# **General / Ethical**

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While it is of course true that animals do eat other animals all the time in nature, basing our own ethics, as humans, on the actions of animals, can lead us to all sorts of problems. If we can justify something solely on the basis that animals do it, then we can justify the following: urinating in people's front gardens (dogs do it); sexually penetrating females without their consent (lions do it); smothering our babies to death (lions also do it); vomiting on people's food (flies do it); and so on. People only seem to be interested in justifying human behaviour on *one* thing that animals do, and that's eating animals.

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Firstly, when someone asserts that it is morally justified to eat animals because we are at the “top” of the food chain, this is an example of ['might makes right' fallacy](https://www.carnismdebunked.com/fallacies), i.e. asserting that it is okay to do something because one is in a position of power over the victim (example: “It’s okay that I beat my wife, because I’m stronger than her”). There is actually no “top” of the food chain anyway, seeing as the food chain is a web, not a pyramid…so all people mean when they say they are “top of the food chain” is that they are able to exert power over the defenceless who can’t fight back, and that somehow makes it okay—this defies core human values, which is that more defenceless beings are deserving of protection, not of bullying and domination.  
  
 Second, when people say “it’s the food chain” to justify their consumption of animals, these are just empty words—ultimately, people just say this phrase without really knowing or caring about what it means, similar to “circle of life”…people just say it as a quick way to end the conversation without actually having thought of a justification.

If all it takes to kill and eat a sentient being is say, “it’s the food chain”, then we could equally just kill and eat that person and say the same…and for them to say this is not a valid counter-argument would mean that person is exempting themselves from the very “food chain” system they are subjecting animals to (for example, if you are part of the “food chain” and want to use this as a justification to kill others, then you can’t exempt yourself from it either).

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The words 'humane' and 'slaughter' put together, are what is known in the English language as an oxymoron, i.e. 2 words that contradict each other when put together. To use the term 'humane slaughter' is as nonsensical as to say 'humane rape', 'humane slavery', or 'humane holocaust'—regarding the latter point, some synonyms for 'slaughter' in the dictionary are 'bloodbath', 'massacre', and 'holocaust'... given that it does not make sense to use the term humane for any of those 3 words, neither can it make sense to say it for the word those synonyms derive from.

Ask yourself this question: is there a nice way to kill someone who *doesn't* want to die? Given that animals want to live, and value their lives as we value ours, there is no nice way to kill them.

In any case, anyone looking at the methods we use to kill farmed animals can see for themselves that it's not 'humane'. Whether the animal is [stunned with a bolt gun or prongs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZE2svQFH_q0), or whether it's by [gas chamber](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rVR7NjnMkIc), or whether they are killed via the [Halal/Shechita method](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZE2svQFH_q0), these are not exactly methods we would use to euthanise even someone who *did* want to die.

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As with the "animals eat other animals" justification, people only ever seem to be interested in justifying something on the basis that it's 'natural' when it comes to murdering animals. Rather conveniently, no one seems to be interested in ditching their smartphone, squatting over a hole in the ground to go to the toilet (as opposed to using unnatural man-made sewage systems), allowing their partner to abstain from showering and brushing their teeth, and so on. The truth is that humans utterly *despise* 'natural', and why wouldn't they—natural is often horrible!

In any case, there is nothing at all 'natural' about eating animal products in this day and age anyway, as the definition of 'natural' means something that is not man-made. Given that the animals we eat are a.) forcefully and systematically bred into existence, b.) domesticated and not wild animals (so essentially are a human creation), and c.) are routinely fed [antibiotics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antibiotic_use_in_livestock) and other completely unnatural things, it makes absolutely no sense that anyone could say that eating meat or animal products now is natural at all.

### **5. "But we're omnivores / We have canine teeth"**

Having body parts that are simply *capable* of doing something does not mean that we should do it. To use an analogy, imagine if a man sexually assaulted someone, and then to justify his actions, pointed at his penis. Yes, humans *can* digest animal products, but why does that mean we should? Vegans are living proof that humans can live long, healthy lives without eating any animal products whatsoever, and they have the same biological makeup (teeth, etc.) of any non-vegan person, thus it is unnecessary to harm animals when there are alternatives.

With regards to the teeth, it turns out that our teeth are in no way carnivorous/omnivorous anyway. Humans have flat, blunt teeth, with a jaw capable of moving side to side, just like any herbivore. With regards specifically to our 2 pointy little teeth, these are commonplace in various species of herbivores, such as fruit bats, rhinos, hippos, gorillas, and musk deer (aka the sabre tooth deer), all of which have far larger, sharper canines than our 2 pathetic little apple-crunchers that are completely incapable of even tearing through a pillow, let alone someone's flesh and bone.

If humans even had a single omnivorous instinct, the animal rights movement wouldn't even exist because we'd be too busy drooling over slaughterhouse footage to even care. Rather, when we see slaughter footage, we are repulsed by it. A true omnivore or carnivore would salivate or get hungry.

