

Christian Vegetarian Association UK

Working towards a violence-free world

YOUR SAY

NO 1 SUMMER 2009

GOD'S CREATURES

by Ann Wills

God gave us animals to work with if we choose,
But this does not mean freedom to abuse.

All animals feel pain and fear

God created them and in His heart he holds them dear.

Spare a thought for the battery hen
Imprisoned in a tiny cage by the greed of men.
She has no room to walk or open her wings
Because her confinement more profit brings.

Live animals in laboratories are cruelly hurt
By now scientists should have learnt
That medical drugs tested on animals still make people ill
There are safer tests, but they use animals still.

So say a prayer for every exploited little life
In cramped conditions or in any kind of strife
They spend their lives hidden from public view
But remember - these are God's creatures too.

Pray for help, write a letter, see what you can do
Have an animal stand at a church fair if you feel called to
Use products which are cruelty-free
Let's make a start with you and me!

For further information contact CVAUK:
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Perspective on the Lectionary - Mark 4:30-34

This passage includes the well-known parable of the mustard seed – the smallest of seeds that grows into the greatest of shrubs. Many Christians apply this metaphor to Christian evangelism, in which individuals spread the Gospel far and wide. I think the metaphor also applies to the Christian Vegetarian Association’s ministry.

We offer a message of compassion, peace, and mercy that has the potential to divert humanity from its current self-destructive course toward the “Peaceable Kingdom” prophesied in Isaiah 11. Though our brothers and sisters in Christ often resist our message, it is steadily gaining acceptance. As more and more people move toward plant-based diets, our witness becomes more mainstream. Just as Christians once widely endorsed human slavery but now find the institution incompatible with Christian faith, I believe that eventually Christians will widely reject the idea that the Prince of Peace could conceivably endorse the cruelties of modern animal agriculture.

We will move toward plant-based diets one of two ways. If ministries such as the CVA flourishes like a mustard tree, people will adopt the “faith of Christ” – a faith that God is loving, compassionate, and sides with victims of violence and injustice, not the perpetrators. Alternative, people will move toward a plant-based diet because unsustainable animal agriculture, with its waste of land, water, and energy, will impoverish the world to the point that only a relatively small fraction of the population can afford the cost of animal flesh. Humanity has been blessed with an opportunity to avoid self-destruction, but this requires that humanity adopt the faith of Christ which, among other things, encourages a plant-based diet. If humanity rejects that opportunity in favor of materialism and self-indulgence, humanity courts disaster.

Given that people are reluctant to abandon the religions of their families and communities, it is fortunate for humanity and the world that other faiths and traditions have teachings that accord with the faith of Christ. However, the faith of Christ comes with a challenge to radically change our lives, to focus on service to God rather than service to our sensory desires. Jesus accepted this challenge to the point of suffering and death. Most Christians, in stark contrast, have resisted the obvious call to simply change their diets and avoid supporting cruel, wasteful modern animal agriculture. We are called to be disciples of Christ, and we must find ways to break through the barriers that keep people who claim to embrace faith in Christ from embracing the faith of Christ.

Stephen R. Kaufman, M.D. - CVA (USA) Newsletter - June 14, 2009

ANIMALS IN LABORATORIES

Unseen they suffer.
Unheard they cry.
In agony they linger
In loneliness they die

A DANGEROUS PLACE

“The world is a dangerous place ,
not because of those who do evil,
but because of those who look on
and do nothing”.

**From the newspaper of the Diocese of Liverpool:
They'd call St Francis a crank**

A friend in Widnes, when the Abortion Bill was presented to Parliament, obtained signatures to prevent legalisation of abortion. For many years, she worked for Oxfam, the NSPCC and often raises funds for Jospice International. This is the kind of lady who stops her car if she sees an old lady trying to cross the road, to take her across - just as any Christian does?

I remember walking through Bold Street with her and a tramp asked for ten pence; she didn't only open her purse but her heart - she talked to him just as any Christian should. A single parent family she had known for only a short time was looking for a new home; instead of offering advice she took that family in, even though she cherishes her family's and personal privacy very much.

Only in the struggle against animal exploitation does she meet misunderstanding and abuse. How selfish we are! 'There are more worthy causes' she is often told (as for instance in a recent endeavour to raise funds for the Humane Research Trust, which sponsors scientists in medical research not involving animals) by people who in the name of Jesus Christ are supposed to oppose injustice of any description.

A Christian cannot condone the horrific experiments on defenceless animals, especially when many are for non-medical purposes (in 1976, of the total 5,474,739 experiments, 3,535,033 were performed by commercial undertakings). Can we condone killing of animals for the vanity of a fur coat or overlook the treatment of cattle, pigs and fowl as machines to provide us with food, unless we make profit our god? If St. Francis were alive today, he too would be regarded as a crank and heretic.

Catherine Jones

Providing the needs

It is quite true as Catherine Jones points out that we must not be cruel to animals but we must also remember that God intended that animals should provide for the needs of mankind. There also appears to be plenty of evidence in the Old Testament that slaughtered animals were offered in sacrifice to God.

It is, indeed, rather unfortunate that so many who campaign on behalf of animals are unperturbed about the experimentation by the abortionists, of innocent babies. St. Francis would not mind being called a crank; he sometimes called his own body 'Brother Ass'.

I heard, sometime ago, about a friendly argument in Heaven during which St. Patrick called St. Francis - 'A Cissie'. They both enjoyed the joke.

J. White

There's no need to kill

I feel I must comment on J. White's letter when he states that God intended animals for us to eat. Man does not need to kill to live. If the majority of people had to slaughter I am sure they would never be able to eat meat again. Most people associate animals bred for food with pleasant fields and hens pecking in farmyards. This is a myth perpetuated by vast companies whose profit seeking has blinded them to the fact that animals have a right to decent conditions. After all, eggs and bacon would not sell as well if the truth emerged.

Animals do not only suffer at the slaughter-house. They are denied freedom of movement, exercise, and even the natural food for which they crave, to mention just a few cruelties. If we are aware of these crimes against innocent creatures, remain indifferent or turn a blind eye, then we are guilty of the sin of omission.

Incidentally, it is grossly uneconomic to produce animal based protein. If we abstain from flesh eating we are sharing the world's food supply more fairly. England could be self-supporting on first-hand vegan foods, while neither England nor the world can support 'two population explosions' - that of man and of the millions of animals deliberately bred to satisfy the short-sighted greed of meat-eaters. To sum up, as the modern German theologian, Fr. Ruland states, 'Like us, the animals desire to live, shrink from pain, and seek pleasure.'

Irene Casey

Animals

May I point out to Irene Casey that in my letter I stated that God created animals to serve the needs of mankind. Some animals may be used as household pets, others for entertainment, but a large proportion supply us with necessary food.

I agree that we should be kind to animals and that slaughtering should be made as painless as possible, but in case Irene Casey's views have raised doubts in some readers' minds about the morality of eating flesh meat, may I console them by quoting an extract from Our Lord's Parable, 'The Prodigal Son' - 'And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it: and let us eat and make merry.'

(Mr.) J. White

Exploiting the weak

Why does the subject of meat abstention stir up such opposition? Could it be that our stomachs come before the welfare of our less fortunate brethren? In a world where 2 out of 3 are hungry it has been estimated that 1.65 acres of land will feed ONE person on a meat and vegetable diet and FIVE persons on a meatless diet. In the UK, 400 million animals are massacred annually.

Man, being a coward, has always exploited the weak. All the evidence points to the fact that man became carnivorous at the onset of the Ice Age, approximately 50,000 years ago, He should have evolved beyond the need to kill. Cruelty is not compatible with Christianity and in this modern world of factory farming (far removed from the farming methods of Jesus' time), we daily eat the products of cruelty.

If my letter has raised doubts in people's minds about the morality of flesh eating then I am truly glad and redouble my prayers. Like Leonardo da Vinci, I look forward to the time when men will look on the murder of animals as they now do of men. To anyone contemplating the step of a non-meat diet, then I say, 'Come on in, the water is lovely'. Then indeed, life takes on a new dimension and only then can one truly partake in the oneness and beauty of Creation.

Irene Casey Area Contact - CWF Member of CSCAW

Correspondence string in the Catholic Herald Feb to May 2009

130209 Unselfish Vegetarian

SIR - I was dismayed to read Nick Thomas's article (February 6) which insinuates that most vegetarians are motivated by selfish reasons, "just to make themselves the centre of attention". I have been a vegetarian since I was very young and have never tried to force others to follow my example. I respect God's creatures and do not want to feel responsible for killing anything He has made.

May I suggest Mr Thomas reads *Evangelium Vitae*, which says: "As one called to till and look after the garden of the world, man has a specific responsibility towards the environment in which he lives, towards the creation which God has put at the service of his personal dignity ... We are subject not only to biological laws but also to moral ones, which cannot be violated with impunity."

We are all responsible for our moral conscience, and at least I know I have thought long and hard about the reasons why vegetarianism is right for me - rather than simply living in blissful ignorance as Mr Thomas appears to be doing.

Yours faithfully, Theresa Collins, Whickham, Newcastle Upon Tyne

200209 How vegetarians are saving the planet

SIR - I worry that Nick Thomas may be at risk of "mad cow disease", judging from his unbalanced rant against vegetarians and his enthusiasm for red meat, including offal (Comment, February 6).

