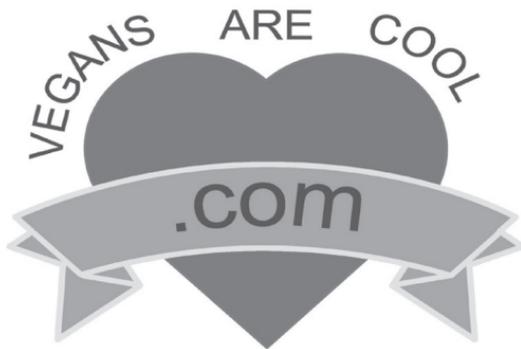


Vegans Are Cool

**A delicious collection of essays, interviews
and articles by cool vegans from around the planet**



Compiled by Kathy Divine

Vegans Are Cool is a series of papers submitted by, and interviews conducted with, vegans from throughout the world.

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Please consult the appropriate well-informed health professional if you are contemplating making a lifestyle or dietary change.

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*To all the beautiful people who contributed to the book,
and to our precious animal co-inhabitants.
May all animals live in peace and freedom very soon.*



Amanda has been an Accredited Practising Dietitian and Nutritionist specialising in vegan nutrition since 1992. She has been a vegan since 1983 and her two grown-up children are lifelong vegans. She can be contacted via <www.humanherbivore.com> or amanda@humanherbivore.com.

Vegan Veterinarians, Andrew Knight and Randall Cannon

Interview with Andrew Knight BSc., BVMS, PhD, CertAW, MRCVS, FOCAE

Australian bioethicist Andrew Knight is a ridiculously busy bloke. He is a Fellow of the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics, which is dedicated to advancing the ethical status of animals through academic research, teaching and publication; the Director of Animal Consultants International, which provides multidisciplinary expertise for animal issues; and a Spokesperson for Animals Count, a British political party for people and animals. Andrew also practises veterinary medicine in London.

Not all Andrew's ventures have been successful, however. Whilst attempting to relax he founded the Extreme Vegan Sporting Association to showcase vegan fitness. Unfortunately, this resulted in risks to life and limb from which he has yet to fully recover.

Andrew has produced over 50 scientific publications on animal issues. His key publications can be found at <www.AndrewKnight.info> and include a major series examining the contributions to human health-care of

animal experiments. These have attracted several awards at international scientific conferences, and formed the basis for his 2010 PhD. They also provided the foundations for his 2011 book *The Costs and Benefits of Animal Experiments*.

Andrew's other publications have examined the contributions of the livestock sector to climate change, vegan companion animal diets, the animal welfare standards of veterinarians, and the latest evidence about animal cognitive and related abilities and the resultant moral implications. His informational websites include <www.AnimalExperiments.info>, <www.HumaneLearning.info> and <www.VegePets.info>.

Andrew has also authored more than 30 popular publications. The most interesting concern the medicine and husbandry of supposedly mythical animals. As the world's most published veterinarian in this esoteric field, he is well on the way to becoming the first registered specialist in Veterinary Cryptozoology (Dip. Crypt.), specialising in the medicine and surgery of animals considered extinct or otherwise non-existent by (regrettably closed-minded) mainstream biologists.

To date, Andrew's studies have taken him to Loch Ness, remote alpine summits, Ireland and even London's eminent College of Psychic Studies. The

outstanding success of most of these trips has been only marginally diminished by the unfortunate absence to date of any of the creatures he has actually sought. Nevertheless, he remains determined to bring the benefits of modern medicine to the rarest and most wonderful of the world's creatures, no matter how many mountains he must climb, snowfields he must ski or tropical islands he must search, and no matter how much time he must — with the deepest of regrets — take off work. Andrew's travel adventures have been extensively chronicled in British veterinary journals, and his photos and stories are available via <www.AndrewsAdventures.info>.

Andrew why did you first become an animal advocate?

When I was eight, my parents gave me a book about baby animals. I looked at the pictures of baby deer and other animals, and announced I was going vegetarian. My parents smiled. It would only last a week, they thought.

