

Respecting  
**animals...**



...means going  
**vegan**

## What is a vegan?

A vegan is a person who refrains from using and consuming animals and animal products for any purpose, including food, clothing, and entertainment.

## The argument in a nutshell

Although most people believe that animals should not be harmed unnecessarily, they behave in ways that contradict this belief.<sup>1</sup> Becoming vegan is the only way for a person to resolve this contradiction.

## Unnecessary harm

Like most people, you believe that it would be wrong for a person to maim or kill a cat out of anger. You would also be revolted by someone who burned a dog for the sake of enjoyment. Generally speaking, you agree that because harming these animals in such ways is unnecessary, the above actions are unjustified.<sup>2</sup> And if you believe that it is wrong to harm animals like cats or dogs without good reason, you already believe something that compels you to become vegan.



## Why is that?

Your belief that harming cats and dogs in these ways is unjustified stems from your awareness that they are sentient beings—that is, beings who feel pleasure and pain, and who have interests in avoiding suffering and in continuing to live. Like most people, you agree that their interest in not being harmed shouldn't be ignored merely to satisfy our comparatively trivial interests (such as our interest in pleasure).

This belief compels us to be vegan because of the following three ideas, taken together:

### 1. There is no morally significant difference between dogs and cats and other animals.

You agree that it is wrong to harm a cat or dog without good reason because you recognize that they are sentient beings whose interest in not being harmed shouldn't be ignored merely to satisfy our trivial interests. This same reasoning applies equally to every sentient being, including cows, pigs, birds and fish, all of whom also have an interest in not being harmed. So your belief about cats



*There is no morally significant difference between dogs and cats and other animals.*

and dogs actually calls on you to avoid harming any sentient animal merely for purposes of convenience or pleasure.

## 2. Using and consuming animals and their products causes harm to animals.

In all but the most extraordinary circumstances, animals cannot be used by humans without being harmed. An example (which is only one of many) will help make this point clear.

To produce cows' milk for human consumption, it is standard to artificially inseminate cows, keeping them pregnant and lactating as continuously as possible.<sup>3</sup> Within about 24 hours of being born, calves are separated from their mothers,<sup>4</sup> a traumatizing experience for both the cows and their offspring.<sup>5</sup> Each year, nearly a million calves are slaughtered for veal<sup>6</sup> at around 3-18 weeks of age.<sup>7</sup> After an average of 5 years,<sup>8</sup> or 3 lactations,<sup>9</sup> their mothers no longer produce enough milk to be considered profitable. 'Spent',<sup>10</sup> nearly all of them are slaughtered for consumption<sup>11</sup> 10-15 years short of a healthy cow's lifespan.<sup>12</sup>



Harms like these are essentially unavoidable when we use them for our own purposes.

## 3. Using and consuming animals and their products serves only our trivial interests.

In order for it to be the case that using and consuming animals does more than serve our trivial interests, we must have some need to use and consume them. For instance, from a health standpoint, it must be necessary to consume animals or animal products. But this is simply not the case.

The American Dietetic Association states that appropriately planned vegan diets are "healthful, nutritionally adequate and may provide health benefits in the

prevention and treatment of certain diseases."<sup>13</sup> Humans simply do not need to use or consume animals. As such, the interests we serve by using or consuming them can be fairly described as trivial (such as the interest in experiencing pleasure).

1. See, generally, Francione. *Introduction to Animal Rights*, Chapter 1. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000.

2. *Ibid.*, at pp. 4-5.

3. Looper, "When Should Dairy Cows Be Inseminated?" Cooperative Extension Service, Guide B-117, New Mexico State University (May 2000)

4. Jones and Heinrichs (2008) "Highlights of the Dairy 2007 Survey: Focus on Calves and Heifers." Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences, Dept. of Dairy and Animal Science

5. Frances C. Flower and Daniel M. Weary, "Effects of Early Separation on the Dairy Cow and Calf: 2. Separation at 1 Day and 2 Weeks After Birth." *Applied Animal Behaviour Science*, 70 (2001): 275-284.

6. Weise, "Illegal hormones found in veal calves." *USA Today* (28 March 2004).

7. Answers.com: "Veal"

8. Wallace (2004), "Market cows: a potential profit center." University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

9. "Nitrogen Use Efficiency by the Dairy Cow." Institute of Grassland and Environmental Research.

10. Hedges, "Use of spent dairy cows in beef production raises questions." *The Chicago Tribune* (2 March 2008)

11. "Economic Opportunities for Dairy Cow Culling Management Options." Info Sheet/Veterinary Services, USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (May 1996).