See Milton R Mills MD's graph [here](https://nsm08.casimages.com/img/2016/04/08/16040810204417279114131737.jpg) from his paper, 'The Comparative Anatomy of Eating' and decide for yourself how closely humans resemble bears, pigs, foxes, and other omnivores.

If sharks had our teeth. Damn, look at those scary predators!

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This is an [appeal to tradition](https://www.carnismdebunked.com/fallacies) fallacy, i.e. where someone justifies something on the basis that we've always done it. This is a very poor argument, because you could justify just about anything using this logic, including other things humans have always done, such as: molest children, rape, steal, kill each other, enslave, torture, etc.

Our ancestors were primitive savages, *not* role models, and besides, the longer an act of violence has been going on for, the worse it makes it for the victim. So the logical conclusion to "humans have been eating meat for thousands of years", if anything, should be: "we *must* stop now".

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Again, in a long list of things non-vegans only ever say when the conversation is about exploiting animals, we have the plants argument. There is absolutely no conviction in this argument, because the vast majority of people on this planet know that it is absolutely insane to compare cutting a plant to, say, cutting a puppy. Imagine if we used this logic for human suffering: let's say there was something on the news about a terror attack and hundreds of people being blown to smithereens, and someone in the room said, "What about cabbages? It's the same thing", what would your reaction be to that? Would you, perhaps, think it was maybe a slight trivialisation of human suffering that those victims were compared to cabbages? It's exactly the same principle when it comes to pigs, chickens, cows, etc.

Here's the thing though: if anyone reading this actually *does* think that 'harming' a plant is comparable to harming an animal, it only makes sense that they go vegan anyway, because it actually requires far fewer plants to feed a vegan than it does a non-vegan (up to 10 times fewer), due to the amount of crops used to raise livestock (copious amounts of crops are used to raise the 83 billion land animals and many of the 100 billion farmed marine animals slaughtered every year). [Veganism minimises land use, crop use, and lowers the amount of deforestation (1 acre of rainforest cleared every second worldwide in animal agriculture).](http://www.cowspiracy.com/facts/)

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Bringing someone into existence for the sole purpose of harming them cannot be justifiable under any circumstances. What's more, no one applies this argument for the animals we *don't* eat, e.g. dogs bred for dog fighting, and so on (apart from dog fighting racket owners themselves, who of course *would* use this argument).

Whether an animal is bred for food or not, it is not in the animal's interest to slit their throat and eat them. So this argument, as per all the arguments used for exploiting animals, fails to address things from the victim's perspective. An animal does not care what they are bred for—they just want to live. And it is *not* our right to dictate a purpose for someone else's life.

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Vegans are living proof that we do not eat animal products for survival purposes. People eat animal bodies and secretions because they enjoy the taste, or other trivial reasons. Mars Bars, KFC, Ben & Jerry's cookie dough ice cream, maple-glazed bacon, donuts, and cheesy puffs are *not* survival foods and never have been. We can survive and thrive without all these foods (all of which, by the way, there are vegan versions of), and thus we are morally obliged to do so.

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The origin of the “circle of life” quote is indeed what you think it is—it is simply a quote from Disney’s *The Lion King* and is used in anti-vegan arguments as a [thought-terminating cliché](https://www.carnismdebunked.com/fallacies) to end the argument without having to face the reality: that is, that animal agriculture is the circle of death, murder and profiteering, and has nothing to do with some kind of cute, natural symbiosis.

What non-vegans call the 'circle of life' is actually a bastardised version of the symbiotic workings of the ecosystem and how it provides fruit for us, as described [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TjyCoBNmjgA) by Paul Bashir.

And isn't it yet again convenient how the people who use the 'circle of life' excuse, just like 'the food chain', seem to want to exempt themselves and their own species from the very rules of this system they allegedly abide by, as perfectly articulated by Gary Yourofsky in his video '[Circle of Life Hypocrites](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zE4tyAjI-OM)'.

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The idea of the world just magically turning vegan overnight and all the farmed animals being left to roam free is a nonsensical scenario. The world going vegan is a gradual process, by which the number of people boycotting animal products would increase slowly over time, thus meaning that farmed animals were bred less and less to meet demand. The number of farmed animals walking this planet right now is directly relative to the number of people buying animal products. More people eating meat/dairy = more farmed animals. More vegans = fewer farmed animals. This is just supply and demand!

So don't worry: cows aren't going to take over the world... yet (mwahahahaha!).

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That's funny... I don't recall anyone ever writing in to Netflix to tell them of their heartfelt concern about all the people being put out of work in the DVD industry because of the trending online switchover to video on demand content? And I don't recall anyone writing a letter to their bank either, criticising them for their switchover to online statements, thus putting all those poor people out of work in the paper industry. And what about when people quit smoking? Shouldn't we be concerned about all those people being put out of a job in the tobacco industry?

As per usual, people are only ever interested in using this argument when it comes to animal exploitation. But anyway, with the workings of supply and demand, changing the demand for a product can cause an industry to 'change its tack', so to speak, so any animal farmers who are genuinely interested in staying in business would be encouraged to switch to crop farming, and so on.