His theory that "vegetarians cannot survive" is easily disproved: communities which enjoy greatest longevity and lower than average incidence of age-related diseases, cancer, heart disease, diabetes - eg the inhabitants of Okinawa in Japan and of Campomele in Italy - subsist on a fruit and vegetable-rich diet which includes very little red meat. And, among animals, the biggest and strongest, the elephant, is vegetarian and has an average lifespan of 65 years in the wild, whereas the pre-eminent carnivore, the lion, has a lifespan of 15 years.

Brains count for more than brawn in matters of survival and most vegetarians avoid red meat for well-thought-out reasons - as a matter of principle and for better health and longevity, not as a fad, as Mr Thomas supposes. The intellectual and principled argument against eating meat goes further: Livestock's Long Shadow, a 2006 report by the UN's Food and Agricultural Organisation, shows that livestock emissions are responsible for more global warming gases than cars, planes and other forms of transport put together.

Eating meat, as opposed to its constituent sources of cereals and so forth, is also wasteful: some 40 per cent of the world's grain goes towards feeding animals and it takes 990 litres of water to produce one litre of milk and 15,000 litres of water to produce a kilo of beef. It's a selfish waste of land and other resources when nearly a billion people are malnourished and over a billion have no access to safe drinking water. Far from being something to be disparaged, vegetarianism is the responsible choice for anyone interested in their health and longevity, easing world hunger and thirst and even "saving the planet".

Yours faithfully, Tony Bond, Kesgrave, Suffolk

060309

No Title

SIR - If vegetarianism is so self-evidently moral and right (Letters, February 20), one can only wonder why Christ wasn't a vegetarian. Indeed, I seem to remember that Christ was somewhat critical of those who fussed about what went into their bellies.

Yours faithfully, Graham Moorhouse, Dartford, Kent

200309

Lions and lambs

SIR - It does not follow that just because Christ was not a vegetarian 2009 years ago that he would not be a vegetarian now (Letters, March 6).

It has in fact been foretold that in the latter and last days as at the beginning the tendency would be, from carnivores towards herbivores. The lion shall lie down with the lamb and "they shall not hurt or harm in all my holy mountain". This is why at the beginning neither man nor dinosaurs were in danger of being eaten. Yours faithfully, James Campbell, Birkenhead.

100409

Life would be hell if we were all vegetarians

SIR - Whatever fodder vegetarians believe was eaten "in the beginning", nowadays all creatures great and small have evolved into either herbivores, carnivores or omnivores (Letters, March 6 and March 20).

Indeed, the entire flora and fauna, seen and unseen, of planet earth constitutes one glorious, unified digestive system, each consuming each, their driving force being neither an intellectual nor a moral conviction. Humans alone have a choice in the matter, and most choose to be omnivores, eating anything tasty they can get into their hungry maws.

Consuming too much meat, or nothing but vegetables, or being excessively sensitive to criticism, are not actually sinful things. They are just rather unappealing tendencies of our peculiar human nature. But for argument's sake, try imagining what life would be like in a wholly herbivorous Britain as we strove to produce proteins sufficient for 60 millions.

From coast to coast, nothing but industrialised arable land, full of high-yielding, genetically-modified crops, sown and harvested by armies of gargantuan gas-guzzling machinery. Gone would be all wasteful woodlands and thickets. No more larks rising full-throated from meadows.

No more leisurely rambles alongside peaceful, butter-cupped pastures where cattle and sheep safely grazed. No more cocks crowing in the morn; no more chickens, pigs and goats in the farmyards, fields and sheds; and no more hay in the barns or cider with Rosie. No more eggs either, nor milk, butter and cheese, and not a woolly hat or leather sandal to be found, even for vegetarians.

We might of course opt to continue breeding farm animals, not for meat but for these useful by-products, and then cull them when they grew old and unproductive, cremating their millions of unwanted carcasses in vast, smoke-belching incinerators. Alternatively, we might process the mountains of meat into high-quality tucker for cats and dogs, provided that herbivore fundamental-

ists haven't insisted on the planned extinction of all carnivorous pets as well.

Wildlife would also pose a bit of a problem in this super-sized arable landscape. Those species not obliterated by pesticides or destroyed as economic and environmental vermin would have to be corralled into unusable wasteland reservations, never again to live in any kind of close symbiotic relationship with mankind. If this all sounds a bit like hell on earth, then it probably would be.

Yours faithfully, Victoria Gillick, Wisbech, Cambs

170409

No Title

Sir, Mrs. Gillick's pleasant picture of the English countryside based on an omnivorous diet (Letters 10th April) is that of a child's farm picture book, hiding anything that might be upsetting or disturbing. She ignores the unseen reality of a diet based round meat and dairy.

In the interests of the whole truth, here it is: a culture of death, with 300 animals a second in the UK, including baby calves, lambs and goats, killed out of sight in hidden slaughterhouses; people paid by the rest of us to be desensitised by killing day after day, sometimes for all their working lives, amongst blood and faeces; ongoing rainforest destruction (70% of this is for grazing or animal feed); appalling factory farms (still the great majority) in contravention of the "righteousness" of Proverbs 12, 10; more idyllic scenery-destroying greenhouse gases from the livestock industry than all transport put together.

Mrs. Gillick strangely likens a future vegetarian countryside to hell, but a much more hellish reality already exists. There are ways of keeping fewer animals without destining them for early slaughter. Mrs. Gillick need not be concerned either about enough protein for the nation. An acre of land used to grow plant protein produces eight to twelve times the amount than one used for animal protein production. What she should be concerned about is the poor of the world deprived of protein because we import it from them to feed livestock in the UK.

As I go now to my church's Good Friday reflection I remember Cardinal Newman's crucifixion sermon in which he likened the suffering of defenceless slaughtered animals to Christ on the cross. Maybe it's a good time to reflect on the true cost of meat, compared with a diet which perhaps carries a bit of a personal cross with it but helps rescue out-of-sight humans, animals and the planet.

Barry Miles, 236 Streatham Road, London.

240409

A dystopian

Sir - The picture of a rural idyll created by Victoria Gillick (Letters, April 10) is false and misleading. The vast majority of farm animals, particularly chickens and pigs, do not live in farmyards but in vast industrial sheds, deprived of natural light, space and freedom.

To enter such premises is to witness a living hell that does not do justice to the Christian concept of compassion. The buttercupped pastures where cattle and sheep safely graze are largely sprayed with chemicals to produce a

monoculture devoid of meadow plants. Vegetarians eat dairy produce, wear woolly hats and even leather sandals (vegans of course do not, on grounds of conscience).

But vegetarians also believe that too much land is used for growing crops to feed animals, a wasteful means of obtaining protein. Far better to grow organic vegetables, salad and fruit crops on at least some of that land, to preserve the soil quality and offer a more welcoming habitat for wildlife. At least then we might hear more larks rising full-throated from the meadows.

Yours faithfully, David John, Church Stretton, Shropshire

240409

No Title

From the general secretary of the Catholic Concern for Animals, Dr Deborah Jones

Sir - Tsk! There was I thinking that Victoria Gillick was pro-life! Has she never visited a slaughterhouse? Never witnessed there the agony of the millions of stressed, sensate animals, or the unborn lambs or calves ripped from their doomed dams to be discarded as junk?

Victoria, dear, try a stint at a chicken processing plant - if your stomach can stand it. What provoked that counter-factual dystopian vision of a "wholly herbivorous Britain"? As one pound of meat protein takes eight pounds of vegetable protein to produce, it is not the vegetarians (who are generally medically healthier) who will cause the final collapse of the traditional countryside. Anyway, where are the animals today? Not in fields and farmyards, but crammed into vast indoor "feeding lots".

Get real, Victoria. The "super-sized arable landscape" is already with us - providing for the unnecessary and wasteful, not to mention cruel and immoral, fashion for meat consumption.

Yours faithfully, Deborah Jones

010509

Vegetarianism and anthropocentrism.

Sir, As co-founder of the Christian Vegetarian Association UK, I have been following your correspondence on vegetarianism with great interest. CVAUK's desire to show compassion and mercy are either ignored or challenged by Christians who use alternative interpretations of the Bible to discredit our faith in a loving and compassionate God. From my experience the main reason for this is dualism, them and us, an anthropocentric attitude towards the rest of God's creation.

God's perfect love is indivisible, so to say that God loves one part of his creation more than another, is to limit and belittle God's love, and deny His perfection (Matthew 5 v 48). Jesus tells us that even the falling of a sparrow gains God's attention, yet Christ also said that humans are of more value than sparrows. Why, because our ultimate purpose is a co-rulership with God but first we must learn to rule and discipline ourselves. God wants us to reflect His image of love and compassion towards all of His creation.

The Bible is a living Book which contains eternal spiritual truths that cannot be found in any other book. However, if we ignore our faith in a perfect God when interpreting the Bible, we turn the Bible into a cold, lifeless, unethical

manual which can then be used to support any action or view we desire. Heathens, agnostics and devil worshippers can all do that. Pope John Paul II tells us: Any interpretation of the Bible that contradicts a rational understanding of God's goodness and mercy, is incorrect.

Today, more and more people are realising that choosing a plant based diet is far more than a mere 'dietary choice'. It is about helping to rescue the planet and preventing human and non-human suffering on a massive scale, it is about creating a sustainable future for our children.

Surely, as Christians, we must act upon the message of Jesus and embrace a lifestyle that perceives the peaceable kingdom of God. A lifestyle that is loving, self-sacrificing, meek, kind and merciful. A peaceful lifestyle that is pleasing to our perfect God.