A decade later, I was still vegetarian — but I didn't trouble myself to learn or think too deeply about the issues until my early twenties. I was appalled at what was being done to people and animals around the world and rapidly became first a human-rights and then an animal-rights activist.

When I was 23, I started dating a veterinary nurse. We both went vegan in an attempt to impress each other with our ethics. Unfortunately, I also had to ditch the non-vegan sweet collection I'd been building up for years, which by then occupied a substantial portion of my kitchen. The demands of romance can be merciless.

Tell us about your pathway since.

For the next several years, I alternated between studying, working, travelling and campaigning about animal rights and other issues. I'd always thought it was who you were and what you did that were important, not what job you held. Nevertheless, it began to frustrate me when I was repeatedly asked in radio interviews what I did for a living. Once I realised that people judge the merits of your arguments by things such as your appearance and qualifications, I began to seriously wonder if I should try to get into a profession.

I considered a number of professions, but becoming a veterinarian seemed likely to enable me to advocate most effectively for animals. I was also attracted to a job that would enable me to do a great deal of good in my day to day work, and that would enable me to travel and to financially support myself and my campaigns.

And so I returned to school, studied hard and made it into Western Australia's Murdoch University veterinary course. I had the vague idea that parts of my training might involve doing nasty things to animals, as well as a vague idea that humane alternatives probably existed elsewhere, but I was ignorant of the details of either.

Soon enough, I found myself drawn into a titanic struggle to win the right for students to 'conscientiously object' to harmful animal use and for implementation of humane teaching methods. By the end of my course, in 2001, Murdoch had become the first Australian university to formally allow student conscientious objection. Almost all of our invasive animal-physiology laboratories had been terminated and we'd established our first humane veterinary surgical training program.

I continued to support students across Australasia and abroad, and by 2005, several other universities had implemented humane teaching methods and conscientious-objection policies, and the first students had graduated from every Australian veterinary school without killing animals during their surgical training.

After graduation, I worked briefly for several US animal-protection organisations. Some commissioned me to conduct studies to examine the human clinical or toxicological efficacy of invasive animal research.

I continued that research for about a decade, until the present time. It has resulted in a large number of published scientific studies and conference presentations, my 2010 PhD, and my book on animal experiments.

Tell us more about your book on animal experiments.

The Costs and Benefits of Animal Experiments was published in 2011 by Palgrave Macmillan as part of an advanced series of at least 15 texts on animal ethics being produced by the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics. It combines more than a decade of research, analysis and experience in order to provide evidence-based answers to the key question: is animal experimentation ethically justifiable?

The book expands on my PhD, which critically assessed the human clinical and toxicological utility of animal experimentation. It includes over 500 scientific references, and relies on large-scale systematic reviews as its primary form of evidence. Within the medical and scientific worlds these are considered to provide ‘gold-standard’ evidence about clinical or research questions, because they pool a large amount of data and aim to minimise sources of bias. The book also comprehensively reviews alternative research, testing and educational strategies.

When considering costs and benefits overall, and particularly, the published studies examining the human clinical or toxicological utility of animal research, one cannot reasonably conclude that the benefits accruing to human patients or consumers, or to those motivated by scientific curiosity or profit, exceed the costs incurred by animals subjected to scientific procedures. On the contrary, the evidence indicates that actual human benefit is rarely — if ever — sufficient to justify such costs.

I very much hope my book will be widely consulted by students, scientists and policy-makers concerned with animal research and alternatives. One of my deepest hopes is it will be included in university libraries wherever life and health sciences or philosophy courses are offered. The book can be ordered via <www.Palgrave.com>.

You’re a Spokesperson for Animals Count, a UK political party for animals. What are the party’s aims?

Whilst broad concern for animals is certainly a mainstream priority, unfortunately this is poorly reflected in the policies of most political parties in the UK and elsewhere. Animal protection often ends up near the bottom of the political agenda. Meanwhile, millions of animals continue to suffer in unacceptable conditions.

