

General Election Vegan Tip Sheet 2015



Introduction.

We know vegan living can be fun, healthy, kind, green and inclusive. You want to share this with everyone, including your MP. **Let us help you be heard.**

Why is this important?

Now, in the run up to the General Election, is the perfect time to get your voice heard. Challenge your MPs to take action against practices that exploit non-human animals, harm the environment, discriminate against people and contribute to ill health. There are important differences between political parties in their policies regarding numerous vegan related topics. Let your MPs know you are looking for a party which protects all the species on this planet.

What's included in this guide?

The guide features:

- a 'find out more' information sheet with useful links.
- a questionnaire to put to potential candidates.
- an overview of key vegan-related concerns.
- additional information on each topic.

Using this guide:

Your MP has real influence over policies, and has the responsibility to represent you. These policies could help protect many non-humans and tackle discrimination vegans sometimes face. The guide is designed to open a dialogue with your MP that will encourage them to think about the inclusiveness of veganism. It will give you simple steps they can take, and show what a difference these changes can make.

The questionnaire is designed to be read by your MP. We are asking what their party's policy is on eight vegan related concerns, and how they plan to move away from harmful legislation. The questionnaire can be emailed to your MP, posted by letter or discussed with them over the phone or in person.

The overview of each section and the further information is designed for your use, as a platform to stimulate discussions and debates with your MP about topics concerning vegans and veganism in the UK. We hope this will give you the foundation to address some issues, on which you can add your own knowledge and experience.

As vegans we speak on behalf of all the species on this earth to end harm to non-human animals. You'll soon feel equipped to take more effective action. Tell your Senior Policy Officer Amanda Baker on policy@vegansociety.com about any responses your MP gives.

Now is the time that your voice counts. Be a voice for the voiceless.

Find out more

What is a general election?

The next UK General Election is on Thursday 7th May 2015. Everyone who is eligible to vote in the UK, and who is registered, can vote for a Member of Parliament (MP) in their constituency.

Find out more about how UK general elections work on the UK Parliament web site: <http://www.parliament.uk/about/how/elections-and-voting/general/>

Register to vote:

The deadline to register to vote in this General Election is Monday 20th April 2015. It is straightforward to register to vote online; all you need is your national insurance number.

Register now on the UK Government web site: <https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>

You can also register to vote by post.

What your current MP's views?

There are major differences between the political parties in their ideas about non-human animals.

Find out the views of your current MP on non-human animals by learning their stance on The Hunting Act, the badger cull, CCTV in slaughterhouses and more at: <http://voteforanimals.org.uk/> (site by Animal Aid).

Questionnaire to put to potential candidates.

We all teach children in our care not to harm animals unnecessarily. If you are elected as a Member of Parliament, how will your party help your constituents to enjoy the benefits of plant-based solutions?

Prospective MPs, this is your chance to tell us where you stand.

The Vegan Society is the first and oldest vegan organisation in the world, representing tens of thousands of UK voters. Our supporters are very interested to hear your party's policies in the following issues.

- 1) **Human rights:** Around half of public authorities in England failed to publish specific, measureable equality objectives by April 2012 (EHRC). In 1993, the European Court of Human Rights confirmed (*W v UK 18187/91*) that vegans enjoy rights to freedom of thought and conscience and the right to manifest beliefs in teaching and practice. They also have the right to avoid indirect as well as direct discrimination. This includes schools, hospitals, the justice system, employment and elsewhere.

What are your party's practical new measures to uphold equality, particularly for those holding legally recognised philosophical beliefs, such as veganism?

- 2) **Nutrition:** Plant-centred diets, at least seven portions of vegetables and fruit daily, have major positive benefits for public health, cutting premature death by over 40% (Oyebode et al. 2014).

What are your party's policies on promoting plant-centred diets for public health?

- 3) **Climate change and Stock-free farming:** Moving away from animal farming and products, to plant crops for food, fuel, fibre and other direct human uses, can significantly cut UK greenhouse gas emissions. The UK is a world leader in proven environmentally, economically and socially sustainable horticulture, arable farming, agro-forestry and other crop farming.