Don Gwillim, Liphook.

080509 No fairytale vision

SIR - I feel I must come to the defence of Victoria Gillick (Letters, April 10). Down here in Devon and indeed in most of the south west her vision of cattle and sheep grazing peacefully among the buttercups is not a fairytale and one of the worst effects of the foot-and-mouth epidemic a few years ago for those of us who were not directly involved was seeing empty fields everywhere without an animal in sight. Maybe the buttercups are not so common as they used to be but there are in fact plenty of organic farms and by the nature of the terrain there are few or no large farms given over to intensive farming.

Surely the answer is not to demand that everyone turn vegetarian but to regulate farming so that cruelty to animals is banned. As someone who has not had brilliant health, I know I cannot manage without meat and have sympathy with Nick Thomas's earlier article (Comment, February 6) where he sang the praises of a good steak at times of physical and mental exhaustion. I have no objection to people becoming vegetarian but I do not think they should claim the moral high ground and demand that everyone else follows them.

Yours faithfully, Ruth Yendell, Exeter, Devon

150509 Jesus the meat eater

SIR - Outside of that bizarre modern mindset that appears to be able to believe in square circles, it is clearly not possible to be a vegetarian and a Catholic (Letters, May 8). The reason is very simple: vegetarianism is based on the premise that it is immoral to eat meat. But if it is immoral to eat meat, then Christ was immoral.

But if Christ is immoral, then Christ is not God, for God is infinite in all perfections. But if Christ be not God, then the basic premises of the Catholic faith are lies, indeed blasphemous lies, and therefore the whole Catholic edifice must collapse like a pack of cards.

Yours faithfully, Graham Moorhouse, Dartford, Kent

220509 Doing greater things

SIR - Graham Moorehouse (Letters, May 15) need harbour no anxiety that Catholicism and vegetarianism should somehow be considered anomalous within the theory that "if it is immoral to eat meat, then Christ was immoral".

Perhaps James, the brother of Jesus merely engaging in sibling rivalry, and St Peter, whose abstinence from the flesh of animals has similarly been mentioned in the history of the early Church, should now be considered unsuitable, unworthy of their traditional place in Catholic tradition?

Maybe the numerous saints (for whom asceticism and reverence for creation led to contemplative renunciation of cruelty and temporal opportunity throughout their time on earth) were simply attempting to outshine one another or usurp the reputation of their Saviour?

The Son of God, let us remember, never claimed to be perfect (Mark 10:18). Indeed, we are invited to improve upon the morality which prevailed in the first century rather than emulate ancient traditions such as human slavery which eventually became the everlasting shame of Christendom.

Our Lord would hardly succumb to a fit of pique at the increasing numbers of compassionate individuals who have turned their backs on slaughter during their earthly pilgrimage. Indeed, we have been given basic spiritual principles of mercy, love, peace, pity and perhaps what Tolstoy realised to be a religion of "infinite perfecting" rather than individual accomplishment.

After all, Christ admonished future generations of His followers with the prophecy: "These things shall ye do, and greater things than these shall ye do" (John 14:12).

It seems that from those to whom much has been given much will always be expected, so surely our vast consumer choice of alternatives to animal exploitation should inspire our daily pursuit of the Kingdom on earth.

Yours faithfully, John Gilheany, Roath, Cardiff

290509 Sentiment and reason

SIR - Vegetarians don't say that eating red meat is immoral and contrary to Jesus's presumed example, thus mutually exclusive with Catholicism as Graham Moorhouse postulates (Letters, May 15).

The unanswerable objection is that eating too much red meat is bad for us, as countless studies linking it to cancer, coronary heart disease, diabetes and hypertension have shown; and, if such excess is bad for us, it cannot be in the Almighty's plan for us. Whether Jesus ate red meat is a red herring, just as would be the fact that He travelled by donkey, wore long robes and probably sported long hair and a beard - only Luddites and Dawson disciples determined to finally empty our churches would argue that Catholics today must follow those examples at the expense of scientific progress.

Jesus would probably have eaten what most people in first century Palestine ate: bread, fish, pulses, figs, herbs, olives - lamb being reserved for special occasions, probably not more than once a month. Which is close to what is now known as the Mediterranean Diet, famed for health and longevity.

Eating red meat is unnatural for humans: only humans must cook it to tenderise it and kill off deadly bacteria, whereas nature equips us to eat vegetables raw; and, relative to body size, our colons and intestines are several times longer than those of carnivores, more akin to those of herbivores, meaning that meat decay, as it moves slowly through the gut, increases the risk of pathogens. Sentiment aside, vegetarianism is not about morality; it's about reason.

Yours faithfully, Tony Bond, Kesgrave, Suffolk

Letters to the secular media

A string of letters from Elizabeth Allison to the Leicester Mercury, apparently this string has lasted a year. It just shows what we can do.

190908 It was tasteless

I COULDN'T agree more with Judy Cornes (Mailbox September 10)' that the picture of three chefs holding dead birds to celebrate their restaurant's success was "taste-less". I found the image repulsive and deeply offensive. The article said that the restaurant's menu includes foie gras. Perhaps Mercury readers would like to know that foie gras production is outlawed in Britain although EU rules state that imports can't be banned. I hope that consumers of this so-called "delicacy" are aware of the suffering caused to the ducks and geese which produce it. Any restaurant which helps to perpetuate such obscene cruelty doesn't get my vote or custom!

Elizabeth Allison, Leicester.

270908 Time to cut out the meat

Recently, in a national newspaper; Rajendra Pachauri, who chairs the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, suggested that meat-eaters should refrain from eating meat for one day a week. The reason given for this was that meat production puts more green house gases into the atmosphere than transport. The article continued to list the benefits of eating meat and regarded the statement as a "vilification of meat". Is it such an outrageous suggestion to live without meat even for one day?

A recent report on the obesity problem stated that vegetarians are not only less likely to be obese but also have low rates of diabetes, heart disease and cancer, and an increased life expectancy. Less expensive fish and cheaper cuts of meat are now being promoted in the media to beat the "credit crunch".

However, the sadly neglected beans and pulses are a great alternative. They are not only rich in protein and other nutrients but healthy and economical. Perhaps it is time for people to review their dependence on animal-based foods. Every five seconds, a child some-where will die of hunger. Vegetarianism uses up far less of the world's resources of food, land, water and energy. Giving up or cutting down on meat consumption could help to alleviate famine in many parts of the world.

Perhaps not such a priority of meat-eaters is animal welfare. However overcrowding, disease, mutilation, drugs and antibiotic growth promoters are just a few of the atrocities suffered by animals in order to put meat on plates.

In a recent TV programme it was stated that scientists are worried about the speed of changes in our climate: By adopting a meat-reduced or meat-free diet, people could not only begin to reduce the environmental destruction already happening, but also enjoy a healthier life, save money, help the most impoverished people on earth and save millions of animals from a life of pain and misery.

Elizabeth Allison, Aylestone.

300908 Why rabbits should rule as pets

AGAIN the vegetarians try to save the world by forcing us to live like them. I have a better idea. With the exception of a few guide and guard dogs, most cats and dogs have no practical function and, as carnivores, eat a great deal of meat. Let's get rid of them. Anyone wanting a pet can have a herbivore such as a rabbit. I await the uproar in reply.

R C Kidd, Enderby.

061008 Cats are good mice-catchers

THE information in my letter concerning climate change, world poverty, obesity and animal welfare was obtained from scientific reports written by experts in their field (Mailbox, September 27).

RC Kidd (Mailbox, September 30), you obviously had no sensible arguments against my comments and, as is usual in such cases, resorted to frivolity. Taken to its logical conclusion, your argument to eliminate "most cats and dogs", which according to you have no practical function would exclude most of the animal kingdom from the Earth. By the way, you can borrow my cats if you're ever overrun with rats and mice!

Elizabeth Allison, Aylestone, Leicester.

271008 Virtues of vegetarianism

Thank you, Graham Stocks, for your letter "Eat low on the food chain" (Mailbox, October 13). I thought I as a lone voice.

A report by the UN stated that 40 million tonnes of grains would end world hunger. The amount of grain fed to animals in the West is 540 million-tonnes.

The Vegan Organic Trust says 70 per cent of all agricultural land in Britain is used to feed animals. Livestock grazing is not only causing deserts to spread, but also the felling of rainforests.

Almost the entire populations of India and China (two billion people) could be fed on the amount of vegetable protein used to feed the US beef herd. The World Cancer Research Fund said plant foods should be the focal point of our dinner plate.

These are facts, not the ramblings of an "extremist" vegetarian. I have found that many people seem "threatened" by the idea of a vegetarian diet and are unwilling to even consider a move from an animal-based diet.

It is hardly surprising. Go to most cafes and the only alternative to meat and fish are eggs and cheese. Plenty of veggie alternatives and meat substitutes are available, but in most mainstream restaurants, vegetarian options are minimal and often uninspiring. TV cookery programmes are biased towards animal-based meals. Where are the inventive vegetarian and vegan chefs? We are all brainwashed into thinking that the main constituent of any meal has to be meat, fish, dairy or eggs.

