simple, organic vegan diet based on fresh fruits and vegetables.

Be strong. Be active. Be healthy. Be vegan!

Being a vegan man

David Rafter
Co-founder of Vegan Era

Growing up as the youngest of 10 children, I assure you there were more than a few initiations into the ranks of being a man — you don't have five brothers without getting knocked around a bit.

Although I never played physical-contact sports such as rugby union, rugby league or AFL, my parents made sure we played pretty much every other sport under the sun: swimming, baseball, athletics, surfing, and of course tennis. Looking back on it, I guarantee my parents were just trying to tire us out so we would go to bed at night.

I find that, living in a culture, such as Australia's, it is almost expected of a man that he play lots of sport and love his barbecue — and I shouldn't just say Australia: if you look at most Western cultures; it's very much like this.

In my family, it was no different; in fact, if anything, that culture was more intense when our brother Pat started to perform very well on the tennis tour.

When someone close to you starts to do very well in his or her chosen sport, it seems your life revolves around them; their wins become your wins, and their losses become your

losses. I remember watching the Wimbledon final in 2001: it was purely devastating watching our beautiful brother lose in the final. You knew how much he wanted it, and you could feel some of the pain he must have been going through. It really is as if your whole family becomes one.

So, you could only imagine that when Patty started to focus on his dietary intake to improve his physical condition, the whole family become involved. It is a wonderful feeling having so many people connected in your life, but at the same time it can be hard to break the mould. When you speak to some of the 'old school' doctors, they are very much inundated with the dogma of the traditional medical system: you need to have meat to get your iron, and milk to get your calcium and eggs … well, they make you fart to get rid of all the other stuff in your system, I joke.

You remember that food pyramid that outlines where you get all your dietary vitamins and minerals? When I look at it now, it seems so outdated and fatigued. It almost looks like a chart that the old doctors drew up in the 1950s about how smoking is good for you so that tobacco companies could increase their sales.

As I mentioned earlier, I had always been a very physical person. I love getting out on my surfboard and catching a few waves, or going for a run in the national park. To

me, it is an amazing relief. It is like all the stresses from the world just go, and you are at one with yourself and the world.

However, as you could imagine, the moment that I told my family I was vegan, all these questions and statements popped out of nowhere: 'David, how are you going to get your iron?', 'David how are you going to get B12, you know your body needs it!', 'David you are too skinny'. Those of you out there who have made the transition to the vegan diet, might have already heard some of these. They don't seem to happen once or twice either: you seem to get bombarded with them (although I can assure you they do stop).

I can still remember the time I made the choice to drop animal products from my diet. I was doing my normal run through the Noosa National Park which went for 30 minutes. When I was coming to the end, I could feel I could keep on going — I just kept up the pace, and an hour went by and my body still felt amazing. I felt I could keep on running and running. I was picturing myself being Forrest Gump running across Australia — I can assure you I had the beard to match.

It was a remarkable experience to feel your body feel so light you could really run the whole day — and it was more remarkable to think that by simply making the

choice to drop meat and diary from my diet, it would have such an impact on the condition of my body.

I can also recall a time I was surfing with a couple of my brothers. We had been out for most of the day, having a ball, catching some great waves. I paddled into one wave, pushed myself up to stand up on the board, and I thought I could literally fly. I felt so light and agile I really did think I was going to take off and go for a little trip … Such a breathtaking experience.

To be honest with you, however, the constant remarks I was getting from my family and friends were getting to me. I took the time to get regular iron tests and B12 tests. The whole time, throughout all my physical activities and dietary changes, no doctors could find anything abnormal in my blood. In fact, I went to give blood and the nurses could not believe how high my iron level was.

So, if you are a man living in this beautiful country and you have made the choice to transition to the compassionate vegan lifestyle, and you still love your sport, here are a few tips that might be good for keeping your dietary needs in check:

- Do eat your greens, and if you can, get into green smoothies. Eating green leafy vegetables is a great way to get iron and B12, especially if you can eat them raw. When you eat the vegetable in its natural state, you harness all its nutritional value.

- Do your best to stay away from heavy foods such as chocolate, chips, bread and pasta. They can have an adverse effect on your body and in fact cause depletion of other minerals and vitamins.

- Instead, look to grains such as quinoa, brown rice, and even millet. Not only are they filling and the carbohydrate your body could be looking for; they have a high level of protein and are full of all the amino acids.

- Another great source for you to get your protein is legumes such as lentils, soy beans and peas such as chickpeas. To be honest, though, I never ate lots of soy, but I do really enjoy a beautiful dahl.

- Get stuck into your fruit, especially bananas and berries such as strawberries and blueberries. They are high in fibre and chock-full of magnesium and potassium to give you that energy boost.

When I was initially making the transition to the vegan diet, I really watched the amount of heavy foods I was having, because I knew that foods such as bread, pasta, chocolate and chips cause your body to slow down. You

will really notice this effect when you put these foods into your system. According to the evidence, the nutritional value of foods such as breads, pasta and grains provides your body with a high level of carbohydrates. Personally, I never felt I needed that carbohydrate in my system in order to perform physical activity. I never noticed my body getting tired; in fact, as I mentioned earlier, I felt I had a lot more energy. Though, on another note, please do listen to your body. If you are doing a lot of activity and you are feeling tired, look at increasing your carbohydrates and make sure you are eating enough legumes and greens so you're getting your iron.

Don't be too alarmed if when you first go vegan, you receive some of the remarks I mentioned earlier. Your loved ones are just concerned for you, and they love you very much. Keep in mind they have been raised on the 'old school' food pyramid, and that their 'old school' doctors might not know any different.

If you're finding that it's tough, make sure you surround yourself with like minded people. Find yourself a good doctor who has done his or her research and who is in line with your new found lifestyle.

Just because you're a man and have become vegan doesn't mean you have to drop all the things you used to love to do. You can sit down with your family and friends and

enjoy the Friday-night game or go out for a surf. Anyway, they might even be jealous of you because your whole being is radiating now, and all the girls flock to you.

<www.veganera.com>

Noel's top 10 ten tips for achieving a buff vegan body

Noel Polanco is a vegan fitness star who lives in New York in the United States of America.

My name is Noel, and I'll be sharing with you 10 tips for looking good and staying in shape without causing harm to a single animal being while you're making your dream body. Most people think being vegan means you are eating only salads, but there is a great variety of food for you to choose from if you are on a vegan diet.

Here are those top 10 tips:

1. Exercise consistently.

Don't exercise once a week and expect to see results; It takes time and dedication.

2. Have patience with your body.

It is much easier to destroy than build. Have patience with your body. Don't rush into getting overnight results

that aren't possible. Just make exercise a daily routine and the results will come through.

3. Get enough rest.

When you're training a lot, your body needs proper rest, and that means at least eight hours of sleep. Your muscles are growing when you're asleep.

4. Increase your intake of beans.

Beans, and especially black beans, are high in protein. When you eat a serving of black beans, you supply yourself with 15 grams of protein.

5. Eat plenty of dark, leafy greens.

Eat your dark, leafy greens as often as possible. Kale and spinach are two great sources of protein.

6. Include quinoa in your diet.

Quinoa (pronounced 'kin-wah') is one of the best grains out there, but most people haven't heard of it. Quinoa is a complete protein source and high in fibre. Include it in your diet and you will help yourself get all the protein you need.

7. Play with your food.

Now, I don't mean 'play with your food' like you played with it when you were a baby; I mean play with it by creating various combinations of veggies, fruits, whole grains, nuts, seeds and seasonings. Try new things; don't just eat the same thing over and over again. You can combine a lot of fruits and use almond milk to create delicious smoothies.

8. Soak nuts and seeds.

By soaking nuts and seeds, you make it easier for the body to absorb its nutrients.

9. When you are training, give it your all.

Your body is capable of achieving more than you think. Push yourself, even to get one or two extra reps in during an exercise. While you are training, focus on just training, not training and texting or doing other things while exercising. If your body is not sore, you are not training hard enough.

10. Love yourself.

When you love yourself you will be thankful for the temple that God has given you to protect. You don't want to go out and harm it with drugs, toxic food or alcohol or the many other negative things that might seem fun to

you at the time but lead to health problems and sickness later in life. Love your body; it's the only one you have. Take care of it so it can take care of you.

I hope you enjoyed reading my top 10 tips for achieving a buff vegan body. To read more about workouts and meals or to connect with me, please go to any of the following four links:

Noel Vegan Fitness Star

<http://www.YouTube.com/da1sinister1>

<http://getfitordietrying1.blogspot.com/>

<http://www.facebook.com/VeganLight>

<http://www.modelmayhem.com/da1sinister>

Noel is the model on the cover of Vegans Are Cool

No more killing animals

By Noel Polanco

What have we become?
We discovered fire, so we kill and burn animals for fun.
We take their lives: where have our feelings gone?
When was killing an animal right? Killing is always wrong.
So I write and say, come join me.

Let us all stop killing and eating meat.
Let animals live and die a normal death.
We shouldn't be the one putting them to rest.
Stop all the abuse and the killing,
This isn't the way we humans should be living.

Noel reads the poem at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=knDJtgtOqi8>.

'Treat animals with love and care, not just your pets.' — Noel Vegan Fitness Star.

Alex Souza – A Vegan Athlete from Brazil

How long have you been vegan and what inspired you to become vegan?

I've been vegan for almost 10 years. The reason was based on ethical motivations related to animal mistreatment that the industries and the companies were engaged in. Other reasons were to do with physiology and anatomy, because humans are naturally vegetarian. My involvement with hard-core bands who are interested in the subject was another factor in making the decision. Bands like Minor Threat, Discarga, Confronto and I Shot Cyrus influenced me a lot, and I played in bands that have raised the vegan flag. Two examples are xREVERx and Triste fim de Rosilene.

Is a vegan diet good for an athlete?

Yes, totally. All high quality nutrients are found in the plant kingdom. I supplement with vegetable protein — soy being the most common and some vitamins — and find that my performance is actually enhanced.

Please tell us what a typical training session would be for you?

Well, I practice the natural method, MovNat. A typical session consists of natural movements such as running, swimming, jumping, balancing, throwing and carrying and lifting objects. A good session would involve training in all these skills or a combination of them. I usually train daily for two hours. The daily workout resembles the daily effort a human would expend if he or she were in nature or left in the jungle to survive.

What do you eat every day? What is a typical meal for you?

I basically eat three times a day. Usually, I fast in the afternoon, to rest my body and establish an insulin balance. A typical breakfast would be based on more liquid than solids. It consists of a mega-vitamin meal I make with bananas, acai, soy protein, a mix of cereals and occasionally wholemeal bread. For lunch, I have a more consistent meal: broccoli, green leaves of various kinds, soybeans, peas, chickpeas, extra-virgin olive oil,

flaxseed, brown rice and beans. I can exaggerate with the good fats because my body fat is excellent: only 5.7 percent. At night, I usually have coconut water, couscous, coconut milk and green tea. After workouts, I supplement with soy protein, tribullus terrestris, chlorella and yeast — usually all natural, without too many chemicals.

What do you say to people who think that vegans cannot be strong and fit?

Watch my videos, and check the size of the stones a vegan can catch, throw and carry. Just train and be disciplined. Focus on your goals, and know you want to change. Vegans can be fit and strong, but the important thing is to not only focus on this objective while you are doing some physical activity but to also focus on rehabilitation of natural movements. When you do these things, the consequence will be a fit body. Vegan animals such as rhinoceros, gorillas and elephants are considered the strongest in the world.

Translated from Portuguese to English by Julia Harger

<http://www.youtube.com/user/AlexVegetarianNature>

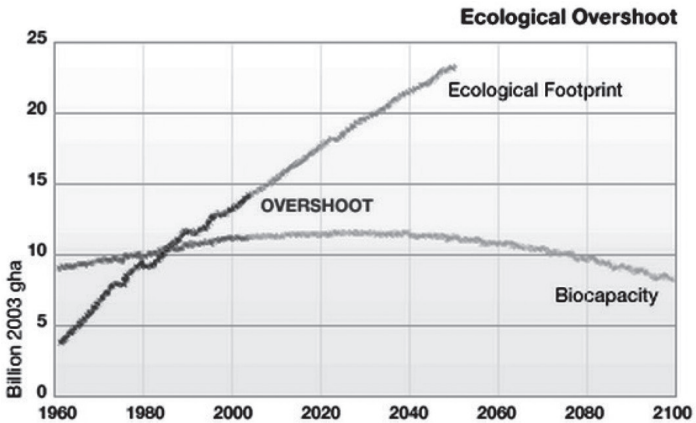
7 A sustainable planet via the vegan diet: vegans are saving the planet!

Livestock's environmental impact

Gerard Wedderburn-Bisshop and Lefkothea Pavlidis
World Preservation Foundation

Our ecological footprint

In one generation, our attitudes towards the ecosphere that supports us have changed dramatically. We once believed that the land was ours to conquer, to tame and to turn into productive agricultural land and to use for mining, cities and transport. We now know there are limits. We now know that we have exploited our natural resources beyond their limits, using more resources than the world can regenerate.[1] We are like a wild child, spending up on our credit card with no way of paying.