What new financial support will your party give to UK farmers who wish to move toward sustainable crop farming, away from the 'livestock' industry?

- 4) **Food security:** Plant-based foods are nutritious, accessible and sustainable. With the population estimated to reach over nine billion by 2050, sustainable food sources are vital to ensuring food security.

How will your party reap these benefits for UK and global citizens?

- 5) **Free school milk:** The School Food Plan in England recognises healthy plant-milk drinks in schools, and over 10% of UK residents regularly buy plant milks. Yet, free school milk does not cover plant milks, despite the UK topping up EU money with 25p to the pound.

Will your party end discrimination in this scheme, and fund free plant milk in UK schools?

- 6) **Non-human animals in testing, science and education:** Research on non-human animals frequently fails to predict the actual effects on humans. New animal-free alternatives can significantly improve the quality of testing, science and education.

Will your party move away from unreliable animal methods, to the wide range of proven effective new animal-free techniques?

- 7) **Non-human animals in entertainment:** Animals suffer needlessly even in so-called 'good' zoos, circuses, race-tracks and other entertainment venues.

Will your party end the use of non-human animals in entertainment?

- 8) **Pesticides and pollinating bees:** A UN report suggests that of the 100 crop species that provide 90% of the world's foods, over 70 are pollinated by bees

Will your party ban neonicotinoid pesticides and put other measures in place to restore UK insect populations – including vital pollinating bees?

Key policy issues: If elected as an MP for 2015-2020, which key policies does your party have to:

- a. Reduce the use of non-human animals for human purposes?
- b. Increase UK land farmed using environmental sustainable cropping methods?
- c. Use crop farming to increase UK and global human food security?

Overview of the eight sections.

1. Human rights

Certain institutions such as hospitals and the education system may discriminate against vegans in everyday life, despite veganism being protected by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Challenge your MP to uphold human rights and promote equality.

2. Nutrition and Health

Plant based foods reduce the risk of some of the UK's biggest health issues such as obesity, heart disease and diabetes. Improving diets will reduce strains on the NHS, improve quality of life and show a commitment to the well-being of all constituents. Challenge your MP to promote a lifestyle that contributes to the health and wellbeing of the population.

3. Climate change

The global 'livestock industry' is in the top three human causes of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, yet is often overlooked in environmental targets. Challenge your MP to push for action that tackles climate change.

4. Farming and food security

There is an increasing demand for sustainable farming techniques as well as higher standards of welfare for all involved in farming. Challenge your MP to back policies that help farmers move away from farming techniques and practises that exploit and harm human and non-human animals throughout the world.

5. Free school milk

The current free school milk scheme excludes plant based milk and therefore discriminates against vegan children and families, as well as those who are unable to drink dairy milk. There is scope for change in legislation with the money the UK Government contributes as a top up to the EU free school milk scheme. Challenge your MP to change legislation that will provide all children with free plant based milk in schools.

6. Non-human animals in testing, science and education

The Safer Medicines Group asserts that animal tests are often unreliable and unsafe. Challenge your MP to back research into modern, more reliable, humane methods of testing.

7. Non-human animals in entertainment

Non-human animals are not ours to do with as we please. Challenge your MP to back policies that are banning the use of non-human animals in entertainment.

8. Pesticides and pollinating bees

Bees pollinate more than half of the crops that provide the world's foods, yet their population has suffered dramatically at the hands of insecticides. Challenge your MP to move to agricultural procedures that protect insects, including bees.

1. Human Rights.

Benefits to your constituency:

- **Introduction**-All human beings benefit from a system that doesn't discriminate and offers equal opportunities for everyone. When vegans are unable to access something it is usually a sign of a deeper problem.
- Hospital catering is widely criticised. There are some fantastic examples of the British Dietetic Association and the Hospital Caterer's Association working together to provide nutritious, well balanced, varied meals to all their patients. Where vegans' requirements are not met, this demonstrates the need for better communication across a hospital to support all service users.
- The Universal Infant Free School Meal programme (UIFSM)¹ was implemented in September 2014 in England. This demonstrates an example of discrimination vegans still face within policies implemented by the government. Many children were left unable to participate in the school dinners, because vegan-friendly catering was not achieved. Families were therefore unable to reap the benefits the scheme offered.
- **Conclusion**-Vegan-friendly food is suitable for nearly everyone, including people with a range of dietary requirements for reasons such as belief or food intolerance. Therefore while your vegan constituents will certainly gain from better provision of a varied diet, all your constituents will benefit if food practises improve in hospitals and schools.