Vegan and vegetarian diets use up far less of the world's resources and help reduce greenhouse gases. Greater emphasis on a plant based diet is healthier, cost-effective, would help to alleviate world hunger and save millions of animals from a life of pain and misery. Why not give it a try? You might even like it! **Elizabeth Allison, Aylestone.**

291008 Bleak future

WHAT a lovely, uplifting and idyllic photograph of the flock of geese ("Geese's daily walk is good for a gaggle", , Mercury' October 20). However, there were two words in the last paragraph of the accompanying write-up which I found saddening; they were "plucking" and "processing"!

Elizabeth Allison, Aylestone.

071108 Deserving Benny is a prize pet

CONGRATULATIONS to Benny, the collie cross winner of your Prize Pet competition (Mercury, November 1).

He truly deserves this accolade after suffering the despicable cruelty of being abandoned. Congratulations also to the Leicester Mercury for promoting a competition which encourages pride in "real".pets rather than the poor specimens so often shown at Crufts and other hypocritical animal shows.

Elizabeth Allison, Aylestone.

141108 Horrified by animal cruelty

ONCE, again I am horrified at the cruelty inflicted on defenceless animals ("Rabbits dumped and left to die", Mercury, November 8).

I wonder how many other animals are not so lucky as to be found and end their lives in landfill sites. I can only assume that such barbaric actions are symptomatic of the selfish, "throw-away" attitude that prevails today. Pet ownership is not compulsory and there is plenty of advice available from animal welfare organisations about the caring for and responsibilities of having a pet.

There are also acceptable reasons and help available for re-homing pets. However, I doubt that the heartless and sadistic people who dumped the rabbits could possibly be bothered about animal welfare. Nor will they take any notice of the following quotation by St Francis of Assisi: "If you have any men who will exclude any of God's creatures from the shelter of compassion and pity, you will have men who will deal likewise with their fellow men." However, they might bear in mind, "As we sow, so shall we reap".

Elizabeth Allison, Aylestone.

Nov 2008 Missing stage in pupils education about food

When I saw school pupils tending pigs and read the accompanying article, "Life on the farm is child's play" (Mercury, November 21), I thought it was a great idea. Growing vegetables and looking after animals are valuable experiences. However towards the end of the article I read that the pigs are taken to slaughter and the cuts of meat are sold."

Surely there is a stage missing in the pupils' education. Might it also be a salutary lesson for them (and the rest of us for that matter) to visit a slaughterhouse in order to see whole process of how meat arrives on our plates?

Elizabeth Allison, Aylestone.

Dec 2008 Call of the wild

THE urbanisation of foxes is our fault, not their choice. Their natural habitat is being eroded and, as there is plentiful food in city streets, I suspect that the deliberate feeding of foxes by animal lovers makes no difference. I have seen foxes in my garden tucking into chips, hamburgers and sandwiches which have been thrown over my hedge!

Anne Duff said: "Foxes are wild animals' and should be treated accordingly". But let us remember that the pet rabbit is a domesticated wild animal which, given a choice, would probably prefer to freely run in the countryside and live in the safety of a burrow.

Elizabeth Allison, Aylestone.

Dec 2008 Pity the animals

I WHOLEHEARTEDLY agree. with Paddy O'Malley ("Making a travesty of Christmas", Mailbox November 27). He states that we should "love and care for our fellow man" and "be compassionate to those in distress".

However, I wonder if the noble sentiments of mercy, love, care and compassion extend to animals which are exploited, confined and slaughtered to end up on overfilled festive plates. There is no mercy or compassion in factory farms, where most of our meat is reared. We are content to leave the unpleasant tasks of meat production to others, but by consuming the flesh of animals, there is complicity in their slaughter.

During the season of peace and goodwill, we should consider the following quotation by Isaac Bashevis Singer: "When a human kills an animal for food, he is neglecting his own hunger for justice. Man prays for mercy, but is unwilling to extend it to others." It is a pity that we are unwilling to "be generous of heart, mind and spirit" to the millions of sentient creatures with whom we share this world..

Elizabeth Allison, Aylestone.

Dec 2008 Heartless thugs

ONCE again we have an instance of wanton cruelty to a vulnerable, defenceless animal. ("Farm prank leaves Oatie traumatised" Mercury Dec. 6). What possesses people to carry out such thuggish actions is beyond my comprehension except to say that they are heartless cowards. who must be mentally ill.

There are authoritative reports which provide evidence to show a definite correlation between cruelty to animals and cruelty to humans. The recent terrible cases of child cruelty surely makes it imperative that the perpetrators of the "prank" at Gorse Hill City Farm are caught and treated accordingly before their evil inclinations escalate.

Elizabeth Allison, Aylestone.

Dec 2008 Hunters Fail to show any compassion

CARDINAL Newman said of hunting that there is "something so very dreadful, so satanic in tormenting those who have never harmed us, who cannot defend themselves, who are utterly in our power and who have weapons neither of offence nor defence". I read with disgust about the Boxing Day hunts ("Boxing Day to see hunters in the pink", Mercury, December 24) The killing of animals for food is bad enough, but to take pleasure from the pursuit of a defenceless creature is a cowardly and despicable act. These pompous, red-coated barbarians belong to a past era. To describe a hunt as "a nice event" is what the Romans probably said of spectacles in the Colosseum. In his book, *Creatures of the Same God*, the Rev Professor Andrew Linzey describes fox hunting as an intrinsically objectionable act, a practical example of our failure to live generously after the example of Jesus".

I wonder how many of those participating in, or spectators of the hunt, listened to words of peace, love and compassion over the Christmas period?. Hypocrisy springs to mind, if they did.

Elizabeth Allison, Aylestone

Dec 2008 Mass slaughter for Christmas.

THREE unconnected articles in the Mercury (December 18) prompted me to consider some of the inconsistencies of our thoughts and actions. The first concerned a baby beaver nursed back to health by the loving care of staff at a wildlife centre. The second was advice to owners of pet rabbits from the RSPCA on taking care of them during the winter.

The third was an article with the headline "We will gobble up geese". I wondered why some animals are treated with care and compassion, and others are mere commodities. Earlier in the year, there was a public outcry when swans were shot with an air rifle, but there isn't a murmur at Christmas, at a time of peace and goodwill; at the mass slaughter of 10 million turkeys. On the one hand, much time, expertise and money is spent on some animals to keep them alive and healthy, while others are manipulated, abused and forced to live in misery just to end up on our plates. The greatest inconsistency is the overabundance, and overindulgence of dead animals to celebrate the birth of our Saviour, who obviously wasn't the saviour of many of the animals which share this Earth with us.

Elizabeth Allison, Aylestone

311208

Veggie is better still, Mr Vaz

I was interested to read that Keith Vaz is advising MPs to take a test for diabetes, particularly if they have the "slight problem" of being overweight ("Vaz makes health test call to MPs", Mercury December 22).

It is well documented that the chance of developing diabetes is increased fourfold if meat is eaten six or more times a week and people who follow a high-fibre vegetarian diet have just under half the chance of developing the disease. Although a vegetarian diet cannot guarantee that diabetes will never develop, the American Dietetic Association states that it is much less likely to lead to death in vegetarians compared with meat eaters and that a plant-based diet can also eliminate or reduce a diabetic's need for medication. These benefits are ascribed to a higher "intake of complex carbohydrates and lower weight among vegetarians.

The British Medical Association also states that "vegetarian's have lower rates of obesity, coronary heart disease, high blood pressure, large bowel disorders, cancers and gallstones". Professor Martin Wiseman, medical and scientific adviser at the World Cancer Research Fund, stated that the number of people suffering from cancer could double in the next 40 years. He said: "Today's children face a future blighted by the disease unless something is done to curb obesity."

So, come on, Mr Vaz, given the overwhelming medical evidence, the best thing you and your colleagues could do is adopt a sensible vegetarian or, better still, vegan diet and set a good example to everyone else. If anyone wants to learn more about a veggie way of "life. Leicestershire Vegetarian and Vegan Group can give helpful advice. For more information call 97786 175445 or visit www.leicesterveggies.org.uk

Eiizabet Allison, Aylestone.

230209

We must change our diet

Once again there is an article about the obesity problem ("Obesity crisis costs us £10 million every year", Mercury, February 16).

The solution suggested as to encourage people to take more exercise. While there are many benefits of increased physical activity for everyone, unless people also change their eating habits, weight loss is minimal. It takes a deficit of 3,500 calories to lose one pound in weight. Fifteen minutes of cycling uses about 100 calories.

People engage in mindless eating. Evidence of this can be seen in our streets littered with burger trays, chip wrappings and empty crisp and chocolate bar packets. It appears that the preparation and cooking of food, as well as sitting at a table to eat a meal, is going out of fashion. I read recently that many new apartments in New York don't have kitchens. All you need is a microwave to reheat your fat, salt and additive-laden ready meal.

Dining furniture is no longer a necessity, as people scoff in front of their-TVs or computers: At the same time, outlets producing fat laden fast foods announce profits and plans for expansion. Is it not time to get back to preparing and cooking our own meals and to eat more simply and cheaply on basic,

simple food? Cutting down on (or better still cutting out) meat and dairy produce is also a healthier diet, which is less likely to result in weight gain. Surely, a little time spent in the kitchen would result in less time spent in doctor and hospital waiting rooms.

Elizabeth Allison, Aylestone.

090209 Food and the eco-town plan

PAUL Harris objected to Pennbury on the grounds that the land is better used for growing food (Mailbox, January 28). I assume he means food for people. However, 70 per cent of all agricultural land in Britain is used to feed animals not people. He also stated that "the world supply of food will dry up" and it will while people continue to eat so much meat and dairy.