In any case, the livelihoods of those on the side of the oppressor is not worth more than the lives of the oppressed. Just as it would not be ethical to continue human slavery on the basis that plantation owners would be put out of work, so too is it unethical to continue animal slavery for fear of farm owners and slaughtermen being put out of work.

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As humans, we are born into a world where all consumerist actions cause harm in one way or another. But to say we shouldn't bother minimising our harm in one area just because we are causing harm in other areas is a complete cop-out. To use an analogy: if you are a lifeguard and see a group of people drowning, should you not bother to jump in and save any because you can't save them all? This is what you're doing when you continue to fund animal oppression simply because you can't stop all oppression.

With regards to there being animal products in everyday items such as car tyres, windows, walls, etc., we shouldn't be focusing on 2% of the problem. The 83 billion land animals and trillions of marine animals massacred every year are massacred by the meat, dairy, egg, leather, wool, and fish industries—not the car tyre industry. Not the glass industry. So let's focus on the extremely simple and practical solution of boycotting meat, dairy, egg, leather, wool, etc. and then we can see those industries switch to plant-based alternatives.

See my post on practical solutions [here](https://www.facebook.com/george.magicmartin/posts/10157520459825541).

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It has never been morally justifiable to discriminate against others based on their intelligence—let's take the Nazi Holocaust for example, where thousands of mentally disabled people were murdered on that basis. Was that morally justifiable? And before you say that this is different: many animals do actually have a higher IQ than mentally disabled humans (let's take the pig, for example, who has the IQ of a 3-year-old human, thus making them more intelligent than those with a mental age of 2 who were murdered in the Holocaust). So what exactly can the justification be here?

Indeed, often, as humans, we are more inclined to protect the less intelligent. Let's take the human baby, for example—by far the stupidest creature on the planet. Unable to perform even the most basic of cognitive and physical tasks, it trails pitifully behind its animal counterparts of the same age in numerous areas.

So why, then, whenever animals are systematically harmed in the food industry, do the same people who are complicit in the litany of outrage whenever a human baby is harmed, use the justification of, "They're not as intelligent as us, so it's not the same"? And why do they not apply that outrage they feel for the harming of human babies to the harming of animals?

How, as a society, have we managed to make this gigantic contradiction and not even realise it? We pour our hearts out for the suffering of someone who is less intelligent than us when the victim looks human, but put feathers or fur on them and suddenly they become fair game. Perhaps if baby-killers put their victims in chicken costumes before they killed them, no one would blink an eye?

As it happens, many animals are as intelligent or more intelligent as many humans in many areas. See [here](https://www.carnismdebunked.com/animal-intelligence) for video examples of animal intelligence from the species we mainly call 'food'.

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Actually, the opposite is true—humans are the only species on earth whose complete removal would benefit absolutely everything (the air, the oceans, the animals, the forests, the soil, etc.). So the idea that a species whose very existence is detrimental to everything is superior to the existence of those species who actually play a role in the ecosystem, is absurd. The idea that one's own kind is superior to another's own kind is the root of all the oppressions throughout history—hardly something we should be aspiring to.

With regards to being the dominant species, and justifying our exploitation of animals on that basis, this is yet another [might makes right fallacy](https://www.carnismdebunked.com/fallacies). And if we are in a dominant position, why would we even want to rule with violence and cruelty? Why rule with an iron fist when we can rule with love and compassion? Our role as the most powerful species on this earth should be to protect our planet and its creatures, not destroy it and enslave them.

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This is pretty rich coming from the most morally depraved species to ever walk this earth—a species whose brutality and evil far exceeds that of any animal, and where stoning, beheadings, slavery, oppression, torture and terrorism are the absolute norm. But in any case, ethics are an evolved thing, and all species have at least a basic understanding of right and wrong, because without it, they cannot survive. Without altruism, a species fails, and would not be in existence today. The reason we, as humans, even understand right and wrong (or at least claim to) in the first place is because, biologically, we *are* animals. As with any other animal, we evolved understanding that good deeds to others often meant a reward in return, thus helping us to survive.

Regardless, a being's understanding of right or wrong does not negate their capacity to suffer. A baby has no concept at all of right or wrong, yet if we used this justification to do to babies what we do to pigs and cows, there would be uproar.

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Most people in the West at one point also agreed that enslaving black people was okay. Most people in certain countries right now think that stoning 'apostates' to death is okay. Majority human vote is not a good way to measure how moral something is. Often throughout history, the masses have agreed with oppression, and are doing the same thing now with the oppression of animals. See [appeal to popularity](https://www.carnismdebunked.com/fallacies) fallacy.

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Again, all the oppressions throughout history were fully legal, and it is still legal today to do things in many cultures such as beat your wife, execute people for adultery, and so on. See [appeal to legality](https://www.carnismdebunked.com/fallacies) fallacy.