How it aligns with current Government policies and targets:

- Better care in hospitals has been shown to lead to quicker recovery rates. Supporting hospitals in the care of their patients will help improve turnover rates, creating more spaces in hospitals and reducing waiting times. This aligns with recent Government targets to see patients within eighteen weeks under the NHS Constitution².
- Better care will result in better service and higher patient satisfaction in hospitals. This supports The Personalisation Policy objectives to improve patient's care, including their experiences in hospitals³.
- The Universal Infant Free School Meal programme was implemented in schools to promote healthy eating amongst young children. Supporting incentives which seek to provide healthier meals in school will appeal to parents, who will likely be voting for those who promote the health of their entire families. Adopting vegan friendly menus will also cover the human rights of a number of different belief groups, as a vegan diet is suitable for many religious requirements.

¹ Department for Education, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-infant-free-school-meals>

² NHS, Quality and Service Improvement Tools, http://www.institute.nhs.uk/quality_and_service_improvement_tools/quality_and_service_improvement_tools/enhanced_recovery_programme.html

³ Putting People First, Department of Health

2. Nutrition and Health.

Benefits to your constituency:

- **Introduction**-Obesity is increasingly prevalent and is set to rise. By 2050 almost 50% of the UK population may be obese⁴. Access to nutritious, well balanced, healthy meals as well as an increase in nutritional information will benefit all your constituents.
- The British Dietetic Association has verified that a well-planned vegan diet is suitable for any age and stage of life. A well-planned plant based diet includes a variety of fruit and vegetables, legumes, nuts and seeds and whole grains. These are high in fibre and rich in protein, iron, calcium and other essential vitamins and minerals⁵. Your constituents would all benefit from an increased variety of plant based foods being available.
- Well planned plant based diets reduce risks of major health issues such as obesity, heart disease, diabetes and cancer⁶.
- **Conclusion**-Health is a big cause for concern in the UK currently, with many people's health suffering as a consequence of their diet. Not only will an improved diet in most cases provide a better quality of life, obesity related health problems put an enormous strain on the NHS. All constituents would benefit from a vegan-friendly service provision.

How it aligns with current Government policies and targets:

- The NHS estimates that absence from work due to ill health costs employers and taxpayers £22 billion a year in the UK.⁷ They also state that approximately 300,000 people a year have to give up work and rely on health related benefits.⁸ Adopting healthier nutrition policies will show a commitment to improving the wellbeing of your constituents.
- Obesity continues to be an issue with the many reports, including the 2007 Foresight Report, estimating that by 2050 half of the UK's population will be obese, at a cost of £50 billion per year.⁹ However, research by the Health & Social Care Information Centre in 2011 has shown that rates of obesity have continued to rise and look likely to exceed the Foresight Report's expectations.¹⁰

⁴ Obesity in the UK: Analysis and expectations, <http://www.nationalobesityforum.org.uk/media/PDFs/StateOfTheNationsWaistlineObesityintheUKAnalysisandExpectations.pdf>

⁵ British Dietetic Association

⁶ American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, <http://ajcn.nutrition.org/content/78/3/544S.full>

⁷ 'Five Years Forward View', The NHS, October 2014

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Tackling Obesity: Future Choices – Project Report' 2nd Edition, Government Office for Science, 17th October 2007

¹⁰ 'State of the nation's waistline', National Obesity Forum, p.4

- Health advantages and increased life expectancy are associated with a healthier diet. Dr Oyinlola Oyebode's research¹¹ at the University of College London has found that having 7 or more portions of fruit and vegetables a day decreases a person's chance of a premature death by 40%.¹²
- In addition, Dame Sally Davies' research has shown that 1 in 10 deaths in the UK are due to people being overweight. Dame Sally Davies is the current Chief Medical Officer and acts as the UK government's principal medical adviser and the professional head of all directors of public health in local government¹³.
- Adopting vegan friendly policies will demonstrate how you are taking positive, proactive steps to help improve problems within the NHS, which remains a contentious issue amongst voters.