The earth now needs 1.5 years to generate what we use in a year.[2]

(Human population is shown here on the left)

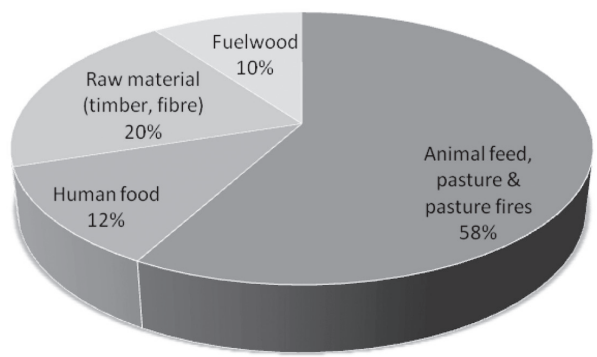
The World Wildlife Fund's Living Planet report[2] chillingly describes this overshoot as an "ecological credit crunch". This report reflects human impact on our planet: on biodiversity (extinctions), freshwater use, deforestation, fishing, agricultural cropland and greenhouse emissions. It describes how vertebrate species have declined by nearly 30 percent over the past 35 years, and how overfishing has pushed 60 percent of fisheries to the point of collapse. At this rate, we will be consuming twice the world's sustainable capacity by 2030.

So, let's look at how we use these resources.

The monster who ate the world

Plants are the basis of life on planet earth. The amazing process of photosynthesis takes sunlight and chlorophyll and converts carbon dioxide and water into sugars and proteins that fuel all plant growth and feed all animals. This series of chemical reactions also creates oxygen for all animals to breathe.

So, how do we use this plant-growth miracle? Austrian researchers have analysed data from the UN Food and Agricultural Organization's comprehensive database on food production[3] and other land use and livestock production data looking at how economic plant productivity is used[4], with surprising findings.



How we use plant productivity: Appropriated net primary production for the year 2000[4]

Livestock consume more than five times as much biomass as humans do, yet they provide only 17 percent of human energy intake and 40 percent of protein intake.[3] It's as though we prepare a meal, keep a sixth for ourselves, tip five-sixths into a 'food converter' and in return receive a small fraction of what we gave away. What a waste!

Comparing livestock with dinosaurs is also enlightening: livestock now consume six times more than the mega-fauna ever did.[5] Now, that paints an interesting picture: all the herds of roaming dinosaurs eating only one-sixth of what the herds of cows, pigs, sheep, fowl and other livestock now eat. This is a picture of dangerous imbalance.

Comparing livestock to wildlife is even more astounding: livestock now outweigh wildlife by 8:1.[3]

Some argue that we have over-populated earth, that we should reduce the number of people. However, the human population is small compared with the number of livestock. Each year, we breed 64 billion animals for meat, milk or eggs — that's right, every person on the planet has a yearly personal 'entourage' of 10 animals. These animals are mostly chickens (80 percent), but we also breed a billion and a half

cattle, more than a billion pigs, a billion sheep, and nearly a billion goats.[3] What animals are in your entourage?

People who live in the USA have the largest entourage — 28 animals per year. Over the course of their life each person will consume on average more than 2000 animals and 100,000 eggs. This huge population of livestock is largely hidden from urban dwellers, but a comical and frightening picture would be painted if every person on a busy city street were accompanied by their personal entourage of cows, sheep, chickens, pigs and more. Imagine the traffic chaos! It's no wonder these livestock, created by human intervention, put an enormous environmental burden on our planet.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) reported in 2002 that one-third of the world's people place an 'undue demand on land, water, and other resources required for intensive food production, which makes the typical Western diet not only undesirable from the standpoint of health but also environmentally unsustainable.'[6] WHO recommends that people eat mostly plant-based foods rich in fruits, vegetables, pulses and legumes, and minimally processed starchy foods.

Developed countries in the last fifty to sixty years have seen a dramatic increase in the consumption of animal products. In 1950, world meat consumption was 47

million tonnes; by 2005 meat consumption rose to 284 million tonnes.[3] That's a six-fold increase, while human population has little more than doubled. Human population, a focus of climate change debate, is clearly overshadowed by unprecedented livestock numbers.

Several major reports have addressed this imbalance, including the 2006 FAO Livestock's Long Shadow,[7] which showed how we grow enough edible grain to provide 50 percent more than is required to feed every person on the planet.

Cows, pigs and chickens that cut down trees

Deforestation is continuing at a rapid pace: 13 million hectares per year. That is larger than the US State of Indiana, per year. Tropical countries are now the hotspots, and the clear leader is Brazil, followed by Indonesia.

Many people believe that logging, particularly illegal logging, is the main cause of deforestation. It is not. Large scale, export-oriented agriculture is now the main driver,[8] much of which is animal agriculture. Also, the myth that subsistence farming is a major factor has now been debunked — rural populations are now moving to cities, and relying on large agricultural operations to provide their food.[8]

The end result is that clearing for pasture and feed for livestock is responsible for 60–80 percent of global deforestation.[9]

Brazil, which is home to more than a quarter of global deforestation, is undergoing rapid agricultural expansion. In 2011, tree clearing rates have escalated because laws aimed at slowing this clearing have been relaxed. Fully 65–70 percent of all Brazilian forest clearing is directly for cattle ranching, and a further 20 percent for livestock feed crops. Brazilian tropical Cerrado woodland is being cleared apace for soybean production, 90 percent of which is used for livestock feed, particularly exported to China to feed pigs.[10] Clearly, people who eat beef, pork or chicken produced from Brazilian pastures or feed crops are directly causing forest destruction on a continent they may never visit.

Indonesia, second to Brazil, is also undergoing rapid agricultural expansion, but here the main driver is converting rainforest to palm oil plantations. Palm kernel expeller (the kernel with oil extracted) accounts for 15 percent of palm oil revenue, all of which is fed to livestock.[11] Here again, those who eat dairy products from the UK or New Zealand are partly responsible for deforestation in Indonesia.

Other South American and African countries are also seeing pressure from large scale agricultural production, much of which is intended for grazing or feed crops.

Deforestation is not confined to developing countries. Until recently, Australia was home to 5 percent of the world's deforestation, with more than 90 percent of this deforestation to make livestock pasture. Trees are cleared in Australia in a similar manner to the Cerrado tropical woodland in Brazil — two large bulldozers pull a monster chain between them, flattening all vegetation in their way. The Australian state of Queensland has been using satellite data to monitor tree clearing for more than 20 years, and over that time for every kilogram of beef produced, 100 square metres of trees were cleared.[12]

Offsetting carbon-dioxide emissions by planting trees is now very convenient. Emissions from air travel can be offset by simply ticking the option when booking and paying a few extra dollars. Programs to offset car emissions are also common. However, these programs are insignificant when compared with tree clearing for agriculture. For example, in Australia, for every tree planted, 100 are cut down, and 90 percent of tree clearing is for grazing pasture.[12] People who take the tree-planting option to offset air travel emissions, but continue to eat grazed or lot-fed animals are deluding themselves. Likewise, the willing volunteers who plant trees but consume meat are (perhaps unknowingly) participating in a cruel irony.

The extinction crisis

The wonderful diversity of life on our planet is at risk. The rate of species loss is now higher than during past biodiversity crises, and biologists now believe we are experiencing the sixth mass extinction on earth.[13] Over that past 500 years, at least 80 of the 5570 mammal species have disappeared, and many more are endangered.

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment[14] and the Global Biodiversity Outlook, found that biodiversity loss is caused by:

1. expansion of agricultural area and associated habitat loss;
2. over-exploitation of natural habitats by, for example, grazing, fishing and logging;
3. pollution, for example eutrophication (oxygen depletion) caused by excess nutrients in waterways;
4. invasive species; and
5. climate change.

Knowing that 70 percent of agricultural land is devoted to livestock[7] for grazing land and feed crops, and that the greatest source of eutrophication and reactive nitrogen is from animal waste, and that a large proportion of greenhouse gas emissions are from livestock, it is now clear that one human activity is the primary driver of this extinction crisis: raising of animals for meat, milk and eggs.

This one facet alone, that we are in the midst of a mass extinction largely caused by animal agriculture, must surely make us stop and think. As the generation who is responsible for this extinction crisis, how will we be judged by our children and our children's children? Being responsible for killing off life on planet Earth is a heavy responsibility to shoulder.

Intensive factory farms appear to offer a solution to some of these issues. However, several negative issues arise such as environmental concerns including water and air pollution, social problems for communities, threats to local public health, as well as the potential to breed pandemic diseases, such as swine flu and bird flu.[15] There is also a growing trend among consumers to avoid factory-farmed meat because of animal welfare concerns.

Impact on our oceans

The International Programme on the State of the Ocean convened a meeting in mid 2011 to examine the latest ocean science, finding that the combined stressors on oceans are creating a major extinction event, and that this is happening faster and with more impact than the worst predictions.[16]

And what do they believe is driving this globally significant extinction? They pointed to three factors that are causing the rapid decline in ocean health: climate change, over-fishing and nutrient runoff. They also point to events resulting from this crisis: carbon dioxide is being absorbed by the ocean faster now than during the last extinction event, when half the deep-sea animals were wiped out; a single mass coral bleaching event killed 16 percent of the world's coral; and overfishing has reduced some fish populations by more than 90 percent.

Ocean dead zones and oxygen depleted zones are rapidly increasing, the ocean is acidifying, and many ecosystems have collapsed — and the causes are easily identified: overfishing due to humanity's voracious appetite for sea food; climate change (which we shall later see is partly caused by livestock); and nutrient runoff.

Nutrient runoff, the main cause of dead zones, is well documented.[16] The major sources of pollution

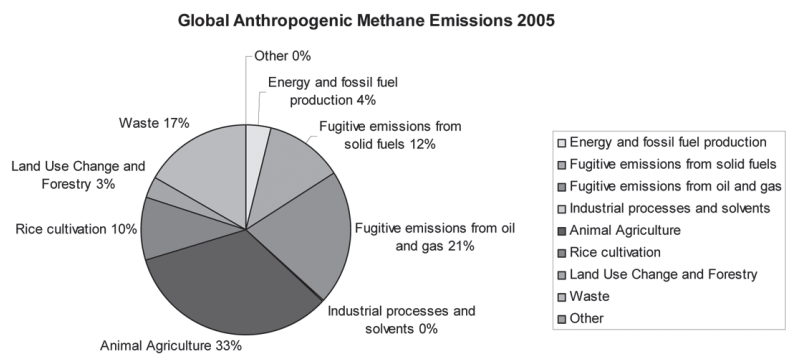
are: animal wastes (both on land and on fish farms); antibiotics and hormones; chemicals from tanneries; fertilisers and pesticides used for feed crops; and sediments from eroded pastures. The greatest source of reactive nitrogen is animal waste, which receives almost no treatment as it flows to rivers and oceans. In the United States, livestock are responsible for 55 percent of erosion and sediment, 37 percent of pesticide use, 50 percent of antibiotic use, and a third of the loads of nitrogen and phosphorus into freshwater resources[7].

Climate change impact of livestock

Climate is impacted by livestock production in several ways.

Firstly, clearing of forests for grazing and crops has a significant impact on both the local and regional climate. It alters land surface reflection, vegetation leaf area, evaporation and transpiration — all of which are vital in climatic processes that occur between ecosystems and the biosphere. Land use and land cover changes also release carbon dioxide and methane into the atmosphere. The result of forest clearing has been shown to prolong droughts, making them hotter and last longer, having an effect equal to that of human-caused greenhouse gases.[17] Extending this local effect, desertification occurs as a direct result of removal of vegetation — from drought, deforestation and overgrazing[7].

Secondly, livestock are a major emitter of greenhouse gases. Ruminants (cows, buffalo, sheep and goats) have a complex digestive system that produces methane directly in their gut by enteric fermentation, which is then belched into the atmosphere. This is the single largest source of methane emissions from human activity, equivalent to emissions from oil, gas and coal mining combined.[18] Methane is also produced from animal waste, particularly when it is concentrated such as in factory farming, and from open fires. Fire is used following deforestation to kill tree re-growth, and is regularly used to maintain pastures — to remove dry, unpalatable grass stalks, to kill woody growth, to control insects such as ticks (particularly in Africa), and to encourage new high protein green shoots.



Sources of global human-caused Methane emissions for 2005[18]

Methane is a strong greenhouse gas, having 25 times the warming effect of carbon dioxide over 100 years. However, methane is oxidised in the atmosphere so that it lasts about 12 years. This makes methane's warming effect when averaged over 20 years to be 72 times that of carbon dioxide — truly earning it the "carbon on steroids" label. Russell[19] calculated that enteric methane emissions from Australian livestock, averaged over 20 years, far exceed the carbon dioxide emissions from all Australian coal-fired power stations.

Nitrous oxide is another strong greenhouse gas that has a warming effect 298 times that of carbon dioxide. It is released from animal waste and from excessive application of nitrogen fertilisers on crops and improved pastures.

Estimates of just how much animal agriculture contributes to greenhouse gases vary considerably, depending on which emissions are counted. Low estimates are derived when methane emissions are averaged over 100 years, and feed crops, deforestation, fire, soil carbon loss and other processing and transport emissions are not counted. The most widely accepted accounting of animal agriculture emissions (which does count deforestation, transport, refrigeration and other costs, but which averages methane's effect over 100 years) is that given in the FAO Livestock's Long Shadow report,[7] showing this activity to cause 18% of all human-caused emissions.

A 2009 study by World Bank environmental specialists published by the WorldWatch Institute[20] argued that the global amount of greenhouse gases emitted from the livestock sector has been severely underestimated. Using a 20 year average for methane's warming, they calculated that livestock and their by-products account for at least 32.6 billion tons of carbon dioxide equivalent each year, or 51 percent of annual worldwide greenhouse gas emissions. This article drew criticism because it included carbon dioxide from livestock respiration, however as we saw, livestock have been bred in such unprecedented numbers (consuming six times more than the dinosaurs!) that this inclusion may be valid.

