

Here's Why Vegans Shouldn't Support Lab-Grown Meat

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January 2022



Lab-grown meat (also known as cultivated meat, in vitro meat, cell-based meat, and clean meat) is a novel biotech alternative to 'traditional' meat. It involves taking some cells/tissue from living animals and growing those cells into pieces of real animal flesh in a lab.

Proponents of lab-grown meat will tell you that as vegans and activists we have failed. They argue that the moral and ethical case against eating animals has not worked, as evidenced by the increasing number of animals globally that are raised and killed for food every year. Therefore, they say, we need novel technologies and innovation so that we can just replace or change the meat on people's plates without them having to change their morals or diet.

The idea is that lab-grown meat will allow people to continue eating REAL MEAT but without factory farming and killing animals. Which at face value sounds kind of good right? Unfortunately it's a flawed solution based on a very flawed premise.

When we step back and take a more holistic look at animal oppression and lab-grown meat as a solution, it becomes very clear that we as vegans should not be supporting or pushing for this technology at all.

Here are my 10 reasons why I don't support lab-grown meat as a holistic and ethical vegan:

1. The premise behind the need for lab-grown meat is wrong:

People don't eat meat and dairy due simply because of a lack of good alternatives.

Lack of tasty and nutritional options is not the root problem driving factory farming and animal product consumption – Speciesism is.

A vast array of plant-based foods are already cheaply available around the world and much of the global population historically and today, enjoy diets with minimal animal protein. Framing the consumption of animals as an issue of "lack of alternatives" is also incredibly western centric and ignores why global meat and dairy consumption is increasing in the first place.

Westernization, neocolonialism, and marketing by multinational corporations are all actively driving populations around the world to ditch their traditional (predominantly plant-based) foods in favor of more meat and dairy based foods.

Enormous time, money, marketing, and lobbying has gone into and continues to go into convincing people that meat and dairy are healthy and necessary commodities, and neocolonialism drives a narrative that meat and dairy are symbols of wealth and privilege, leading more people who aspire to adopt a western way of life to eat more meat and dairy.

This is being completely ignored in the rush to embrace lab-grown meat and promote the idea that we just need a “realistic” alternative to meat so people can stop eating animals.

The real issue underlying the oppression of animals is that most people are deeply speciesist and view animals as objects and commodities for our use. Therefore, most people see no inherent moral problem with continuing to eat animals for taste, tradition, or convenience.

2. Lab-grown meat actively relies on animal exploitation and animal ingredients.

Lab-grown meat currently exploit animals because efforts to research, create, and scale lab meat require that flesh biopsies be taken from living animals regularly for the purpose of extracting stem cells from them.

Proponents of lab-meat claim that the biopsies are “small” and “harmless”. Yet how is that really any different from the claims of the animal ag industry who claim that they kill animals “humanely” in a “quick” and “painless” way?? Both are unnecessarily using and exploiting animals for human purposes.

The process of growing flesh in a lab also necessitates the use of a growth medium.

Traditionally, most cell-culture growth mediums contain something called Fetal Bovine Serum or FBS. FBS is extracted from the fetuses of pregnant cows at slaughter houses and involves a painful process where a giant needle is inserted into the baby cows heart and their blood is completely drained.

While many proponents and developers of lab-grown meat claim that they are working on or have already created an FBS-free serum, the only lab-grown meat commercially available is currently made using FBS. And many of the alternatives that are currently used in the biotech industry, simply rely on other products of animal exploitation like egg albumin rather than FBS.

While lab-meat producers may eventually develop a truly animal free and plant-based cell growth formula, efforts to get there are currently actively exploiting animals and supporting slaughterhouses.

Not to mention that by the lab-meat industry’s own estimates, it is likely to be 10 years or more before lab-grown meat can even be scaled to a commercially viable level and price. That means numerous animals are being exploited here and now in the name of a POSSIBLE, future solution.