¹¹ O. Oyebode, V. Gordon-Dseagu, A. Walker, J. S Mindell 'Fruit and vegetable consumption and all-cause, cancer and CVD mortality: analysis of Health Survey for England data', Journal of Epidemiol Community Health, 31 March 2014

¹² Ibid

¹³ Dame Sally Davies <https://www.healthinsurancedaily.com/health-insurance/product-area/occupational-health/article443000.ece>

3 & 4. Climate Change, Stock Free Farming and Food Security

Benefits to your constituency:

- **Introduction** – Environmental studies, including Mohr's,¹⁴ show that climate change poses one of the most serious threats to the environment and to human survival in recorded history. The evidence of human generated greenhouse gases (GHG) through animal agriculture is overwhelming.
- The Zero Carbon Britain report, 'Rethinking the Future',¹⁵ shows that agricultural food production is responsible for just under 10% of total UK GHG emissions and that a significant reduction in animal 'products' (e.g. 'beef', 'lamb' and 'dairy') is vital.
- Most environmental efforts focus on reducing levels of CO₂. However, gases such as methane and nitrous oxide have far more global warming potential. These are produced in significant volumes by animal agricultural industries. For example, cows and sheep produce 37% of the total methane generated by human activity, and methane is estimated to be 23 times more warming than CO₂. The livestock industry generates 65% of human-related nitrous oxide,¹⁶ which has the global warming potential of 300 times that of CO₂.¹⁷
- According to the United Nations (UN)¹⁸ 2006 UK report, the livestock sector accounts for 9% of CO₂ derived from human-related activities, as well as producing a much larger share of more harmful GHG. The report concluded that raising animals for food generates more GHG than all the cars and trucks in the world combined.
- Methane emissions are causing nearly half of the planet's human induced warming, therefore methane reduction must be a priority.¹⁹
- **Conclusion-** The majority of environmental protection schemes have focused on CO₂ emissions, which are largely costly and inefficient. A switch to primarily plant based diets, it is estimated, could offer a major reduction of GHG with far less negative impact.²⁰

How it aligns with current Government policies and targets:

- In February 2015 the Conservative, Liberal Democrats and Labour party leaders publically agreed by signing a pledge to work together across party lines to agree carbon budgets
- The Government is showing its commitment to reducing climate change by pledging £720 million to the Green Climate Fund.

¹⁴ Mohr, A new global warming strategy, <http://www.earthsave.org/globalwarming.htm>

¹⁵ Zero Carbon Britain, Centre for Alternative Technology, 2013

¹⁶ 'Livestock's Long Shadow: Environmental Issues and Options', Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 29th November 2006

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Ibid.

5. Free Milk in Schools

Benefits to your constituency:

- **Introduction** – On the current free school milk scheme, parents of vegan children are required to provide their own plant based milks to consume at school. This can have a number of adverse effects. For example, this process can be psychologically damaging for vegan children as they are made to feel isolated and “different” from their peers.
- If the parent is unable to provide plant milk, either financially or for other reasons, vegan children and families miss out on the benefits of this scheme as there are no suitable alternatives. This shows a failure by the school to implement its duty of care over vegan children. However, this can be easily rectified.
- Mintel’s 2014 report showed that plant-based, non-dairy foods are worth £150m a year. The report also found that the non-dairy consumer market increased by 155% between 2011 and 2013.²¹
- Fortified, unsweetened plant based milks are nutritious, which will benefit the health and welfare of children in schools. Soy milk contains upwards of 7 grams of protein per cup and considerably less fat than cow milk.²²
- Fortified plant based milk may provide a better source of calcium than animal milk after weaning, and has a more positive effect on older children’s bone development.²³

Conclusion – Including plant based milks in the Free School Milk scheme demonstrates a commitment to the health and well-being, both physically and psychologically, of vegan children in the education system.