Recently a topic of great interest to climate scientists has been the short lived climate forcers — those emissions that last only a short time in the atmosphere but have a major warming effect. These forcers are black carbon (from biomass fires and exhausts), methane and ground-level ozone.[21] Black carbon lasts only a few weeks in the atmosphere, but warms 1600 times more than carbon dioxide over 20 years, and ground-level ozone also lasts only a few weeks, but warms as much as 20 percent of yearly carbon dioxide emissions. Ground level ozone is formed in a complex photochemical reaction, and is a major component of smog. The best means of reducing ozone production is to reduce methane (and we know

where that comes from). Ozone has a very harmful effect on plants and people, and black carbon also reduces crop growth and causes respiratory conditions, therefore controlling these would have multiple climate, crop production and health benefits.

Reducing these three short lived climate forcers will slow warming by as much as half a degree in the next fifty years, and buy time to reduce carbon dioxide. These reductions could avert dangerous tipping points. The greatest source of these forcers, and therefore the most effective means of reducing these emissions, is animal agriculture.[21]

Climate scientists are very concerned about carbon dioxide emissions because this gas lasts for hundreds and thousands of years in the atmosphere — in fact some of the carbon dioxide released at the start of the industrial revolution is still up there, warming the world. There is a seldom-told but remarkable story of how we can draw down a large amount of this legacy gas by implementing steep cuts in animal agriculture.

If all animal agriculture ceased:

- 60 – 80 percent of global deforestation (responsible for over a quarter of global carbon dioxide emissions) would cease;

- Fire for deforestation and pasture maintenance would cease (80 – 90 cent of open fires are deliberately lit);

- 70 percent of all agricultural land could be returned to forest or natural grassland, drawing down at least 20 years of carbon dioxide emissions in above and below-ground carbon.[21]

This natural, low cost and large scale draw-down of carbon dioxide is the basis for a study by the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency, which reported[22] that a global transition to a low-meat diet would reduce climate change mitigation costs by about 50 percent, a no-meat diet would reduce mitigation costs by 70 percent, while an animal free diet would reduce costs by 80 percent. This study found that up to 2700 million hectares of pasture and 100 million hectares of cropland could be abandoned, resulting in a large carbon uptake from regrowing vegetation, in addition to the substantial methane and nitrous oxide emission reductions.

Governments are increasingly faced with the stark reality of meeting these costs, more commonly in the form of extreme weather events such as the 2011 floods in Australia and the drought in China and the USA. Considering the cost of climate change mitigation alone, the diet change option offers a growing appeal when

compared to high cost technological solutions such as carbon capture and storage from coal fired power stations. This argument alone is a compelling reason for diet change.

Land degradation and soil salinity

Land degradation is loss or deterioration of soil condition and long term loss of vegetation. This can lead to desertification if left unchecked. One fifth of the world's pastures and rangelands, including three quarters of dry-land rangelands are now degraded. The dominant driver of this degradation is livestock overgrazing, soil compaction and soil erosion caused by livestock action.[7] Land degradation also results in loss of soil organic matter (hence reducing the huge store of soil carbon).[12]

Soil salinity occurs when deep soil salts rise to the surface and concentrate, killing vegetation. The cause of salinity is well known: removal of deep-rooted vegetation such as trees which cycle water between the soil and the atmosphere, maintaining the water table at a lower level. We also know what is responsible for removal of most trees: livestock agriculture.[9]

Air Pollution

Ground-level ozone is a major component of smog, and as we saw above, has serious health and crop production

impacts. Also discussed was the most effective means of reducing this ozone — by reducing methane. Again, we know the sources of methane well: nearly half is caused by animal agriculture.

Future food and farming

Beginning in the 1960's, the remarkable 'Green Revolution', fuelled by advances in crop breeding, fertilisers, pesticides and industrialised farming methods, led to a very comfortable food security for the world. Yields of wheat, for example, rose from 1-2 tonnes per hectare to 7-8 tonnes. Agricultural research organisations such as the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research helped achieve similar gains in yields of maize, rice, grain legumes, potatoes and other crops. In a short six years, India went from a country that could not feed itself, to achieving food security. The Green Revolution led to a road out of poverty for millions of people.

However, the cracks in this formidable production system are starting to appear. From 2001 to 2008 grain harvests failed to keep up with demand, drawing down the world's stockpiles of grain from more than 100 days to less than 50 days.[23] Food prices shot up, sparking riots in many countries from Mexico to Zimbabwe. Failed crops from drought and climate change fuelled conflicts, put more

than 1.5 billion people at risk of starvation.[24] Many countries restricted or banned food exports in an attempt to control food prices. Prices did ease in late 2009, but have again reached high levels in 2011.

The food crisis of 2008 is a sign of what lies ahead. A 'perfect storm' has put our future food security at extreme risk, and future crises will be far worse unless we make major change.[25] So what is this perfect storm? A combination of population increase, demand from an increased number of wealthy consumers, water scarcity, land scarcity, soil nutrient loss, peak oil (and hence peak nitrogen fertiliser), peak phosphorous, climate change and food globalisation.

In just five years, the increased demand for food in China and India was equivalent to the food consumed by all of Europe. China's meat consumption over the last 15 years has trebled, requiring ten times more grain to feed livestock. China's own grain harvests have been ravaged by drought, desertification and rapidly depleting ground water tables, leading to large imports. By 2050, the FAO expects demand for food to double,[26] the greatest driver being a shift in demand in China and India to more grain-intensive meat and dairy products. The coming storm will ensure we cannot meet that demand.

Wars have been fought over water, fishing grounds and productive agricultural land, and although there is still some under-utilised land in South America and Africa, denatured soils demand more increasingly scarce fertiliser, with climate change ensuring floods, extreme weather events and droughts will be common. Famine could strike within a matter of weeks following failed harvests, leading to climate refugees, armed conflict and starvation.[25]

So what needs to change? How can we feed another three or four billion people? How can we double our food production with far less water, less land, and less fertiliser?

Many reports have posed solutions to this coming crisis, such as Chatham House.[27] They strongly emphasise food production resilience and sustainability. Along with issues of finance and investment in crop productivity, the key issues of ecological pest management and soil fertility through increased soil organic matter are stressed, as well as encouraging small-holder farming and aid access to markets. These reports commonly identify the critical factor causing the food crisis as the trend in consumption towards meat and dairy.

Julian Cribb concludes that the coming famine is a planetary emergency,[25] that 'The traditional cookbook is a hymnal to an age of indulgence that is costing us the

earth.' and '… that the western diet kills more than half its consumers through heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes should be sufficient warning of its inherent risks.'

Cribb predicts that several radical changes will have an impact on humanity, and that 'The twenty-first century diet will be more healthful all round.'

The healthy world diet Cribb refers to is low in meat and dairy products, noting that vegetable production yields more food for a given area of land and amount of water than legumes or cereals (and of course meat and dairy). Vegetables contain higher levels of micro-nutrients such as vitamin A and C and folates, and yield more energy, protein and iron per unit of land than meat.[28] He notes that vegetable production can be the focus of urban gardens, creating employment and food security even in densely populated cities. He predicts that meat will become a high-priced luxury, reflecting the true cost to the planet of producing it.

Cribb lays the blame for 'the coming famine' on cookbook writers, fast-food chains, supermarkets, magazines, dieticians and nutritionists, agricultural bureaucracies, food scientists and celebrity chefs.

The food industry will certainly be hit hard by this crisis. However, the uncertainty and risk facing the food

industry could well be seen as an opportunity. Demand for plant-based meat and dairy alternatives will be needed on a large scale: these products can be effectively marketed as healthier, less expensive and environmentally friendly food products.[29] This in turn, will reduce climate and environmental impacts and reduce the costs of climate mitigation.

Ecological impacts of a global shift to plant-based diets will be far reaching:

- Deforestation will rapidly drop, and reverse when forests re-grow on grazed lands;
- Grain production will reduce (current production would be 50 percent more than needed[7]);
- Greenhouse emissions will reduce by as much as 51 percent;
- Climate change mitigation costs will reduce by 80 percent;
- Extinctions and biodiversity loss will drop by 60 percent;
- Soil degradation, water pollution, air pollution and ocean pollution will quickly improve; and

- Ecological balance will be restored to our fragile environment.

Further, adoption of an organic plant-based global diet would result in:

- Rapid draw-down of greenhouse gases now in the atmosphere, to be stored in the soil;
- Soil health improving dramatically, strengthening the web of life beginning in the soil, and resulting in healthier more nutritious crops; and
- On-farm employment increasing, attracting people from cities back to rural communities.

The ecosphere and our moral 'blind spot'

Today, most of us are compassionate towards animals and reject animal cruelty; however, humanity still has a large 'blind spot' in our consciousness relating to using animals for meat, milk and eggs. A stunning example of this is demonstrated by a popular animal welfare organisation holding sausage sizzles across Australia in order to raise funds. Surely killing animals to raise funds to save animal lives brings a large blind spot into focus.

This same blind spot has created a forest-destroying, land-degrading, water-polluting giant that is pushing our climate, our food and thousands of species into the greatest crisis humanity has ever seen. The conclusion is clear: killing animals for food may be cruel to animals, but the result may be more cruel to humankind.

> *"Every age has its massive moral blind spots. We might not see them, but our children will."*
> **— Bono**

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Book review

From Crisis To Peace: the Organic Vegan Way is the Answer
Supreme Master Ching Hai

This pioneering book explains the connection between our food choices and how they affect the environment. Available free to read from <http://crisis2peace.org/>, it is a collection of quotes from Supreme Master Ching Hai — who is an environmentalist, spiritual teacher, artist, author, designer and world-renowned humanitarian. She states that the main cause of global warming is the livestock industry, and proposes an organic vegan diet as the major solution to solve the problem.

The chapter titles include 'The Vegan Solution to Save the World', 'Organic Veganism to Heal the Planet', 'Enacting Vegan Laws and Policies' and 'Immediate Global Shift to a Plant-Based Diet'.

From Crisis to Peace: the Organic Vegan Way is the Answer also includes 'A Personal Plea from Supreme Master Ching Hai to World Leaders' in which she urges leaders to adopt policies that encourage and support their nation's adoption of a plant-based diet for the benefit of all people.

I highly recommend this book for anyone who is interested in learning more about how an organic vegan diet can solve the serious global problems humanity is facing, such as climate change, deforestation, global food and water shortages and world hunger. It is an inspirational collection of quotes that will leave the reader inspired and ready to take positive action.

<http://crisis2peace.org/>

Reviewed by Kathy Divine

Meet Jane Daly

Jane is based in Sydney, Australia and is in her 6th year of being vegan. Jane is Research and Projects Coordinator for the Vegan Society NSW[1] and she's currently collaborating with Noah Hannibal, aka Vegan Tank,[2] to create a new Australian vegan magazine, *Living Vegan*, which is to be launched at World Vegan Day in Melbourne, in November 2011.

In her day job Jane is a Research Consultant at the Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology, Sydney (UTS).[3] Her background is in applied research and consulting focused on energy policy and climate change response. Jane's research interests relate to the behavioural, organisational, systemic and cultural responses to sustainability challenges. She has a special interest in sustainability issues associated with food and diet.

What is your 'going vegan' story?

I went vegan overnight — 'cold tofu', if you will. It happened after I downloaded a free Vegan Freak Radio podcast from iTunes.[4] I was vegetarian at the time, and this quirkily named podcast caught my attention. Listening to Bob and Jenna's antics and their convincing explanations of veganism, my eyes were immediately opened, and I jumped right in. I cleaned out my fridge that day and haven't looked back.

How have your family and friends reacted to your veganism?

My family is really great. My Mum is particularly supportive. Mum always makes sure there is plenty of great vegan food when I go back home for Christmas. Her husband, who has some health problems, is benefiting from the vegan influence now. Mum quickly figured out that if she made a vegan meal

and labelled it as such, her 'hubs' wouldn't be so keen on it. So, now she's adopted a different strategy — if she makes say a vegan soup for dinner, instead of calling it vegan, she calls it 'Country Style' soup.

I find that interesting, because it's not the food itself that has changed, it's the meaning embedded in the name of the food and how it is presented, and this seems to work with her husband who is 'blokey' and from an older generation.

As for my friends, most are vegan or vegetarian, and my workplace is also great. We have a vegetarian catering policy, and there is always a vegan option available for me and the other vegans in the office; in fact, our Institute Director has just gone vegan again after being vegetarian, so the numbers in the office are growing!

What are some of your favourite foods?

Bananas, mangoes, and custard apples win hands down. I also love greens and green smoothies and eating the herbs from my courtyard garden. I try to eat a fairly low-fat, high-raw diet, but still make room for 'naughty' takeaways. Actually my favourite restaurant at the moment is Vina, in Newtown. I love their combination fried rice and mock fish hotpot. But generally I try to eat at home, because my own cooking is pretty delicious,

to be honest. I get an organics box from Doorstep Organics,[5] a small business run by my friend Peter Richardson. The produce is always so fresh and of such a high quality, and they often drop in extra surprises I haven't ordered.

You seem to have your finger in a number of pies: What are you working on at the moment?

I am currently working to establish a Food, Diet and Sustainability research area at my workplace, the Institute for Sustainable Futures (ISF). As luck would have it, a number of other UTS researchers are interested in sustainable food, so I am seeking collaborations and funding for several exciting projects in the area.

The Institute has already done some world leading research into peak phosphorus and my colleague Dr Dana Cordell has launched the Global Phosphorus Research Initiative.[6] Did you know that producing meat products require 10 times more phosphorus than is required in order to produce vegetable-based products?[7] And we are quickly running out of phosphorus reserves, so it is quite a serious threat to food security. One of the ways to address peak phosphorus is through diet change towards plant based diets.