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While it doesn't matter what our ancestors did anyway (given that we are living in the present and can make our own choices), it's likely not true that meat played any role in the development of the human brain—if meat was brain food, then the most carnivorous species on this earth would be the most intelligent. What separated us as a species from all the other animals is cooking, and this is the most plausible explanation as to why we evolved the most powerful brain (again, not that it's relevant anyway).

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So what? Why is that a bad thing? There is nothing so special about human existence that animals should have to die for us to exist, whether it's now or whether it was back then. Regardless, this argument leads to dangerous ground, because one could also justify the rape of girls by the same basis (that's why the human female can start bearing children as early as 10 years old—they evolved being impregnated around that age). As per usual, the actions of our ancestors are simply irrelevant to how we behave now as a species.

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Indeed. But buying an animal product isn't a bad thing for the animal who is already dead—it's a bad thing for the animal who is now going to be killed as a result of the money you paid to that industry to kill them in order to replace that product on the shelf. Every time we pay for an animal product, we pay for another animal to be abused and murdered. Again, this is the reality of supply and demand. We vote with our wallet every time we buy an animal product, and say: "I support animal cruelty".  
  
Imagine someone paying for a hitman to murder someone and then saying, “I’m not responsible”. This is ultimately the same logic as someone demanding animal murder and then avoiding accountability, just because the slaughterman (the hitman in this analogy) *physically* did the dirty work.

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By this logic, we should also have given American cannibal and serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer a lower sentence, given that he ensured to use nearly every part of his victim's corpse, eating various parts of it and even turning some body parts into household items like bowls, etc. Often, using every part of the body is actually the most undignified way to treat someone after they've died.

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Wait, I thought people going vegan is putting people out of jobs in the meat industry now? Right, anyway, I'll get to the point.

You going vegan actually will make a difference. A huge one. Indeed, in the US alone, [400 million fewer animals](http://www.mercyforanimals.org/americans-ate-400-million-fewer-animals-in) were brought into a life of exploitation and suffering in 2014 than 2013, due to a rise in the number of plant-based diets. In the UK, the number of vegans has [risen 360%](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/food-and-drink/news/number-of-vegans-in-britain-rises-by-360-in-10-years/) in the last decade, hence why the main chain restaurants there are changing their menus in order to cater to demand (e.g. restaurants offering vegan cheese pizzas, etc.). So why not join the ever-growing number who are becoming part of the solution to the problem of animal suffering?

Want to see how much of a difference you'd make by boycotting animal products for a certain length of time? Check out the [Vegan Calculator](http://thevegancalculator.com/) and see for yourself!

In any case, we are accountable for our own actions. Imagine if someone said that, just because burglaries are still going to happen regardless of whether you burgle or not, you might as well burgle. Just because others are doing something, that doesn't mean we should be playing a part in it as well. As the saying goes: "Be the change you want to see in the world".

### **\***

This phrase is absolutely meaningless. People can live anywhere. They might live next to the factory farm from hell; they might live 3 miles from a farm where animals are tortured for fun; and so on. What does it even mean?

It makes no difference to the victims where you buy from. And the distance makes it no less of a crime. If I kill my neighbour's dog, is that less of a crime than if I kill someone's dog in the Democratic Republic of Congo? Of course not.

All farmed animals meet the same fate, regardless of whatever cute little term it is that the marketers put on the label.

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How can we morally justify taking someone else's life because we like the way they taste? We cannot justify harming others based on sensory pleasure. If we can, then we can also justify rape because to the rapist it feels good, or theft because the thief gets pleasure from the money or goods they acquire. Harming someone else for one's own pleasure is morally reprehensible, and any good person knows that.

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By definition, supporting animal agriculture cannot be a personal choice, because it affects others. How you style your hair, your favourite colour, your preferred music genre—these are all personal choices. Who you choose to enslave, oppress, and kill, however, is not. To summarise: "Your personal choice ends where someone else's body begins".

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Veganism is about treating others as equals, not about being superior. It is non-vegans who believe that their tastebuds are superior to all life on earth. As vegans say: "I don't feel superior because I'm a vegan... I'm a vegan because I don't feel superior".

With regards to being judgemental, vegans judge the majority of life on earth as precious. Meanwhile, it is non-vegans who tend to judge all other species as being not worthy of having even basic rights, e.g. the right to be free from harm and exploitation.

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There is not an ideology on this earth more forceful than Carnism. Not one. Those who eat meat, cheese, and eggs, who wear leather and wool, and so on, force their beliefs on others to such an unimaginable extent that others actually *die* for their beliefs (by the trillions per year)—how forceful is that!

You also have to laugh at this statement, because if it was the person arguing it who was the one waiting in line to have their throat slit, or was having their babies stolen from them, or was about to be skinned alive, they'd be begging, sobbing, pleading for people like us (vegans) to speak up for them and save them. Hell, if you look at it from the *victim's* perspective, if anything, the question should be: "Why aren't vegans more forceful with their beliefs?"

See [here](https://www.facebook.com/george.magicmartin/posts/10156523844115541) for my post on forcing beliefs.