How it aligns with current Government policies and targets:

- One of the primary aims of the European School Milk Scheme²⁴ is to improve the health of children in schools and lower obesity. Plant based milks would still fulfil these aims and objectives.
- The current procedure in implementing the European School Milk Scheme in Britain is an additional “top-up” of 25p for every £1 a litre that the EU commits. This provides a legislative opportunity to include plant based milks in the UK.
- Introducing a subsidy for plant based milks on the free school milk programme will have financial benefits. Plant based milks can cover those with a range of dietary requirements, such as belief or intolerance and are a suitable alternative for most people.

²¹ Dairy Drinks, Milk and Cream – UK’, Mintel, April 2014

²² Soy foods, nutritional health <http://www.soyfoods.org/nutrition-health/soy-for-healthy-living/soy-for-heart-disease/soy-protein-content-chart>

²³ AJ. Lano, SE Berkow, ND Barnar. ‘Calcium, dairy products, and bone health in children and young adults: a reevaluation of the evidence.’, Pediatrics 2005;115:736-43

²⁴ European Commission, http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/milk/school-milk-scheme/index_en.htm

- The milk industry is currently under huge financial strain. The potential for farmers to diversify their land is possible, as outlined in 'Diversifying Farming Businesses' from the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (2012).²⁵ Farms in Britain are able to grow vegan friendly grains such as oats, which can be used in creating plant milks or used as a food source for humans.
- Oat milk is the most environmentally sustainable milk for Britain. Most plant based milks are produced in Europe, however oat milk is easily made in the UK, giving it significantly low food miles.²⁶

²⁵ Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, <https://www.gov.uk/diversifying-farming-businesses>

²⁶ Goodness direct

6. Non-human Animals in Testing, Science and Education.

Benefits to your constituency:

- **Introduction-** Many people in Britain are concerned about animal testing. Currently, although there is no legal requirement for animals to be used for fundamental biomedical research, there is a requirement for animals to be used in the development and safety testing of medicinal drugs and vaccines.²⁷ Statistics by the Home Office show that in 2013 over 4 million animals were used for research purposes in the UK alone.²⁸
- Nine out of ten drugs that appear safe and effective in animal tests prove unsafe or ineffective in human trials according to the US Food and Drug Administration White Paper: 'Innovation or Stagnation', 2004²⁹.
- Not only are there ethical considerations surrounding animal experimentation, there is growing evidence that when animals are used for medical research purposes the results gained are not directly translatable to humans and are often unreliable and unsafe. The Safer Medicines group state that 10,000 people a year die from side effects of medicines. By continuing to rely on animal testing as a marker for whether a product is safe for human use is potentially putting lives at risk³⁰.
- **Conclusion-**There is a commitment at a UK and European level to reduce the number of animals used for research purposes. This is demonstrated by the 3 R's initiative. However, more needs to be invested in research that will contribute to scientific knowledge and provide evidence that non-animal techniques will generate advances in medical research.³¹

How it aligns with current Government policies and targets:

- The current Government policy in relation to animals in testing, science and education is the "3 R's. The aims are to Replace animals with non-animal alternatives, Reduce the number of animals being used and procedures to be Refined to minimise suffering. However, no time scale has been set on the implication of this policy and there has been no commitment to strategy³².
- Section 24 of the Animals (Scientific procedure) Act 1986 restricts publication of the details of what happens to animals in experiments and inhibits serious debate. Encouraging debate around animal testing will increase awareness and could bring real change to the field.