Animals Count is a UK political party for people and animals, established in 2006. We branched off from the Dutch Party for the Animals, which was the world's first party to achieve electoral success. As of 2011, they had 23 politicians elected at national, provincial and local levels. Animals Count has received thousands of votes in British elections but has not had any candidates elected yet, a fact that's partly attributable to the UK political system, which discriminates against minor parties.

However, we aim to encourage or pressure other political parties — some of whom do have real power — to incorporate more animal-friendly policies within their own manifestos. We seek to engage them in dialogue, and we also contest seats, particularly in constituencies in which a small number of votes can determine the outcome. Losing votes to Animals Count helps other parties understand the need to better represent animal interests.

Similar parties for the animals exist in Germany, Austria, France, Spain, Portugal, Israel, Canada, and Australia (the Animal Justice Party). Some other parties and leaders — particularly the Greens — also have good policies for animals. Unfortunately however, this is far from uniform. While inconsistencies remain, dedicated political parties such as Animals Count will continue to represent the interests of animals within the political realm.

Why do you advocate vegan diets for companion animals?

Many people have become vegan for the sake of the animals, the environment, or their health. This has done an enormous amount of good. However, most of these caring people still continue to feed their companion animals meat-based diets, which achieves opposite effects. They do this out of fear of adverse health consequences of vegan diets, and ignorance of how these might be avoided. Accordingly, I created www.VegePets.info, which reviews in detail the health and nutritional aspects of vegan and commercial meat-based diets for companion animals.

The health hazards for dogs and cats (and, of course, for 'food' animals) inherent within commercial meat-based companion animal diets are numerous and difficult to avoid. Such diets provide an industrial dumping ground for abattoir waste products, meat considered unfit for human consumption, such as that obtained from animals who arrive dead, dying, diseased or disabled (4-D animals) at the abattoir; old or spoiled supermarket meat; large numbers of rendered dogs and cats euthanized in animal shelters in countries such as the US; old restaurant grease, complete with high concentrations of dangerous free radicals and trans fatty acids; and damaged or spoiled fish, complete with dangerous levels of mercury, PCBs and other toxins.

These diets may contain pathogenic bacteria, protozoa, fungi, viruses and even prions, and their associated endotoxins and mycotoxins — and particularly when manufactured in countries like the US, they may contain hormone and antibiotic residues and hazardous preservatives.

Diseases described in the scientific literature as more common following long-term maintenance of cats and dogs on meat-based diets include kidney, liver, heart, neurologic, visual, neuromuscular and skin diseases; bleeding disorders; birth defects; immunocompromisation; and infectious diseases (e.g., DiBartola et al. 1993, Dow et al. 1989, Freytag et al. 2003 and Strieker et al. 1996 — see www.VegePets.info).

My veterinary experience over many years leads me to believe that so-called degenerative diseases such as cancer, kidney, liver and heart disease are probably much more common than would occur naturally — and I think some cases are probably exacerbated, if not directly caused by, the hazardous ingredients in many meat-based diets.

Vegan diets aim to meet all the nutritional needs of cats or dogs using only plant, mineral and synthetically-based ingredients. There is absolutely no scientific reason

why such diets cannot be formulated to meet all of the palatability, nutritional and bioavailability (which primarily refers to digestibility) needs of cats, dogs, humans, or virtually any species. Crucially, vegan diets also avoid most of the hazards found in meat-based diets.

However, use of a complete and balanced nutritional supplement with a home-made diet, or a nutritionally complete commercial vegan diet, is essential to safeguard health. Supplements and diets may be obtained from the suppliers listed at www.VegePets.info.

Regular urine pH monitoring is also important in order to detect the urinary alkalinisation, with its consequent potential for urinary stones and life-threatening blockages, that may result from a vegan diet in a small minority of cases (most commonly among male cats). Advice on monitoring and correcting alkalinisation using dietary additives is available at www.VegePets.info.

Finally, some animals maintained on certain meat-based diets long-term may be very resistant to change. The most important factors for transitioning difficult pets are very gradual change and persistence. Additional guidance is available at www.vegepets.info.

What's the purpose of the Extreme Vegan Sporting Association?