12. Karpf "Dairy Monsters, Part two" *The Guardian* (13 December 2003)

Taken together, these three facts reveal that the basic belief we share about animals compels us to become vegan. Using and consuming animals and their products harms animals merely to satisfy our trivial interests. If we agree that harming animals for our trivial interests is wrong, then we must seek to abolish our use and consumption of animals for food, clothing and entertainment.<sup>14</sup>

### **Wait a minute. What about reform, 'humane' treatment, and vegetarianism?**

Have we ignored any options that would align our behavior with our beliefs without requiring us to become vegan? Why not reform how animals are used by ensuring that they are treated 'humanely'? Alternatively, what about vegetarianism?

For many reasons, these options are inadequate.

### **Reform and 'Humane' Animal Products**

Because animals are considered human property, institutional (e.g., corporate) reforms are unable to provide meaningful protection for animals' interests. This is because any attempt to ensure that animals'

interests are better protected must attempt to balance those interests against the economic and institutional interests of their human owners. Within a system in which animals are human property, even their most significant interests can be (and are) trumped by the comparably trivial human interests in profit and efficiency. Attempting to 'balance' the interests of a piece of property against the interests of a property owner is like trying to deal a fair hand of cards with a rigged deck—it simply can't be done, because the mechanisms in place are fundamentally unfair.

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Demonstrating this point, Professor Gary L. Francione's long-term research<sup>15</sup> has shown that because animals are human property, the only institutional reforms adopted are those that allow property owners to continue exploiting animals in economically efficient ways. As a 2005 USDA Livestock Slaughter Inspection Training module puts it: "Prior to [the passage of The Humane Methods of Livestock Slaughter Act of] 1958 there were no laws in the United States governing humane slaughter practices. The majority of the meat industry recognized the benefits of humane slaughter practices and their use was widely accepted. Primarily there were economic incentives; humane treatment generally resulted in less bruising and therefore less trimming of the dressed carcass."<sup>16</sup>



Pigs down on the kill floor have come up and nuzzled me like a puppy. Two minutes later, I had to kill them—beat them to death with a pipe. I can't care.

Ed Van Winkle, slaughterhouse worker (Gail A. Eisnitz, *Slaughterhouse*)



constrained pigs

The Humane Slaughter Act of 1978 added some other handling requirements: “downers’ cannot be dragged while conscious, workers are not allowed to physically retaliate against animals, water must be provided to animals at all times, and cattle prods connected to AC house current must be reduced by a transformer to the lowest effective voltage not to exceed 50 volts.”<sup>17</sup> Putting aside the fact that these requirements are routinely ignored, as evidenced by widely available internet videos, these minor adjustments to the act still primarily benefit those that stand to

gain from animals undamaged by handling. For example, beating or dragging a pig or cow increases the likelihood of carcass bruising and reduced meat quality, which was the primary concern to begin with.

No new federal legislation written to protect animals in the dairy, egg, and meat industries has made it to the House or Senate floor in almost 30 years. To this day, the Humane Slaughter Act, despite extensive activist lobbying, exempts Kosher and Halal slaughter and offers no regulation whatsoever on the slaughter of chickens,

13. [http://www.eatright.org/cps/rde/xchg/ada/hs.xsl/media\\_22003\\_ENU\\_HTML.htm](http://www.eatright.org/cps/rde/xchg/ada/hs.xsl/media_22003_ENU_HTML.htm)

14. See, generally, Francione. *Introduction to Animal Rights*, Chapter 1. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000.

15. See Francione. *Animals, Property, and the Law*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995; and Francione. *Rain without Thunder*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996.

16. [http://www.fsis.usda.gov/PDF/LSIT\\_HumaneHandling.pdf](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/PDF/LSIT_HumaneHandling.pdf)

17. [http://www.fsis.usda.gov/PDF/LSIT\\_HumaneHandling.pdf](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/PDF/LSIT_HumaneHandling.pdf)



caged hens

slaughtering industry; brings about improvement of products and economies in slaughtering operations; and produces other benefits for producers, processors, and consumers which tend to expedite an orderly flow of livestock and livestock products in interstate and foreign commerce.”<sup>19</sup>

turkeys, fish, and rabbits, which means that over 99% of all animals used for food in this country are not even covered.<sup>18</sup>

Even if they *were* covered, the act still fails to recognize their interest in continuing to exist. It is concerned only with preventing any suffering above and beyond that involved in a standard industry practice which “results in safer and better working conditions for persons engaged in the



beak mutilation

Recent ‘humane’ reform campaigns only perpetuate these failures. For instance, cage-free egg campaigns seek merely to decrease suffering by calling for the removal of hens from the intensive confinement of “battery cages.” These campaigns have focused primarily, for

example, on a hen’s ability to spread her wings. But cage free eggs are still produced by birds who have had up to one-half of their beaks amputated without anesthetic.<sup>20</sup>

Photos: front and back covers - Debora Durant; dog - Albert Boyle; others - animalsvoice.com

18. Cows, pigs, and sheep--the ‘livestock’ covered by the act--comprise only a fraction of the total animals killed for food every year, about 12,626,700. The precise number of marine animal deaths are unavailable, as they are counted by weight, but it is estimated to be approximately 10 billion, not including “by-catch.” Chickens, ducks, and turkeys account for over 9.4 billion, according to USDA statistics. Rabbits account for at least 1.9 to 2.3 million.