As part of my role at ISF, I have also had the opportunity to work with the animal protection institute, Voiceless, and in recent years ISF has won two research grants from them. And although I'm not directly involved, more recently ISF and Voiceless have established THINKK, the Think Tank for Kangaroos.[8] THINKK is critically assessing kangaroo management practices and exploring non-lethal management options that are more consistent with ecology, animal welfare, human health and ethics. My colleague and (vegan) friend Keely Boom is involved in that project.[9]

So it's a really exciting time to be working at ISF and it's great that our Director is so supportive of these animal and sustainable food issues.

Outside of work, I am also volunteering with the Vegan Society of NSW.[10] I most recently wrote a submission to a consultation process being run by the Australian Government, to formulate a National Food Plan (NFP).[11] On behalf of the Society, I recommended that an important objective for the NFP should be to develop innovative measures for achieving dietary change towards more sustainable and compassionate, vegan and plant-based diets. I also recommended that the NFP include targets for reducing meat and dairy consumption in Australia.

A group of us are now working to establish a new national vegan advocacy organisation, Vegan Australia (VA). The vision for VA is to inspire Australians to accept veganism as an ethical, attainable and beneficial way of life. Our tagline 'Love life, live vegan' really sums this up. VA will promote veganism, campaign to government and provide support to already committed vegans.

Your work sounds pretty cool. So, what are your main research interests?

I am most interested in research to inform strategies for changing patterns and cultures of meat and dairy consumption in favour of plant-based diets. Earlier in the year, I presented a paper at a sustainability conference, titled 'Reducing Meat and Dairy Consumption: a cultural change approach'.[12] The paper explores existing research on the cultural meanings of meat and dairy, and suggests a cultural change approach to dietary consumption change, and areas for further research.

Next month I will be moderating a session at the Australian Animal Activists Forum called 'Vegan Mainstream'. The panel members have all been involved in some exciting vegan and diet change initiatives. I am really interested in understanding the various initiatives that are happening around the world, like Meat Free Monday, Vegan Pledge, the Vegan Easy Challenge and so on. I am keen to evaluate these initiatives and draw out lessons so we can gain a better understanding of what really works in order to change people's diets for the longer term.

I hope to continue this research as part of my job, but eventually I plan to do a PhD on this stuff.

You have a lot going on, and I understand you are involved in a new Australian vegan magazine too?

Yes that is right — *Living Vegan*! It's very exciting. It began after I found out that the much loved *Vegan Voice* was ending. Many people were so sad. Some cried. All over the internet, people were calling out for a new magazine.

After doing some further background survey research, it was very clear that a huge interest and support for a new magazine existed from vegans all around Australia, and so I began planning one. As luck would have it, I soon found out that the very talented Noah Hannibal, aka Vegan Tank, was also planning a new magazine! So, we connected on Skype and decided to collaborate to create *Living Vegan*.

We have a very ambitious timeline as we are launching the first issue at World Vegan Day this November. We hope the magazine will really speak to the many existing vegans out there by providing positive stories and

inspiration but also useful information for new vegans and 'pre-vegans'. We hope to offer a digital version and phone app down the track, too. Our website is <www.livingvegan.com.au>, so keep an eye out for *Living Vegan*.

Who has particularly inspired or helped you?

I have already mentioned Bob and Jenna Torres,[13] they got me to go vegan in the first place. Then, I would have to say Gary Francione[14] has been a big inspiration. His essays and talks really helped me get a lot of my thinking in order while I was still learning about veganism in the first couple of years.

More recently I would have to say that my friends and colleagues in the vegan community here in Sydney are incredibly inspiring. Greg McFarlane,[15] the current president of the Vegan Society NSW is very admirable and forever supportive and positive. My boyfriend Tim Moore[16] is also amazing. He has been vegan for 15 years and his talents are too numerous to mention here. It is such a pleasure to be in a vegan relationship.

I should also add that two raw foodies have been a great inspiration to me: Grant Campbell[17] and Joy Mozzi.[18] These two really make me smile!

What do you think are the most effective ways of helping veganism to become more mainstream?

I think that it is important to recognise that as individuals, we are embedded in economic, social, technological and cultural contexts. These contexts play an important part in shaping our behaviours and practices. I think the opportunities for change exist in the interplay between individuals and their contexts. I really encourage people to try going vegan: for a day; for a week; for however long — and for whatever reason — just give it a go and see for yourself!

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60 seconds with Kian Khani

Iran

What are the benefits of being vegan for you?

Being vegan is the compassionate way of living. It is good for my health, and I don't need to kill any sentient beings to augment my body. As a vegan, I don't feel any burden on my conscience as my inner self knows it is the right way.

Would you recommend the vegan diet to other men?

I recommend it to everyone in the universe. I have so much energy, I can stay up all night. I challenge meat-eating men to be able to have as much energy as I do. Three of my meat-eating male friends my age have had bypasses, and one is a diabetic. They get sick a lot whereas my health is in top condition. I have been sick twice in the last sixteen years, but only because on those two occasions I was in a very polluted area whilst on overseas holidays.

How long have you been vegan?

Three years vegan, 16 years vegetarian.

What advice would you give someone thinking about going vegan?

It's the best thing. Don't be scared. You will get more nutrition from legumes, fresh fruit and vegetables, compared with meat. We don't need to supplement at all. It's also great for losing weight.

60 seconds with Zulaa Tamir

Mongolia

What are the benefits of being vegan for you?

My health has improved, in addition to a lot of other positive changes. During the transitional period of becoming vegan, my attitude towards life was totally transformed into a new way of seeing life. I also joined a better network of happy vegan friends, so I can also say my social life's improved. I feel lighter and calmer, overall.

Would you recommend the vegan diet to other women?

Yes, for sure — for men and women; everyone.

How long have you been vegan for?

Three years.

What advice would you give someone who is thinking about going vegan?

Find lots of vegan recipes, and do your research on the internet, and find new vegan friends to learn from. Stick to your goals, and never give up. Be honest with yourself — if you know you really want to do it, keep going; try it, and I 'one hundred percent' guarantee you will see lots of positive changes.

Spotlight on a vegan business

Tammy Fry from Frys Vegetarian

Wally Fry's experimenting in the kitchen in order to create a meat free meal that he could enjoy, was his starting point for later creating a global business. Frys Vegetarian is saving animals and the planet, one meat free product at a time. I caught up with Tammy Fry, daughter of Wally, to find out more.

Please tell us a bit about your product range.

We have 19 products in our range available in 23 countries worldwide. All products are vegan and are made in a dedicated vegan factory. No preservatives, artificial colours, cholesterol, trans fats and of course, no hormones or antibiotics in our products! We buy non genetically modified soya. Our raw materials are all sourced from sustainable sources.

What has been the response from the public to your products? Which countries are they available in?

We make delicious tasting meat alternatives, so people all over the world really love our products. We rely strongly on word of mouth advertising. We are not a corporate and do not have huge budgets to commit to advertising our products. We ensure quality at all times and value for money!

Frys Vegetarian products are available in India, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Spain, Sweden, Germany, Indian ocean islands, United Arab Emirates and North and Central African countries.

Please tell us about your Meat Free Monday initiative in South Africa.

Meat Free Monday has been hugely successful in South Africa. We have worked closely with non profit organisations and local celebrities to drive a common and powerful campaign. We have received fifteen thousand pledges to date and hope to replicate our South African effort here in Australia.

Why should people eat a Frys burger instead of a meat burger? Are there any environmental benefits for example?

Frys burgers contain no cholesterol; no preservatives; no artificial colours; they are not genetically modified; there are no trans fats; no antibiotics or hormones. By eating a vegetarian burger, around 200 grams of carbon dioxide equivalent are generated (including all the processing steps). A beef burger generates approx 5595 grams of carbon dioxide equivalent! Plus the water savings; less loss of biodiversity due to mono culture crops being planted to feed livestock (70 percent of crops

are fed to animals); less deforestation and desertification are more reasons to eat a vegetarian burger.

The saving of hundreds of thousands of animals which are currently living in horrific conditions, is of course another reason to eat a Frys burger.

What are the future plans for Frys?

We will continue to grow and hopefully give people considering a vegan or vegetarian lifestyle, a great meat alternative so that the switch for them is easier. Frys will always maintain its high set of values and ethics, and will always place the environment ahead of profit. Onwards and upwards!

<http://www.frysvegetarian.co.za/>

Spotlight on a vegan business

Jeremy Johnson from Vegan Perfection

Can you please tell us a bit about Vegan Perfection?

We are a vegan-owned and operated business specialising in distribution of high-quality vegan foods throughout Australia. We only sell vegan products, and we check every potential new product thoroughly to ensure it is truly vegan and ethically made. We have a

strong focus on organic and gluten-free products as well as a number of nut-free and sugar-free lines.

Do you have a favourite product you sell?

There are so many now, that it is difficult to pinpoint one, but I would have to say it is our range of Redwood 'Cheezly' vegan cheeses. This was the first range of products we ever imported, and they are still our most popular by far. I love the fact they taste so good and melt so perfectly — so much so that non-vegans are often very impressed and able to make the switch to dairy-free cheese, which is a great thing!

What has been the feedback from customers?

Predominantly positive. We set out to increase the options for Australian vegans when they walk into a shop anywhere in the country. Although it is difficult to distribute to every single town in such a big country, most people are now able to access good-quality vegan products locally and appreciate having this option. Not everyone is going to like or buy every vegan product in the shop, but at least they now have the choice!

Would you recommend starting a vegan business? Any advice you would like to pass on?

Yes, absolutely! We have seen a large number of vegan businesses start in the last three or four years and it is so encouraging. We try to offer support and advice to every new vegan business we come into contact with, because we know how hard it is to make this type of venture work. The advice I would give would be to always stay true to the beliefs and goals of the business and to remember you must believe in what you are doing 100 percent. If you don't believe in it, other people won't believe in it either … Oh, and be prepared to work harder than you've ever worked or you ever will work in your life!

<www.veganperfection.com.au>

8 The vegan diet is great for weight loss, too!

Meet Simone Seeley

Weight-loss results from the vegan diet can be amazing: Simone tells us how.

My name is Simone, and I'm a 21-year-old, single, stay-at-home mum of a one-year-old boy, Connor. I'm studying to become a breastfeeding counsellor, and I plan on becoming a lactation consultant after that. Soon, I'll be starting a vegetarian–vegan nutrition course so I can become a vegetarian–vegan nutrition consultant and help people with their diet and health.

I've been vegan since March 2010. I'm 174 centimetres tall, and I used to be overweight, but I now weigh a healthy 60 kilograms. I always used to struggle with my weight, and I didn't have a good relationship with food; I saw it as my enemy and something I should avoid. I tried everything to lose weight — even drugs — and before I became pregnant, I did lose weight, but it was a hard and unhealthy journey. While I was pregnant, I put the weight on again.

When I had my son, something shifted within me: I saw meat not as food but as someone's mother, daughter, son or brother. I saw dairy products as a mother's stolen breast milk, and I got really upset. I lost the baby weight by adopting a vegan lifestyle. I have a better relationship with food now and see it very differently, because everything I eat is cruelty free and I feel that with every meal, I'm making a difference in the world.

Please share with us your journey towards a healthy weight. How did you achieve it? Any special tips you'd like to share with us?

I was carrying a lot of weight I had to lose, due to weight gained during my pregnancy. I never thought I'd be able to lose it. I didn't go vegan to lose the weight, though; I went vegan because I could no longer be a part of or support industries in which animals are tortured. The weight loss was a bonus! I ate when I was hungry and never deprived myself if I felt like having a treat.

I have a lot of foods in my diet now, whereas before, I ate the same things every week — it was boring. Now, I try new foods every few days! I invested in a couple of vegan cookbooks, including a raw-vegan one, and found a couple of good recipe websites. I suggest that anyone going vegan buy some books and visit some websites, because it can be very scary when you're thinking of

cutting out meat, dairy and eggs if that's all you've eaten previously. You might think there's nothing to eat, but you'll be very surprised at what you find!

Do you find it helpful to have a vegan diet so you can maintain a healthy weight?

I believe it is. Since becoming vegan, I have become more health conscious and learnt a lot about nutrition. I felt I needed to learn about sources of vitamins and minerals so that if anybody asked me, 'How do you get your iron?' I could answer with confidence. I previously had no idea when it came to nutrition; I just ate whatever and hoped I was getting what I needed. Now, I know I get all the required vitamins, minerals, etcetera, because I had a blood test to see how I was going and my doctor was speechless! It was nice to prove that a vegan diet can be healthy!

Also, just because I'm vegan doesn't mean I don't have junk food, so if your goal is to lose weight, you can't go crazy on those foods, but it's okay once in a while. I found that if I was craving something sweet, there are healthy, raw-vegan desserts that taste so good — such as chocolate mousse!

Besides weight loss, have you derived any benefits from following a vegan lifestyle?

I have a sense of happiness and my life has purpose.

I no longer suffer from anxiety, depression and agoraphobia. I had been on medication for several years, and for the past couple of years, I was on a very high dosage. Since becoming vegan, I've felt I didn't need the medication any more, and with the approval of my doctor, I've weaned myself off it, and I've never been happier. I believe that when you're consuming animal products, you're consuming the fear, pain and anxiety the animals felt both during their entire life and at death.

I used to have bad skin breakouts and couldn't find any skin products to clear them up. I became very self-conscious, whereas now, I have clear skin.

I'm now part of the vegan community, so I have a sense of belonging and find it fun to meet new people at various vegan events.

I'm part of positive change in the world, and that is very exciting.

I am now passionate about cooking and about trying new foods.

I love educating other people and showing them that vegans aren't always pale, stick-thin hippies who eat lettuce and lentils all day. It's awesome teaching them about the vegan lifestyle!

How important do you think exercise is as part of a weight-loss plan? Is there anything else you think you should mention, in addition to the benefits of diet and exercise, that you found can aid weight loss?