3. Lab-grown meat is speciesist and upholds the need to consume flesh

Veganism is fundamentally an anti-speciesist ideology about justice and bodily autonomy for all beings. It is about not intentionally exploiting, killing, or using animals no matter how justified we think it is. If we want to see a world where animals are free to live on their own terms, we must dismantle the underlying speciesist beliefs and behaviors in ourselves and in society.

The promotion and focus on lab-grown meat (unlike the promotion of plant-based foods) does nothing to fight or dismantle speciesism, and actively reinforces the idea that animal flesh is “food”, and that animals are objects for human use.

4. The free market and technology rarely solve moral problems in society.

Technology and the free market have rarely if ever proven effective at solving injustice and complex systems of oppression. For example, proponents of lab meat love to suggest that whales benefited by the introduction of fossil fuels, because it made whale oil for lamps obsolete. But this perspective is reductionist at best, and blatantly inaccurate at worst. The reality is that today, more whales actually die annually at the hands of humans than they did back when we relied on whale oil for our lamps!

Unless and until we actually change the underlying beliefs and attitudes about animals in society, no new technology or free-market solution will be the magic bullet to achieve a vegan world free of slaughterhouses.

We humans will always continue to find new ways to exploit and harm animals for our human wants and needs. This is exemplified in the push within the agriculture industry to simply find more “ethical”, sustainable, and environmentally friendly ways of exploiting animals for food. Things like genetically engineering female cows to have more male traits and produce more meat per animal, or feeding cows seaweed to stop them from emitting so much methane (both things that scientists are actively working on).

Without the moral and even health arguments against consuming animals, why would consumers feel the need to change what they are eating at all? Without a clear message against exploitation and use of animals, what incentive is there for individuals to even choose lab-grown meat instead of the supposed more “sustainable” or “humanely” raised animals?

5. Lab-grown meat is still animal protein and inherently unhealthy

As western meat centric diets have spread around the globe, so too have rates of heart disease, diabetes, and cancer.

This is something that vegans have been speaking out about for years. One of the great benefits of a plant-based diet is that it has the power to radically transform our food and health care system and save human lives too.

Animal flesh inherently contains inflammatory-disease-causing animal protein regardless of whether it's grown from a few cells in a lab or taken from slaughtering an individual. Lab-grown meat is also likely to still contain high levels of cholesterol (something only found in animal-based foods) which is strongly linked to our number one killer: heart disease.

So lab-grown meat will do nothing to address our epidemic of chronic illness the way plant-based foods will and vegans promoting lab-grown meat undermines years of work by vegans to educate people that humans are not biologically meant to eat meat.

6. Lab-grown meat is energy intensive to produce and not very sustainable.

While lab-grown meat proponents claim that this technology will drastically reduce land, water, energy inputs, and greenhouse gas emissions associated with meat production, the data backing up these claims is

a bit lacking. Especially regarding climate change.

Growing cells in lab is [not an easy feat](#). Cells require a sterile environment and specific temperature, pressure, oxygen, and CO2 levels to be maintained. Autoclaves, incubators, and bioreactors that are needed to grow mass quantities of cells successfully, are all incredibly energy intensive and will draw from the electric grid for power.

Not to mention that for lab-grown meat to form realistic muscle fibers and have the texture and consistency of say a steak from an animal, the cells/flesh will likely need to be [regularly exercised](#) and stretched using energy intensive machines, and maybe even have oxygen forcibly perfused inside them.

Lab-grown meat may simply shift the burden from direct animal methane emissions and land-use change emissions, to fossil fuel emissions from grid. Which isn't really much of a net positive.

[Some studies](#) even indicate that lab-grown meat might end up being MORE resource intensive to produce than raising and slaughtering animals.

The few studies that do show an enormous reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from lab-grown meat are based almost entirely on futuristic modeling (and not real world data) that assumes the entire electric grid is built on renewable energy and not fossil fuels. Obviously that is not true at present and creates a false conclusion about the environmental benefits of lab-grown meat.