19. <http://uscode.house.gov/download/pls/07C48.txt>

20. Smith, “Hen housing systems compared.” Feedstuffs FoodLink (8 October 2007).

21. Oberholtzer, Greene, Lopez, “Organic Poultry and Eggs Capture High Price Premiums and Growing Share of Specialty Market.” Economic Research Service/USDA LDP-M-150-01, at p. 7

22. Duncan (2001), “The pros and cons of cages.” *World’s Poultry Science Journal*, 57, pp 381-390  
doi:10.1079/WPS20010027.

23. Botheras, Hemsworth, Coleman, Barnett, “Animal Welfare as Related to Egg Production Systems: Cage and Non-Cage/Alternative Systems (Barns, Aviaries, Free-Range).” Ohio State University Dept. of Animal Sciences.

24. Severson, “Suddenly, the Hunt Is On for Cage-Free Eggs.” *The New York Times* (12 August 2007)

25. Hirsch (2003), “Legal Protections of the Domestic Chicken in the United States and Europe.” Animal Legal and Historical Center, Michigan State University--Detroit College of Law.

26. Severson, op. cit.

27. U.S. Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service. 2006. Chickens and eggs: 2005 summary.

28. Rollin, *Farm Animal Welfare: Social, Bioethical, and Research Issues* (Ames: Iowa State Press, 1995), p. 135.

29. Henry, “The squawk over Ohio’s eggs,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer* (1 June 2003).

The value of a sentient life is not measured in its utility to others, but in its immense, irreplaceable value to the being whose life it is.

Joanna Lucas (Peaceful Prairie Sanctuary)

Hens, though 'free' from cages, are hardly free: they are usually crammed into large sheds with tens of thousands of other birds,<sup>21</sup> where they live in their own waste<sup>22</sup> and suffer from a variety of painful ailments related to intensive egg laying and confinement,<sup>23</sup> even cannibalism.<sup>24</sup>



chick trays

Though healthy hens live at least 5 years,<sup>25</sup> even cage-free hens are 'spent' after only one laying year, between 12-18 months of age, at which point they are slaughtered to be incorporated into processed foods.<sup>26</sup> And what happens to male chicks in the egg industry? Because they are not bred for meat and are unable to lay eggs, nearly 300 million male chicks<sup>27</sup> are ground up alive, gassed, electrocuted, or suffocated each year.<sup>28,29</sup>

The example could continue, and there are many more like it, but the point is clear: this so-called 'humane' reform campaign has not resulted in meaningful protection for animals' interests in not being harmed. Indeed, we can expect no reform to pass that meaningfully protects animals' interests as long as animals are considered property.

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We ought to keep in mind a much more important point as well: using and killing animals for our own benefit is always a harm to them. And because animals' interests in not being harmed are much more significant than our interests in using them for our own pleasure, we should never do so regardless of how 'humane' we try to make the process.

### **Vegetarianism**

While vegetarianism may seem like an adequate solution, it is not. As we have seen, both milk and egg production are directly harmful to animals. And as has been established, the only reasons to use dairy and egg products are based in convenience and pleasure.

# Making the change

It is important to remind ourselves that our belief that it is wrong to unnecessarily harm animals does not merely require that we reduce their suffering. As demonstrated by our disgust with people who injure animals for purposes of pleasure, we believe that we should never harm an animal merely to satisfy our trivial interests. Because using and consuming animal products harms animals, and because it is unnecessary, it is necessary that we become vegan.

Becoming vegan will bring your beliefs and your actions into alignment—you will be living in accordance with your belief that it is wrong to harm a sentient being without justification. Most importantly, you will play a direct role in abolishing animal exploitation and working toward the goal of ensuring that no sentient being is ever harmed merely to satisfy our trivial interests.



This pamphlet draws on the ideas presented in *Introduction to Animal Rights: Your Child or the Dog*, by professor Gary L. Francione, Distinguished Professor of Law and Nicholas deB. Katzenbach Scholar of Law & Philosophy at Rutgers School of Law-Newark. We suggest reading *Introduction to Animal Rights* for a more in-depth discussion of these ideas, along with related arguments. Professor Francione also blogs at [abolitionistapproach.com](http://abolitionistapproach.com).