I don't have an exercise routine, but I stay active by running around after my son. I take him for walks, and we play at the park, but as a mum, I don't have time to work out at the gym, so I just do what I can.

I think that drinking water is beneficial. Previously, I lived on a diet of soft drinks. I occasionally have one now, but I've mainly replaced them with water, or mineral water with fresh lemon juice if I feel like something fizzy.

Any last inspirational thoughts for us?

Veganism led me to improve my life more than I can say. It's not just a diet; it's a way to live positively and kindly. It's not only my physical health that's improved; I'm better both mentally and spiritually. I recommend it to everyone, because I feel awesome!

To view photos of Simone, please visit <www.vegansarecool.com>

Meet Zelma Opland from South Africa

Why did you decide to go vegan, and how long have you been vegan?

I have been vegan for three and half years. I decided to go vegan because during the preceding year I had become aware through a vegan friend, of the cruelty of the dairy industry. When my marriage to a vegetarian man ended, it was the perfect opportunity to clear my home of all dairy, leather, etc.

What have been the benefits for you of following a vegan diet?

There have been many benefits, including the initial superficial benefit of losing about 12 unwanted kilograms. I have also come to realise that many people who interact with me in my work as a psychotherapist and elsewhere have been influenced by my decision. Being a vegan has given me an enormously increased sense of self respect, and I have seen the effect my conviction has had on others.

Can you share with us one of your favourite recipes?

I can't really provide you with a recipe as I don't cook much myself but my favourite dishes are old-fashioned

wholesome vegetable soup; vegetable stew; healthy salads; and baked vegetables. By the way, my dogs are also vegan and love the recipes from a book I bought from PETA (People For the Ethical Treatment of Animals) called *Vegetarian Dogs and Cats*.

What is it like being vegan in South Africa? Is it easy, or are there some obstacles?

South Africa has amazing fruit and vegetables, excellent health stores and a brilliant range of soya products, so getting and making good food is not difficult. While we may not have the choice that people have in the US, personally I prefer to keep it simple. I don't eat out much and prefer entertaining at home, but when I do, I'm fortunate in that I live in an area of Johannesburg where I have two really great veg/vegan restaurants really close by. Over the last year, I have noticed that wherever I go, people know what a vegan is, whereas previously, that was definitely not always the case. South Africa is generally a big meat-eating culture but as with being vegan anywhere in the world, there are those who are willing to listen and are open to change and many who just aren't ready.

Anything else you would like to add?

Becoming vegan meant becoming an activist, and this has added a new and very meaningful dimension to my

life. I have also met some wonderful people as a result and have had far more impact in changing people's consciousness than I ever did in my previous twenty eight years of being vegetarian.

Zelma is a psychotherapist who is in the process of setting up an organisation that will provide free trauma counselling to those working with animals, including, but not limited to animal-shelter and animal-rescue workers. She can be contacted via <zelmaopland@iburst.co.za>

Spotlight on a vegan business

Jessica Bailey from the The Cruelty Free Shop

Why did you decide to start The Cruelty Free Shop?

When I first became vegan, I found I spent a lot of time shopping: both reading labels and visiting multiple shops to find all the products I wanted, which was very time consuming. On top of that, lots of vegan products I wanted I just couldn't get in Australia. I figured that other vegans must be having the same problems, and I was concerned that people might be finding it all too hard and give up on veganism. These thoughts led me to start The Cruelty Free Shop online (<www.crueltyfreeshop.com.au>), to make vegan products more readily available and make it easier for people to become and stay vegan.

I started the business with hardly any money and grew it slowly, over the years, until now, 10 years on, we're proud to have the widest range of vegan products in Australia and to have been voted Australia's favourite vegan business four years running.

Can you tell us a bit about what you sell?

We sell a huge range of vegan goodies, mostly alternatives to common non-vegan foods — things such as soy cream, lollies without gelatin, mock meat and dairy-free cheeses. I have realised, over the years, that what most vegans want isn't health food but vegan treats — our biggest sellers are vegan marshmallows and chocolate bars! Oh, and we also sell lots of certified cruelty-free products: hair and skin care products, cosmetics, household cleaners, and so on.

Do you have a favourite product you sell?

My all time favourite is the Cheezly melting cheese from the UK and Constant Craving truffles and Lamyong mock meat, and … I could go on and on!

What has been the feedback from customers?

Our customers seem very happy with our service and range — as evidenced by them voting us as Australia's favourite business each year, and a lot of lovely feedback

we receive. Over the years, many customers have morphed into friends — an unexpected bonus.

Would you recommend starting a vegan/cruelty-free business? Any advice you would like to pass on?

Definitely: the world needs more vegan businesses! I'm always keen to help out new vegan businesses. I just made it up as I went along and inevitably made lots of mistakes along the way; if I can help other vegans to avoid those mistakes, I will be very happy.

What other contributions have you made to the vegan community?

Six years ago, I decided that Sydney needed an event to celebrate veganism and to help educate the public about animal rights. I came up with the idea of a Cruelty Free Festival, and asked Animal Liberation NSW whether they'd allow me to run it under their banner. Fortunately, they said yes, and now the 100 percent vegan festival is in its sixth year and is getting bigger every year. The goal of the festival (<www.crueltyfreefestival.org.au>) is to show people how they can make simple changes in their daily lives to help save animals from cruelty. We hope every person who goes to the festival does one more thing in his or her life for animals; whether it be changing their diet, sponsoring an animal, adopting a pet, joining an animal rights group or changing their brand of shampoo. With

about 6000 people attending the festival, that's really going to make a difference!

<www.crueltyfreeshop.com.au>

<www.crueltyfreefestival.org.au>

9 Vegan compassion: being the voice for animals

Meet Mariana Tosca

Mariana is an award-winning actor who has a huge heart. Through her tireless efforts to speak on behalf of animals, she is an inspiration to many people. We caught up with her to find out more about her work for animals and her passion for veganism.

What inspired you to go vegan? Was there a specific moment where you made the connection, or was it a gradual process?

I had been a vegetarian for the majority of my life, but when I was asked to host a gala for a farm-sanctuary fundraiser, I found out how mistaken I was in my belief system. That night, I learnt the truth about 'free-range' farming. I had always been under the assumption that the animals being used for egg and milk production were leading comfortable, distress-free lives, but I couldn't have been more wrong.

There are no government laws or standards regulating the use of terms such as 'free range' or 'free roaming' for

labels on egg cartons. Those labels generally mean that hens are uncaged but confined indoors in overcrowded sheds. For animals raised for meat, the USDA mandates that free-range chickens must have 'access to the outdoors' and that free-range cows and sheep must be 'grass fed and live on a range'. No other criteria are stipulated, such as the size of the 'range' or the amount of space required for each animal, or any guidelines for animal care and handling.

On dairy farms, calves are taken away within two days of being born. The males are destined for veal production and are confined to small crates that are 22 inches wide and 58 inches long, making it impossible for them to move. That's done deliberately to keep their muscles from developing so their flesh remains tender. They are fed on a diet of milk powder and water, that lacks adequate iron, to deliberately cause anemia in order to keep their flesh pale. Then, after four to six months, they are killed.

This treatment, coupled with the knowledge that dairy cows are kept in a state of perpetual pregnancy only to be robbed of the milk their bodies are naturally producing to nourish their own offspring, was enough for me to say, 'No more'.

There seems to be a lot more media coverage about veganism lately. Are we possibly making some progress, and are you seeing more people around you going vegan?

I live in a city and a country in which vegetarianism and veganism are more mainstream than they were even as little as a decade ago. I think we are living at a very exciting time, in terms of how society is becoming more and more open to what was always labelled and judged a 'fringe' lifestyle. To be able to fly on a plane and order a vegan meal and then land at an airport for a connecting flight and be able to find vegan options in a strip of what had once been just a long stretch of carnivorous kiosks are signs of remarkable progress. Veganism has gone from being the shunned, ostracised nerd in the playground to being the coolest, most popular kid in school.

Are you involved in any animal-advocacy groups or animal-rights groups?

I am very proud to be associated with a number of non-profit groups who are doing extraordinary things to lessen the suffering of other earthlings. I serve on the advisory boards of these organisations:

Save The Chimps: <http://www.savethechimps.org/> — the world's largest chimpanzee sanctuary, founded by the late Dr Carole Noon. Save The Chimps is a 12-island sanctuary located on 200 acres in Florida and is home

to hundreds of chimpanzees who've been retired from the NASA space research program, bio-medical research projects, the entertainment industry and the pet trade. I had the rarefied privilege of accompanying one of the families of chimps on their migration from a defunct laboratory to their new island home on the sanctuary.

Born Free USA: <http://www.bornfreeusa.org/> – the US offshoot of the UK-based Born Free. Born Free USA is a conservation and animal-welfare charity run by a phenomenal group of people led by Will Travers and Adam Roberts. The organisation was founded by Will's parents, Virginia and her late husband Bill Travers, who starred together in the 1966 film 'Born Free'. Of all of the conservation groups in the world, Born Free USA is in the pantheon of the greats, displaying integrity and an impeccable sense of purpose in their ceaseless efforts to protect the wild animals of the earth.

DreamCatcher Wild Horse and Burro Sanctuary: <http://www.dreamcatcherhorsesanctuary.org/> – a 1200-acre sanctuary located in Northern California, founded and run by Barbara Clarke, an intrepid and soulful woman whose tireless advocacy for the animals humbles me. DreamCatcher takes in previously rounded-up or adopted wild horses and returns them to a life similar to what they experienced in the wild. DreamCatcher also takes in aged or retired domestic horses. Many of the horses at

the sanctuary were headed for a slaughterhouse in either Canada or Mexico, to be killed for human consumption in Europe or Japan.

ElephantVoices: <http://www.elephantvoices.org> – a non-profit founded and run by two of the world's most respected authorities on elephants and two of the finest people I know, husband-and-wife team Petter Granli and Dr Joyce Poole. Their goals are to advance the study of elephant cognition, communication and social behaviour and promote scientifically sound and ethical management and care of elephants. They accomplish these goals through research, conservation, education and advocacy.

National Equine Resource Network (NERN): <http://www.nationalequine.org/> – a charity founded and run by Shirley Puga, a woman who has been at the forefront of equine rescue work for the last several years. Shirley facilitated the rescue of over 800 horses from situations where they were abandoned, abused or scheduled to be slaughtered. A key objective of NERN is to fill a critical role of providing resources to new and existing rescues or sanctuaries. Currently many organisations are struggling with high expenses, low donations and a never ending supply of horses. NERN wants to help them stabilize their business, and provide tools so they may become more self sufficient.

In the entertainment industry, there seems to be actors and other artists that are going vegetarian or vegan. Why do you think these diets are so popular among artists?

They photograph better on camera! Their skin is clearer, their eyes are brighter and their body is leaner — what's not to love?

Any final thoughts you would like to share with us?

I think we need to share our food with others who haven't yet experienced eating in a cruelty-free way. That's how we can effectively change the world. When it comes to food, you really don't have to do a lot of talking. There's never a need to get into lengthy debates, you just give somebody something that tastes really great and then they start asking questions. 'Wow, that's really made without any meat? That was amazing.' And that's how you start to shift perception. Food is the almighty persuader.

Peace begins on your plate.

For more information about Mariana and her work helping animals, please visit <www.mtosca.com>.

Meet Deb Doyle

Deb is a self-employed book and publication editor and editorial-training consultant.

How long have you been vegan?

I've been totally vegan for a few months, almost vegan since 2003 and vegetarian for about 28 years.

Have you found any health benefits associated with switching to a vegan diet?

Yes: people tell me I look years younger than my biological age (56), I had no unsettling symptoms of menopause, my skin is clearer, my hair is shinier and stronger, I haven't had a cold since I don't know when, I think more clearly, I'm healthier spiritually, and my post-childbirth weight is much less of an ongoing problem.

What's your favourite food?

This is a hard one to answer because I love so many things, but I'll have to say fresh strawberries and blueberries with soy yoghurt for dessert, closely followed by yellow peaches in summer and vegan dark chocolate all year round — oh, and raisin toast with tahini and blackberry jam, and a mug of tea, with soy milk, for morning tea.

Why did you decide to go vegan?

I didn't have one big epiphany, just many light-bulb moments and moments during which I felt like I was 'coming home'. In 1986, while living in Melbourne, Australia (where I lived until 2004), I stopped at an Animal Liberation Victoria stall in Bourke Street Mall. I saw horrifying images of farmed-animal cruelty, signed whatever petitions were on the table, and stopped eating fishes once and for all (I'd cut out red and white 'meat' some time before then).

I did, however, keep eating eggs, cheese and yoghurt. In the early 1990s, I cut out the dairy products and eggs when I found myself viscerally absorbing the pain and misery that cows and hens suffer through regardless of how they're raised. I cut out honey in 2003 and leather footwear last year. I have a silk eye mask (for sleeping) that I'll replace with a cotton product when the time comes. I've never been able to wear wool, but I wouldn't have worn it even if I could have. I'd always thrown up when eating bread spread with even a smidgeon of butter, so that's been no loss. I now read all labels on foods in supermarkets and don't keep myself in denial about the hidden nasties. I'm blessed in having a long-time partner and husband who's 'one of us' and 'gets' everything about the ethics and philosophy of veganism.

I consciously went vegan because I could no longer live with myself or my daughter if I maintained any form of hypocrisy. A few years ago, I had a nightmare about a bloodied, half-dead piglet in an abattoir, and s/he was crawling out of the killing room and pleading with me to stop the pain. I feel in my heart that Jesus Christ would have to have been vegan. I'm chuffed that one of my big childhood pop idols, Beatle Paul, is a voice for veganism. I'm proud to be an ethical rather than dietary vegan. The dietary benefits are health and longevity, which are terrific, but I'm vegan for the animals, not my own side benefits. Like all sound decisions, the choice comes from the heart, not the head. My biggest challenge is to stay sane in an insane world. As a thinking and feeling person who's consciously minimising engagement with the (wait for it) capitalist–medical–pharmaceutical–reproductive–agribusiness–technical–military complex, I'm as happy as a pig in mud!