²⁷ Home Office, <https://www.gov.uk/research-and-testing-using-animals>

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Food and Drug Administration

<http://www.fda.gov/aboutfda/transparency/basics/ucm194932.htm>

³⁰ Safer Medicines, <http://www.safermedicines.org/pdfs/leaflet.pdf>

³¹ Ibid

³² National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research, <https://www.nc3rs.org.uk/the-3rs>

7. Non-Human Animals in Entertainment

Benefits to your constituency:

- **Introduction** – Many people in Britain are concerned with the treatment of animals in the entertainment industry. As humans, we are taught not to harm animals unnecessarily.
- Circus animals are protected by the Animal Welfare Act.³³ 'Wild' animals must be licensed; however there is no law to stop circuses using certain types of animals.
- The government in Westminster announced a ban in March 2012 on 'wild' animals in circuses in England, and published a draft law in 2013. However, there has been a lack of a firm commitment to implement this scheme. The bill has been blocked a total of seven times.³⁴
- A 2010 government consultation found 94% of the British public supported a ban on using 'wild' animals.³⁵ It has been called a "travesty" and an "outdated practice".
- The British Veterinary Association backs the ban, stating: "The welfare needs of wild animals cannot be met within a travelling circus, in terms of housing or being able to express normal behaviour".³⁶
- The RSPCA have stated that "Cramped and bare temporary housing, forced training and performance, loud noises and crowds of people are often unavoidable realities for the animals."³⁷
- **Conclusion** - For these reasons, the unnecessary mistreatment that occurs from animals providing entertainment for humans is unjustifiable and therefore should be eradicated.

How it aligns with current Government policies and targets:

- The law to ban the use of 'wild' animals in circuses has personal support from David Cameron, former environment minister Jim Fitzpatrick, and many other Labour MPs. David Cameron has promised Animal Defenders International, "We are going to do it". However, the bill is currently being blocked by a number of Tory back benchers.
- This is a change that will be perceived as a positive commitment to animal welfare by a largely supportive constituency.

³³ Animal Welfare Act, 2006. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/45/contents>

³⁴ D. Carrington, 'Law to ban wild animals in UK circuses being blocked by three Tory MPs', The Guardian, Friday 5th December 2014

³⁵ 'Initial summary of responses to the Defra public consultation exercise on the use of Wild Animals in Circuses', DEFRA, March 2010

³⁶ 'Wild Animals in travelling circuses', BVA Policy, (<http://www.bva.co.uk/News-campaigns-and-policy/policy/Ethics-and-welfare/Circuses-and-animals/>)

³⁷ Harris S, Iossa G & Soulsbury CD (2006) 'A review of the welfare of wild animals in circuses'. Report submitted to the Circus Working Group, 4 December

8. Pesticides and Pollinating Bees

Benefits to your constituency:

- **Introduction** – Bees are major pollinators, enabling the production of 90 major food and non-food crops. Apples, berries, cucumbers, nuts, cabbages and even cotton will struggle to be produced if bee colonies continue to decline at the current rate.
- A UN report suggests that of the 100 crop species that provide 90% of the world's foods, over 70 are pollinated by bees.³⁸
- Bees sustain 50% of Britain's flowering plant ecosystem³⁹.
- An international petition to stop the use of neonicotinoid pesticides has received over 3.5 million signatures.⁴⁰ This demonstrates the huge global support behind this ban.
- **Conclusion** – Banning neonicotinoids will have a hugely positive effect on food production and agriculture in Britain at a time when food security is a highly contentious subject.

How it aligns with current Government policies and targets:

- In April 2013 the European Commission agreed an EU wide ban for two years on some Neonicotinoids. 27 European countries have supported the ban. In Italy a ban has been in place for a number of years, and the bee population is recovering⁴¹.
- In Britain, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) have branded the ban 'unnecessary and unjustified'. However, MPs have accused DEFRA of 'entangling economic factors with environmental decision making and risked overlooking the significant economic value of insect pollinators to UK agriculture'.⁴²
- Supporting a ban on neonicotinoids will show a commitment to protecting British agriculture, food security, a protection of the British flowering eco system and the bees themselves.

³⁸UN, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=37731#.VO3vi3ysX1Z>

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ http://www.avaaz.org/en/save_the_bees_global/

⁴¹ European Commission <http://sapiens.revues.org/1648>

⁴² A. Driver, 'Neonicotinoid ban 'unnecessary and unjustified' – Defra', Farmers Guardian, 10th September 2013, (<http://www.farmersguardian.com/home/arable/neonicotinoid-ban-unnecessary-and-unjustified-defra/58616.article>)