7. Lab-grown meat is unlikely to be readily accepted by consumers without education and marketing.

While many people especially in the tech industry are enthusiastic about eating lab-grown meat, proponents have repeatedly admitted that to get the masses to accept lab-grown meat will take some marketing and education. This is because it is well documented that many consumers seem to dislike things that seem “unnatural” and have an “ick” factor.

[One study](#) on consumer acceptance found that there was a significant negative halo effect associated with lab-grown meat being made by large food and biotech corporations (such as Tyson – who is already investing in lab-meat) with a history of unethical behavior and practices.

Internal documents from the food industry and meat producers also show that the animal ag industry is already working hard to sell “real meat” as more “natural” healthy, authentic, and “real” than lab-grown meat. This will also likely hamper consumer acceptance. But here's the thing, if marketing, and education CAN influence consumers to switch what they are eating, why not just put that time and energy into convincing consumers to eat plant foods instead of lab-grown meat?

8. Unknown potential long-term safety risks

Proponents of lab-grown meat claim that it will be healthier and safer to eat than conventional meat because it will be produced in a controlled environment without the risk of bacterial contamination.

Yet the reality is that growing tissue in a lab, poses a whole new host of potential risks and problems.

When large quantities of cells are grown together with rapid cell division and proliferation, dysregulation and mutations often occur, as what happens with cancer cells. How will this dysregulation be screened out? Will some cells with cancer-like properties make it through the screening process? How safe is that to eat?

What about the gene editing of cells to create specific characteristics or adjust nutritional properties of the meat? What are the long-term risks or unintended side-effects of that?

It also increasingly seems that every type of lab-grown meat will be made using different techniques, with many of the details of exactly what and how the meat is grown, being kept proprietary. This lack of consistency and transparency only makes it harder for consumers to actually know what they are eating and how their food was produced and if it is really safe.

9. Lab-grown meat is at odds with food sovereignty and will facilitate more corporate consolidation and control of our food supply

For lab-grown meat to be scalable and price point competitive, it will have to be produced in large industrial labs by large food and biotech corporations.

Some lab-grown meat companies have already filed patents for genetic engineering techniques for creating lab-grown meat. This is further evidence that lab-grown meat as an “alternative protein” will be made, controlled, and pushed on people as a top-down solution by the very corporations who are actively driving up meat consumption and causing the climate crisis.

Corporations like Tyson and Cargill who have invested in lab grown meat, who also make the list of the top 100 single biggest contributors to climate change. We are talking about companies who are fundamentally driven by profits, not ethics or sustainability.

Relying on these companies to produce our food and transform the food system into an ethical and sustainable one, is like relying on the tobacco industry to make “healthy” cigarettes and prevent lung cancer.

Lab-grown meat will simply be a tool used to facilitate more corporate control and consolidation of our food supply, making more people dependent on large profit driven corporations to feed us. This is the opposite of what we need for food security in a growing world.

10. We already have the ideal food system solution – VEGANIC agriculture!

While more options and alternatives to meat and dairy aren’t bad, they are not and cannot solve the root issues of animal oppression and speciesism. Especially when such alternatives like lab-grown meat actively harm animals and uphold speciesism.

We don’t need to depend on a new technology with unknown risks and benefits to transform the food system. The good news is we already have the ideal solution – which is a VEGANIC food and agricultural systems. This brings together the best of all worlds. It’s the most ethical, sustainable, and healthy food system that truly supports local communities and is anti-speciesist at heart.

Veganic agriculture brings the power and control of our food supply back to the hands of the people. Veganic agriculture is a clear rejection and alternative to the large corporate food system which is killing people, animals, and destroying the planet. Lab-grown meat is not and cannot be veganic.

Learn more at: [Clean Meat Hoax Articles](#) and [Lab-grown meat is supposed to be inevitable. The science tells a different story](#)