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It is no more a 'religion' to abstain from harming turkeys and pigs than it is a religion to abstain from harming cats and dogs. Veganism, simply, is a moral obligation.

With regards to it being similar to a religion, consider this: religion is getting people to believe in things they can't see. Veganism is getting people to see things they don't want to believe.

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To the perpetrator, morality is subjective. To the victim, however, it never is. Morality is only ever subjective when the person saying that phrase *isn't* the victim.

But even if we’re to be charitable here and grant that someone *truly* does believe morality to be subjective, even if they are the one being victimised: if you believe morality to be subjective, you at least want to have a consistent moral framework.  
  
To those people, we can ask to “name the trait”:  
  
What is it that’s true of animals that, if true of a human, would justify stabbing *that* human to death for a burger?  
  
There are 2 paths here: either admit that there is no morally relevant trait true of animals that justifies massacring them, or apply this trait or set of traits to a human and end up justifying a holocaust of humans, which to any rational person would appear insane.

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This argument is pointless, because you could literally just say that about any animal we *don't* eat as well, e.g. a cat or a dog. So if this rather bizarre justification can be used to talk about herbivorous animals like lambs, why isn't it used to justify killing and eating animals that, well, actually would eat you if they could, like the lions who get shot on hunting safaris that the world is always up in arms about whenever it happens?

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While vegans should not be rude to you, as the vast majority of us were also non-vegans at one point, this is not an acceptable excuse to harm animals. If you don't like vegans, that's fine, but why take it out on animals? Are chickens rude to you? Then what is the point of this argument?

By this logic, one could also be put off from eating animal products, given that non-vegans are frequently rude about a variety of things, including subjects involving food. So why not say: "A non-vegan was rude to me once, so I'm not going to eat animal products ever again"?

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Not true. As a matter of fact, veganism can be as expensive or inexpensive as you want it to be. But pound for pound, a plant-based diet is by far the least expensive one on the planet, given that the staple foods of the most poverty-stricken societies worldwide are rice, beans, lentils, potatoes, bread, and so forth. For much of the world, meat and animal products are a luxury item. As an example, [this article](https://www.wfpusa.org/articles/wfp-meal-around-the-world/) from the World Food Programme USA about 9 plates of food in the world’s 'hungriest countries’ lists animal flesh in just *one* dish.

Indeed, we even unknowingly promote the cheapness of a plant-based diet when we use such common phrases as "cheap as chips" and "living on the breadline". We don't say, "cheap as steak" or "living on the lobsterline".

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If you've got time to buy animal products, you've got time to buy fruits, vegetables, nuts, beans, lentils, seeds, and grains. Being vegan is no more time-consuming than being a non-vegan, so this is a completely redundant excuse. Indeed, often the foods that take the longest to cook are animal products. Put it this way: it ain't the nut roast that's in the oven for 8 hours on Christmas Day.

Add to that routine visits to hospitals and pharmacies that are part and parcel for many people who eat animal products due to their aggravation of our most common diseases, and you'll find that eating animal products turns out to be one of the most time-consuming endeavours you can undertake.

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But you can. And that's the point. Anyone who's reading this has no excuse not to be vegan. Unless you're either a.) sitting on a sand dune in the middle of the Sahara Desert, or b.) sitting in an igloo somewhere in the North Pole, in which case I must say, I'm pretty impressed with your wi-fi signal.

Palming off one's own complicity in animal agriculture onto those living in barren wastelands shows a complete lack of ability to take responsibility for one's own actions. If you are reading this now, that means you have access to either a computer, laptop, tablet, or smartphone, which means you also have access to shops and so on.

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This is known as a [fallacy of relative privation](https://www.carnismdebunked.com/fallacies), i.e. an appeal to other problems. It is fallacious in several ways: a.) the person saying it likely isn't doing anything (or is completely incapable of doing anything) about these 'other issues' they mention, b.) them eating animal products is doing nothing to actually help those other issues, c.) none of these other issues are preventing them from going vegan, and d.) being vegan does not take more time than being non-vegan, so they can still be vegan and focus on these 'other issues' they allegedly care so much about anyway.

What's particularly ironic about this fallacy with regards to veganism though, is that supporting animal agriculture actually causes many of these 'other issues' in the first place! A society that is indoctrinated into accepting harm to animals from day one (e.g. a Carnist society, like the one we live in) normalises violence, thus this is echoed in the way its human citizens are treated. To summarise, there is no chance we will eradicate war, rape, slavery, genocide, murder, and assault for as long as we think it's just 'the done thing' to mutilate and slaughter billions of innocent animals every single week. In fact, animal agriculture itself has a direct link to violence towards humans—a [joint study](http://www.animalstudies.msu.edu/Slaughterhouses_and_Increased_Crime_Rates.pdf) by the University of Windsor and Michigan State University concludes that when a slaughterhouse is opened in a particular area, rates of violent crime, robbery and rape in the area show a significant increase as a direct cause of slaughterhouse employment.