Veganism helps animals and the environment, and enables more efficient use of global food and water resources, thereby saving human lives too. However, many people resist these logical arguments for cultural reasons. Veganism is culturally alien to them. Some seem to imagine that vegans must endure grim and joyless lives of self-denial: no meat pies, leather jackets or animal-tested lipstick? Surely, we must dream of little more than our own untimely deaths, as we feebly stagger through our days, made pale and weak by lack of essential animal proteins? What kind of folk would subject themselves to such extremes?

I created the Extreme Vegan Sporting Association to demonstrate just how fun and fit vegans can really be. Growing numbers of athletes, as well as otherwise normal folk, have discovered some very important truths: by exercising basic consideration for the lives of those they would otherwise eat, and the people and animals who share our environment, vegans almost always become healthier and fitter! Karma, perhaps? Whatever the reason, being vegan can be seriously fun!

All who subscribe to our fun and life-affirming sporting ideals may consider themselves members of the Extreme Vegan Sporting Association. They can showcase their

exploits on www.ExtremeVeganSports.org. We currently include pictures or videos of vegan body builders, bungy jumpers, cyclists, dune tumbler, hikers, mountaineers, martial artists, runners, sky divers and yodellers. I encourage your readers to send in pictures of their own exploits via the website. All sports will be considered, but participants must be vegan!

What advice would you give to others interested in an animal advocacy career?

Large-scale advocacy — as distinct from hands-on animal welfare work — is aimed at achieving social change. To have any chance of success, it is essential that advocates present cases that will be seen by their target audiences as reasonable and rational. They should also present messages that are as close as possible to mainstream culture, rather than alienated from it, as sometimes occurs with more militant activism. If direct action tactics are used, then they should be ones that generate mainstream support for a campaign, rather than opposition. There are some outstanding examples from Australia and elsewhere that have very effectively used humour, for example.

It's also fundamentally important that advocates are realistic. We need to be realistic about human psychology — particularly, the psychology of behavioural and social

change, in order to determine the most effective strategy and tactics. We must also recognise that in many cases, relatively small, incremental changes are the best that may be achieved, and that inappropriate tactics can jeopardise even these. Advocates should focus on perhaps one or two issues likely to result in the greatest positive change, rather than picking too many issues, or those less winnable. Our time and resources are very limited. We must combine reason with a realistic world view to ensure we achieve the maximum impact possible, both for the sake of the animals, and perhaps, ourselves.

If the possibility exists, then it may also be worth pursuing a career that will maximise one's ability to advocate for animals. Excellent choices include medicine, veterinary medicine, law, dietetics and environmental science. The movement also needs support skills such as IT, graphic design, photography and videography, management, marketing and fundraising.

Randall Cannon is a veterinarian who lives in Orlando, Florida, in the USA.

What inspired you to become a vegan?

My inspiration for becoming vegan was, without a doubt, the animals. Any health and environmental benefits are a bonus. I was raised in a family that hunted, and I

myself hunted until I was 20. Like most people, I looked at animals as a source of personal enjoyment, whether for taste or sport. When I entered veterinary school, I cared for animals, but in a very selfish way, looking at them more as a possession than a soul — I loved animals more for what joy they brought me.

I was trained in the livestock industry and had full knowledge of the horrors involved in bringing animal products to the dinner table. I was able to keep my blinders on and continued to eat meat and dairy for about 11 years into my career. Somewhere along the way, my patients showed me, time and time again, that they were as special, if not more special, than humans; they certainly have purer souls. I began to look at animals as true beings who deserve all the dignity and rights we afford humans.

Before becoming vegan, I enjoyed steak immensely — filet mignon was my favourite. After a 'good meal', I was haunted by the vision of a cow's eye — the eye of a beautiful, trusting, innocent cow. The hypocrisy of working all day to save a dog or cat and crying when I couldn't but then coming home and eating a steak began to gnaw at me. I gave up meats about nine years ago but continued to eat dairy and fish until about a year ago, when I finally admitted to the horrors of the dairy and fishing industries as well. I now realise I have no right to use animals for