The Vegan Society

Education Network

A message from a vegan learner
(How to support me in your school)

Being a vegan learner means caring about how our choices affect other people, non-human animals and the planet. It means wanting to learn in a way that feels kind and fair.

Sometimes school lessons use non-human animals, which can make it difficult for me to join in. But learning doesn't need to involve harming or upsetting any living being. There are many creative, exciting ways to learn without using non-human animals.

I believe school should include everyone and show respect for all living beings. When teachers and schools understand this, I feel understood and able to learn with confidence.

This booklet shares what that can look like and how schools can make sure every learner, including vegan learners, can take part proudly.

We do not need to use non-human animals to learn



“Trips to animal farms can feel strange.”

When we visit animal farms or places where non-human animals are kept, we are sometimes asked to touch them or watch things like milking or shearing.

I sometimes wonder if the non-human animals want that. I wonder what their lives are like when we are not visiting.

If we do visit places with non-human animals, I would rather go somewhere, like a sanctuary, that puts their needs first and helps us learn without turning them into something to touch or stare at.

“Zoos, aquaria and safari parks upset me.”

When we visit zoos, aquaria or safari parks, we are told we are going to learn about non-human animals. We walk around and look at them in enclosures, tanks or large fenced areas.

Sometimes I feel sad. A tank is tiny compared to the ocean. An enclosure is nothing like being free in the wild. Even a big safari park is still a place where non-human animals cannot truly choose where to go.

They are there for people to watch. I wonder if they get bored. I wonder if they miss being free in their real homes.

I would rather learn about non-human animals through documentaries, books and live wildlife cameras, or by learning about them in their natural habitats without keeping them behind fences or glass.

Learning about non-human animals should help us respect them, not just observe them.





“Having classroom companion animals (pets) does not feel right to me.”

When we keep non-human animals like hamsters, guinea pigs, rabbits, fish or reptiles in our classroom, it can seem fun at first. But school is loud and busy, and it does not feel like the right place for them.

They do not choose to live in a cage in a classroom. We move around a lot and sometimes we crowd around them. Even when we try to be gentle, it might still feel scary.

I think about weekends and holidays. Do they get enough space and quiet time. A cage is not the same as a field, a forest or a river.

If we want to learn about non-human animals, I would rather learn in ways that do not mean keeping them locked up for us.

“When non-human animals are passed around, I worry about them.”

When non-human animals are brought into school and everyone gets a turn to hold them, it can feel exciting. But I wonder how it feels for them.

Being picked up by lots of hands and looked at all the time is not normal for them. Even if someone says they are used to it, that does not mean they like it.

Some children feel nervous too. Not everyone wants to touch a non-human animal. It can feel awkward when you think you must join in.

Learning should not mean a non-human animal has to be carried around the room.

“I have questions about hatching projects.”

When we hatch chicks or ducks in school, it feels new and cool at first. But then I start to think.

What happens to the boys?

Where do they go after our project ends?

Are they taken away from their mums just for us?

Non-human animals are living beings. They are not classroom equipment. I do not think they should be born just for a short lesson.

“Small creatures still matter.”

Even tiny non-human animals like stick insects, caterpillars, frogs or woodlice deserve kindness.

When we keep them in tubs or tanks to watch them, they cannot choose to leave. They must stay there because we put them there.

I would rather watch videos or use books and technology than keep a living being trapped in a box.

“Watching non-human animals as part of a display makes me sad.”

Sometimes non-human animals are brought in for a show, like birds of prey demonstrations. It might look impressive, but I think about the noise, the travel and being watched by lots of people.

I want to learn amazing things without a non-human animal having to perform for us.



“It makes me sad when non-human animals are used at school fundraisers.”

Sometimes at fairs or special events there are donkeys or other non-human animals brought in to help raise money. People might ride them, hold them or take photos with them.

It might look fun, but it makes me feel sad.

Those non-human animals did not choose to be there. They are taken somewhere noisy and busy, with lots of people walking past and touching them. That could feel scary or confusing.

Raising money for our school is important. But I do not think it should happen in a way that uses non-human animals as part of the entertainment.

We could raise money in ways that are kind to everyone.

“Even when it is called learning, it can still feel like using.”

Sometimes we feed classroom companion animals to show the class. Sometimes we weigh them or measure them to record progress. Sometimes we keep a chart about how they grow.

I know teachers want us to learn, but I still wonder what it feels like to be watched and checked all the time when you cannot leave.



"Learning can still be exciting."

We do not need non-human animals in our classroom to make learning interesting.

We can watch documentaries, use virtual reality, see live wildlife cameras and learn outside while non-human animals stay free. We can do projects, art and research and we can ask big questions.

We can be curious without being in charge of another life.

"I want school to show kindness."

Non-human animals cannot tell us if they feel scared or stressed.

They cannot say they would rather not be there.

They cannot choose to leave.

But we can think about how it might feel.

School should teach us to care about others. That care should include non-human animals too.



A Note to Teachers

The voices in this booklet reflect concerns that many children may not feel able to express openly.

The use of live non-human animals in education is often well intentioned and introduced to make learning more engaging. Yet whether non-human animals are kept in classrooms, brought in for handling sessions or encountered on organised visits, they are placed in situations centred on human learning rather than their own needs. Even where welfare standards are in place, it is important to ask how these experiences feel from the perspective of the non-human animal and what children may learn from seeing living beings used in this way.

Some learners feel uncomfortable around non-human animals due to allergies, fears, cultural perspectives or ethical beliefs. Activities involving live non-human animals can leave children feeling excluded or unsure about taking part.

Schools shape values as well as knowledge. Choosing not to rely on live non-human animals, including keeping companion animals in classrooms or arranging animal-based visits, shows that education can nurture curiosity while also modelling compassion and empathy for others.



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