I remember the unholy taste of the 'lambs' brains' I was fed as a baby. I remember, as a child, seeing a skinned rabbit on my grandmother's kitchen sink and a fish's head in my dinner bowl. I remember dry retching on seeing poor piggies strung up on hooks in a butcher shop. I remember having the same feeling of disbelief, at age 15, when viewing a TV documentary about the Canadian seal slaughter. I remember, in my thirties, being pregnant in hospital and being advised to eat 'a

bit of liver' to boost my iron supplies and being one of the few patients who'd been diagnosed as 'lactose intolerant'. I'll never forget the first time I allowed myself to empathise with non-human mothers who lose their babies. All I've done now is expand the circle of compassion to include every creature with whom we share this precious earth.

What advice would you give someone who is reading this interview and who is thinking about making the switch to a vegan diet?

Be true to yourself. I found that nothing fazed me any more once I'd decided to stick to my principles rather than worry about being popular. Know that you'll sort out your spirituality, friendships and philosophy in one fell swoop. Rejoice in being part of the world's last great liberation movement. Listen to your body, and eat only what it loves and needs. Remember you're in the vanguard of change to take the world back to the Garden of Eden and create a new earth.

Meet Jasmin Singer

Jasmin is the Co-Founder and Executive Director of Our Hen House (<www.ourhenhouse.org>), a multimedia hive of opportunities to change the world for animals. She is a freelance writer for VegNews magazine, a host for VegNews TV and the former campaigns manager for Farm Sanctuary.

Please tell us a bit about your website www.ourhenhouse.org.

Our Hen House uses video, audio, interviews, and the written word, to provide daily updates on what you need in order to create change. Changemakers come in all different shapes and sizes — artists, grassroots activists, academics, lawyers, students, business moguls, media darlings, and so on. No matter what your niche is, Our Hen House aims to give you what you need to be part of a new world for animals. Our mission is to effectively mainstream the movement to end the exploitation of animals, and our style is indefatigably positive.

Specifically, we produce a daily blog that is full of ideas for getting involved with creating change; a weekly podcast where we interview pioneers and great thinkers from the world of animal rights, as well as give updates on current events from animal rights, and ruminate on everything from theory to delicious vegan food; and a video production unit that gets into the heads of creative thinkers that are bridging coalitions and advocating for animals in innovative ways.

Our Hen House is a non-profit organization, and we're based in New York City. I founded it in January 2010, along with my partner, animal rights law professor Mariann Sullivan. We have a lot of fun, and we like to

think that our voices, both individually and collectively, are accessible and entertaining. There is so much to be sad and angry about. We hope that Our Hen House provides inspiration for positive change, rather than focusing on just the sad stuff.

What inspired you to create it and what is your ongoing inspiration?

Prior to co-founding Our Hen House, I was working at a national animal rights organization, a job I loved very much and learned a great deal from. But I felt that my voice was becoming edgier than the top-down organization I worked for. Also, I wanted to focus my activism on encouraging and fostering the personal responsibility we all have for creating change, and on helping people let go of the sometimes complacent mindset that the animal rights organizations will take care of that changemaking for us. Though the role of these organizations is vital (for example, where would we be without the undercover investigations of Mercy for Animals?), I think that the huge shift that needs to occur largely has to happen person to person — in the office, at the gym, through reaching out to the media, by introducing animal studies programs at universities and law schools, through legal avenues, and by good old fashioned grassroots means.

Mariann and I wanted to create a hub for these kinds of ideas so that anyone can plug them into their lives, no matter what their talents or interests. At the same time, we saw such potential for harnessing the power of new media in order to change the world for animals, which is why Our Hen House is a multimedia hive for changemaking. Whether it's blogging, podcasting, video-making, social networking, or live-streaming one of our talks, we hope that the many tools Our Hen House offers will find the way to reach a burgeoning activist.

Our ongoing inspiration is the people who send us emails telling us they signed up for that animals and society graduate program because of hearing about it from us, or they decided to leaflet for fifteen minutes every day during their lunch break because of an interview they heard on the podcast, or they entered their animal rights themed art into an art show because of our Art of the Animal section. The changes that are happening right under our noses, and the successes of Our Hen House, are so telling of the fact that people do not want to sit idly by while billions and billions of animals are being abused and killed.

The other inspiration for our work is, of course, those very animals — whose suffering is incomprehensible. In the United States, 267 chickens are killed every second for food. I actually have that number tattooed on my left wrist, because it keeps things in perspective for me, and reminds

me of how big this mountain ahead of us is going to be to climb. But I also see small successes in the way society views animals, and in the growing availability of vegan food. These things give me hope, and I cling onto that.

What has been the feedback from people who have read your blog and/or listened to your podcasts?

Interestingly, our blog readers tend to be a different crowd from our podcast listeners. Our podcast listeners are incredibly outspoken, quick to email us after they hear an episode and give us their thoughts. We like to think (and have been told) that the casual and conversational style of our podcast allows for people to feel that they are hanging out with us, which of course makes us happy to hear. So it's not uncommon for people to contact us after an episode and weigh in with their thoughts on everything from anger, to vegan cheese, to that newest vegan product that we reviewed. Since we get to interview such incredible activists — our mentors, really — we hear from our listeners telling us how moved they were by our guests' stories and thoughts. And, while many of the people we've interviewed are well-known, some of our most popular podcast episodes have been with college students who are starting animal rights clubs, or folks living in the middle of nowhere who are implementing "vegan challenges" among their colleagues. We're incredibly humbled and inspired by these stories, and we know that our listeners are too.

As for our blog, it tends to focus more on actual ideas for getting involved with changing the world for animals, so the feedback we get on that is usually from folks who are trying the ideas we suggest, such as bridging the arts with advocacy (either through painting or poetry or theatre), or writing a letter to the editor, or baking a batch of vegan cupcakes for their office party and providing their co-workers with the recipe, along with a 'Why Vegan?' brochure. Our blog also highlights activists who are already changing the world, and we frequently hear from our readers with stories of how they were inspired by these interviews.

Would you encourage vegans to start a blog themselves to promote the benefits of the vegan lifestyle? How can they get started?

For anyone with even a remote interest in writing, starting a blog is a must. This can be for someone who is, as you said, promoting the benefits of a vegan diet, or it can be more specifically geared toward activism. Using a blog to document your vegan or activist journey can be an important advocacy tool, if it's angled correctly.

Start by signing up for a free blog on blogspot or wordpress. On a separate sheet of paper, brainstorm what you want your focus to be. Who is your audience? What are you trying to accomplish? Do you want to focus on showing athletes that

a plant-based diet is optimal for their sport? Do you want to have a blog encouraging parents in your community to get involved with veganizing the cafeteria at the local elementary school? We all have a number of different circles in our lives. Zero in on one of those circles, and use your blog to speak up for animals in your unique way. Then, go back to that free blog you started, and just start writing. Keep your entries concise and personal, and spread the word through social networking.

Some of my favorite vegan-oriented blogs, including *One Dollar Diet Project* and *Meet the Shannons*, have been so successful that they have resulted in book deals, so you never really know how successful your project can be until you jump in and give it a try. And, whatever you do, don't just target fellow vegans. Be sure to ask your not-yet-vegan friends, family and colleagues to subscribe. Remember: we're trying to change the world, not just toot our own horns.

Are you seeing any progress in regards to people being more open to switching to the vegan diet?

Without question. And although we live in New York City, which is one of the most vegan-friendly cities in the world, we spend the majority of our time traveling to small towns throughout the country where we give workshops on veganism and activism, and we have been

pleasantly surprised to find that even tiny towns in the middle of nowhere are surprisingly vegan-aware and vegan-friendly.

I'm sure this collective leap towards veganism is a result of many factors, including things like the wild mainstream success of the film, *Forks Over Knives*, as well as books that have hit the bestseller lists, like *Veganist* by Kathy Freston and *The Kind Diet* by Alicia Silverstone, not to mention the undercover videos that groups like Mercy for Animals have gotten into the mainstream news media. There is also more awareness because of celebrities like Bill Clinton and Ellen DeGeneres who are not shy about their love of vegan food.

It's an exciting time to be involved with the animal rights movement, and I hope that the future brings even more awareness about the plight of farmed animals, and the power we each have to vote with our dollars, consume delicious vegan food, and live in accordance with our ethical beliefs.

What would you say to someone who is wanting to become vegan but is hesitating?

When I was flirting with the idea of veganism, there were things that held me back. Mainly, I was afraid of being labeled in a way that sounded so finite, not to mention

radical, or so I thought. The truth is, the leap I took to veganism turned out to be a very, very short one, because, as I quickly learnt, vegan food is dynamite — and it's everywhere.

Most people believe in taking personal responsibility, otherwise, we wouldn't recycle, we wouldn't vote, and we would feel free to litter. Going vegan is taking personal responsibility for your food choices. But it's so much more. When you change your eating habits, you have a far greater effect than just your individual boycott of the meat industrial complex, and your individual support for good food. In fact, it affects everyone around you: friends, family, waitstaff, chefs, the person who sits next to you who hears you order lunch, the person in the supermarket who you ask where the tempeh is, the people who read your status update talking about where you had dinner. People you don't even notice, are noticing.

Humans are an intensely social species, and social change happens person to person. And the truth is, most people are not willing to change unless they see someone else do it first. So, by going there before others, you can help create the comfort zone that they need before they can do it themselves. Someone has got to take a leadership role here, because there is just no time to waste.

Plus, there are myriad resources available for people interested in going vegan. Books like *The 30-Day Vegan Challenge*, by Colleen Patrick-Goudreau, and websites like VeganAtHeart.com — which is a free email coaching program for people who are vegans at heart but not necessarily in practice — are hugely helpful for the burgeoning vegans out there.

Lastly, going vegan will open up a whole new world of deliciousness that you never thought possible, and will introduce you to people from all over the world who are passionate about life, social justice and food. Going vegan was the best decision I've ever made. It's the best part about me, and I have no doubt it will be the best part of you too.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

It's high time to change the world for animals!

Meet Mariann Sullivan

Mariann is the Co-Founder and Program Director of Our Hen House (<www.ourhenhouse.org>), a multimedia hive of opportunities for changing the world for animals. She teaches animal law at Cardozo Law School, Brooklyn Law School and Columbia Law School; has published several articles on animal law; has served on the boards of several animal rights organizations; and for 20 years was the deputy chief court attorney for the New York State Appellate Division First Department.

Can you tell us a little bit about your journey to veganism?

As with so many people, my journey to veganism, and awareness about animals and their importance started with a dog. We had had a dog when I was growing up, but she was really my mother's dog, and, while I loved her, I'm sad to say I didn't really get it. Then, when I was almost forty, I got a dog of my own for the first time — Calhoun. I was single at the time, leaving a lot of room for Calhoun and me to form a really close bond. Because I was actually paying attention, I started to notice how much was going on inside him — the awareness, the emotions, the depth.

Of course, also like many other people, I would not necessarily have connected my realizations about Calhoun to other animals, but just at the right moment, an acquaintance mentioned that he had stopped eating

meat because of the way the animals were treated. For some reason, that random remark managed to get by the enormous wall of denial that I had been carefully maintaining for so long. Of course, I knew that animals raised for food were not treated well. Of course, I knew that they were real animals, with real feelings, and thoughts, and longings, just like my beloved Calhoun. But, like everyone else, I ignored that reality until that moment. I guess I had my guard down, and, as a result, I started to seriously think about what that meant for my life.

That's actually a strong reminder for me that we should never hesitate to talk about why we eat the way we do. We never know who might be listening, and we don't know what effect we are having on them. In fact, we may never know. I certainly didn't immediately say to that acquaintance, 'Oh, right: I'm going to stop eating animals right this minute.' But it started me thinking, and after a while, that's exactly what I did.

Are we seeing any progress for animals in terms of legal rights and protections in your country and internationally?

Here in the United States, we are definitely seeing progress on a legal and policy front, but it is incredibly slow and small. And sometimes, it seems like for every

step forward, there are two steps back. But I don't think we should be surprised by this. There have occasionally been times when legal change has led social change. I think Brown v Board of Education, which ended racial segregation before a large segment of the population thought it was the right thing to do, was one of those moments. But most of the time, there has to be substantial change in social attitudes and behavior before the law follows. This is particularly true for animal issues, where the opposition is so powerful. The industries aligned against us — agribusiness and pharmaceuticals — are the largest, most powerful industries in the world.

In fact, it is clear that the law, as it is currently enforced, is still far behind social attitudes about animals, especially farmed animals. For so many years, animal agribusiness, along with the legislatures that too often simply protect the interests of the industry, has been an impenetrable fortress aligned against anyone who wanted to make changes protecting farmed animals. Until recently, no efforts to improve the horrifying conditions in which these animals lived and died made the slightest impact. It was as if the whole animal protection movement was a minor annoyance, which the industry could just casually brush off.

Then, animal protection groups, such as the Humane Society of the United States and Farm Sanctuary, started

to bring these issues directly to the people through the use of ballot initiatives, and we really started to see that most people do not support factory farming and its cruelty. The ballot initiative process, which only exists in some states, allows advocacy organizations that have collected a certain, very large, number of signatures to put a question directly to the voters and get a law passed without going through the legislature. Through this method, some states started to prospectively ban such abusive confinement systems as the gestation crate for pregnant pigs, the veal crate for calves, and the battery cage for egg-laying hens. After a couple of these victories, the industry started to pay attention, and now legislatures have responded in a few other states with similar bans.