In 2006 more than a third of the two billion tons of grain produced worldwide was fed to animals. With the anticipated increase in population from current 6.5 billion to 9.5 billion and increased meat consumption in developing countries, the global demand for meat by 2070 will be between twice and three times its current level. While there have been many protests against eco-towns, I have yet to hear of protests against the use of land for animal grazing and growing food for them.

As well as livestock for meat and dairy being the second biggest cause of global warming, the farmed animal industry is a most destructive, wasteful, toxic, disease promoting food production system imaginable. I wholeheartedly agree with Paul Harris: we do need all the land there is for growing food, but the food has to be directly to feed people.

Elizabeth Allison, Aylestone.

170209 More food for thought

Elizabeth Allison (Mailbox February 9), makes some correct points about the need to reduce our consumption of meat and dairy products.

We need to make these changes if we are to be able to feed a world population of 9 billion people. Ms Allison implies, however, that this is an issue that is being ignored by all those opposing the Pennbury development, when arguing that we need to preserve greenfield land for growing food. This is not the case with Friends of the Earth.

Leicester. FoE have opposed Pennbury, among other reasons, because we believe that we should be making maximum use of empty properties and brownfield sites, before even considering further greenfield development. We, have adopted this position because of both the extra greenhouse gas emissions that would result from the change in land use and because we believe that we cannot afford to further reduce the land area available for food production.

We are also just launching major campaign about the need to reduce our consumption of meat and dairy products. Friends of the Earth are not arguing that we should stop meat and dairy production altogether, since some production uses land unsuitable for growing crops, or exploits resources that would otherwise be wasted; however, we cannot afford to continue devoting

larger and larger areas of land to growing crops to feed animals when the same area of land could support far more people if used to grow crops for direct human consumption. The same applies to the diversion of much of the catch from overexploited fisheries to the production of fishmeal, for animal feed. Malcolm Hunter, Leicester Friends of the Earth.

202009 Mixed farming. defended

Elizabeth Allison ("Food and the eco-town", Mailbox, February 9) is right that we may well have to change our eating habits in future as demand for grain continues to grow and possibly outstrip supply - as shown by large swings (both up and down) in grain prices over the last 18 months.

However, as farmers who believe in the benefits of mixed farming, we feel that she weakens her argument considerably by her extreme and sweeping statements. She describes livestock farming in the UK as "destructive, wasteful, toxic and disease-promoting. We feel such strong, inaccurate and over-simplistic views take no account of the many benefits that livestock farming brings and the very highest animal welfare standards that British farmers uphold. She also ignores the fact that there are many different systems of rearing animals. Some use land which could not grow crops, others use waste food products which cannot be eaten by humans.

Many of them provide for a diverse landscape with grass-fields which improve biodiversity and provide a break crop to improve soil structure and fertility. And, of course, many people prefer a countryside with live-stock, rather than wall-to-wall cropping. Food security is a major issue which politicians are beginning to recognise, after neglecting farming for many years. But let's try to keep the whole picture in view while we debate it.

Sandra and Anthony Herbert, Whetstone. .

020309 Farming: The greener alternative

Farmers Sandra and Anthony Herbert ask us to look at the whole picture when debating the impact of livestock farming (Mailbox February 20).

Sadly, they do not go on to complete this picture. It was the United Nations, which in its 2006 report, Livestock's Long Shadow, described livestock farming as "one of the top two or three most significant contributors to the most serious environmental problems at every scale, from local to global". The same report found that the global livestock industry contributes more greenhouse gasses than all the world's transport systems combined.

Organic livestock systems may go some way to improve local biodiversity, but a recent study at Bangor University found they actually result in higher greenhouse gasses emissions and therefore contribute more to climate change compared to intensive systems.

As for the alleged "high" welfare standards of British farmers, a poster by the British Pig Executive (BPE) was recently banned by the Advertising Standards Agency (ASA) after the BPE was asked to substantiate its claims of "high" welfare and could not. The ASA's ruling came shortly after a poster by the National Farmers Union on the subject of TB was banned on the grounds that it

was misleading. An absence of animal farming would not result in a countryside of "wall-to-wall cropping". As plant-based farming requires less land, more land would be available for genuinely biodiverse wildlife areas.

Today's countryside is artificial. I find the sight of cows hedged into a bare field, devoid of all stimuli and awaiting their slaughter date a very unappealing sight. While some land may be of a poorer quality and currently unsuitable for crops, that land would be better used for providing other materials such as timber, which the UK often imports than for livestock.

As livestock animals consume far more calories than they provide in meat and dairy products, the ratio for food production from animals will never be 1:1. Those who genuinely care about food security and biodiversity will move away from the consumption of animal products.

V Hunt Sheppard, Leicester.

020309 Why vegetarian diet is best way

WHILE animal welfare standards are higher in the UK than many other countries, the conditions of intensively farmed animals leave much to be desired. Some of the destructive elements of livestock farming are as follows:

An area the size of England and Scotland becomes desert every year as a result of grazing. Rainforests are felled at an alarming rate for the same reason and for the growing of animal feed. It is said that farmed animals are the second most important cause of global warming. The wasteful elements of livestock farming include water. It takes 9,680 litres of water to produce 1kg of beef (1kg of onions needs 140 litres). About 10kg of good-quality plant produce is needed to produce 1kg of meat.

The UN states the amount of grain needed to end world hunger is 40 million tonnes - 540 million tonnes are fed to animals in the West. The toxic issue includes acid rain. Animal dung is one of its major causes.

The Dutch are tackling their slurry problem by exporting some of their waste to Africa. In Britain alone, 4.5 billion litres of pesticides are used each year. The Soil Association states that 500 chemicals are used, many suspected of causing cancer. Vegetarians suffer 40 per cent less cancer deaths than meat eaters. The World Cancer Research Fund advises plant foods should be the focal point of our dinner plate, not meat and dairy. One wonders why.

Elizabeth Allison; Aylestone.

150409 I'm just passing on the facts about meat-eating

WENDY Warren suggests that because vegetarians eat eggs and dairy produce they don't care about animal welfare (Mailbox April 3). What nonsense! Her assumption that there will be an "adjustment" to the world population is an extraordinary statement. Is she suggesting we wait for a cataclysm to solve the world food problem?

Vegetarianism is often a stage prior to becoming vegan. Both diets provide sufficient protein and all necessary nutrients for good health as well as using far less of the world's resources. What evidence does she have to support her claim that most veggies don't eat soya?

The teeth, jaws, mouth and digestive system of humans have far more in common with those of herbivores than carnivores. Ms Warren's arguments are unconvincing, ill-informed and concerned only with finding fault.

I do not criticise meat-eaters. I pass on information to enable people to make educated choices. Ms Warren says she would continue to eat meat "by sheer cussedness". If current trends continue, future generations may not have that choice. She should be grateful to vegetarians and vegans, as their abstinence from meat will allow meat-eating to continue for longer!

Elizabeth Allison, Aylestone.

300309 Why we should be vegetarians

RATHER than argue the details in G A Wright's letter (Mailbox, March 24); the main reasons in favour of a vegetarian diet are as follows: Giving up meat is a healthier way of eating. The BMA has stated that: "Vegetarians have lower rates of obesity, coronary heart disease, high blood pressure, large bowel disorders, cancers and gallstones." A meat-eater's diet uses up more of the world's resources than that of a vegetarian. It is recognised that the current use of land, water and energy is not sustainable. The Government has stated that our diet will have to change.

While 37 per cent of the world's harvested grain is fed to animals raised for slaughter, tens of millions of people die annually from starvation and nearly a billion suffer from malnutrition. In many countries where there is lack of food, crops are grown to feed our animals.

The main reason given by vegetarians for adopting their diet is compassion for animals, which is obviously not high on a meat-eater's agenda. The Rev Professor Andrew Linzey said: 'Animals are God's creatures, not human property, nor utilities, nor resources, nor commodities, but precious beings in God's sight.' I have yet to read any reports which contradict the points I have made, but perhaps G A Wright could tell me about the benefits of eating meat, rather than criticising and ridiculing a vegetarian diet.

Elizabeth Allison, Aylestone.

280409 Making money from manipulation

I WAS dismayed at the Mercury for giving half a page of what I presume is free publicity to the Great British Circus, particularly as it featured a photograph of the elephants (Mercury, April 122).

For members of the audience to say children can learn about animals by watching them perform tricks is ridiculous. The only thing they learn about is the human desire to dominate, degrade and manipulate animals in order to make money. I agree with Paul Thomas ("Call to boycott animal circuses", Mail-box, April 21), and his comment 'Circuses: Yes. Animals: No':

Elizabeth Allison,- Aylestone.

020509 Let's get it right

I WISH that, when correspondents use quotations from letters, they would quote correctly. I said in a previous letter: "The teeth, jaws, mouth and digestive system of humans have far more in common with those of herbivores than

carnivores", not that human, digestive systems are in common with herbivores ("Healthy diet", Mailbox, April22).

L Swift says that the information I gave is largely false. It was from several sources, including The Comparative Anatomy of Eating, by Milton R Mills, MD, and Vegan Nutrition: Pure and Simple, by Michael Capor, MD. I would be interested to know the source of L Swift's information.