As Pythagoras once said: “As long as humans continue to be the ruthless destroyer of other beings, we will never know health or peace. For as long as people massacre animals, they will kill each other. Indeed, those who sow the seed of murder and pain will never reap joy or love.” And as Leo Tolstoy said: “As long as there are slaughterhouses, there will be battlefields.”

Most people don't even realise that animal agriculture is actually the most [destructive entity on the planet](https://www.carnismdebunked.com/environmental). In other words, without veganism, none of these 'other issues' would even have a planet to exist on. The ongoing holocaust of animals and its resulting destruction of our planet is, quite simply, the biggest issue of our time.

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There are several angles we can approach this argument from, which I will take from [my video 'The "Crop Deaths" Argument: 4 responses vegans can give'](https://youtu.be/f3oZ3GUjl8E) and summarise below:

1. Difference between intentional and unintentional harm:

Vegans don't demand products that inherently involve violence (i.e. there are ways to source vegan foods without violence and exploitation, while non-vegans foods absolutely must involve violence and exploitation in some way).  
  
2. Veganism minimises crop deaths:  
While vegans absolutely should acknowledge that their lifestyles do cause harm, the practical solution to the problem of animals dying in crop harvesting is not to consume a diet that requires around 10 times more crops (due to the crops used to raised livestock) and maximises land usage, and then on top of that support the largest act of systematic oppression and violence in the history of this planet (billions of animals murdered every single week via the meat, dairy, egg, leather, wool, and fish industries). There are also a lot of myths that go around that suggest vegans are actually responsible for more animal deaths than meat eaters. Ed Winters (Earthling Ed) debunks this myth excellently, using credible resources, in an article you can read [here](https://www.surgeactivism.org/articles/debunked-do-vegans-kill-more-animals-through-crop-deaths).  
  
3. The farms of the world are run by non-vegans:  
Anything to do with farming, currently, will have some form of harm involved, because of this Carnist food system we live under. If vegans ran the farms of the world, which will happen if we strive towards a vegan world, such practices as pesticide use and shooting "pests" would be eliminated entirely.  
  
4. A certain amount of harm will inevitably be caused in order to maintain civilisation:  
Unfortunately, whatever we do as humans to build an even half-decent and functioning society, there will ultimately be some collateral damage as a result of that. For example, we support the construction industry, despite the fact this causes guaranteed deaths every year. Essentially, telling a vegan their actions are as bad as a non-vegan's because of crop deaths, would be like telling someone who lives in a house that their actions are as bad as someone who pays a hitman to murder people, simply because construction is extremely dangerous and results in guaranteed deaths every single year.

*Also regarding crop deaths:* [*see nirvana fallacy and tu quoque fallacy.*](https://www.carnismdebunked.com/fallacies)

### **\***

For something to be a human instinct, it has to be something programmed into the genetic code of all humans, that every single one of us does naturally and is beyond our control. Examples of human instinct include breathing without even thinking about it, jumping/flinching if something catches you by surprise, laughing if you find something funny or if you get tickled, shaking when scared/anxious, shivering when cold, sweating when hot, and so on.

So this idea that it is our 'instinct' to eat meat or to hunt/kill animals is simply not true. It's not something your body just does and you have no control over.

Not once has any human ever eaten meat or killed an animal through 'instinct'. If it's an instinct, why do I and millions of other people not do it? Why do we find it so easy to control? Why does an animal rights movement exist in the first place? Why do you not salivate when you see an animal? Why do most people not even want to watch slaughter footage? Why do we go "Eeew" at the thought of eating certain parts of the animal's corpse?

We systematically kill animals for profit, the same as any other business. It is no more an instinct to kill animals than it is an instinct to manufacture iPhones. And we eat animals and their secretions because of apathy (i.e. just not caring), conditioning (being taught that it's okay when we'd naturally be inclined NOT to if no one else did it), and because it's normalised ("everyone else does it, so I can't be wrong in doing it, right?").

So if it's human 'instinct' to eat meat or to kill animals, then pretty much every other thing you have full control over and could easily abstain from doing if you cared enough is instinct as well.

### **\***

Not only is this argument irrelevant because we *are* living in the here and now and with modern technology (so the arguer would be morally obliged to be vegan anyway), but it's not even true. Many of the greatest minds throughout ancient history have abstained from the consumption of animal products. [This poem](http://gentleworld.org/i-no-longer-steal-from-nature/) titled 'I no longer steal from nature' was written by a blind poet and philosopher, Al-Maʿarri, around 1,000 years ago, in a desert climate where vegetation was extremely sparse. So if he could do it thousands of years ago and without the diverse range of shops we have now, what excuse has anyone using this argument got to not go vegan?

Trying to divert the scenario away from the here and now so as to avoid one's own complicity in the current massacre of animals only goes to serve as a [red herring fallacy](https://www.carnismdebunked.com/fallacies).

### **\***

You don't need to have visited a place in order to decide for yourself that what goes on there is unethical. Indeed, most of the places we call evil, we've never visited ourselves. Imagine if someone were to say your opinion on Nazi concentration camps was invalid because you had never visited one. Clearly, this argument is nonsense, *especially* as veganism is not anything to do with welfare (i.e. how 'humanely' the animals are enslaved and murdered), but rather to do with the basic premise that it is not morally acceptable to use animals at all, regardless of how it is done.