Some would say that these bans are so minimal as to hardly constitute progress, but given the reality of how bad the treatment of animals on factory farms has become, these reforms are real, and are at least a hopeful sign that change is possible. The reality, though, is that significant legal change is not going to come until it is motivated by strong social pressure. That pressure needs to come from people letting their legislators know that animal protection is an important issue and one that will influence them when they vote. And legislators also need to see that these are dying industries that should no longer be exerting such control over public policy. The

only way they will come to understand that is for people to start moving away from animal-based foods and demanding healthy and ethical food.

What is the response from your students to animal law lectures? Are more students becoming interested in this area of law?

Each year, there are more students who are passionately interested in animal protection and take the course because they want to pursue this as their life's mission. However, I have to say that most of my students start out the course having a somewhat vague interest in the subject and not much awareness of the conditions in which animals are held. It is a reminder to me every year that we still have so much work to do in just informing people about what is going on. We all need to get out of the 'vegan bubble' from time to time. For most of my students, once they find out what is going on (and whenever possible, I have them find that out for themselves and from each other, rather than my telling them), they are deeply shocked, and want to do something to change it.

Do you think there will come a time when animals are given the same respect legally as humans are given?

I don't think the law will ever deal with animals the same way it deals with humans. I don't think that's realistic

or even sensible. The law is largely concerned with regulating human society and deals with many human needs and aspects of human behavior that animals do not share or partake in.

So the question is, how should the law deal with animals? We often hear that the fundamental problem with animals and the law is that the law considers animals to be property. Certainly, 'property' is a poor way to set forth the appropriate legal relationship between humans and animals. But, perhaps another way of achieving the same purpose would be to say that the goal of our legal relationship with animals should be to leave them alone, except when it is in their interest for us to interfere with them or when we truly have no other choice.

The thing we need to remember, though, is that flawed legal doctrine is not really the fundamental reason that we are so far from a satisfactory relationship with animals. Instead, it's our refusal to acknowledge what we are actually doing to them, why we are doing it, and who they really are, that is the real problem.

The fact is that every state in the US and many countries around the world already have a law that provides, in essence, that it is a crime to cause animals to suffer unnecessarily. Some states have written in some exceptions to that, but let's assume we can get rid of those

and just think about that for a moment. If we actually obeyed those laws, animal exploitation would come to a screeching halt. How can it be that the law has so little effect on our behaviour?

For one thing, since those laws were written, times have changed regarding what is now 'necessary.' We live in a world where it is no longer necessary, in any sensible interpretation of that word, to exploit animals in any way. Seriously. Okay, maybe some people could argue about some medical research, and there might be some differing points of view on appropriate wildlife management, but 99 percent of it is obviously, irrefutably, utterly unnecessary, including, of course, eating them.

For another thing, times have also changed regarding what we know causes 'suffering'. We now understand that animals have complex and varied realities, and, with some differences depending on species, they can be caused to suffer both physically and psychologically not only by being physically abused, but by being deprived of their normal behaviours, habitat and relationships.

So, if we just started to enforce those laws prohibiting causing unnecessary suffering in a legitimate, honest way, taking into account our current knowledge of their capabilities, animals would be fine.

What has been the highlight of your career?

Animal law has, since I awakened to this reality of what is being done to animals, been my passion, rather than my source of income. But it has taken me to places that I really could not have foreseen. I would be hard pressed to name a particular highlight among so many wonderful experiences, though the first time I had an essay published was very exciting (i.e., 'Foxes in the Henhouse: Animals, Agribusiness and the Law, A Modern American Fable' which I co-authored with David J. Wolfson and which was published in *Animal Rights: Current Debates and New Directions* [Cass Sunstein and Martha Nussbaum, eds.]). I also had an opportunity to speak at an animal law event at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, which was a wonderful experience and really broadened my view of the global reach of the animal protection movement.

And just having the opportunity to teach about a subject which I consider so important and so fascinating is, year after year, absolutely a privilege. My students are almost always engaged and provide me with so many opportunities to rethink these issues in new ways. All of these things, which have been so fulfilling, came to me because I pursued my passion to change the world for animals. I would advise anyone to do the same.

What role do you play in <www.ourhenhouse.org>?

I have to admit that Jasmin does the vast majority of the day to day work for Our Hen House, but I like to think I make a significant contribution in brainstorming, as well as providing support and advice. And, in fact, I do contribute a fair amount of content. Our goal is to highlight ways for people to get involved in changing the world for animals in all the different ways that might fit into their own lives, and some of the many areas that we focus on, such as law and academia, tend to fall more naturally into my lap. So I research and write many of the blog posts highlighting opportunities in those areas, though we both overlap into each others' bailiwicks from time to time.

I also do a lot of the editing, which, oddly, I really seem to enjoy, and there are a number of things that we pretty much always do together, including the weekly podcast, our workshops and some of our articles. We are lucky in that we seem to complement each other's skills and interests. I am more big picture, and Jasmin actually gets things done!

Anything further you would like to add?

Go vegan!!

Meet Siaw-Yean "Sy" Woon

A veterinarian student who has a true love for animals.

As a vegan veterinary student, I am unfortunately a relatively rare breed. I note this because I elicit surprise when informing people of the population dynamics in our veterinary faculty; most assume that veterinarians would be averse to consuming their patients. However, on the spectrum of 'devoted vegan to hardcore meat-eater', vets generally lie towards the latter end. This is probably accounted for by the agriculture-based origins of the veterinary profession and the continued relationship with animal agriculture. Our learnt skills are required to maximise the animal product whilst maintaining animal 'welfare', that is minimising suffering and ensuring animal needs are met. So, it makes sense that we wouldn't be taught about these industries from a perspective that questions the ethical validity of their existence! As long as we follow 'standard practice', the means apparently justify the ends — although our specieism is obvious in our tireless efforts to save every last dog and cat.

My journey towards veganism could certainly be described as a 'process'. Ever since I can remember, I have had a love and passion for animals which has propelled me towards my current status as a vet student. Yet, despite my lifelong aspiration to protect the lives of animals, and

my pursuits along the way — saving and playing with insects when young, to compensate for a pet dog which we eventually got; notoriously 'resuscitating' a dead frog in primary school; fundraising and campaigning for moon bears throughout high school — I had grown up eating meat as a staple. I am even guilty of having regularly consumed shark's fin soup — which comprises the customary entrée at nearly every restaurant gathering — during our trips to visit relatives in Malaysia. At the time, I was oblivious to the immensely inhumane method of obtaining a shark's fin — hence, my belief that education and awareness are the ultimate key.

Lamb was the first meat I gave up as a ten year old, after claiming that it was 'more' wrong to eat innocent baby animals. Then, in the last few years of high school, I made the transition to a 'vegequarian' — a vegetarian who eats seafood — with the ultimate aim of becoming a vegetarian. My parents were reluctant for me to make the switch, due to the assumed health detriment of eliminating any meat, so sea life was the compromise.

I was also quite ignorant to the degree of suffering involved in fish-farming and the unsustainability of ocean fishing. Moreover, it seemed implausible that I could ever give up sushi! So, I continued consuming seafood, dairy and eggs, with the justification that I needed seafood for protein and omega 3, dairy for

calcium and protein, and eggs for protein and vital nutrients. At the time, veganism seemed impossible as I believed it equated to a challenging, nutritionally inadequate, joyless diet.

After endeavouring to achieve the necessary marks, I was able to enter my dream degree whereby I'd finally acquire the skills to save animals' lives. At the end of my first year of uni, I was voted president of the University of Sydney Animal Welfare Society, and am completing my second year in this position. During this time, I have worked to convey awareness about a number of local and international animal welfare issues such as bear bile farming, exotic animal circuses, puppy farms, factory farming, live animal exports, free-range vs cage eggs, animal experiments and more. It is this very position that provided an invaluable avenue for increasing my own exposure to animal welfare issues that I had ironically learnt to be the acceptable norm within our veterinary degree. Forced moulting of hens, beak-slicing of chicks, teeth clipping of piglets, absence of pain relief for invasive farm procedures, sow stalls and battery hens owned by the uni and common infectious diseases resulting from intensive farming conditions are all examples of practices we learn about, are desensitised to and fail to question. Vets are expected to treat the symptoms rather than reflect on the original cause.

Although we were taught that it requires the annual forced impregnation and injection of hormones to actually produce milk — rather than there existing a naturally-milk-producing-cow — the details of the baby cows' fate were glossed over. From personal research I was led to discover the reality. However, it wasn't until I undertook our compulsory dairy farm placement that I observed first hand the traumatic separation of a day-old calf from his or her mother. That, and the feeding of bacteria-laden, blood-stained milk to newborn calves, while observing their pitiful vulnerability, and noting my partner's accurate comparison between human's genocide and the genocide within the herding of milking cows we observed miserably walking past their crying offspring who were confined to pens, were a fairly effective impetus for finally eliminating dairy.

Free-range eggs were another matter, as I was comforted by the fact that they were 'humane' and necessary. Earlier this year, after being selected to give a presentation at the 8th World Congress on Alternatives and Animal Use in the Life Sciences, I began correspondence with Dr Andrew Knight, who was also an invited speaker in the same session. We were both presenting on humane veterinary education, and after 'Googling' Dr Knight, I came to discover he was a vegan! This astounded me and was certainly inspiring. Never had I expected to find a real live vegan veterinarian, moreover one openly

declaring it! Surely it would be unscientific to promote a nutritionally deficient diet!

Yet, further research revealed the many assumptions I shared with society to be mere myths which serve to justify the eating of animals. Even the American Dietetic Association's position paper displayed on their website explicitly advocates a vegan diet as "healthful" for all life stages, as well as protective and curative for various diseases.[1] I seemed to no longer have any justification for consuming eggs; veganism was now not only the ethical option; but it was also the superior healthy option.

Watching the documentary, Earthlings, during this period provided further support for solidifying the connection. Since I've become vegan, the unjust ironies that exist in society have become uncomfortably apparent. Due to this paradigm shift, I find it strange that I'm expected to defend and make excuses for why I prefer 'not' to kill animals and their offspring (for dairy and eggs) in order to satisfy my culinary preferences.

Of course, much of this is due to lack of awareness, which is is why teaching others — especially children — is a passion I have come to realise. Unlike what most people assume, veganism is certainly not about giving up your desires. I am probably the biggest 'sweet tooth' I know

— in addition to being a compulsive eater! So, the great joy vegan food brings to my palate is a testament to the fact that I am not making a great sacrifice. I still enjoy consuming vegan cheesecake, brownies, pizza, burgers, luxurious fake-meat dishes and so on, but my enjoyment is no longer at the expense of animals' lives.

I feel veganism is the ultimate opportunity to apply my moral philosophies to my actual life. It's not just about the food I now consume and the products I buy; it's an all-encompassing life epiphany which I absolutely relish. I'm able to align my views, goals, passions and career choice — promoting animal welfare and not contributing to animal suffering — with my daily life in every way. It is about consciously doing as little harm as possible and feeling amazing about making the effort to live in the most ethical way you can!

Feel free to join my society via our Facebook page, by searching for University of Sydney Animal Welfare Society or type in <https://www.facebook.com/groups/171817352692/>

On Twitter: <https://twitter.com/#!/USYD_AWS>

The position paper of the American Dietetic Association which promotes a vegan diet, backed by scientific evidence, can be found at this web address: <http://www.eatright.org/About/Content.aspx?id=8357>

1 Craig, W. J. and Mangels, A. R. (2009). 'Position of the American Dietetic Association: Vegetarian Diets'. J Am Diet Assoc. 109 (7), pp. 1266-82.

Some Friendly Advice for Flesh Eaters

Think not of the fact that a pig's life was taken
To provide for your breakfast of rashers of bacon;
Refuse to admit a cow's throat was slit
To give meat for the burger into which you just bit;
And don't for one moment reflect on the torment
That the reddy-brown stain on the slaughterhouse floor meant;
Scoff at the thought of concerning yourself
With those battery eggs on the grocery shelf;
Don't question the need to make animals bleed
When it's driven by profit and corporate greed;
Though suffering's rife, think not of the strife
That goes hand-in-hand with your meat-eating life;
For such thinking can pose quite a danger you see
As you might just end up a vegan like me.

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Originally published in 2004 as part of Elizabeth's first collection of poetry, The VOCAL Project: A Vision Of Compassion for All Life.

In 2011, Elizabeth started the Veganthused! blog, <www.veganthused.com>, with the mission of inspiring and encouraging people to explore and embrace veganism. She coined the portmanteau word 'Veganthused' to represent an unabashed enthusiasm for all things vegan.

Spotlight on a vegan business

Sona Pamboukhtchian from Socially Vegan Cakes

How long have you been vegan and why did you decide to make the switch?

I became a vegan over a year ago, before that, I was a lacto-vegetarian — eating only dairy, not eggs — for 13 years. My entire family decided to make the switch together, because we had all tried being vegan at various times and with varying degrees of success but we realised that if we were to stick to it, it had to be a group effort. Going vegan is especially easy when you have the support of those around you. I've been blessed to have my family along on this journey with me.

I think it's very important to find a group of like-minded people to make the transition easier; you need people around you who support what you do, not only in principle but in practice too. People such as members of your local vegan society will help keep you motivated,

because in them you'll have a really friendly group of like-minded people around who are more than happy to share tips, tricks and recipes.

What is the best thing about being vegan?

Well there's a lot of great things about becoming vegan, but I think the best has to be knowing that what I put on my plate doesn't cause suffering and pain to untold numbers of innocent animals. Some people might use the argument that if you bought free-range meats and dairy products you would solve the problem. I disagree with this completely because I base my decisions on 'If someone was doing this to my mum/dad/sister/best friend/dog, would I be okay with this?' And my answer is always 'No!' Those animals' worth is greater than the sum of their parts and I refuse to believe that being the stewards of this earth means butchering other creatures that don't look, talk or walk like us just to satisfy our stomachs.