Elizabeth Allison, Aylestone,

070509 Veggie claims are challenged

IN RESPONSE to Elizabeth Allison's letter (Mailbox, May 2), my sources of information regarding human anatomy come from a degree in palaeobiology (which featured an, awful lot of comparative anatomy) and plain common sense. Humans have pointy canine teeth for a reason. And if we are supposed to be pure vegetarians, why then have we been consuming meat for a quarter-of-a-million years? Surely our bodies would refuse to digest it, or even keep it down?

Also, the sources Ms Allison cited (The Comparative Anatomy of Eating, by M R Mills, and Vegan Nutrition: Pure and Simple, by M Klaper) have not only had their over-simplistic and often plain false arguments refuted (as a simple Google search shows), they were also both written by vegetarian/vegans to promote a vegetarian/vegan lifestyle.

Perhaps using a non-biased source of information that isn't pushing an agenda would give a much clearer view of the situation? I am not arguing against Ms Allison's lifestyle choice; what she eats is her business. But I take issue at pseudo-scientific claims that humans are herbivorous. It's like claiming cigarettes cure cancer and exercise makes you fat. It's falsehood, misinformation, and should always be challenged. Beliefs should be promoted on their own intrinsic merits, not on outright lies.

L Swift, Coalville.

280509 There is an alternative to supporting this barbaric trade

AFTER National Vegetarian Week, last week, I thought your readers may be interested to know these facts. Statistics for the number of land animals killed for their meat (figures obtained from the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the meat hygiene service) showed increases for some species slaughtered.

A greater number of sheep, goats and farmed deer were slaughtered in 2008 compared with 2007. Figures for 2008 showed that over 16.5 million sheep, over 9,500 goats and over 6,000 deer were killed. Total number of cattle 2.6 million, pigs 9.5 million, chickens almost 800 million and turkeys 15 million stayed at similar levels.

The number of laying hens slaughtered when "spent" at around the age of one year had risen from 27.42 million killed in 2007 to over 28 million in 2008. Surely it makes you think when you read about the millions of animals that are killed for food when it is so unnecessary. Next time you pick up a piece of meat

to put in your shopping trolley ask yourself is their an alternative to supporting this barbaric trade?

Sue Daniels, Leicestershire Vegetarian/Vegan Group.

010609 I'm sick of being preached at

Am I the only reader who is sick and tired of reading your letters page regarding our meat-eating habit?

The latest offering (Mailbox, May 28) is from Sue Daniels of the Leicestershire Vegetarian/Vegan Group. Why do vegetarians and vegans need to belong to a group? Perhaps they feel marginalised or embarrassed about the fact that they don't eat meat and have to assemble in dark corners to indulge their passion.

As a meat-eater, and proud of it, I don't need to be told by the likes of Ms Daniels about the number of animals slaughtered to satisfy my omnivorous eating habits. As I understand it slaughterhouses are regulated and inspected by the Government so I'm sure any impropriety would soon be spotted. Of course, we hear stories about various incidents in slaughterhouses when an animal doesn't die at the first attempt but these things, whilst being regrettable, occasionally occur.

I have in the past been persuaded to try some of the "alternatives to meat and in all honesty there really is no comparison to a juicy, rare to medium steak with just a hint of blood running through it. So, Ms Daniels, and all of the other Veggies, let's get on with our lives, you eat what you like, I'll eat what I like and maybe we can live together in harmony.

John Wood, Glen Parva.

080609 Vegetarian option means much healthier lives

ONCE again the subject of vegetarianism arouses anger ("I'm sick of being preached at", Mailbox June 1).

John Wood asks why vegetarians and vegans need to belong to a group. Why do people belong to any group or society? He says he is "proud" to be a meat-eater. What is there to be proud of? Is meat-eating an achievement? As for the regulation of slaughter houses by the Government being a guarantee that improprieties are soon spotted, we all trust the Government implicitly not to allow improprieties don't we? I have read numerous books and research papers about health and nutrition by eminent scientists, doctors and health organisations. All agree that a plant-based diet is beneficial to health and that we should at least reduce our consumption of meat and dairy products.

William C Roberts, MD, editor of the American Journal of Cardiology us: Although we think we are one, and act as if we are one, human beings are not natural carnivores. When we kill animals to eat them, they end up killing us.

So, Mr Wood, enjoy your "juicy, rare to medium steak" while we veggies enjoy our, much healthier lives!

Elizabeth Allison, Aylestone.

120609 Stop this veggie propaganda

I AM really sick and tired of Elizabeth Allison, of Aylestone, being awarded a regular position on the letters page to promote her idealistic world of total vegetarianism for us all.

Why is this minority group and particularly this person given this level of promotion by the editor? Might it be that the editor is a veggie too or is he related in some way?

Let's be fair - enough has been printed on this subject of veggies versus omnivores!

Nothing Elizabeth writes is going to have any impact on us omnivores, whose teeth, digestive system and organs we all have in common, including vegetarians such as herself.

She bases her "facts" on papers written and published by a very tiny few "learned" people with whom she attempts to discredit the research of a far greater number of internationally-recognised and respected scientists who disagree with the fact that we were "designed to be vegetarians".

Time to change newspapers, I think, for one whose editor is impartial.
Ray Watson, Leicester.

220609 Vegetarian minority should not be ignored

IN RESPONSE to Ray Watson, I am neither related to nor know the dietary preferences of the editor ("Stop this veggie propaganda", Mailbox, June 12).

The fact that vegetarians are a minority does not mean they should be ignored. He obviously considered health, ecological and environmental issues, animal welfare and food for the developing world, all of which are addressed by a vegetarian diet, as unimportant.

Mr Watson says that nothing I write "is going to have any impact on us omnivores". I am well into middle-age and have only been a veggie for two years, information I read about vegetarianism certainly changed my diet.

Mr Watson discredits the "facts" I refer to by doctors, health organisations and scientists but does not supply any facts or name any internationally recognised and respected scientists to support his opinions. Does he consider the British Medical Association, the Lancet, World Cancer Research Fund, World Health Organisation (to name a few) as "a very tiny few learned people"?

If Mr Watson is open-minded I suggest he reads "The China Study" by T Colin Campbell, which is the most comprehensive study of health and nutrition ever conducted. Dr Campbell was a farmer's son and a meat-eater who, as a result of his research adopted a plant-based diet. Could Mr Watson recommend any publications to support his point of view?

Vegetarianism challenges the status quo and is therefore controversial. Dr Campbell writes: "Sustaining controversy as a means of discrediting findings that cause economic or social discomfort is one of the greatest sins of science."

Elizabeth Allison, Aylestone.

Letter string to the Hull Mail by Eileen Girling

081108

No Title

Dear Sir, The mainstream church limits its love to humans while at the same time singing all creatures of our God and king and all things bright and beautiful and other such like hymns, but yet not speaking out for the millions of these creatures abused relentlessly every day in research labs and on intensive farms and by other man made evils. So I agree with your correspondent that the church needs to change, though I would suspect that this is a change that David Treacher has not taken into account but it needs to involve all Gods creatures in its everyday prayers and to show concern and to speak up for all life on earth which traditionally it has failed to do.

Some years ago the church spoke out against stem cell research because they are human cells but they never speak out for fully grown animals undergoing research., I wrote a poem about this . It is this two faced attitude that has caused a great many believers to leave the church. How do I know ? Well I belong to four different well established vegetarian Christian groups (and there are many more) whose many thousands of members have left the mainstream church through its said lack of concern for all life .They, like me , have been deeply disappointed at its limitations. There is a wonderful Reverend, James Thompson of Wales, nicknamed the 'animals padre' and if he had a church locally it would be pretty full as he shows concern for all creatures. His newsletters are wonderful and lifting and can be found on the web under 'Christians against all animal abuse'. **Eileen Girling.**

131208 The RSPCA and the BBC boycotting crufts dog show

Dear Sir, Emma Milnes the T V vet. is now saying that it is time that we stopped genetically modifying pedigree dogs into a collection of deformed animals whose welfare is compromised from the moment they are born. I absolutely agree and I had a similar letter published in your paper over 40 years ago but it is only recently that I have seen any condemnation of the deliberate cruelty involved in the making of pedigree dogs.

I am doubly pleased therefore that the RSPCA is boycotting Crufts next year and so it should, as it stands to prevent cruelty to animals and as pedigree dogs are deliberately man made through selective breeding their action is well overdue, and I am pleased also that the BBC is pulling out of televising crufts. The dogs in Crufts dog show have aptly been termed a parade of mutants and this is precisely what they are as they have been bred using the mutations that occur in the DNA of all living things . Most mutations are detrimental to the species and so are mostly not good news. I think all breeders should have to study at least even basic genetics when they want to interfere with the dog world using unnatural incestuous matings .

Many do not fully understand how recessive mutated genes can double up when using such inbreeding, even to the extent of saying (on the axed soapbox) that grandparent to grandchild in not inbreeding when anyone of any intelligence knows of course that it is . At the end of the day we do not have to

have pedigree dogs. They are unnaturally manmade. What is wrong with the more natural mongrel. The homes are full of these mutts all waiting for someone take them on. **Eileen Girling.**

280409 The downward spiral of animal cruelty continues

YOUR caring correspondent, Bert Greaves, is right to say that cruelty to animals is our eternal shame. I also agree with him that killing an animal is murder (People's Voice, April 22).