But guess what: it just so happens that many vegans are actually vegan *because they have* either grown up on farms, or worked on them or visited them, and seen many of the horrific practices that take place there. Visit [this Facebook post](https://www.facebook.com/george.magicmartin/posts/10159891844395541?pnref=story) and see for yourself the accounts of vegans who either come from farming backgrounds themselves or who have visited them. If anything, you'll see that by telling vegans to visit farms, all people are doing is strengthening vegans' beliefs that animal agriculture is abhorrent, by urging them to bear witness to the many horrors that take place there.

### **\***

Just like the "plants are also living" argument, it is a huge trivialisation of sentient animal life to compare animals to non-sentient life-forms such as yeast and bacteria. When one makes such an argument, they essentially compare animal life (and indeed human life, as humans are animals biologically) to a slice of toast.

Let's assume that bacteria actually were sentient though, which would raise the question of whether it would be ethical to use antibiotics if you had an illness: and the answer is, absolutely yes. Why? Because there is nothing ethically wrong with anyone using whatever force is necessary to defend themselves. So just as you would have the right to shoot dead a crocodile dragging you underwater to be savaged to death in their fearsome jaws, or a police sniper should have the right to squeeze the trigger if a terrorist has a knife to a hostage's throat, so too should you be able to use antibiotics or use soap in order to defend your own body from attack. There is a huge moral distinction between defending oneself from attack, and actually attacking others unnecessarily.

### **\***

Ask anyone who uses this argument what's actually stopping *them* from going vegan, and they'll come up with a whole list of first world problems that make even the fussiest first world diva sound like a battle-hardened war hero: "I couldn't live without bacon"; "I don't have enough time"; "I don't like the taste of tofu"; "I don't want to have to read ingredients labels on things"—you name it.

Veganism isn't a first world issue—*avoiding* going vegan when you have the capability to do so, is.

### **\***

This scenario is jokingly referred to as ‘Schrödinger’s cattle’, i.e. on the one hand the [animals will overpopulate](https://www.carnismdebunked.com/general-ethical#11) if everyone goes vegan while on the other hand they will go extinct!

Humour aside though, this is touched upon in [point 8](https://www.carnismdebunked.com/general-ethical#8) (i.e. that we could also justify dog fighting by that logic, seeing as those dogs are bred for that and wouldn’t exist if it weren’t for the dog fighting industry) but just to expand on that: we could justify just about anything if we hold the notion that existing merely to be subjugated is special.

A child who is abused by their parents would not exist if it weren’t for their parents—does this mean we should forgive what their parents do to that child and say, “Well he/she wouldn’t have existed without you, so you’ve done nothing wrong”? Of course not.  
  
 With regards to extinction: there would not be anything morally wrong with a species created by humans actually no longer being bred as our slaves. Domesticated animals are essentially a human invention—it’s nothing like the extinction of wild species (in any case, in a vegan world, it’s likely that the few thousands or so remaining domesticated farmed animals in existence would be living in sanctuaries, rather than be erased completely).  
  
 Generally, when people use the ‘extinction’ argument, it’s because they are concerned about the extinction of burgers, pizza, and ice cream, rather than the extinction of cows (and so on). If species extinction is a **genuine** concern for you, however, please [see here](https://www.carnismdebunked.com/environmental#7).

### **\***

For a start, *every* single justice movement in history started out with a tiny number of people who said, “enough!” To use an old cliché, “Rome wasn’t built in a day”—and neither will a vegan world be. But that doesn’t mean we should just wave the white flag and leave animals to endure the oppressive hell in which they are entrapped.  
  
More importantly, and as mentioned in the answer to the argument ["you going vegan won’t make a difference”](https://www.carnismdebunked.com/general-ethical#23): you are accountable for *your own* actions—what other people do doesn’t matter *in the slightest*.  
  
The world will never be free of the rape and murder of humans—so does that mean you should do those things as well, because “the world is never gonna be free of murder”?

### **\***

Scenarios that bear no relevance to your actual situation, such as the fantasy idea of being stranded on a desert island like from the TV series ‘Lost’ or the movie ‘Cast Away’, with limited options of what to eat, are not worth entertaining. To use this excuse is to distract away from the reality, which is that you absolutely *can* go vegan.  
  
Here’s a better question: what if you *weren’t* on a desert island? What if you lived in a society with an abundance of supermarkets and greengrocers, and every single day you could choose exactly what you wanted to eat? Would you continue to fund the bloodshed and murder of innocent beings, or would you choose the peaceful alternative? The difference between these two scenarios is that one is a fairytale while the other is the reality you face every single day.

### **\***

The site author is not here to argue with you about your preferred economic system and try to convince you otherwise. However, the site author absolutely will call out your inconsistency if you think it’s OK to massacre sentient beings under the economic system you hate instead of at least *trying* to live peacefully.  
  