What inspired you to start your own baking business?

It was actually Emilia, my mum, who started the business; I was originally the research and development department, of the baking business. Whenever there was an event, she was asked to provide the cake and all our vegan and vegetarian friends were impressed. People always told her she should start a business. When we

realised that the places to order a vegan birthday cake or cupcake from were next to impossible to find in Sydney, we came to the conclusion we couldn't not do it.

Socially Vegan Cakes is an interesting name for a business — what does it mean?

My sister, Zara, came up with the 'socially vegan' concept, which is based on the premise that going out as a vegan should be just as much fun and be just as 'delicious' as going out is for your 'non-vego' friends. The business is called Socially Vegan Cakes because whenever we went out, after having a salad and a bland main course, we had to settle for either fruit or nothing for dessert, and in my opinion, dessert is the 'icing on the cake' of any meal.

Lots of people tell me they can't believe that cakes can be made without eggs and dairy. Is that really the case, and how hard is it to make a vegan cake?

Well, obviously, that's untrue, because our vegan baking business is thriving! It really isn't hard at all to make vegan desserts; it just takes a little bit of time and patience to make the switch, and most of it's actually just a mental change. Some vegan recipes are not going to taste the same as a non-vegan version, but then again, why would you want it to?

Another thing to remember is that 'modern recipe books' have been around for about 700 years, which means it has taken roughly that long for us, as a culture, to perfect a lot of desserts, for example an egg white meringue. If left to their own devices, most people wouldn't find a bird; take her egg; crack it open; separate the slimy white bit from the yellow wobbly bit, add dehydrated sugar cane juice to the white, slimy bit; beat the mixture for a very, very long time until it is stiff and dry it out in very low heat for several hours!

What has been the response to Socially Vegan Cakes? Would you encourage other people who are thinking of starting a vegan business to give it a try?

The response to Socially Vegan Cakes has been absolutely positive. Now, vegans don't have to sit through another birthday party or office party in their honour and be unable to enjoy the dessert! I would definitely encourage anyone who wants to start a 'vegan anything' to do it — but I must warn you that as with any other small business, you're the baker, decorator, accountant, receptionist, delivery driver and kitchen hand. However, it really is a very rewarding experience, and I would highly recommend it, because you're not witness to even half the amount of good you're doing by making veganism more accessible.

What would you say to someone who was thinking of going vegan but who's hesitating because he or she thinks they might miss out on something by switching?

I would say 'go for it' because chances are there's a 'vegan cheats' version that can tide you over for the changeover. This isn't meant to belittle anyone's favourite foods or their passion, but any kind of food is just a habit. The roast that you think you'll miss on Sunday afternoons has nothing to do with the actual food; it's to do with the happy, family atmosphere surrounding it. It's also very, very, very important to get in touch with some vegans who can help you make the change. By having a taste of a few different types of non-dairy milk at a vegan friend's place, you'll takes the expense and uncertainty out of paying for something you've never tried before and may simply hate. Vegan friends can introduce you to new products, recipes, restaurants and cafes and make the experience much less daunting.

<cakes.sociallyvegan.com>

<facebook.com/sociallyvegancakes>

10 Mouth-watering vegan recipes from around the globe

Double Chocolate Cake

By Aimee Blossom, Brisbane, Australia

Cake ingredients

1 cup of grapeseed oil
3½ cups of white self-raising flour
1 cup of sugarless cocoa
2 cups of organic raw sugar
3 cups of soy milk
Orange zest: the juice and skin of 1 finely grated orange
2 tablespoons of vanilla essence
1/3 of a tablespoon of salt

Method

Put oil and sugar into a bowl. Add the juice and orange zest. Add 1 cup of the soy milk and then sift in dry ingredients and add the milk alternately. The mixture should now be runny (cake that contains oil is more runny than cake that contains margarine). I use a whisk for mixing. Bake the mixture at 180 degrees Celsius for about an hour, or until it comes out clean.

Icing

Mix 1 cup of icing sugar with 2 cups of vegan margarine and 1/3 of a cup of the sugarless cocoa. Mix the ingredients using a whisk or an electric beater. You can refrigerate the mixture for several weeks. When the cake is well cooled, cut it in half and put the icing in the middle and/or on top, as desired.

To turn the cake into a black forest–type cake, strain a jar of morello cherries and put the icing in the middle of the cake. To get an even cake when you're cutting it, put two toothpicks opposite each other on each half of the cake so that when you move it, you'll know where the halves were originally.

The cake can be frozen after cooking.

Four delicious raw-food dishes

By Leigh-Chantelle Koch
Naturopath, blogger and vegan-festival organiser
Brisbane, Australia

Raw sushi rolls

Ingredients

1 zucchini, sliced using a vegetable peeler
1 carrot, sliced using a vegetable peeler
1 red capsicum, sliced
½ an avocado, sliced

A handful of spinach leaves
Lemon juice

Method

Using the zucchini slices as your wrap, add the carrot slices to the top.
Place the capsicum, spinach leaves and avocado on one end of the wrap.
Wrap tightly until complete.
Squeeze some lemon juice on top.
These ingredients are enough for 15 to 20 rolls.
Serve straight away or keep cool in the refrigerator.
They're great as an entrée at home or to take with you to friends' places.

Raw lasagne

Ingredients

1 zucchini, sliced using a vegetable peeler
1 carrot, sliced using a vegetable peeler
Spinach leaves
1½ cups of macadamia nuts, processed or cut up finely
A handful of parsley, coarsely chopped
A handful of coriander, coarsely chopped

Sauce

2 tomatoes
1½ avocados

8 dates, soaked
2 lemons
Mince
1 red capsicum, sliced
10 mushrooms, sliced
2 celery stalks, chopped
¼ of a cup of raisins and/or sultanas

Method

Using a food processor, process the sauce mix and set it aside for later use.

Process the mince mix and set it aside for later.

In a square baking dish, layer the zucchini slices on the bottom.

Spread half the sauce mix on top and set the remainder aside.

Sprinkle the carrot on top of the sauce and then the mince mixture.

Sprinkle the spinach leaves on top of the mince mixture, and then sprinkle the remaining zucchini on top.

Spread the remaining sauce mixture on top of the zucchini.

Combine the macadamia nuts, parsley and coriander, and sprinkle them on top.

Serves four to eight people.

Serve straight away or keep cool in the refrigerator.

Raw chocolate

Ingredients

200 grams of coconut oil, melted
½ a cup of almond meal
½ a cup of hazelnut meal
½ a cup of raw dessicated coconut
½ a cup of raw carob powder, sifted
1 tablespoon of raw cacao powder

Method

Mix all the ingredients in a food processor or combine them using a spatula in a bowl.

Make sure you mix all the ingredients thoroughly.

Spoon the mixture into chocolate moulds or small patty-cake wrappers.

Freeze the mixture to set it.

These ingredients are enough to make 15 to 20 chocolates.

Remove the wrappers before serving.

Serve with cashew cream (see recipe) and sprinkled with the raw cacao powder.

Raw cashew cream

Ingredients

1 cup of raw cashews
¼ of a cup of agave nectar

¼ of a cup of water
Cinnamon, if desired

Method
Process the cashews in a food processor.

Add the agave nectar while still processing.

Slowly add the water until the mixture is as thick or runny as you like.

Add the cinnamon, if desired.

These ingredients are enough to make about 1 cup of cream.

Serve with fruit salad, cake or fudge or on top of chocolate.

You can refrigerate the cream for a few days or freeze it for a few months.

If you've frozen the cream, blend it after defrosting and before using.

It's a versatile cream you can add to any sweet dish.

If you'd like to add it to a savoury dish, don't add the agave nectar.

These recipes are © Leigh-Chantelle Koch and Viva la Vegan!

See the how-to videos at <youtube.com/vivalavegandotnet>.

Irish vegan stew

By Mary O'Connor, Limerick, Ireland

Ingredients
1 cup of TVP (textured vegetable protein)
2 medium floury potatoes
1 small leek
1 medium carrot
1½ litres of boiled vegetable stock from 2 vegetable stock cubes
1½ tablespoons of soy sauce
Salt and pepper
Fresh parsley for garnish

Method
Wash and peel all the vegetables.

Chop the potatoes into 1½-inch cubes.

Slice the carrots and leeks diagonally so they're ¼ of an inch thick.

Choose a pot that has a lid and put all the ingredients in it. Add the vegetable stock and soy sauce.

Cover the stew and bring it to the boil. Simmer for about 30 minutes, until the TVP is tender and the potatoes have caused the liquid to thicken.
Season with the salt and pepper.

Serve in a large soup bowl and sprinkle the parsley on top.

These ingredients are enough for two people.

Crispy Slice

By Sandy Luu
Sydney, Australia

Ingredients
5 slices of sandwich bread
½ a cup of self-raising flour
250 ml of water
1 cup of chopped corn kernels, peas and diced carrots
2 teaspoons of vegetable stock powder
A pinch of pepper
¼ of a cup of fry powder (available at Asian grocery stores)
4 tablespoons of olive oil

Method
Pour the ½ cup of self-raising flour into a mixing bowl. Add the 250ml of water and stir them together. Add the corns, peas and carrots. Add the fry powder to make the bread more crunchy. Add the vegetable stock powder and the pinch of pepper. Mix well.

Cut the slice of bread in half into a triangular shape.

Put the olive oil into non-stick frying pan. Dip the bread into the mixing bowl of flour.

Fry until the bread becomes crispy golden-brown on both sides. Place on a plate and serve.

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Two Indian recipes

By Charu Gohil

Rajma: 'Red Kidney Bean' curry

This dish is extremely popular in North India and elsewhere. Serve it with plain, boiled rice; salad; and your favourite pickle!
Serves two people

Ingredients
½ a cup kidney beans soaked for 3 hours in hot water and boiled in a pressure cooker. Can also use 1 tin of red kidney beans (400 grams)
½ a teaspoon of mustard seeds
½ teaspoon of cumin seeds
1 bay leaf
Salt to taste
3 tomatoes
2 teaspoons of grated ginger
2 tablespoons of oil
1 teaspoon of turmeric
2 teaspoons of paprika
Coriander powder to taste
Cumin-seed powder to taste
Fresh Coriander leaves
1 teaspoon of garam masala

Method

Heat the oil and add the mustard seeds, cumin seeds and bay leaves.

Once it crackles, add the tomatoes, grated ginger and salt.

Cook until it forms a thick paste.

Add the kidney beans, paprika, turmeric, coriander and cumin-seed powder, to taste.

Add the water and fresh coriander leaves.

Let the mixture simmer.

Add the garam masala.

Vegetable biryani

Biryani is a mouth-watering and tasty rice dish with a rich flavour. It was originally created by the Mughals and was later adapted to have an authentic Indian taste. You can serve it as a main dish and it serves two people. The divine aroma of this dish is sure to tempt anyone!

Ingredients

½ teaspoon of oil
½ teaspoon of mustard seed
½ teaspoon cumin seed
1 bay leaf
150 grams of cauliflower
½ cup of peas
1 carrot

1 potato
150 grams of French beans
3 tomatoes
Salt to taste
1 tablespoon of paprika
½ teaspoon of turmeric
½ teaspoon of coriander powder
½ teaspoon of roasted cumin seed powder
½ teaspoon of cardamom
½ teaspoon of black pepper
½ teaspoon of garam masala

Method

Sauté cumin seed, mustard seed and bay leaves

Mix in all the diced vegetables

Add in the rest of the spices

Cook in medium heat

Keep stirring and add oil gradually until cooked

Add chopped coriander

Serve and enjoy!

Sancocho soup

A Colombian recipe by Yadira Gelvez and Leonardo Lopez.

Ingredients

2 onions, peeled and cut into small pieces

4 spring onion bulbs, tied in a bunch
4 green bananas, peeled and chopped
500 grams of taro, peeled and chopped
10 potatoes, medium size, peeled and cut into halves or quarters
5 corn cobs, cut into halves or thirds
3 cloves of garlic, crushed
2 teaspoons of vegan stock powder
1 teaspoon of ground turmeric
½ a teaspoon of cumin
½ a teaspoon of black pepper
salt, to taste
spring onion leaves, chopped into small pieces
parsley and coriander
2 tablespoons of olive oil
4 litres of water

Method

Heat the oil in a pot, and fry the onion, garlic, pepper, cumin and turmeric until light golden in colour.

Add the water, potatoes, taro, salt and spring onion bulbs (tied in a bunch).

Cover the pot and bring to the boil. Lower the heat and simmer for 10 — 15 minutes.

Add the green bananas and simmer until tender. Add the corn and simmer for 4 minutes.

Serve hot and garnish with coriander, parsley and spring onion leaves.

Optional: Add hot chilli.

Other titles by the author

Forever 21: The empowering guide to reclaiming your youth, beauty, health, happiness and spirituality

Forever 21 is the book that explains how to look younger, feel happier and healthier while saving animals' lives and helping the environment. The eight Forever 21 Principles give you the tools you need to create a happier and healthier you!

If you are ready to reclaim your power and reach your full potential on every level, this is the book for you!

After being repeatedly told for many years that she looks younger than her age, Kathy Divine decided to document her lifestyle tips for maintaining a youthful look.

Part one of the book elaborates on these secrets of youth, with an explanation of the eight Forever 21 Principles. Part two is a collection of interviews she did with health experts and elite athletes who are focused on empowering people to reach their full potential in all aspects of life.

For more information about *Forever 21* including stockists, see <www.kathydivine.com>