Brutality is brutality. Today we have kicked nature aside and brought in materialism and so we continue on our downward spiral. In the end, nothing will gain. Children should be taught at home that all species matter and suffer, but sadly many are not taught this and grow up to abuse animals, which can then lead to abusing people. I am 68 and I have fought (in so many ways) for a better, fairer deal for all animals since being a child. But I am very often left to feel downhearted at people's negative comments and see cruelty is all around us, which continues to get worse.

The agonies caused to battery hens and the intensive farming methods performed on other living creatures are totally unnecessary (because of the great protein myth), yet people still buy the products of this mass cruelty. The shops are full of chemicals to kill this, kill that, which kills lots more species too (for example, birds). A beautiful garden? I do not see that when living creatures have been systematically poisoned to make this totally unnatural garden.

Mass cruelty is the order of the day. I do not have all the answers, but I do know that suffering is suffering, whatever the species. Thank you, Mr Greaves, for your concern for all species.

Eileen Girling

THE MAIL SAYS

Research has shown people who commit acts of cruelty against animals often move on to their fellow humans. People who abuse animals must be stopped before it leads on to tragedy.

040509 Reply to Dr Dawes letter mail May 2nd on animal testing

Dear Sir, Re the letter "Make concerns known about animal testing" Mail May 2nd by Dr Dawes. In March of this year I emailed Graham Stuart to inquire what he was doing about animal experiments and intensive farming. I received the usual standard letter that "until some thing more reliable came along then animal tests must continue."

I then wrote again asking Mr Stuart which kind of animal he thought was a reliable model for a human. I then received a further reply that said that, quote " I have no expert knowledge but am led to believe that for now they remain the best tests" Your response "I am led to believe" are really appreciated by me, Mr Stuart, because they are an honest admittance so thank you!!

If only our M.P's and the pro vivi public would study things out for themselves and not allow themselves to "be led to believe" by the Mega vested interests companies. We should never listen to vested interests and expect to

get the truth!!! Dr Dawes writes that poisoning, maiming and murdering animals in meaningless tests is useless as animals and humans have a different biology. How very true and logical, a point which thousands of doctors are now bringing out. But I have been saying that for years. In fact all species differ in biology but even further is the fact that all individuals differ within a species as all are unique, with the exception of identical twins, triplets etc as all react to drugs and other things in an individual way ,even within close relatives and so it infuriates me that the protests public can dismiss all grotesque experiments collectively by grouping all non human species as one group of animals by that well known illogical statement that humans benefit, as humans do not.

Testing drugs on animals is totally misleading and dangerous for humans and thousands die yearly from such drugs, passed as safe in animal tests. Where are the comments from the pro vivisection people on this? Manmade chemicals are a "modern" day evil, we demand them for all sorts of reasons then experiment on other innocent creatures on the pretext of human good. Chemicals are bad news. Animal experiments are a cover for the mega rich drug businesses, in court they cannot lose!!

By the way I was asked what the difference was between a test and an experiment on our local radio way back. There is no difference. A test is an experiment, yet test sounds better. Whatever word is used, believe me hell exists in those labs. Look on the anti vivi websites. Read all the anti vivi books by honest doctors and scientists!!

As Dr. Dawes wrote "it is only when caring people rise up and demand a change to current animal suffering that things will change. My final plea is also to those who are not concerned about all the differing species suffering but say they are concerned for humans. You should get out there and fight against vivisection for humans too,as the lab hell is killing and maiming them every day. The world will one day look back on vivisection with disbelief, that is if this planet is still in existence which is doubtful unless mankind alters his ways.

Eileen Girling.

010509 Misguided, even dangerous posturing'

THE letter from Eileen Girling in the Mail, April 28, stood out for its fatuousness.

Ms Girling has long taken the advocacy of "animal rights" to an absurd extent, but her implicit criticism of gardeners who use slug pellets, pesticides and who knows what else, because they might kill a few birds, reaches a new depth. "Suffering is suffering, whatever the species" - is it really, Ms Girling? Ants? Slugs? Woodlice? Earwigs? Even the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) do not, so far as I know, claim that insects feel pain. And if they do, well, tough!

In a world where thousands of human beings die untimely and dreadful deaths from the effects of war, disease and malnutrition, Ms Girling's repetitive posturing is not only misguided, but actively dangerous. Far from raising animals to the level of humans in people's minds, she and her like reduce humans

to the level of animals. She says she has fought for a better, fairer deal for all animals since being a child. Madam, you have wasted your life.

MP Taylor Woodlands Road, Hull

030509 Reply to M P Taylor Fri May 1st

Dear Sir, Please may I do a Pete Allan (no offence Pete) and be allowed my right of reply to the verbal attack on me by M P Taylor of Hull ,Mail May 1st. Wow! unbelievable stuff!! I am misguided, dangerous and I have wasted my life. All this because I fight for those who cannot fight for themselves, those other creatures who share this planet with us and rely on us to care.

Those who fought to end slavery were attacked in the same ways as "animal people" are nowadays raising the human issues to insinuate that we do not care about our own species .

It is well known that it is the so called animal people that having compassion, show's more concern for humans too . Some facts M P Taylor, Peta do claim that insects etc feel pain but do you really need them to? Isnt it obvious to you. All creatures are built from the same DNA, laid out in a different plan and Yes to answer your scornful "is it really" of course suffering is suffering for all living creatures. It is logic not peta that teaches me such facts. Trouble is humans have used and abused all other species, and still do, including other humans that they are thought of as of little consequence just like the slaves were and as being here for our use. It is true that thousands of humans die untimely deaths from war, disease and malnutrition, it is also true that it is the selfishness of other humans that cause all this.

The very chemicals that you attack me for mentioning cause most modern diseases , factory farming is a leading cause of untimely deaths from starvation mentioned but it is millions a year ,not thousands. There is enough food on earth for all if we changed to vegetarianism Garden chemicals do harm to everything, millions of beneficial creatures as well as the target ones and it is not "might kill a few birds", they kill thousands yearly. The whole interconnect-edness of nature in the garden and elsewhere is suffering ,"your"chemicals ending up in the waterways. There is a chemical onslaught, like I said, kill this, kill that and it is ruining the earth.

Apart from the dreadful slow death of poisoned creatures (yes I do care and always will) it causes problems also for the human beings which you bring into the equation and the saturation of our chemical world needs to stop. All the running in the world to help cancer research is useless. We need to look at the chemical causes instead of cures and work from there. Chemicals are mega business and are ruining the planet. If the world became a kinder fairer place to all creatures then I would not have to be repetitive would !! Finally because of lack of space allowed why is it M P Taylor that it is to an absurd extent to care about the suffering of slugs, earwigs ants etc. No creature on this earth is as worthless as you believe it is and nothing on this earth should suffer, especially if mankind can stop that suffering. I see no wrong in that. and I will always fight for what I believe is right regardless of putdowns like yours. ,which as I said are to be expected in this unfeeling world. **Eileen Girling.**

May 2009 We must work with nature, not against it

REGARDING Mr Taylor's letter in reply to Eileen Girling's ("The downward spiral of animal cruelty continues").

Misguided, even dangerous, posturing. I do not live in your area, but happened to see these letters in your paper. How dare Mr Taylor pass judgment on kindness and compassion, for that is what Ms Girling is trying so hard to get over. All nature has a part to play in mother earth. Where would we be without the lowly worm, for instance, who oxygenates the soil that growing things need. Ms Girling is right -this business of killing everything that gets in our way, even our own kind, human beings, is the root cause of misery in this world. We need more compassion and understanding and respect of the role played by all living things. We need to be good stewards of God's creation and work with nature, not against it. MP Taylor's attitude is deplorable. I would suggest the life wasted is his own, not Ms Girling's, as he thinks. I say God bless her for speaking out.

PE Flanders

Letters to the Beverley Guardian from Eileen Girling

141208

BBC withdrawel from Crufts

Dear Sir, I am so pleased that the BBC are to withdraw the televising of Crufts dog show in 2009. This, following the RSPCA condemnation and that of several famous t v vets and the famous geneticist Steve Jones is long overdue. How the deliberate genetic modification of pedigree dogs through selective breeding has been allowed to continue, unchecked for all these years is beyond comprehension in a so called dog loving country. The breeders have produced so many deformed shapes and sizes in dogs that we have huge dilemmas regarding their welfare in most breeds. It is so wrong to deliberately produce dogs with all manner of serious problems including being unable to give birth vaginally and being unable to breathe correctly. Crufts is disgusting to parade all these animals ,created from mutations, as wonderful specimens of their breed. I was watching this years Crufts when a large terrier was said to be "a marvellous specimen of its breed." Marvellous? With hair growing over its eyes obstructing its sight poor dog!! Eyes are to see with clearly and not through a lot of unnatural hair growth. Yet this is nothing compared with the serious modifications bred into our pedigree dogs. The queen is said to be a dog lover. What dog lover would deliberately produce dwarf dogs with their inherent spinal health problems. Corgi means dwarf dog in Welsh. I often see pedigree dogs advertised as from champion stock and I get annoyed at the deceit as that does not necessarily mean a thing. The "champion" parent or parents named may have won "championships "according to the breed standards set but no one knows exactly what it is carrying in its genes (its genotype) just like two human parents can win a good looking contest they can also both be carriers of the cystic fibrosis gene and so can produce a C F offspring. Many breeds should be banned and allowed to become extinct as they are now more unnatural than ever and are suffering all their lives for mankind's whims the pedigree dog world is out of control. **Eileen Girling.**