 It’s OK to believe that buying any product in a capitalist system causes harm. It’s *not* OK to aim to cause the maximum harm possible while living in that system you hate. And by the logic of this excuse, one could buy literally anything, no matter how depraved, violent, and immoral, and just brush it off by saying “well there’s no ethical consumption under capitalism”, as if buying a child pornography film, for example, is morally the same thing as paying to watch a Hollywood movie at the cinema.  
  
 In this unjust world we live in with its corrupt food system, it is understandable that someone would say there’s no ethical consumption under whatever economic system it may be. But just because human workers are treated badly in whatever industry it may be, that does not give you the right to pay for the most evil and violent acts upon non-consenting chickens and fish, when a non-perfect but *more* ethical alternative is there.  
  
 Plus, no one who uses this argument lives by it anyway. You’ll see the very same people who use this argument posting “Support black businesses” or “Boycott X company and buy Y instead”. Why can’t they apply this to veganism?

### **\***

There isn’t a single vegan you will ever say this excuse to whose culture is not steeped in animal oppression. Every single vegan you will ever meet grew up in a culture where veganism is frowned upon and looked at with disdain, where animals are seen as commodities, and where consuming animal flesh or secretions is a part of daily life. So until there is even a single vegan country on this earth (there currently isn’t one, and won’t be for a long, long time), this excuse will sound completely nonsensical.  
  
Besides, culture is not an excuse for committing acts of violence and oppression. It is part of the culture in several countries to stone women, imprison gay people, and kill blasphemers. Does that make it OK?

### **\***

This isn’t how farming works, and any person asking this question is simply using it as a distraction. No one sources their animal products like this because, simply put, this scenario doesn’t exist.

Farming is a business model based on profit—females are raped with metal objects in order to impregnate them, male offspring are instantly killed or raised shortly for meat and then killed young and fresh, and the females then go off to slaughter once they no longer give a profitable amount of whatever it is they’re bred for (milk, eggs, wool, etc.).  
  
 It makes no business sense whatsoever to just breed animals into existence and spend a whole lifetime caring for them and paying for their needs so people can just eat their tough, chewy, cancerous body once they eventually die after several long, expensive decades.  
  
 To use an analogy of how absurd this question is, it would be like someone who buys plastic telling a zero-waste person, “well what if I buy some plastic that just evaporates into thin air once I’ve thrown it away?” Once again, this is a scenario that doesn’t even exist, hence the presence of a zero waste movement.

### **\***

As addressed in the earlier argument, [“veganism is expensive”](https://www.carnismdebunked.com/general-ethical#33), plant foods are the cheapest foods on the planet—and further to this, there are vegans living on the breadline in many poverty-stricken countries the world over.  
  
And seeing as vegans tend to be LESS well-off than their animal-eating counterparts in Western countries, with vegans tending to work low-income jobs cleaning toilets, stacking supermarket shelves or waiting tables at restaurants (or be jobless), while the glass skyscrapers and parliamentary buildings of capital cities are filled with steak-eating non-vegans on 6/7-figure salaries, what exactly is the argument that people are trying to make here when they say “vegans are privileged”?  
  
If the non-vegan making the argument is referring to race and class when they say this, it could also be argued that it is both classist and racist to make such an excuse, because ethnic minorities and poor people *do not exist as props* to be used in one’s argument to avoid complicity in animal abuse. As such, it’s also a [red herring](https://www.carnismdebunked.com/fallacies), using the struggles of others to deflect accountability in the argument.

From a Western race/class perspective, it is also conforming to what’s known as the ‘bigotry of low expectations’: that is, people making the claim that only rich and/or white people should be expected to be vegan while everyone else gets a free pass to abuse animals, subconsciously see white people, for example, as ethical and brilliant, while other groups are dumb savages who need to be babied and cannot be held accountable for their unethical behaviour. All races and social classes possess moral agency and are accountable for oppressive and violent behaviour, and all should be expected to be vegan!

### **\***

In a world where animals are exploited, brutalised and murdered for a myriad of different reasons, unfortunately “rarely eating meat” does nothing to end animal suffering—in fact, it just adds unnecessary suffering, because the person saying this need not pay for animal exploitation at all.  
  
While it may be “better” to eat less meat than eat lots of it, suggesting that this is ethical or that one is “off the hook” for doing this is ultimately a [false dichotomy](https://www.carnismdebunked.com/fallacies) because it supposes that the only option for the non-vegan is that they either kill lots of animals or kill few, when the reality is that the moral obligation is simply to not abuse animals at all, and this is possible for them.  
  
 We would not apply the “commit less oppression” solution to any other injustice. No one, for example, would say “okay, I’ll racially abuse fewer people” or “I’ll beat my spouse less” in the face of racism or domestic abuse issues. If something is evil/wrong, the moral obligation is simply to not do that thing. Ultimately, the victim who is affected by one’s decision to harm them doesn’t care that you’re doing it less often; the fact is, they’re already being murdered or abused because of that person.