180209

Battery Hens and our local BBC radio

Dear Sir, A very compassionate lady called Jo of The Little Hen Rescue in Norfolk ,who has rescued several thousand battery hens was being interviewed by Peter Levy on his BBC Radio humberside show of Feb. 17th. Jo was telling Peter of the stress suffered by the battery hens during their trauma of incarceration in their battery cages and Peter asked her, "How do we know they're not happy though".. So on behalf of the voiceless battery hen, may I please use some logic to answer this question,. Imagine being a battery hen, packed into a cage with 3 and sometimes 4 others. No sunlight, no fresh air, no running, no walking, no scratching around in the earth, no dust bathing ,no bedding ,no stretching of wings or whatever no normality whatsoever ,Instead squashed into a small cage ,subjected to all that the battery hen undergoes in its prison. It is certainly not possible for these creatures to be happy. And for what? Cheap and plentiful eggs, a "food" we can do without. There can be no question that such creatures as these are suffering hellish conditions. I sometimes wonder who is the "luckiest" as on hatching the males, the brothers of these hens,are simply discarded like refuse,(as they are not bred for meat) either gassed or fed alive into a large mincer ,my conclusion being that these fluffy male yellow chicks fare better than their sisters.!! Soon it will be Easter and fluffy yellow chicks will be placed all around to gasps of " oohh" What a farce this is .I was reminded during Peters illogical question to this compassionate lady Jo of some years ago on Countryfile of a very compassionate anti battery young man (They are not all bad) who visited a battery unit and the lady owner told him the hens were happy or they would not lay. Well chickens do not lay unfertilised eggs naturally, they have been genetically modified or altered through selective breeding by mankind to lay as they do. The whole reproduction process does not stop because of unhappiness ,especially when it has been selected for. People could stop the battery hen tomorrow by buying free range or simply by cutting eggs from their diet. After all they are not a natural food,,eggs are a home for a chicken embryo to grow in. I read some years ago that 85 per cent of people disagree with battery eggs and yet 79 per cent of people bought battery eggs, proving that human actions speak louder than words We are living in a very cruel world and I believe modern man has no compassion, as if he had, we would not tolerate all the abuses of living creatures. Also where is the voice of the churches in this.

Eileen Girling.

110309

Childrens intelligent questions

Dear Sir, One of my grandchildren asked me "how can animal drug testing improve the lives of humans ?" (Out of the mouths of babes!) . I said that it cannot and that too many people allow themselves to be brainwashed by the establishment that these tests are necessary for human good. Think for yourself I told her ,is a dog a good model for humans ,or is it a cat?. Or perhaps a mouse, a cavy, a rabbit or one of countless other species used in labs., because most people classify them all as one species for this argument ,as in animals v humans .. The answer I said is none of them are. I said that even another human

being, even if related is not a good model for another person because we are all unique and that we all react differently to substances. I said that those who say that animal tests help humans are not thinking things out logically, and that it is well overdue that those people thought it all out for the whitewash that it is, as a high number of people die in this country everyday through the side effects of drugs taken that have been passed as safe in animal tests, which rather proves the point that all creatures are different and so are individuals within a species.
Eileen Girling.

Evening Telegraph

Burgers for the poor? That's hard to swallow

IT IS vary laudable that St Nicholas church, Nuneaton, is helping the 'destitute', but burgers from McDonalds? In the Bible it says 'thou shalt not kill', which must include animals. I'm afraid that I cannot adhere to any religion which condones slaughtering animals for food.

In July 1990 the General Synod called for an investigation into hunting and factory farming on church-owned land, but the pro-hunting members created such a fuss that the wishy-washy motion called on the people to engage in the ethical review of human responsibility to the living environment.

I've no doubt the hunting/shooting/fishing fraternity are still to be found there now. So come on Church, pull your fingers out and be a little more outspoken against vivisection/factory farming/trapping/zoo's etc and follow the examples of Ezekiel, Daniel and Isaiah, who were all vegetarian. If anyone is interested, there is a vegetarian Christian group called The Fellowship of Life based in Bangor. **Jeff Thorburn**

231108

The Enquirer

Dear Sir, With reference to your article in your newspaper dated 20th November 'why o why' do people get so enraged at the phrase "behaving, like animals". Of course it is meant to be an insult but it should not be. I only wish people did behave like animal. It would. be a much safer, kinder world if we did. Most of the major problems with life are caused by the human species — muggings, rape, murder, need I go on. The way we treat animals is absolutely appalling. We treat them as mere objects, here just for our convenience, to be exploited for our own selfish ends.

How many people are there who ever pause and think of the terrible suffering we cause them. Some do, of course, and act according but they are in the minority. A prime example is our eating habits. The dairy cow -- We take away her baby calf when only a day or so old, so that we can steal her milk. The poor calf is then shot or sent abroad for incarceration for the veal trade. The suffering caused to both is unimaginable.

"We have enslaved the rest of the animal creation, and treated our distant cousins in fur and feather so badly, beyond doubt, if they were able to formulate a reunion they would depict the Devil in human form". William Ralph Inge (Dean of St. Paul's). There are so many alternatives to animal based diets in the Supermarkets today it is so easy to go "Cruelty Free". **Name withheld**

150509

Ipswich Evening Star - Politics

One evening last week I watched the news on TV and sat through an item on the day in parliament: it was described as "bruising". I was sickened by the atmosphere in the chamber of mutual loathing, hatred and contempt displayed by our elected elite, nowhere any suggestion that these people are supposed to act in the best interests of the country as a whole. How can M.P.'s be surprised when so many people choose to believe that they are dishonest?

If historians of the future show such recordings to their students, what impression will they have of the society which could send such specimens of humanity to Westminster?

Last month in Germany I found an article in a newspaper written a few decades ago by Wilhelm Röpcke, a political commentator: "A true ruling élite would adopt a position above class interests and the passions, vices and foolishness of the people. The members of this élite would distinguish themselves by their exemplary, slowly maturing life of renunciation and achievement for the whole of society, leading lives of impeccable integrity, subduing base appetites, demonstrating the maturity of their judgement, with spotless private lives and unshakeable courage when standing up for truth and justice." How many of our current politicians could say that they fulfil such expectations?

John Shirley

071008 - Brigitte Bardot writes to Sarah Palin, Governor of Alaska

Governor, More than two years ago, I contacted your predecessor to denounce the cruelty of aerial wolf hunting. Today I am shocked to learn that you firmly support this cowardly practice, both morally and financially.

Your fight to keep polar bears off the Endangered Species list even though they are threatened by global warming demonstrates your total irresponsibility, your inability to protect or even respect animal life, but it's true that for you, a good animal is a dead one!

By campaigning for drilling for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, you are putting an already fragile habitat at risk, as well as all the biodiversity of a sensitive area that must absolutely be preserved.

Governor, by denying man's responsibility for global warming, by being a proponent of the right to bear arms and shoot anything that moves, by making numerous declarations of alarming stupidity, you bring shame upon women and represent, all on your own, a terrible threat, a true ecological catastrophe.

Defending life means showing compassion for all the beings that populate this ailing earth. Since we are only on this earth for a short time, think of what you are leaving behind for future generations...

To finish, I beg you to no longer refer to yourself as a 'pit bull with lipstick', since I can assure you that no pit bull, no dog, nor any other animal is as dangerous as you.

In the name of the respect and preservation of nature, I hope that you lose this election, because then the whole world will win!

Brigitte Bardot (No, she is not a member of CVAUK but an interesting letter)

A Note for your Diary. Remembrance Day Service for Animals 2009

Hello, I am writing to let you know about a Remembrance Day service which will be held at The Animals in War Memorial, Brook Gate, Park Lane, on the edge of London's Hyde Park, which was unveiled by Princess Anne on 24 November 2004 to remember the millions of animals, including horses, which have been killed in conflict while serving their country.

In 2006 Cynthia O'Neil went to the Memorial on Remembrance Sunday and there was no one else there. In 2007 she went again and only one other person turned up, so she decided to do something about it.....

This year's remembrance service for animals will be held at the Memorial on November 8th at 10.30 am. Marble Arch is the nearest tube station.

I am writing to ask if you would kindly put a notice in your newsletters and on your website to announce this event, so that anyone who can attend will join us.

It would also be good to get some media attention, to make people aware of the sacrifice so many innocent creatures have made throughout the centuries for mankind. And are still making. Yet it is paramount that this Remembrance Service needs to be observed with dignity, reverence and respect for those who sacrificed their lives. And with appropriate moments of silence. This event must not become a rallying point for animal activists to shout the loudest for their own cause.

Purple poppies and wreaths will be available from Animal Aid nearer to the time at a cost of around £10, I believe. Visit: www.animalaid.org.uk email: info@animalaid.org.uk I do hope you will advertise what could become an annual national salute to this forgotten sacrifice. Vickie Nealis

A BIG THANK YOU

To all those members who sent in letters over the past few months. They are excellent and should be a great encouragement to us all. Please use the enclosed arguments to write your own letter to either the Christian or secular press. Please send copies of letters (published or unpublished) to CVAUK, together with the letter or article that prompted your response, and any answers. Please send good black/white copies to assist accurate scanning into my computer. Don

Atrocities are not less atrocities,
when they occur in laboratories and
are called medical research.
George Bernard Shaw

If one dreams alone, it is just a dream.
If many dream together.
It is the beginning of reality

CVAUK members names are bold .
(All items in boxes submitted by **Debbie Sparkes**)